

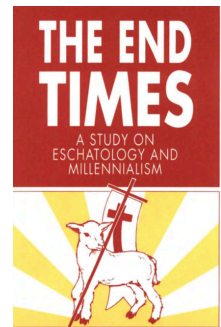
Prerequisite¹ to Revelation

¹"something required beforehand"

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy,
and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it,
because the time is near. 1:3

In order to understand the Book of Revelation, you need to know and understand the doctrines about which it speaks. The Book of Revelation uses many and various symbols and images to teach the truths of Holy Scripture. ***We begin our study of Revelation by reviewing the doctrines of the End Times . . . as a prerequisite.***

The following is an excellent overview of these doctrines. This is an extended excerpt (and edited) from the Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod entitled The "End Times: A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism. (September 1989)". The full 61 page report can be found online at <https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=417> or email me and I can send it to you.



1. Inaugurated Eschatology

The Old Testament throughout has a future-oriented thrust to it. The faith of the Old Testament believer was thoroughly eschatological ("study of last things"). As the writer to the Hebrews states, "These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar" (11:13). The **OLD TESTAMENT** eschatological outlook can be summarized under the following seven points: ^[20]

a. Old Testament believers awaited a **future Redeemer**. From Gen.3:15 onward the Old Testament points forward to the promised Redeemer. He will be the culmination and fulfillment of the offices of prophet (Deut. 18:15), priest (Ps. 110:4), and king (Zech.9:9), the "servant" whose suffering atones for humankind's sins (Is. 52:13 53:12), and the glorious "one like a son of man" to whom is given eternal "dominion and glory and kingdom" (Dan. 7:13-14). [Messianic Prophecies](#)

b. The Old Testament writers look forward to the eschatological **Kingdom of God**^[21] when God's reign will become a reality experienced fully not only by Israel but by the world, whether in judgment or in salvation (Psalm 93; 95-99; Dan. 2:44-45; 7; Isaiah 24-27; Obadiah 21).

- c. The Old Testament anticipates the **new covenant** which will bring forgiveness of sins and constitute the fulfillment of God's covenants in the past with Abraham, Israel, and David (Jer. 31:31-34).
- d. **The restoration of Israel** is a central element of eschatological expectation in the Old Testament period. The prophets longed for the day when God would restore His repentant, believing, and purified people (Ezekiel 36; Isaiah 35; 54-55; 61).
- e. The **outpouring of the Spirit** was another object of the eschatological hope possessed by God's people in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28-29; Ezek. 36:27; 39:29; Is. 32:15; 44:3).
- f. The prophets await the **day of the Lord** which will bring God's wrath on the wicked but salvation for the believers (Is. 13:6-16; Zeph. 1; 3:9-20; Joel 2:32; Obadiah 15-21; Malachi 4).
- g. The Old Testament looks forward to the **new heavens and the new earth**. As the earth is cursed as a result of the fall (Gen. 3:17-18), so also the earth must share in God's final act of redemption (Is. 11:6-9; 32:15; 35:1-7; 65:17; 66:22).

With the first advent of Christ, these Old Testament eschatological hopes are fulfilled. Jesus of Nazareth is the long-awaited, promised **Messiah** who has defeated Satan, sin, and death (Matt. 12:22-29; John 12:31; Col. 2:11-15; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 15:55-57; 1 John 3:8). In His life, death, and resurrection the eschatological **kingdom of God** has appeared in history (Matt. 12:28; Luke 1:32-33, 68-75; 11:20; 17:20-21; Col. 1:13-14; Rev. 1:6; Rom. 14:17). **The New Israel** (Gal. 3:29; 6:16; Rom. 9:6-8) now receives the forgiveness of sins and all the blessings of **the New Covenant** in Christ (1 Cor. 11:25; Hebrews 8-10). The promised **outpouring of the Holy Spirit** has already come in Christ (Acts 2; 8:14-17; 10:44-48; 19:1-7; Eph. 1:13-14; Titus 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 6:19). The great **Day of the Lord** has arrived in Christ (Luke 19:44; Matt. 3:1-12; 2 Cor. 6:1-2). And those who are in Christ already participate in the new creation; they are, in fact, "a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). The **eschaton** has been inaugurated; "the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor. 10:11). Through the Gospel and the sacraments the Christian already now receives God's promised eschatological blessings by faith (Heb. 6:5; 1 Pet. 2:2-3; Rom. 8:37-39; 6:1-11).

