

PLEASANT SPRINGS END TIMES SERIES • LESSON 4 • SERIES FINALE

A Positive Biblical Theology of the End

The Grand Story, the Return of the King, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Renewal of Creation — what Pleasant Springs teaches, with all our heart

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← [Discipleship School](#)

Where this fits: The fourth and final lesson of the Pleasant Springs *End Times* series. After [Lesson 1](#) (the Rapture), [Lesson 2](#) (Revelation), and [Lesson 3](#) (the millennium, Israel, and the Church), we finish with a positive, hopeful, Christ-centered statement of what we actually *do* believe about the end of all things. No more “what we do not teach.” Only the good news.

WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

Three lessons of careful distinction-making are behind us. We have traced the 19th-century origin of the Rapture doctrine. We have learned to read Revelation as first-century apocalyptic mail to seven real congregations. We have walked through the three millennial views and the four frameworks for relating Israel and the Church. We have said, carefully and respectfully, what Pleasant Springs does *not* teach and why.

But a Christian eschatology cannot live on negations. Our people do not come to church to learn what we reject; they come to hear the good news. This final lesson, then, is the good news. It is what we affirm with all our heart. It is the hope that keeps a persecuted Nigerian pastor on his feet, that steadies an elderly saint in her last illness, that teaches a young couple to start a family

in a broken world, that gives a missionary the courage to go where the gospel has never been preached. It is the end of the story that every Christian is living toward.

The shape of biblical hope is not evacuation. It is *consummation*. The story that began in a garden ends in a garden-city. The God who made all things very good is going to remake all things very good — and he is going to dwell in the middle of them with his people forever.

Greek NT (Rev 21:3–4): ἰδοὺ ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ σκηνώσει μετ’ αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς μετ’ αὐτῶν ἔσται, αὐτῶν θεός.

Revelation 21:3–4 (ESV): “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

PART 1 — THE GRAND STORY: FIVE ACTS OF SCRIPTURE

Christian hope cannot be understood apart from the Christian story. Our eschatology is not a section of the systematic theology textbook; it is the last scene of the greatest drama ever told. The Bible tells one story in five acts, and only the last scene of the fifth act is what we commonly call “the end times.”

ACT ONE

Creation: God makes a good world (Genesis 1–2)

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Six days of separation and filling. A garden planted in Eden. Man made in God’s image, male and female, given dominion. “Very good,” seven times affirmed. This is the baseline from which everything else departs and to which everything else returns. The material world is not a mistake to be escaped. It is God’s good work.

ACT TWO

Fall: The introduction of sin and death (Genesis 3)

The serpent's lie. Adam's choice. The curse on the ground. Death enters, exile from the garden, the flaming sword, the long tragedy that follows. The rest of the Old Testament is the outworking of this fall: Cain kills Abel, the flood, Babel, the patriarchs, Egypt, exodus, the judges, the kings, the prophets, the exile. Throughout it all, a promise: the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). God is not going to abandon his world.

ACT THREE

Redemption: Jesus Christ (the Gospels)

In the fullness of time, the Son of God takes human flesh, lives the life Adam failed to live, dies the death Adam deserved, and rises on the third day as the firstfruits of a new humanity. The kingdom of God has broken into history. Death has been defeated at its root. The serpent's head has been crushed. Everything that happens afterward is the consequence of the resurrection rolling out across the world.

ACT FOUR

The Church: Already but not yet (Acts through Revelation 3)

The Spirit is poured out. The gospel spreads from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the ends of the earth. The Church lives between the two comings of the King — in a world where Christ has already won but where the victory is not yet fully manifested. We suffer, we witness, we love, we endure, we die, we are raised up, we are gathered into the Church across 2,000 years. This is the age in which we live.

ACT FIVE

Consummation: The Lord returns and makes all things new (Revelation 19–22)

The King comes. The dead are raised. The judgment happens. The old order passes away. The new heavens and the new earth are revealed. The holy city descends from God out of heaven. God dwells with his people forever. The tears are wiped. Death is no more. This is the end toward which the whole story has been moving from Act One. This is what Pleasant Springs believes is coming, and this is what we are waiting for.

