

STEM Bookclub; Semester 1, 2023

Adrio König - The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology, Toward a Christ-Centred Approach

Thoughts, Comments & Reflections

Pages 1-16

RP

Some quotes on just the first section (up to p. 6)

In each phase of Jesus' history, he fulfils the covenant - God's creation goal - in some particular way: for us, especially during his earthly ministry; in us, in his word through the Holy Spirit; and with us, particularly at his second coming.

The phrase "last days" is never used in NT for some future period. ... The last days have already dawned. ... in which Christ was born and worked.

The entire history of Jesus Christ is described in such eschatological terms. ... His return is no more eschatological than his earthly work or his resurrection.

We live in the end as part of the end, Christ himself. ... It is not true that every tick of the clock brings us nearer the end, since the end is a person - and we are already in him and united with him.

In one sense seems pretty obvious / clear to me? But perhaps this is the result of my "amillennial" context that doesn't really worry much about arguing over the end times as in revelation.

The day of the Lord is fulfilled in Jesus' first advent, in his earthly ministry, and in his work in the Holy Spirit - as well as in the day of judgement.

OT expectation: Human history will end in a full and final manifestation of Yahweh inaugurating his royal rule of earth. ... Expectations ... always led to a reference to Yahweh's personal appearance.

In NT Jesus himself hints at this.

His miracles as messianic deeds of salvation with eschatological character.

The "kingdom of God" as summarising Israel's prophetic expectation.

His self-identification as "son of man".

RP questions:

- *He says OT prophecy can be "now and not yet" why not with Jesus' first coming?*
- *Could Hebrews 1 be exegeted slightly differently. E.g. "In these last days he has spoken to us through his son." might not be Jesus' birth, but in his whole life that is written in the gospels (that are now being read by people?)*
- *I am keen to hear other references to "last days" in epistles. Do they say something different.*

Pages 17-31

RP quotes and questions:

- OT Prophecy on Jesus: “Indistinct, even sketchy character of OT prophecies (with emphasis on the “human element” in Holy Scripture) results from the prophet’s groping for words to express promises without being able to say precisely what the fulfilled reality would look like.” p. 21 My question: What about when God tells them what to say? Also, the OT analysis was a bit confusing. Would have preferred more biblical quotes. His conclusion p. 23 “The prophets do not distinguish between specific parts of their messianic expectation. Rather is there an impressive unity of vision in their rich diversity of promises. It was possible, once Christ had appeared, to proclaim comprehensively that all the promises were fulfilled in him.”
- Jesus as Beginning: “Jesus is the helmsman of creation, which is why everything can be brought together in him.” (*I like this metaphor*) “That Christ is the first, ‘alone supreme’ means that he is Lord over the universe”
- Jesus as the end: “That Christ is the telos as both the end and the goal of creation is supported by the NT statements which teach that the whole creation is directed toward him, exists and continues in him (Col 1), that it is reconciled by him (Col 1:20, 2 Cor 5:18-19) and that it is united in him (Eph 1:10)” Jesus is “therefore the last both in the temporal sense and in the sense that he is decisive for creation.”
- In the first century AD it was already the last days since they were the days (i.e. the history) of the Last One, Jesus Christ” p. 31

Pages 32 - 49

Seth: How does each segment have significance when he is trying to hold it all together?
 Schema is nice and neat, trying to see how its unpacked. Looking forward to more detail
 How does the work “through us” connect to the end? What is the real sense we are accomplished for and for who? How is it true/real while we are not fully integrated?

Does everything he says about Jesus being the end apply to the other terms as well?

RP Quotes and questions:

His literature review:

Bultmann - history was actually terminated by the first coming / crucifixion of Christ. ... But he does so at the cost of Jesus’ resurrection, Holy Spirit, return and renewal of the earth. P. 32

Barth - full weight to Christ’s resurrection as his first return, coming in the Holy Spirit as his second return, and his second coming as the third return. But at the cost of the earthly work of Jesus, never a real part of eschatology.

