

Essentials of Christianity (pt 33)
10/31/2010

*Introduction*_____

Good morning to everyone! I hope that today's teaching will meet all of us right where we're at.

We have arrived at the last subject that we're going to cover in this series on the **Essentials of Christianity**. The last subject is **Eschatology: The Doctrine of Last Things**.

Eschatology is a very big subject to cover, and so (as I stated last week) we will be focusing on aspects of biblical teaching about what is *yet to happen; what we can anticipate in the future*.

As I also stated last week, though the field of eschatology is controversial for many, the Bible provides us with a lot of clarity on numerous aspects of eschatology. And this is why we can state dogmatically that eschatology has many components that fall into the category of essential Christian doctrine.

I want to encourage those who weren't here last week to please obtain a copy of the teaching because we covered some material that ties in with today's material.

Here are the essential components of eschatology:

Death
Resurrection
Judgment
The Eternal State
Hell

Heaven
Return of Christ

Last week we covered **death** and **resurrection**. Today we're going to begin our time by looking at the subject of **“Judgment.”**

Judgment: let's turn in our Bible's to **Hebrews 9:27-28**. In several of the categories we have left to cover, there is going to be some overlap. But it's important to see them as distinct; separate from one another--standing on their own, if you will: even though they intersect under the same theological category; and their timing is close together as well.

Since the Bible mentions them separately, we're also covering them that way.

^{NAU} Hebrews 9:27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

²⁸ so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

Though some liberal theologians have often denied the fact, it is quite certain that the Bible teaches a final judgment, after which individuals will go to their allotted destinies, i.e., heaven and eternal bliss or hell and eternal punishment. Biblically speaking, this “day of judgment” is most certain and will be the culmination and fulfillment of numerous judgments of God against sin and evil throughout history.¹

We touched on this last week in covering the topic of resurrection. Remember what Jesus said:

¹ Bible.org

^{NAU} John 5:28 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice,

²⁹ and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

Back to our text.

Vs 27-28-- our writer is making a connection and comparison in these 2 verses. In each case there is a death and then a subsequent appearing.

Verse 27 emphasizes the appointment that all mankind has with death- followed by an appearance before the Judge.

Vs 28-- so also Christ experienced death once, and he also will experience a **2nd appearing**, but not to be judged, but to Judge!

Vs 27-- this verse eliminates any possibility of someone dying and coming back as something else, which is A.K.A- Reincarnation.

Reincarnation is the belief that a soul moves from body to body in a birth-death-rebirth cycle, and it is a development of the Hindu-Buddhist teaching of soul transmigration.

This transmigration includes the possibility that a soul can be born into the body of an animal. The status of the body a soul is born into, ranging from a house fly to a well-to-do person, is an indication of the quality of life that soul lived in its previous body. A good life brings rebirth into a higher form; a bad life brings rebirth into a lower form. This upward and downward graduation fulfills the Law of Karma, a central tenet of Hinduism.

Karma teaches that good deeds are rewarded and bad deeds are punished. Hinduism's goal is for the soul to break out of the Karma cycle and become one with the universe. The appeal that reincarnation holds for people is its promise that life goes on and we get as many chances to get it right as we need.

If there is reincarnation, man has no compelling need to make peace with a righteous God in this life or even to treat his fellow man with love and respect. If a man has as many lives as he needs to attain perfection, he might think, "Why not live it up this life and leave good works and making peace with God for another life?" ²

No, our text in Hebrews is clear that it is appointed for men once to die (physically) and then judgment.

From the beginning Christians have recognized that this age will terminate with judgment at the return of Christ. Because God is holy, He must judge all that is unholy. Judgment is a necessary expression of God's own character. However, God's judgment will be fair and according to truth (Rom. 2:2).

As the Son of God, Jesus has the authority to render judgment (John 5:27–29). Jesus announced a future judgment connected with His return when He said people would be judged according to their deeds (Matt. 16:27). He also declared that the knowledge (or lack of it) that people had would affect the judgment. Those who had greater knowledge would receive greater judgment (Matt. 11:24).

All people, without exception, will die and come under the judgment of God.

² 1984 - PFO. All rights reserved by Personal Freedom Outreach. Reproduction is prohibited, including BBS, except for portions intended for personal use and non-commercial purposes. For reproduction permission contact: Personal Freedom Outreach, P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, Missouri 63136.

³ H. Wayne House, *Charts of World Religions*, ZondervanCharts (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006).

John the apostle described a final day when, before the great white throne, the books will be opened and unbelievers will be judged (Rev. 20:11–15). The records of the unbelievers will render them guilty before God and unworthy of eternal life. All the unbelieving dead, whether in the sea or on the earth, will be judged in the presence of God in that day.

We'll discuss their fate later.

Believers will also be judged because Paul declares, “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God” (2 Cor. 5:10). There believers will be recompensed for their deeds, whether good or worthless. The lives of believers will be reflected in this judgment (1 Cor. 3:12–15). Some will have no rewards; their works will be burned up because their motives were wrong (1 Cor. 3:14–15; 4:5). Others will have lived qualitative lives and will be rewarded accordingly (1 Cor. 3:12–13).

The eternal fire of hell has been prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). At the end of the age God will also judge Satan and his demons when, together with the beast and the false prophet, the devil is cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

To wrap up this segment **turn to Daniel 12:1-2**

^{NAU} *Daniel 12:1 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.*

² *"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.*

Paul, standing before a judicial committee, declared to them about another judicial committee.

