

Eschatology

- Introduction
- Biblical understanding of death
- The goal of personal existence
- The intermediate state
- New Testament eschatology
- Central events of the end
- Final states

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Introduction

- Eschatology = study of last things, the completion of God's plan for creation.
- Personal eschatology = the goal of each of us as individuals.
- Corporate eschatology = the goal of history and humankind in general.
- Cosmic eschatology = the goal of creation.

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Introduction

- These goals can be summarized as follows:
 - Personal eschatology ⇨ Resurrection
 - Corporate eschatology ⇨ Return of Christ
 - Cosmic eschatology ⇨ Renewal of creation
- These aren't absolute distinctions.
 - Resurrection is both personal and corporate.
 - These terms remind us of the whole picture.

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Death

- Death is one aspect of eschatology we don't have to argue the existence of!
 - Everyone has to come to terms with it.
 - But we do have to discuss its meaning.
 - It “calls our existence into question” (Grenz).

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Death

- OT doesn't have full concept of afterlife.
- Sheol is place of death in OT.
 - Some passages seem to say death is the end.
 - Others suggest a shadowy existence afterward.
 - Late OT begins to give hope of resurrection.

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Death

- Inter-testamental period: elaboration of idea of afterlife, more belief in resurrection.
 - Sheol with two compartments.
 - Sheol/Hades vs. Paradise.
 - Pharisees believed in resurrection; Sadducees did not.
- Jesus' resurrection changed the meaning of death and gave new hope.

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Death

- Death was not part of God's creation intentions.
 - Death isn't natural to human life.
 - Death entered the world with sin.
 - Christ achieved victory over sin and death.
 - We are still right to grieve at death.
 - But we do not grieve as those who have no hope.

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Death

- In the consummation, death will be destroyed.
- Three aspects of death:
 - Physical death: separation of spirit from body.
 - Spiritual death: separation of person from God.
 - Eternal death: eternal separation of person from God - if one is spiritually dead at physical death.

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Death

- Death is separation, loss of community.
- But believers need not experience loss of community.
 - "Even in death we enjoy community. We are surrounded by God's love in Christ" (Grenz).
 - Because of Christ, death doesn't have the last word.

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Goal of Personal Existence

- Non-Christian views:
 - Oblivion: death ends all existence.
 - Monism: merge with the One.
 - Reincarnation: cycles of rebirth.
 - Immortality of the soul: leave behind the body for disembodied existence.
- Christian view: resurrection.
 - Re-embodied for eternity.
 - Affirms both personhood and bodily existence.

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Goal of Personal Existence

- Our resurrection is assured by Jesus' resurrection and by the indwelling Spirit.
 - This is *not* a resuscitation.
 - Our resurrection bodies will be like Christ's.
 - They will be similar to and different from our mortal bodies.
 - They will be "spiritual": *not* nonmaterial but given by and animated by the Holy Spirit rather than by natural life.

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Goal of Personal Existence

- What difference does the doctrine of resurrection make to counseling?

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Intermediate State

- What happens to people between death and resurrection.
- Soul sleep - soul survives in unconscious state.
- Purgatory - cleansing from venial sins.
- Conscious existence of the soul - experience the presence of the Lord.

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Intermediate State

- Little information in Scripture about the intermediate state.
 - See 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:10.
 - Suggests embodied, disembodied, reembodyed.
 - Believers will be with the Lord (Phil. 1:23).
 - Story of rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) is all we have about intermediate state of unbelievers.
 - Suggests unbelievers are separated from God.

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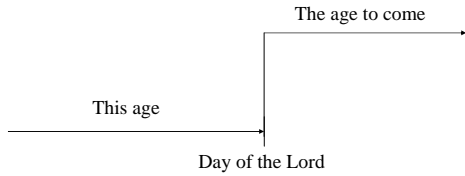
Intermediate State

- Grenz: the dead are “held by God.”
 - They rest from their labors.
 - Perhaps the dead are outside successive time and experience no lapse between death and resurrection.
- What difference would this make in counseling?

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NT Eschatology

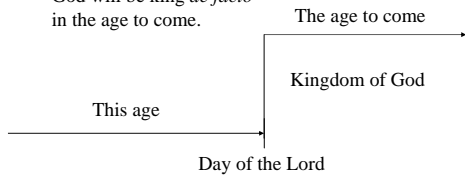
- Two ages: this age and the age to come.
- Separated by the Day of the Lord: event when God intervenes to set things right.



