End Times

Instructor's Guide

The purpose of this course is to gain an understanding 1) of the events that God will use to bring about the end of the world and 2) of how the teaching of the Millennium corrupts the biblical doctrines of end times. The instructor needs to invest sufficient time to comprehend the materials and present them in a way that people who do not have formal theological training can understand the important issues.

In teaching advanced topics, it is important for the instructor to understand the goal of his teaching. The saving truths are presented in the Scriptures, but they do not benefit a person's soul unless they are transcribed from the Scriptures onto the wall of faith in the mind and heart of the believer. Ideally, a Christian's faith will be a beautiful mural of all the teachings of the Bible appropriately linked with each other to give the Christian a perfect knowledge of God's will. This mural will never be completed in this world, but it is important that the Christian and those that teach him or her work to make it more complete. While pastors have a well-developed mural based on long and systematic training, laypeople often have scattered facts from the Bible placed here and there on their wall of faith. Sometimes they are misconnected with each other, and sometimes wrong information learned from non-Scriptural sources will be intertwined with Scriptural truth. In his presentation of the Scriptural material, the teacher will always try to guide his hearers so that they will put it into the correct place in the mural and make the correct attachments to the other materials that are there. This is what makes teaching the Word of God challenging and rewarding.

This course is set up to be taught in nineteen 60-minute sessions, but the material in the lessons can be regrouped for any number of class periods that are available. From educational research we know that reading the material before the class, answering the study questions, and considering the issues that are being raised by the readings are essential to maximizing learning. Students should be strongly encouraged to do so. It is good to close the lessons with hymns written by Lutheran lyricists.

Note that the study questions and answers are inserted in the teaching text where they might be used, but they can be moved in the actual presentation or ignored.

1. How Can We Know about the Future?

A. The Bible and the Future

1. The Bible is the inerrant, verbally inspired Word of God. - If we want to know the future, we need a source of information that will always give us the right information about it. If we rely on sources that do not always give the correct prediction (for example, meteorology), then we risk making terrible mistakes with our lives and our money. Either the Bible is a reliable source because it is the revelation of God, or it isn't (no "sort of" reliable). There is no middle ground. Either we can rely on it, or we can't. The Bible claims that we can rely on it. a) St. Peter wrote, "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit guided the writers. {2 Peter 1:21} b) St. Paul wrote, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." External training. {2 Timothy 3:16–17} c) The Prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you." All relevant information. {Jeremiah 30:2}

2. Only God knows the future. - The LORD is not a creature of time. He knows the future because He is in the future, just as He is in the present and in the past. One cannot use a telescope to see the future. For Him to say what will happen in the future is like someone looking through a doorway and telling us what is happening in the next room. In Isaiah 41:21-24 the LORD taunted the false gods by daring them to tell the future even though they could do nothing even in the present. The

LORD is different because He can tell the future. a) King David wrote, "Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them (indicates God's foreknowledge)." {Psalm 139:16} b) The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "The LORD of hosts has sworn: 'As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.'" {Isaiah 14:24} Things don't happen by accident. c) Isaiah quoted God when he wrote, "For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'" {Isaiah 46:9b-10} God's prophecies are accurate. d) "Then David said [to God], 'Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?' And the LORD said, 'They will surrender you.'" {1 Samuel 23:12} This shows that God knows the conditional future.

Q3. Why does God reveal information to us about the future? A: So that we can be sure that He will save us.

3. God reveals some aspects of the future. He tells us what we need to know. - The LORD reveals the future when it advances His plan of salvation, but not for the mere curiosity of His people. Faith means relying on the LORD being in control even though he has not given us a complete roadmap of what will happen. The LORD does not feel the need to continually prove Himself to His creatures. a) "Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, 'Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you to be prince over his heritage. When you depart from me today, ….' When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day." {1 Samuel 10:1-9} Samuel told Saul what would happen to him later that day. b) Isaiah quoted God when he wrote, "Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them." {Isaiah 42:9} Promises of future things. c) Jesus said, "See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." {Matthew 24:25} Do not rely on things which were not revealed by God. d) "Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me.'" {Matthew 27:9-10} God gives both prophecy and fulfillment.

Q1. What is the only sure source of information about the future? A: The Bible, all other sources are fallible.

Q2. Why is God's knowledge about the future important to us? A: He knows what to do to handle all problems that might trouble us.

4. The only sure source for information about the future. a) All prophecy comes from the LORD. - One can only guess about the outcome of anything that can have multiple outcomes. For example, the bidding in the card game bridge. The laws of probability will dictate how often one is right. Sometimes the odds of predicting a winner are increased by other factors, which allow those who understand the real situation to regularly do better than those who don't (for example, someone seeing all the cards). Yet only the prophecies of the LORD are always correct and reliable because He can see precisely the events about which He speaks. - Isaiah wrote, "When they say to you, 'Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,' ("wizards that peep," see Siegbert Becker's book) should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to

this word, it is because they have no dawn." {Isaiah 8:19–20} - James warned against presuming what the future will bring. "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit'— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, 'If the LORD wills, we will live and do this or that.'" {James 4:13–15}" Man proposes, God disposes." b) The prophecies are numerous. - here are thousands of Bible verses which make some mention of the future, although care must be taken not to read divine prophesy into situations where the common laws of nature produce the expected result. While even the ordinary things around us happen only at the direction of the LORD, it is His accuracy in predicting the abnormal that sets Him apart from imposters. - "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done." {Isaiah 46:9–10} c) The prophecies are completely reliable. - The LORD is never wrong because He is omniscient. No one else is omniscient, not even the angels and the demons, although the latter like to pretend they are. - "For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay." {Habakkuk 2:3} God's predictions are not always immediately fulfilled.

Q6. Give several examples of prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled in the New Testament. A: Jesus was born of a virgin, born in Bethlehem, and his clothes were divided by lot at his death.

Q4. Why might God not reveal more to us about the future? A: It might be harmful for us to know too much, for example, the exact time of our death

5. The Bible is filled with prophecies that came true. - There are many prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled. Some have claimed that these were added or adjusted after the fact to make this to be the case. Yet, consider the ones about Christ that could not be faked because they are documented as having existed before Christ. The LORD's control of nature is complete, and He knows all. Written prophecies cannot be faked because they existed before Jesus was born. Contemplating the nature of these prophecies, there is no reason to doubt any of the Old Testament prophecies. The Old Testament gives lots of information about Jesus. a) Virgin birth – "Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." {Isaiah 7:14} b) Born in Bethlehem – "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days." {Micah 5:2} c) Ministry in Galilee – "But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone." {Isaiah 9:1-2} d) Healing the sick and releasing prisoners – "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor." {Isaiah 61:1-2a} e) Redemption of mankind – "Behold, my servant shall act wisely;…yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." {Isaiah 52:13-53:12} A lot of details. f) Division of clothes – "I can count all my bones – they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." {Psalm 22:17-18} g) Resurrection – "For you will not abandon my soul to the grave, nor let your holy one see corruption." {Psalm 16:10}

B. Looking for the future in the wrong places

Q8. What is astrology? A: The belief that the position of the heavenly bodies affects earthly events

through forces other than gravity.

Q7. Why is the occult dangerous? A: It is working with the demons, and they are our enemies.

1. Methods. a) Mediums, Occultists - When not faking their craft, these people are in league with evil spirits because the LORD does not impart information through such people but rather condemns them. - "Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean (death is unclean) by them: I am the LORD your God." {Leviticus 19:31} A warning against the "black arts." b) Divination (entrails, flight of birds, tea leaves, cards, palms, etc.) - The use of auguries to tell the future has existed for a long time and is a practice of deceit. (They supposedly are signs in nature only wizards can see.) The only signs that the LORD gives in nature are the signs that are visible to all (e.g., clouds bringing rain). That one can be trained to take information out of something that has no information is an art worthy of P.T. Barnum. - Contrast: Jesus said, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.'" {Matthew 16:2–3} - With: Moses wrote, "There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer." {Deuteronomy 18:10} There is a long history of people acting stupid. Their recommendations are worthless. c) Astrology - That the configuration of the heavens guides the things on earth is a long-standing myth. That it is believed by educated people shows how insecure people are. It is dangerous because it can influence decision-making when it is followed, thereby overriding God-given wisdom. - "You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons make known what shall come upon you. Behold, they are like stubble; the fire consumes them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame." {Isaiah 47:13-14} Consult God's Word and be content.

Q5. Who was Nostradamus? A: A French physician and astrologer (1503-1566).

2. Seers. a) The Oracle at Delphi – Pythia was the high priestess of Apollo at Delphi. She gave ambiguous answers to questions so that the answer would always be right in retrospect. Deceptive answers. b) Nostradamus – a French astrologer, physician, and mystic of the 16th Century who wrote 4-line obscure prophecies, which people ever since have tried to attach to current events. Shoes that fit any feet. c) Jeane Dixon – a 20th Century American mystic and psychic who was a columnist and author. She got a few major predictions right but was far more often wrong. Some guesses are bound to be right. d) Nancy Reagan – President Ronald Reagan's wife was an avid follower of astrology and sometimes got her husband to follow her lead. Influences on politics. e) News columnists – No matter where one looks in American society, one finds a lot of people making a living by predicting the economy, the stock market, political events, and the effects of climate change. The world is full of such "experts," and they are often wrong. Each of these people taut their successes, but few present to the public a scorecard containing both their correct and incorrect predictions. While careful study of a specific issue may improve the chances that a forecaster will get a more accurate result, no one has the perfect score a divine prophet would have. f) Even when there is a scientific basis for predicting future events (for example, meteorology), there is the problem of the natural phenomenon of "chaos." All natural processes are defined in terms of non-linear differential equations. We rarely know all the terms in the equations, much less their values and coefficients, and often the equations cannot be solved in a closed form.

2. Jesus is Coming Back

People wonder how the world will end. Will it be by an asteroid, climate collapse, a nuclear war, or a super volcano? These things merely distract from the real end – the return of Jesus.

A. The Old Testament view of the Messiah
   1. The restorer of Israel. a) The nation of Israel - The LORD had promised the land of Canaan to

Abraham's seed (a one-sided covenant). Most Israelites understood this to be a permanent possession, regardless of how they acted toward God (however, staying in Canaan meant Israelites needed to keep a two-sided covenant). - "The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession'." {Leviticus 14:33–34} -The LORD said, "I will restore Israel to his pasture, and he shall feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and his desire shall be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead." {Jeremiah 50:19} b) The kingship of David - God promised David that his male descendants would rule the kingdom of Israel forever, provided that they remained faithful to Him (a two-fold promise to David). Many of the people of Israel understood this to mean a physical descendant of David would always rule over an earthly kingdom of Israel. - The LORD said, "I covenanted with David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to rule Israel.'" {2 Chronicles 7:18} (physical) - The LORD God said, "And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them." {Ezekiel 34:23} (spiritual) c) The city of Jerusalem - Jerusalem was where the LORD had placed His name and where He had allowed His temple to be built. (central importance of Jerusalem) The Israelites believed that He had committed Himself to defend the city. - The LORD said, "For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David." {2 Kings 19:34} (physical) - The LORD said, "For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem." {Joel 3:1} (spiritual Jerusalem)

2. The judge of the wicked. a) Revenge on hostile neighbors - The Israelites looked forward to God giving them a leader who would repay all the nations that had worked to destroy Israel. (getting even) - "I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the evil that they have done in Zion, declares the LORD." {Jeremiah 51:24} b) Day of the LORD - The Day of the LORD was regarded as a day of judgment against foreign enemies, but also some believed against those who had made Israel a stench in God's nostrils. (cloudy picture of Judgment Day) - "For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining." {Joel 3:14–15}

3. The Savior from Sin. a) The suffering servant - The prophets, particularly Isaiah, speak of a Messiah that will come to rescue His people by taking on their weakness and guilt. (a substitute) - "Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind…." {Isaiah 52:13–53:12} (suffering for us) b) The eternal kingdom - The prophets wrote of a time when there would be perfect peace. - "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb…. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD" {Isaiah 11:6-9} (peace beyond earthly peace) - "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it." {Micah 4:1} (a place of refuge)

Above are things that the Jews saw in God's covenant promises. They did not realize there would be two comings of the Messiah.