Notice the shape. The end is not the negation of the beginning. It is its *fulfillment*. The creation begun in Eden is completed in the new Jerusalem. The tree of life that Adam was barred from in Genesis 3 is replanted on both sides of the river in Revelation 22. The image-bearing humanity

that was marred in Act Two is restored and glorified in Act Five. Nothing good is lost. Everything broken is mended. God's purposes do not fail.

PART 2 — ALREADY AND NOT YET: THE TWO-AGES FRAMEWORK

The New Testament everywhere assumes a specific shape of biblical time. The prophets of the Old Testament had spoken of “this age” (the fallen present under sin and death) and “the age to come” (the messianic age of righteousness and life). The two were expected to be separated by the arrival of the Messiah: one day he would come, everything wrong would be set right, and the age to come would replace this age decisively.

What the New Testament reveals is a shock: the Messiah has come, but he has come in two stages. At his first coming the age to come has *broken into* this age — but this age is still here. His resurrection is the firstfruits; his second coming will be the harvest. Between the two comings, the two ages overlap. The Christian lives in the overlap.

The kingdom is already here — Christ is enthroned at the Father's right hand (Phil 2:9–11). The Spirit is poured out (Acts 2:16–18, fulfilling Joel 2). Sins are forgiven now (1 John 1:9). Eternal life is a present possession (John 5:24). The powers of the age to come have been tasted (Heb 6:5).

The kingdom is not yet consummated — we groan in these bodies (Rom 8:23). Creation groans with us (Rom 8:22). We still die. We still sin. The wicked still prosper. The Lord's Prayer is still prayed: “your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

This “already but not yet” framework (developed in modern scholarship by Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 1946, and George Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 1974) is essential. It saves us from two equal and opposite mistakes: (a) triumphalism, which expects too much victory now and is shattered by suffering; and (b) defeatism, which expects no victory until the return and is shattered by the present labor. The right posture is confident endurance. The King has come. The King will come. Meanwhile, we work.

*Greek NT (Heb 6:4–5): ἀδύνατον γὰρ τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας, γευσαμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ καλὸν γευσαμένους θεοῦ ῥῆμα **δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος.***

Hebrews 6:4–5 (ESV): “For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and **the powers of the age to come...**”

The age to come has real *powers* already at work in the present. Every healing, every conversion, every answered prayer, every ounce of grace, every flash of joy — these are arrival announcements. The future has come near.

PART 3 — CHRIST WILL RETURN: SIX TRUTHS WE CONFESS

The center of Christian eschatology is not a timetable. It is a Person. Pleasant Springs Church confesses, with the whole historic Christian Church across every age and tradition, six clear truths about the return of Jesus Christ.

1

His return is *personal*. The same Jesus will come back.

Not an idea, not a spirit, not a movement, not a “cosmic Christ” diffused into creation — but the actual Nazarene who walked with his disciples, ate fish on the beach, bore the wounds of the cross in his glorified body. “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). The same Jesus. Your Savior. Your friend.

2**His return is *bodily*. He will come in the flesh he ascended in.**

When Jesus rose from the dead, he rose bodily — “a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Luke 24:39). He ate broiled fish (Luke 24:42–43). He was touched (John 20:27). That same body was taken up into heaven at the Ascension, and will return. Christianity is the only religion that insists on the physical: God made matter, God took matter, God will come back in matter, and God will renew all matter.

3**His return is *visible*. Every eye will see him.**

“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him” (Rev 1:7). This is not a secret event, not a quiet rapture, not a two-stage coming of which one stage is invisible. The Second Coming is the most public event in history. No one will miss it. No one will doubt it. No televangelist will need to explain it. The King will stand forth, and the whole earth will see.

4**His return is *glorious*. He comes in the glory of the Father.**

“They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt 24:30). With all the angels (Matt 25:31). With the sound of the trumpet of God (1 Thess 4:16). With the shout of the archangel. The one who was despised and rejected, crowned with thorns, numbered with transgressors, will be revealed as Lord of lords and King of kings. Every knee that has ever bent will bend again — this time in acknowledgment, not necessarily in love.

