

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Two Models of Eternal Life

Two Models of Eternal Life - posted by docs (), on: 2010/12/18 11:32

What do you think of when you think of eternal life and the eternal state?

My thoughts are not original with me. I'm borrowing from a book, "Future Israel" by Barry Horner, published fairly recently. He discusses the fact that there seems to be some debate as to the extent to which the early church fathers, even Augustine, may have been,

"influenced by Greek thought in such a way as to subtly include elements of Hellenism within their hermeneutical frame of reference regarding Scripture, especially with regard to eschatology. In other words, the Augustinian concept of the City of God was based on an either/or, that is, an inferior/superior eschatological regard for earth and heaven rather than the Hebrew both/and eschatological hope concerning earth and heaven, materiality and spirituality" (Future Israel - pg 211 - 212).

Me: It's always hard to share only a little of what a author has wrote because it is only a piece of his complete thoughts. So, keeping in mind the other things the author wrote concerning this particular aspect, the author means that because of the influence of Greek thought in that day, more regard was placed on the spiritual and heavenly because of its superiority versus the base and lowly nature of earthly things. Which may have influenced the early fathers and their view of what lies beyond the eschatological last things and their view of the eternal state. Then over the centuries, as pre-millennialism versus amillennialism developed, there came to be two dominant models or ways of looking at eternal life as shown below, with pre-millennialism supposedly more Hebrew in outlook and amillennialism being more influenced by Greek thought. That's probably a rub right there for many but I find this discussion fascinating to a degree. The author cites a few recent developments where those of the "Spiritual Vision Model" persuasion have leaned more toward or at least included elements of the "New Creation Model" in their beliefs. But overall, he is citing two dominant models and themes of the after life that have become dominant over the centuries. I lean more to the pre-millennial (with no early secret rapture) side at this point but for those who are amillennial does the description of the "Spiritual Vision Model" (see below) adequately describe amillennialism's view of the after life in your opinion? And of course, any comments from anyone on the "New Creation Model" are welcome.

(Begin)

The Redemption of Spirituality and Materiality

In rejecting the Platonic/Augustinian eschatological dichotomy between inferior, earthly materiality and superior, heavenly spirituality, the preferred alternative of both earthly materiality and heavenly spirituality in holy union should be carefully understood. Craig Blaising describes this essential distinction in the millennial debate in a manner that is well worth consideration at this juncture. He speaks of "Two Models of Eternal Life," the "Spiritual Vision Model," which is the presupposition or "preunderstanding" of amillennialism, and the "New Creation Model," which is the presupposition of premillennialism. The Spiritual Vision Model understands the "final state of the resurrected" as being in heaven. Advocates of this view base it on not only on "biblical themes,"

"but also on cultural ideas common to the classical philosophical tradition. That tradition has contributed to the spiritual vision model in three basic convictions: (1) a basic contrast between spirit and matter; (2) an identification of spirit with mind or intellect; and (3) a belief that eternal perfection involves the absence of change. Central to all of these is the classical tradition's notion of an ontological hierarchy in which spirit is located at the top of a descending order of being. Elemental matter occupies the lowest place. In the spiritual vision model of eternity, heaven is the highest level of ontological reality. It is the realm of spirit as opposed to base matter. This is the destiny of the saved, who will exist in that non earthly, spiritual place as spiritual beings engaged eternally in spiritual activity....Following the classical tradition's identification of spirit with mind or intellect, the spiritual model views eternal life primarily as cognitive, meditative, or contemplative. With this point of emphasis, the place or realm of eternal life is really a secondary or even inconsequential matter. In this essential reality, eternal life is a state of knowing ." (C.A. Blaising, "Premillennialism" - "Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond" (ed. D.L. Bock and S. N. Gundry; Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1999), 161-62.

On the other hand , the "New Creation Model"

"draws on biblical texts that speak of a future everlasting kingdom, of a new earth and the renewal of life on it, of bodily resurrection (especially of the nature of Christ's resurrection body), of social and even political concourse among the redeemed. The new creation model expects that the ontological order and scope of eternal life is essentially continuous with that of present earthly life except for the absence of sin and death. Eternal life for redeemed humans will be an embodied life on earth (whether the present earth or a wholly new earth), set within a cosmic structure such as we have presently. It is not a timeless, static existence but rather an unending sequence of life and lived experiences. It does not reject physicality or materiality, but affirms them as essential both to a holistic anthropology and to the biblical sense of a redeemed creation." (Ibid above., pg 162-63)

In other words, concerning this more biblical perspective, materiality is not ultimately to be transcended, but rather transformed. Such a transformation is to be the rebirth that ushers in "the Messianic Age, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne...judging the 12 tribes of Israel" (Matt 19:28). Then there will be "a new heaven and a new earth" (Isa 65:17; 66:22), that is, a spiritually renewed earth and cosmic order. Through the triumph of sovereign grace, both human and nonhuman aspects of creation, animate and inanimate, will be greatly blessed beyond the state of things prior to the transgression of Adam and Eve. (Future Israel - Barry Horner. pg 213-214).
(End)

Re: Two Models of Eternal Life - posted by davidc (), on: 2010/12/18 19:22

Docs, an interesting article, I believe much misinterpretation came in with Augustine. Praise God that we have a bible now and can read with the help of the Holy Spirit and not lean on men's misunderstanding.