B. The return of Christ

Q1. What does God foretell about political events? A: There will be strife among nations.

Q2. What does God foretell about natural events? A: There will be weather issues and earth stability issues.

Q3. What does God foretell about our personal lives? A: There will be joy and sadness, trouble & sorrow.

1. What the Bible doesn't routinely predict. OT □ importance of family and nation; NT □ these no

longer important. a) Political events - Political events no longer have the direct impact on the LORD's plan of Salvation that they did before the birth of Christ. No specific predictions are given, apart from that there will be continual turmoil before the end of the age. - Jesus said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority." {Acts 1:7} b) Natural disasters (These are only signs.) - While Jesus predicted that natural disasters would continue to be a part of the earth's plight, no specific disasters were predicted. - Jesus said, "There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven." {Luke 21:11} c) Our personal lives - While we might like to be able to use the Bible to learn details of our future, it was not given for that purpose. All is in God's hands. "There is a time…." The LORD will take care of us. - Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" {Matthew 6:25}

Q4. How does the Bible keep our attention focused on the "big event"? A: The preaching of the Law and Gospel. Pointing us to recurring signs.

2. One big event – the return of Christ. a) Predicted since His ascension - After His resurrection, Jesus' disciples were naturally eager to know about the future. The eagerness changed to deep concern when He was taken up from them into heaven. Angels directed them to where they should look for the future with a prediction of Christ's return. - "And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'" {Acts 1:10-11} b) It is the focal point of Christians. - Christ's words that His kingdom is not of this world must continue to echo in the Christian's ear. There will be no "abiding city" on this earth, no place that is a utopia for the followers of Christ. The prize is elsewhere, and it will not be fully ours until Christ returns. - "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." {1 Corinthians 15:19}

3. Special terms for Christ's return. Keep your eyes on the skies. a) Coming – Jesus said, "For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming (παρουσία) of the Son of Man." {Matthew 24:27} b) Revealing – "The revelation (ἀποκάλυψις) of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place." {Revelation 1:1a} c) Appearing – "To keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing (ἐπιφανείας) of our Lord Jesus Christ." {1 Timothy 6:14} We are always building for eternity.

4. The day. - Judgment Day is described with various modifiers, which all focus on its being a specific point in time. It is a one-and-only occurrence which will be overpowering in its effect on mankind. It will be an unbelievable spectacle. a) "The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the LORD comes, the great and magnificent day." {Act 2:20} b) "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." {Philippians 1:6} All will be complete. c) "Who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." {1 Corinthians 1:8} The end of everything. d) Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town." {Matthew 10:15} Judgment e) "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." {Ephesians 4:30} Salvation f) "The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes." {Joel 2:31} g) Jesus said, "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." {John 6:40} Resurrection

Q5. Explain why the signs of the end are significant to Christians but not unbelievers. A: Christians are waiting for Jesus to return, and unbelievers aren't.

C. The timeline

Q6. Discuss the ages of the Biblical timeline. A: Ages: Obscurity, Promise, End Times, Eternity.

1. The present age and coming age. a) Age of obscurity – This is the period from the creation to the call of Abraham. Before Abraham, we have little information. During this period almost no one is quoted, and details of people's lives are very limited. - "So the LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.'" {Genesis 6:7} A curse b) Age of the promise – While the promise of a Savior was made in Eden, the promise was assigned to a particular family and tribe only with the call of Abraham. This age lasted until the coming of Christ. - "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets." {Hebrews 1:1} c) Present age (end times) First coming to second coming. – This is time since the resurrection of Christ during which the church spreads the message of His salvation before Judgment Day. - Jesus said, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, …" {Luke 20:34} d) Age to come (Heaven and hell) Eternity – This is the age that will begin with the completion of the final judgment and has no end. - Jesus said, "…but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage." {Luke 20:35}

2. We are in the end times (the last age before Judgment Day). - Numerous passages clearly declare that we are in the final age before the end of the world and the judgment. This is important. a) Peter said, "But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.' " {Acts 2:16-17} The world was in the "last days' already at Pentecost. b) "For then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." {Hebrews 9:26} Christ sealed the deal. c) "He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." {1 Peter 1:20-21} God set the "last times." d) "Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come." {1 Corinthians 10:11} We are in the end times.

Q7. How does Christianity differ from Hinduism and Buddhism in terms of timeline? A: The Christian timeline is linear, but those of the Eastern religions are cyclic.

3. History is heading for a goal. a) Linear (i.e., directed) history The road of time has a beginning and an end. – The Bible describes a linear history with a definite beginning {Genesis 1:1} and a definite conclusion (Judgment Day). - St. Paul wrote, "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power." {1 Corinthians 15:24} b) Cyclic history A time loop of events like described by Solomon – Some religions like Hinduism and Buddhism believe that history is composed of repeating cycles. No progress c) Stagnant history – Existentialism teaches that there is no forward progress in history, but that history is scattered events with no conclusion. A world of chaos.

4. Already and not yet. a) Reconciliation is complete. - Although we still live in this present age, all that is necessary for our Salvation has been completed. We are ready for heaven. We have what we need to enter heaven; it is only a matter of time until we get there. We must stay the course. - St. Paul wrote, "More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." {Romans 5:11} Objective justification b) Full consummation is coming. - We now feel the contamination of sin and the evils of the present age. This will continue until we reach the coming age, either through Christ's return or our death. We must continue to fight Satan's agenda. - St. Paul wrote, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own."

{Philippians 3:12} Elected □ called □ converted □ sanctified.

3. The Date is Unknown

Our trouble with the unknown is that it bothers us. We do not want to leave things in God's hands.

A. When will we be there? The uncertainties of life.

1. A bad day in the "friendly skies" – Lack of control - Our flight plan seemed simple enough. We board the plane by 7:45 am, there is a plane change in Chicago, and we will be on the ground by 2:30 pm. The grandchildren will meet our plane. a) When we arrive at the airport, we find that our flight has been cancelled and the next flight to Chicago is not until 12:30 pm. We will miss the connecting flight. We change tickets and by 9:10 am we are on our way to Detroit to catch a connecting flight from there. b) The plane we are to catch in Detroit has been delayed two hours because of bad weather in New York and also has a mechanical problem, so the airline graciously puts us on a plane to Atlanta where we are assured that we can catch a flight that will arrive at our destination by 5:20 pm. c) In Atlanta, we have to wait aboard the plane for a half hour while they try to find another crew member who hasn't exceeded their on-duty hours. Then, for no apparent reason, we need to move to a different plane before taking off. And finally, at 9:37 pm we land. Frustration!
2. Without a map or GPS – Lack of direction (Lost) - Fred said the fishing resort was a great place, but a little hard to find. A little? He must have left a few roads off the map he drew for us or maybe he didn't put north at the top of the map. The GPS doesn't recognize the name of the place. It's getting dark, and we haven't seen a person in 10 miles. I hope we don't drive into the swamp.
3. Are we there yet? – Lack of patience (Bored) - Gramma's house is only an hour away. Why do the kids have to ask every five minutes, "Are we there yet?" "No, we're not!"
4. Lack of control, lack of direction, and lack of patience can each trouble us as we await Jesus' return.

B. No one knows the date.

Q1. Why hasn't the LORD given us the date on which He will return? A: It would affect our behavior and not likely for the good.

1. It is certain. God has always known it. - We must realize that the date of the end of the world is set and cannot be changed. It is not open to negotiation. The LORD knows everything that has happened, is happening and will happen because He fills all of time. He has known this date from before He created the world. a) "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." {Acts 17:31} b) "Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt." {Isaiah 13:6–7} c) "For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations." {Ezekiel 30:3}
2. The angels do not know. - The LORD has not shared the timing of future events with creatures of time, including the angels. Even in his state of humiliation the Son had to move through time and therefore did not avail Himself of this knowledge. a) Jesus said, "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." {Matthew 24:36} b) "And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light." {Zechariah 14:7} c) "And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?"" {Daniel 12:6} The answer given cannot be definitively deciphered.

3. It is not for us to know. - The LORD does not think it is to our advantage to know when He will return. He knows our nature is to put off things until later if we think we have more time. Hearing the message of the Gospel is always urgent to someone, so the possibility of an imminent return needs to be kept before our eyes. a) Jesus said, "Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." {Matthew 24:42} b) Jesus said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority." {Acts 1:7}

C. Illustrations

Q2. Use Biblical illustrations to explain how Jesus' Second Coming will occur. A: A lord returning to his house, the bridegroom coming, a thief coming.

Q3. What do we mean when we say the return of Christ will be unexpected? A: It will occur during a period of time when people least expect it.

1. Owner - The wise boss knows that employees will become lax if they have no sense of urgency to get their work done. He or she drops in periodically to see that progress is being made. An old Russian proverb states that the soles of the Tzar's feet are the best fertilizer, meaning that where the Tzar visits, the farmers will work to grow good crops. a) Jesus said, "But if that wicked servant [the one in charge] says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites." {Matthew 24:48–51} Punishment for the lax servant. b) Jesus said, "It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning – lest he come suddenly and find you asleep." {Mark 13:34-36}
2. Bridegroom - Before mankind began to make an idol of time, events happened when everything was ready. The arrival of the bridegroom in Jewish custom signaled the beginning of the festivities. One needed to be ready when he came, or one would miss the party. a) Jesus said, "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom….Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." {Matthew 25:1-13}
3. Thief - No one wants a thief to show up, and one hopes a thief never will. A thief gains his advantage by appearing without warning. If it were known when he was coming, he would be captured by the police. Not knowing means that one needs to be watching for him at all times. Common theme in the New Testament. a) Jesus said, "But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into." {Matthew 24:43} b) St Paul wrote, "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the LORD will come like a thief in the night." {1 Thessalonians 5:1–2} c) St. Peter wrote, "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." {2 Peter 3:10}

D. Nature of Christ's Return

Q4. In what way will the return of Christ be sudden? A: It will be at a point in time for which there will be no build up.

1. Sudden. - No early warning system will detect Jesus entering the earth's upper atmosphere. He won't telegraph His coming to even a select group of church leaders. His return will not be a rolling arrival by time zone. Faster than our thought processes. a) Jesus said, "Thus will be the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be

grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left." {Matthew 24:39-41} b) Paul wrote, "While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape." {1 Thessalonians 5:3}

Q5. What are some reasons why trying to determine the date of Christ's return is pointless? A: The Scriptures tell us we cannot do it.

2. Unexpected. - If people knew that the LORD was coming seven days hence, there would be a lot of hard partying followed by sham repentance. When people know the fire inspector is coming, a lot of things get put in order or hidden until she leaves. It is the nature of people to game every system they encounter to attempt to gain an advantage (This is hardwired into our nervous system.). a) Jesus said, "As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'" {Matthew 25:5–6} People become complacent. b) Paul wrote concerning the last day, "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." {1 Corinthians 15:51–52}

E. Determining the Date

Q6. Who was Cotton Mather? A: A 17th century New England preacher who loved controversy.

Q7. What is the significance of the Mayan calendar? A: None. It is simply an alternate, superstitious calendar.