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NT Eschatology

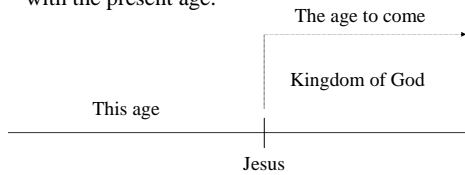
- Kingdom of God = reign of God; the government of the age to come.
 - God is king *de jure* in this age.
 - God will be king *de facto* in the age to come.



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NT Eschatology

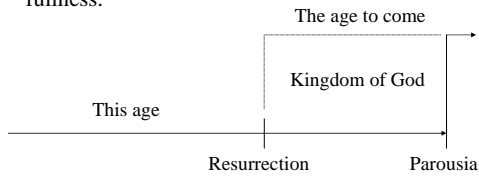
- The kingdom of God broke into history in Jesus' ministry.
- The age to come had dawned without doing away with the present age.



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NT Eschatology

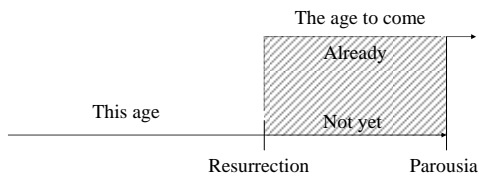
- Jesus' resurrection marked the beginning of the end.
- His parousia will bring in the age to come in its fullness.



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NT Eschatology

- Until then, we live "between the times."
- We live with the "already" and "not yet."



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Central Events of the End

- Three words are used in the NT for the Second Coming:
 - *Parousia* (coming)
 - *Apokalupsis* (revealing)
 - *Epiphaneia* (appearing)
- NT teaches that Jesus will come again.
- The time of his coming is uncertain.
- His return will be personal, visible, bodily, triumphant.

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Central Events of the End

- The resurrection is the believer's hope.
 - Accomplished by the triune God.
 - Associated with Christ's coming.
 - NT focuses on the resurrection of believers.
 - Unbelievers will also be raised.

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Central Events of the End

- The final judgment follows resurrection.
 - God has delegated this judgment to Christ.
 - Christ will judge the evil cosmic powers, the nations, all human beings.
 - All secrets and sins will be revealed.
 - Judgment is final and irrevocable.
 - Believers will have a judging function.

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Central Events of the End

- Judgment is on the basis of works.
 - People will be held accountable for what they know.
 - For believers, there will be no condemnation.
 - NT suggests that believers will receive rewards.

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Final States

- Universalism = universal salvation.
- “Universals” that aren’t universalism:
 - Universal atonement = Christ died for all.
 - Universal opportunity = everyone has a chance to respond to God in some fashion.

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Final States

- Varieties of universalism:
 - Simple universalism = everyone is saved automatically.
 - Universal restoration = hell will eventually be emptied out as God’s love overcomes all resistance. This isn’t purgatory.

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Final States

- Hell is the final state of the wicked.
 - Passages in NT are highly figurative.
 - Gehenna (Gk., NT) = garbage dump outside Jerusalem, place of child sacrifice.
 - Main point: eternal separation from God.
 - Ultimate loss of community.
 - God grants people their desire to be independent of him.

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Final States

- Most think NT teaches eternal punishment.
- Some argue for annihilationism: the wicked cease to exist.
 - Some argue that people will cease to exist unless God grants them eternal life.
 - Others believe the wicked will be destroyed by their sin, or God destroys them.

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Final States

- Righteous experience renewal of creation.
 - There will be new heavens and new earth.
 - Creation will be set free.
 - Continuity and discontinuity with this creation.
 - Affirms the value of creation.
 - Separation of heaven and earth is overcome.
 - Experience the perfection of community.
 - Kingdom of God comes in fullness.
 - The end is greater than the beginning!

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Final States

- Significance for counseling?

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Ruth, age 66, is a recent widow. Her husband Frank died suddenly of a heart attack, just after retirement. They had had many plans for hobbies and travel, but now she is alone. She misses him a great deal. She even feels alone at church, because she is the only single in her group of friends. Some of her friends have implied that she should just get over it. One of them says that Christians shouldn't grieve, since they know that they are going to heaven. She tells you that she has always thought of herself as Frank's wife; she no longer knows who she is, now that half of her is gone. She has begun to think a lot about her own death. Sometimes she's afraid, and sometimes she thinks she would welcome it. What theological framework will you need in order to address her situation?

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Case Study

- What are the theological issues?
- What about personal eschatology is relevant to her situation?
- What about the nature of humanity is relevant to her situation?
- What about salvation is relevant to her situation?
- What about the church is relevant to her situation?

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