

The Last Things

I. The doctrine of the Last Things is about what happens to us from the point of our physical death and what occurs in the world when Christ comes again in glory.

A. Temporal Death:

1. Is neither destruction nor annihilation.
2. But the \_\_\_\_\_ of the soul from the body.
  - a. Matt. 27:50
  - b. Luke 23:43
  - c. Eccl. 12:7
3. While the experience is universal (Hebrews 9:27), the results are of one of two possibilities:

For those who trust in Christ, death is not a punishment, but a \_\_\_\_\_ (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:18) and a change for the better (Philippians 1:23 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:6-8).

For those who reject Christ, death is the cause for fear and dread, as it will lead to eternal punishment and separation from God.

4. Death is referred to as \_\_\_\_\_ in the Bible on account of the appearance of the physical body (Luke 8:52-55) without the spirit. We reject, however, the false teaching referred to as “soul sleep” that means that the spirit sleeps in an unconscious state until the resurrection.
5. After physical death, we retain our distinct \_\_\_\_\_ and continue to exist as a distinct person (Matthew 17 on the Transfiguration).
6. The departed soul remains in heaven or in hell until the Day of Judgment, when they shall be \_\_\_\_\_ with their own bodies (John 5:28-29, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16).
7. While in heaven or hell, there can be no “crossing over” (Luke 16:26).
8. The popular idea that ghosts are souls remaining on earth is tenuous to say the least (though Scripture does not say that it is impossible to see the spirit of someone who has died, in fact there are examples from Scripture of it happening as in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 28:13f.) However, we also know that angels may appear as human (Hebrews 13:2). Satan himself

masquerades as an angel of light (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:14) and we know that his demons (other fallen angels) seek to deceive.

9. Also keep in mind God's warning about occult practices in Deuteronomy 18:9-12.
10. We must therefore stay strong in the Word of God.

#### B. The Second Coming of Christ:

1. Factual and real: Acts 1:11, Matthew 24:30 and 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16.
2. All people will see Him coming down from \_\_\_\_\_ and the angels of heaven will accompany Him (Matt. 25:31, Luke 17:24 and Luke 21:35).
3. Time of His coming: The Last Day is already appointed by God, but no one else knows that day (Mark 13:32). Thus we are to be ready at all times (Matt. 24:42-44).
4. Signs of His Coming: Matthew 24, Luke 21, 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3. There are three major sign categories:
  - a. Signs in NATURE (like earthquakes).
  - b. Signs in the SOCIETAL and POLITICAL realm (like wars).
  - c. Signs in the CHURCH realm (like false teaching).

#### C. Antichrist:

1. General, many antichrists or \_\_\_\_\_ teachers within the church. 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:18.
2. Specific, as in "the man of lawlessness" of 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:3 who is an exceptional servant of the devil.
3. The marks of the Specific Antichrist/The Man of Lawlessness:
  - a. He will come in connection to the great falling away, called "apostasy" (2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:3), when many people will reject the Gospel of Christ.
  - b. He exalts himself over everything and everyone else as if he were God and sets himself up in God's temple (2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:4).

- c. He will impress people with great false wonders (2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:9), but will ultimately teach against and reject the pure Gospel of Christ (1<sup>st</sup> John 2:2).

Note: The Lutheran Confessions identify Antichrist with The Roman Papacy (not an individual pope, but the office of the papacy). Recall that historically salvation by grace through faith alone was anathematized by the Roman Council of Trent; that the pope claimed full power over the church and political realms; and the pope is given such exceptional power that it is believed he may establish new doctrine. Furthermore to this day the pope has become a symbolic representative for the entire Christian Church even while many protestant/evangelical Christians praise him for his ethical and moral positions. But we must always monitor whether or not the pure saving Gospel of Jesus Christ is being presented (regardless of the status or reputation of the one preaching or teaching). We must also be aware of how the Antichrist might manifest in a different context in accordance with the biblical criteria listed above. Note: the Lutheran position is not taken to mean that Lutherans view Roman Catholics as non-Christians. We acknowledge many Roman Catholic Christians who are devout in the saving faith by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. These Catholics are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our concern here is about the official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.