1. Date setters. - Despite the statements by Christ that the date of Judgment Day cannot be known, numerous people have attempted to calculate it from information given in the Bible. Like Adam and Eve, these people will not take the LORD at His word but believe that He is holding out on them. But who is more gullible, the date-setters or those who believe them? People cannot accept God at this word. a) Hippolytus (170-236) – The history of his life is clouded, but he apparently was an opponent of the bishops of Rome of his era. Because he thought the earth was destined to stand for six thousand years and that it had already stood for 5,500 years by the time of Christ, He set 500 AD as the year of Christ's return. He is somewhat unusual in that he chose a date that he certainly would not live to see. No one would be able to confront him if he was wrong. b) Mount Tabor (1419) – Mount Tabor in Israel was supposedly the place of Jesus' Transfiguration. It was also the site of a battle at the time of the Judges, and some have forecasted it as the place where the battle of Armageddon will be fought. Around the time of John Hus, a large group of people in Bohemia named one of their hills Mount Tabor and waited for Jesus to make His return to that spot. Clever idea but it failed. c) Cotton Mather (1663-1728) – He was a puritan minister who defended the Salem witch trials. He was involved in various religious and political controversies. Because of his proclivity of becoming involved in controversies, it was only natural for him to set the date for Christ's return and then change it when his predictions failed. Dates: 1697, 1716 & 1736 Example of utter folly. d) Johann Bengel (1687-1752 – Bengel was a Lutheran Pietist and Greek scholar who thought he could work out the return of Christ from the numbers in Revelation. He wisely set the date of Christ's return as 1836, long after his expected death so he was not proved wrong in his lifetime. e) Edgar C. Whisenant (1932-2001) – He was a NASA engineer who thought that he could learn the date of Christ's return by careful analysis of the Bible and numerology. He published a book claiming that the date would be in 1988. Numerical competency does not help. f) Y2K – Because 2000 was supposedly the 2000 anniversary of Jesus' birth, many thought the world would end that year. Jesus, however, was not born in Year 0, so the whole argument for His return that year was very silly. g) New Agers – The Mayan calendar ended a major cycle on 12/21/2012. Some therefore believed the earth would end that day. Like as if the Mayans knew anything! h) Seventh-day Adventists (William Miller/Ellen White) – This group has emphasized the return of Christ and has set various dates for that return since 1843 based on Daniel. Despite its terrible track record of predictions, the church has more than 20,000,000 members worldwide. People like to be

fooled!! i) Jehovah Witnesses – Like the Adventists, the Witnesses have been promoting finding the day of Christ's return in Daniel. Their first date was in 1874, and numerous revisions were made until they decided that He had already returned but has not yet revealed Himself. The Watchtower folly.

2. Don't set a date – be ready always
a) The sure prediction. - The sure prediction of the LORD is that the event will occur, not when the event will be. This is very similar to the first coming of Christ, when there was plenty of notice, but no timeline. We know "that" but not "when." – Jesus said, "Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come." {Mark 13:33} b) Always be prepared - When one is on a battlefield, one can be attacked by the enemy at any time and might even be hit by "friendly fire." One must constantly be alert to prevent harm or death. In the same way, we must await the return of Christ. We must maintain a state of preparedness.

4. Christ Could Come at Any Time

God knows when Christ will return. We must be content not knowing.

A. The "here and now" We are trapped in it.
1. We are always "here." The nature of here. Whether "here" is just a momentary location or whether "here' is the place we are housebound. "Here" is on earth, and here it will stay. a) The young are often eager to get out of "here." b) The middle aged are frequently happy for a stable "here" where we can feel comfortable. c) The elderly may feel trapped "here" or fear their "here" will be taken from them.

2. It is always "now." The nature of now. The past has escaped us, and we can go crazy awaiting the uncertain future. We hope for better, or maybe we dread things getting worse. a) The young think of themselves as the "now" generation, the people with chances to do things. b) The middle aged have the power "now," but they fear soon becoming irrelevant. c) The elderly struggle with a "now" which is only a shadow of the "then."

3. The "here" and the "now" are only temporary, but we are always in them. We must avoid the tyranny of the urgent. When will they be gone? When will Jesus return?

B. Soon/Near

Q1. Why were the people of the Old Testament hoping the Day of the LORD would come soon?
A: They wanted a day of vengeance on their enemies.

1. Old Testament. We must understand the situation. - As the nations of Israel and Judah became less faithful to the LORD (a danger as time passes), the prophets began warning the people that there would be retribution by the LORD for their actions. In the short-term this was the disasters that surrounded the temporal destruction of Israel and Judah. Israel/Judah were older than the USA. In the long-term the prophets pointed to the final judgment of the LORD. a) "Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! (Destruction of all we have built.) Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt." {Isaiah 13:6-7} b) "Son of man, prophesy, and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Wail, 'Alas for the day!' For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations."'" {Ezekiel 30:2-3} c) Most had not reformed. "Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes." {Joel 1:15} d) Beware of God's judgments. "For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head." {Obadiah 15} e) A building refrain. "The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day

of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements." {Zephaniah 1:14-16}

Q2. How did the focus of the New Testament church change relative to Christ's return? A: It will be a day of rejoicing for the believers.

2. New Testament. No earthly kingdom. - In the New Testament the focus has been sharper on the final judgment, although some references are made to the destruction of Jerusalem. Continuous reminders must keep it before our eyes. a) "This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short….For the present form of this world is passing away." 55 AD {1 Corinthians 7:29-31} b) "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay." 65 AD {Hebrews 10:37} c) "Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door." 45 AD {James 5:9} d) "The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers." 60 AD {1 Peter 4:7} e) "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near." 90 AD {Revelation 1:3}

C. The Signs

Q3. What will be the signs in nature of Christi's return? A: Floods, earthquakes, famine.

1. In nature. - Signs in nature show that the physical universe obeys the LORD because Jesus is coming back. These signs are meant to remind the Christian but will not be noticed by the unbelieving world. The LORD is in control. a) Famines – Jesus said, "There will be famines and earthquakes in various places." {Matthew 24:7} b) Earthquakes – Jesus said, "There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines." {Mark 13:8} c) Signs in the heavens – Jesus said, "There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven." {Luke 21:11} d) Pestilences – "What the young locusts have left, the mature locusts have eaten." {Joel 1:4} Repent: Jesus is coming soon.

Q4. What will the political signs be? A: Wars and revolutions.

2. In nations. The world's problems cannot be fixed. - People are always demanding peace, but the economic reality is that there are never enough resources to satisfy greedy mankind. Therefore, there will always be an incentive for wars. a) Wars and rumors of wars – Jesus said, "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars." How often do we remember peace in our lifetime? {Matthew 24:6} b) Revolutions – Jesus said, "When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once." Each year there are several. {Luke 21:9} c) Destruction of Jerusalem – "He [Jesus] answered them, 'You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.'" The effect on the church. {Matthew 24:2} d) Increase in wickedness – Jesus said, "And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold." No sympathy. {Matthew 24:12} e) Great distress – Jesus said, "For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now." International panic. {Mark 13:19}

Q5. What will be the signs in the church? A: False doctrine, a falling away of many.

3. In the church. - People find accepting the will of the LORD to be stifling, so they look for ways to reformulate theology to let them believe anything they please. a) False Christs – "And he [Jesus] said, "See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them." Big new ideas! {Luke 21:8} b) Persecution of Christians – Jesus said, "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake." Threats of repression. {Matthew 24:9} c) Apostasy – Jesus said, "And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another." Declining church attendance. {Matthew 24:10} d) False prophets – Jesus said, "And many false prophets will arise and

lead many astray." Slow change in doctrine. {Matthew 24:11} e) Gospel reaching the whole world – Jesus said, "The gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations." A positive. {Mark 13:10} f) An abomination in the holy place – Jesus said, "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." The unholy replacing the holy. {Mark 13:14}

4. Not all signs had been fulfilled by the time of the resurrection of Jesus. a) Gospel reaching the whole world – Even with the internet, some would argue that the Gospel has yet to reach the most remote areas of the world, but it is getting closer all the time. Maybe not yet. b) Destruction of Jerusalem – Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD and several more times in the next century. Now accomplished. c) An abomination in the holy place – Some claim this is the rise of the papacy; others the construction of the Dome of the Rock on the top of the temple mound. Unknown. d) Famine in Roman Empire – "And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius)." Definite event. {Acts 11:28} e) Paul's trip to Rome – "The following night the LORD stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome." Definite event. {Acts 23:11}

D. Is there urgency?

1. Jesus could come at any moment. a) The signs have all occurred – It would appear that a good argument can be made that all the signs that were to occur before Judgment Day have happened, many multiple times. Why should the LORD wait longer? We are not waiting for additional signs. b) We need to abandon our sins and repudiate our sinful selves – When Christ comes, do we want to be fighting the good fight of faith, or do we want to be found sitting on the sidelines while our Old Adam runs our lives? Theology of the cross. c) The Great Commission always has urgency (It must not get lost in the routine.) – The hymn verse "While the souls of men are dying and the Savior calls for you" is a reminder that every day many people go to hell, so we need to reach them now. Beware of confusing the visible and the invisible church.

   Q6. Should Christians pray that the second coming occurs sooner? A: Yes, we want heaven to come.

2. Praying for Christ to come soon. (Let's get out of this mess!) - We should not feel it improper to pray for the quick return of Christ. The battle has gone on long enough for us all to be weary and ready for the next world to commence. a) "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God." {2 Peter 3:11-12a} b) "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" {Revelation 22:20}

   Q7. What were biblical hints that Christ's second coming might be delayed? A: Parables which talk of long delays. Prophecies of earthly events.

3. Why the seeming delay? a) Each day is one day closer. In long-term projects, one needs steady progress. - When one is making a long trip or doing a long project, it may seem the end will never come. It is then that realizing each evening that one is one day closer to the goal can keep one's hopes up. - "Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed." {Romans 13:11} b) The LORD's time is not our time. - "Are we there yet?" To the adult driver this is an annoying question because it comes from a lack of perspective on the length of the trip. - "The LORD is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." {2 Peter 3:9} c) Gathering all the elect - Showing up at a party much too early is embarrassing and wastes one's time. One could do useful things before the party if one does not show up too early. The LORD has not called in all the guests yet, so we must be

patient and keep working on the tasks that God has assigned us. Don't just adjourn your life and sit and wait. - "Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been." {Revelation 6:11}

4. Hints of a delayed coming in the Bible. a) Parables – Several parables compare the kingdom of God to situations which have a wait-time built into them. Jesus talked of waiting. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. {Matthew 25:5}; "He [Jesus] said therefore, 'A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return.'" {Luke 19:12} b) Signs of the Second Coming – Some signs were not yet fulfilled at the time of Christ. {Luke 21:9 (above)} First century return not indicated. c) Apostles expected to die first – As time passed, several of the apostles mentioned that they would leave the world before the Second Coming. The apostles accepted delay. For example, Peter wrote, "Since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me" {2 Peter 1:14}. d) Satan bound for a long period after Christ's ascension. – Some of the visions given in Revelation have significant time components. There are various events in the heavenly realms that must take place first. For example, "And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years" {Revelation 20:2}.

5. Our attitude. a) Stay close to Jesus (avoid getting lost.) – The longer the hike, the more important it is to stay near the guide. It is easy to get lost over a long distance and never be found again. b) Let the signs be a reminder (Be eager.) – The signs of the end remind us that the LORD has not forgotten His promises. c) These may be the very last of the last days (Don't wish for the second coming to be postponed.) – Some generation will experience the very last day of this world, and it could be ours. We should not be like the Pharisees who eagerly waited for the promised Messiah to come in the next generation, not theirs.

5. What Can We Expect While We Are Waiting?

The theologies of the curse and of the cross must be accepted. All people suffer due to the curse of sin. Christians also suffer due to their faith in Christ. Suffering affects us because we are not just watching a movie.

A. Trouble and wickedness Under the curse on Adam.

Q1. What signs in nature will occur as Judgment Day approaches? A: Famines, earthquakes, floods.