Cullmann - Jesus is the center and turning point of history, (which the bible itself never applies to Jesus)

Pannenberg - rejects any distinction between salvation history and history, the whole of history as the locus of divine revelation. Since history has not yet run its course, God has not yet completely revealed himself. Jesus as “untimely born” proleptically appeared before the end. But it disconnects Christ from the actual course of history.

Schoonenberg - Jesus had to attain maturity in his body (the church) wherein he is still coming to completion. At the second coming, his body, his fullness will be realised. But ... only a specific section of his history is viewed as the last.

Shutz - Because the eschaton is attached to a person, everything we say about the last things must be deduced from the last One. but includes only the earthly ministry, death and resurrection.

Big idea seems to be: P. 38 Eschatology is teleological Christology - goal-directed christology. Salvation history is not analogous to earthly time. Possible to say the consummation comes before the end.

We need not be exclusively supernatural in our eschatological expectations. E.g. Jesus birth with few extraordinary events, but the infant was Jesus.

Because Christ is the goal of creation, it is not possible to contemplate his significance without considering "things" (created realities).

If Jesus Christ is the last, then the end has already been reached in him; the end is even now being reached by him, and the end will yet be reached through him.

Pages 47 - 63

Rohan's Quotes / Thoughts:

Interesting thought - Christ is "less" than the Father precisely because he is quantitatively "more" than the Father (he is both God and man, while the Father is God only) p. 48

Jesus cannot be imagined apart from his existence and activity FOR the world and humanity,

There is a correspondence between Jesus' relationship to creation and his Father's relationship to creation. Both are positive toward creation; both care about it. P. 50

For creation to have any goal at all requires God to be free Lord over it, not the necessary ground under it. Creation flows neither from some inner law (to argue against Tillich).

Creation is grace. P. 53

God and Covenant:

Since God's creative activity was a work of grace, the covenant was his goal in creating.

"I will be your God and you will be my people - covenant and community of love are the same (unifying Luther and Calvin's view)

I define covenant as a gracious relationship of love between God and humanity, a relationship in which God takes the initiative by creating the world to be the place where it can be realised, then creating human beings to live in it. *QUESTION: Is this true? I feel like that's not what it is. He is expanding too much what covenant is. This is still a helpful summary of bible, but could have just used a different word to covenant?*

It goes back to Genesis 2. *QUESTION: Does it?*

Through the ages, different facets of this covenant are stressed, but central purpose: God's gracious communion with and care for humanity.

Christ is the covenant itself. "I shall be your God" is fulfilled in him. "You shall be my people" is also fulfilled in him.

God's love for the world is finally and fully revealed in Jesus. He had no other history except this history of love.

Call to obey God's commandments is a call to gratitude. The obligation we have not met, but which Jesus did meet. Jesus is thus the man "for" God, the man who is on God's side.

In fulfilling the covenant he does not make humans superfluous; rather he will achieve for us, in us, and with us the goal God has in mind for us.

God and Creation:

Creation was a Good beginning. But only a starting point.

Sin was shocking unexpected. Nothing sly or covert in the serpent's strategy.

Berkouwer refuses to discuss the "origin" of sin and refers only to its beginning: an inexplicable and hence deeply guilty deed of the human being itself.

The goal of God's work was known from the outset, human response for the most part unexpected, incomprehensible, sinful and guilty. History revealed more facets of God's character, sharply contrasting the brightness of his glory against the dark backdrop of humankind's faithlessness and sin.

P. 62 cool comparison of Old and New Creation.

In Gen, God visits Adam. In Rev, he makes his home with humankind.

A garden (unprotected life of open country) → a city (safe, ordered convenience)

Tree of life → trees of life.

Absolutely dependent on the sun → No sun as the glory of God shines on us, lamb becomes lamp.

Not literal, but to depict the marvels of promised glory, infinitely greater than the first creations.

