

The Dividing Line

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[0:00] If you'd take last week's notes, or actually you don't need to take them, it'd be better for you not to be looking at them. I just want to give you a quiz. We've started with the Bible's own timeline, the Bible's own system of eschatology, and we are beginning with the clear before the difficult passages.

We're beginning with the literal before the figurative and the general, the big view before we descend to the particulars. How does the New Testament divide up all of time?

Here's the timeline. How does the Bible divide it? I'm sorry? Present age and the age to come.

Does that encompass and include eternity?

The eternal state? Alright, it does. And if it does, then that means that there is no time after the age to come.

It means that there is not another period between this age and the age to come. No, if these two encompass all of time, then everything that happens must happen in these two ages.

[1:20] Now, last week I brushed over the teaching that the Bible views the age to come as unending time.

That the age to come is time without an end. And the reason I emphasize that is because there are some who would mistake biblical prophecy on this score.

If they read in their Old Testament that something happened on this earth and in time, they immediately think, ah, it has to refer to this age. But not so.

Not so if the age to come is also time. And indeed is also time on this earth where we look forward to a new heaven and a new earth.

So, for that reason, we must realize that eternity is not timelessness. It's just unending time.

[2:22] And prophecies that refer to space-time events may indeed be fulfilled in the eternal state, the age to come.

So, the prophetic floor plan has two rooms. This age and the age to come. That means all the prophetic pieces of furniture must fit in one of these two rooms.

Simple enough. And yet, its ramifications for the various end-time schemes is dramatic, as we'll see. We also saw that the two ages are different periods of history with qualitatively different states of human existence.

What two things are found in this age that are not found in the age to come? Death and marriage.

Okay? There's a lot of death in this age.

There's a lot of marriage in this age. There's none in that age. Can you see the qualitatively different lives, lifestyle, states of existence that there are between these?

[3:30] They're vastly different states. This age. The age to come. How does the Bible characterize this present age morally? Evil.

Galatians 1.4. This present evil age. And we looked up many of the scriptures that pointed out to us that we're not to be conformed to this age because it's evil.

And this world's wisdom is folly in God's sight. This age is characterized as being evil.

Now, it was there that we broke off last week. And I challenged you with the question, what problem does this give to the post-millennialists? Now, if you take your new chart, you can throw the green chart away that I handed out weeks ago.

I told you last week, for our purposes, it didn't go out far enough on the last two schemes. And so I've simply drawn out the line so that all four schemes then end with the eternal state.

[4:38] The old chart did not have the two views of premillennialism ending with the eternal state. But since all views believe that the scheme ends in the eternal state, this reflects their views.

So if you take that view and look at the top, post-millennialism, and what we saw about post-millennialism, do you see any problem that the post-millennial view has with the scriptures definition of this present age ever being an evil age not to be conformed to?

Anyone? The idea is that everything gets better and better before the eternal state.

All right. The idea that everything gets better and better before the eternal state, even to the point of changing the characteristic mold of this world so that it is no longer evil, but it is righteous.

What evil remains in this world during their view of the millennium is an evil that is completely squelched and held under. And Christ and righteousness and truth reigns in government and in society.

[5:54] Families trickles down to all of society. But again, the clear teaching of the New Testament is that this present age is always and ever described as one that is evil, that has Satan as its God, and that is not to be conformed to by the Christian.

So, again, by taking and just taking the most basic teaching of the New Testament, I think the post-millennialist has some problem defining how you can have righteousness be the characteristic state of this present age.

Now, we didn't have time to touch on the last point last week. This present age ends with the coming of Christ.

Titus chapter 2, the apostle speaks of the great, the blessed hope.

Of the believer. He speaks in verse 11 of Titus 2, The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared in this age.

[7:17] It has appeared to all men. And it teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

While we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now, it's not explicit.

It's not explicitly stated here. But you can see that in this present age of battling with sin, what is it that we're looking forward to that will inaugurate and begin the eternal state?

It's the return, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior. And so, the return of Christ marks the end of this present age and the beginning of the eternal age, the age to come.

Now, we'll seek to make that all the more clear from Scripture as we go along this morning.

[8:18] You remember from Luke chapter 20, where Jesus was showing the difference between this age and the age to come. He said all, he spoke of those who attain to the resurrection.

As if the resurrection is that which begins the age to come. And indeed, that is the way the Bible speaks. That the resurrection is the door out of this age, as Sam Waldron says, and the door into the age to come.