1. Natural disasters. - Disasters of three types–geological, atmospheric and biological–are to be expected as time passes. Sin affects the whole creation. "For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now." {Romans 8:22} a) Earthquakes, landslides, & volcanic eruptions – The ground itself will rebel against man's wickedness, creating crumbling hills, sink holes, lava flows, and tsunamis. b) Storms – The atmosphere will churn up hurricanes, tornadoes, famines, and blizzards. Weather patterns will become unstable, destroying crops and buildings. c) Disease & plague – Bacteria and viruses will attack mankind. Their ability to mutate will threaten large numbers of people and challenge scientific efforts to contain them. d) Climate change – In addition to the individual dangers posed by the natural processes listed above, these processes can happen simultaneously, changing whole ecosystems or even the environment of major parts of the earth. Planet-wide issues.

Q2. What are some of the causes of wars that will occur before Judgment Day? A: Resources, political leverage, desire to dominate others.

2. War. - There is always a plausible reason, at least in some people's minds, for a war, so wars will occur. Jesus said, "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this

must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" {Matthew 24:6-7a}. a) Wealth and land are not evenly distributed. – Plundering others and taking their resources is the underlying cause of most wars. Arable land, fresh water, and other natural resources are limited in most areas, so having control of them is important for economic prosperity. b) Political leverage – Rulers are more popular if they fight "just wars" because military necessity unites people for a common good. Having a common enemy brings unity. Propaganda is used to deceive one's citizens into fighting an "evil" enemy and in the process giving the government greater control over internal affairs. c) Religion and culture – People try to maintain their own religion or culture by imposing it on others. In the process, the religion or the culture are often irretrievably altered. Crusades to help others "see the light."

Q3. Why will Christians experience anxiety? A: Uncertainties, fear of violence, persecution.

3. Anxiety. (Lack of trust in God.) - It is inherent in our sinful nature to fuss and fret, fearing we have lost control. Moreover, the world about us gives us plenty of reasons to doubt our own ability to handle the challenges of living in a corrupted world. a) Our daily needs (God is providing.) – We may have concerns about our immediate needs: "What will we eat?" "What will we drink?" "What will we wear?" "Where will we live?" Jesus said not to worry about such things because "Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all" (Matthew 6:32). b) The turmoil of life (Cries for help.) – The storms of life may overwhelm when we see no path to security. The disciples cried out, "'Save us, Lord; we are perishing.' And he [Jesus] said to them, 'Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?'" (Matthew 8:25–26).

Q4. What troubles will the church face? A: Heresy, apostacy, divisions, false christs.

4. False teaching and apostasy. (Under the cross) - The devils never sleep and are always looking for ways to undermine the church. His assaults are ruthless. Over the years they have developed a playbook, which has been remarkably successful and which they have used repeatedly. No quarter is given. Humans are extremely gullible and will repeat the same errors that they have recognized and denounced in previous generations. Jesus said, "Many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray" {Matthew 24:10-11}. a) Abandoning the faith (Seeking a better option.) – Many people are religious only because it is to their advantage to be religious. When that advantage disappears, their faith and their participation also disappear. "For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica" {2 Timothy 4:10a} (Spirituality). b) Corrupted Christianity (The theology of glory.) – Digging into God's Word is tedious and boring to many people, including many scholars. "New" human ideas are much more interesting and offer more possibilities, and "feel good" religion is more appealing. "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths" {2 Timothy 4:3-4}. c) False Christianity ("An angel from heaven") – Pseudo-Christianity, such as the Mormons, the Jehovah Witnesses, and Islam, rely on a single prophet who is supposed to have received a new revelation which radically alters the teachings of the Scriptures while arguing that it worships the same God. Jesus said, "If anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it" {Matthew 24:23–26}. Beware of dynamic personalities.

Q5. In what ways are Christians persecuted today? A: Physically, economically, culturally.

5. Persecution of Christians. - Times when those believing the Bible are not persecuted are the rare times, not the usual. Correct teaching is seldom in favor. Jesus said, "You will be delivered up even

by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake" {Luke 21:16-17}. a) Physical persecution (Various ways) – Christians are physically harmed at the direction of the authorities or with their tacit permission. In some area where there is limited government control, gangs carry out persecution against Christians, particularly in Africa and Asia. b) Social persecution – Christians are socially shunned and pressured to abandon their faith through ridicule. (Pressured to go along with form, thereby losing the substance.) In recent times many Christians have attempted to avoid social persecution by generalizing their faith. If they feel that if they don't admit to believing in anything controversial, they can keep their faith and avoid persecution, but they have already abandoned their faith by making it unoffensive. (Forced silence about religion.) c) Financial persecution – Christians and their organizations are taxed more than others or prevented from performing parts of their ministry through financial requirements. In Islamic countries, Christians may have to pay a tax to practice their faith. Sometimes employers try to limit the practice of Christianity by work schedules or requirement to participate in activities (e.g., the United Way) that are anti-Christian.

6. The final struggle. - As the world becomes more developed, it is natural for it to become more corrupt. Societies tend to prosper when they have a strong work ethic based on a commonly accepted moral code, but as they become more prosperous, they begin to think that they have a right to that prosperity and grow lax in their recognition of the values that gained them that prosperity. Corruption rises with wealth, e.g., identity theft. a) The danger of prosperity – Man looks more and more to his own abilities and less and less to God. God warned the Israelites about worshipping their prosperity. **"**And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Deuteronomy 6:10–12). Subsequent generations expect more. b) The craving for security (Reducing risk) – Everyone craves a secure place to live. That longing can place Christians into the position of abandoning their LORD to have the wealth and security that the world has and give up the hardships and earthly uncertainly that Jesus calls us to accept. Beware of false security. **"**Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head'" (Luke 9:58).

   Q6. What will happen at the very end? A: Many forces will unite to try to destroy Christianity.

7. The very end. - Christians should expect that as the very last days arrive, the world will try to eradicate Christianity as it tries to eradicate disease. This may happen by physical persecution of Christians or through a corrupting of the church so that genuine Christians have no place to hear and study God's Word. a) The Battle of Armageddon {Revelation 16:16} – Because Revelation is written in terms of spiritual pictures instead of physical predictions, we recognize that the Battle of Armageddon is a spiritual battle where the hosts of hell will throw their whole arsenal of weapons against those Christians who remain faithful to the LORD, but we know they will fail. There will be more and more pressure to give up solid Christianity. Jesus assured us that His church was founded on Himself, namely, "Christ, the Son of the Living God." He said, "on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" {Matthew 16:18}. b) The final battle (Evil people will make common cause.) – Moreover, the peoples of the world will attempt in some way to form a common front against Biblical Christianity. "For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty" {Revelation 16:14}. c) The "little season" {Revelation 20:3b} (Heightened activity by Satan.) – At the very end Satan can be expected to make one final push to end the church on earth and leave the LORD's spiritual kingdom in ruins. "And if the LORD had

not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days" {Mark 13:20}.

B. The endurance of God's rule – God's providence

Q7. What positive things will happen for God's kingdom as Judgment Day approaches? A: There will be yearly cycles bringing crops, the Gospel will spread, technical innovations will help people, stable governments that do not persecute the church.

1. Physical blessings. a) Seedtime and harvest (Amid turmoil, we still are fed.) – The earth will continue to produce large quantities of food and goods to supply mankind. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" {Genesis 8:22}. Certainly, this does not mean that we should abuse the productive land and other resources that God has given us, but that good stewardship of God's resources will continue to be rewarded. b) Technology will advance (The LORD allows for human betterment.) – From the earliest time the LORD has given even to evil people the ability to develop the technology to improve human civilization. "Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron" {Genesis 4:22a}. God has blessed mankind with incredible opportunities to learn about and to improve his environment.

2. Spread of the Gospel. a) Great Commission – We have the LORD's direction to spread His Word. We have the opportunity to serve. Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" {Matthew 28:19-20a}. This commission gives man the wonderful opportunity to work as a partner of God. b) Promise of success – The LORD's Word will be effective. Our work will forward God's plans. "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it" {Isaiah 55:11}. This does not mean that everywhere the Gospel is preached that there will be crowds of converts. Sometimes our preaching merely establishes the standard by which people will be judged. c) Inhibition of Satan – Satan will be restrained so the missionary work of the church can proceed as Christ directed it to be done. Despite the obstacles, we will overcome and be saved. "And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended" {Revelation 20:2-3a}.

3. Blessings for the church. a) The mission will be accomplished – The LORD will help the church to reach the whole world. God's goals will be realized. "This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" {Matthew 24:14}. Even when the church seems to be shrinking rather than growing, the success of the harvest is always in the LORD's hands. b) The church will not fall – Built on the rock of Jesus Christ the church cannot be overcome by any foe. Satan will not prevent the success of the Word. Jesus said, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" {Matthew 16:18}. By Christ's return, the church will have reached all the elect, and the Holy Spirit will have brought them to faith. c) Our salvation is sure – We have the Holy Spirit working to preserve us in faith. The Holy Spirit will keep working. "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" {Ephesians 1:13-14}.

4. Comfort of Revelation. a) Individual Christians – Christians are protected from the demons of the Abyss (hell). Predestination involves all the details of salvation. "They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of

God on their foreheads" {Revelation 9:4}. Because God has a detailed plan for the salvation of each of the elect, He will not let them be destroyed. b) The church – God will prepare a place of safety for the church, represented by the woman, in a hostile environment while the earth endures. God will preserve His invisible church. "The woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days" {Revelation 12:6}. The LORD will never let it cease to exist even though it often seems to be in great peril.

6. The Antichrist

Q1. What is an antichrist? A: A church leader who teaches false doctrine.

A. Definition of antichrist – *ἀντίχριστος* means someone who is in the place of Christ. It implies a substitute who is not the genuine article.

Q2. What are the marks of an antichrist? A: 1) In the church, 2) a position of authority, 3) changes church doctrine, 4) interferes with faithful Christians.

1. Marks of those who are antichrists. a) Inside the church. They are found among leaders in the church, such as bishops, pastors, teachers, and theologians. People outside the church cannot be antichrists. St. Paul wrote, "Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery— to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you" (Galatians 2:4–5). b) Teach strange doctrine. They teach doctrines other than those that are revealed by the Bible. St. Paul warned Timothy, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). c) Attempt to control the church. The Great Antichrist is so called because he will attempt to seize control of the whole church. He will try to suppress others who teach the message of Christ and make them subservient to him. The scale of his actions will far exceed all others.

Q3. Is there only one antichrist? Why or why not? A: No. There are many false teachers.

2. Predictions by John – Denial of Christ and His incarnation. a) Many false teachers. "Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come." {1 John 2:18} There is not one single antichrist, but many have proliferated in the church because people loved to try to establish themselves as something special by claiming to have new revelation that only they have received. b) *Will the real Jesus please stand up?* "Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son." {1 John 2:22} Denial can be carried out by acknowledging Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world and then modifying the attributes of the Jesus they are teaching so that he loses some of or all his divine power. c) Non-trinitarian. "Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already." {1 John 4:3} There are organizations that claim to be Christian, but that do not accept the Trinity as expressed in the Nicene Creed. These are sham-Christians who deny God's decree of redemption. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses. d) Jesus is both God and man. "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist." {2 John 7} Some antichrists paint false pictures of how Jesus Christ is both God and man. The Athanasian Creed addresses this type of anti-Christian teaching.

