

BCC Biblical Eschatology Course

2-Oct-2026 by Dale Gooding and David Richoux

About this document

These are the weekly notes produced by Pastor Dale Gooding for our Biblical Eschatology Course by Dr Michael J. Vlach called "*Biblical Eschatology: What the Bible Teaches about Future Events*". David Richoux has taken the notes from each week and compiled them into this document so that we have a cumulative set of notes for the class.

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Week 1 - Introduction

Lesson 1 – Eschatology Explained

Scripture Preparation

Read: Isa. 46:9-10; Deut. 4:30; Isa. 2:2; Dan. 10:14; Hos. 3:5; Matt. 24:3;
2 Tim. 3:1; 2 Pet. 3:3

Discussion Questions

1. How important is the doctrine of eschatology for understanding God's big-picture purposes?
2. What would you say to someone who claims eschatology is not that important or that churches should not emphasize teaching eschatology?
3. How important is it to understand the three phases of eschatology fulfillment (Old Testament, First Coming, Second Coming)?
4. If someone wanted to know why the study of eschatology is practical, what would you say?

Week 2 - Eschatology Issues 1

Lesson 2 – Bible Interpretation and Eschatology

Scripture Preparation

Read: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Peter 1: 10-12; Luke 24:25-27

Consistent Literal-Historical-Grammatical-Interpretation:

- A) Literal = What the Author meant by what he wrote.
- B) Grammatical = Understanding how words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and language work.
- C) Historical = Understanding Historical Context of the Bible authors.
- D) Interpretation = The process of understanding what the Bible author meant in this (reader grasps what the author meant).
- E) Consistent: = Applying Literal-Grammatical-Historical Interpretation to all Scripture (OT & NT), and to all genres: Narrative, Wisdom, Legal, Gospels, Epistles, Poetry, Prophecy

Bible Interpretation and Eschatology Discussion Questions

1. How would you explain "Literal-Grammatical-Historical" interpretation in your own words?
2. How important is Literal-Grammatical-Historical Interpretation for understanding eschatology and Bible prophecy?
3. What can go wrong if we do not use consistent interpretation principles when it comes to understanding Bible prophecy?
4. If someone says, "We need more than "Literal Interpretation" to understand the Bible," how would you respond?

"Consistent Literal Interpretation applied to all Scripture can lead to a sufficient and accurate understanding of the Bible and events to come (Eschatology)."

Lesson 3 – Jesus' Role in Eschatology

Scripture Preparation

Read: Matt 5:17-20; 2 Corinthians 1:18-22; Luke 24:13-32; Acts 3:18-21

"Jesus is the Central focus of all Scripture" (2 Cor 1:20a).

Jesus' Relationship to Key Themes:

- A) "Kingdom" = Jesus is the Ultimate King with the Ultimate Kingdom reign.
- B) "Abrahamic Covenant" = Jesus is the Ultimate Seed of the Abr. Cov. (Gal. 3:16)
- C) "Mosaic Covenant" = Jesus is the end of the Law for Righteousness (Rom. 10:4)
- D) "Davidic Covenant" = Jesus is the Ultimate Davidic King.
- E) "New Covenant" = Jesus established the New Covenant with His Blood (Lk. 22:20)
- F) Jesus' Key Roles:
 - 1. Jesus is the Suffering Servant
 - 2. Jesus is the King
- G) Jesus Guarantees the Entire OT will be Fulfilled & Accomplished (Matt 5:17-18)
- H) Jesus Fulfills Messianic Prophecies - Lk. 24:44
- I) Jesus Expected Literal Fulfillment - Matt. 24:15
- J) How does Jesus Fulfill OT Prophecy:
 - 1. Literally:
 - 2. As the Means:
- K) The Two Comings of Jesus' & Fulfillment:
 - 1. 1st Coming Fulfillment:
 - Suffering Servant
 - Atonement for Sin
 - Brings the New Covenant
 - Messianic Salvation for Gentiles
 - 2. 2nd Coming Fulfillment:
 - Day of The Lord
 - Kingdom
 - Judgments
 - Resurrections
 - Restoration of Creation

Closing: Acts 3:18, 20-21

Lesson 3 (continued)

Discussion Questions

1. How would you explain the significance of Jesus concerning the fulfillment of Bible prophecies?
2. What would you say to someone who does not believe Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled literally because "Jesus fulfills the Old Testament"?
3. How does "fulfillment in Jesus" relate to the fact that there are two comings of Jesus to earth—one past and one future from our standpoint?
4. Can we bring glory and honor to Jesus if we talk about other things in the Bible like creation, Israel, nations, land, and physical blessings? Explain.