Well, when does the resurrection occur? It occurs at the return of Jesus Christ. So, we see on that chart from last week that we have these two ages, and the present age is going to end at the return of Jesus Christ.

Now, what problem does this give to the premillennialist scheme? The two bottom schemes on your handout. They've got a thousand year earthly reign of Christ after Christ's second coming, and yet before the eternal state.

They don't want us to confuse that thousand years with the eternal state. It's not that, they would be strong to tell us. No, it's a golden age after his second coming and before the eternal state.

[9:44] So, they have this time in which unresurrected evil men live right alongside of the righteous after the return of Christ.

Now, the two age view that we've seen from the Bible presents a problem then to the premillennialists. Where should they put the millennium? In this age or in the age to come? Because everything's got to fit into those two rooms, remember? So, where do they put the millennium? They can't put it in this age. Why? Because, according to the premillennialists, the millennium occurs after Christ's second coming.

Well, Christ's second coming marks the end of this age. So, they can't put it in this age. Rather, they would say it's the coming of Christ that brings about this glorious era of a thousand years of peace on earth.

So, there's no room for the thousand years in this age, but neither can they put their millennium in the age to come. Why not? Anyone?

[10:58] Sin is still present in their millennium. In their millennium, it's held down, but it's still present. In fact, it's so present that at the end of that thousand years, Satan is released and gathers hordes of unbelievers to do battle against the church, in their view, or against Jerusalem, excuse me, in their view.

And their number is more than the sands of the sea. So, there's still evil in their millennium. So, they can't put it in the age to come because there's no evil men.

Only the righteous attain to the resurrection and to the age to come. So, again, there's no room in this present age and no room in the age to come.

And so, they've had to stick it in between. And that in itself is a problem with the view of taught in the New Testament, that all of time is divided into one of these two ages, this age and the age to come.

Sam Waldron says, If the present age and the age to come comprise all of time, including eternity, then there's no other place to put the millennialist, the premillennialist millennium.

[12:18] Perhaps the reason eschatology has remained such a mystery is because these theories have made claims that don't fit with the clear statements of the New Testament. And again, I would emphasize the clear statements.

We've seen the 16 passages that speak of this clear division of time of this age and the age to come and the character of this age and that age to come.

Premillennialism, I'm quoting Sam, is confusing simply because it is impossible to make consistent with the clearest and simplest biblical passages. Premillennialism, I'm quoting Sam, is confusing. Well, if this study then of the age, this present age and the age to come has done anything, I trust it shows us that you don't have to understand the little horn on the last beast in Daniel to understand the end times scheme, the basic scheme of the end times.

You don't have to understand the book of Revelation. You understand the clear statements of Scripture. You have at least a basic house plan in which to fit then the details of these events found elsewhere in the Word of God.

Well, our subject for this morning is that little line. If you've got your hand out this morning, it's the dividing line.

[13:43] If all of time is divided into this age and the age to come, we need to be very interested in that little line that goes up and down. What is that dividing line?

What separates this age from the coming age? And it's not just one thing. It's many things. It's a whole complex of events that happen together.

It's the return of Christ. It's the universal resurrection, the universal judgment of all men. It's a new heavens and a new earth. It is a momentous event.

One momentous event. That's the name of a book that I would suggest, if you'd like to study, what is that dividing line between this age and the age to come? The Momentous Event.

A Discussion of Scriptural Teaching on the Second Advent by W.J. Greer, a Banner of Truth publication. So, we're taking up then, for the next few weeks, that dividing line.

[14:42] That blessed hope that we're looking forward to as the end of this age, the return of Christ. Now, this morning, we're going to begin by seeing that the dividing line is, the third thing stated, universal judgment.

What divides this age from the age to come? Well, all these things. This whole complex of events. But we're looking this morning at the universal judgment.

And by this, we simply mean that there will be one judgment of all men. I'm sorry, I'm looking here at the handout, and I need to find my place in my notes, if you'll give me a chance.

Let's... After the first session, in which we surveyed these different views of the end times, I had a brother come up to me and say, boy, do I have a lot to learn.

I thought that when Jesus Christ comes back, it's all over. And I said, brother Jim, where'd you get such an idea as that? And he said, from the Bible.

[16:00] And I would posit that if you just read the Bible, you would come to the very same conclusion that when Jesus Christ comes back, that's it. That's the end.