3. Predictions by St. Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 – Man of lawlessness working against Christ. - a) Comes before the last day – "For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction." Predicted the Great Antichrist. {2:3} At the time that Paul wrote these words, the great Antichrist had not yet made his appearance. Because the certainty of his coming had been revealed to Paul, Paul could confidently write that he would come before the return of the LORD. b) Will have large effects. Opposes the genuine teachings of the

church – "Who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship." {2:4a} The Antichrist whom Paul was predicting would indeed be "great" based on the scope of attacks on the visible church. He would affect both the doctrines and practices of the church. c) Claims to speak for God. Becomes the central figure in the church – "So that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God." {2:4b} Could anyone be so bold as to claim to be God and not be ousted from the church? Unlikely. But what about someone who would claim to be the sole agent of God (i.e., His vicar) on earth? d) Great Antichrist is an office. Works over a long period – "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work." {2:7a} People come, and people go. Once they are gone, they begin losing their influence. Therefore, if the activities of the Antichrist were already happening at Paul's time, the Antichrist must be a succession of men with the same title, like the "high priest" in the Old Testament. e) Papacy rose as Rome collapsed. Has been somewhat restrained – "And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time….Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way." {2:6, 7} The rise of Christianity, and therefore any particular position within Christianity, was restrained by the pagan Roman Empire. As the Roman Empire in the west began to collapse, one person (and his successors) stepped forward to assume the reins of leadership in the chaos that ensued, namely, the Bishop of Rome. f) The Great Antichrist will not go away. Will be destroyed by Christ on the last day – "And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming." {2:8} That the papacy will endure until Judgment Day is not comforting because of the number of people it continues to deceive and lead away from saving faith to a reliance on their own works. g) Miracles belong to God, not people. Presides over phony miracles – "The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders." {2:9} God does miracles every day in response to the cries of His dear children. For people to try to take credit for God's miracles or to fake miracles to deceive the gullible, is utterly shameful. h) Showiness & pomp, unlike Christ. Is highly deceptive – "With all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." {2:10-12} The "princes of the church" who prance around in their cardinal red robes to impress the ignorant have mesmerized much of the world's population into believing that they are representatives of God rather than Satan's buffoons.

B. Identification of the antichrist

Q4. Who first identified the papacy as the Great Antichrist? A: Bishop Arnulf at Rheims (9th century, Dante, Medieval Catholic scholars.

Q5. What groups historical have recognized the papacy as the Great Antichrist? A: Reformers, most Protestants.

1. Papacy was long ago recognized as Great Antichrist. - a) Early in history (Era of papal rise.) – Bishop Arnulf of Rheims (991) & Dante (1265-1321). During the Early Middle Ages, the economic conditions in Europe were so poor and the political strife so destructive of the countryside that the Bishop of Rome could not gain a firm hold over the church. As the situation became more tranquil, some Catholic scholars saw what was happening. b) Early Reformers – John Wycliff, John Hus, and Jerome Savonarola. By the 14th and 15th centuries the power of the popes had risen so much versus the secular rulers that numerous men began to identify the pope for what he was. Naturally, there was a major effort on the part of the church to suppress this idea. c) Reformers – Martin Luther, John Knox, Thomas Cranmer, John Calvin. Once Martin Luther challenged the church and survived, other men rallied to the cause of truth. They described the papacy for what it was, and their writing spread through Europe. d) Strong consensus. Confessions – Book of Concord (1580), Westminster Confession (1647), Baptist Confession (1688). A major

break-through occurred with the identification of the papacy as the great Antichrist in the confessions of the church because it meant that a common consensus was growing and that the idea could no longer be suppressed by papal threats. e) Later Churchmen – Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, Charles Hodge, Charles Spurgeon. By the time that the later church founders appeared, the principle that the pope was the great Antichrist was well accepted in Protestantism. They followed the trend of teaching this idea, while the Roman Catholic Church continued to use every means at its disposal to ridicule it and condemn as heretics those who held it.

Q6. What are the key activities which make the papacy fulfill the predictions about the antichrist?
A: Places the pope above the Scriptures, abrogates God's Law and Gospel, introduces human rules.

2. Vicar of Christ. [Peter was never the "Rock on which the church was built" or the Bishop of Rome.] a) Total ruler. Rules the church – Claims authority over the whole church. The pope claims authority over all Christendom, including those not members of the Roman Catholic Church. He is subject to no other organization or individual on earth. b) Enthusiast. Is infallible – Claims a direct link with God that allows him to define doctrine. The pope claims to receive revelations directly from God which he relates to the church as he thinks necessary. c) Pope claims to be omnipresent. Participates in all sacred acts – Demands to be acknowledged in the performance of all the sacraments of the church. The pope claims he has the same status as God, namely, he is involved in all actions carried out by the church. The church therefore is basically an extension of his body because its actions are his actions.

3. Perverts the Gospel. a) Doorway to heaven. Authority of the church – He claims that the church is the only means of grace. Only actions done by the church or with the sanction of the church can contribute to a person's salvation. The church is the agent for sinners in bargaining their eternal fate with God. b) Ultimate spiritual authority. Creates doctrines – He creates doctrines with no scriptural basis and denies others which are biblical. He claims to be the ultimate interpreter of the Scriptures, and he can blend them with sayings of the church fathers and/on with direct revelations from God as he thinks best. c) Different level of works - like the Pharisees. Salvation through works – He urges his flock to do good works to gain the grace needed to become sanctified and subsequently justified. Moreover, works done to keep the commandments of God are the lowest ranking works. Works called "counsels," such as Jesus urged in the Sermon on the Mount, are higher level works and more meritorious. The highest levels of works are those created and endorsed by the church, such as pilgrimages or taking holy orders in the church.

4. Establishes idols. a) Transubstantiation (complete transmutation). Sacrifice of the Mass – The body and blood of Jesus are turned into an idol to be worshiped and paraded. One can gain the benefit of a mass even if one is not present (ex opere operato) at it if one contributes to its celebration financially and has one's name read in connection with it. b) Mary is a demi-goddess. Virgin Mary – Mary is said not only to answer prayer but to have participated in the redemption of the world. The supposed power of Mary has grown over the years because there is little in the Bible to restrict such ideas, and Mary' role in salvation appeals to women. c) The RCC tells God who to put into power. Saints – Saints are created by the church, venerated, and used as intercessors. By canonizing saints, the church is, in effect, telling God whom he should be listening to in dealing with people. d) "Holier-than-thou" places to pray. Places of pilgrimage – Special indulgences are given to people who travel to places where Mary or the saints are supposed to have appeared. This is a highly profitable enterprise for the church. Not only do pilgrims contribute financially to the church as an institution, but they also spend money along the way, some of which also finds its way into the coffers of the church.

5. Growing menace. a) Fingers in politics. Rehabilitating its image – The papacy has morphed its image from representing the wrath of God by killing all heretics it could get its hands on a few centuries ago to a world-wide ambassador of peace and assister of the poor in their struggle for

economic justice. The Roman Catholic Church works with governments to manage charities which strengthen its grip on various sub-cultures. b) The RCC manages the guilt for the sinner. Deals with the devil – The papacy condemns gross sins, but it continually lets Catholics practice them without consequences in the church. Only when it is politically advantageous or necessary does it discipline anyone. The pope has long licensed sin of every kind, either directly or through indulgences granted without the need for genuine repentance. Money and acts of penance act as the great eraser of guilt for sin.

C. Appropriate response

Q7. How should we respond to the papacy? A: 1) Clearly reject it, 2) Direct our conversations to a) total depravity, b) objective justification, & c) good works following justification.

1. A clear statement of Biblical truth. a) It is a firm part of Lutheran teaching. Lutheran Confessions - The confessions recognized the papacy for what it is – the fulfillment of the Scriptures' prediction of the Antichrist. *The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* is of particular value. Reaffirms Confessions. The statements one finds in these documents are strong because one cannot afford to pull one's punches when the salvation of souls is at stake. b) *Statement on the Antichrist* - The WELS adopted this statement in 1959 to show that its position has not changed with the changing face of the papacy. The drafting of the statement and its acceptance at convention did not create new doctrine, merely emphasized that the WELS position had not changed.
2. Recognize the Gospel. a) Presence of God's Word will still let the Holy Spirit save some. – Because the Roman Catholic Church continues to read the Scriptures to its people, it is possible that the Holy Spirit can still convert some hearts to a proper understanding of the way of salvation despite the church's false teachings. "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." {Isaiah 55:11} However, the emphasis on false doctrine means relatively few will gain saving faith. b) Directing our conversations – The Roman Catholics have been fed a distorted view of the Law and the Gospel. We must talk with them about 1) the total depravity of every person and 2) the objective justification that Christ has earned and freely bestows through faith alone. 3) Good works follow justification. We are not linked with Jesus (or the church) as a team working for our salvation. We have nothing to contribute.

7. The Events of Judgment Day

Part I: Return in glory

A. Return of Jesus

Q1. What are key points about the return of Christ? A: a) Appear in the clouds, b) with power & glory, c) seen by all, d) with the angels, e) with great fanfare.

1. Appearance in the clouds. Sudden change. - The return of Jesus will fill the sky. One second the sky will be as it is every day at a particular time for each location on the face of the earth, and a moment later the sky will be filled with Jesus' dominant figure. It will be sudden and unexpected. There will be no chance to react and reconsider one's views of religion. Getting people to look up. a) Daniel – "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man." {Daniel 7:13} b) Jesus – "Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." {Matthew 24:30} c) Angels – The angels said to the apostles after Jesus' ascension, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? 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}

2. With power and glory. Overwhelming beyond imagination. - The sight will dwarf all earthly splendor. The radiance of Jesus and his mighty angels will be overwhelming. Most people will never have imagined anything like it, even those who regularly go to movies with fantastic special effects. Anti-Christians and skeptics who may have developed plans to deal with Jesus on the off chance that He would return will quickly have their plans rendered completely worthless. a) Jesus – "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." {Luke 9:16} b) Paul – "Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." {Titus 2:13}
3. Will be seen by all. Simultaneous. - He will appear all over the world simultaneously. There will be no ability to warn others in later time zones to prepare. If people imagine there is a "Jesus siren" to warn of the impending Judgment Day, it will never have a chance to be activated. No advanced knowledge of physics will allow people to explain what they will see. a) Jesus – "For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day." {Luke 17:24} b) John – "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him." {Revelation 1:7}

   Q2. What will be the role of the angels? A: Gathering and sorting the peoples.

4. With the angels / the heavenly army - The angel hosts in large number will be there to gather all the people, living and dead, from wherever they currently are. The angels will overpower any resistance, which will melt away as people are filled with amazement and dread. This divine SWAT team will quickly arrange the situation for the new reality of the physical presence of the Almighty Judge. a) Jesus – "So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." {Matthew 13:49-50} b) Paul – "To grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." {2 Thessalonians 1:7}
5. With great fanfare. Regal and noisy - The trumpet-like sound proclaiming Jesus' return will get everyone's attention. Like a circus parade suddenly bursting onto a street, the activities necessary to carry out the judgment will hold everyone's attention. There will be no disinterested viewers of the event. Everyone will immediately stop doing whatever was on their agenda and become part of the judgment scene. We will drop our agendas and adjourn. a) Jesus – "And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." {Matthew 24:31} b) Paul – "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." {1 Corinthians 15:51-52}

B. Cosmic occurrences

   Q3. What is the cosmic cataclysm? A: The heavenly bodies abandon their orbits.

1. What is to be expected. Complete rearrangement. - The physical universe will be shaken. The normal function of its various components will be disrupted or completely cease because worldly structures and processes will no longer serve any purpose. The components of the physical world will scurry out of the way so that Jesus can have center stage. What seems so strong to us today will crumble and melt away, but such ultimate chaos will not be the focus of anyone's attention. a) Heavenly bodies. Jesus – "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." {Matthew 24:29} b) Earth. The writer to the Hebrews – "At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but

also the heavens.' This phrase, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain." {Hebrew 12:26-27}

2. Predicted often. The removal of the backdrops. - The destruction of the universe as part of the final judgment has been predicted since the time of the major prophets. Just as the sets and the backdrops on a stage are torn down after the last performance of a play is completed, so the earthly set for the play about man's sin and God's grace will be disassembled. Old Testament prophecies a) Isaiah – "All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree." {Isaiah 34:4} b) Joel – "Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining." {Joel 3:14-15} New Testament prophecies. c) Peter – "And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the LORD comes, the great and magnificent day." {Acts 2:19-20}

3. End of the world. With the play over, there will be no need for the old set. The old will go. Will God recycle it? Everything will go into the trash. Whether some of that trash will be recycled into a new heaven and a new earth, or whether all of it will be returned to nothingness is not indicated in the Bible. Over the years numerous theologians, including Lutherans, have made cases for each possibility, but wasting time on this matter is pointless because God will do as He pleases no matter what we think. Destruction. a) John – "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them." {Revelation 20:11} b) Peter – "But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly." {2 Peter 3:7}

4. How much can we say. - While we can imagine what Judgment Day might be like, it is not something that anyone has ever experienced. Something new. Scripture only gives us a limited preview. We should therefore be careful not to embroider on the revelation that we have received so we do not lead ourselves into believing manmade doctrine about what will happen. There has been a long history of people leading themselves and others into the tar pit of false delusions. We should not worry about it. a) Paul – "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known." Our view is weak. {1 Corinthians 13:12} b) Peter – "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories." Even the prophets did not know. {1 Peter 1:10-11}

C. Reaction to Christ's return

Q4. What will be the response of the ignorant unbelievers? A: Bewilderment, panic.