Thus, the Christian now lives in the age of the fulfillment, in the last days (Acts 2:17; 3:20-21; Heb. 1:1-2; 9:26; 1 John 2:18; 1 Pet. 1:20). The New Testament declares that the messianic age promised in the Old Testament began at Christ's first advent. The promised Messiah is now graciously ruling on the throne of David through the Gospel and the sacraments, the means through which He extends His gracious invitation (Matt. 22:1-14). The messianic age which the New Testament declares a present reality cannot be viewed, therefore, as only in the future.^[22]

And yet, Christians still await the consummation of these divine promises. They await **the Messiah's** second coming when **the kingdom of God** will be made fully manifest (Matt. 7:21-23; 8:11-12; 25:31-46; Luke 21:31; 22:29-30; 1 Cor. 6:9; 15:50; 2 Tim. 4:18). Christians eagerly anticipate the consummation of the **New Covenant** when they will perfectly know the Lord and sin no more (Jer. 31:31-34). They look forward to the day when all of the **New Israel**, Christians living and dead, will be gathered together forever to be with the Lord (Matt. 19:28; 24:30-31; 25:31-34; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). The gift of the **Holy Spirit** which was poured out on each of them at their baptisms is the down payment and guarantee of their inheritance of future glory and of the reception of their spiritual body (Eph. 1:14; 4:30; 2 Cor. 5:5; Rom. 8:23). And Christians faithfully wait for the future **day of the Lord** when they will dwell with Him forever in **the new heavens and the new earth** (2 Pet. 3:10-13; 1 Thess. 5:1-11).

Therefore, the Christian lives in the proverbial tension between the now and the not yet. This tension underlies everything that the Scriptures teach about eschatology. On the one hand, the end has arrived in Christ. The believer now receives the promised eschatological blessings through the Gospel and sacraments. On the other hand, the consummation is still a future reality. The Christian has not yet entered into the glories of heaven.

The life of Christians in this tension is a life under the cross (Matt. 16:24-25); the eschatological blessings which Christians have are theirs by faith, not by sight (Rom. 8:24-25). Hence, believers can expect to suffer and be persecuted in this life. But the abundant life which Jesus came to give enables them to rise above suffering and, in the midst of their suffering, helps them to focus on the future consummation (Luke 6:22-23, 26; 1 Thess. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:10; John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Col. 3:1-4; Rom. 8:18-25). Only on the last day will Christians move from a life under the cross to a life of glory.

2. Future Eschatology

When the Scriptures speak of future events of the end times they do so by simultaneously pointing to what has been called the great eschatological act of the past^[23] **Since Christ has won the decisive victory over Satan, sin, and death in the past, future eschatological events are but the culmination of what has already been set in motion by this pivotal event in human history.** With this in mind, we now proceed to look in detail at those aspects of "future eschatology" which are crucial for a proper interpretation of the end times.

a. THE SIGNS OF THE END

The signs are everywhere, all the time: the End is near!

Scripture reveals numerous signs which signal Christ's return (especially in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and 2 Thessalonians 2). Before considering these signs, it is important that their *purpose* be understood.

First, the signs of the end do not signify events which will happen only in the future. The church of every generation can expect to witness their occurrence. Wars, famines, earthquakes, and anti-Christian forces were present already in the first century A.D., and they continue today. Even Jesus' promise that the Gospel will be preached throughout the world can be said to have been fulfilled already in the days of the apostles (Matt. 24:14; Rom. 1:8; 10:18; Col. 1:23). To be sure, *these signs will become more evident and intense immediately preceding Christ's return*, but every generation was and is acting responsibly in expecting Christ's return in its own lifetime. Watchfulness, not laziness or apathy fostered by the mistaken notion that Christ's return must be far off in the future, must characterize the church's constant posture (Matt. 24:33, 42-44; Luke 21:28; 1 Thess. 5:6).

Second, the signs of the end are not intended to provide Christians a means by which they may calculate the exact time of Christ's second coming.^[24] In fact, the New Testament warns against all such efforts at date setting (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32; 2 Pet. 3:10). The signs of the end presented in Scripture assure the Christian that Christ will surely return.

Third, observing the signs has a positive significance for life in the present. They serve as a reminder of God's call to watchfulness, holy living, and service to Christ (Matthew 25; Rom. 13:11-14; 2 Thessalonians 2-3; James 5:7-11; 2 Pet. 3:11-18).