5**His return is *certain*, even though the timing is hidden.**

“Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only” (Matt 24:36). This is not a riddle for the clever; it is a rest for the faithful. We do not need to know the when. We need only to know the who, and he has already told us. “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness” (2 Pet 3:9). He will come. He will not be late. Every date-setter has been wrong. Christ himself is the only one who knows, and he is the one who has promised.

6

His return brings *everything* — resurrection, judgment, new creation, God with us.

The return of Christ is not a stage in a longer program; it is the hinge on which everything else swings. At his coming the dead are raised (1 Cor 15:51–53). At his coming the nations are judged (Matt 25:31–32). At his coming the creation is renewed (Rom 8:21). At his coming God comes to dwell with his people (Rev 21:3). You do not wait for Christ *plus* the resurrection *plus* the judgment *plus* the new creation. You wait for Christ, and he brings all of it with him.

The Apostles' Creed on the End

“He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;

the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.”

— The Apostles' Creed, second and third centuries, confessed by the whole Church for nearly 2,000 years.

PART 4 — THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

The Christian hope is *not* the immortality of a disembodied soul. It is not ghosts in heaven. It is not cloud-sitting. It is not eternal harp lessons. The Christian hope is the resurrection of the body — every faithful believer raised, transformed, glorified, as Christ was raised — on the day he returns.

Paul gives us the single most detailed treatment of this in 1 Corinthians 15. The chapter is too long to quote in full, but its shape matters. It begins with the gospel Paul preached and the

Corinthians received (15:1–11): Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, appeared to many witnesses — most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote. Then Paul addresses Corinthian skeptics who were saying there is no resurrection of the dead (15:12). If there is no resurrection, Paul says, then Christ has not been raised, our preaching is in vain, your faith is in vain, we are still in our sins, those who died have perished, we are of all people most to be pitied (15:13–19). But Christ has in fact been raised, as the firstfruits.

Greek NT (1 Cor 15:51–54): ἰδοὺ μυστήριον ὑμῖν λέγω· πάντες οὐ κοιμηθησόμεθα, πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα, ἐν ἀτόμῳ, ἐν ῥίπῃ ὀφθαλμοῦ, ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ σάλπιγγι· σαλπίζει γάρ, καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐγερθήσονται ἀφθαρτοὶ, καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀλλαγησόμεθα. δεῖ γὰρ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθανασίαν. ὅταν δὲ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσῃται ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσῃται ἀθανασίαν, τότε γενήσεται ὁ λόγος ὁ γεγραμμένος· κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νῆκος.

1 Corinthians 15:51–54 (ESV): “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: **‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’**”

What Paul says about the resurrection body:

- It is *continuous* with our present body. Paul uses the metaphor of the seed: what is sown is what rises, but transformed (15:36–38). The grain of wheat is truly the same plant as the stalk, yet glorified.

- It is *discontinuous* with our present body. The perishable puts on imperishable. The mortal puts on immortality. The body sown in weakness is raised in power; sown in dishonor, raised in glory (15:42–43).

- It is a *spiritual* body (*sōma pneumatikon*, 15:44) — which does *not* mean “a non-physical body” (a contradiction in terms). Paul’s word means “a body animated and fit for the

Spirit,” as opposed to the present *sôma psychikon*, “a body animated by the natural soul.” The new body is more physical, not less — real, tangible, incorruptible, glorified.

- It is *like Christ's*. “We eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (Phil 3:20–21). The pattern of our resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus. He ate fish. He was touched. He bore the scars. He was recognizable and yet transformed. So shall we be.

The resurrection of the body is not a technical detail buried in the middle of a creed. It is the governing Christian conviction about the future. It means that God does not discard what he has made. It means that your body matters, your brother's body matters, the body of the suffering child matters, and in the end every body that belongs to Christ will be made new.

— N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, HarperOne 2008

PART 5 — THE FINAL JUDGMENT

Every human being who has ever lived will stand before the judgment seat of God. This is one of the most consistently taught and most consistently avoided doctrines of the Christian faith. The Old Testament psalms and prophets cried out for it. The New Testament assumes it on every page. The historic creeds confess it. Pleasant Springs affirms it.

