

DOCTRINE 1

UNIT TEN THE GOD WHO RENEWS

INTRODUCTION

- ↪ There are still promises to be fulfilled – Peter records that we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth.
- ↪ At times people have focused on what happens to individuals after death – ‘going to heaven’.
- ↪ The Bible tells of our individual hope as a part of God’s plan for the future.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- ↪ The Lord’s Prayer contains the request ‘Thy kingdom come’.
- ↪ The word ‘kingdom’ has led some to think in terms of a political state – or confuse church and kingdom.
- ↪ The kingdom of God is God’s rule over us - Jesus said “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36).

- ↳ The kingdom of God brings the church into existence, and rules over it, but the church is not the kingdom.
- ↳ It is God who brings in his own kingdom through his word, and ultimately when Christ returns.
- ↳ God's kingdom still has present political and social consequences.

THE MILLENNIUM

- ↳ Christian thought is divided over the 1,000 year period spoken of in Revelation 20.
- ↳ **THE POST-MILLENNIAL**
 - A period of great success for the gospel, beginning at some point within Christian history and continuing for 1,000 years.
 - After this time Christ will return in glory – effort is put into discerning whether the period has yet begun.
- ↳ **THE PRE-MILLENNIAL**
 - The return of Jesus is placed at the beginning of the 1,000 year period.
 - Between this time and the final consummation there will be a millennium of the visible reign of Jesus, accompanied by increasingly successful evangelism.
 - Some pre-millennial Christians are also 'dispensationalists' – Christians will be taken to heaven suddenly and Christ's earthly 1,000 year reign will begin.

↳ THE A-MILLENNIAL

- The view that the period referred to in Revelation symbolises the entire time between the first and second comings of Jesus.
- The name suggests that a-millennialists do not believe in the millennium, but actually they see it, like much of Revelation, as a realistic symbol.

↳ If the a-millennial approach is adopted, the signs of the times are regarded as always being present.

↳ The return of Jesus is the next great event on God's timetable.

↳ A common misconception is identifying modern-day Israel with the biblical prophecies regarding Israel.

↳ The problem is that the Old Testament is read without the New Testament key to its interpretation.

↳ The Old Testament prophecies find their true fulfilment in Christ and his church, not modern-day Israel.

↳ Some spend all their time trying to work out the exact timing of Christ's return – but we should always be ready.

THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST

- ↳ The first coming of Jesus was with a humble secrecy and an unwillingness to triumph except through the cross.
- ↳ Throughout this present era of history, he is ruling through his Spirit and his gospel.
- ↳ At the end of the age, “the Lord will come down from heaven”.
- ↳ There are three key features of this return or ‘parousia’.
 - The return of Jesus will be public – every eye will see him.
 - Jesus’ return will be unexpected – like a householder catching his servants unawares (Mark 13:34-37).
 - It will be decisive – it is the beginning of judgement.

CONCLUSION

- ↳ When Jesus was raised from the dead, God’s future became part of our history in a dramatic way.
- ↳ It is the intention of God that all humans rise again from the dead on the last day.
- ↳ This is not just spiritual - but the reconstruction of our very selves.
- ↳ The Bible does not tell us much about the form that our resurrection bodies will take and their connection with our present bodies.

- ↪ There appears to be both continuity and dramatic, overwhelming change.
- ↪ Christ is the firstfruit and head of our race, so we will be like him, but not all will be truly like him.
- ↪ The resurrection is the prelude to judgement, and for those who remain 'in Adam' it is therefore the prelude to condemnation.

THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

- ↪ From the beginning, God showed that he is a just God, sparing the righteous and condemning the guilty.
- ↪ The New Testament gives the same picture as the Old.
- ↪ Paul pictures the wrath of God being experienced within history.
- ↪ The Old Testament prophets were conscious of the way in which judgement is sometimes 'stored up'.
- ↪ This can lead to people being complacent or doubting that God exists.
- ↪ There will come a day when God's wrath will arrive.



THE JUDGE

- God is the judge before whom all, great or small, will stand on that day.
- The New Testament also states that judgement is carried out by Jesus.
- Jesus portrays himself as the Son of Man judging the world.
- The appointment of Christ as a judge performs a four-fold function.
- It emphasises the divinity of Christ – we honour the Son as we honour the Father.
- Judgement is executed by one who himself exists in human nature.
- It emphasises that it is relationship with him which is the ultimate point of judgement.
- It assures Christians that when they see their judge they also see their Saviour.



THE JUDGED

- Judgement is universal.
- Are Christians subject to judgement? Paul says so (2 Corinthians 5:9-10) but Jesus taught that those who believe in him will not be condemned (John 5:24).
- Christians will indeed be judged – but, in Christ, their salvation is not the issue – the Lord has already borne our judgement.
- Christians' acquittal is not down to their works, but to the work of Christ on the cross.
- The Bible warns of judgement for those who abandon their faith in Christ.
- This can be through apostasy or hypocrisy – profession of Christianity does not constitute automatic salvation.

↳ THE BASIS OF JUDGEMENT

- God is patient – seeking repentance from people while there is time.
- Our sins are passed over for a time rather than forgotten, and there will come a day of reckoning for them.
- God takes account of the opportunities people have had to hear the gospel, but there is no doubt that all have sinned.
- God's law is the basis of judgement – it defines sin and brings consciousness of it.
- The ultimate basis of judgement will come through our relationship with God through Christ.
- The Bible is reticent about the situation of those who don't hear about Christ or die in infancy.
- We must assume the lostness of humanity outside Christ.
- But we also honour the power and mercy of God, and can believe that he could bring people to himself through Christ by the work of his Spirit without our knowledge.

↳ THE CONSEQUENCES OF JUDGEMENT

- God's judgement is part of his work of universal renewal – it initiates the 'age to come'.
- With the coming of Jesus to judge the world, we have the culmination of God's plan for this age.

THE RENEWAL OF ALL THINGS

↪ We know little about the ages that are to come, but what we do know can be summarised as follows.

↪ CONDEMNATION

- For some, the future contains that eternal condemnation called hell.
- The Biblical descriptions are truly terrible, and it is no surprise that the authors warn strongly against incurring God's wrath.
- At the heart of this horror is the total loss of relationship with God – “I never knew you”.
- Contemporary Christians often refuse to believe in hell or diminish its severity.
- A fair reading of the Bible can not lead to such results – there is no universal salvation, and we must assume that hell will be endless in duration.

↪ BLESSING

- Jesus came to save, not to condemn.
- As the deprivation of relationships is central to hell's despair, so the fulfilment of relationship is at the centre of heaven.
- The city of God is beautiful beyond compare, and now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them.
- Paul writes that in the coming ages, God will show the incomparable riches of his grace, experienced in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.
- Our focus will be on God and the triumph of his righteousness.