That is the momentous event. Kind of like the last minute on the 4th of July of the fireworks.

It's all going off at the end, isn't it? And after that, it's over. That's what the return of Christ is. A whole complex of events that happen at the return of Christ, marking the end of this age and the beginning of the eternal state.

So we look then at judgment day. Universal judgment. Now that's not a small issue of, we're not on a tiny detail of eschatology here. That's again why we're starting with the general, the large picture. 58 times the New Testament refers to the day as a reference to the day of judgment. This is an important last thing.

[17:06] And this study of judgment day will shed much light on the understanding of the end times. We're going to turn to Scripture and find these three main points that are listed for you in the handout.

Three main points about the judgment day. There will be one judgment of all men, living or dead, righteous or unrighteous. That's the who. Who will be judged.

The scope. And it will occur at the second coming of Christ. That's the when. The timing. And it will result, that judgment will result either in eternal life for the righteous or eternal punishments for the wicked.

Such is the result or the issue of that judgment. So as simple again as this study is, it has devastating implications for some of these views of the end times.

Especially for the pre-millennialists because if you'll notice on the chart, they have not one coming of Christ, but two second comings, two stages to His coming.

[18:14] I'm looking down at the dispensational pre-millennialists at the bottom. And right in the middle here, you see pre-tribulational coming and secret rapture. There's the first coming of Christ.

And then seven years later, after the great tribulation, they have Christ revealed and coming a second time in glory at the battle of Armageddon.

So they've got two comings, or at least two stages to Christ's return. They also have two resurrections because at the rapture, they have the saints, the dead saints being resurrected.

But then a thousand years later, at the end of the millennium, they have another resurrection of unbelievers.

And so it is with the two judgments. They have two stages to Christ's return. They have two stages, two different resurrections, and two different judgments. And I would say this study then of the dividing line and the judgment being universal for all men does have implications for this scheme.

[19:25] So let's look to the New Testament then and see if indeed this is what it teaches concerning the dividing line. Matthew 16 and verse 27. You see I've got three columns here.

We're looking for these three truths. Not every passage will contribute to these, to every one, but overall we should be able to fill in who will be judged, when, and what is the results.

What are the results? Matthew 16, 27. Again, our Lord is speaking.

For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory with His angels and then He will reward each person according to what He has done. Let's begin with the who.

Does this say anything about who will be judged? Help us? Each person. You can fill that in. Each person.

[20:32] The context only underscores that. He who wants to save his life will lose it. There it's talking about the unconverted. And he who loses his life for me will save it.

So we're talking about each person. The righteous and the unrighteous. Both will be rewarded when the Lord Jesus returns.

Alright? When? Does this tell us anything about when? When? Verse 27? Verse 27? Verse 27? Verse 27?

Sorry? Look again. Alright? This is something that's going to happen when the Son of Man comes in His Father's glory with His angels.

Now, we'll see that terminology is the second advent of Christ, the return of Christ. So, whatever is going on here happens when the Son of Man comes.

[21:35] So that's the when in the passage. The results? We have anything told us here about results? Each one will.

Marcus? Judged according to their deeds. And again, if you look in the passage, he does say earlier on, whoever wants to save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for me, verse 25, will find it.

We're talking about ultimate issues of eternal life and eternal punishment. Though that is not as explicit, at least in verse 27, as these other aspects.

Alright? Matthew 25, our second text. How shall we do this?

A rather lengthy passage. I trust one that's familiar with you or to you. Let me just read the first several verses.

[22 : 42] Verse 31, When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with Him. Have we heard that before? Alright, what's the when? We can at least jump over to the middle column.

When the Son of Man comes. That's when this judgment takes place. Alright? All the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

He'll put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, Come you who are blessed by My Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom, and prepared for you since the creation of the world.

Then on He goes to tell them, For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty. You gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me.

I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer Him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you something to drink?

[23 : 44] When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine you did for Me.

And then He'll say to those on His left, Depart from Me, you who are cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat.

I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you did not invite Me in. I needed clothes and you did not clothe Me. I was sick and in prison and you did not look after Me.

They also will answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison and did not help you?

And He will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me. Then they will go away to eternal punishment but the righteous to eternal life.

[24 : 46] Who is being judged at this judgment at the return of Christ? All the nations. Anything else from the passage?

