

The End of the World and other stories

Stories we tell stories about our future
'what happens when I die'
nature of stories

Four Last Things

Death

Comes to us all
Sheol – the world of the dead
Death as the end
Death as natural part of life (St Francis)
Death as healing, mercy

Judgement

Justice
Truth
Salvation
Coming of the Kingdom

Heaven

Created place
Where God dwells
Kingdom of heaven
Where we go when we die
Dimension of life

Hell

Sheol
Jesus' warnings
Gehenna
Punishment or annihilation
Is anyone in hell?

Some other stories

Purgatory Temporal punishment before heaven
Newman *Dream of Gerontius*
Transformation
Away in a Manger

Resurrection Comes out of hope for restoration and the Maccabean martyrs
Jesus resurrection as a pledge of ours
Spiritual bodies

Eternal Life More than future state
Fullness of life
Sharing the life of God

Christian Funerals Originally a time of feasting and rejoicing – 'birthday' of a martyr
Only later that element of mourning enters
"In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life"

The Body in Christian hope Incarnation and resurrection give body a central role
Body as place of our identity
Medieval arguments
Hell's teeth and the hope of wholeness
Christianity as a materialist religion (William Temple)

The story of God's Triumph

What sort of a story?

Apocalyptic = unveiling

About present as well as future – reading the signs of the times

Times of suffering and persecution produce apocalyptic

Who wins?

God (obviously)

How does God win?

Through death and resurrection of Jesus

This has already happened!

What does the victory of God mean?

Defeat of enemies (Gentiles, anti-Christ, Beast)

Kingdom of God has come

Resurrection of the dead – defeat of final enemy

New creation

God's presence with us

The return of Jesus *parousia* = both presence and arrival

Is there a timetable?

What sort of story

Can we turn these stories into a single narrative? Are we supposed to?

Unknowability

Millenarian hopes

The millennium ideal time
within history

Pre-Millenarianism millennium when Jesus returns
tends to be passive and pessimistic
danger of elitism and worldly delight in power

The Rapture
Only for the elect

Post-Millenarianism millennium before Jesus' return
tends to be active and optimistic
danger of faith in progress and inability to be critical

Amillennialism millennium is Christ's reign now
Augustine – millennium is age of the church
prophesies fulfilled in Christ, not in schemes or worldly events

Life in the end times

How then shall we live?

Ecology and eschatology

A final story