

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Last Things

STATEMENT OF FAITH ON ETERNITY

We believe that God, in his own time and his own way, will bring this present world to the appropriate end and usher in the fullness of his kingdom. We believe that Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly, the dead will be raised, and Christ will judge all humanity. Those who die in their sins without Christ spend eternity in Hell, while those who die with their sins forgiven through Christ spend eternity with him in Heaven.

ARTICLE 10

VII. 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.

THE KINGDOM IS COMING

- . The kingdom is not here in its fullness yet, there is coming a time when Christ returns in glory and his rule and reign will be instituted everywhere and recognized by everyone
- . Matthew 26:64 - Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.”

THE KINGDOM IS COMING

- . Acts 1:11 - They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

- Matt 24:44 - "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.
- John 14:3 - "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.

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

- 1 Thessalonians 4:16 – 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 will rise first.
- Rev 22:20 – He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
- The Bible makes it clear that we do not and cannot know when Christ will return.

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

- Mark 13:32-33 – "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come.
- Acts 1:7 – He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

- There are many passages in Scripture that encourage us to be ready because Christ will come back at a time we do not expect (Matt 24:42-44, 50; Mark 13:32-33; Luke 12:40; 1 Thess 5:2; James 5:7-9; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 22:20).

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

- However, there are also several passages of Scripture that speak of certain events that will happen before Christ comes back
 - Preaching of the Gospel to all nations (Matt 24:14; Mark 13:10)
 - The Great Tribulation (Mark 13:7-8; Matt 24:15-22; Luke 21:20-24)
 - False prophets working signs and wonders (Mark 13:22; Matt 24:23-24)
 - Signs in the Heavens (Mark 13:24-25; Matt 24:29-30; Luke 21:25-27)
 - The coming of the man of sin and rebellion (Antichrist – 2 Thess 2:1-10)
 - Salvation of Israel (Rom 11:12; 25-26)

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

- Jesus' Return is:
 - Personal – It is the same Jesus Christ who lived in the flesh who will return to this earth (Acts 1:11; John 14:3; 1 Thess 4:16)
 - Bodily and Visible – Jesus will return in the same way that he ascended (Acts 1:11), with a physical body that will be completely visible (Matt 24:30)
 - Unexpected – Although many signs precede and accompany Christ's return, it will be sudden and surprising (Matt 25:1-13; 1 Thess 5:2-3; 2 Pet 3:3-4)
 - Triumphant and Glorious – Christ's return will be the final stage of his exaltation. He will return to this earth with great power and glory (Matt 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; 1 Thess 4:16).

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

- Jesus' return will result in the resurrection of believers to enter the Millennial Kingdom and then eternal blessedness and the resurrection of unbelievers to eternal punishment

THE RAPTURE

- The word rapture is a state or experience of being carried away. It comes from the Latin rapio (rapturo), which means to snatch in relation to an ecstasy of spirit or the actual removal from one place to another – to be carried away in Spirit or body (this word is used in 1 Thess 4:17; Acts 8:39; 2 Cor 12:2-4)

THE RAPTURE

- The Rapture of the church is the carrying away of the church from earth to heaven. (1 Cor 15:51-58; John 14:1-3; 1 Thess 4:13-17).
- 1 Thess 4:16-17 – 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 will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

RESURRECTION

- All who are in Christ will be physically resurrected (Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2; Ezek 37:12-14; Psalm 17:15; 49:15)
- This was the Old Testament hope, maintained and taught by Jesus (Matt 22:29-32; Mark 12:24-27; Luke 20:34-38), Peter (Acts 2:24-32), Paul (Acts 13:32-37), John (John 5:28-29; Rev 20:1-15), and the author of Hebrews (11:19)

RESURRECTION

- 1 Cor 15:22-23 - For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,
- Our resurrection bodies will never wear out, grow old, or suffer disease or death. They will be completely healthy and strong forever. They will be the pinnacle of God's creation, physical bodies, animated by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:11)

RESURRECTION

- 1 Cor 15:42-44 - So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

RESURRECTION

- Our resurrection bodies will be like Christ's resurrection body, and will be physical bodies like his, transformed in glorified bodies (Luke 24:38-39; John 20:27).
- 1 Cor 15:49 – Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

RESURRECTION

- Our resurrection bodies will be our own bodies, having similarities to our present bodies, but completely perfected and glorified (Rom 8:11; Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15:37-38, 42-44, 51-53). We have every reason to believe that we will recognize and know one another in heaven.
- The emphasis in Scripture is on the resurrection of believers, but it is clear that unbelievers will one day be raised from the dead as well, receiving new bodies.