1. Ignorant Unbelievers. - To those who have never heard of Jesus and the coming judgment or have followed religions in which there is no eternal reckoning, It will be an absolute disaster with unknowable panic. Judgment Day will be like people being suddenly awaken out of sleep to find themselves in a living nightmare. Their natural knowledge of God has caused them to try to assuage their guilt for their sins from their souls through pathetically inadequate works, but the harshness of the divine judgment will leave them in utter despair. They had failed to find God on their own, and it will be too late to cry, "What must I do to be saved?" No comfort will be available. a) Terror. Asaph – "Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! Like a dream when one awakes, O LORD, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms." {Psalm 73:18–20} Panic. b) John – "Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and

the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?'" {Revelation 6:15-17}

Q5. What will be the response of the recalcitrant unbelievers? A: Panic, hoping one of their self-deluding arguments will work.

2. Recalcitrant Unbelievers. False beliefs are worthless. - To those who ignored Christ or reviled Him and to those who have re-engineered Him into something that He is not, Judgment Day will become progressively more terrifying. The fibs that many have prepared for this event will quickly be discarded as inadequate in their great despair. Trying to "lawyer" God won't work either. No arguing their case on technicalities. Human cleverness will be crushed by the almighty magnificence of the glorified Jesus. a) Jesus – "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" No phony Christianity. {Matthew 7:21–23} b) King Solomon – "Because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me." {Proverbs 1:25–28} People need to learn the truth now.

Q6. What will be the response of the believers? A: Momentary shock followed by great rejoicing.

3. Believers. - After the initial shock which certainly every living human will experience, great joy will fill their hearts and voices, as they realize that their strife is over and the victory won. It will be like graduation day times a billion. At last!!! a) Jesus – "Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." {Luke 21:28} Promises fulfilled. b) Paul – "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." {Romans 5:1-2} c) Peter – "But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." {2 Peter 2:13}

Q7. What is the "fear of fulfilment? A: Something happening that you want to happen, but not just yet.

4. The fear of fulfillment. In this life there is the thrill of imagined events. When the events become real, however, things can become scary, or the fear of buyer's remorse can set in. Facing the reality and wondering. a) For years you dream of when you will be able to drive. But when you finally get behind the wheel and the other cars are moving around you, your confidence can take a beating. Not like we pictured it. b) You want to go to the Naval Academy and become a marine, but when you arrive, those other guys look a whole lot more like marines than you do, so you get onto a plane and go back home. c) The same thing can happen with regard to Judgment Day. We want it to come – soon – but maybe not too soon. Maybe we would like it to come after our deaths, so we won't have to endure the shock of it. And if it happened after our deaths, we won't have to worry about it coming when we were in the middle of a sin. Fear of when it will happen. We are used to life and death, but Judgment Day is something else. It is hard to think of such a great event in a calm frame of mind. d) Then there is the fear that maybe we have not been good enough yet. Maybe something is lacking. Maybe we are not good enough. Not to worry – we are saved by God's grace, NOT by our works! Come, Lord Jesus.

8. The Resurrection of the Dead

Part 2: Resurrection

A. Details of resurrection

Q1. What are the details of the resurrection? A: 1) trumpet, 2) Jesus calls, 3) dead arise from their graves, 4) believers receive glorified bodies.

1. The dead will come back to life. - Even those not familiar with the study of medicine know that dead people do not come back to life. Irreversible processes happen at death that prevent the body from living again. (One can explain the chemical of dead if one is familiar with them.) Yet the Lord God Almighty is not bound by the laws of nature, and He has promised that on Judgment Day He will reassemble the bodies of all those who have died, no matter what the cause of death or what has happened to their bodies since. a) Restoration. "And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." {Job 19:26-27} b) "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." {1 Corinthians 15:52} c) "And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done." {Revelation 20:13}

2. Both the righteous and the wicked. - The wicked will not be able to avoid (no escape) the judgment by being dead before the judgment happens. On Judgment Day everyone will be called back to life. This thought should truly trouble sinners. While the believers are promised a glorified body and heaven, the unbelievers will get their body back in far less desirable condition. Unbelievers do not get a glorified body. There will be no escape from the judgment. a) "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." {Daniel 12:2} Note: Daniel is not implying in this statement that there are some dead who will not be raised. "Many" here is a Hebraism implying the number raised will be very large. b) Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." {John 5:28-29} Only believers can do good works in God's eyes. c) "Having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust." {Acts 24:15}

Q2. How will the resurrection affect the people who are still living? A: Believers will receive glorified bodies.

3. Believers who are living will be changed. - At the time of the resurrection of the dead, those who are still living will be treated in the same manner as the resurrected dead. The bodies of the believers will be glorified similarly to those being called back to life, while the unbelievers will have to bear their infirmities. What happens will be too sudden for anyone to jump into the other group. a) "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." {1 Corinthians 15:51} b) Jesus said, "Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left." {Matthew 24:40-41} Some will be taken and changed. Some will not be changed. There will not be a 1:1 ratio between the two groups.

Q3. Who will do the raising from the dead? A: All members of the Trinity.

4. Who will do the raising from the dead? But which person of the Trinity will carry out the act of resurrection? Like all acts of God in the physical universe, all the members of the Trinity are involved. God is one. The LORD is one entity as far as His creation is concerned. a) Father – "We

also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence." {2 Corinthians 4:13–14} b) Son – "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." {Philippians 3:20–21} (A little bit of the how.) c) Holy Spirit – "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." {Romans 8:11}

B. The resurrected body

Q4. What will the resurrected bodies of the believers be like? A: Like Christ's, not limited by the current laws of nature.

1. Like Christ's. - After His resurrection, Jesus' body was still recognizable to His disciples. He could still do the things that He could do before, as He demonstrated by eating fish (Luke 24:42). However, He was no longer bound by the laws of nature. Glorified bodies are independent of the laws of nature. It will be similar for all believers, although that does not mean that believers will have all the power of God. a) "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven." {1 Corinthians 15:49} Things will be different in heaven. b) "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." {Philippians 3:20-21}

Q5. What will the resurrected bodies of the unbelievers be like? A: Probably similar to their earthly bodies, but we have limited knowledge.

Q6. How will people be able to recognize each other? A: We do not know.

2. Characteristics. - We do not know all the characteristics that our glorified bodies will possess, but the Bible does mention some of them. We need to be particularly careful not to speculate about what the Scriptures do not tell us, lest we make for ourselves a false doctrine concerning the resurrection. a) Imperishable (Cannot age or die.) – At both the macroscopic and microscopic levels our glorified bodies will not decay. We will not again move toward death, nor will we be able to be harmed in any way. - "So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable." {1 Corinthians 15:42} b) With glory (Won't have to deal with the details of living.) – All the personal inconveniences of living that we need to endure day after day will be gone. We won't have to worry about skin care to look beautiful, and we will never have a bad hair day. - "When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." {Colossians 3:4} c) With power (Always be strong and fit.) – The weaknesses of the body will be gone. We won't need to do exercises to stay in shape because we will always be able to do anything we need to do to serve the LORD. - "It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." {1 Corinthians 15:43} d) Spiritual body (Made for heaven) – We do not know the nature of the spiritual body which Paul mentions. It will undoubtedly have the additional characteristics necessary to dwell in the heavenly realms. - "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." {1 Corinthians 15:44} e) Size and age (The details of our new bodies are unknown.) – We do not know how old we will appear to others, or for that matter, whether we will appear at different ages to different people, depending on when they knew us. We also do not know anything about our size. We do not know how we will recognize each other, but when the time comes, we will find out. f) Curiosity got Eve, and with her the rest of us, into a whole lot of trouble with God. There are things within our power to know, and things which are not within our power to know. Part of our faith in the LORD is that we trust Him to handle those things which we can't. We cannot know more about our glorified bodies than the Bible reveals, so we need to wait patiently to find out. (Wait patiently on the LORD.) - David wrote, "Be still before the LORD and wait

patiently for him." {Psalm 37:7}

C. Nature of Resurrection

Q7. What two factors are involved that make the resurrection possible? A: 1) God's power, 2) Christ's redemptive work.

1. Possible by God's power. - a) While the resurrection of the dead is something that is currently and most likely forever beyond human power, the LORD can accomplish it by merely speaking the word that it is to be. This is a "God thing." After all, He brought the whole universe into being in this manner. - The angel Gabriel said, "For nothing will be impossible with God." {Luke 1:37} - "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" {1 Corinthians 15:12} b) The extent of God's power is not established by human speculation or by popular vote. Our reasoning is irrelevant. There will always be skeptics both without and within the church who want to tell God what He can and cannot do. These people may trouble believers because their arguments can sound so logical, but we should not for a moment doubt God's power to do all that He promised us. We must step away from what we think is possible, yet we must not be gullible. - "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, 'We will hear you again about this.'" {Acts 17:32} - "They [scoffers] will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.'" {2 Peter 3:4} - "For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" {Isaiah 14:27}

2. Possible by Christ's redemption. - While the LORD's power could always cause the resurrection, it would have been a resurrection to eternal suffering had not Christ taken away the guilt of our sins. It is this that allows for a resurrection of our souls from spiritual death and then the resurrection of our bodies in a glorified state. We need Christ's redemption to make the transformation at the resurrection. a) "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him (bound together with Christ) in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." {Romans 6:4-5} b) "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ." {1 Corinthians 15:20-23} Adam □ death; Christ □ life.

3. Fundamental doctrine

Q8. Why is the doctrine of the resurrection a fundamental doctrine? A: Without the resurrection we would still be in our sins. Because God is able and has promised.

The Christian faith rests upon a number of fundamental doctrines drawn from the Scriptures. To deny any of these fundamental doctrines is to create a new religion with a new god, one who is not capable of saving us. To deny doctrines is to create a new religion. Key doctrines that every Christian must strive to know to the extent that the Scriptures have revealed them and that he or she is able to understand them are: a) The LORD, the Almighty God who is a Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – three persons but only one essence. Else Arius and Unitarians. b) The Decree of Creation – God from eternity committed Himself to create the world in all its details, to preserve it, and to make all things work for the good of His elect. Creation + operation + preservation. c) Total depravity (dead in sin) – All people are totally depraved by nature and incapable of doing anything to contribute to either their own salvation or their own conversion to the saving faith. d) The Decree of Redemption (Plan of salvation) – God from eternity committed the Son to become

incarnate in the Virgin Mary, to perfectly fulfill all God's just demands in man's place, to atone for the guilt of all people's sin by His suffering and death, and then to rise victorious from the dead. e) The Decree of Predestination is unconditional. – God from eternity elected those who would be saved, creating detailed plans for their conversion and sanctification which are carried out through the work of the Holy Spirit. Only God can change hearts.

One cannot, therefore, deny the resurrection of the dead and still be a Christian. Believing in Christ's resurrection is essential. To deny the ability of the LORD to raise the dead is blasphemy. To doubt that He will do as He has said is heresy. a) If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain….If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. {1 Corinthians 15:14,17} b) Key point: "Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, 'Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.'" {Acts 23:6} c) "Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment." {Hebrews 6:1-2} Note what the "elementary doctrines" are.