Greek NT (Heb 9:27–28): καὶ καθ' ὅσον ἀπόκειται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαξ ἀποθανεῖν, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο κρίσις, οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ προσενεχθεὶς εἰς τὸ πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας, ἐκ δευτέρου χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας ὀφθήσεται τοῖς αὐτὸν ἀπεκδεχομένοις εἰς σωτηρίαν.

Hebrews 9:27–28 (ESV): “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

Greek NT (Acts 17:30–31): τὰ νῦν παραγγέλλει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν, καθότι ἔστησεν ἡμέραν ἐν ἣ ἔμελλει κρίνειν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ἐν ἀνδρὶ ᾧ ὄρισεν, πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν.

Acts 17:30–31 (ESV): “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Four things to say about the final judgment:

1. The Judge is Jesus. God has committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:22). The one who will judge the world is the one who bore its sin. This is not a terrifying stranger but the Savior who knows us perfectly. The same hand that stretched out on the cross holds the books.

2. The judgment is by works, and salvation is by faith — and these do not contradict. Revelation 20:12 says the dead were judged “by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.” James 2:17 says faith without works is dead. Romans 3:28 says we are justified by faith apart from works of the law. How do these cohere? Salvation is secured by Christ’s work alone, received through faith alone — and the genuine faith that saves produces real works that the final judgment will acknowledge as evidence of regeneration. Works do not save; works display whom faith has saved.

3. For the believer, the judgment is vindication, not terror. “Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, *not to deal with sin* but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb 9:28). Christians stand in Christ’s righteousness on that day. The sins that would have condemned us have already been judged at the cross. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). We will stand. We will not fall.

4. For the unbeliever, the judgment is a terrible thing. We say this not with satisfaction but with grief — with Paul’s tears (Rom 9:1–3), with Jesus’s weeping over Jerusalem

(Luke 19:41), with every faithful evangelist’s heart in every age. The New Testament is somber about the consequences of rejecting Christ: “the lake of fire” (Rev 20:15), “eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thess 1:9), “outer darkness” (Matt 25:30). Christians have disagreed about the specific nature of final judgment (conditional immortality, traditional eternal conscious torment, purgatorial views); Pleasant Springs holds the traditional view, but holds it with a heavy heart, not with glee. Hell is why we preach the gospel urgently. Heaven is why we preach it joyfully.

PART 6 — THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

Here the Christian imagination has been most damaged by popular teaching. For a hundred years American evangelicalism has often taught that the end of the world means the *destruction* of the world: the earth burns up, souls fly to heaven, the material creation is discarded. This is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches the *renewal* of the material creation.

Greek NT (2 Pet 3:10–13, selected): ἥξει δὲ ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς, ἐν ἣ ὁ οὐρανὸς ῥοιζήδων παρελεύσονται, στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται, καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται... καινοὺς δὲ οὐρανοὺς καὶ γῆν καινὴν κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ προσδοκῶμεν.

2 Peter 3:10, 13 (ESV): “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be **exposed**... But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

A crucial textual point: the Greek verb in 2 Peter 3:10 for what happens to “the earth and the works that are done on it” is *heurethêsetai* — “will be found,” “will be exposed,” “will be laid bare.” Older English translations (KJV, NIV 1984) translated the whole verse with “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up,” based on later inferior manuscripts that read *katakaisêsetai*. The best modern Greek text and almost all modern translations (ESV, NIV 2011, NRSV, NET) read “will be exposed.” Peter’s picture is not the incineration of the material world but its purification by the fire of divine judgment — a refining fire that burns away the dross and leaves the gold. The works of men (and of God in creation) are *laid bare*, not annihilated.

Greek NT (Rom 8:19–21): ἡ γὰρ ἀποκαταδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται. τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη... ὅτι καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ.

Romans 8:19–21 (ESV): “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility... in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

Creation itself will be *set free*, not destroyed. Like the resurrection of the body, the renewal of the earth is continuity with transformation. Oak trees and ocean waves, mountains and meadows, music and meals, language and laughter — these are not things to be left behind. They will be glorified.

LXX (Isa 65:17, 21–22, 25): ἔσται γὰρ ὁ οὐρανὸς καινὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ καινὴ... καὶ οἰκοδομήσουσιν οἰκίας καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐνοικήσουσιν καὶ καταφυτεύσουσιν ἀμπελῶνας καὶ αὐτοὶ φάγονται τὰ γενήματα αὐτῶν... τότε λύκοι καὶ ἄρνες βοσκηθήσονται ἅμα.