Week 3 – Eschatology Issues 2

Lesson 4 – Futurism and the Timing of Prophetic Fulfillment

Scripture Preparation

Read: Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24; Mark 13

I) When are the events of Matt. 24 Fulfilled?

- Wars
- False Messiahs
- Earthquakes
- Abomination of Desolation
- Worst period in human history
- Gospel preached to the whole world
- Cosmic Signs
- The Coming of Jesus

II) When are the events of Revelation 6-22 Fulfilled?

- Arrival of the Anti-Christ (False peace)
- War
- Famine
- Death
- Martyrdom
- Earthquake & sky rolled like a scroll

III) The 7 Trumpets:

- First: 1/3 of the earth, trees & grass burned up (8:7)
- Second: 1/3 of the sea creatures die and ships destroyed (8:9)
- Third: 1/3 of the waters are polluted & many die (8:10-11)
- Fourth: 1/3 of the sun, moon & stars are darkened (8:12)
- Fifth: Locusts / Demons are released to torment people (9:1-11)
- Sixth: 4 previously bound demons released to kill 1/3 of mankind (9:13-19)
- Seventh: Proclamation of Christ's Kingdom Reign (11:15-18)

Lesson 4 (continued)

IV) The 7 Bowls:

- 1st: Painful sores (16:2)
- 2nd: Sea becomes like blood & everything in sea dies (16:3)
- 3rd: Rivers & springs of water turn to blood (16:4-7)
- 4th: Sun scorches people with fire & heat (16:8-9)
- 5th: Darkness & Intense Pain (16:10-11)
- 6th: Euphrates River dried up, prepares way for Eastern kings (16:12-16)
- 7th: Severe earthquakes that split the great city into 3 parts; cities of Nations fall; severe hail (16:17-21)

V) The Return of Jesus Himself - Matt. 24:30-31 & Rev. 19, references of? What is your answer to the above passages?

- Past fulfillment?
- Present fulfillment?
- Future Fulfillment?
- Timing is not in view.

VI) Views:

- 1) Preterism: Fulfillment is past from our standpoint; all or mostly by AD 70
- 2) Historicism: Fulfillment continues between the two comings of Jesus
- 3) Futurism: Fulfillment of many prophecies is future from our standpoint
- 4) Idealism: Timing is a non-issue; God's principles: good triumphs over evil

Lesson 5 – Survey of Coming Prophetic Events

VII) Future Events:

Seventieth Week of Daniel (Tribulation Period)

Day of the Lord

Rapture

Rise and career of the Antichrist

Return of Jesus to Earth

Messiah's Earthly Kingdom

Healing of nature / animals

Judgments

Resurrections

Lessons 4 and 5 (continued)

Discussion Questions

1. What are your thoughts on the issue of the timing of Bible prophecy fulfillment?

2. Briefly summarize the following views concerning the timing of Bible prophecy fulfillment:
 - a) Preterism

 - b) Historicism

 - c) Idealism

 - d) Futurism

3. How important is having the correct view of the timing of Bible prophecy fulfillment for grasping an accurate understanding of God's purposes?

4. If someone asked you why you hold the view you do concerning the timing of Bible prophecy fulfillment, what would you say?

Week 4 - Israel and the Church 1

Lesson 6 – Israel's Place in Eschatology

Scripture Preparation

Read: Gen. 12:2-3; Lev. 26; Deut. 4:25-31, 30:1-10; Isa. 49; Eze. 36-37; Rom. 11:11-29

Israel's Place in Bible Prophecy

- Israel is significant not only in the past, but also in the present and in the future.
- Replacement Theology / Supersessionism has often led to the place of Israel in God's plans being ignored or distorted.

What is Israel?

