

## Introduction to Christian Theology Class VII—Eschatology: Documentation

[One of the most striking examples] of secularization in contemporary Christianity is the quiet dropping of belief in a future life. Historically, this belief was the lifeblood of dynamic Christianity. The early Christians thought of themselves as ‘aliens and exiles on earth’ and as persons whose true citizenship was in heaven. And throughout the Christian centuries, belief in a future life was at the heart of all living faith. Now however, this faith, though rarely denied, is equally rarely affirmed. I myself acquired two degrees in Christian theology and completed all the requirements for ordination to the Anglican ministry without receiving any instruction in this doctrine, or even being exposed to sermons about it" (Paul Badham).

*“Everything that is not eternal is eternally out of date.”*  
(C.S.Lewis)

*Hope is one of the Theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth “thrown in”: aim at earth and you will get neither (CS Lewis)*

Preaching at the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Oxford on October

22,1939,CS Lewis observed that

to a Christian the true tragedy of Nero must be not that he fiddled while the city was on fire but that he fiddled on the brink of hell. You must forgive me for that crude monosyllable. I know that many wiser and better Christians than I in these days do not like to mention heaven and hell even in a pulpit. I know, too, that nearly all the references to this subject in the New Testament come from a single source. But then that source is our Lord Himself. People will tell you it is St. Paul, but that is untrue. These overwhelming doctrines are dominical. They are not really removable from the teaching of Christ or of His Church. If we do not

believe them, our presence in this church is great tomfoolery. If we do, we must sometime overcome our spiritual prudery and mention them.

*Unhappiness on earth cultivates a hunger for heaven. By gracing us with a deep dissatisfaction, God holds our attention. The only tragedy, then, is to be satisfied prematurely. To settle for earth. To be content in a strange land. To intermarry with the Babylonians and forget Jerusalem.*

*We are not happy here because we are not at home here. We are not happy here because we are not supposed to be happy here. We are “like foreigners and strangers in this world” (1 Peter 2:11).*

*Take a fish and place him on the beach. Watch his gills gasp and scales dry. Is he happy? No! How do you make him happy? Do you cover him with a mountain of cash? Do you get him a beach chair and sunglasses? Do you bring him a Playfish magazine and martini? Do you wardrobe him in double-breasted fins and people-skinned shoes?*

*Of course not. Then how do you make him happy? You put him back in his element. You put him back in the water. He will never be happy on the beach simply because he was not made for the beach.*

*And you will never be completely happy on earth simply because you were not made for earth. Oh, you will have your moments of joy. You will catch glimpses of light. You will know moments or even days of peace. But they simply do not compare with the happiness that lies ahead.--Max Lucado Heaven: God's Highest Hope (Word:Waco,1994), chapter 1*