

Denver, Colorado

July 12-16, 1958

OUR GENERAL CONCEPT OF BIBLICAL ESCHATOLOGY

G. D. Huebert

The doctrine of eschatology divides theologians and Bible scholars into three distinct classes: amillennialists, postmillennialists and premillennialists. Amillennialists hold the view that there will be no millennium; postmillennialists maintain that Christ will come after the millennium; and premillennialists believe that Jesus will come before the millennium. In this paper the premillennial view shall be presented. In order to get a birds eye view of the subject matter of this paper, an outline is submitted at this juncture.

The Outline

I. The Second Coming of Christ.

1. The Fact of it.
2. The Importance of it.
3. The Manner of it.
4. The Time of it.

II. The Resurrections.

1. The First Resurrection.
2. The Second Resurrection.

III. The Believers at the Judgment seat of Christ.

1. The Purpose of it.
2. The Time of it.
3. The Result of it.
4. The Marriage Feast of the Lamb, following it.

IV. The Great Tribulation.

1. The Character of it.
2. The Time of it.
3. The End of it.

V. The Millennium.

1. The Event Preceding it - Judgment of the Nations.
2. The Rulers of it.
3. The Citizens of it.
4. The Conditions of it.
5. The Great Falling away and Rebellion after it.

VI. The Unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment.

1. The Judge.
2. Those who are Judged.
3. The Outcome of the Judgment.

VII. The Consummation of Things and the Eternal State.

1. The New Heaven, Earth and Jerusalem.
2. The Eternal State of both Men and Angels.
3. Christ Committing His Kingdom to God the Father.

I. The Second Coming of Christ.

1. The Fact of Christ's Second Coming. Jesus predicted His coming again while He was still on earth. He said, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). This does not mean that Jesus would come to His own on the Day of Pentecost in the person of the Holy Ghost, because the disciples then received the Holy Spirit. Here, however, Jesus promised that they were to be received by Him in the presence of His Father (John 14:3,6).

Christ also promised His return after He had already ascended into heaven. Out of His glorious home He re-affirmed the promise He had made on earth and said, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20).

The fact of the second coming of Christ is also substantiated by Old as well as by New Testament saints. This is evident from the following quotation: "And Enoch.....saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints" (Jude 14). This passage indicates that Enoch believed in the glorious future appearing of Christ, that Jude believed it, or else he would not have quoted Enoch, and that Jude wanted others to believe it too, or else he would not have written it into this sacred book.

The early church fathers have likewise considered the return of Christ as a fact. The eminent ecclesiastical historian Schaff points out that such distinguished teachers as Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian and others believed that Jesus would come again.

Our own Mennonite Brethren fathers had the same conviction. They based their faith on Acts 1:11 ".....this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

There are many more Scripture passages which state that Christ will come again, but it is sufficient to limit ourselves to the ones referred to above.

2. The Importance of this Doctrine. "It is said that prophecy occupies one fifth of the Scripture, and that the Second Coming occupies one third of prophecy. Where the first coming of Christ is mentioned once, that of His Second Coming is mentioned eight times.....One out of every twenty-five verses in the New Testament makes mention of the Second Coming..... In the 216 Chapters of the New Testament, it is said there are 318 references to this doctrine."¹

3. The Manner of Christ's Second Coming. A number of the disciples watched Jesus as He was ascending up into heaven. Two angels then said unto them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). From this passage we learn that Christ's second coming will be a bodily, personal and visible one, just like it was the case with His ascension into heaven.

4. The Time of Christ's Coming. No one knows the exact time of Christ's return. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7).

The Coming of Christ will be premillennial. Dr. Rutgers in his book, "Premillennialism in America," suggests that premillennialism is the theology of laymen; it is not scholarly.² In reply to this view we refer to the book "The Theocratic Kingdom," published in 1884. The writer, George N. H. Peters has listed by name the outstanding clergymen of the world in his day both with reference to country and

1. E. H. Bancroft, Christian Theology, p. 260.

2. John L. Stauffer, Premillennialism, p. 5.

denomination who were premillennarians. In the United States within eleven denominations he has named 360 of them. Very many of America's honored expositors, editors, and preachers are entered in this list. Similarly, at least 470 widely known ministers and writers of Europe are also indicated by name. Some of the outstanding men are: Bengel, Olshausen, Stier, Alford, Darby, Ebrard, Lange, Meyer, Fausset, Delizsch, Seiss and others.³

