

End Times & Eternal Life

Introduction: Why it Matters

Eschatology—the study of “last things”—is often overlooked, but it profoundly shapes how we live, hope, and serve today.

1. A Hope that Anchors

Eschatology reminds us that **history has a purpose and God is in control**. We aren't wandering—God is writing the story.

2. Motivation for Mission

When we believe Jesus will return—and that people will stand before Him—we're compelled to share the gospel with urgency and love.

3. Understanding God's Rescue Plan

The “already/not yet” reality of Christ's kingdom brings perspective:

- **Already:** Jesus has saved us, given us the Spirit, started renewal
- **Not yet:** We await His full return, resurrection, new creation

4. Shapes Our Whole Story

Eschatology isn't optional theology—it touches our work, suffering, worship, finances, and everything else. It gives cosmic context to our everyday faith.

5. Unity Amid Differences

Many Christians hold different views on the timeline, but all **agree on the essentials**: Jesus will return, there's a resurrection, final judgment, and eternal restoration.

Section 2: What the Bible Says—Core End Times Truths

The Bible clearly teaches four foundational truths about the “last things” that shape how we live today:

1. The Return of Jesus

Scripture promises that Jesus will come back—personally, visibly, and decisively. Acts 1:11 reminds us that He will one day return “in the same way” He left. When He comes, it will be with power to finalize God’s plan for creation.

2. The Resurrection of the Dead

At Christ’s return, the dead will rise—in glorified, embodied form. Both believers and unbelievers will be resurrected. For believers, it’s an act of deliverance; for unbelievers, it leads to judgment. (Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17)

3. The Final Judgment

Everyone who has ever lived will stand before Christ to give an account. God’s righteous standards will be applied, and justice will be rendered—compassionate grace for believers, and final accountability for others. (Matthew 25:31–46; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11–15)

4. New Heaven & New Earth

God will not abandon His creation. Instead, He will renew and restore it completely. Revelation describes a world with no pain, tears, or death—where God dwells with His people forever. (Revelation 21–22)

The “Already but Not Yet” Kingdom

We live in a tension between now and not yet. Jesus inaugurated God’s kingdom with His life, death, and resurrection—but its final fulfillment awaits His return. We experience glimpses of His kingdom now, even as we wait in hope. (Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15; Hebrews 2:8–9)

Section 3: Different Christian Views on the Millennium

In Christianity, believers agree on many end-times essentials; where we differ is on how and when Jesus will reign during the “thousand-year” period. Here’s a clear breakdown of three historic views:

1. Premillennialism – Christ Returns First

- Believes Jesus will return **before** a literal 1,000-year reign on earth, followed by a final rebellion and then final judgment.
- Two main types:
 - **Historic Premillennialism:** No church–Israel distinction. Believers remain on earth through tribulation; Jesus returns afterward and reigns visibly.
 - **Dispensational Premillennialism:** Distinguishes Israel and church, including a pre-tribulation rapture. Follows with a literal tribulation and millennium.
- Rooted in a **literal interpretation** of Revelation 20:1–6 and early church thought from figures like Justin Martyr.

2. Amillennialism – Christ Reigns Spiritually Now

- Views the “millennium” symbolically: Christ reigns presently through the church age, not in a literal thousand-year kingdom.
- Consistent with historical creeds and common among Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Reformed Christians.
- Holds to a future return, final resurrection, and full renewal—but without a separate “millennial” era on earth.

3. Postmillennialism – Christ Reigns Through the Church’s Influence

- Teaches Jesus returns **after** a golden age established by the Gospel’s spread and Christian influence.
- Optimism about global transformation is a hallmark—believers expect increasing righteousness and peace before Christ’s return.
- Historically popular among Puritans and revivalist movements, though less prominent today.

Quick Comparison Table

| View | Christ Returns | Millennium |
|----------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Premillennial | Before | Literal 1,000 yrs |
| Amillennial | After | Symbolic, now |
| Postmillennial | After | Golden age precedes |

Why This Matters at Love Church

- **Unity over debate:** Though views differ, we are united on the essentials—Christ’s return, resurrection, judgment, and restoration.
- **Living with hope:** No matter your view, Jesus will return, righteousness will triumph, and pain will end.
- **Balanced urgency:** Some await His visible return (premillennial), some work toward His reign through the Church (postmillennial), and some live as part of His current reign (amillennial).

