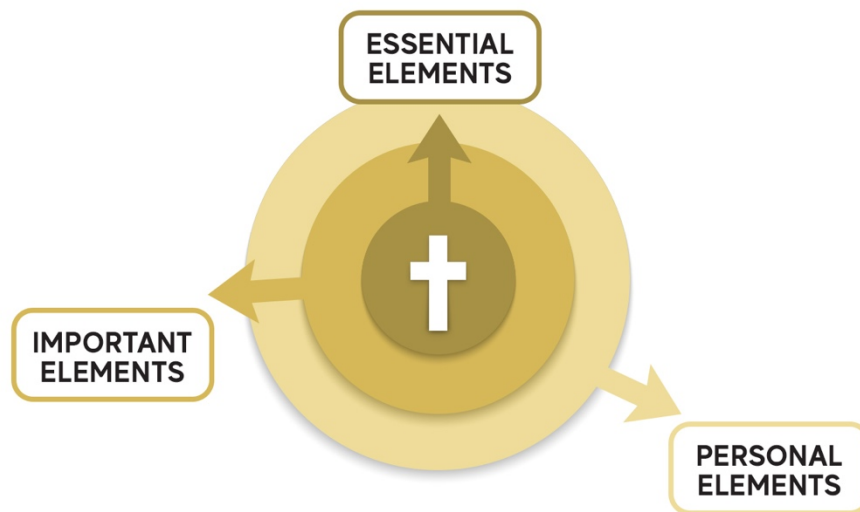


End Times Essentials



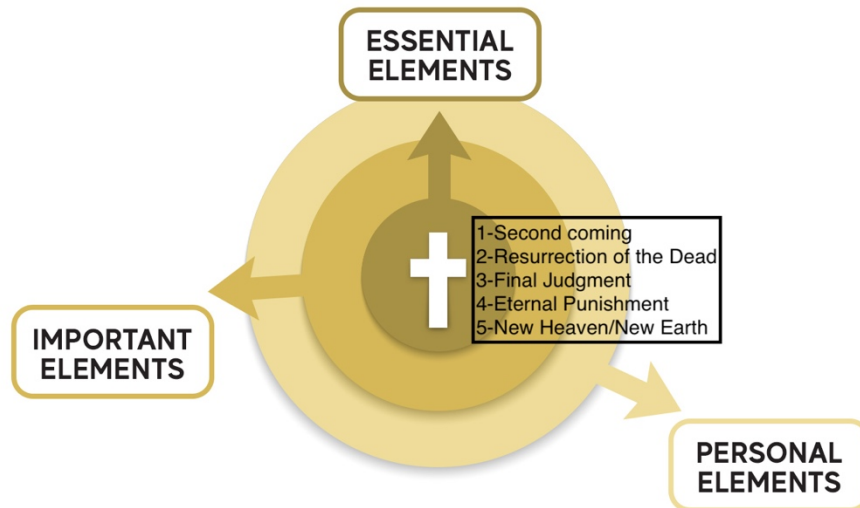
We believe that Jesus is coming back to earth in order to bring this age to an end. Jesus will reward the saved and punish the wicked, and finally destroy God's last enemy, death. He will put all things under the Father, so that God may be all in all forever. That is why we have urgency for the Great Commission—to make disciples of all nations. We like to look at the Great Commission as an inherent part of God’s original command to “be fruitful and multiply.” We want to be disciples of Jesus who love people and help them to be disciples of Jesus. We are a movement of disciples who make disciples who help renew existing churches and who start new churches that make more disciples. We want to reach as many as possible—until Jesus returns and God restores all creation to himself in the new heaven and new earth.

I. End Times Essentials – *here are the* five core, orthodox elements of what the Bible teaches about the end.

- The second coming
- The resurrection of the dead
- The final judgment
- Eternal punishment

- The New Heaven and New Earth

These elements are foundational to Biblical orthodoxy. They are the focus of what scripture teaches about end things and should be foundational to our beliefs. These are also the beliefs upon which the earliest Christian focused in the earliest faith statements of the historic church: the Apostles creed and the Nicene creed.¹



1. Why is the Second Coming of Jesus so Important?

It is the final battle that ends the war with evil, brings the resurrection of the dead and leads to victorious, eternal life.

The apostle Paul describes the suddenness of the second coming in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

2. What is The Resurrection of the Dead?

The second coming of Jesus will also bring forth the resurrection from the dead of all who have lived. The Bible teaches that when a follower of Jesus dies prior to the second coming of Jesus, they go instantaneously to be at “home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). Similarly, when a non-believer dies, they instantaneously go to a place of torment, separated from God (Luke 16:23). So, at death, both the saved and the unsaved are in the intermediate state. Everyone remains in this temporary state prior to the second coming of Christ.

At the second coming of Christ, we will celebrate the resurrection of the dead. At that very moment, both the saved and the condemned are resurrected and brought before the judgment of God to receive their eternal rewards or punishment. The saved will receive glorified bodies and enjoy eternal life in the new heaven and new earth (see chapter five). But sadly, those who die without Christ as their Savior, will be condemned to an eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46).