George E. Ladd in his "Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God" makes mention of the fact, that there are many outstanding conservative critical scholars, such as Zahn, Alford, Godet and others who hold the premillennial view. He states that the premillennial position "has become deeply rooted in American Christian life because it received the support of some of the most godly ministers and Bible teachers America has ever known. Names like James M. Gray, A. C. Gaebelein, R. A. Torrey, A. T. Pierson, C. I. Scofield, W. B. Riley, I. M. Haldeman and H. A. Ironside have been particularly associated with this position. It is doubtful if there has been any other circle of men who have done more by their influence in preaching, teaching and writing to promote a love for Bible study, a hunger for the deeper Christian life, a passion for evangelism and zeal for missions in the history of American Christianity. They were men who walked with God."⁴

Another list of eminent men who are known for their premillennial view are the following: Lewis Sperry Chafer, Wilbur M. Smith, J. W. Reimer, A. H. Unruh, J. G. Thiessen, Gerald B. Stanton, William Evans, E. H. Bancroft, Erich Sauer, H. C. Thiessen, Clarence Larkin, Adolf Kuepfer, G. R. Brinke, E. Schuyler English and many others.

John L. Stauffer in his booklet on "Premillennialism" maintains that he does not profess to find all the difficult prophetic problems answered in the premillennial system of interpretation, but through its literal acceptance of Scripture whenever possible, leads to the solution of more problems than any other system of prophetic interpretation.

It is evident from the above, that premillennialism is not the theology of the laity only, but also of many prominent conservative scholars. It is of still greater importance to know that it is the teaching of the Bible.

The Holy Scriptures inform us, that Jesus will come before the millennium. When He appears, He will raise the dead, but the righteous are to come forth out of the grave before the millennium, that they may reign with Christ during the 1000 years of His rule on earth, therefore there can be no millennium before Jesus comes (Rev. 20:5). When Christ returns Satan shall be bound, but the enemy is to be bound during the millennium, therefore there can be no 1000 years of peace until Jesus comes (Rev. 20:1-3). When the Lord appears the Antichrist is to be demolished, but as this man of sin is to be destroyed before Christ's reign of peace there can be no millennium until Jesus comes (Rev. 19:20; 2 Thess. 2:8).

Just as the first coming of Christ extended over a period of 33 years, so the second coming involves a period of time and includes a number of events. The coming of the Lord is to occur in two stages. In the first stage Christ comes for His saints; this is called the "rapture" or "parousia". In the second stage the Lord comes with His saints; this is called the "revelation" or "epiphany."⁵ At the first stage two important events transpire; the resurrection of the dead saints and the bodily change of the living saints. After this they shall together be raptured to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:16,17). At the second stage Christ comes to the earth and His saints come with Him (1 Thess. 3:13; 4:14; Col. 3:4; Jude 14).

The rapture is to occur before the great tribulation period, spoken of by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:21,22). Many Bible scholars consider the ascension of Enoch into heaven (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5) as a type of the rapture of the church. Enoch ascended into heaven before the flood struck the world. Therefore we may conclude, that the church will also ascend into heaven before the tribulation period with its many judgments.

3. L. S. Chafer, Systematic Theology, Vol. IV pp. 283, 284.

4. G. E. Ladd, Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God, p. 49.

5. Wm. Evans, Great Doctrines of the Bible, p. 241.

A general principle has been established, which is expressed in 2 Peter 2:9, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." It is conceivable that this principle would also find its application in the case of the Christian church by delivering it from the great tribulation which is a time of many judgments. Noah and Lot are examples of the application of this principle and since 2 Peter is an eschatological epistle with a good deal of stress on the second coming of Christ, it is then logical to believe that the above stated principle would also find its application here.

Many expositors of the Scriptures maintain that the church of Philadelphia, speaking from the prophetic viewpoint, represents the true church which will be on earth when Christ will appear to take His saints to glory. This seems evident from Rev. 3:10,11. Here we are informed that an hour of trial is about to come upon the inhabitable world, but the church of Philadelphia is to be kept out of that hour *ΕΚ ΤΗΣ ΗΩΡΗΣ*, and not in that hour *ΕΝ ΤΗ ΩΡΑ*. This is also the conclusion to which many outstanding men have come who made a special study of this question, such as Dr. Henry C. Thiessen⁶, whose advanced knowledge of the Greek language is established, E. Schuyler English, who has written a whole chapter on this question in his book, "Re-Thinking the Rapture."⁷ The same conclusion has also been reached by an unknown writer of the 64 page booklet "Die Entrueckung der Kirche vor der antichristischen Drangsalszeit."⁸

That this hour of temptation is not an hour of 60 minutes is evident from the context, because it is a temptation which comes upon the whole world. John 10:28, 29 also makes mention of an hour which includes the two resurrections even though they are 1000 years separated from each other. The hour of temptation of Rev. 3:10 was in the future, when the book of Revelation was written; and it is still in the future, because there has never been such an unusual time of trial which has come upon the entire world.

