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Teaching Notes

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From Now Until Then

Eschatology Until the Final Events

I. Understanding the Present Age

A. End Times

Hebrews 1:2 in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son

Acts 2:17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

1 John 2:18 Dear children, this is the last hour

B. "Times of the Gentiles"

Luke 21:24 Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

C. The Present Age and the Age to Come

Mark 10:29-30 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields-- and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.

Ephesians 1:21 [Christ is seated at God's right hand]... far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

1. the present age

Luke 16:8 The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

1 Corinthians 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"

Ephesians 2:2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience

- a. life continues outwardly like it has from the beginning of history
- b. marriage, childbirth continue as they have

2 Peter 3:3-4 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴ They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

Matthew 24:36-39 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

- c. people get hurt, sick, and die

Revelation 21:4 There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

- d. creation groaning to be liberated from its bondage to decay
- e. nations rising and falling, warring, prospering and suffering
- f. advance of the gospel to the ends of the earth
- g. post-Pentecost: indwelling Spirit uniting Christians around the world
- h. Satan in constant opposition to this advance, yet unable to stop it
- i. the evil world system a constantly tempting and opposing force

- 2. the age to come

Hebrews 13:14 For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

Hebrews 6:5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come

Ephesians 2:7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

II. The Future of Individuals and the World on Earth

A. Kingdom Advance “To the Ends of the Earth”

1. the Great Commission... “to the end of the age”

Matthew 28:18-20 *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

2. clear prediction

Matthew 24:14 *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

Luke 24:46-47 *He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

3. the advance described prophetically

a. the stone of Daniel 2

Daniel 2:34 *While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them.*

Daniel 2:35 *But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.*

Daniel 2:44-45 *"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands-- a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.*

b. the yeast in Christ’s parable

Matthew 13:33 *He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."*

B. Various Tribulations

Matthew 24:3-8 *As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign*

of your coming and of the end of the age?" ⁴ Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains.

C. Increasing Wickedness on Earth

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God-- ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

Matthew 24:12-13 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

D. Persecutions: suffering for Christ

Matthew 24:9-10 "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other.

E. Antichrists: political and doctrinal enemies

1. Antichrists as political enemies

Matthew 10:18-22 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, ²⁰ for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹ "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. ²² All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

2. Antichrists as doctrinal enemies

Matthew 24:11 many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.

1 John 2:18-19 Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

2 Peter 2:1 *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies*

Acts 20:29-30 *I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.*

F. Power of God to Preserve the Church: Individually and Collectively

Jude 1:24-25 *To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy-- ²⁵ to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.*

1. God is exerting awesome but invisible power to keep us from falling away

Ephesians 1:18-20 *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms*

2. Christ is constantly interceding for us

Hebrews 7:24-25 *because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

3. God is sustaining our faith constantly

Luke 22:31-32 *"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."*

4. God is filtering our temptations

1 Corinthians 10:13 *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

5. God's anointing helps us discern false doctrine

1 John 2:20 *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.*

[Note: this statement comes in the middle of the section on antichrists]

Matthew 24:24-25 *For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect-- if that were possible. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time.*

6. God's discipline reclaims us quickly when we wander

Hebrews 12:11 *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

7. Therefore none of the elect will fall away and be lost

Philippians 1:6 *being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

John 6:39 *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.*

III. The Future of Individuals After Death

A. Questions of Precision and Terms

1. Hebrew *Sheol*... the grave, or general abode of the dead
2. Greek *Hades*... seems to some to correspond to *Sheol*, or perhaps to have some of the Greek mythological overtones; everything must be tested by actual use in the NT
3. Greek *Paradeisos*... some make distinctions between this and heaven; however, such a careful distinction is not supported by any text of scripture, merely by the existence of a separate word; and remember that Jesus said the thief would be *with Him* today in paradise
4. Old Testament saints supposedly rescued by Christ from a *limbus patrum*, a holding place where they awaited Christ's atoning work on the cross; by this view, Christ descended to Hades and set them free and led captivity captive, bringing them up to paradise; this is the Catholic interpretation of the 'descent to hell'... however, note that Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration

B. Believers

1. soul separated from body... but seen to be "unclothed"

2 Corinthians 5:8 *We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*

2 Corinthians 5:4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Philippians 1:23-24 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

2 Peter 1:13-15 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, ¹⁴ because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵ And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

2. body decays

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

Psalms 49:14 Like sheep they are destined for the grave, and death will feed on them. ... their forms will decay in the grave

Job 19:25-26 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶ And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God

3. soul judged (assessed)

Hebrews 9:27 man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment

4. soul perfected

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Hebrews 12:22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect

5. soul welcomed

2 Peter 1:10-11 *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

6. soul in the presence of God and of Christ in paradise, heavenly Mount Zion

[see Hebrews 12:22-23 above]

