

The Biblical Metanarrative #4: Jesus and the Church

BACKGROUND

The incarnation of the Son of God in the person of Jesus was the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promises to bring about the full redemption of not only Israel, but also humanity and the creation itself. Nevertheless, many Jews did not receive Jesus as the Messiah because he did not fulfill the full set of messianic expectations when he first came to the earth 2000 years ago. Even the disciples were shocked and dismayed by his crucifixion. What they soon discovered after his resurrection was God's plan for Jesus to ascend to heaven and to delegate to the disciples the responsibility to advance God's kingdom in the earth. In addition, the fulfillment and consummation of all of God's redemptive and messianic promises would only fully take place when Jesus returns to the earth a second time.

JESUS'S FIRST COMING (c. 4 BCE – 29 CE)

1. Jesus came as *true humanity*; he is the recapitulation of Adam.
 - Ro 5:12-21 (ESV) ¹⁴**[A]dam...was a type of the one who was to come...** ¹⁹*For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*
 - Paul calls Jesus "the last Adam" and "the second man" (1 Co 15:21-22, 45-49).
 - Irenaeus, a 2nd century Bishop of Lyons, elaborated on Paul's insight:
 - Jesus sums up all of humanity in himself.
 - Jesus retraces the "steps" of Adam, succeeding where he failed.
 - Jesus has taken human nature through life and death, and into glory.
 - Consequently, he is able to serve as our mediator before God (1 Tm 2:5).

2. Jesus came as *true Israel*; he is the reconstitution of Israel.
 - Jesus is *the* seed of Abraham through whom the nations are blessed (Gal 3:16).
 - Jesus fulfills everything Israel was called to be and to do.
 - Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets (Mt 5:17-18) in terms of...
 - His faithful obedience to all their religious and ethical requirements.
 - His fulfillment of numerous specific messianic prophecies.
 - His being the fulfillment of various Old Testament prophetic types.
 - Consequently, *“all the promises of God (in the OT) find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory”* (2 Co 1:20 ESV).
3. Jesus came to atone for our sins; he is Isaiah’s suffering servant (49:1-7; 52:13-53:12).
 - Is 53:4-6 (ESV) *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
4. Jesus came to establish a new covenant (Is 42:6-9); he had fulfilled the old covenant.
 - Je 31:33-34 (ESV) *But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people... [T]hey shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*

JESUS’S SECOND COMING (Date Unknown)

1. The personal, bodily return of Jesus to the earth is the primary hope

of the New Testament.

- The return of Jesus is repeatedly emphasized in the apostolic preaching of Acts, but not once is mentioned the benefit of going to heaven when we die.
- Paul refers to our future hope nearly 90 times in his NT writings. Only 10% refer to going to heaven when we die; the rest refer to either the return of Jesus or the things that will take place once he returns.

2. The return of Jesus will bring about the resurrection of the righteous.

- Our resurrected bodies will be like Jesus's body (Php 3:20-21; 1 Co 15:35-54):
 - Incorruptible, imperishable
 - Glorious, splendid, radiant
 - Powerful, mighty, strong
 - Immortal, deathless
 - Heavenly (but manifested on the renewed earth)
 - Spiritual (*lit.* of the Spirit) as opposed to natural (*lit.* of the soul)
 - It is still physical, just as Jesus's resurrected body was physical.
- We will be conformed into Christ's image (holy and sinless) (1 Jn 3:1-2; Rom 8:29).

3. The return of Jesus will bring about God's judgment of humanity (cf. Ro 2:1-11).

- The righteous will be rewarded for every good deed. We receive God's salvation, not wrath. Our inheritance is glory, honor, and immortality with eternal life.
- The unrighteous will be punished for every sinful deed. They receive God's wrath, not salvation. There will be fury, tribulation, and distress ending in the lake of fire.

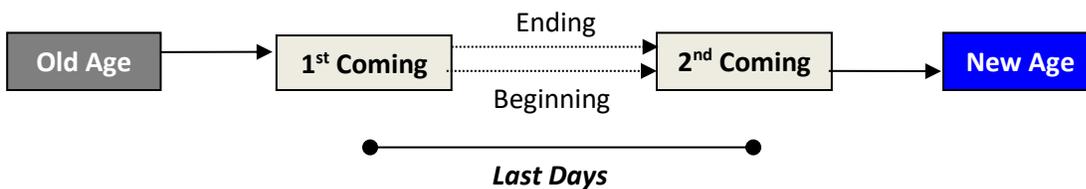
4. The return of Jesus will bring about the renewal of creation.

- The Bible is full of promises in the OT and NT regarding the coming age:

- The liberation of creation from its groaning. (Rom 8:18-25)
 - The renewal of all things. (Mt 19:28-29)
 - The restoration of all things. (Ac 3:19-21)
 - The uniting of all things under Christ. (Eph 1:8-10)
 - The meek inheriting the earth. (Mt 5:5)
 - The knowledge of God filling the earth. (Isa 11:6-10)
 - The redeemed reigning with Christ. (Rv 4:1-5:14; 2:26ff; 3:21)
 - The cessation of human mourning, sorrow, suffering, and death. (Rv 21:4)
- All the earth will be filled with the glory of God just as God intended in the beginning.

THE “LAST DAYS”

1. The “Last Days” is the period of time between Jesus’s first and second comings.
2. “Already, but not yet.” Already we have a partial fulfillment of the various messianic prophecies and enjoy a foretaste of the new and glorious age of God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, but not yet do we have its fullness.



THE CHURCH

1. Jesus is the head of the church. Its identity is derived from him. (Eph 1:22-23).
 - Body of Christ: He indwells us by his Spirit, advancing his kingdom through us (Eph 4:12).
 - New Man: He joins all ethnicities in himself and is restoring his image in us (Eph 2:15).
 - God’s Temple: He manifests his presence to us and reveals his glory to us (Eph 2:19-22).

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- Bride of Christ: He has eternally joined himself to us in covenantal love (Eph 5:31-32).
- Family of God: He has secured our adoption by the Father into his family (Ro 8:15-17).
- People of God: He has set us apart for God's service and purposes (1 Pe 2:10).

2. Jesus has charged the church to carry out his mission on the earth.

- We are responsible to proclaim the message of God's reconciliation through Jesus to all peoples and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey Jesus (Mt 28:18-20).
- We must be empowered with God's Spirit to be his witnesses in "Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Ac 1:8).
- We are called to disciple the whole person in the full context of life (1 Th 5:23).
- We are called to be a prophetic voice to the world around us, bringing the message of God's love *and* holiness to light for all who are separated from him (Col 4:3-6).
- We are called to pray daily that God's name would be honored and his kingdom would come and his will be done, all three on earth as they are in heaven (Mt 6:9-10).
- We are called as God's witnesses to be a living community of love, faith, and holiness.
 - Others should see in us a partial glimpse of God's glorious kingdom to come.
 - Others should experience from us a foretaste of God's coming kingdom.
- We are called to fulfill God's mission and be faithful even unto death (Rv 21:11).
- The church includes more people than ever in the history of the world. But much work remains. God will save people from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue as he has promised. But we are

responsible to be the means by which he brings this about.