

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT OF FAITH: **Eschatology** (pertaining to the Last Things)
by David M. Coddington

I believe that death is a necessity for every human (Hebrews 9:27). The original fall into sin is the cause of death (Genesis 3:19). It is the penalty for sin (Romans 6:23). Death is “the end of physical life through the separation of soul and body” (Erickson 1169). Death is not a punishment for believers (Romans 8:1). Instead, it is a result of living in a fallen world and is used by God to complete our sanctification. The effects of the fall are still present in the world and affect believers. Death allows believers to complete their union with Christ and suffer as He did in life and death (Romans 8:17; 1 Peter 4:13).

I believe that in death, the soul does not die nor is annihilated. The soul is taken to either heaven or hell, and then awaits the resurrection of the body for the final judgment. A believer's soul is taken into the presence of God in heaven immediately after death (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23). Believers will have a physical appearance in heaven while waiting for the resurrection (Matthew 17:3-4; Luke 16:23). Those persons who do not believe in Jesus will be sent to hell, or hades, after death (Matthew 11:23; Luke 10:15). This place will be filled with torment and pain. Unbelievers will wait there until they are resurrected. They will then be put into their physical bodies, judged, and cast into the lake of fire that will be their place of eternal punishment (Matthew 3:12; Revelation 21:8). The eternal state of unbelievers will be characterized by eternal pain and separation from God (2 Thessalonians 1:9). There will be different levels of punishment in hell that will be determined by the actions of the person on Earth (Matthew 10:15; Revelation 20:12). The punishment of the unbeliever will be eternal (Matthew 25:46). There will be no escape, redemption, or reprieve for them.

I believe that believers should hold obeying Christ more important than their lives. Believers should not put preserving their lives as their highest goal (Acts 21:13; 20:24). Faithfulness should be kept even to death, or martyrdom (Revelation 12:11). Believers should view their death with joy (2 Corinthians 5:8). There is no fear in death for the believer (Romans 8:38). Believers may grieve in the event of the death of a believer (Acts 8:2; 20:37-38). However, this sorrow should also be accompanied with hope and joy (1 Thessalonians 4:13; Revelation 14:13).

I believe that prophecy is an important part of Scripture and should be studied in depth. Fulfilled prophecies allow believers to have faith in what God says. Future prophecies give believers a look into the future to see God's plans. Prophecies should be interpreted as literally as possible, but this can be a challenge because prophecy is rarely explicit. Wisdom is needed to understand prophecy. Unclear prophecies should be viewed as such and not make the foundation for our faith.

I believe that the church will be raptured, or taken into heaven, before the tribulation period (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). Believers will be spared the wrath of God that will be poured out during the tribulation period. This return of Jesus to rapture the church will be secret, and will prepare for His second coming when He sets up his millennial kingdom. Believers will be rewarded for their action in the judgment, or bema seat of Christ (Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 3:9-15). The believer's works and deeds on Earth will be examined (1 Corinthians 3:13). If there

are good works, then the believer will be rewarded accordingly (1 Corinthians 9:25). The Marriage Supper of the Lamb will then take place (Revelation 19:7-9). This is a feast that is between Jesus and His bride the church. It “expresses the tender love of Christ for His people, the intimacy of their fellowship in the coming age, and the bounty of the future life” (Rayburn 745).

I believe that the covenants in the Old Testament to the nation of Israel are going to be literally and unconditionally fulfilled to them. The church will not fulfill or receive these covenant promises. Under the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised land and numerous descendants (Genesis 12:1-3). In the Palestinian Covenant, God promised that the nation of Israel would have land that is prosperous (Deuteronomy 30:1-10). In the Davidic Covenant, God promised to set up a king from the Davidic line that will rule over Israel. These covenants will be fulfilled literally to the nation of Israel in the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ. The church and Israel are different entities and are handled differently by God (Enns 412-413).

I believe that there will be a seven-year period, or the seventieth year of Daniel, that will precede the return of Christ; where God will pour out his wrath onto the Earth. In the Great Tribulation, God will judge, and bring His wrath on Gentiles and Jews that do not believe (Revelation 6:17). The tribulation is not for the church or believing Jews. God has stored up His wrath against the unbelievers on the Earth and their wickedness, and will pour it out onto them. The purpose will be to pronounce and impose judgment, and bring people to Christ. Many people will believe in Jesus Christ during the tribulation when they see the foretold signs that will be performed. The tribulation is an event that will be in the future. It did not take place when the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. It will be initiated by the rapture and the revealing of “the abomination that causes desolation” (Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3). The Great Tribulation will end with Christ destroying His enemies and Him setting up his Earthly kingdom: the millennium (Matthew 24:29-30).

I believe that Christ will return and set up a physical earthly kingdom. This will be a physical and future event that will happen after the Great Tribulation. Satan will be bound up and demonic influence removed from the earth (Revelation chapter 20). Jesus will set Himself up in Jerusalem on the throne of David (Luke 1:32-33). This kingdom will fulfill the promises that God made to the nation of Israel (Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 30:1-10; 2 Samuel 7:16). The conditions during the millennium will be perfect. There will be peace (Micah 4:2-4), joy (Isaiah 61:7), comfort (Isaiah 40:1-2), no poverty (Amos 9:13-15), or sickness (Isaiah 35:5-6). The curse on the earth will be removed. The thousand years will be perfect, utopian society. Jews will play a prominent part in the millennium. This time will be a literal 1,000 year reign (Revelation chapter 20). The millennium is not a spiritual state that is gradually happening over time right now. After the thousand-year reign, Satan will be released to test and deceive those persons who were born or lived during the millennium (Revelation 20:7-8). God will destroy them and throw them and Satan into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:9-10,15).

I believe that everyone will be resurrected in their physical body at the end of the age (1 Corinthians 15:35-49). This resurrection will involve their physical body that “will be in a fundamental sense identical with their present body” (Berkhof 722). This will happen after the millennial kingdom (Revelation 20:11-15). After the resurrection, each person will be judged according to their deeds and whether they believed in Christ (Matthew

25:32; Romans 2:5-6). This judgment will include deeds as well as thoughts (1 Corinthians 4:5). The believers will then be separated from the unbelievers, and each group will be sent to their respective eternal residence. Unbelievers will go to the lake of fire, and believers to the new heaven and earth.

I believe that all human beings will spend eternity in either heaven (New Jerusalem), or hell (Burning Lake of Fire). Heaven will be a perfect place where we will be able to worship God and commune with one another. After the final judgment, heaven and earth will pass away and God will create a new heavens and earth. On earth, believers will live in New Jerusalem where there will be no pain or suffering. Forever we will be in this perfect place. Unlike believers, unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire, which will be their place of eternal punishment (Matthew 3:12; Revelation 21:8). The eternal state of unbelievers will be characterized by eternal pain and separation from God (2 Thessalonians 1:9). There will be different levels of punishment in hell that will be determined by the actions of that person on Earth (Matthew 10:15; Revelation 20:12). The punishment of the unbeliever and the reward of the believer will be eternal (Matthew 25:46).

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