

Hope Community Church

Week 12 - Statement of Faith: The Last Things

From Hope's Statement of Faith:

We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal felicity of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked. Matt. 16:27; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts. 1:11; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thes. 4:15; 2 Tim. 4:1; Titus 2:13; 1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Cor. 15; 2 Thes. 1:7-10; Rev. 20:4-6, 11-15

Personal And Visible Return

? What are different views or representations of the end times you've seen or heard? (through church, conversations with others, popular culture, etc.)

As we just discussed there are a lot of different thoughts about what the end times will be like. There are even a wide variety of views within Christianity, and differing views from person to person at Hope, because there are some things that are more open to interpretation that we can't be absolutely certain about. If you have more questions after our time together we can dig in more later, but our focus today during small group will be on some aspects that scripture is clear about that Hope believes.

Matthew 16:27 (NIV)

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

Mark 14:62 (NIV)

"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

John 14:3 (NIV)

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Acts 1:11 (NIV)

"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

? Based on these verses, where is Christ now?

? What is Christ doing?

? What is Christ going to do?

? How is Christ going to come back? From the verses, what will it be like?

Matthew 16 says that the Son of Man will come and reward each person according to what they have done. Let's dig into that a bit more.

2 Thessalonians 1:1-10 (NIV):

Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: ²Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. ⁴ Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

⁵ All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. ⁶ God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you ⁷ and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. ⁸ He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might ¹⁰ on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

? How does this add to our knowledge of the last things? Specifically, what are the rewards or results each person will experience based on what they've done?

So there are two pretty different outcomes here. In God's right judgment those who do not know God are punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the Lord. In Matthew, Jesus describes this eternal separation from God as a, "blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." That's pretty heavy to take in. But for those who are found in Christ, those who believe, they will experience eternity in a totally different way. We know that Christ will return, and that He is preparing a place for us.

Isaiah 65:17 (NIV)

God says, "See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."

Revelation 21:1-5 (NIV)

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed

away.”⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

? So, what will this new kingdom be like?

New Heaven And New Earth

God will dwell among his people and make all things new. We’re going to split up and look at a few different passages. For each section, answer the question, “What does this passage tell us about the new heaven and new earth?” When everyone has had time to read and discuss, we’ll go around and have each group answer that question for their passage.

Revelation 20:4-6 (NIV)

⁴ I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.⁶ Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years....

? What does this passage tell us about the new heaven and new earth?

1 Corinthians 15:20-28 (NIV)

²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.²³ But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.²⁴ Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.²⁷ For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.²⁸ When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

? What does this passage tell us about the new heaven and new earth?

1 Corinthians 15:35-49 (NIV)

³⁵ But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”³⁶ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.³⁷ When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.³⁹ Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another.⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and

there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. ⁴¹ The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. ⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

? What does this passage tell us about the new heaven and new earth?

? What excites you most about the prospect of eternity with God in His kingdom?

? How does what we’ve talked about tonight sit with you? How does it influence the way you live your life?

2 Timothy 4:1-5 (NIV)

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: ² Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³ For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵ But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

? What does it mean to do the work of an evangelist and discharge the duties of your ministry?

Questions For Discussion & Accountability

? How have you been doing the work of an evangelist? Or, in what ways can you start?

? What hardships or challenges are you experiencing? How can the promise of this future help you to endure these hardships?

? How can we encourage you in any/all of this?