The hour of temptation, which is the period of the great tribulation, is described in detail in Rev. 6 - 19, but in all these chapters the church is not to be found on earth. The reason for it must be that Rev. 2 and 3 conclude the pilgrimage of the true church of Christ on earth.

Another reason for holding the pre-tribulational view is the fact that the restrainer of iniquity must be removed first, before the man of sin can be revealed (2 Thess. 2:6,7). It has been maintained, that this restrainer is the Roman Empire, or Gentile world-dominion, or Satan. Linguistically, any of the three proposed interpretations may be correct. Judging from the general content of the Scripture, however, neither one of the three is to be considered as a restrainer of iniquity. The most logical answer is, that the Holy Spirit restrains iniquity through the church. The church is the salt of the earth, and when the salt is removed, decay does its destructive work. When the church is taken, the Holy Spirit will be removed as the restrainer, and then the man of sin will be revealed. Following this, the Lord Jesus will destroy him (the Antichrist) with the brightness of His coming.

Dr. Wilbur M. Smith has expressed his pretribulational view on the rapture as follows: "I must say for myself that I have never seen any arguments or Biblical exegesis of relevant passages that would persuade me to abandon the view I have held for many years, that the Lord Jesus may come at any time, and the church will not go through the tribulation. If the church is to experience the tribulation, the idea of the imminency of Christ's appearing must be given up. I think that no man can say from the Scriptures that Christ cannot come today. And if He could return today, it is not necessary to argue that He will come at the end of this dreadful period of suffering and Satanic rule." The first stage of Christ's second coming will evidently take place before the great tribulation period and the second stage will occur right

6. L. S. Chafer, Systematic Theology, Volume IV, pp. 369, 370.

7. E. S. Schuyler, Re-Thinking the Rapture, p. 91.

8. Unknown, Die Entrueckung der Kirche.... pp. 45-50.

after it. This we learn from 2 Thess. 2:8 "And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."⁹

II. The Resurrections.

The Bible teaches that all who have died shall be raised from the dead (John 5:28, 29; I. Cor. 15:22; Rev. 20:12). There are two resurrections (Rev. 20:5).

1. The first resurrection. This is the resurrection of life (John 5:29) and of the righteous. The resurrection body of the saints will be an incorruptible, heavenly and a glorified body (1 Cor. 15:35-49). The first resurrection seems to have 5 or 6 stages: Christ rose first with an incorruptible glorified body (1 Cor. 15:20). Many saints (probably Christ's contemporaries) came out of the graves after His resurrection (Matthew 27:53). Those who have died in faith in Christ shall rise at the rapture (1 Thess. 4:16). The two great witnesses who are testifying with marvelous results during the tribulation period, rise, after their dead bodies have been lying on the streets of Jerusalem for three days and one half (Rev. 11:11). This is in the middle of the tribulation period. The saints, who die during the time of the iron rule of the Antichrist will rise from the dead before the millennium in order to rule with Christ 1000 years (Rev. 20:4). Finally there is the resurrection of the Old Testament saints.¹⁰ Daniel was instructed to go and rest, as it seems in the grave, and stand in his lot at the end of the days, which brought the great tribulation period to an end. (Dan. 12:13). The inference, which we draw from it is, that Daniel is to rise from the dead, before the millennium, and if Daniel is to rise at that time, we may naturally conclude, that that is likely the time of the resurrection of the Old Testament saints in general. A slight illusion to this is made in the words of Christ, ".....many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." This kingdom of heaven refers to the millennium here on earth. It is called kingdom of heaven, because its rulers are heavenly.

III. The Believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ.¹¹

1. The Purpose of it. A very important passage which treats of this subject is 2 Cor. 5:10. Here the statement is made "we must all appear (be made manifest) before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad" (worthless). The pronoun "we" is used in this chapter 26 times, and in every instance it refers to the believer. This epistle is written to the saints in Corinth, so the judgment here spoken of is for the believers, and not for the unsaved, and the purpose of it is, as indicated in the above passage, to judge the works of the believers (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

2. The Time of it. This judgment will take place when the Lord comes. This is clear from the following words: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5).

9. W. M. Smith, Moody Monthly, March, 1957.

10. J. D. Pentecost, Things to Come, p. 411.

11. C. Larkin, Dispensational Truth, p. 108.

3. The Result of it. This judgment will not be one in the sense of a trial to see whether the people concerned are innocent (saved) or guilty (lost), for it is a judgment for saints only. It will be like the judge at a race track who rewards the successful contestants. Such a scene is described in 1 Cor. 9:24-27. The result of this judgment is loss or reward. Dead works are represented by wood, hay and stubble, and the good works by silver, gold and precious stones. Only the good works shall remain and be rewarded. The one who suffers patiently in trials is to receive a crown of life (James 1:12; Rev. 2:1). Shepherds who faithfully feed their flock are to get a crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4). Soul winners are to have a crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19, 20; Phil. 4:1). A crown of righteousness will be given to those who love Christ's appearing and are waiting for it (2 Tim. 4:8). The incorruptible crown is for those who are victorious in their struggle against sin (1 Cor. 9:25-27).