- Ethnic: Descended from the promised seed line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- National: Common ancestry, language, history, customs, law, etc.
- Territorial: Linked with the land of promise (Genesis 15:18-21)

Israel's Purposes

- Bless all families and nations of the earth (Gen. 12:2-3; 18:18; 22:18)
- Be a light and mediator to other nations (see Deut. 4; Exod. 19:5-6)
- The Scriptures (Rom. 3:2)
- From whom is the Messiah (Rom. 9:5)

Israel in Eschatology

- To be enslaved in Egypt for 400 years and then delivered with blessings (Gen. 15:13-14)
- Destined for the Promised Land (Gen. 12:6-7; 15:18-21; Joshua)
- Will disobey God and be dispersed / scattered to nations (Deuteronomy 30)
- In the Latter Days Israel to be gathered from the nations (Deut. 30:3-4)
- Israel to repent and be saved as a nation in latter days (Deut 30:2, 6)
- Israel to be restored to the Abrahamic Covenant, including the land of promise. (Deut. 30:5; Leviticus 26:40-45)
- Destruction of Temple with Babylon(586 BC) and Romans (AD 70)
- Israel missed Jesus (Luke 19:41-44)
- Times of the Gentiles continues (Luke 21:24b)
- Israel currently experiencing a partial, temporary hardening (Rom. 11:25)
- Will be in covenant with the Antichrist for a seven-year period (Dan. 9:27)
- Will experience the abomination of desolation and the wrath of the Antichrist in the Tribulation Period (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15-20)
- Will believe in Jesus and be saved in the Last Days (Rom. 11:26-27)
- Israel will be rescued (Zech 14; Matthew 24:30-31)
- Will bring more blessings to nations when she believes (Rom. 11:12, 15; Isaiah 2)

Lesson 6 (continued)

Discussion Questions

1. How important is understanding "Israel's Place in Eschatology" for properly grasping God's purposes?
2. What can go wrong if one does not understand the place of Israel in God's purposes?
3. What would you say to someone who says, "The church is the fulfillment of God's purposes for Israel so there is no future significance for national Israel in Bible prophecy"?

Week 5 - Israel and the Church 2

Lesson 7 – The Church's Place in Eschatology

Scripture Preparation

Read: Revelation 2–3; 1 Thessalonians 5:9–10

A. The Church Defined

1. It is a Messianic / New Covenant community of believing Israelites and Gentiles in this age between Jesus' two comings.
2. The Church is related to Old Testament promises that the Messiah would bring blessings to Israel and Gentiles. (Rom. 11:17–24)
3. Church is founded upon Jesus, the apostles, and New Testament prophets (Eph. 2:20)

B. What the Church Does

1. The church is the pillar and support of the truth in this age. (1 Tim. 3:15)
2. The church is the means for Gospel proclamation in this age.
 - Great Commission (Matt 28)
 - Gospel to world (Acts 1)
3. The church should be a means to make Israel jealous to believe in Jesus as Messiah. (Rom. 11:14)

C. Eschatology in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3

1. **Ephesus**: "To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God."
2. **Smyrna**: "He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death."
3. **Pergamum**: "To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it."
4. **Thyatira**: "He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; 27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; 28 and I will give him the morning star."
5. **Sardis**: "He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."
6. **Philadelphia**: "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.
 1. *"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name."*
7. **Laodicea**: "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."

Lesson 7 (continued)

D. The Church is looking for The Lord to Return

1. "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:13)
2. "You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near." (James 5:8)
3. "Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light." (Romans 13:11-12)
4. He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. (Revelation 22:20)

E. The Church will be Evacuated from the Day of The Lord

1. But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36)
2. "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." (Rev. 3:10)
3. "and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come." (1 Thess. 1:10)
4. "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9)

F. The Church Will Rule the Nations in the Millennial Kingdom

1. He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; 27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces (Rev. 2:26-27)
2. "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." (Rev. 5:10)
3. "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." (Rev. 3:21)
4. The first appeared, saying, 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.' And he said to him, "Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.' The second came, saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.' And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.' (Luke 19:16-19)

Lesson 7 (continued)

Discussion Questions

1. How important is understanding “The Church’s Place in Eschatology” for knowing God’s purposes?
2. What do you think of the idea that members of the church are headed for a kingdom reign with Jesus on earth after Jesus’ return?
3. Do you believe churches talk about eschatology too much, too little, or just right? Explain.

Week 6 – Personal Eschatology 1

Lesson 8 – Death: An Eschatological Perspective

Scripture Preparation

Read: Gen. 2:16-17; Gen. 3; Heb. 9:27; Heb. 2:14-15; Rom. 8:38-39;
1 Thes. 4:13-15; 1 Cor. 15:44-46; Isa. 25:7-8

1. Death:

- Separation
- End of Life
- Cessation of all life activities

2. Adam, Sin & Death:

- Genesis 2:16-17 - "The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."
- Genesis 3:19 - "By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

3. Romans 5:12:

- "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—"
- Gen. 5 - "And he died..." x8