2 Corinthians 5:8 *We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*

Philippians 1:23-24 *I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.*

Luke 23:42-43 *Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³ Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."*

7. aware of earthly events

Revelation 6:9-11 *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" ¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.*

[at the fall of Babylon] **Revelation 18:20-21** *Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you." ²¹ Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.*

Therefore, perhaps this verse can be used to speak of departed believers observing us:

Hebrews 12:1 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

[however, I think it best to interpret this verse as referring to the way Old Testament saints as recorded in the pages of scripture testify so powerfully to the life of faith, as just related in Hebrews 11:

Hebrews 11:4 *And by faith [Abel] still speaks, even though he is dead.*

8. waiting the resurrection

Hebrews 11:39-40 *These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. ⁴⁰ God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect*

Romans 8:23-25 *Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

9. worshipping God

Revelation 7:9-10 *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*

C. Unbelievers

Key Passage:

Luke 16:19-31 *There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰ At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' ²⁵ "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' ²⁷ "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' ²⁹ "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' ³⁰ "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' ³¹ "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"*

1. soul separated from body

2. body decays

3. soul judged
4. soul consigned to torment
5. soul aware, regretful, in mental anguish
6. soul awaiting final judgment at the resurrection

Acts 24:15 there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

John 5:28-29 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out-- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

Revelation 20:13-15 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

7. no escape possible

IV. False Teaching About the Intermediate State

A. Purgatory

1. Definition:

Purgatory is a place of punishment in the intermediate state in which those who die as baptized believers at peace with the church must undergo penal and purifying suffering for a period of time to prepare them for ultimate acceptance into heaven.

Unbaptized people and those who have committed mortal sins go to hell. Baptized "saints", who have attained a state of Christian perfection on earth go straight to heaven. Everyone else must spend some time in purgatory. The more sin there is to purge, the longer and more miserable will be their suffering in purgatory.

2. Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches teach this; Protestants generally reject it
3. There is no scriptural evidence for this in canonical scripture; Roman Catholic evidence is taken from the Apocrypha, II Macc. 12:39-45

2 Maccabees 12:39-46 And the day following Judas came with his company, to take away the bodies of them that were slain, and to bury them with their kinsmen, in the sepulchres of their fathers. ⁴⁰ And they found under the coats of the slain, some of the donaries of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbiddeth to the Jews: so that all plainly saw, that for this cause they were slain. ⁴¹ Then they all blessed the just judgment of the Lord, who had

discovered the things that were hidden. ⁴² And so betaking themselves to prayers, they besought him, that the sin which had been committed might be forgotten. But the most valiant Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin, forasmuch as they saw before their eyes what had happened, because of the sins of those that were slain. ⁴³ And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection. ⁴⁴ (For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead,) ⁴⁵ And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. ⁴⁶ It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.

4. this doctrine greatly impugns the work of Christ on the cross, since it makes finite human suffering of equal (or perhaps even greater) significance than the atonement of Christ

B. Limbo

1. from Germanic word for hem or fringe
2. there are two types in Roman Catholic doctrine: the limbus patrum, (where OT saints had to wait for Christ's atoning work); and the limbus infantum (where unbaptized infants must spend eternity, neither in heaven nor hell)
3. Augustine believed that since all humanity was polluted by Adam's sin, and that since only baptism in the name of Christ could remove that sin, unbaptized infants must be damned; medieval theologians (Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas) considered Augustine's view too harsh and concocted this compromise—neither heaven nor hell
4. there is absolutely no biblical evidence for either one of these limbos, and thus both must be rejected by Christians

C. Soul Sleep

1. death is frequently spoken of as sleep in the NT

1 Thessalonians 4:15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

2. however, this concept extends that to the soul
3. basic idea: the soul cannot remain consciously aware separated from the body, therefore the soul loses all consciousness until the resurrection; to the individual, then, it seems that death is immediately followed by the General Resurrection

4. the many passages cited above concerning the soul after death are sufficient to refute this, especially this one:

2 Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

D. Intercession to/for the Dead

1. Prayer to saints

- a. though it is true that departed saints are conscious and aware of what is happening on earth, and may well be praying for us on earth, there is no Biblical example or warrant for praying to saints
- b. Christ is clearly portrayed as our perfect mediator and intercessor; none other is needed
- c. The argument that we ask other living saints to pray for us, why not dead ones is specious; there is clearly a difference in that we cannot see those departed saints and must take by faith that they hear us and can pray for us; this faith must depend (as all faith does) on the promises and commands of God; but there are none for prayer to saints

2. Prayer for the dead

- a. This is intimately connected to the doctrine of purgatory and must be rejected
- b. Prayer for the dead is supported only in that 2 Macc. Passage cited above

E. A Chance to Hear the Gospel (for those who've never heard)

F. Annihilationism