Pages 64 - 81

P. 65 is a good summary so far I think:

What Christ has done fits together in the fulfilment of the covenant. ... Christ reconciles us and gives us peace with God in crucifixion. ... He comes to dwell in us and allows us to dwell in him, giving us new life. Includes our living in community with God, serving him obediently and combating sin.

Incarnation:

Simeon's eyes "have seen" the deliverance of Israel. Jesus reads the prophecy of Isaiah and says it has been fulfilled now. Jesus' exorcism of demons is a sign that "the kingdom of God has already come upon you".

John's striking agreement between the coming of Christ to the old earth and the coming of God to the new earth, both coming to "dwell" with humankind.

In John 1:14 nothing less than the goal attained. **God is with his people as their God; they, represented by the man Jesus, are with God as his people.**

Crucifixion:

Jesus declares without qualification, "It is accomplished". Radical eschatological statement.

Resurrection:

Resurrection as an event of the end, as the beginning of the general resurrection.

Resurrection always assumed it would be a supernatural occurrence which would take place at the end, when God would judge the world and remake the earth, and now it happens to Jesus!

Rohan q - in Isaiah 13:9, the day of the lord is "cruel". Is that happen when Jesus comes the first time too?

Pages 82 - 96

Christ himself is the content and so the fulfilment of the covenant.

Though we ourselves are not yet actively involved in the way in which God's goal is reached in the incarnation, cross and resurrection of Jesus, neither are we utterly detached from it, that goal was set for us and is beneficial to us, and it alters the relationship between God and us radically and decisively.

What it achieved, "reconciliation" (But God never became our enemy and so has no need of reconciliation) QUESTION: Really?

The atonement can never mean less than the realisation of the eschaton.

"Eschatology is defined by the GOAL which God envisaged at creation ... then it is unacceptable to express it simply in terms of time and the passage of time.

Because this person has come, the eschaton has come, because this person will come again, the eschaton still lies in the future.

P. 89 The new testament never talks about the atonement as being limited in any way. It does not even hint that any specific group might not be reconciled.

With the call to repentance and faith only is any limitation of salvation or the attainment of God's goal implied. Not in the first mode (eschaton for us) but in the second (eschaton in us).

Eschaton is plainly cosmic.

"The apocalyptic sphere is that for which no analogies exist, the realm where radically new things happen". We can deduce nothing about the resurrection body from contemplation of our present bodies. 1 Cor can be summed up in two words: "unknown" and "opposite".

The gospels are not disciples' diaries, written after each day with Jesus about the experiences of that day. They were written after his resurrection and express the meaning of his birth, words, deeds and cross in the light of that resurrection.

Christ's goal is really achieved. Though it has been accomplished without us, hostility is utterly ended, peace is truly concluded, humankind is actually reconciled, and death is surely vanquished. So Christ's first coming is no mere introduction, it is real eschatology because it is he, the eschaton, who comes.

Pages 97 - 120

The eschaton realised for us has yet to be realised in us. We must begin to experience our freedom from sin and freedom for God, to live actively as God's true servants and offer our lives for his service. Since our response, believe, thanksgiving and service are imperfect, the mode itself is imperfectly realized, and God's goal in us incompletely achieved.

Anyone who neglects the call of repentance and faith is lost, despite the achievement already of the goal. To ask whether or not such a person was indeed reconciled is to raise an illegitimate question. **The NT writers did not think it strange to teach both that the goal has been reached and that the decision falls within the province of faith, because faith lives entirely from the achieved goal. We should never try to think in a more “purely” theoretical manner than the NT does.**

The earthly activity of Jesus reaches the goal in us, through “the kingdom of God”. Where God is our God (our king) and we are his people (subjects of his kingdom)

The KoG does not refer to a specific area or country where he reigns, but to his active rule - the Lord reigns. (From OT usage).

The Lord was king of other peoples as well, of all peoples. And God reigns not only over humankind but over all creation.