4. Types of Death

- Physical Death
- Spiritual Death
- Eternal Death

5. The Three Types of Death Explained

- Physical Death = Cessation of Bodily Life
- Spiritual Death = Separated from God
- Eternal Death = Conscious Life apart from God Eternally; punishment and banishment from God for eternity. This happens to those who physically die while spiritually dead.
 - Unbelievers will experience eternal death separated from God's presence (2 Thes 1:9). The lake of fire is their destiny (Rev. 21:8).
 - Death ushers a person into direct accountability with God (Heb. 9:27).
 - Jesus warned that people should fear God "who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).
- Physical Death - While sentencing to the lake of fire awaits final judgment, the destiny of the unsaved is sealed at the point of death.
- Proverbs 11:7a sums up what death means for the wicked: "When the wicked dies, his hope will perish."

Lesson 8 (continued)

6. Facing Death for Christians

- Believers in Christ are not spared physical death. They are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), but decay of their physical bodies still occurs.
- As Paul stated, "Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16).
- While heading to physical death, the Christian does not have to fear death. Christ has conquered it (Rev. 1:18).
- Jesus, through His sacrificial death is able to "deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery" (Heb. 2:14–15).
- Paul said, "For I am sure that neither death nor life . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38–39).
- Paul viewed the choice between remaining on earth and departing to be with Christ as a difficult choice: "If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account" (Phil. 1:22–24).
- Paul told the Corinthians, "Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8).
- Paul viewed departure from the body (physical death) as preferable since he would be with Jesus

7. Death seemed like sleep to for believers in Jesus

1 Thes. 4:13-15 – "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep."

8. The Defeat of Death

1 Cor. 15:26 – "the last enemy which will be abolished is death."

Rev. 20:13-14 – "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire."

Isaiah 25:7-8 – "And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, Even the veil which is stretched over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken."

Rev. 21:4 – "and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

- Death is Defeated because of Jesus

- Because He rose from the dead, YOU will rise from the dead.

Lesson 8 (continued)

Discussion Questions

1. Explain the three types of death.
2. How does Jesus' resurrection impact how you view death?
3. Should there be a difference between how a Christian views upcoming physical death and how a non-Christian views death? Explain.
4. Hypothetical scenario: A non-Christian, who is weeks away from dying, watched a hospice nurse on YouTube say that she has seen hundreds of people die and death should not be feared. This person, who is dying, want to know what you think about this issue. What would you say?

Week 7 – Personal Eschatology 2

Lesson 9 – The Intermediate State

Scripture Preparation

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; Philippians 1:22-24 Revelation 6:9-11

Vlach's Notes on the Intermediate State

The intermediate state refers to conscious existence for people between physical death and the resurrection of the body.

It applies to both believers and unbelievers, although the destinies of these two groups are different.

Since the focus of the NT is on the imminent return of Jesus and the kingdom of God on earth (Isa. 11; 65:17–25; Rev. 20–22), scriptural data concerning the intermediate state is brief. Yet significant information exists about the intermediate state in the Bible.

Two Views of Intermediate State before Jesus' death and resurrection:

1. Old Testament saints went to the good compartment of Sheol/Hades waiting for Jesus to come and release them to Heaven.
2. Old Testament saints went directly to Heaven.

The Intermediate State of the Unbeliever

The intermediate state of unbelievers after death involves conscious torment in a place called Hades.

In the NT Hades refers to the place of the wicked prior to final judgment in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:13).

- And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. (Rev. 20:13)
- Hades, therefore, functions as a temporary place of conscious torment for the wicked.
- The most explicit discussion of Hades is found in Luke 16:19–31 with the account of the "Rich Man and Lazarus."

Intermediate State of the Believer

The intermediate state for the believer is drastically different from that of the unbeliever.

The intermediate state involves conscious, peaceful existence in heaven with Jesus between physical death and resurrection of the body.

Lesson 9 (continued)

The intermediate state for the believer involves his soul being translated immediately to the presence of Jesus in heaven upon physical death (2 Cor. 5:8 Phil. 1:21–24).

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight— we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. (2 Cor. 5:1-8)

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. (Philippians 1:21-24)

As Stephen was being stoned he cried out to Jesus whom he saw in heaven, “**Lord Jesus, receive my spirit**” (Acts 7:59).

To the repentant thief on the cross, Jesus promised, “**Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise**” (Luke 23:43).

