



DISCIPLESHIP

THE HEART OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

SESSION #14

ESCHATOLOGY: A VISION OF ETERNITY THAT MOTIVATES US FOR LIFE

I. What's your view of forever?

II. Eschatology =

1. Pop-culture views
2. Scripture and the history of the church

III. How did we get here?

A. Reason #1

B. Biblical Correction:

1. The natural world

2. Meaningful work

3. Relationships

C. Reason #2

D. Biblical Correction:

1. Genre

2. Language

3. Context

E. Reason #3

F. Biblical Correction:

1. Psalm 10

2. Micah 6:8

G. Reason #4

H. Biblical Correction:

1. Rev. 21:1-8
2. 2 Peter 3:9

I. Reason #5

J. Biblical Correction:

IV. Conclusion: Revelation 22:20-21

The Martyrdom of Polycarp

circa AD 69, transcribed circa AD 155

As Polycarp was being taken into the arena, a voice came to him from heaven: “Be strong, Polycarp and play the man!” No one saw who had spoken, but our brothers who were there heard the voice. When the crowd heard that Polycarp had been captured, there was an uproar. The Proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. On hearing that he was, he tried to persuade him to apostatize, saying, “Have respect for your old age, swear by the fortune of Caesar. Repent, and say, ‘Down with the Atheists!’”

Polycarp looked grimly at the wicked heathen multitude in the stadium, and gesturing towards them, he said, “Down with the Atheists!”

“Swear,” urged the Proconsul, “reproach Christ, and I will set you free.”

“Eighty-six years have I have served him,” Polycarp declared, “and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?”

“I have wild animals here,” the Proconsul said. “I will throw you to them if you do not repent.”

“Call them,” Polycarp replied. “It is unthinkable for me to repent from what is good to turn to what is evil. I will be glad though to be changed from evil to righteousness.”

“If you despise the animals, I will have you burned.”

“You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and is then extinguished, but you know nothing of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. Why are you waiting? Bring on whatever you want.”

It was all done in the time it takes to tell. The crowd collected wood and bundles of sticks from the shops and public baths. The Jews, as usual, were keen to help. When the pile was ready, Polycarp took off his outer clothes, undid his belt, and tried to take off his sandals – something he was not used to, as the faithful always raced to do it for him, each wanting to be the one to touch his skin – this is how good his life was. But when they went to fix him with nails, he said, “Leave me as I am, for he that gives me strength to endure the fire, will enable me not to struggle, without the help of your nails.”

So they simply bound him with his hands behind him like a distinguished ram chosen from a great flock for sacrifice. Ready to be an acceptable burnt-offering to God, he looked up to heaven, and said, “O Lord God Almighty, the Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of you, the God of angels, powers and every creature, and of all the righteous who live before you, I give you thanks that you count me worthy to be numbered among your martyrs, sharing the cup of Christ and the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and body, through the immortality of the Holy Spirit. May I be received this day as an acceptable sacrifice, as you, the true God, have predestined, revealed to me, and now fulfilled. I praise you for all these things, I bless you and glorify you, along with the everlasting Jesus Christ, your beloved Son. To you, with him, through the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and forever. Amen.”

Miroslav Volf on God's violence or ours

Posted on August 12, 2009

“One could object that it is not worthy of God to wield the sword. Is God not love, long-suffering and all-powerful love? A counter-question could go something like this: Is it not a bit too arrogant to presume that our contemporary sensibilities about what is compatible with God’s love are so much healthier than those of the people of God throughout the whole history of Judaism and Christianity?

One could further argue that in a world of violence it would not be worthy of God *not* to wield the sword; if God were not angry at injustice and deception, and did not make the final end to violence, God would not be worthy of our worship. Here, however, I am less interested in arguing that God’s violence is not unworthy of God, than in showing that it is beneficial to us.