Isaiah 65:17, 21–22, 25 (ESV): “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth... They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit... The wolf and the lamb shall graze together.”

The Old Testament’s picture of the age to come includes houses built and lived in, vineyards planted and harvested, children who live long, and a restored peace among the creatures. This is not an escape to a disembodied heaven. This is heaven *coming down* to a renewed earth. Isaiah 65 is the picture of Revelation 21–22 in seed form.

The implication for how we live now: if the earth is to be renewed, not annihilated, then the work we do on this earth has eternal significance. The cup of cold water (Mark 9:41), the raising of a faithful child, the tilling of a garden, the writing of a good book, the practice of justice, the tending of a church, the care of a city — all of this labor in the Lord is “not in vain” (1 Cor 15:58). In some way beyond our full comprehension, the work done in Christ is taken up into the new creation. Nothing good is lost.

All of the above — the return of Christ, the resurrection, the judgment, the renewed creation — is the setting. The jewel at the center is this: God himself will dwell with his people. Face to face. With nothing between us. Forever.

This is the storyline of the Bible in one thread. In Eden, God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. After the fall, he dwelt in the Tabernacle, a tent of meeting in the wilderness — separated from his people by a veil. In Solomon’s Temple, he dwelt in Jerusalem, a dwelling among his people in glory — still separated by the holy of holies. In the incarnation, he tabernacled among us in Jesus (John 1:14, *esékênôsen*). At Pentecost, his Spirit came to dwell *in* his people. At the consummation, the dwelling will be complete: heaven comes down to earth, the tabernacle of God is with man, every veil is gone, we see him face to face.

Greek NT (Rev 22:3–5): καὶ πᾶν κατάθεμα οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι. καὶ ὁ θρόνος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου ἐν αὐτῇ ἔσται, καὶ οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ λατρεύσουσιν αὐτῷ, καὶ ὄψονται τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν.

Revelation 22:3–5 (ESV): “No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. **They will see his face**, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”

“**They will see his face.**” This is the beatific vision that the medieval theologians longed for, the goal of every biblical saint’s devotion, the final *why* of creation and redemption. Moses was not allowed to see God’s face and live (Ex 33:20); the redeemed in the new creation see his face without dying, because death has died. We shall see him as he is. “And when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

This is what heaven is for. It is not harps. It is not streets of gold. It is not winged cherubs or endless leisure. It is God with us. It is seeing the Lamb who was slain and reigns forever, and joining the chorus that the whole of creation joins, the redeemed from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, praising the God who made us and loved us and rescued us and at last brought us home.

Christian eschatology is never merely speculative. What you believe about the end decisively shapes how you live in the middle. Four implications.

1. We work with confidence. Because the earth will be renewed, not destroyed, our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58). Plant trees. Build businesses. Write books. Raise children. Teach classes. Tend gardens. Visit the sick. The work done in Christ carries into the new creation in ways we cannot now fully imagine. A Christian has every reason to work hard and long — not to earn salvation but because salvation is not an escape from the world but the redemption of the world, and the hands of God are the hands of his people.

2. We suffer with hope. “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18). This is not pious denial; it is mathematical comparison. Ten billion years of glory with God, measured against a hundred years of suffering now, makes the suffering — though real — countable. Christians suffer differently from the world because Christians know how the story ends.

3. We witness with urgency. If there is a real judgment and a real hope, then the gospel is not a preference; it is the only news that matters. Pleasant Springs tells its members: speak to your neighbors. Go on mission. Support the missionaries. Pray for the unsaved. Every human being you know is going either to the presence of Christ forever or away from it forever; you know the Lord, they do not yet, and the word he has given you is the word that will change their eternity. Tell it.

4. We worship with joy. The worship of Revelation 4–5, 7, 15, 19, and 22 is the goal of human existence and the shape of eternal life. Every Sunday morning at Pleasant Springs is a rehearsal of that. When we sing the hymns, break the bread, hear the Word, and pray, we are practicing what we will do forever in the presence of the Lamb. Worship is not preparation for real life; worship *is* real life, begun now.