4. The Marriage Feast of the Lamb. With reference to this subject J. Dwight Pentecost writes as follows: "In many New Testament passages the relation between Christ and the Church is revealed by the use of the figures of the bridegroom and the bride (John 3:29; Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-33; Rev. 19:7-8; 21:1 - 22:7). At the translation of the church Christ is appearing as bridegroom to take His bride unto Himself, so that the relationship that was pledged might be consummated and that the two might become one."¹²

The wedding supper will take place in heaven. No other location would fit a heavenly people (Phil. 3:20). This is also evident from the fact that Christ returns from heaven after the marriage has taken place (Rev. 19:7-8 cf. Rev. 19:14).

The time of the marriage is revealed in Scripture as falling between the rapture and Christ's coming down in glory for the establishment of His kingdom. This is clear when we consider that prior to the rapture the church is still anticipating this union, and at the second advent the wedding has already taken place. The aorist tense ELTHEN "has come" indicates this (Rev. 19:7). The saints will follow Christ, when He comes to smite the wicked nations of the world. This succession of events is indicated in Rev. 19:7-16.¹³

IV. The Great Tribulation.

The Character of it. Jesus in his discourse on Mount Olivet on Tuesday evening before His crucifixion, said, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be....." (Matthew 24:21,22).

That this tribulation is not the suffering which befell the Jews at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. is clear, because many of the things that are to happen before and after this tribulation did not happen at the destruction of Jerusalem.

The great tribulation is one which will come upon the whole world (Rev. 3:10). The Antichrist will rule during that time. He will sit in the temple of the Jews and will claim to be God (2 Thess. 2:4). No one will be permitted to buy or to sell things unless he has the mark of the beast upon his forehead or upon his right hand. The false prophet invokes people to worship the Antichrist and whoever refuses to do it is put to death (Rev. 13:14-18).

The two great witnesses (probably Moses and Elijah) are testifying for God with the result that many of the twelve tribes of Israel are saved and sealed (Rev. 7:4-8). Finally they are put to death by the Antichrist, but they rise again and ascend into heaven (Rev. 11:7-11).

12. J. D. Pentecost, Things to Come, p. 226.

13. Ibid., p. 226.

The Antichrist, and all that adhere to him are under the curse of God and are punished with many severe judgments. The entire period of tribulation is described in Rev. 6-19.

2. The Time of the Tribulation Period. The time of the tribulation will be during the reign of the Antichrist on earth, after the rapture of the saints.

The prophet Daniel in his vision of the seventy weeks (Dan. 9:20-27) was informed that there should be 69 weeks from the going forth of the edict to restore Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince. Those were prophetic weeks in which each week stood for seven years. These were fulfilled, for it was 483 years from the going forth of the edict by Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem in 450 B. C. until Jesus rode in triumph into Jerusalem in 33 A. D. and was hailed as the Son of David.¹⁴

Jesus was crucified and God's clock for Israel then stopped, and the other 70th week remained and is still to be fulfilled. In the break between the 69th and 70th week, the church period comes in, which culminates with the rapture. After the rapture God's clock will again begin to tick for Israel. This seventieth week, consisting of seven years, forms the tribulation period. The second half of it will be especially great, because the Antichrist then breaks his covenant, which he has made with Israel. As a result of it he will persecute God's people. He will exalt himself and demand worship (Dan. 9:24-27; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:15).

The purpose of the tribulation is to prepare Israel for the Messiah (Jer. 30:7) and to bring about the conversion of a multitude of Jews, who will enter into the blessings of the kingdom. The second great purpose of the tribulation is to pour out God's judgment on unbelieving man and nations (Rev. 3:10; 16:9).

3. The End of the Great Tribulation. The tribulation period will end with the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-21). Clarence Larkin maintains that the field of battle will be the valley of Megiddo, located in the heart of Palestine. The forces engaged will be the allied armies of Antichrist on the one side, and the heavenly army of Christ on the other. The time will be when the allied armies of Antichrist are about to take the city of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-3). This battle was foreseen by Isaiah (Isa. 34:1-8), Ezekiel (Ez. 39:1-22), the apostle John (Rev. 14:14-20; 19:17-21) and others. The slaughter shall be so great, that the land shall be soaked with blood, and the fowls shall be called upon to come and feed on the meat of those fallen in the battle. Before the destruction of the army of the Antichrist, he and the False Prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire. After the battle is over, Satan will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit, where he will be sealed up for 1000 years. This is the culminating act of the tribulation period (Rev. 20:1-3).