The OT expectation was that the Lord would reappear as king, prove his might, liberate Israel from its enemies and rule in glory.

In post-OT Judaism, a regular feature of prayers is to ask that the kingdom of God be revealed. God was King in the present, but he was so in a hidden fashion. The last day when he would reveal his kingship in power. OT future expectation was strongly nationalistic. But apocalyptic expectation was suprahistorical, supernatural, and universalistic.

Must view it against a background of demonology. The world has been stolen from God by evil powers which must be overcome before God can rule again on earth.

Jesus did not want to be made king, he already is king. Direct connection between Jesus and Yahweh, who is king of the whole world. The KoG has come because Jesus has come.

He comes not to proclaim something but someone - himself. Our future is decided by our relationship to him. Jesus the king begins his rule by restoring the natural order.

Jesus comes not only to save souls, but to save people, to save the world and to renew the earth. Thus he not only forgives sins but also heals people.

“A storm is no normal happening of nature but rather the work of Satan, who seeks to drag not only humans but also nature into chaos. That is why Mark uses words so frequently uttered by Jesus when driving out demons. He expels the demon from nature. BIG QUESTION HERE.

The very existence of seasons is part of the chaos sown by Satan.

The crowd’s physical hunger is as much of Satan as their spiritual hunger.

Pages 121 - 137

Some random pages on what “rulers/authorities are” then the good stuff on page 124.

The NT witness to Christ’s victory and lordship over powers announces his victory emphatically, but also warns of continuing danger.

The danger still posed by Satan to the faithful and the promise that they will be annihilated, but only in the future.

Two things clear. 1. NT places more emphasis on the message that Christ is the head who subjugates the powers. Nevertheless that threat is affirmed. Satan is still a roaring lion. 2.

Don't neglect the joyful news of Jesus' lordship over the subjugated Satan. By not praising Christ for his victory, they deny him the honour which is his due.

Powerless against Jesus, against the whole armour of God, against faith, Satan is defeated. Warnings to the faithful are not intended to focus their consciousness on Satan but to remind them that their only victory is in Jesus.

Though the powers have been conquered already, they will be conquered again. Then there will be no opposition to God, no threat to the faithful, and no need for them to wrestle.

His exegetical stance (as he discusses "The Millennium"! p. 128)

- Elucidate obscure, difficult passages which clearer, easier ones.
- We shall expound poetic, apocalyptic, highly symbolic sections with prosaic sections.
- Test our expositions of isolated or obscure statements in Scripture against more central, widely attested truths.

Both chiliasm and anti-chiliasm interpret Rev 20 as if it were a product of the 20th century rather than the first. They don't take proper account of the confusion being experienced by the Asian Christians.

John did not write Revelation as advance history. How would it have helped the confused, persecuted congregations to learn that Satan would be bound at some remote, future time? They needed help then! Or that Satan has indeed been bound but would be unbound for a short while. John, their comforter telling them that their present trouble was nothing to what they would experience when Satan was bound again.

Hendriksen - In John 12:31 Jesus will make disciples of all nations through his worldwide mission, which indicates that Satan is bound and unable any longer to seduce them - the precise through of Rev 20:30

"A thousand years" and "a short while" do not indicate time but symbolise power. 1000 years demonstrates the completeness of Christ's victory over Satan. "Short while" is a symbol for the limited danger Satan still poses to the church.

Revelation revolves around Christ's triumph. The wars described in Rev accomplish nothing against God's people. Anticlimactic, little more than the instantaneous extermination of his enemies by the Lords' breath.

Though Jesus work in us is realised chiefly through his coming and work in the Holy Spirit, it cannot be confined to the interim. Jesus already began to realise the kingdom of God during his ministry.

Pages 138 - 149

139 The general outpouring of the Holy Spirit is an eschatological expectation, and that there is a connection between this outpouring of the Spirit and the coming of the Messiah.