^{NAU} Acts 24:24 But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.

²⁵ But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you."

Finally, turn to Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.

^{NAU} Ecclesiastes 12:13 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.

¹⁴ For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

The Eternal State, Hell and Heaven: after judgment every person will then enter the eternal state. We will be incorporating the subjects of **Hell** and **Heaven** into this one. This is because every being ever created will spend their eternal existence in either hell or heaven.

Both hell and heaven are not just states of existence, they are places. They have physicality.

After judgment every person will enter into what will end up being their **eternal state** of existence. This is the point to be made right now. Good or bad, all will eventually be transferred to the state of their eternal existence.

Turn with me to 1Corinthians 15: 50-54: read

^{NAU} 1 Corinthians 15:50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

⁵² *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*

⁵³ *For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

⁵⁴ *But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.*

A section of scripture we typically use to highlight the resurrection of the believer; but it also proves something else: **that mortality is swallowed up by immortality.**

Paul's discourse on both the resurrection of Jesus and the believer also nails down the inevitability of the eventual eternal existence of all humans when body and soul are reunited prior to entering their eternal abode.

The true church agrees that the souls of all men will live forever in resurrected bodies in either heaven or hell. Unbelievers will continue in an eternal state of torment. The expression "weeping and gnashing of teeth" suggests both suffering and despair, implying a continued existence of suffering. In Matthew 25:46 the terms "punishment" and "life" are modified by the same word "eternal," hence if life is eternal, then of necessity so is punishment. Annihilation is denied in this verse; punishment continues for an endless duration.

Hell may be seen as:

- (a) a total absence of the favor of God;
- (b) an endless disturbance of life as a result of the complete domination of sin;
- (c) positive pains and sufferings in body and soul; and
- (d) such subjective punishments as anguish, despair, weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

Believers will enjoy the bliss of Heaven, which is pictured as a banqueting scene, emphasizing the fellowship, relaxation, joy, and happiness in Christ's presence. Believers' eternal dwelling place will be the new heaven and the new earth (Isa. 65:17). John describes the new heaven and new earth in great detail (Rev. 21:1–22:5).

Hebrews 12:22–24 describes the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem: angels, New Testament believers (identified as “church of the first-born”), God, Old Testament believers (identified as “spirits of righteous men made perfect”), and Jesus.

The New Jerusalem is pictured as a holy city, coming down out of heaven. It is a literal city because it has measurements (Rev. 21:16). The brilliance of the Shekinah of God will illuminate the city. The city itself will be secure (21:12–13).

Above all, the blessing of the New Jerusalem will be that God will dwell in fellowship with man. There will be no need for a priest; believers will have direct access to God (21:22). Sorrow and the things that caused sorrow will be removed in the New Jerusalem (21:4,5). But Christ will be central there, and believers will serve Him and enjoy His fellowship for all eternity (22:3–5).⁴

Choosing not to believe in the eternity of human existence, heaven and hell will not make the reality of their existence go away.

John Lennon's blasphemous song that he wrote decades ago was a myth:

⁴ Paul P Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Moody, Chicago, 1989).

Imagine there's no Heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace

He knows now that his song was a myth and the reality of eternal existence has seized him.

I was grieved to see the blindness of a man who claims to be an atheist, who wrote a brief article for *The Secular Humanist Bulletin*. But it goes to show how people just don't want to face the reality of eternity as described by the Bible.

Check this out:

I do not worry much these days about whether there is an afterlife. If there is, it is not going to depend upon a specific religion. Instead, perhaps a somewhat facetious metaphor would be the metamorphosis of the lowly caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly. Does the poor caterpillar, when it constructs its pupa case, know what its next life will be? Likewise, we can only guess what lies beyond the grave.

Perhaps everyone would be involved in this metamorphosis, regardless of religious faith—there would be no final judgment and selection with salvation for some and damnation for others.

Carrying this line of thinking a step further, maybe there is (as some scientists claim) a parallel universe similar to ours, but not identical, where everything that happens here also takes place there but at a higher plane and on a different time frame. This could be an extension of the evolutionary process and unrelated to religion. Considering the many other new, decidedly weird cosmic activities being discovered on a regular basis, there are some who speculate this would fit within the vast spectrum of possibilities.

I will take my chances, live as though this is all there is, and simply try to lead as constructive and enjoyable experience with the time I have, showing compassion towards all living things, including the very humble that are also passing this way.

I am now in mid-eighties, and I feel that I have had my full allocated time and space in this world, beyond that of many of my kindred. Perhaps soon will be my time to rest. I do not feel any apprehension of its coming, only of the possible suffering that may proceed it.

I should be well satisfied with a deep, dreamless sleep for the rest of eternity. Sleep is the pacifier of all anxiety, a thing to be cherished, for in sleep there is absolution from feeling and pain. I have no ambitions of going through another life. This one was quite enough. ⁵

What saith the scriptures.

^{NAU} *Revelation 22:10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.*

¹¹ *"Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy."*

⁵ Against a Personal God: William L. Ackerman
The following article is from the Secular Humanist Bulletin, Volume 24, Number 1 (Spring 2008).
Dr. William Ackerman is a retired research geneticist from the U.S. National Arboretum. He is the author of Beyond the Camellia Belt (Ball Publishing, 2007).

¹² *"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.*

¹³ *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."*

¹⁴ *Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.*

¹⁵ *Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.*

¹⁶ *"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."*

¹⁷ *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.*