Finally, the signs of the end do not belong necessarily to the category of the extraordinary or spectacular. The exhortations to be watchful, given by Jesus and the apostles, presuppose that the signs will be a part of the ordinary course of history (such as wars, earthquakes, famines, apostasy, and the worldwide proclamation of the Gospel) and therefore that discernment is necessary. Such discernment is also required, of course, in the case of the extraordinary; counterfeit "signs and wonders" are indeed possible (2 Thess. 2:9; Matt. 24:24).

We now proceed to a discussion of the individual "signs." Anthony Hoekema's outline of "the signs of the times" serves as a useful way to present what the Scriptures teach concerning the events which are to take place prior to Christ's coming. Hoekema's grouping (slightly revised here) is as follows:^[25]

1. The sign showing the **GRACE OF GOD**: *the proclamation of the Gospel to all nations.*

2. The signs indicating **DIVINE JUDGMENT**

a. wars b. earthquakes c. famines / pestilences d. signs in the heavens;

3. The signs indicating **OPPOSITION TO GOD**

a. tribulation b. apostasy c. Antichrist

The most important sign of the end is the missionary preaching of the Gospel to all nations (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10). It gives to the present age its primary purpose and significance (Matt. 28:18-20). The period between Christ's two advents is preeminently **the missionary age**, the time when God graciously calls all people to be saved, a time foretold by the Old Testament prophets (e.g., Is. 2:1-4; 42:6-7; 49:6; 52:10; Amos 9:11-12). This sign, therefore, means that the church will carry out an ambitious program of outreach to the Jew and to the Gentile^[26] As the church proclaims the Gospel to all nations, nothing shall prevail against it, not even the gates of hell (Matt. 16:16-19; Rev. 7:3; 11:3-6; 20:1-6). *However, we must humbly admit that only God knows when this sign will have been completely fulfilled.*

The next group of signs -- wars, earthquakes, famines, pestilences, and signs in the heavens -- indicates **divine judgment** (Is. 19:2; 2 Chron. 15:6; Matt. 24:6-8; Mark 13:7-8; Luke 21:9-11, 25-26; Joel 2:30-31). This does not mean, of course, that people who suffer from such disasters are necessarily targeted as the special objects of God's wrath (cf. Luke 13:1-5). But disruptions of this kind in nature are reminders of the fact that the present fallen world is under God's curse (Gen. 3:17; Rom. 8:19-22). They are manifestations of God's wrath and signal the need for all sinners to repent (Luke 13:3, 5; Rev. 9:20-21; 16:9). Christians, however, are urged to regard these signs also as "birth pangs" of a new and better world (Rom. 8:22; Matt. 24:8; Rev. 21:1-4) and to take comfort in the fact that God promises to protect and preserve them in the midst of this suffering (Rev. 3:10; 7:3-4).

The third group of signs indicates **opposition to God and His kingdom**: tribulation, apostasy, and Antichrist. As the other signs, the sign of tribulation applies to the entire period between Christ's two comings. Just as Old Testament Israel experienced suffering and distress throughout its history, so the church can expect no less. Jesus saw trouble ahead for His people (Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-20; 16:33). Because of the continued opposition of the world to the kingdom of God, Christians can expect to suffer persecution in various forms throughout this age and are called to endure in faith until the end (Matt. 24:9; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-19).

However, the Scriptures also teach that tribulation for the church will intensify toward the end. The Old Testament predicts heightened persecution against God's people prior to the end (Dan. 12:1; Ezekiel 38-39; Zech. 14:1-2). Jesus speaks of a "*great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be*" (Matt. 24:21), immediately after which He will return (Matt. 24:29-31; cf. Mark 13:14-27; Luke 21:20-28). When Jesus points to the "desolating sacrilege"^[27] in Matt. 24:15, He probably is referring to a blasphemous desecration and destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, which then typifies the Antichrist who arises in the church (cf. Luke 21:20; 2 Thessalonians 2). With prophetic "shortened perspective"¹¹, Jesus thus places both the destruction of Jerusalem and the final intensified persecution against the church into the same picture. Clearly this persecution is not limited to Jerusalem or the Jewish nation but is directed against the whole church, since in Matt. 24:22 Jesus says that those days will be shortened "for the sake of the elect." Moreover, Jesus addresses His discourse to His disciples as representatives of the church.