4. Part of the LORD's salvation plan. - None of the LORD's plan of salvation makes sense to the human mind. God's actions follow His plan, not what makes sense to us. So, that the plan ends with another miracle can hardly be unexpected, even though it challenges our ability to comprehend it. a) "And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified he also glorified." Progressive events. {Romans 8:30} b) "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead." {Philippians 3:10-11} The theology of the cross.

9. The Final Judgment

Part 3: Judgment

A. Earthly criminal trials

Q1. What are the key components of a trial? A: Judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, defendants, evidence, jury, verdict, & sentences.

1. Key components of a trial. a) Time of the trial – The time of the trial is based on when the matters of the trial have been investigated and when the trial can be scheduled on the court calendar. Negotiated among the prosecutor, the defense attorney, and the court. b) Prosecutor – He or she represents the government and must establish that a crime has been committed and prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant has committed it. Proving crime and guilt. c) Defense attorney– He or she represents the person charged with the crime and must show either that no prosecutable crime was committed or that there is a reasonable doubt that the defendant committed it. Defendants can choose to represent themselves. Creating reasonable doubt. d) Judge – The judge controls court procedure and decides how the law applies to the matters in the dispute. If the trial is a "jury trial," the judge instructs the jury on how the law must be applied to the evidence. If the trial is a "bench trial," the judge decides based on the evidence whether a crime was committed and if the defendant is guilty. Control of trial. e) Evidence – Both the prosecutor and the defense attorney can present evidence in the form of physical materials or witnesses that provide relevant information about the crime or about the defendant. Exhibits. Both attorneys can challenge evidence and/or how the law applies to the matters in dispute in the trial. f) Jury – The jury is composed of a group of common citizens that decides the guilt or innocence of the defendant based on the evidence and the judge's instructions. Jury selection. g) Verdict – A defendant might be found to be guilty of some charges and not guilty of others. Evaluation by jury or judge. h)

Sentence – If the defendant is found to be guilty of any charges, the judge will sentence the defendant to punishment based on the stipulations of the law and other circumstances. Sentencing hearing.

B. God's Courtroom

Q2. How does God's courtroom differ from an earthly courtroom? A: 1) The time of the trial is set by God. 2) Satan is the prosecutor.

1. Time of judgment. - The Bible reveals that an eternal judgment will happen on the final day of the earth's existence. God sets the date. a) Jesus said, "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak." {Matthew 12:36} b) Jesus said, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne." {Matthew 25:31} c) "The LORD knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment." {2 Peter 2:9}

2. The prosecutor. - The name "Satan" means accuser, and Satan is always looking for ways to show that people have committed sins according to the Moral Law. He knows our sins because he tempted us to do them. a) "Then Satan answered the Lord and said, 'Does Job fear God for no reason?...But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.'" {Job 1:9–11} b) "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." {1 Peter 5:8} He is out to get us.

3. The defendants

Q3. Who will be on trial in the final judgment? A: Evil angels, all people, living and dead.

a) Angels. - The angels who rebelled against the LORD and who have been troubling the people of the earth ever since they rebelled will receive their final sentence and be placed where they can trouble the believers no more. The devils will receive their final sentence. - "The angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, He has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day." {Jude 6}

b) All nations. - All people, regardless of their nation or race, will appear before Jesus to be judged. It will not matter how much opportunity they had to hear the Gospel or what their age is at his return. Judgment will come upon all. - Jesus said, "Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." {Matthew 25:32} c) The living and the dead. - The dead will be called back to life to face the judgment. Death is no escape. The dead will appear with the living before the judgment seat. - "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom." {2 Timothy 4:1} (The resurrection was discussed in the last chapter.)

Q4. Who will the judge be? A: Jesus.

4. The Judge - At the trial Jesus will be the judge. As the Lord God Himself, He knows the evidence because He has seen the whole history of the world. As a man, He has lived in the world that He will be judging. The Savior will also be the judge. a) "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son." {John 5:22} b) "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He (Jesus) is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead." {Acts 10:42}

C. The proceedings

Q5. What will be the steps in the judgment process? A: Evidence, verdict, sentences.

1. Each person will be judged individually. - To separate those who will be saved from those who will

be damned, each person's sins will be considered independently of other people. We should not imagine, however, that there will be a long, interminable line as people wait for judgement. This is because Jesus can judge the cases of all people simultaneously yet individually. Two parallel sets of trials. Everyone will be examined individually but simultaneously. This is beyond our imagination. a) "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." {Ezekiel 18:20} b) "For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God….So then each of us will give an account of himself to God." {Romans 14:10-12} c) "You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me." {Exodus 20:5}

Q6. How does the evidence differ for the believers and the unbelievers? A: Believers: evil suppressed, good reviewed. Unbelievers: Evil reviewed.

2. The evidence. - The LORD knows all the thoughts, words and deeds of all the people who have ever lived. There will be no evidence that is questionable, and none will be thrown out based on technicalities. The judgment will be impartial, giving no consideration to a person's status in the world. A very fair judgment. Most people's indictments will be very long, and it will be impossible for anyone to plead innocent to the charges. a) "For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders all his paths." Not way of hiding things. {Proverbs 5:21} b) "The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all his innermost parts." {Proverbs 20:27} c) "And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." {Hebrew 4:13}

3. Defense attorney (The split starts here.) – Christians. - Jesus is the defense attorney for those people who believe in Him as their Savior. He will point out that there is no evidence against Christians because all the evidence against them have been washed away by His blood. There is no evidence that applies. As the judge, Jesus will therefore acquit them and declare them innocent. a) "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies." {Romans 8:33} b) Jesus said, "Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." {John 3:18} c) "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." {1 Corinthians 6:11}

4. Defense attorney – Unbelievers. - Those who do not trust in Jesus as their Savior will have to rely on their idols, their hypocritical Christianity, and their own works. There is nothing that can be said for the defense. None of these agents will appease God. They can do nothing to prevent the judge from looking at the evidence of people's deeds. Satan will have a field day pointing out all the sins of unbelievers that will force them to spend eternity in hell with him. a) "They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god that cannot save." Idols cannot help. {Isaiah 45:20} b) Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" Phony Christianity will be seen through. {Matthew 7:21–23} c) "[We must] be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified." Good works are of no value. {Galatians 2:16}

Q7. Based on what will believers be justified? A: Faith in Jesus and response to faith.

5. The verdict – Christians. – Not guilty. Because Christians have had all their sins removed through Jesus' blood, they have no sins of which to be found guilty. The only things on their records will be

the good works that they have done. Even though all their good works have been tainted by sin, Jesus will overlook this because Christians are His dear siblings. These will move directly to the sentencing phase of the trial. a) "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." {Jeremiah 31:34, Hebrews 8:12} b) "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." {Isaiah 1:18} Completely forgiven.

Q8. Based on what will unbelievers be condemned? A: 1) Lack of repentance, 2) evil deeds done.

6. The verdict – Unbelievers. Guilty of all charges. Jesus knows the evidence because He is omniscient. He will acknowledge that all the accusations that Satan makes against the unbelievers are true. Therefore, as the judge, Jesus will find the unbelievers guilty of all their sins. a) "The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment." {Psalm 1:4–5} b) "The wicked falls by his own wickedness." No hope. {Proverbs 11:5} c) Jesus said, "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." {Mark 8:38}
7. The sentence – Christians. – Welcome to heaven. Jesus will be delighted to reward those who have believed in Him. He will laud their good works and invite them into the blessedness of heaven. a) Jesus said, "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father….The King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'" {Matthew 25:34–40} b) Jesus said, "Many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." {Matthew 8:11}
8. The sentence – Unbelievers. Sent straight to hell. Jesus will revile those who failed to believe in Him. Even their efforts at doing good to their neighbors will be dismissed because, like all human good works, they were tainted with sin, and the unbelievers did not seek forgiveness for their sins. a) Jesus said, "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels….And these will go away into eternal punishment.'" {Matthew 25:41–46} b) Jesus said, "While the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." {Matthew 8:12}

D. Acts in judgment
1. Believers judging. - The Bible says that the believers will be involved in the judgment of both men and angels. We are not sure how this will happen. Rather than speculate, it is better to wait until Judgment Day, as understanding this has no bearing on our salvation. We do not understand the judging of people and demons. a) Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? {1 Corinthians 6:2} b) "The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father." {Revelation 2:26-27}
2. The place of good works in the judgment – This will be discussed in the next session.

10. Judgment & Hell

A. Acts of judgment

Q1. What is the role of good works in the final judgment? A: Only believers do good works.

2. Good works as basis of judgment. Good works done in faith do count. - Those who believe in Jesus will have their works of service to the LORD and to their neighbors tallied in their favor for which they will be rewarded in heaven. Those who do not believe in Jesus will have their sins tallied against them for which they will be punished in hell. What gets tallied depends solely on the faith

in a person's heart or lack thereof. a) The promise. Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." {John 5:28-29} b) The standard. "He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury." {Romans 2:6-8}

3. Degrees of reward. - While there will be the general reward of heaven for all who believe in Jesus and repudiate their own sinful nature, individual rewards will be handed down based on people's records of service to the LORD and to their neighbors. We do not know what they will be. The nature of these rewards is not known, but we can expect God will reward us beyond what we can now imagine. However, we should not live our lives to try to maximize our rewards in heaven, because everything we get from the LORD is a gift according to His good pleasure. We should not strive for reward. a) Humility model. "He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers." {1 Corinthians 3:8-9} b) Faithful service gets you more than a gold watch. Jesus said, "The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward." {Matthew 10:41–42} We do not have to do heroic things.

   Q2. What does the term "degrees of punishment" mean? A: The severity level of punishment.

4. Degrees of punishment. - While there will be the general punishment of hell for all who rejected Jesus and did not hear about Him, individual punishments will be handed down based on people's response to the means of grace. Those who had many opportunities to hear and believe will be given worse punishment than those who did not hear the call to repent and believe. We have no details about this, but the amount of affiliation with the visible church appears to be a consideration. a) Jesus said, "For if the mighty works done in you [Capernaum] had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you." {Matthew 11:23–24} To be baptized and then to fall away is worse than not to have been baptized. b) "That servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating." {Luke 12:47-48} Mere membership in the visible church does not sustain faith.

B. Nature of hell

   Q3. What was the original purpose of hell? A: Place of punishment for fallen angels.

1. Purpose of hell. a) Place of punishment - Hell was created as a place of punishment for Satan and all the angels that rebelled against the LORD. Designed for demons. When mankind fell into sin as well, hell also became the place where sinners would be punished. But adapted for humans. - "God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment." {2 Peter 2:4} - Jesus said, "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." {Matthew 24:41} b) Place of isolation, separated from the love of God – the good He does for all people. - The LORD cannot tolerate sin and sinners. By condemning them forever to hell, He will get them out of His holy presence by placing them in a separate realm apart from where He, the hosts of heaven, and the saints dwell. - "And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" {Matthew 7:23} - In the account of the rich man and Lazarus that Jesus told, Father Abraham said, "Between us [in heaven] and you [in hell] a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be

able, and none may cross from there to us." {Luke 16:26} Dante – "Abandon all hope ye who enter here."

Q5. Where is hell located? A: We do not need to know.

2. Location - The location of hell is an out-of-this-world place and cannot be determined from Scripture. Because Jesus "ascended" into heaven, people have naturally assumed heaven is up relative to the earth's surface. Therefore, they have concluded that hell must be downward from the earth's surface. Because the earth is spherical, some have further reasoned that it is at the center of the earth. However, heaven and hell are eternal realms which are not located in the physical world.

