

The Eleven (11) Topics of Theology Identified and Explained

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Theology's definition cannot be fully explained by merely breaking down the word from the Greek word theos, meaning "God," and logos, meaning "word"; thus deriving at the combination of the words "the Word of God," or "God's Word." Theology is not God's Word; the Bible is God's word. A better meaning, therefore, would be a "discourse about God" or Webster's definition, "the study of the nature of God and religious truth."¹

Systematic Theology is, according to Lewis Sperry Chafer, the "collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and defending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and His works."² Systematic theology can be distinguished from other classifications of theology. However, it should be noted that several of the other classifications are in a category of study within systematic theology.

In this study and writing, we will be discussing the eleven (11) other classifications of theology.

The other classifications of theology are:

1. **Theology Proper**—the study of the nature and existence of God. There are various explanations for the existence of a God. The cosmological approach of determining the existence of a God says that "every effect must have a cause. Because something cannot come from nothing, there must be an original cause that is the reason for the world's existence."³ Another approach or argument for the existence of God would be the Teleological argument which, in summary, means that due to order and purpose in the universe, there must be a master architect of it and His existence is recognized in the magnificent harmony and precise order of the universe itself. (Psalm 8:3-4) states it very simply:

¹ The American Heritage Dictionary, 2nd College edition, Boston, Houghton Milton Company 1991, page 1260.

² Paul Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology, Chicago, Moody Press, page 147.

³ Paul Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology, page 183.

“When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou ordained; what is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?” (NASB).

“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands” (Psalm 19:1, NASB).

Other arguments for the existence of God are the Anthropological, Moral, and Ontological. Anthropological meaning man is created in the image of His creator (spiritually not necessarily physically). God exists with intellect, conscience, emotion, and will. The Moral argument simply takes the Anthropological a little further and states that it is God that places a moral concept or standard within man. The Ontological argument is based on a fact that all men have an awareness of God. Therefore, there has to be a God.

There is also a general revelation of God whereby God conveys truth concerning Himself to mankind. Revelation is, therefore, God’s disclosure to man of the truth about Himself that man would not ordinarily know. A good example of the general revelation of God can be found in Romans 1:18-21. This Scripture reference not only stresses the existence of God, but the fact that man is accountable to God.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” (NASB)

There are various attributes contributed to God. These are usually classified under two categories: Absolute and Relative attributes.

Absolute attributes—includes Spirituality (God is spirit); no limitations; source of all life, Immutability (Unchanging; free from deterioration; absolutely perfect), Unity (God cannot be divided; the Lord alone is one), Truth (God is the true God in distinction to all others, there is none like Him, Isaiah 44:8-10), Love (a God that loves the object irrespective of the worth of the object or the ability of the object to reciprocate that love...object of God’s love is mankind), and Holiness (His Holiness is without peer...no one else is like Him; He is High and Exalted...and cannot condone evil).

In all of the above, it basically comes down to the fact that God, and God alone, is worthy to be praised, adored, and set apart as the Exalted One that is awesome in all His attributes of His majesty.

- 2. Christology—Doctrine of Christ...**the deity of Christ cannot be separated with His eternity. Whether you believe the deity and His eternal state or not; they are still linked together. There is direct acknowledgment and announcement of Christ's preexistence and eternity found in the New and Old Testament.

Some New Testament affirmations of Christ's eternal existence are:

John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word" which is further explained as

Christ Jesus (the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us, John 1:14).

Since the Word was from the beginning, the origin begins at the existence of the universe (ever how far back that goes).

Colossians 1:17, Paul contends and firmly states that "He (Christ) is before all things,"....meaning that Christ is eternal and pre-existed as the Word proclaims.

Old Testament prophecies confirm the lineage of Kingship for Christ...from His virgin birth, through the line of Abraham, line of Judah, and line of David. Prophecies concerning Christ's birth, His life, His death, His victory over death (resurrection), and His reign on earth are all fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth...who truly was God's only Son. He has fulfilled every prophecy about Himself and will complete the victory as He brings His bride and God's chosen people to Himself; thus, providing a full and complete redemption story that gives credence and truth to the full Word of God. Christ was the incarnate Word (made flesh) where the eternal Son of God took to Himself an added nature....humanity. This humanity Christ figure came through the virgin birth.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows....His mother Mary...will bear a Son; and shall be called Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins....the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel...which translated means, 'God with us.'" (Paraphrased, Matthew 1:18-23)

The doctrine of humanity is also important. Jesus had to be a man if He was to represent fallen humanity and, thus, providing His death of the cross as not an illusion, but a reality.