The **Revelation** to John also describes this final persecution against the church, although in symbolical language (9:13-19; 11:7-10; 16:12-16; 19:19; 20:7-9). This is Satan's "*little season*," when he gathers the anti-Christian world in an attempt to destroy the church and prevent it from freely preaching the Gospel to all nations (Rev. 20:7-9; Ezekiel 38-39). Satan's final assault is **symbolically** called the battle of **ARMAGEDDON**, the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew *har megiddo*--"hill of Megiddo," an expression that may allude to the famous battles which took place there in the Old Testament. But in view of the nature of apocalyptic language, these verses should not be interpreted literally as if they referred to a world war in the Middle East. Nor is this great tribulation to be understood as lasting 3 1/2 or 7 years, since the numbers in Daniel and Revelation are also symbolic. When Satan's "*little season*" has begun or is to begin cannot be computed exactly. Since opposition to the Christian church is widespread in our day, however, there is every reason to believe that we are already in this period of time.

The purpose of the sign of tribulation, too, is to exhort Christians to "*look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near*" (Luke 21:28; cf. Matt. 24:33; Mark 13:29). Tribulation is also God's means of refining the church and "proving" the Christian (1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12; Zech. 13:9; Dan. 12:10). This judgment which overtakes the church is the last preliminary to Judgment Day (1 Pet. 4:17), and as such "*it warns the members of the church that to seek to escape suffering by renouncing the faith is fatally senseless; they will escape present suffering only to find certain doom.*"^[28]

Another sign of the end which indicates opposition to God is the sign of **apostasy** or "falling away." The apostasies of the New Testament era were foreshadowed in the Old

Testament. The Old Testament records a history of increasing apostasy which ultimately led to the destruction of both the northern and southern kingdoms. The history of the Christian church is also marked by a continuing apostasy throughout the period between Christ's two advents (Matt. 24:10-12; Heb. 6:6; 10:29; 2 Pet. 2:20-22; 1 John 2:19; Gal. 6:12-13).

However, the New Testament also predicts a final apostasy or rebellion. Jesus speaks of false Christs and false prophets leading many astray (Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22). The apostle Paul teaches that the second advent of Christ will not come *"unless the rebellion [apostasy] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed"* (2 Thess. 2:3). Since this sign is called a **falling away** or **apostasy** and the "man of lawlessness" takes his seat in the visible church (i.e., "the temple of God," v. 4), we may assume that those who fall away will be associated with the Christian church. This final, climactic apostasy, like the sign of tribulation, will be an intensification and culmination of a rebellion which began already in Paul's day (2 Thess. 2:7).

Finally, opposition to God is marked by the sign of the Antichrist. The term **Antichrist** is found in John's epistles (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7) and signifies both a substitute Christ (Greek **anti** means "in place of") and an opponent of Christ.

The New Testament predicts that the church throughout its history will witness many antichrists (Matt. 24:5, 23-24; Mark 13:6, 21-22; Luke: 21:8; 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7). All false teachers who teach contrary to Christ's Word are opponents of Christ and, insofar as they do so, are anti-Christ.

However, the Scriptures also teach that there is one climactic "Antichrist" (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20-21, 24-25; 11:36-45; 2 Thessalonians 2; 1 John 2:18; 4:3; Revelation 17-18). In the opinion of most exegetes, this Antichrist was prefigured by Antiochus Epiphanes who profaned the Jerusalem temple by dedicating it to Zeus, by taking away the continual burnt offering, and by placing a pagan altar on top of the burnt offering altar in 167-164 B.C. (cf. Dan 8:9-13, 23-25; 11:21-35). He was also prefigured, it is held, by the emperor-worshipping Roman armies which profaned ("desolating sacrilege") and destroyed the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70 (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20). The Antichrist's satanic counter-thrust to God's kingdom can also be expected to intensify towards the end.

The Scriptures reveal the following distinguishing marks of the Antichrist:

1. Just as Antiochus Epiphanes profaned the temple, so the Antichrist takes his seat in the "temple of God," that is, **IN the Christian church** (cf. 2 Thess. 2:4; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21; 1 Tim. 3:15).