There are two key scriptures which, I have found, highlight the two different interpretations you have written of.

The first is in the new testament in the first chapter of Ephesians:

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance” (v. 9,10).

The interpretation of the phrase "the dispensation of the fullness of times" is where the two differ. An amillennialist will say this is the present dispensation of the church, as Christ has already fulfilled all prophesy in Himself. They will say that the gathering together of all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth refers to the church and the preaching of the gospel to all the world.

The premillennialist will differ and say that scripture points to there being another dispensation after the church age when Christ will rule on the earth for 1000 years. He will then deliver up the kingdom to the father consisting of us the heavenly saints and Israel the earthly, gathered into one.

The second scripture is repeated three times (slightly differently) in the old testament;

"But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" Num 14:21 (KJV)

This promise of Jehovah is repeated in Isaiah 11 v9 and Hab 2 v14, but promising that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.

Again the amillennialist will say that this is to be accomplished through the preaching of the gospel in all the world. But Jesus' command to his disciples was: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

This present age of grace has no promise of universal salvation, but rather a calling out of a remnant among Jews and Gentiles into the church. The church age is an age of testimony to the world, and of edification to the body; the future age spoken of is an age of universal knowledge of the glory of the Lord, and is well described throughout the scriptures. It will be an age when all will know him from the least to the greatest. Not only will all Israel be saved (Romans 11), but all the earth will know His Glory.

David

Re: - posted by ArtB (), on: 2010/12/20 0:44

My view of God's plan for eternal life is not based on what we do, but what He has planned for us from the very beginning.

Just look at Ephesians 4 - 13.

4. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world (gr, Cosmos), that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

God knew us, chose us, before the foundation of the world , and that we would be Holy and Blameless before Him

5. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

We were predestined to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to His kind will.

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

And this God freely bestowed upon us in Jesus.

7. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

In Jesus we have redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of our sins, by His rich graces we are redeemed

8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight

It's a gift to us, well planned out before time.

9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him

God the Father revealed this truth of his kind intention through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son.

10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

According to God's timing and plan etc.

11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

We Have Obtained an inheritance, as predestined according to God's will, work, and purpose

12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

The early Christians receiving the fulfillment of the above plans of God first.

13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise

We listened to the message of truth (gospel), and we believed Jesus's message to us, we were sealed in Jesus with the Holy Spirit Jesus promised us (the indwelling Paraclete, God in me). Jesus also told the Father that He did not lose even one of His Sheep.

14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

I want to highlight the greek word 'arrhabon' which is translated as 'pledge' in the NASU.

Strong's definition is:

arrhabon (ar-hrab-ohn'); of Hebrew origin ; a pledge, i.e. part of the purchase-money or property given in advance as security for the rest:

(Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright Â© 1994, 2003 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

The Holy Spirit in us is Jesus's pledge (Security down payment) of our inheritance until (the time of) the full ransom of Jesus's acquisition of us unto the praise of His glory.

ARTB

Re: Two Models of Eternal Life - posted by ArtB (), on: 2010/12/20 1:21

BTW, Docs, I agree that Augustine's ideas were very misguided and misleading to the Christian Church. I believe he was more influenced by worldly views than the Bible. In particular, Manicheism and Platonism. He was also the wrong guy to establish moral guidelines for the church, and in particular on banning clergy from being Married, along with St. Jerome.

The Christian Church was pristine until the time of Constantine. Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity for two reasons, 1st, his father believed in one God, and it was not Jesus or the Trinity.

And Constantine embraced Christianity as the official Church of the Roman Empire for another wrong reason, He won his big battle that made him emperor after placing T's on his soldiers' shields. Afterward, He murdered family members, and sent his wife to determine where all the Holy places were in Jerusalem, and others to find Mt. Sinai, and they chose the wrong one. Supposedly he became a Christian on his death bed. His biggest harm to Christianity was his banning of paganism and seizing the pagan temples and ordered them turned into Christian Temples, and he appointed Christian Bishops to become Judges of the peoples of the Roman Empire, which may seem good, but in fact paved the way for ambitious not-so-Christian people to enter the clergy as a means to gain power and wealth. Finally, the en masse conversion of pagans to Christians proved somewhat superficial as these new pagan Christians brought their pagan ways into the Christian Church via praying to saints as a substitute to praying to the gods and goddesses that they were long accustomed to seeking and praying to for help.

Prior to Constantine, the Christian Church was Pristine. This was due to the fact that, prior to Constantine, there was no earthly reason to become a Christian, Christians were constantly being persecuted and victimized, and were looked down upon by the masses in general. Only a genuine believer and follower of Jesus Christ were willing to be Christians based strictly upon the full Gospel of Jesus Christ.