

Eschatology

The word *eschatology* comes from a Greek word meaning "last things." It is the branch of theology that explores God's ultimate plan for humanity and creation. While eschatology is often associated with the end of the world, it is really about the fulfillment of God's promises and the completion of salvation history.

On a personal level, eschatology considers what happens to each person at death. The Church teaches that after death we stand before God in what is called the Particular Judgment. At that time, each person encounters the truth of their life and enters into heaven, purification in purgatory, or separation from God in hell.

On a universal level, eschatology looks toward the fulfillment of all things at the end of time. Christians profess that Christ will come again in glory, the dead will be raised, and the Last Judgment will take place. God will bring creation to its intended fulfillment, and his kingdom will be established in its fullness.

The Church also teaches that certain events will precede the end of time, including the proclamation of the Gospel to all nations and the continuing call of all people to faith in Christ. While Christians may be curious about when these events will occur, Jesus reminds us that no one knows the day or the hour.

Ultimately, eschatology is not meant to inspire fear but hope. It reminds us that history is moving toward God's purpose, that Christ has already conquered sin and death, and that one day God will be "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28). The study of the last things invites us to live faithfully in the present while looking forward with confidence to the fulfillment of God's promises.