2. He is not Satan himself but **operates "by the activity of Satan"** (2 Thess. 2:9).
3. He ascribes to himself truly divine power and exhibits himself **as God** (Dan. 7:25; 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:4).
4. He is a pseudo-Christ, **a satanic perversion of Christ**. He has a "coming" to imitate the "coming" of Christ (2 Thess. 2:8-9). He performs "signs and wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9) to imitate the Christ who was "attested. . .by God with mighty works and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22). He represents a "mystery of lawlessness" (2 Thess. 2:7) to imitate the "mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4; Col. 4:3) and brings a "wicked deception," "strong delusion," and "what is false" to imitate and oppose the truth of the Gospel (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Thus, he denies Christ and persecutes Christians (1 John 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7; Dan. 7:25).
5. He **remains until Judgment Day** when Christ will slay him (Dan. 7:13-14, 26; 2 Thess. 2:8).

When St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he saw a restraint placed on the "man of lawlessness" which would be removed before this "man of lawlessness" would be revealed. Paul refers to this restraint as a thing ("what is restraining him," 2 Thess. 2:6) and as a person ("he who now restrains," 2:7). We do not know what or whom he had in mind. Perhaps he meant the Roman empire and emperor whose benign power of law and order permitted the Gospel to "speed on and triumph" (3:1). One cannot be certain.^[29]

In any case, the workings of the Antichrist are under the sovereign control of God. Martin Franzmann rightly concludes, *"There is no uneasy balance of power between the satanic and the divine; the man of lawlessness must, unwittingly and unwillingly, serve God's purposes. Through him God executes His judgment, that fearful judgment which delivers up men who will not love the truth to the lie which they desire. Only those become victims of the potent lie who 'suppress the truth' (Rom. 1:18) and so invoke the wrath of God."*^{30]} Christians are called to "stand firm" in the faith in the face of the one who comes "by the activity of Satan" (2 Thess. 2:9, 15).

Concerning the historical identity of the Antichrist, we affirm the Lutheran Confessions' identification of the Antichrist with the Office of the Papacy whose official claims continue to correspond to the Scriptural marks listed above.^[31] It is important, however, that we observe the distinction which the Lutheran Confessors made between the **office** of the pope (papacy) and the **individual men** who fill that office. The latter could be Christians themselves. **We do not presume to judge any person's heart.**^[32]

b. THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST

The New Testament Scriptures teach that Christ will one day visibly return in glory. They refer to His second advent by using several different terms: "coming" or "presence" (*parousia*), "appearance" (*epiphaneia*), "revelation" (*apokalypsis*), and "the day of the Lord". A study of the texts in which these terms occur reveals that [Christ's second advent is one event at the end of history](#). The Scriptures teach the following concerning Christ's second and final coming:

1. Christ will come **visibly** and all people will see Him (Acts 1:11; Matt. 24:27, 30; Luke 17:22-24; 21:27, 35; Mark 13:24-26; 14:62; Rev. 1:7).
2. Christ will come in **glory** surrounded by the host of His angels (Matt. 13:39-43, 49; 16:27; 24:30-31; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 19:11-14; Titus 2:13; Jude 14, 24; 1 Pet. 4:13; Zech. 14:3).
3. When Christ returns, a **bodily resurrection** of all the dead will take place. Believers will be raised to salvation and unbelievers to damnation (John 5:27-29; 1 Cor. 15:12-57; Dan. 12:1-2). All believers, both dead and living, will be "caught up" to "meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:13-17). Death will be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26, 54-57; Rev. 20:14).
See page 10-12 for further notes on the Resurrection of the Dead
4. When Christ returns, He will **judge** all people, both the living and the dead (Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16, 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Jude 14-15; Rev. 20:11-15). Believers will receive eternal salvation and unbelievers eternal damnation (Matt. 25:31-46; 1 Pet. 1:4-5, 7; 5:4; 1 John 3:2; Heb. 9:28; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:6-10). Satan and the Antichrist will be destroyed (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 20:10).
5. When Christ returns, "**new heavens and a new earth**" will be created (2 Pet. 3:10-13). Nowhere, however, do the Scriptures teach that at His return Christ will establish a this-worldly, political kingdom or "millennium."

The **date** of Christ's second advent is unknown. Jesus Himself taught, "*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only*" (Matt. 24:36; cf. Matt. 24:42, 44; 25:13; 1 Thessalonians 5; 2 Peter 3). The times or seasons fixed by the authority of the Father are "*not for you to know*" (Acts 1:7). Therefore, speculation concerning the time of the end is forbidden. This much can be said: the fact that God has delayed it now for almost two millennia is due to His patience and mercy, for "*the Lord is not slow about His promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance*" (2 Pet. 3:9).