V. The Millennium.

1. The Event preceding it - the Judgment of the Nations. This judgment is one of the Gentile nations (Matthew 25:31-46). It takes place following the second advent of Christ to the earth (Joel 3:1-2), when Christ will come in His glory (Matthew 25:31).

J. Dwight Pentecost maintains that this judgment will take place at the same time that the Lord will restore Israel to Palestine, which is at the second advent. It must precede the institution of the millennium, for those accepted in this judgment are taken into the kingdom (Matthew 25:34).

The place of this judgment is to be the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2). This location is not easy to determine. Some hold that it is synonymous with the valley of Berachah (2 Chron. 20:26) where Jehoshaphat defeated the Moabites and Amonites, which victory gave the place a new name.

¹⁴ J. G. Draewell, Betrachtungen über die Endzeit, Seite 87.

In Zechariah 14:4 we read that at the Lord's return to the mount of Olives a great valley shall be opened. J. D. Pentecost suggests that since the name Jehoshaphat means "Jehovah judges," it may be that this judgment will take place in the newly opened valley outside of Jerusalem.¹⁵

The basis of this judgment is the treatment which the nations have given to the brethren of Christ, the Jews (Matthew 25:40) during the great tribulation period. J. W. Reimer maintains that those who treated Israel well are considered righteous and those who have illtreated Israel are wicked. The righteous inherit the earthly kingdom and the godless are eternally damned. They have not heeded the invitation of Christ and are now eternally condemned (Matthew 24:14; 25:31-46; 10:40-43).¹⁶

2. The Rulers during the Millennium. Christ, the Old Testament saints, and all the saints that take part in the first resurrection will be the rulers during this earthly kingdom age (Luke 1:32,33; Matthew 8:11; Rev. 20:4,6). Two things are necessary in order to make the millennium possible: the personal absence of Satan and the personal presence of Christ. Jesus will be the chief ruler during these 1000 years and the saints will be His helpers in this important task.

J. G. Draewell in his book "Betrachtungen über die Endzeit" suggests that neither Christ, nor the resurrected saints will constantly be on earth during their reign in the millennium, but that they will be in heavenly places while they rule on this globe, just like the kings of England who ruled over India, but did not live there.¹⁷

3. The Citizens of the Millennium. Israel will again gather in Palestine and will enjoy the blessings of this golden age (Isa. 43:5,6). The homeland of God's people will again be built up (Isa. 61:4). Israel will regain its former good reputation as a holy people (Isa. 62:12), and will do a large scale mission work (Isa. 43:21).

J. G. Thiessen maintains that the (Gentile) nations will be the missionary object of Israel and that great national conversions will take place (Isa. 61:5-6; Pslm. 22:28-29; 87:4-6; Isa. 19:18-25).¹⁸

4. The Conditions during the Millennium. The saved will neither be sick (Isa. 33:24; 35:5,6) nor will they die, "but sinners being an hundred years old shall be accursed" and perish (Isa. 65:20). There will be a reign of righteousness (Isa. 11:4,5). Universal peace will prevail among men, as well as in the animal kingdom (Isa. 2:4; 11:6-9; 65:25). The earth will be freed from the curse and bear an abundance of fruit (Isa. 35:1; 51:3; Ezek. 34:26; 36:30).

5. The Great Falling Away and Rebellion after the millennium. When the 1000 years of peace are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. He shall go out and deceive many nations and countless individuals and shall gather them in battle against God and His people. This great host of God's enemies will surround the saints who are encamped in Jerusalem. The Lord will then cause fire to come down from heaven which shall devour these rebels against divine authority. Satan shall then be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where he shall be tormented forever and ever (Rev. 20:7-10).

15. J. D. Pentecost, Things to Come, pp. 415, 416.

16. J. W. Reimer, Der Wunderbar Ratschluss Gottes, Seite 34.

17. J. G. Draewell, Betrachtungen über die Endzeit, Seite 122.

18. J. G. Thiessen, Daz Reich Gottes auf Erden, Seite 26.

VI. The Unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15)

1. The Judge. Jesus Christ, the Son of God will occupy the great white throne, for the Father has committed all judgment unto His Son (John 5:22). Since He became man and was tempted like as we are, yet without sin, He is well able to do this work.