The importance of Christ's Deity is the bedrock, the foundation of Christianity. We must recognize that Christ died to provide salvation for a lost humanity. Because He is deity, His death has infinite value...because He, being God-like, yet man, can die for the entire world.

- 3. Pneumatology—Doctrine of the Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is the 3rd person of the Godhead (Triune God). The Holy Spirit has personality and can relate to finite beings. Personality is defined as that which possesses intellect, emotions, and will. The Holy Spirit is not just an influence, but a Person....having personality

characteristics. According to Scripture, the Holy Spirit has intellect and examines the inner-nature (depths) of God and reveals it/them to man.

1 Corinthians 2:10b states, "The Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God." (NASB).

The Holy Spirit's works confirm the personality. He teaches, testifies, guides, convicts, regenerates, intercedes, and commands. The Person of the Holy Spirit has emotions which confirm His personality. The fact that He can be grieved, be lied to, be resisted, be obeyed, and even blasphemed give credence to His personality and similar characteristics of the Father and Son. In Acts 7:51, Stephen stated that the unbelieving Jews were "*stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears...always resisting the Holy Spirit.*" Not only did these unbelievers resist...they rejected the work of God.

The works of the Holy Spirit is evidence of His deity. This can be seen in:

- Creation: Genesis 1:2b, "...and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters."
- Inspiration of Scripture: The Spirit of God took charge over the human writers of the Bible to guarantee an inerrant, God inspired writing of Holy Scripture. "*..for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God*" (2 Peter 1:21).
- Regeneration (gives life to).
- Intercession
- Sanctification (a believer joined unto Christ coming to be in Christ).
- Helping saints (John 14:16)...a promised helper to the disciples.

The works of the Holy Spirit indicated His deity (His oneness within the Godhead) ...together with the Father and Son.

- 4. Bibliology—Doctrine of the Bible.** Bible is derived from the Greek word *biblion*...meaning "book" or "roll." Scripture comes from the Greek word *graphe*, meaning "writing." The Bible is a unique book, unlike any other writing (work). It is so unique that it claims with itself as a witness to its unusual character. About 3800 times the Bible declares, "God said," or "Thus says the Lord" (Exodus 14:1, 20:1; Isaiah 1:19 Jeremiah 1:11 and Ezekiel 1:3). Paul also testified to the fact that the things that he was writing about were the Lord's commandments (*1 Corinthians 14:37, "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment."*

Do the writers who made such claims (i.e. Paul, Peter, John) being trustworthy and were willing to die for the cause and integrity of the Scripture (what they were writing), it should give credence to the Bible as the inspired Word of God. The Divine nature of the Bible can further be seen with its continuity of its teaching. Written by many authors, at different times, without conferring with one another can only mean that there was a Holy, Divine and Godly presence as each writer carefully drafted words on papyrus (the type of writing material where words were transcribed in their time). There are no contradictions or inconsistencies within its pages. The Bible is a Divine Revelation in which can be defined as, “the act of God whereby He discloses Himself or communicates truth to the mind, whereby He makes manifest to His creatures that which could not be known in any other way.”⁴ It should be noted that it can be accurately stated that, the Scriptures are God-breathed.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB).

5. **Angelology—Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons.** Angel comes from a Hebrew word meaning, “messenger.” Angel can mean a human messenger (1 Kings 19:2) or a divine messenger (Genesis 28:12). Another meaning is “one who is sent.” Angels are sometimes called the “sons of God” Job 1:6, “holy ones” Psalm 89:5...those set apart, “host, denoting the armies of heaven (Ps. 89:6). Scripture gives account of angels in 34 of the 66 books of the Bible. Christ was helped by angels following His temptation; He even referred to His resurrected state as comparable to angels (Matt. 22:29-30). Jesus even taught that angels would regather Israel (the nation) at the time of His return (Matt. 25:31-32, 41). In giving testimony of Christ, the existence of angels provides reliability and credibility (if we can’t believe in angels, then how can we rely on the credibility that Christ Jesus was who He said He was?)