*Greek NT (Titus 2:11–14, selected): ἐπεφάνη γὰρ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ σωτήριος πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις...
προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.*

Titus 2:11–14 (ESV): “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our **blessed hope**, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...”

Titus 2 is the single best New Testament summary of how eschatology reshapes ethics. “Waiting for our blessed hope” is itself a form of training to live rightly. The future pulls the present into shape.

PART 9 — THE GOSPEL IN LIGHT OF THE END

We end where every Christian teaching must end — at the gospel itself. Because the end will be what it will be, the gospel is urgent, gracious, and sufficient.

THE GOSPEL IN LIGHT OF THE END

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man for us. He lived the perfect life we failed to live. He died the death we deserved, bearing the sins of all who would believe in him. He rose from the dead on the third day, conquering death itself as the firstfruits of a new humanity. He ascended to the right hand of the Father. He will return, personally, bodily, visibly, and gloriously, to judge the living and the dead and to bring in the new creation. He is coming to raise your body, to wipe your tears, to renew the earth, and to dwell with you forever.

The invitation is open. Whoever will, let him come (Rev 22:17). Repent, believe, be baptized, be joined to Christ’s body. Receive now by faith the righteousness that will stand at the Last Day. Trust him to keep you until then.

The warning is real. Every person who refuses this invitation will face the judgment on their own terms. There is no neutral ground. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts (Ps 95:7–8; Heb 3:15).

Greek NT (Rev 22:17, 20): καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ νύμφη λέγουσιν· ἔρχου. καὶ ὁ ἀκούων εἰπάτω· ἔρχου. καὶ ὁ διψῶν ἐρχέσθω, ὁ θέλων λαβέτω ὕδωρ ζωῆς δωρεάν... λέγει ὁ μαρτυρῶν ταῦτα· ναί, ἔρχομαι ταχύ. Ἀμήν, ἔρχου, κύριε Ἰησοῦ.

Revelation 22:17, 20 (ESV): “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price... He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. **Come, Lord Jesus!**”

SIMPLIFIED SUMMARY — THE END TIMES SERIES IN ONE PAGE

PLEASANT SPRINGS CHURCH BELIEVES

- 1.** Jesus Christ will return — personally, bodily, visibly, and gloriously — at a time only the Father knows. One Second Coming, not two (Acts 1:11; Matt 24:30; 1 Thess 4:16; Rev 1:7).
- 2.** At his coming, the dead will be raised. The faithful will be given glorified, imperishable bodies like his own. Those alive will be caught up to meet him in the air — to escort the returning King down to the renewed earth (1 Thess 4:17; 1 Cor 15:51–54; Phil 3:20–21).
- 3.** Every person will stand before the judgment of God. The judge will be Jesus (John 5:22). Christians stand in his righteousness; unbelievers stand in their own sin (Rom 8:1; Heb 9:28).
- 4.** The creation itself will be renewed, not destroyed. The new heavens and new earth are continuous with the present creation, purified by judgment and glorified (Rom

8:19–21; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1).

5. God will dwell with his people forever. We will see his face. There will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain. All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well (Rev 21:3–4; 22:3–5).

This is what Pleasant Springs believes, teaches, preaches, prays, and worships toward. This is the hope that makes us faithful in the middle. This is the gospel in light of the end.

Summary of the Four-Lesson Series

Lesson 1 — The pretribulational Rapture doctrine was invented by John Nelson Darby in 1830 and has no place in eighteen centuries of prior Christian teaching. The Greek words (*parousia*, *apantêsis*, *harpazô*) do not describe an evacuation; they describe the Church going out to meet the returning King and escorting him back to his kingdom.

Lesson 2 — Revelation is apocalyptic-prophetic-epistolary mail from John on Patmos (c. AD 68 or 95) to seven real congregations under Roman persecution. It is not a coded newspaper of the 21st century. The four main approaches (preterist, historicist, futurist, idealist) each capture something true; we read it as eclectic idealist-preterist.

Lesson 3 — On the millennium we are historic premillennialists (with sympathy for amillennialism). On Israel and the Church we hold one people of God in Christ, with a real future conversion of ethnic Israel at Christ's return (Rom 11:25–27). We are not dispensational, and we are not strict supersessionists.