The throne which Christ will occupy is described as great and white. G. R. Brinke suggests that this indicates the majesty and righteousness of Christ the judge. The throne will not be on the earth for the judgment will take place after the millennium and during the renovation of the earth by fire (2 Pet. 3-7).¹⁹

2. Those who are judged (Rev. 20:12). With reference to this judgment Theodore H. Epp states the following: "The Scriptures reveal that there are three kinds of death: physical death, which is cessation of life in this body; spiritual death, which is the absence of the life of God in man; and the second death, which is the eternal, everlasting separation of man (body and soul) from God. The dead spoken of in this passage before us are the spiritually dead, who were dead in their trespasses and sins and who remained dead because they had not received the life that was offered them; therefore, they are the ones to be judged and condemned to a second death. . . . All of the unsaved ones will stand before him in. . . . resurrected bodies. . . ." ²⁰

Cla rence Larkin writes about this judgment as follows: "The wicked or ungodly will not be judged to see whether they are entitled to eternal life, but to ascertain the degree of their punishment."²¹ It is clear from the context of Rev. 20:11-15 that the wicked of all ages will be judged at the great white throne.

3. The Outcome of the Judgment. The result of this judgment is expressed in the words, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15). Eternal separation from God is the destiny of the unsaved. There will be degrees of punishment (Matthew 10:15; 11:21-22; Luke 10:12, 14; 12:47-48). Those who have heard the Word of God but did not heed it, shall receive severe punishment (Matthew 12:41-42; 2 Thess. 1:8-9) and a special measure of plagues shall fall upon those who add to or falsify the Scriptures (Rev. 22:18). The names of those who have accepted Christ are recorded in the book of life; but those that reject Him will be judged at the great white throne and will be cast into the lake of fire, which is a place of eternal punishment for all the ungodly.

VII. The Consummation of Things and the Eternal State.

1. The New Heaven, Earth and Jerusalem. The Scriptures we read of the heaven that will flee from the presence of the Lord (Rev. 20:11), that the first heaven will pass away (Rev. 21:1), and that there will be a new heaven (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13). The queen of Sheba found it hard to describe the grandeur of Solomon and his kingdom. Paul had seen and heard things in heaven which he could not express in human terms (2 Cor. 12:1-14). Similarly John was unable to describe fully the glory of our heavenly home, yet he had the privilege of beholding heavenly visions and of hearing words spoken by the inhabitants of that beautiful abode of God, of the holy angels and the departed saints.

There will not only be a new heaven, there will also be a new earth. The present earth shall pass away (Rev. 21:1). This however, does not mean that it will pass out of existence. The earth was brought into being and it shall remain forever (Psl. 78:69; 104:5; 119:90; Ecc. 1:4). It shall experience a great change (Psl. 102:25, 26)

19. G. R. Brinke, Skizzen über die Offenbarung, Seiten 312, 313.

20. T. H. Epp, Prophetic Nuggets, p. 103.

21. C. Larkin, Dispensational Truth, p. 111.

The face of it shall be renewed (Psalm 104:30). The great conflagration of the earth, as described by the apostle Peter (2 Peter 3:3-13) results in the renovation, complete purification or the new birth of this globe. The use of the following analogy may help to clarify this point: a "new earth" does not mean another earth, just like a "new man" does not mean another man, but rather a renewed man (Rev. 21:1 cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). On this new earth there will be no iniquity, nor will there be any consequences of sin (2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:4). The earth shall put on its edenic glory and beauty. There shall no longer be thistles and thorns, and labor shall be a delight. There shall be no destructive insects or parasites. No raving beasts shall lie in ambush to destroy and devour, nor snakes hiss among the beautiful colored flowers. No graves shall be dug, no tears be shed, and no soil be saturated with human blood. It shall blossom like the rose and be clothed with edenic glory. The meek shall inherit the earth and enjoy the bountiful blessings of it (Matthew 5:5).

There is also to be a holy city, the new Jerusalem. It is of celestial origin. The glory of it is unexcelled. The wall of it is of jasper, the city of pure gold, the foundations of precious stones, the twelve gates are pearl gates, and the light of it is the Lord (Rev. 21:18-24).

The new city is 12,000 furlongs, or 1500 miles square. We are informed that the length and breadth and height of it are equal. Clarence Larkin suggests that this does not necessarily imply that it is a cube, for a pyramid may also have equal dimensions. He also holds that this is the probable form of the new city, for a wall 114 cubits, or 216 feet thick, could not support a wall 1500 miles high, and a wall that high would hide the pyramidal part of the city from view. The 114 cubits then must refer to the height of the wall (Rev. 21:17).²²

The inhabitants of the new Jerusalem are God and Christ (Rev. 21:3; 22:1,3), an innumerable host of angels (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:12), Old Testament believers, (Rev. 21:12; Heb. 11:10,13) as well as New Testament saints (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22, 23; 13:14; Rev. 3:12). The constantly open gates of the new Jerusalem make it possible for the saved nations, which are living on the new earth, to bring their honour and glory into the city (Rev. 21:21-26).²³