RESURRECTION

- Unbelievers will not experience a resurrection to eternal life, however, but will face their final judgment at the time they are raised.
- John 5:28-29 - "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. (cf. Dan 12:2; Matt 25:31-46; Acts 24:15; Rev 20:11-15)

FINAL JUDGEMENT

- The Bible repeatedly states that there will be a great final judgment of believers and unbelievers that will take place in the future. All people will stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ in their resurrected bodies and hear his proclamation of their eternal destiny (e.g., Matt 10:15; 11:22, 24 12:26; 25:31-46; Acts 17:30-31; Rom 2:5; 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Cor 5:10; Heb 6:2; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6; Rev 20:11-15).

FINAL JUDGEMENT

- The Bible describes multiple judgments:
 - judgment of the nations (Matt 25:31-46)
 - judgment of believers' works (2 Cor 5:10);
 - the great white throne judgment of unbelievers (Rev 20:11-15)

FINAL JUDGEMENT

- Jesus Christ is the Judge (Matt 25:31-33; John 5:26-27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1), although believers will share in the judging in at least some cases (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:28-30; 1 Cor 6:2-3; Rev 3:21; 20:4).

FINAL JUDGEMENT

- Unbelievers will experience the judgment of Hell, which is a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked (Isa 66:22-24; Dan 12:1-2; Matt 5:22, 29-30; 8:12; 13:38-42; 18:6-9; 22:13; 25:41, 46; Mark 9:42-48; Luke 12:5; 16:22-24; John 5:29; 2 Thess 1:9; Heb 6:2; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 7, 13; Rev 14:9-11; 19:3; 20:10, 14-15; 21:8)

FINAL JUDGEMENT

- Hell is an eternal tragedy, eternal separation from the community of God, the experience of being outside of God's redeeming love forever.

THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

- The first stage of the new heavens and the new earth is the millennial kingdom, when Jesus Christ will personally and bodily return to this earth and rule over it for a thousand years, and believers will rule with him as they participate in his glory (Matt 25:34; 1 Cor 15:24; Rev 20:1-11).
- This time will be a time of great abundance and fertility, of renewing the earth, and of Jesus Christ ruling and reigning with perfect righteousness and judgment. There will be complete peace throughout the earth during this time.

THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

- At the end of the kingdom, there will be one final rebellion led by Satan, and he and all of his followers will be finally and forever defeated by Christ (Rev 20:7-10; cf. Phil 2:9-11).
- Our final destiny is to dwell in a new heavens and a new earth; an entirely renewed creation (Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1-3).

THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

- This earth will be renewed and cleansed from sin (Rom 8:19-21; Heb 1:11-12; 12:26-17; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 21:1). After the millennial kingdom, John sees a new Jerusalem coming from heaven to earth (Rev 21:2), and he then describes an eternal order that involves civilization, architecture, banquets, ruling, and work – eternal life.
- We will exist in the new creation in our resurrected bodies.

THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

- The New Creation will be a place of great beauty, joy, abundance, and blessing in the presence of God and all of his saints (Rev 21-22).
- God renews and reconciles creation through the blood of Christ (Col 1:19-21). He restores and recreates a world to vindicate his good, original creation purposes

THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

- This is Jesus' triumph and fulfillment of the cultural mandate in Gen 1:26-28, as Jesus hands over his kingdom to the Father (1 Cor 15:24-28)
- Through Christ we enter into creation's Sabbath rest (Heb 4:9) – this does not mean doing nothing, but enjoying peace from our enemies (cf. Rev 21:1)
- We enjoy perfect community with God and with each other (Rev 21:3)