

Where is the Church Headed “Eschatologically”?
“Eschatology” in the Old Testament
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Eschatology in the Old Testament is centered around Zion, the place of God’s Presence on earth, which in turn looks forward to the “city of the future,” a new transformed Jerusalem (Rev 21-22). Peace in Zion comes through the transformation of human society—a society restored to the Promised Land, led by the righteous King (Messiah), to which and to whom all nations come for transformation (as well as judgment! Isa 60). The true mark of this peace is the transformation of the human person—the new humanity, made new by radical forgiveness, a new heart, new Spirit, and new covenant. The end will see a transformation of nature where a new ecology will arise from the new creation—the new heavens and the new earth. In all of this the Old Testament does not distinguish between a first or second coming of Messiah. There seems to be no room for an imposition of any earthly thousand year reign of Messiah in any of the Old Testament eschatological passages. The transformations mentioned above are begun in “symbolic” terms after the return of Babylonian exiles, but inaugurated in earnest with the first coming of Messiah and the existence of the Church. All eschatological visions will not be fulfilled ultimately until Messiah’s second coming. In the meantime we live in a “now/not yet” scenario.

1. It is obvious that today’s Jerusalem is not the city to come. Rather, Zion and the New Jerusalem of the Bible represent God’s Presence with all those who are judged to be in “heaven.”
2. There is no peace on this earth at present, except for those who accept the Messiah as God’s Son, giving the new community of faith among the nations a “peace” that is a foretaste of the final peace to come at Messiah’s second coming.
3. The transformation of the human person occurs now in the new covenant community for those who have accepted God’s radical forgiveness in Messiah, having received a new heart and the Holy Spirit. While this transformation is wonderful, it will not reach perfection until Messiah’s second coming.
4. While Christians (God’s new covenant community of Jews and Gentiles) should work hard to preserve and protect this world (ecological stewardship), this world is “reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (2 Pet 3:7). There is a purification process for the coming of the new heavens and the new earth.

Some helpful resources are:

- Beale, G. K. *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*. Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1998.
- Bruce, F.F. *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968.
- Bruce, F.F. *The Time Is Fulfilled*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.
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- Gowan, Donald E. *Theology of the Prophetic Books: The Death & Resurrection of Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.
- Hebert, A.G. *The Throne of David: A Study of the Fulfilment of the Old Testament in Jesus Christ and His Church*. Madison: ACEF, inc., 1984.
- Holmgren, Fredrick C. *The Old Testament & the Significance of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Riddlebarger, Kim. *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.
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