Certain attributes of angels can be seen in the fact that they are:

- Spirit beings....can reveal themselves in the form of human beings. However, they are spirit beings (spirits, Hebrews 1:14).
- Created beings....the Lord created the angels by His word (Ps. 148:2-5).
- A higher order than man....they are not subject to the limitations of man (incapable of death, greater wisdom than man, greater power than man).

However, they have limitations compared to man. Those limitations are:

- Not created in the image of God

⁴ Paul Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology, page 155.

- At the end of the age, redeemed man will be exalted above angels (*1 Corinthians 6:3b, do you not know that we shall judge angels?*)

There are various classifications of angels.

Some of these classifications are:

- Angels who are governmental rulers (Ephesians 6:12; Daniel 10:13)
- Angels who are highest ranking, i.e. Michael (archangel), chief princes, and ruling angels (Ephesians 3:10).
- Angels who are prominent individuals...Michael (Dan. 10:13); Gabriel (Daniel 9:21; Luke 1:26) who reveals God's purpose and program to God's prophets and people of Israel.
- Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12), probably the wisest and most beautiful of all God's created beings who was originally placed in position of authority over the cherubim surrounding the throne of God.
- Angels who are divine attendants—i.e. cherubim, who have indescribable powers and beauty. They are protectors and proclaimers of God's glorious presence. Seraphim are pictured surrounding the throne of God.

There are various ministries of angels.

Some are ministers to God, to Christ, and to believers.

Angels will also be involved in meting out the final judgment on unbelievers (Revelation, the wrath of God).

Both the Old Testament and New Testament affirm the existence of Satan. He is real and his existence is extensive. Christ Jesus makes reference to Satan 25 times and 19 books including all the New Testament writers acknowledge his evil existence. Satan has personality. He has intellect, exhibits pride and emotion in the fact that he desired to exalt himself above the rule of God. Satan is conniving, deceitful, and is a liar. Satan speaks (Job 1:9-10), tempts (Matthew 4:3), plans and accuses believers (Revelation 12:10). Satan desires to be above God and has made every attempt to thwart God's plan of final victory through and for Jesus and His followers. Satan will be defeated and cast into the lake of fire in the end...forever. (Revelation 20:7-Doctrine of Demons...

Satan is the ruler of demons (Matthew 12:24. There are two groups of fallen angels; one group is the demons who are free and active in the world. The other fallen angels are bound in confinement, 2 Peter 2:4. These confined demons will be loosed from confinement during the Tribulation period to afflict people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (Revelation 9:3-11).

Certain characteristics of demons can be seen in that they are:

- Spirit beings
- Not omnipresent, but are localized (one place; not different places at one time).
- Intelligent, but not omniscient.
- Powerful...but not omnipotent.

Demons inflict disease, influence the mind to sin, hurt and destroy, deceive people and even nations. Demons can possess the minds and control the faculties of human beings. However, demons have to yield to the power of Jesus.

6. Anthropology—the study of man. This comes from the Greek word *Anthropos* meaning “man.” Therefore, anthropology means “the study of man” or “discourse about man.” There are various views concerning the origin of man. Non-Christians commonly hold to atheistic or humanistic evolution (man evolved through a process over time). Some Christians believe that God started the process, but did it through evolution. Other Christians believe that man was created by either a flat divine act of God or some form of “developing creation.” Various theories have been suggested as to how the process of man was initiated. There is the atheistic evolution (no God; origin of matter and life was not a supernatural thing, it is a matter of atoms in motion....”atoms, motion, time, and chance has brought about what life we now have and understand.” (Darwin, Charles).

There is the atheistic evolution (plants, animals, and man gradually evolved from lower forms, but that God supervised the process); the Progressive creationism theory, also called the Age Theory (rejects a literal six-day creation but that creation wasn’t actually six days, but a long period of time...but with God’s supervision). This theory tries to reconcile the Bible with science; the Gap Theory (places a lengthy period of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2), accommodating to science.