Alright, that gets down to individuals, doesn't it? It's not national judgment as if you got, well, Egypt, you guys go to hell. Israel, you go to heaven. No. All the nations of the world are here gathered. But they comprise all the individuals making up the nations for they are separated as sheep from the goats down to individuals who either did or did not show kindness to the Lord Jesus Christ and His church.

So, all the nations, individual sheep and goats, what else are they called? The righteous and the unrighteous. Alright?

So, it's not just a judgment of the saved or just a judgment of the lost. We find them together here at the same judgment. And what is the result of this judgment?

[25 : 58] They all come before the judge and as they leave, what are the results? Eternal punishment, eternal life.

There's a fork coming off of judgment day and they all go either directly into eternal punishment or directly into eternal life. You see, this is the last event.

This is it. This ushers you into the eternal state. Eternity and its conditions begin right here, right now. Depart from me into the eternal fire, verse 41, prepared for the devil and his servants, his angels.

So, these are ultimate destinies that are handed out at this judgment. Permanent conditions for all of time, for all eternity.

What is it that determines which way they go? From the passage, what determines which way they go? their works, right?

[27 : 18] Their deeds. You see that? Doesn't say anything about their faith, does it? And some people have said, well, see, this is not at all the judgment.

This is a different judgment. This is a judgment of works. Obviously, we're not going to be judged by works. Wait a minute. This is the judgment that all nations, every individual will show up at.

And we all will be judged according to our works. You say, but we're not saved by works. And that's why this passage is criticized by many premillennial dispensationalists saying, you're teaching

salvation by works.

But are we? Or are we just saying that wherever there's faith in Jesus Christ, there are always works accompanying it? That wherever Jesus Christ is supremely loved and trusted in, there is always a lifestyle that changes from self-seeking to serving and to giving.

That a faith that has no works is dead and is no faith. And so, that connection between faith and works is so direct and is so intertwined and inseparable that the final judgment can take place on the basis of a man's works and that will show whether or not he had true saving faith or not.

[28 : 40] That's an important point. And it's one that often gets thrown aside because of this whole idea that, well, Christians, we can't be judged in that day according to works.

Well, works of a man or a woman simply to demonstrate. And that's what the final judgment is for. It's for a vindication, a demonstration to all.

And so, it will be seen in what the people of God did, how they lived, that they indeed trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. And obviously, it is their faith in Christ that gets them entrance into heaven.

But the works is simply a proof that they had that faith in the Lord Jesus. Acts chapter 17. Again, not all the columns are answered by all the texts.

But when we put the whole composite together, we get a clear readout on these three questions.

Well, this one will help us with regard to who. Acts 17, 30 and 31, Paul is preaching in Athens.

[29 : 48] And he says, in the past, God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. for He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed.

He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead. Who's that? The final judgment from the text?

The whole world? Any other descriptive language? All people everywhere. Alright, that's pretty inclusive, isn't it?

You can't get any more inclusive than that. If the Apostle Paul wanted to prove that everyone's at this judgment, he couldn't have used language more direct. All people everywhere will be here. And though the timing is not mentioned, yet, what does the text tell us about the timing?

The when? A fixed day. A day. Now, we don't have to go far in Paul's writings to know what that day is. And we'll see that in the next passage that we look to.

[30 : 54] And the judge is appointed as well as the day. The one that God raised from the dead.

That will be his next appearance. You killed him. He was buried. He appeared to his own but not to the world.

But the next time you see him, he will be judge. Well, this was right at the heart of Paul's message to the world. Christ is coming again for judgment and all men everywhere will be there.

That's why all men ought to repent and get right with God. The next book, Romans chapter 2. Verse 6.

Well, let's begin at verse 5. verse 6. Verse 6. Verse 6. But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you're storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath when His righteous judgment will be revealed.

God will give to each person according to what He has done. To those who, by persistence and doing good, seek glory, honor, and immortality, He will give eternal life.

[32 : 03] But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being or every soul of man who does evil.

First for the Jew, then for the Gentile. But glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good, first for the Jew, and then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.

All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law. And all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it's not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Indeed, when Gentiles who do not have the law do by nature things required by the law, they're a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. Since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their conscience is also bearing witness in their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ as my gospel declares. Who is at this judgment?

[33:21] judgment? There's a lot of language here. Let's see if we can draw it out and write it down. Shout it out as you see it. Every soul of man.

