

## **The Baptist Faith and Message** **Article 10 – Last Things**

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth.

The dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord

In theology, the study of “last things” is known as eschatology. That comes from the Greek word for “last” which is *eschatos*. So eschatology is the study of last things. Eschatology or “End Times” as many evangelicals refer to it today has a major fascination in the church culture today. I find it interesting, however, that in our statement of faith this is one of the shortest articles out of all 18 articles. In addition, in Paul’s greatest treatment of theology of all his epistles, the book of Romans, he doesn’t even touch on eschatology – it doesn’t even get a nod from him.

Conversely in our modern evangelical culture you have conferences, seminars, websites, books, movies, TV shows. In fact, some minister’s entire focus of their ministry is devoted to communicating their opinion of how the end times events will all take place. I think somewhere along the way we have gotten out of balance.

Now obviously when we talk about and discuss those things, it’s perfectly normal for our curiosity to be peaked. It’s perfectly natural for us to ask questions, and try to find out “how is it all going to play out?” In fact, Jesus’ disciples were pretty curious about it all, so that asked him:

*“Lord is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times and epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses. Acts 1:6-8*

Jesus is saying, the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

### **I. JESUS Is Coming (Paragraph 1)**

A. His coming will display His CONTROL  
*God, in His own time and in His own way*

*...which the Father has fixed by His own authority. Acts 1:7*

God is the one who has already determined how it will happen and when it will happen. Make no mistake of it, God is in total control. It’s natural for us to look at society and think it’s all out of control, but it’s not. God will demonstrate when Jesus returns that everything is going to happen completely and totally according to his purpose and plan.

B. His coming will define the CONCLUSION  
*will bring the world to its appropriate end*

When Christ returns it marks the end of human history as we know it.

*I will create a new heaven and a new earth; the past events will not be remembered or come to mind. Isaiah 65:17*

C. His coming will declare His COMMITMENT  
*According to His promise*

Jesus made a promise to his followers, and he makes a promise to us.

*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. John 14:3*

D. His coming will demand a CORONATION  
*Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth.*

*But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Matthew 25:31*

- It is a PERSONAL return
- It is a PERCEIVABLE return

There is room in our statement of faith for many different eschatological positions regarding the return of Christ. You cannot point to a specific position beyond what is affirmed here and say, “This is what Baptists believe about the return of Christ” and speak accurately or correctly.

Many labels are used to describe people’s position regarding the return of Christ and the consummation of all things. Some of them are: premillennialism, amillennialism, postmillennialism. Among premillennialists, there are pretribulationist, mid-tribulationist, and post-tribulationist. There are Baptists that prescribe to each of the different positions I’ve just mentioned.

Jack Hyles: *The best way to interpret the Bible is not to interpret the Bible.*

*But immediately **after** the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, And **then** the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and **then** all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will **gather together** His elect. Matthew 24:29-31*

*But in those days, **after** that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. And **then** they will see the Son of Man coming in power and glory. And **then** He will send forth the angels and will **gather together** His elect from the four winds. Mark 13:24-27*

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together** with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. 1 Thess 4:16-17*

*Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the **coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**, and our **gathering together to Him**, that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the **apostasy comes first** and the **man of lawlessness is revealed** the son of destruction. 2 Thess. 2:1-3*

*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. Matthew 24:14*

**REMEMBER:** the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

## **II. JUDGEMENT Is Coming (Paragraph 2)**

A. It begins with a RESURRECTION

*The dead will be raised*

*Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. John 5:28-29*

B. It happens in RIGHTEOUSNESS

*Christ will judge all men in righteousness*

*And he will judge the world in righteousness; he will execute judgment for the peoples with equity. Psalm 9:8*

C. The lost will receive RETRIBUTION

*The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment.*

*And they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds...and if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:13, 15*

D. The saved will receive REWARD

*The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord*

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 1 Corinthians 5:10*

What about these words "whether good or bad?" Great question!

*Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood hay straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15*

Back in our main text the words "good or bad" do not speak of moral good or moral evil. They speak of that which is either worthy or worthless.

Matthew 5:13 -16

Note: There is nothing evil about wood, hay, and stubble. It's just worthless in the presence of fire.

Example: You stay home on Wed night to watch *The Andy Griffith Show*. That's not immoral. It just won't last.

Imagine I bring the deeds of my entire life to the Lord in a box. He puts them on the altar and then tests them by fire.

On one occasion, Jesus taught, ***“Do not give in the offering like the Pharisees who sound a trumpet. They already have their reward.”***

Here’s one way to tell if you have a pure motive – *Do you notice when nobody notices?*

For every thing that survives the fire of Christ’s judgment, I will receive a reward.

I don’t know everything, but there will be crowns.

2 Timothy 4 - Crown of righteousness

James 1 – A Crown of life

1 Peter 5 – A crown of glory

Revelation 4 – A crown of gold

What is the loss? It is the revelation in the presence of a holy God that your life counted for nothing!

When we get to that eternal city we will hear the 24 elders described in Revelation 4 – *“Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor and power for Thou hast created all things and for Thy pleasure they have been created.”*

We will hear the chorus described in Revelation 5 as the 4 living creature join the 24 elders in saying, *“Worthy are You, O Lord to take the book and open the seals for You were slain and with Your blood You have purchased men for God from every tribe and nation and language and tongue.”*

The Bible then says that millions upon millions of angels will join in the refrain, saying together, *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and power and blessing!”*

And as the chorus of creation reaches a climactic crescendo, the Bible says that our voice will be added to the song of praise, as

*“Every created thing which is in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea declares, ‘To Him who sits on the throne and unto the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and power forever and ever, amen!’”*

I will lay my crowns at His feet and say,

Lord, here is the reward for the church I pastored...

Lord, here is my crown of righteousness...

Lord, here is the reward I got for teaching SS...

I lay these and I lay myself at Your feet as a trophy of grace!

What does this have to do with SORROW?

Imagine having nothing to give your wife on her birthday.

That pales in comparison to having nothing to give Jesus.

*Must I go and empty-handed, thus my dear Redeemer meet?*

*Not one day of service give Him? Lay no trophy at His feet?*

*Must I go and empty-handed? Must I meet my Savior so?*

*Not one soul with which to greet Him? Must I empty-handed go?*

I implore you today...if you can teach...teach.  
If you can give...give. If you can serve...serve.  
If you can witness...witness.

Because *“we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds done in the flesh, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”*