Then there is the Literal 24 hour days...theory. This is the view that God’s creation was performed in a literal 24 hours, in 6 days (Flat Creation theory).

The basis for the 24-hour creation day’s theory is the biblical account of Genesis 1 and 2.

- 1) God created man directly

(Genesis 1:27; “And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them.” 2:7, “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being”; 5:1, “...In the day God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.”)

- 2) God created the male and female genders (Gen. 1:27). Both man and woman were created by God (they did not evolve from a lower form of life).
- 3) God created in six twenty-four hour days. The Hebrew word day (yom) always designates a 24 hour day; the phrase “evening and morning” emphasizes a 24 hour day.
- 4) God created man as a unique being. Man is not a higher form of animal...as would the theory of evolution would presuppose. Scripture presents man as a moral creature, accountable to God. Man is a soul and thus is eternal (Genesis 2:7).....*and is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26).*

The material part of man is the physical. The spiritual part of man is soul and spirit. The fall of man does not give account to the origin of sin, but describes the entrance of sin into the realm of humanity. The provision of man to get back into fellowship with God is found in God’s gift of His Son to be an offering for the remission (forgiveness) of sin. By man’s choice, he can fall on his knees to be reconciled to God by asking for forgiveness or he can stay in rebellion and make the choice to reject God’s forgiveness through His Son.

7. Hamartiology—Doctrine of Sin. This simply means to “miss the mark”, Greek word is *hamartia*. This could also mean “every departure from the way of righteousness.” All people (man, God’s creation) have missed the mark of God’s standard and he continues to fall short of that standard.

Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

The doctrine of sin finds the following definition:

- Sin is a transgression of the law of God. This means the actual overstepping, transgressing against God’s standards.
- Sin is a failure to conform to the standard of God. This means failing to do what is right (whether it is just a failure of committing to God’s standard or omitting what we know to do right....this is not conforming to God’s standard.
- Sin is a principle within man. Sin is not just an act, but a principle within man. It is a power that deceives men and leads

them to destruction. It is also understood that all people have this sin nature,

“But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Galatians 3:22).

- Sin is rebellion against God. It is a frame of mind that denotes lawless deeds.
- Sin is wrongful acts toward God and man. This refers to the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; which simply means that man willfully disobeys God in his sin nature.

Sin is charged to every person.

The Christian’s conflict with sin arises in three areas:

- 1) The world...we are not to love the world and the things that are therein; we are to crucify our fleshly desires....and put on Christ.
- 2) The flesh...which is the willing instrument of sin, and is subject to sin. It involves lust and control of the mind.
- 3) The devil....a real, personal being who seeks to destroy the Christian witness and make him ineffective. The Christian is called to resist the devil and put on the armor of God.

There are some things God has provided to help the Christian from the path of sin. They are:

- 1) The Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- 2) The intercession of Christ He is our Advocate (defense attorney) when we commit sin,

1 John 2:1, 2, “My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”

- 3) The indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This involves His (the Holy Spirit’s) ministry to us by indwelling, anointing, sealing, empowering, filling, and enabling the believer to constantly live in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16).

8. **Soteriology—Doctrine of Salvation.** In the Christian doctrine, the death of Christ is highly significant. Although there are many false theories (at least deficient or incomplete theories) on the doctrine of salvation, there is a correct meaning of the atonement. The foundational meaning of the death of Christ is the truth of its “substitutionary” character. This means that Christ died “in place of sinners.”

He purchased sinners’ (all sinners) freedom from an eternal judgment of death; thus reconciling them to God through His righteousness. He satisfied and still satisfies the righteous demands of a holy God. *2 Corinthians 5:21 states, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*

Words that describe the meaning of Christ’s death are:

Redemption—meaning the believer has been purchased out of the slave market of sin and set free from the bondage of sin. *1 Corinthians 5:20 and 7:23 declares that, “you (the believer) have been bought with a price.....”* That price was the death of Jesus on the cross of Calvary.