Each person. Okay, those who obey and those who don't.

Even those who had the law and those who did not have the law. Any other descriptions? Every human being.

That's another translation for every soul of man. Verse 9. Everyone who does good. Jew or Gentile.

That encompasses the whole gamut of people.

The righteous and the unrighteous. Verses 7 through 10. So, who's here? Everyone's here. When? Any language that determines the when.

[34:28] By the way, Paul's contemporaries are going to be there. He speaks of them being there. You see? It's not just a few people at the end of the age when Christ returns. Paul's contemporaries will be there.

Alright, when? The day of God's wrath. Verse 5 and verse 16. The day.

Okay? Christ's second coming is the day that is being referred to. We can see that with Matthew 16, 27 that we already looked at.

The reference there, Matthew 16, 27 was, For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory with His angels.

Then He will reward each person according to what He has done. Notice verse 6 in Romans 2. God will give each person according to what He has done.

[35:36] Do you hear the same language? This judgment is to give each person what He has done. And Matthew 16, when Jesus comes in His Father's glory, He will give, reward each person according to what He has done.

Again, there's the link of this day with when Jesus returns. That's the when. And what are the results? Just a few more rewards than others.

Some get a few more rewards, a better place in heaven than others. What are the results, the issues of this judgment? Anyone? How's it describe it?

Sorry? Perishing. Some will perish. Others will receive eternal life. Isn't that the ultimate issues? God sent His Son into the world that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. These are ultimate issues being meted out. Any other language? glory, honor, and peace coming to some.

[36:41] What's that contrasted with? Wrath, anger, trouble, distress, indignation. All right, this is a judgment that leads to the ultimate issues of eternal life and eternal punishments.

2nd Thessalonians. We'll have to make our last passage for this morning. 2nd Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 5.

Paul is encouraging this church in Thessalonica because they're persevering in the midst of their trials.

And all this is evidence, he says in verse 5, that God's judgment is right. And as a result, you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering. God is just.

He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels.

[38:00] He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power on the day He comes to be glorified in His holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

This includes you because you believed our testimony to you. Who will be at this judgment? how are they described?

Well, you've got troublemakers there, don't you? And those who are troubled. Those who are persecuted and those who are persecuting. dead, verses 6 and 7. You've got those who don't know God, verse 8.

Those who do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus, verse 8. And you've got His holy people, believers, verse 10.

His sanctified ones. So, that's pretty explicit from the text. Who's there at this judgment? When? That's explicit.

[39 : 17] When is this judgment going to happen? On the day He comes. And what a coming it is when the Lord Jesus is revealed.

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven and blazing fire with His powerful angels. And again, verse 10. On the day He comes to be glorified.

Alright? That's clear when it's happening. What are the issues, the results of this judgment? See any language?

He'll give trouble to some, relief to others. Good. Anything else that will be received in that day? Everlasting destruction is shut out from the presence of the Lord.

These are the ultimate issues of how people will spend eternity either with the Lord resting in relief or troubled in misery.

[40 : 32] Everlasting destruction. Never ending destruction shut out from the presence of the Lord. Interesting. Here's a people who are being persecuted and how does Paul encourage them?

God is just. You see that in verse 6? You guys are being persecuted. Know this. God is just. And He's going to mete out justice when Christ returns in glory.

And one momentous event will have two gloriously different effects for all of eternity. So, I trust that we can see at least from the beginning of our study of the New Testament passages.

Who's going to be at this judgment? All people everywhere. Dead, alive, righteous, unrighteous. When will it happen?

Christ's return. Where will they go at the end of this judgment? Heaven and hell. Eternal life, eternal punishment.

[41 : 36] this is the end. This is the New Testament's teaching that when Christ returns, it's all over. It's all over. Can you see the importance of this teaching?

One of the most misleading teachings of premillennial dispensationalists is the teaching that there's a second chance for some people. That when Christ returns the first time in the secret rapture and goes into heaven, they'll still be able to be saved during the tribulation.

Or they'll be able to be saved during the millennium. The Bible says when Jesus returns, it's all over. And if you know Christ when He returns, you're ready to be received into glory with Him.

But if you don't know Christ, when He returns, it's over. There is no second chance for anybody, not one. The urgency of the gospel is attached to this important point of eschatology.

this age and the age to come are separated by the universal judgment at Christ's coming.