

**Living the Essentials of the Faith: Everywhere, Everyone, At All Times**  
**RAISE – Revelation, Anthropology, Incarnation, Sanctification, Eternity**  
*Eternity Part 1 – What is the ultimate hope of all Christians?*

**Key Concept:** Jesus will return to earth with “power and glory” to raise the dead and judge the living and the dead, securing the ultimate grace and justice that will fully realize the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Summary:** The Christian faith affirms that history has both a definitive beginning and a definitive conclusion. Time began when God created the world ex nihilo, or out of nothing. It will conclude when Jesus returns to usher in a new heaven and a new earth.

Today’s popular eschatology (the church’s word for the study of the last things) obsesses about signs and tribulations and the escalating conflict between spiritual forces. A more biblical eschatology, however, emphasizes not a set of highly detailed warnings, but the return of Jesus Christ that leads to the resurrection and the final judgment. For Christians, the end of time is neither to be feared or avoided; it is the very hope of our faith.

Jesus promises the disciples that He will ascend into heaven, and then return at a later date, “coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Jesus’ return will complete the Kingdom of Heaven, finally triumphing over the powers of evil and establishing justice for all people of every time. Thus it is Jesus, who secured forgiveness for our sins through His death, and victory over death through His resurrection, who will also ultimately provide justice and peace as our Judge.

The return of Jesus, often called the Parousia, will be unmistakable to the world. He will appear in the heavens on a cloud, together with the entire angelic host. Immediately following His appearance in the heavens will be the resurrection of the dead. All those who have died will be restored to life and reunited with a spiritual version of their bodies. This resurrection is death’s final defeat. After the resurrection, there will be a judgment of both of nations and of individuals, mortals and angels. Jesus will separate those who followed Him from those who opposed Him, and each will depart for their own eternal reality. This judgment, which brings about the perfect justice of Christ, is the hope of all believers and God’s final and complete victory over evil.

Jesus warned His followers of certain signs for which to watch, but also instructed them to remain perpetually vigilant, for His return would be as unexpected as “a thief in the night.” Scripture tells us that the timing of Jesus’ return is known only to God, again reinforcing that we are to live in a manner of constant readiness.

Christians are privileged to know the end of their own story. We live in light of that ending, looking forward with hope even while working with urgency, knowing that our time is short. Together, Christians of every time and place unite together in the ancient prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus!”