#### D. The Reign of Christ Upon The Earth and Revelation 20:

1. There are two major ways of viewing Revelation 20 where the 1000 years is mentioned six times.
  - a. Amillennialism: The 1000 years is NOT literal, but is SYMBOLIC or figurative. It refers to the perfect time when Christ reigns through His Church on earth as He reigns in heaven.
    - 1) This view calls attention to Christ's words that His kingdom is not of this world (Jn 18:36) and that Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God was in the midst of His disciples (Lk 17:21).
    - 2) This view teaches that Christ bound Satan when He died on the cross and rose from the dead.
    - 3) This view rejects the teaching of the "rapture," and the idea that unbelievers will be "left behind" for a second chance (The *Left Behind* series presents a patently false doctrine. There is not a SINGLE Bible passage that teaches a pretribulational rapture of the church. Even the adherents of this teaching admit this glaring fact).
    - 4) 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:14-17 is describing some of the events of The Last Day/Judgment Day/The Second Coming of Christ.

- 5) This view teaches that the tribulation – when Christians are persecuted before the second coming of Christ – as an unknown period of time. It should not surprise us if it is happening now (consider how much in the world resists and rejects the Christian faith, consider also real persecution against Christians).
- b. Millennialism or chiliasm (for example, pre-millennialism): For the most part, this view says that the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth is YET TO COME. In pre-millennialism, Christ will come to take all Christians (the “rapture”) before the 1000 years begin.
    - 1) This view teaches that Christ has not yet bound Satan, but will do so when He comes visibly to begin the millennium.
    - 2) This view teaches the “rapture,” and the idea that unbelievers left behind will have a second chance to accept Christ.
    - 3) This view teaches that the tribulation will occur before, during or after the rapture and before the millennium.
2. See attachment “Diagrams of Millennial Views.”
  3. Know these terms as well:
    - a. First Death: Sin entering into the world leading to spiritual and physical death.
    - b. First Resurrection: Experienced only by those who are saved. Conversion that leads to the soul experiencing heaven before the bodily resurrection (if that Christian dies BEFORE the second coming of Christ).
    - c. Second Resurrection: The GREAT resurrection when all flesh will rise.
    - d. Second Death: Experienced only by those condemned. Damnation leads to the soul and body being cast into the eternal lake of fire.

E. The Last Day, aka Judgment Day, aka The End of the World:

1. The Second Coming: Like lightning (Matt. 24:27). Christ will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16).

2. The Resurrection: One general resurrection of both believers and unbelievers (John 5:28-29). The body buried and the soul once separated at death will be reunited. The believer's body will be \_\_\_\_\_ (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:51-53), but the unbeliever's body and soul suffers eternal damnation (Matt. 10:28, Mark 9:43-48, Luke 16:24 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1:9, these all teach the reality of hell).
  3. The Judgment: Christ will judge all people on the Last Day. Their works are considered as signs of whether or not they had saving faith (Matt. 25).
  4. What will happen to the earth? Annihilation or renovation? 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:6-7 & 10 seems to suggest annihilation, but Hebrews 1:10-12 suggests renovation. The Scriptures teach that there will be a NEW heaven and a NEW earth (Rev. 21).
- F. Heaven: Those with saving faith in Christ enjoy a "marriage" celebration (Matthew 25:10, Rev. 19:9), a banquet (Luke 22:30), real bodies (Job 19:26-27, 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:53), in the presence of Christ (Rev. 21:23), in the presence of the holy angels (Is. 6:2 & Daniel 7:10), in the presence of the saints of ages past (Matt. 8:11), in the presence of all who have died in the Lord (Rev. 14:13, Luke 23:43 & 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 5:8), a real place described as a house with many rooms (John 14:2), a heavenly city (Rev. 21:10-27), a river of the water of life and the tree of life in our midst bearing fruit (Rev. 22:1-2), no matrimony (Matt. 22:30), all good questions answered (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:9-12), no death, no mourning, or crying or pain (Rev. 21:4), full satisfaction and contentment (Psalm 17:15), unspeakable joy and pleasure (John 16:22, 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:8).

Catechism: pgs. 169-173.