2. The Eternal State of both Men and Angels. The final state of the righteous is described as a life of fellowship with God, Christ and fellow believers (1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:2; John 14:3; Rev. 21:3; 22:4; Heb. 12:23). It is a life of rest from earthly labours (Rev. 14:13), but also a life of heavenly worship and service before God (Rev. 19:1; 20:3). It is a life of fuller knowledge (1 Cor. 13:8-12) of holiness (Rev. 21:27), of abundant blessings (Rev. 21:6), of glory (2 Cor. 4:17; Col. 3:4), of absence from sin, sickness, death, grief and sorrow, and a life of endless joy (Rev. 21:4).

The godless, who have rejected Christ and His redemptive work of salvation, and have died in unbelief shall forever be separated from the Lord and the redeemed (2 Thess. 1:9; Luke 16:26). Eternally they shall be tormented (Rev. 14:10,11) and have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8). These are the lost for whom Christ died, and yet they are excluded from the blessings and the glory of the redeemed.

The unfallen angels are those who have kept their first estate. They are as holy as they were when they were created and it is evident, that they will remain in this estate forever. That they will endure in their holiness forever is intimated in the Scriptures because they are at present in those scenes which characterize eternity to come.

The fallen angels, which may number one third of all angelic beings (Rev. 12:4) are identified with Satan in his present evil activities and they will also share with him the doom that awaits him. They with Satan will forever be tormented in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

22. C. Larkin, Dispensational Truth, p. 146.

23. E. Sauer, Der Triumph des Gekruzigten, Seite 221.

3. Christ Committing His Kingdom to God The Father. When Christ has accomplished all things which pertain to salvation, then the consummation point has been reached, which is best expressed in 1 Cor. 15:24-28, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power, for he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, for he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Astakhoff, N. I. Saloff. The Rapture of the Church. Berne, Indiana: Berne Witness Company.
- Bancroft, Emery H. Christian Theology. Johnson City, New York: Johnson City Publishing Company.
- Bestvater, W. J. Betrachtungen ueber das letzte Buch der Bibel. Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1919.
- Bettex, Fr. Das Ende. Stuttgart, Deutschland: J. F. Steinkopf.
- Board of Home Missions, Southern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Fundamentals of Faith. Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1946.
- Brinke, G. R. Skizzen ueber die Offenbarung. Gutenbergstrasse 22, Bern Schweiz: Aehrenleseverlag.
- Chafer, Lewis Sperry. Systematic Theology, Volume IV. Dallas, Texas: Dallas Seminary Press.
- Draewell, J. G. Betrachtungen ueber die Endzeit. 1116 Bridge Street, Philadelphia, Pa.: Herausgegeben vom Verfasser, 1929.
- English, E. Schuyler. Re-Thinking the Rapture. Travelers Rest, South Carolina: Southern Bible Book House.
- Epp, Theodore H. Prophetic Nuggets. Lincoln 1, Nebraska: Back to the Bible Publishers.
- Evans, William. The Great Doctrines of the Bible. 843-845 North Wells St., Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1912.
- Gaebelein, A. C. Revelation. 456 Fourth Avenue, New York City: Publication Office "Our Hope"
- General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America. Catechism. Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1937.
- Haarbeck, D. Theodor. Biblische Glaubenslehre. Elberfeld: Verlag der Buchhandlung der Evangelischen Gesellschaft fuer Deutschland, 1930.
- Hodge, Charles. Systematic Theology, Volume III. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887.
- Holy Bible. Oxford: At the University Press.
- Kuepfer, Adolf. Die Letzten Dinge. Zuerich 49 - Hoenngg, Kimmattalstrasse: R. Mueller-Kersting.
- Ladd, George E. Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God. Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954.
- Larkin, Clarence. Dispensational Truth. 2802 N. Park Ave., Philadelphia 32, Pa.: Clarence Larkin Est.
- Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. Confession of Faith. Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House.