Lesson 4 — Positively and with joy: Christ will return in glory, the dead will be raised bodily, all will face judgment, the creation will be renewed, and God will dwell with his people face to face forever. That is the blessed hope.

And All Our Brothers and Sisters

Throughout the series we have said, at every turn, that Christians across many end-times views are our brothers and sisters in Christ. The historic Creeds do not require us to agree on the timing of the rapture, the details of the millennium, the structure of Daniel's seventy weeks, or the identification of the 144,000. They do require us to confess Christ crucified and risen, ascended

and coming again, the Judge of the living and the dead, the giver of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. On that we are one Church. “In the essentials, unity. In the non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity.”

PRAYER — A SERIES CLOSING

Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, Lamb of God, Lord of the church, the one who was and is and is to come: we come to the end of this little series of lessons and we confess that we have only begun to learn. Teach us what we could not learn here. Protect us from errors we have not yet seen. Keep us loving those who disagree with us about these things, because you died for them too, and we will spend eternity at the same table with them. Anchor our hope not in charts and timetables but in you, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Give us confidence to work, patience to suffer, boldness to witness, and joy to worship. When the trumpet sounds and the heavens open and you come with all your holy angels and the saints of every age, find us ready — faithful in our small corner of your world, waiting with your whole Church for the day we have always longed for. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read the Apostles' Creed aloud. Which phrases touch on the end? What does the Creed affirm, and what does it leave open? How much of the end-times debate that dominates modern Christian conversation is actually about credal essentials, and how much is not?

2. The New Testament teaches the resurrection of the *body*, not the immortality of a disembodied soul. Why does this matter for how we think about death, funerals, caring for the bodies of believers who have died, and the hope we offer to grieving families?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 15:58. Paul’s “therefore” connects the whole doctrine of the resurrection to concrete practical action: “Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” How would your daily work look different if you truly believed your labor in Christ carries into the new creation?

4. The book of Revelation ends with the word “Come.” The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” Jesus says, “Come.” Whoever is thirsty is invited to come. Who in your life needs to hear this invitation this week? How will you extend it?

5. Looking back over the four lessons of this series: what has most deepened or corrected your understanding? What remains unclear? What will you teach your children — or your own heart — differently now?

FURTHER READING

- **For a full positive biblical theology of the end:** N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*, HarperOne, 2008 — the most influential popular-level statement of the new-creation vision
- J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*, Baker Academic, 2014 — the best single scholarly defense of holistic, creation-renewal eschatology
- Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, Eerdmans, 1979 — Reformed, amillennial, still the standard classroom text
- Michael E. Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God*, Zondervan, 2004 — accessible recovery of the new-earth hope
- Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, Crossway, 2004 — on the already/not-yet kingdom

- Matthew L. Halsted, *The End of the World as We Know It*, IVP Academic, 2023 — referenced throughout the series
- **On the resurrection body and the new creation:** N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Fortress, 2003 (the scholarly foundation)
- G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*, Baker Academic, 2011 — major comprehensive treatment
- **On heaven:** Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, Tyndale, 2004 — popular-level, theologically careful
- Jerry L. Walls, *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy*, Oxford, 2002
- **On the already/not-yet:** Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, Westminster, 1946 — the classic statement
- George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, Eerdmans, 1974
- **On final judgment and hell:** C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, 1945 — imaginative, pastoral, life-changing
- Douglas J. Moo (ed.), *Four Views on Hell*, 2nd ed., Zondervan, 2016
- **On Christian hope and the shape of the future:** Gerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, Presbyterian & Reformed, 1930 (reprint) — classic Reformed
- Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart, *Hope Against Hope: Christian Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium*, Eerdmans, 1999
- Christopher Morse, *The Difference Heaven Makes: Rehearing the Gospel as News*, T&T Clark, 2010

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(END OF THE END TIMES SERIES)

Four lessons — the Rapture, Revelation, the Millennium and Israel, and a Positive Biblical Theology. Return to the [beginning](#), jump to the [Lesson Archive](#), or rest in the promise: “Behold, I am coming soon.” *Come, Lord Jesus.*

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