Reconciliation=making peace with God; Propitiation=Jesus was the “covering for our sin”; Forgiveness=cancellation of debt that one owes or the guilty verdict that one has been given (the debt or sin has been nailed to the cross...thus releasing one from the prison of sin); justification=a gift given through the grace of God, *Roman 3:25, “...being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”*

9. **Israelology—the Doctrine of Israel.** Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, in his document, *The Jewishness of Premillennial Eschatology*, states that “the factor of Israel is a distinguishing feature of the different theologies.”⁵ It seems to be that the Israelology of each of the four systems of theology distinguishes one from the other. In some systems of theology, Israelology plays no distinct role; while for others it is central to the overall theme and beliefs. The Dispensational view is that “Israel has and never will be the Church, is not the Church now, nor will she ever be the Church.”⁶ However, the Jewish nation (Israel) is the center of all things related to the earth. How nations, peoples, and religions treat the nation of Israel and their people will be how Jehovah God chastens and uses them for His glory. They will be either blessed or cursed, “...and I (the Lord) will bless those who bless you (Abraham and the nation he fathered), and the one who curses you I will curse” (*Genesis 12:3*). Liberal theologians who do not believe and accept the infallibility of Scripture mostly ignore what the Word teaches about Israel.

⁵ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewishness of Premillennial Eschatology*, <http://www.messiah3.org>, page 3 of 4.

⁶ Lewis Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4: page 311

The Dispensationalists believe, however, that the Israel has been and always will be the center point of theology. Although there are some Covenant theologians that believe that there will be a spiritual restoration of Israel, they tend to disregard the promises of God's covenant with His people in relation to geographical and political aspects. The Dispensational Premillennialism is the most Jewish of all theologies. This conclusion gives to the Messianic Jews the best theology in that it recognizes Israel's future as well Jewish identity in this present age. The Dispensationalist believes that there will be a literal establishment of a Messianic Kingdom with a restoration of Israel by Jesus Christ, the Messiah...who was prophesied many centuries before His coming, and will be that King prophesied...."But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled" (Matthew 26:56); "You have said it yourself (Jesus speaking), nevertheless I tell you, hereafter "you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64); "And on His robe and on His thigh he has a name written, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords" (Revelation 19:16). "Theologically speaking, traditional Judaism has the most in common with Dispensational Premillennialism than any other branch of Christian theology. In fact, only Dispensational Theology can allow for a fully developed Israelology within its Systematic Theology."⁷

- 10. Ecclesiology—**Doctrine of the Church. The church, by definition, is a "called out group." The church actually began after the ascension as recorded in the book of Acts and is a particularly Pauline doctrine. Therefore, the church today should be called, a group of called out believers in Jesus Christ.

Some aspects of the church include the local church and the universal church. The local church is defined as a group of believers who are identified as a local assembly or congregation; wherein, the universal church is considered "all those who, in this age, have been born of the Spirit of God and have by that same Spirit been baptized into the Body of Christ." The universal church is sometimes referred to as the invisible church while the local body of believers would be called the visible church. The local church would know who their members are (on roll of the local church); the universal church members would only be known by the roll call in heaven, whereby the members names are in the Lamb's book of life....and would be considered visible...only by heaven's standards. The local church member would be recognized as having met the standards set down by the local assembly.

Jesus said, "*I will build my church*", *Matthew 16:18*. He was referring to the universal church...in that it was the believers in the present age. The Church can be called the Body (metaphor describing the unity of the body...Christ being the head of the body),

⁷ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, The Jewishness of premillennial Eschatology, <http://www.messiah3.org>, page 1 of 4.

“And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23).

It is sometimes referred to as the “bride”, thus referring to the “bride of Christ.” The Bible refers to the body of believers as the bride, waiting for her husband (the Church waiting for Jesus to come and take her home),

(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

Some other terms used for the church are building, priesthood, flock, branches.

The church is a separate, distinct entity from Israel (the nation of Israel). Israel always means the physical descendants of Jacob (the Jewish people). The Bible is very distinct in not mixing the church and the nation of Israel (God’s chosen people as a nation). Although Jews can certainly become members of the universal church (belief in Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God), the nation of Israel as a whole is not recognized as the Church, nor does the Church (universal) ever replace Israel as God’s chosen people. We are grafted into the branch of Israel; Jesus being the root of the vine. We are the adopted sons and daughters of the Lord God.