Section 4: Living Today in Light of Eternity

Knowing we live in the “already” of Christ’s victory and the “not yet” of His return shapes everything—our perspective, purpose, and priorities.

1. Live Like It Matters Eternally

- **Stay alert and faithful:** In Luke 12:37, Jesus praises the servant who is awake for his master’s return—a visual for living ready in every moment. JD Greear emphasizes this:

“Live in a way that only makes sense if Jesus is coming back soon.”

- **Walk in righteousness every day:** Romans 13:12 challenges us—“the night is far gone, the day is at hand”—to embody Christ’s light daily. Paul puts it this way:

“If our lives end tonight, are we ready to meet the Lord?”

2. Embrace Eternal Perspective for Comfort

- **Your suffering has purpose:** Paul calls earthly afflictions “momentary light troubles” compared to the “eternal weight of glory” awaiting believers.
- **Peace in the waiting:** Knowing eternity provides hope in hardship—it’s not meaningless pain but preparation for resurrection and restoration.

3. Shape Daily Rhythms Around Eternity

- **Pray without ceasing:** 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 urges consistent prayer, joy, and gratitude. It’s not about silence or perfection—it’s constant communion with God.
- **Live with focus and stewardship:** 1 Peter 4:7–11 calls us to clear-minded prayer, generous hospitality, and faithful use of our spiritual gifts—all shaped by the nearness of Christ’s return.

4. Live with Urgency, Yet Not Anxiety

- **Prioritize what endures:** Matthew 6:19–21 teaches us to store treasures in heaven, knowing earthly things fade.
- **Let this guide how you invest your time, money, and relationships**—into growth, service, love, and gospel-making work.

Summary: A Life Redeemed Now for Forever

Eternity isn't merely an idea—it is a lens through which we live:

Eternal Truth

Jesus is returning

Our lives are temporary

Everything matters

How It Shapes Us

Influence how we live today—
faithful, awake, enduring

Infuses everything with urgency—
faith, hope, gratitude

We invest time, talents, and
treasures in what lasts

Section 5: Living with Hope in Action

Understanding the end times isn't just theology—it's a call to live differently, rooted in hope and purpose.

1. Live on Mission Every Day

Jesus didn't return so we could hide—we live ready and focused. Paul reminds us not to bury our gifts but multiply them for His glory. One pastor says:

“If you know the world has an end—and that it could be soon—that rearranges your priorities... I want to have invested my talents to the fullest for his kingdom.”

We engage in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and relationships with intentional gospel purpose—fully awake and active.

2. Walk in Purity

Jesus urged us to stay alert: “Be on guard... stay awake” (Matt.24:42). When we live as if He could return today, it heightens our moral awareness. That spiritual vigilance isn't legalism—it's a humble readiness, living holy because we long to meet our Savior.

3. Show Compassion Through Mercy

Peter reminds us to use our time wisely and to be loving and generous. Amid suffering and injustice, our work isn't just charity—it's a glimpse of the coming Kingdom. Acts of mercy are Kingdom seeds, reflecting our hope for a renewed world.

4. Practice Forgiveness

Knowing Christ will return and judge gives us freedom from resentment. As JD Greear points out, understanding that “he’ll set all things right” helps us endure hurt without bitterness. We forgive not because wrongs don’t matter—but because His justice—and His grace—do.

5. Live Hopefully, Not Fearfully

Our hope isn’t based on optimism—it’s anchored in God’s control. As one writer notes, we’re not cheerleaders for luck; we trust our lives are “firmly held in the hand of God”. This secure hope enables us to keep going, keep giving, keep shining—even when life is hard.

Why This Matters for You

- **You live intentionally**, not passively—each day matters.
- **You live morally**, not out of fear—because He might return today.
- **You live compassionately**, not passively—reflecting His justice.
- **You live securely**, not anxiously—because God holds the future.

In short: We don’t obsess over dates or signs—but we live ready, hopeful, and on mission. We serve, love, forgive, and approach each day as though Christ might walk through that door. That is living with end-times hope in action.

Recommended Books for Living with End-Times Hope

1. **“Surprised by Hope”** by N.T. Wright
2. **“Are We Living in the Last Days?”** by Timothy Keller
3. **“Revelation and the End of All Things”** by Craig R. Koester
4. **“The Unseen Realm”** by Michael Heiser