

Being with God

God's people will be with God and Jesus Christ forever

[JOHN, DESCRIBING A VISION:] *Now God's presence is with people, and he will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them and will be their God.* REVELATION 21:3B NCV™

And so we [believers] *will always be with the Lord.* 1 THESSALONIANS 4:17B

God's people will see God

They will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. REVELATION 22:4 NCV™

God's people will praise God . . .

[JOHN, DESCRIBING A VISION OF BELIEVERS IN HEAVEN:] *Then I heard what seemed to be a large crowd that sounded like a roaring flood and loud thunder all mixed together. They were saying, "Praise the Lord! Our Lord God All-Powerful now rules as king.* REVELATION 19:6 CEV

Presumably such praise of God will continue throughout eternity.

. . . and God's people will serve God

[JOHN, SPEAKING OF BELIEVERS IN HEAVEN:] *For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them.* REVELATION 7:15

The Punishment for the Ungodly

The ungodly will be separated from God and Jesus Christ

[JESUS:] *Then I will declare to them [who do not do God's will], 'I never knew you. Go away from me, you lawbreakers!'* MATTHEW 7:23

The ungodly will be thrown into fire

[JOHN, DESCRIBING A VISION:] *This is the second death – the lake of fire.*
¹⁵*If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, that person was thrown into the lake of fire.* REVELATION 20:14B–15

15. 'The Last Things'

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I. Jesus Christ's Return and the Final Judgment

The history of the world as we know it will culminate in Jesus Christ's dramatic and awesome return. Associated with this is God's final judgment of all people, through Jesus Christ, in which the eternal destiny of each person will be pronounced.

Note that further events of the end times are discussed in *I. The Persecution of God's People*, p. 346. Although they are events that precede Christ's second coming, they are still an aspect of the biblical teachings that are often referred to as 'The Last Things'.

The Timing of Jesus Christ's Return

Jesus Christ will return at an unexpected time, while people are living as usual

You know very well that *the day the Lord comes again will be a surprise, like a thief that comes in the night.* [1 THESSALONIANS 5:2](#) NCV™

No one knows when that day or hour will come—not the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father, ³⁷because just as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. ³⁸In those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage right up to the day when Noah went into the ark. ³⁹They were unaware of what was happening until the flood came and swept all of them away. That's how it will be when the Son of Man comes. [MATTHEW 24:36–39](#) ISV

Jesus Christ's return will be preceded by distressful events

And when you hear of wars and rebellions, do not be afraid. For these things must happen first, but the end will not come at once.”¹⁰Then he [Jesus] said to them, “Nation will rise up in arms against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹There will be great earthquakes, and famines and plagues in various places, and there will be terrifying sights and great signs from heaven. [LUKE 21:9–11](#)

For that day will not arrive until the rebellion comes and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction. ⁴He opposes and

imperishable. ⁴³It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ... ⁴⁹And just as we have borne the image of the man of dust [Adam], let us also bear the image of the man of heaven [Christ]. [1 CORINTHIANS 15:42–44, 49](#)

As such, God's people will be given eternal life

[JUDE, TO BELIEVERS:] Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the Lord Jesus Christ with his mercy to give you life forever. [JUDE 1:21](#) NCV™

The Heavenly State of God's People

God's people will enter the kingdom of God

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] All of this shows that God judges fairly and that *he is making you fit to share in his kingdom* for which you are suffering. [2 THESSALONIANS 1:5](#) CEV

God's people will be made perfect

[PAUL:] Not that I have already attained this – that is, *I have not already been perfected* – but I strive to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me. [PHILIPPIANS 3:12](#)

Paul implies that believers will be made perfect.

God's people will have glory

[PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] I make this appeal as a spiritual leader who also witnessed Christ's sufferings and *will share in the glory that will be revealed.* [1 PETER 5:1B](#) GW

God's people will have great joy

[JUDE, TO BELIEVERS:] Now to him [God] who is able to keep you from stumbling and *to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ...* [JUDE 1:24](#) ESV

II. The Afterlife

The believer's hope is largely based on God's wonderful promises for his people concerning the afterlife, the life begun by their resurrection from death. At the center of these promises is the final, everlasting phase of God's relationship with his people. In contrast to these wonderful promises are the teachings about the horrific eternity that the ungodly face.

