

Christian Beliefs

Doctrine of Last Things

Section 1—Doctrine

Crosspointe Community Church—statement of faith

Last Things

We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of his kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the endless suffering of the wicked, and the eternal joy of the righteous. (Matt. 16:27; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:15; Titus 2:13; 1 Cor. 15:20, 54–55; 2 Thess. 1:7–10; Rev. 20:11–15; Rev. 21:1–9)

The Return of Christ: When and How

- I. **Personal Visible Return**—1 Thess. 4:16, Acts 1:11
¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."
- II. **We should look forward to it**—Titus 2:11–13
¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,
- III. **We will not know the exact time**—Matt. 25:13
¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.
- IV. **Final results are agreed—God rules**—Rev. 11
¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."
- V. **Could return be at any time?** (See Ladd quote—Grudem p. 1097)
George Ladd—"the prophets had little interest in chronology and the future was always viewed as imminent....the OT prophets blended the near and the distant perspectives so as to form a single canvas...the future is viewed through the transparency of the immediate. It is true that the early church lived in expectancy of the return of the Lord, and it is the nature of biblical prophecy to make it possible for every generation to live in expectancy of the end."
Verses of imminent return—1 Thess. 5:2, Phi. 3:20; Rev. 22:7
⁷ "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Final judgment and external punishment

I. Fact of judgment—Rev. 20:11-15

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

II. Nature

a. Unbelievers judged —Rev. 20:12; Rev. 14:9-11

¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.
Rev. 14:10--¹⁰ he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

b. Believers judgment—II Cor. 5:10

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

III. Moral application of final judgment

a. Satisfies the need for justice (Col. 3:25)

²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality

b. Final judgment enables us to forgive —not seek vengeance—Rom 12:19

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it^{to} to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

c. Motive for righteous living—2 Peter 3:

¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

d. Motive for evangelism—2 Pet 3:9

⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you,^{to} not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

New heaven and earth

I. What is heaven—God's presence (localized)—I Thess. 4:17-18

¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

II. It is a place—Acts 1:11; Rev. 21:1

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more

III. **Physical creation renewed** (2 Pet. 3:13, Rom. 8:19-21)

2 Peter 3:13-¹³ *But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells*

Rom. 8:18-21--⁸ *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God*

IV. **Resurrected bodies** (1 Cor. 15)

⁵² *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality*

V. **New creation is new life without the presence of evil**—Rev. 21:5-8

⁵ *And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."*

Theological triage:

Core to biblical truth—see above items

Items for discussion and charity—timing and extent of tribulation and millennium

Section 2—Practicing the doctrine of last things

1. **Renewed love for the King of kings and Lord of lords**—he is sovereign, and rules and we seek his kingdom—Rev. 11:15-16

¹⁵ *Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,*

2. **One important motivation to change is that the Lord is returning.** It should lead us to holiness (Titus 2:12-14)

¹¹ *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

3. **This gives us a bigger view of life.** Life is not merely a temporal existence—there is an eternity to view. The complaints of the moment are not as significant in light of eternity. Rom. 8:18

¹⁸ *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

4. **All wrongs will be made right by the Lord in the future.** This frees us up to live Godly in the sight of the Lord now without worrying about others. Rev. 21:4
⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."
5. **Depression, sadness, fear can be enhanced by feeling isolated and deserted.** A good view of the future informs us that we are not left alone.—John 14:1-3
"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;^[a] believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?^[b] ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also

Discussion questions:

1. Does the subject of last things cause you to be excited, fearful, uncertain, or another emotion? Why do you think the Bible discusses the topic at all? Why not more detail?
2. What do you think is the most practical and helpful aspect to the doctrine of last things?
3. Why did God decide to restore the heavens and earth rather than just taking all his people to another place? Is the earth worth it? Why or why not?
4. Is it fair that God judges those who reject him? Is he just?
5. How can the doctrine of God's return and making all things right help you when things seem so wrong at times in the world today?
6. What part of the doctrine of last things do you like the most? What part is hardest for you to think about?
6. What other applications can you think about concerning this doctrine?