For the disciple of Jesus, the resurrection of the dead will be an exciting reality. The new bodies we will receive will not be made of flesh and blood; rather, they will be imperishable, glorious, and powerful bodies. The Apostle Paul described it this way:

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

Paul goes on to describe how it will happen:

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:50–53)

Our new bodies will be fitted for the new heaven and new earth. But most importantly, our new bodies will be ideally suited for an eternal life of intimate communion with God.

3. What is the Final Judgment?

It is when God, the Righteous Judge, declares each person saved or condemned.

Romans 14:10 – 12 - You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'" So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

4. What Future Awaits the Unrepentant?

The unrepentant will painfully suffer eternal separation from God in eternity.

Revelation 21:8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death. (NIV)

Matthew 7:13-14

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

(NIV)

2 Thessalonians 1:6-8

God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 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. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord

Jesus. (NIV)

5. What is the Promise of the New Heaven and the New Earth?

The saved will live eternally with God on a new earth, a home of righteousness.

The Intermediate State

The Apostle Paul clearly states that to “be absent from the body is to be home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). If we die prior to Christ’s return, our last breath here becomes our first breath there in God’s presence. The dead in Christ are not asleep in the grave as some people assume. Rather, they are home with the Lord in the abode of God, that being the “third heaven” which Paul described experiencing in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, calling the abode of God a paradise. The “first heaven” provides rain (Psalm 68:8); whereas the “second heaven” is arrayed with the sun, moon, stars and planets (Psalm 8:3, 19:1, 33:6); while Paul’s “third heaven” is beyond the celestial and is the abode of God, where Christians are “home with the Lord” prior to Christ’s return.

This counters another misconception that the deceased remain in the grave, where the soul “sleeps” until the return of Jesus Christ when the “dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). To the contrary, the dead in Christ are home with the Lord and they rise up as an army, and they accompany Jesus at the second coming to vanquish the evil one (Revelation 19:8, 14).²

Isaiah 65:17

"See, I will create *new heavens* and a *new earth*. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind." (NIV – emphasis mine)

Isaiah 66:22

"As the *new heavens* and the *new earth* that I make will endure before me..." (NIV—emphasis mine)

At Christ's return, God destroys this earth and the heavens (i.e., the atmosphere and space). The Apostle Peter described the unique details of this little-known fact.

2 Peter 3:10-13

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a *new heaven* and a *new earth*, where righteousness dwells." (NIV—emphasis mine)

Revelation 21:1

"Then I saw a *new heaven* and a *new earth*, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away... (NIV—emphasis mine)

II. Secondary but Important End Time Models – *we will* focus on the other important elements that are not part of essential, foundational beliefs. These secondary or third level beliefs are often debated by godly leaders in the church and they include the following:

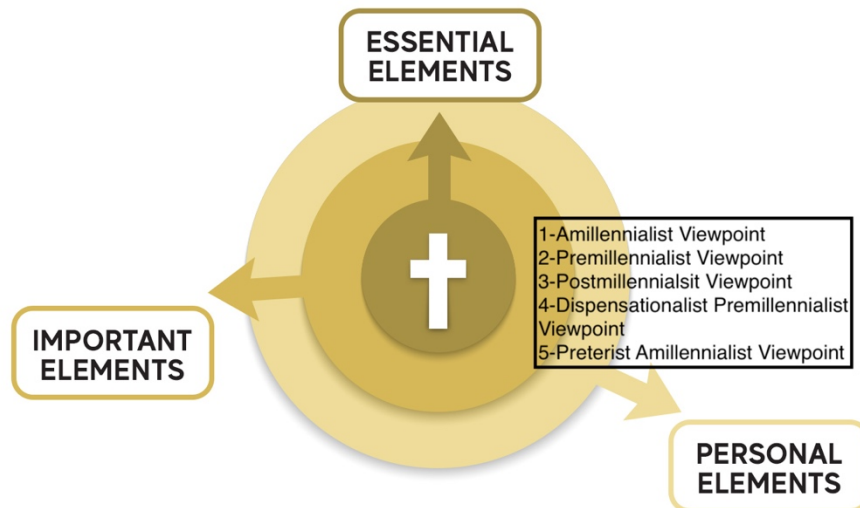
- The 1,000 year reign
- Cosmic disruptions and tribulation on earth at the end
- Increase in false prophets and wickedness
- The anti-Christ

- The conversion of Israel

The renew.org and Harpeth Christian Church we champion a theological paradigm which upholds with vigor that which is essential, but at the same time, promotes respect on secondary, but important and personal beliefs.³

We will leave it to other writers to work out the details on these secondary doctrines.

Here are the five end times viewpoints.



¹ Dayton Hartman does a good job in showing how these five elements are key. He demonstrates their connection to the early creeds as a key benchmark, see *Jesus Wins: The Good News of the End Times* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019)

² Ibid, pp.41-76.

³ For more information on the paradigm of different levels of importance to Biblical teachings, see Chad Ragesdale, *Bullseye Christianity: Discerning the essential, important and personal elements of the faith* (Renew, 2021).