

Last Things Article X

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.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

Key Text:

*Note there are only 2 Old Testament references!

Matthew 16:27: For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

Matthew 18:8-9: If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

Matthew 19:28: So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Matthew 24:29-31: Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Matthew 24:36,44: But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Matthew 26:64: Jesus said to him, “*It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.*”

Mark 8:38: For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

Mark 9:43-48: If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where ‘*Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.*’ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where ‘*Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.*’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire- where ‘*Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.*’

Luke 12:40: Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Luke 16:19-26 The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 20:34-38: Jesus answered and said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But even Moses showed in the *burning bush passage* that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘*the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*’ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.”

(Not in article)

John 14:1-3: “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 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.

Acts 1:11: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Romans 14:10: But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Philippians 3:20-21: For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Colossians 1:3-5: We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will 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. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 5:1ff

1 Timothy 6:14-15: that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

2 Timothy 4:1, 8: I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Titus 2:13: looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:27-28: And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

James 5:8: You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

2 Peter 3:7-13: But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

1 John 3:2: Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Revelation 20:11-15: Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:1-5: Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”

When one reads article X on “Last Things,” one immediately is struck by what is not there. The *BFM* does not mention the Day of the Lord, Daniel’s 70th week, the rapture, the tribulation, the Antichrist, false prophet, or the millennium. Further, the *BFM* does not discuss the number of comings of Christ, the number of resurrections, nor the number of judgments—all areas of disagreement among Bible believing Christians.

The *BF&M* article on Last Things is a broad and generic expression about end-times that Baptists from differing understandings of end times can endorse with a joyful and unified spirit.

Throughout our history, Baptists have affirmed a wide range of belief systems about the last things. George Truett, former pastor of FBC Dallas and B.H. Carroll, the founder of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, espoused postmillennialism. Pastor-theologian Herschel Hobbs affirmed amillennialism. This view was popular in our SBC Seminaries for many decades. Popular pastor W. A. Criswell taught pre-tribulational, premillennialism. This is also the view of Billy Graham, John MacArthur, David Jeremiah, Charles Ryrie, Adrian Rogers and Danny Akin. James Merritt, former SBC president, John Piper, and Al Mohler hold the view of post-tribulational, premillennialism.

The *BF&M* highlights the irreducible minimum of orthodox beliefs about Last Things: personal return of Christ, resurrection of believers and unbelievers, judgment of all individuals, and eternal destinies of hell and heaven.

What are the keynotes about Last Things according to the *Baptist Faith and Message*? We start by highlighting five.

First, the *BF&M* accentuates the purposeful meaning of history. History is not cyclical, a pagan understanding of history expressed in some forms of Greek philosophy and Eastern religions. Neither is history evolutionary, progressing upward to a higher status. The Bible affirms that the God who created historic time also directs history towards a purposeful conclusion. God, according to His plan and timing, will consummate cosmic history.

Second, the *BF&M* highlights the personal return of Christ as the central core of Last Things teachings. Christ will return personally. Christ will return visibly, a teaching that rules out the multiple “secret” comings of some sect groups. Christ will return gloriously, not in the

manner of a humble birth, but in the triumph of a glorious King. Christ will manifest His unveiled deity when He returns. Christ's return is a Revelation, another term underscoring His deity.

Third, the *BF&M* affirms the bodily resurrection of all persons. Christ will raise both believers and unbelievers (John 5). The Bible does not describe the nature of resurrected unbelievers. Paul detailed four qualities of the resurrected body of believers: incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual (that is, a fit instrument for the Spirit; see 1 Cor 15:50-58).

Fourth, the *BF&M* acknowledges the returned Christ as judge of all. In contrast to some human courts, this divine Judge operates on the principle of righteousness (justice). The judgment declares our final states; the judgment reveals the basis of God's righteous judgment. Christ judges each person according to his or her deeds (2 Cor 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15). The judgment reveals the unrighteous deeds of unbelievers and the rewards granted to believers.

Fifth, the *BF&M* briefly details eternal destinies. God assigns the unrighteous to hell, a place of eternal punishment. The *BF&M* rules out annihilationism, a denial of the eternal nature of hell. In hell, unbelievers endure conscious punishment forever. Eternal hell is the ultimate in wastefulness, loneliness, hopelessness, and sinfulness. In contrast, biblical teachings describe heaven as a temple (cube), garden, and a city (vibrant community). Heaven is a place of rest, reward, and service to God. As SWBTS theologian W. T. Conner stated, "Heaven is no lazy man's paradise." The greatest joy of heaven is dwelling forever with the Lord.