The Scriptural teaching concerning Christ's second advent has a very practical purpose. God wills that all come to believe in the Gospel, lead a holy life in service to Christ, and eagerly await the last day with patience (Rom. 13:12-14; Titus 2:11-13; 1 Pet. 1:13-15; 2 Pet. 3:11-12; 1 John 3:2-3; 1 Tim. 6:14; Matt. 25:14-30).

c. THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

One general resurrection of the body is a central truth in Biblical eschatology^[33] The Scriptures clearly teach that the Triune God^[34] will raise all the dead bodily at Christ's second coming, will give to the believers eternal life, and deliver the unbelievers to eternal damnation.

Jesus taught, "*Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment*" (John 5:28-29; cf. Dan. 12:2; [35] Acts 24:15). In Revelation 20 the apostle John speaks of this single, general resurrection when he writes, "*And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and they were judged--each one--according to their works*" (20:13; our translation). This "general" resurrection will occur at Christ's second advent, which is the "last day" (John 5:28-29; 6:39-40, 54; 1 Thess. 4:16; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:23). The premillennialist opinion that there will be two, three, or more bodily resurrections separated by periods of time simply cannot be sustained on the basis of what the Scriptures themselves teach concerning the resurrection of the dead.

EXCURSUS ON RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Scripture teaches that whatever of man is in the grave (i.e., his body) rises. The identity of the risen body with the body of one's earthly life is implicit in the term **resurrection**. Just as the resurrected Jesus was the same person as the crucified Jesus and was so recognized by His disciples, so also the dead who are raised are the same persons who formerly lived on earth. A **continuity** exists between the natural body and the resurrection body of the one who is raised.

However, there is also a **discontinuity** between the natural body and the resurrection body of believers. Just as Jesus' resurrected body was a "glorious body," so too the Christian's "lowly body" will be changed to be like Jesus' glorious body (Phil. 3:21). This

change of the Christian's body is necessary because "*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable*" (1 Cor. 15:50). Because of mankind's fall into sin, the natural body is now subject to the effects of the fall (such as sin, weakness, disease, aging, and death), a situation which will come to an end at the resurrection.

St. Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 15 is the most complete commentary on the Christian's resurrected body given in the Bible. The apostle presents six contrasts in this chapter:

1. What is sown corruptible is raised incorruptible. No longer will it be liable to disease or decay.
2. What is sown in dishonor is raised in glory. No longer will it have the dishonor of being buried, but it will be glorified, radiant and shining like Christ's glorified body (cf. Phil. 3:21).
3. What is sown in weakness is raised in power. The weaknesses which cause people to tire and need rest will no longer hinder them.
4. What is sown a natural body will be raised a spiritual body. No longer will it function according to its natural instincts, but it will live completely under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit.³⁶
5. This mortal nature will put on immortality (vv. 53-54). It will no longer be subject to death.
6. The Christian's body which now bears "the image of the man of dust" will then bear the image of Christ (v. 49; cf. Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10).

Of course, Scripture does not satisfy all of our curiosity about the resurrection (1 John 3:2). It does tell us, however, that the Christian in both body and soul will be glorious and perfect like Christ, no longer subject to the effects of the fall.

Resurrected Christians will be "*like angels*" in that they will "*neither marry nor be given in marriage*" (Matt. 22:30; Luke 20:35-36). However, the similarity is not to be extended to include incorporeity or loss of identity as male and female. Nor are we to believe that certain natural bodily functions will any longer be necessary in the life to come (cf. 1 Cor. 6:13).

Christ's resurrection is both the cause and the guarantee of the Christian's resurrection. His resurrection is the "first fruits" of the final harvest, guaranteeing that those who are in Him shall also rise from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20; Col. 1:18; Rom. 8:29). Through baptism

the Christian has already been raised to life and is thus assured of the future bodily resurrection (Rom. 6:5, 11, 13; Col. 2:12; 3:1-4). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who was given at baptism, is the pledge ensuring the Christian's future resurrection (Rom. 8:11, 23; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14). Likewise, the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper are a foretaste of future eschatological blessings (Matt. 26:29; 1 Cor. 11:26).