The intermediate state also means rest from the toils of this life. Revelation 14:3 states:

"And I [John] heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'"

Revelation 6:9–11 offers the most detailed information concerning the intermediate state. The apostle John witnessed a scene in which souls appeared in heaven under an altar. These are the souls of those “who had been slain for the word of God and for they witness they had borne” (Rev. 6:9). These are Christian martyrs whose souls now appear in heaven. Verses 10–11 state:

They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

Lesson 9 (continued)

This scene refers to martyrs during the coming great tribulation. Yet, several truths about the intermediate state of believers can be learned here.

First, in heaven these saints have keen self-awareness and knowledge of others and world circumstances at the time. They know they were killed for their testimony for Jesus and they want judgment on earth for their murderers. These saints remember past experiences and have hope for the future.

Second, they are aware of the distinction between heaven and earth. They do not forget about earth altogether with their arrival in heaven or act as if heaven is all that matters.

Third, heaven is not their final destiny. Even in heaven, the saints long for justice upon the earth, a justice that comes with the return of Jesus and the saints in Revelation 19:11ff.

Fourth, the martyred saints in heaven appear to have some body-like form, perhaps an intermediate state body. They can be seen by John ("I saw . . . the souls"). They have an audible element in that they can speak and be heard ("They cried out with a loud voice"). Also, they can wear clothing ("they were each given a white robe"). And they operate within the confines of time ("they were . . . told to rest a little while longer").

Intermediate state saints in heaven have a real existence. This is not bodily existence as we experience now. Physical death has occurred and their bodies remain in the ground awaiting resurrection. Nor is this existence comparable to that of the resurrection of the body.

Yet on the other hand, this is more than just a static, invisible state. Certainly, there is an element of mystery regarding the essence of intermediate state bodies, but a real and localized presence of believers in heaven appears to be the case.

The Significance of the Intermediate State

What role does the intermediate state play in God's broader cosmic plans?

- The resurrected Jesus shares the throne of deity with the Father (Ps. 110:1).
- It is from heaven that God maintains sovereign control over the universe (Psalm 2).
- The souls of saints who die go immediately into the presence of God in heaven.

So the intermediate state is important in God's plans.

Lesson 9 (continued)

Yet it is possible to fall into extremes when it comes to the intermediate state's importance.

One extreme downplays the significance or even existence of the intermediate state. Some teach that there is no intermediate state existence for believers or unbelievers or that there is no biblical information on this topic. Some deny an intermediate state and opt for what can be called "soul sleep." Supposedly, when a person dies he slips into a temporary unconscious existence until Jesus comes and the resurrection of the body takes place. But as shown, multiple passages describe conscious existence for people between physical death and resurrection of the body.

On **the other side**, the intermediate state can be overemphasized in two ways: The first occurs when the intermediate heaven is viewed as the final state of all believers. When Christians think their eternal destiny is heaven, not the new earth (Rev. 21:1), they are overemphasizing the present heaven. Some popular hymns such as "I'll Fly Away," with lyrics like "To a land where joy will never end, I'll fly away," might give the impression that the destiny of the Christian is "out there" forever, and that the "land" God promises is heaven. But heaven is not the ultimate destiny of believers—the new earth is. Peter declared, "But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

Another erroneous perspective is viewing the intermediate state as the millennial reign of Jesus and the saints in heaven. This is held by some who hold to amillennialism. But the Bible does not present the millennial reign of Jesus and the saints as occurring in heaven. Instead, it will be fulfilled on earth, from and over the realm where God originally tasked man to rule (Gen. 1:26-28).

Earth, not heaven, is where a millennial reign of Jesus and the saints is needed, not heaven, which already possesses the universal kingdom reign of God. The martyred saints who appear in heaven in Revelation 6:9-11 are pictured as longing for justice upon the earth. They are not reigning yet, but waiting to reign, a wait that is satisfied with the resurrection and reign of the saints after the return of Jesus (Rev. 20:4). In sum, the millennial reign of Jesus and the saints is not a hidden reign from heaven, but a visible, tangible reign in the realm where God created mankind to rule—the earth.

The intermediate state is an important state of existence for deceased believers in heaven or hades during this age before the second coming of Jesus and the resurrection of the body. But it is not the final state or destiny for human beings.

What we do not see in Scripture:

- Reincarnation
- Soul Sleep
- Purgatory

Lesson 9 (continued)

Discussion Questions

1. Do you believe the doctrine of the Intermediate State is practical for our present lives? Explain.
2. How does a correct understanding of the Intermediate State affect how you view the death of Christians you know?
3. Have you often thought of the distinction between the current intermediate state and the final state of believers in eternity? Does it matter? Explain.