At times believers manifest an unbiblical emphasis in relation to Last Things. We focus on end time speculations and predictions. The New Testament emphasizes the teachings about Last Things as a doctrine of comfort and a call to holiness for believers. *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000* (and 1963 version) lack this vital call to practical holiness. *The Baptist Faith and*

Message 1925, however, beautifully expressed the practical benefit of the teachings about Last Things in the article “The Return of the Lord.” It reads, “It is the duty of all believers to live in readiness for his coming and by diligence in good works to make manifest to all men the reality and power of their hope in Christ.”

People naturally have an intense interest in the future. Psychic hotlines have become big business as hurting people seek a glimpse of potential hope in their coming destiny.

Evangelical Christianity is not immune to this desire to know the future. Hal Lindsey’s book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, made him one of the 70’s most popular authors. Today Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye’s fictional series, *Left Behind* has sold tens of millions.

A “feeling” pervades many evangelicals that we indeed are the “terminal generation.” Thankfully, the 2000 *BF&M* statement on “Last Things” is a judiciously written statement that provides insight into some of the most significant events in the future and at the same time can be embraced by believers from various eschatological perspectives. It is balanced and careful, something always needed in discussions of eschatology.

We believe that Jesus Christ will return because he promised that he would. At the time of his return, every sacrifice we may have made for his kingdom will melt into insignificance as we enter into eternity with our Savior. Every longing that we as believers have had to see our Lord’s face will be realized.

When we see him, we shall be like him (1 John 3:2), and we will fall on our faces to worship the one “who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood” (Rev 1:5b). At that time arguments over eschatological details will be irrelevant as we cry out “to him be glory and power forever and ever” (Rev 1:6b). As John wrote in Revelation 22:20, “Even so, come Lord Jesus!”

ESCHATOLOGY: VIEWS OF MILLENNIALISM

THE PREFIX BEFORE “MILLENNIUM” REFERS TO THE “TIME OF CHRIST’S SECOND COMING AS IT RELATES TO THE MILLENNIUM	PREMILLENNIALISM “SECOND COMING <u>BEFORE</u> THE MILLENNIUM”	POSTMILLENNIALISM “SECOND COMING <u>AFTER</u> THE MILLENNIUM”	AMILLENNIALISM “NO LITERAL MILLENNIUM”
Definition	Also referred to as CHIALISTS, refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ to earth PRIOR TO the 1000 year reign – or the millennium.	Christ’s second coming will occur after the millennium.	There will be no literal historical reign of Christ on earth for 1000 years.
Characteristics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christ will return at the end of THIS AGE with His saints to the earth to reign for 1000 years as King. 2. In the millennium the nation Israel will experience the blessings God promised to Abraham and David pertaining to Israel’s Land, Nationality or (seed), and Throne. N.T. believers will likewise share in some measure in the covenant blessing having been engrafted into the one people of God (Romans 11). <p>Summary found in Rev. 20:4-6; cf. also Isa. 11; 65.</p>	<p>The church is not the kingdom but it will bring in the kingdom (a utopian Christianized condition) by the preaching of the gospel.</p> <p>Evolutionary process for some – “New age” idea that we are getting better and better and better! Christ does not return at all for these.</p> <p>Christ will not be on the earth during the kingdom. He will rule in the hearts of people, but will return after the millennium. (conservative postmillennialism).</p> <p>Not a literal 1000 year millennium. The church (not Israel) will receive the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham and David in a spiritual sense.</p>	<p>The kingdom reign of Christ and His saints is in the existence for the period of time between Christ’s two advents. (Actually is happening now.)</p> <p>The kingdom is either the church on earth (Augustine’s view now perpetuated by the Roman Catholic Church) and/or the saints in heaven (Warfield’s view).</p> <p>The promises to Israel about a land, seed and throne are thus completely fulfilled now in a spiritual sense in the church.</p>
Important Advocates	Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, Tertullian, Cyprian, Tyndale, some Anabaptists, Moravians, Mennonites, John Wesley, Ryrie, Walvoord, Graham, Criswell, Patterson, Erickson, Akin, Mohler, Jeremiah, Swindoll, and MacArthur.	Daniel Whitby, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Wesley, Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, Augustus Strong, B.H. Carroll, G.W. Truett.	Origen, Augustine, Roman Catholic Church, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, B.B. Warfield, L. Berkof.