- Moody, D. L. Der Himmel. 826 LaSalle Ave., Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association.
- Meyer, Robert L. The Millennium, The Beast, The Tribulation. 4500 W. Broadway, Minneapolis 12, Minnesota, Osterhus Publishing Co.
- Mullins, Edgar Young. The Christian Religion. Philadelphia: The Judson Press.
- Neufeld, John J. "Siehe der braeutigam kommt." Boleslaw Goetze, Warszawa 1, ul. Polna 64: Missionsverlag: Wydawnictwo Religijne.
- Pentecost, J. Dwight. Things to Come. Findlag, Ohio: Dunham Publishing Company, 1958
- Peters, G. W. Into His Presence. 2149 Tuolumne, Fresno, California: Published by the Author.
- Pickering, Hy. Heaven the Home of the Redeemed. London: Pickering and Inglis.
- Reimer, J. W. Der Wunderbare Ratschluss Gottes mit der Menschheit. Verlag unbekannt.
- Sauer, Erich. Der Triump des Gekreuzigten. Der Rufer Evangelischer Verlag Guentersloh.
- Scofield, C. E. Teile das Wort der Wahrheit recht. Verlag von Gottlob Koezle in Wernigerode.
- Smith, Wilbur M. The Church, The Tribulation and the Rapture. Article in Moody Monthly, March, 1957.
- Stauffer, John L. Premillennialism. Reprint from "Christian Ministry."
- Strong, Augustus Hopkins. Systematic Theology. Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907.
- Thiessen, Jacob G. Das Reich Gottes auf Erden. Vervielfaeltigte Pamphletnotizen.
- Unbekannt. Prophetische Fragen, Heft 1, "Die Entrueckung der Kirche." Verlag Geschw. Doinges, Dillenburg.
- Unruh, A. H. Lectures on Revelation and Eschatology.
- Zissler, Ferd. Die Offenbarung des Johannes. Geisweid, Westfalen: Verlagshaus der deutschen zeltmission, 1927.

SUPPLEMENT, BY THE FINDINGS COMMITTEE, ON THE PAPER

"OUR GENERAL CONCEPT OF BIBLICAL ESCHATOLOGY"

NOTE 1 - The following paragraph to precede the Introduction:

In the study of eschatology we need to bear in mind that we seek to realize primarily the general broad outline of the plan of redemption and consummation of all things. About the details and about the element of time relative to the various stages of events there are many different interpretations and deductions. It is important for any student of the Bible not to allow a doctrine to be taken to an extreme, as for example hyper-dispensationalism, and thus cause the student to get an unscriptural view of eschatology.

NOTE 2 - Page 3 - 29 replace the last paragraph with the following:

It appears from Scriptures that the rapture is to occur before the great tribulation period spoken of by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:21,22). This is the view generally held by the Mennonite Brethren Church. Many Bible scholars consider the ascension of Enoch into heaven (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5) as a type of the rapture of the Church.

NOTE 3 - Page 5 - 31 under II. The Resurrections, replace the second paragraph with the following:

The first resurrection is the resurrection of all the righteous unto eternal life at the coming of Christ. (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

The second resurrection is the resurrection of all the wicked, unrighteous of all ages. It is a resurrection unto damnation. (John 5:29)

NOTE 4 - Page 5 - 31 under The Believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ, point 1, line 4 delete the word "worthless".

NOTE 5 - Page 6 - 32 under point 3 delete sentences 2 and 3 and substitute the following:

It will be the solemn moment when the individual believer will stand in the presence of the holy and omniscient Lord to give an account of the deeds done while in his body, whether they be good or whether they be bad. (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10,11).

NOTE 6 - Page 6 - 32 under point 4

In the quotation from Pentecost in paragraph 1 line 6, after the words "unto Himself" place 3 periods and quotation marks to indicate that the quotation is not completed, and omit the rest of the paragraph.

NOTE 7 - Page 6 - 32 under point 4:

Omit paragraph 2.

NOTE 8 - Page 6 - 32 under IV. The Great Tribulation, leave paragraphs 1 and 2 and the first 2 sentences of paragraph 3. Delete the rest of that entire section and add the following:

The entire period of tribulation consists of seven years and is described in Rev. 6 - 19. The Anti-Christ and all that adhere to him are under the curse of God and are punished with many severe judgments.

At the end of those seven years, the Anti-Christ and the false Prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire, and Satan will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit, where he will be sealed up for 1000 years. This is the culminating act of the tribulation period (Rev. 20:1-3).

NOTE 9 - Page 9 - 35 VI. 1. second paragraph, omit last sentence.

NOTE 10 - Page 9 - 35, VI. 3. Omit the words, "Those who have heard the Word of God but did not heed it, shall receive severe punishment (Matthew 12:41-42; 2 Thess. 1:8-9) and substitute the following:

Those who have heard the Word of God and did not heed it shall receive greater punishment than those who did not know "the Lord's will and did things worthy of stripes." Luke 12:47,48.

NOTE 11 - Page 9 - 35 VII. 1. second paragraph leave sentences 1 and 2 delete rest to page 10 - 36 line 6 "On this new earth . . .

Substitute the following:

For, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which . . . the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up . . . nevertheless we, according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth." 2 Peter 3:10-13

NOTE 12 - Page 10 - 36 delete paragraph "There is also to be . . ."

NOTE 13 - Page 10 - 36, second last paragraph, line 3 change "Intimated" to "declared."