11. Eschatology—Doctrine of the Last Things;

There are many areas whereby Christians and theologians differ over their beliefs concerning the last days. When is Jesus coming back, who will have to go through the tribulation, will the church be raptured, etc.? However, there are some areas in which most believers can believe. These include the explanation of death, the believers immediate presence with the Lord, the hope of Christ’s return, the resurrection, judgment and the eternal state of the believer and unbeliever.

The study of the last days might include the:

- Acknowledgment of death and judgment as a reality for every member of the human race.

Hebrew 9:27, .it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.”

- The understanding that there is the existence of two eternal destinies, heaven and hell. Heaven reserved as the dwelling place of God where his followers and believers are located in a blessed state where praise and adoration for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords will take place; hell being the opposite of heaven other than it is a real place where there is total separation from God and His followers. The occupants of heaven are spoken about in the Bible. The Old Testament believer looked forward to the future reign of the Messiah. The Old Testament saints went to heaven upon death, Genesis 25:8. In this present church age, believers immediately go to God's presence in heaven upon death (Luke 23:43, 2 Cor. 5:8).

Hell is a place of eternal punishment. There are some disagreements as to where hell is and who is, has and will be there. We do know that sin cannot enter heaven; therefore, without the remission of sin, one cannot enter heaven. If a person does not go to heaven, we know that he or she is separated from God and it is a place of constant torment and memory.

Eschatology also deals with the return of Christ. The return of Christ is mentioned over 300 times in the New Testament and Christ, Himself, taught that His return would be a literal, physical event; He would return in the same manner as the disciples had seen Him depart. The return of Christ should be a joy for the Christian; however, it will be the beginning of a nightmare for the non-Christian.

There are three (3) major views concerning last things in conservative theology:

1. Amillennialism—those holding to this view do not believe that there will be a literal thousand year reign of Christ on the earth; however, they do believe in the literal return of Christ. They believe that there will be a bodily resurrection at the end of the age. They believe that the resurrection of the believers and unbelievers will be at the same time. “The adherents to this belief tend to spiritualize all the prophecies concerning the kingdom and attributes to the Church those prophecies relating to Israel.”⁸

2. Postmillennialism—is the most recent of the three (3) major views of millennialism. This view suggests that this present world will get “better and better” until the whole world is Christianized...and then Christ will return to a kingdom knowing nothing but peace...at the end of the millennium. The Postmillennial view was originated by a Unitarian in England, Daniel Whitby (1638-1726). The overwhelming rise in the number of wars and moral evil around the world has diminished this view.

3. Premillennialism—is the oldest view of millennialism. In most cases, those believers who hold to a literal view of the Scriptures are premillennialists. There are some premillennialist that interpret the prophetic books of the Bible, especially the book of Revelation, in a spiritual sense. By that I mean they “spiritualize” it in lieu of

⁸ Tim La Haye, Revelation—Illustrated and Made Plain, page 289

interpreting it literally. Premillennialists believe that the Lord Jesus will return before the millennium. They also believe that the tribulation period (7 years) will be before the millennium, that the believers will be “caught up” with the Lord as the Church, the Bride of Christ, to usher in the Tribulation Period, that the Church will not have to be subject to the great pains of the Tribulation Period, and most believe that the Lord Jesus can come back at any time, but that no one knows the time or the seasons in which the Kingdom will be ushered in. Acts 1:6, 7 give an account of this, “And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said unto them, ‘It is not for you to know the times or epochs (seasons) which the Father has fixed by His own authority’...” (NASB). It is understood that the premillennial view is the one most accepted by literalist because the Scriptures back the view, whereas the other views tend to be based somewhat on the thoughts and ideas of man in lieu of the Word of God, both Old and New Testament.

Bibliography

End Notes: Although the author used his own thoughts and methods in the way the information was presented, most all of the context of what is presented in this paper was taken from Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology, Part 2: Systematic Theology* and the chapters covering the doctrines stated within the contents of his book. The pages studied and information gathered came from pages 147-371. There were some lines quoted directly from the book (so footnoted).

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