Most people who insist on God’s “nonviolence” cannot resist using violence themselves (or tacitly sanctioning its use by others). They deem the talk of God’s judgment irreverent, but think nothing of entrusting judgment into human hands, persuaded, presumably, that this is less dangerous and more humane than to believe in a God who judges! That *we* should bring “down the powerful from their thrones” (Luke 1:51-52) seems responsible; that *God* should do the same, as the song of that revolutionary Virgin explicitly states, seems crude. And so violence thrives, secretly nourished by belief in a God who refuses to wield the sword.

...Imagine that you are delivering a lecture in a war zone (which is where a paper that underlies this chapter was originally delivered). Among your listeners are people whose cities and villages have been first plundered, then burned and leveled to the ground, whose daughters and sisters have been raped, whose fathers and brothers have had their throats slit. The topic of the lecture: a Christian attitude toward violence. ...Soon you would discover that it takes the quiet of a suburban home for the birth of the thesis that human nonviolence corresponds to God’s refusal to judge. In a scorched land, soaked in the blood of the innocent, it will invariably die. And as one watches it die, one will do well to reflect about many other pleasant captivities of the liberal mind.”

Mourning and the Kingdom: Paris, Beirut, Nigeria.

Posted on November 15, 2015 by Dr. Esau McCaulley, PhD, Northeastern Seminary

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted –Jesus Christ

One of the central tenants of the loosely organized movement labeled “black lives matter” is the idea that black lives are not as highly prized as others. It was never, at least in the Christian appropriation of the term, meant to negate the idea that police lives matter. It was never intended to dispute the fact that all lives matter. It is not really a movement so much as an expression of a sentiment or a feeling, the feeling that sometimes black lives and deaths were viewed differently than whites in the United States. It was a call to mourn so that one day that mourning would be far less frequent.

I thought about this as the inevitable comparison was made between the lament over lives of the people slaughtered in Paris, Beirut, and Nigeria. The inequality of attention is not a matter of dispute. It is clear. What comes after the rhetorical points have been scored? How should we pray?

The Christian call to prayer is more than a mere expression of grief. It is an declaration of our pain before the throne of the God who *can act to heal and save*. We pray for the coming of the *kingdom* because Jesus’ just rule is the hope for the nations. When our call to prayer is a not so thinly veiled call for *advocacy* it betrays a hope for the wrong type of kingdom. All governments matter and the laws that expand freedom and opportunity should be the subject of the Christian’s concern, but these concerns are *penultimate*. When things are at their worst and different cultures look askance at one another, when declarations of war and retribution bloody our thoughts, when the Muslim is described as subhuman, it is the death and resurrection of Jesus that pulls us back from the brink.

When faced with unfathomable evil that runs up to and beyond the limits of human explanation how shall we respond? Those who rally round the cross know that deep evil has been overcome by a more profound love. The light shines in the darkness. The earliest Christians had their share of stories about the cruelty of empire. But they longed to see that empire saved. That remains our great glory! How shall we pray? The way we always have: For the kingdom to come so that God’s will might be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The universal call to prayer is a theological affirmation of the universal reign of God in Christ. This reign extends beyond comfort during tragedy to the creation of the great society recounted time and again in Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom. This kingdom is eschatological and will only come in its fullness in the age to come. But we can preach, pray, and long for at least a foretaste.

For the Christian, the call to pray for Paris is a call for Jesus to be *Lord* in Paris and if in Paris then also St Andrews and Huntsville and in the hearts and minds of people everywhere. The call to pray is an implicit demand that we actually open up the gospels and discover again the God to whom we pray. If we open those books we will find him, battling against our all too human instincts and telling us to love our enemies, to pray for those who persecute us, to repent and be saved.

The Christian, then, is not involved in a mourning competition: Beirut over Paris, Blacks lives over White. We are wrapped up in the *universal* longing for the kingdom. Sometimes this causes our prayers to be *focused* on particular people whose suffering is acute. Who would dispute that Paris (or black lives or Beirut) should be the subject of special prayer? But we must be careful lest in our very mourning we testify to a limited vision of the kingdom bought at the price of our savior’s blood.