140 The person and ministry of Jesus is the beginning of the HS work among us,
The spirit that gives Jesus.

Whatever the spirit does, he does as the Spirit of CHris. So Christ does it - in and through him.

The spirit is a thoroughly eschatological gift - but only the first part, a guarantee that the balance has still to be paid.

149 Shift in language from “kingdom” in gospels to “Jesus Lordship” in Acts / Epistles.

Pages 150 - 159

151 In emphasising the forgiveness of sins, Jesus associates himself directly with the OT. ... Here we have the year of jubilee in human form.

153 Proclamation or mission is the HS work, the spirit causes the church to proclaim the gospel throughout the world, bringing people to faith and so attaining God’s goal in their lives and in the world.

154 ALL edification should be undertaken for the essential task of being that instrument through which Christ reaches God’s goal in the world. The purpose of Christian living is not personal holiness but gospel witness.

Pages 160 - 179

“To say that faith separates is to say that Christ separates”

164 The church as the people of God fully answers God’s original intention to create a being other than God that might share in God’s happiness (unlike Israel which failed)

This entire hostile force, which has stretched across the centuries is the AntiChrist.

Pages 180 - 192

181 God’s eschatological purpose for creation can never be restricted to people it has cosmic, all-inclusive dimensions.

182 Because complete peace has been won for us, but we do not yet experience it fully, we look to the future.

Key ways biblical promises are fulfilled

1. Promises are fulfilled repeatedly. (unlike predictions)

- So the preliminary fulfilment becomes a promise of a yet more glorious fulfilment.
2. No one can deduce from prophecy exactly what shape events will take.
Anyone who took Joel by itself would predict a totally different pentecost. Need faith to understand.
 3. Predictions cannot escape the confines of the known. Anything really and essentially new can never be predicted.
 4. We know the God of promise surely, his trustworthiness, so we know a great deal about the future, in broad outline, can approach it with confidence, while expecting to encounter many surprises along the way.

190 The central message of Jesus' return is "stay awake, be ready every moment"

193 Jesus could have come at any moment in the last 20 centuries and no sign would have been unfulfilled.

Pages 193 - 208

194 In OT, Since God as God of the covenant was near to his people spatially, they expected that his deeds were also at hand and that he would soon perform them.

201 Jesus' ascension did not imply he went far away but rather that he will forever be very close to his disciples, they expect his return in the near future.

202 Manner of Jesus coming: visible, sudden, cosmic, glorious.

208 Christ will not come for his own sake, he will come rather to take us to himself, so that we can be where he is and see his glory.

Pages 209 - 224

209 Is the future DISCLOSURE or FULFILMENT? (Both. Disclosure of Lordship, God's children (On that day there will be no other lord who can claim our obedience, trust and zeal. We will be his obedient and trustworthy people, and he our God.), Judgement (the decisive element is what believers have done in their earthly lives))

221 Hell is indeed an end, but only an end without an accomplished goal - i.e. an end which has miscarried. (That's why revelation has more on new heaven and earth than hell. New earth lies closer to God's creative purpose.)

Pages 225 - 248

Christ's coming as fulfilment. - Resurrection of the body.

The resurrection of the body is the resurrection of the person (not dualism)

235 Because of the creatureliness of heaven, and God is love and space is the space of love we must insist on the spatiality of heaven. Heaven is the PLACE where God lives. But also understand the otherness of heaven. GOD is there!

John begins by speaking of both new earth and heaven. But ends by discussing only the new earth. Because heaven will be on the new earth once God lives there with the new humanity.

Remembering the faithfulness of God toward his entire creation.

237 We must allow God freedom to surprise us in fulfilling his promises.

238 The biblical message of new heaven and earth is the call to a holy life of service, not to curiosity about details of new earth.

239 In future, The three relationships, with God, fellow humans and nature is restored but also enriched and deepened.

God no longer visits, he lives with them.

Humans will serve God eternally, as God originally intended.

242 “New earth will be a surprise, not a disillusionment for God’s children”