ENDNOTES

[11] John P. Milton, *Prophecy Interpreted* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960), 15. According to Milton shortened perspective means that "in the prophetic message the eschatological goal of the covenant is often seen as coming soon. It seems to be expected right after and in direct relation to the historical situation of the moment to which the message of the prophet is directed."

[19] *Ibid.*, 1. Inaugurated eschatology (OT) is to be distinguished from "realized eschatology," (NT) the theory of C.H. Dodd that the final eschaton has come in Christ. According to this latter view, no future series of events is yet to happen. The kingdom has come (in Christ) and with it eschatological realization.

[20] *Ibid.*, 4-12.

[21] The kingdom of God can be defined as God's promised ruling activity over and among people which brings judgment and mercy. "The prophets had foretold that this real but hidden reign of God would one day become manifest and universal; God would lay bare His arms finally and definitively to lead all history to its goal, to triumph over all who refused His royal mercy and to bring home to Himself His people gathered from among all nations." W.R. Roehrs and M.H. Franzmann, *Concordia Self-Study Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 16, under Matt. 3:2.

[22] The Oxford NIV Scofield Study Bible takes the position that "Christ is not now seated upon His own throne. The Davidic Covenant. . . and the promises of God through the prophets. . . concerning the Messianic kingdom await fulfillment. It is in a still future day that God will give to His Son, once crowned with thorns by men, the crown of His father, David" (p. 1318, under Rev. 3:21).

[23] Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 77, states, "The greatest eschatological event in history is not in the future but in the past."

[24] For example, William Miller, the founder of the movement producing the Seventh-Day Adventists, concluded that Christ's return would occur between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. More recently, Edgar Whisenant received national media attention by calculating Christ's return in September 1988, and then revised his calculations for a 1989 appearance of Christ.

[25] See Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 137.

[26] The New Testament clearly teaches that the church must continue to evangelize the Jews (Rom. 1:16; 11:11-24, 28-32; Matt. 10:23; Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 9:19-23).

[27] This phrase is quoted from Dan. 8:13 and 11:31. Most exegetes conclude Daniel is referring to Antiochus Epiphanes who erected a pagan altar in the temple in 167 B.C. This "desolating sacrilege" was then a type of the altar erected in A.D. 70 and ultimately a type of the Antichrist. The intention of the similar phrase in Dan. 9:27 is disputed. See under Dan. 9:24-27.

[28] Franzmann, *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*, 265, under 1 Pet. 4:17.

[29] Dispensationalists commonly identify the restrainer with the Holy Spirit and the restraint with the church, which will be "raptured" before the "tribulation." Then the Antichrist will appear and work for seven years. However, the belief that the Holy Spirit and the church will be removed before the "tribulation" has no Biblical support, as we have shown.

[30] Franzmann, *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*, 213, under 2 Thessalonians 2.

[31] Ap XV, 18; *Treatise*, 39-59; FC SD X, 21-22; SA II, iv; see the "Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod," paragraphs 20-21, 43; also John W. Behnken, "Papacy as Anti-Christ," *The Lutheran Layman* (Dec. 1955); and Paul Raabe, "Necessary Distinctions Regarding the Papacy," *Concordia Journal* 14 (January 1988): 3. Attention may also be called to the Australian "Theses of Agreement" (1966), which contain a section on "Theses on Eschatological Matters" (pp. 14-18).

[32] To the extent that the papacy continues to claim as official dogma the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent which expressly anathematizes, for instance, the doctrine "that justifying faith is nothing else than trust in divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this trust alone by which we are justified," the judgment of the Lutheran confessional writings that the papacy is the Antichrist holds. At the same time, of course, we must recognize the possibility, under God's guidance, that contemporary discussions and statements (e.g., 1983 U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue statement on Justification by Faith") could lead to a revision of the Roman Catholic position regarding Tridentine dogma.

[33] See *A Statement on Death, Resurrection, and Immortality*, a Report of the CTCR, 1969.

[34] This work is attributed to the Father (John 5:21; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14), to the Son (John 5:27-29; Phil. 3:20-21), and to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11). [35] "Many" in Dan. 12:2 is the Hebrew way of expressing "all."

[36] The contrast here is not that of material and non-material but that of a natural body in this sin-cursed existence and a supernatural body enlivened by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14-15; 10:3-4). See Eduard Schweizer, "Pneuma, Pneumatikos," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT), trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 6:421.