The New Creation

The present heavens and earth will pass away

[JESUS:] *Heaven and earth will pass away ...* MATTHEW 24:35A

God will create new heavens and a new earth

[PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] But, according to his [God's] promise, *we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness truly resides.* 2 PETER 3:13

God's people will live in the new Jerusalem

[JOHN, DESCRIBING A VISION:] *Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, dressed like a bride ready for her husband. ...* ²⁷*Nothing unclean, no one who does anything detestable, and no liars will ever enter it. Only those whose names are written in the lamb's Book of Life will enter it.* REVELATION 21:2, 27 GW

Eternal Life

As God raised Christ from the dead, God will raise his people

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Now God indeed raised the Lord and he will raise us by his power.* 1 CORINTHIANS 6:14

On Christ's return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *It is the same with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown [one's natural body] is perishable, what is raised is*

exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, and as a result he takes his seat in God's temple, displaying himself as God.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:3B–4

This "man of lawlessness" (v. 3) appears to be a final antichrist, (cf. Revelation 13), instigating momentous "rebellion" (v. 3) against God.

Awesome cosmic events will occur just prior to Christ's return

Immediately after the suffering 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 heaven will be shaken.* ³⁰*Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn.* MATTHEW 24:29–30A

Jesus Christ's Return

Jesus Christ will return with his angels

He will do this *when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven with his mighty angels, ...* 2 THESSALONIANS 1:7B GNT

Jesus Christ will come in great glory

Then *they* [people] *will see the Son of Man arriving in a cloud with power and great glory.* LUKE 21:27

On Jesus Christ's return his followers will be gathered to him

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.* ¹⁷*Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.* 1 THESSALONIANS 4:16–17

On Jesus Christ's return evil powers will be crushed

But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; then *when Christ comes, those who belong to him.* ²⁴*Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he has brought to an end all rule and all authority and power.* ²⁵*For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.* 1 CORINTHIANS 15:23–25

The Final Judgment (I): Its Scope and Outcomes

God will judge every person, for all they have done

For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. [ROMANS 14:10B](#)

But remember that God will judge you for everything you do.
[ECCLESIASTES 11:9B](#) NCV™

The dead will rise to be judged, and either rewarded with eternal life or be condemned

Many of those who sleep in the dusty ground will awake – some to everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting abhorrence.

[DANIEL 12:2](#)

The Final Judgment (II): The Process

God will judge all people through Jesus Christ

[PAUL:] God will judge the secrets of human hearts, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus. [ROMANS 2:16B](#)

On his return, Jesus Christ will judge and reward all people according to what they have done

For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. [MATTHEW 16:27](#)

Those who have believed in Christ will have eternal life . . .

But these [miracles of Jesus] are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. [JOHN 20:31](#)

. . . Those who have rejected Christ will be condemned

The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. [JOHN 3:18B](#)

This and the above subsections show that people will be judged according to their deeds and their response to Jesus Christ.

What people have known will be taken into account

For all who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. [ROMANS 2:12](#)

Gentiles without knowledge of the Mosaic Law, by nature have a grasp of its requirements (cf. vv. 14–15) and will be judged as such (v. 12a). Those who know the law have a clearer understanding of what God requires, and so they will be judged more strictly (v. 12b).

The Millennium

The prophecy of a thousand year reign of Jesus Christ

They [believers who had been martyred] came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were finished.) This is the first resurrection.

[REVELATION 20:4B–5](#)

Revelation 20:1–6 is critical to the concept of “The Millennium”. Each of verses 2–6 refers to a thousand year period – a millennium. This millennium is also arguably referred to by numerous OT passages (cf. *II. God's Plans for Israel*, p. 180) and possibly a few other NT ones.

The two most popular interpretations of this “Millennium” today are the Amillennialist and Premillennialist viewpoints. Amillennialists view the reign of deceased believers with Christ (cf. Revelation 20:4b ↑) to refer to a present reign in heaven. They see this reign as having been introduced by Jesus Christ's first coming, with him being pronounced Lord of all. They believe that Jesus Christ will return, and then the general resurrection will occur, followed by the final judgment. Following this would be the reign of Jesus Christ over the new earth in the afterlife.

Premillennialists believe that Christ's return will be followed by a first resurrection of believers, who will reign with Christ in a literal thousand-year rule of righteousness on earth. This would then be followed by the final resurrection and then the final judgment.