3. Wrath of God over sin. Sin is hideous in its nature and effects. The LORD hates sin, and His wrath over sin cannot be attenuated by human desires to make Him a nicer Being. Sin disturbs how the universe works and prevents it from running smoothly to serve the purpose that God had set for it. Because the LORD hates sins, those who commit sin must be punished; therefore, His wrath must fall upon them. a) King David wrote, "For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you." {Psalm 5:4} b) "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he [John the Baptizer] said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'" {Matthew 3:7} The words of Scripture are harsh for a reason. c) "Because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed." {Romans 2:5}

C. Punishment of hell

Q4. What is the ultimate punishment of hell? A: Separation from God, and hopelessness.

Q6. What role does fire play in hell? A: It is the overall expression for the torments of hell.

1. Torments of hell. - Hell will be a place of torment, but we do not know how the torment will be administered. a) Will hell be dark or light? Some argue that since God is light, hell must be in darkness. Opposite of being in God's presence. - In Jesus' parable, the king said, "Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." {Matthew 22:13} - "He [the LORD] has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day." {Jude 6} No light of hope. b) What role does fire play? Will it produce physical anguish, mental anguish or both? - Jesus said, "Whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire." {Matthew 5:22} Being burned is painful. - Jesus said, "It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." {Mark 9:47–48} Pain is forever renewed. - "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries." {Hebrews 10:27} Hell is a dead end. - "Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." {Revelation 20:14-15} Like an oil-covered lake ablaze. c) Will people's flesh be eaten by worms? - The LORD said, "And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." {Isaiah 66:24} Being perpetually eaten by worms. - "My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt; my skin hardens, then breaks out afresh." {Job 7:5} d) Will punishments depend on what a person fears most? The things that frighten us most are the hardest to bear and give us the most agony if inflicted upon us. - "For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." {Hebrews 10:30–31} God will even the score. - "O Lord, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth! Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve!" {Psalm 94:1–2} This is a worst nightmare. There

is nothing pleasant to be found in it.

2. Eternal suffering. - The suffering in hell will be horrible, and there will be no end or breaks within it. It is this fact that makes it so bad. One will never be able to readjust or catch one's breath. There will be no five-minute breaks every hour. There will be no rescue and no hope of comfort from anyone. Pain and terror without end. a) Jesus said, "It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire." {Matthew 18:8} b) "They [those who reject the Gospel] will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might." {2 Thessalonians 1:9} c) "The devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." {Revelation 20:10} Utter helplessness. No way out.

D. Deniers of hell

Q7. What is the basis for denying the existence of hell? A: They claim that God could not be that mean.

1. "A loving God won't punish people." (God could not be so cruel!) - Most people would rather deny reality than face it. Many Christians are deniers of hell. The thought of hell is so horrible that the great majority of people do not want it to exist. Therefore, they re-engineer the Lord God into a god who is so loving that he would not send anyone to hell. This is like trying to end a hurricane by leaving it off the weather map. The LORD does not want to punish people, but He will. Stark warning. a) Jesus said, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." {Matthew 10:28} b) "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" {Numbers 23:19} God is not fibbing.

2. Limited punishment. - While some people agree that punishment is appropriate for some or most people, they feel eternal punishment is too severe, so they propose alternatives. God is unimpressed. They try to revamp hell. a) Purgatory is trying to make hell temporary before promotion to heaven. – To avoid the hopelessness of an eternal punishment, some have devised a temporary place of torment where people can be purged form their sins but then go into heaven. People get what they deserve, but only for a limited amount of time. While the Roman Catholic Church has long used the threat of purgatory to extract money from its members, other groups also believe that punishment for sins will only be temporary. b) Annihilation (Punishment, then non-existence) – Some people have come to imagine that the punishment will be temporary and then the unbelievers will be completely annihilated. The length of punishment might be very short or long, but eventually it will end. This gives sinners a false hope that they can ignore God's will without too great of risk.

3. Jokes about hell. - Hell is utterly terrible. It is an agonizing holocaust. There is nothing funny about it. The LORD has warned us about hell and its horrors so that we will repent of our sins. When we joke about hell, we mock God's justice. Joking about hell diminishes it horror. Hell must be feared!!! a) "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." {Galatians 6:7-8} b) "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place." {Ephesians 5:4} There is a book called *How to Become a Bishop without Being Religious* that advises pastors to avoid talking about hell.

E. Pray to stand righteous in the judgment.

1. It is good and proper for people to pray to avoid falling from the Christian faith and incurring the punishments of hell. Hell needs to be on our minds and in our prayers. It is only through the efforts of the Holy Spirit that anyone will remain in faith. Therefore, we should fervently pray for our faith

to grow and remain firm. a) Jesus said, "But stay alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." {Luke 21:36} b) "He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it." {1 Thessalonians 5:24} The devil wants us to forget about hell and think only about the here and now.

11. Heaven

A. Benefits of heaven

Q1. What does "being with the LORD" mean? A: We will be in the LORD's presence and know many of the mysteries of God.

1. Being with the LORD!!!!! - Some people look for the remotest place they can find, where there is no sign of mankind and where they can feel the beauty of nature. It is there that they sense the "presence of God" in the lack of stress from modern life. Such a place of peace and quiet is like a mere penny compared to a million dollars when we experience the joy and serenity of the genuine presence of the LORD. a) "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known." {1 Corinthians 13:12} b) "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "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." {Revelation 21:3}

Q2. What are some of the consequences of sin we will not experience in heaven? A: Illness, death, heartache, hunger & thirst.

2. No sin or the results of sin. - Sins weigh down our whole life to such an extent we cannot imagine how well things would work if sin had not degraded them. Sin is one of the reasons people want to escape others. No sin and no temptation to sin will mean no frustration or unmet needs. a) "When the perfect comes, the partial will pass away." {1 Corinthians 13:10} Magnificent structures with no flaws. b) "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." {Revelation 21:4}

3. Unimaginable bliss. - Everyone sometimes imagines what it would be like to be treated like royalty. How wonderful it would be to have everything always going right because someone was making sure that nothing could go wrong. When have you been happy? In heaven that someone is the LORD, and our wildest dreams will be exceeded. a) "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." {Psalm 16:11} Happiness without fearing the future. b) In one of Jesus' parables, the ruler said, "You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." {Matthew 25:23} c) "And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" {Revelation 19:9} Relaxing forever.

4. Heaven is eternal. - Heaven will never end. In this life we establish routines and favorite places which we regularly visit. They give us a sense of time passing, as we try to hold on to what pleases us, for we know that it is slipping away. Each time we do the routine or visit the place it will be one less time we do it. In heaven there will be no such melancholy associated with events because nothing will ever end but can be enjoyed again and again forever. a) "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." When you are young and when you are old, you see the world quite differently. {Matthew 25:46} b) "For they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." {Luke 20:36} c) "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.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." {1 Corinthians 15:54-57} Our whole orientation will change when there is no more death.

B. Residents of heaven

Q5. Who will the residents of heaven be? A: God, angels & other spiritual creatures, the elect.

1. The position of Jesus in heaven. - Understanding the Trinity is beyond our mental abilities now and probably forever. We know there are three persons in the Godhead, but how they will appear to us in heaven has only been revealed to us in pictures that fall far short of reality. Jesus will be the center of worship for the redeemed, but the whole Trinity will share in our adoration. God and the Lamb. It is confusing. And what about the Holy Spirit? a) "Behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away." {Daniel 7:13-14} b) Jesus said, "All should honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him." {John 5:23} c) "And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!'" {Revelation 5:13}

2. Angels and heavenly creatures. - The Bible tells us that angels and other creatures exist in heaven. Their full variety will not be known until we arrive. Various types of spiritual creatures. a) "And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind." {Revelation 4:6} b) "And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God." {Revelation 7:11}

3. The elect, believers in Christ. - Jesus died to bring all people to heaven, but most people have opted out because they have not heard the message or did not find it to their liking. Nevertheless, large numbers of people, elected in Christ before the world was created, have believed and will be present to enjoy the blessings of heaven. Even a small percentage of humanity is a large number. a) "And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified." {Romans 8:30} b) "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." {2 Timothy 2:10}

Q3. Why will more than 144,000 people be in heaven? A: 144,000 is a symbolic representation of completeness.

4. How many people will be in heaven? - The Bible uses numbers both to indicate size and completeness. It uses 144,000 because it is 12 x 12 x 10 x 10 x 10. The Bible uses 12 to indicate God's people and 10 to indicate completeness. 144,000 in Revelation 7:9 can be thought of as the Old Testament people (12) and the New Testament people (12) coming from every direction (10 cubed). This represents the total number of people saved. (Some explanation of Hebrew versus Roman numbers would be appropriate here.) a) Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Small percentage. {Matthew 7:13-14} b) Jesus said, "I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." {Matthew 8:11} c) "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands." Still a lot. {Revelation 7:9}

C. Questions about life in heaven

Q6. What will people do in heaven? A: Only God knows but certainly singing and praising God, to be sure.

1. What will life in heaven be like? We only have mere hints. - The Bible indicates that all creatures in heaven will sing and praise the LORD. However, that does not mean people will do nothing else in heaven. We are told that we will reign with Christ, which implies activity, although the Bible does not tell us what those activities might be. a) "Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!" {Psalm 84:4} b) "I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." {Revelation 15:2-3} c) "If we endure, we will also reign with Him." {2 Timothy 2:12}

   Q4. Will we eat in heaven? A: Apparently if we want to.

2. What about food? - Several biblical verses indicate that food will be available and eaten, although needing food to sustain life would seem unlikely because people cannot die. Perhaps, there might be beer in heaven. a) Jesus said, "I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." What about types of food and flavors? {Luke 22:29-30} b) Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." {Mark 14:25} c) "Through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month." Will there be months? {Revelation 22:2}

3. What about marriage? - The purposes for marriage on earth are 1) to procreate the human race, 2) for companionship, and 3) to control lust. The first will not apply in heaven, the second is negated because there will be no loneliness in heaven, and the third is unnecessary because there will be no sin. a) "And Jesus said to them, 'The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.'" {Luke 20:34-36} Note that people will not become angels.

   Q8. What will our reaction be if some of our friends and relatives are not in heaven? A: We will be confident that God has judged them appropriately.

4. Will we recognize others? We do not know how we will recognize others. - The disciples recognized Jesus after His resurrection, so it's reasonable we will be able to recognize people as well. Such recognition might not be by sight. Perhaps we will inherently know everyone. a) "Knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence." {2 Corinthians 4:14} Little information. b) "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy." {1 Thessalonians 2:19-20}

D. Particulars about heaven

   Q7. Where is heaven located? A: Outside the physical universe.

1. Its location. - Because many languages use the same word for 1) the sky, 2) outer space, and 3) the abode of God, people naturally think God's home is somewhere above us. While the Bible uses this cultural-based terminology, clearly the residence of God is in the realm of eternity, not in the physical universe. Symbolically above the earth. a) "For thus says the One who is high and lifted

up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "'I dwell in the high and holy place.'" {Isaiah 57:15} b) "Until the day when he was taken up." {Acts 1:2}

2. The new heaven and the new earth. - We don't know what the nature of the new heaven and new earth will be like. We lack a frame of reference. It may be very different. The Bible pictures gates of a single pearl and streets of gold because we do not have the proper frame of reference to understand what things will be like. We are like bushmen being told about downtown Chicago. a) "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind." {Isaiah 65:17} b) "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more." {Revelation 21:1}

3. Will the earth be annihilated or renovated? - The Bible does not give enough evidence to settle this issue, so it cannot be made a point of doctrine either way. a) Annihilated. "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." {2 Peter 3:10} b) Remodeled. "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, 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." {Romans 8:20-21} New laws of nature?

4. Applications to our lives - The reality that either heaven or hell is in everyone's future should keep us focused on the importance of building our faith. We should not set our hearts on earthly things because they will certainly be taken from us in one manner or another. We must store up treasure in heaven. Be heavenly minded, but work while it is day. a) "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." {Colossians 3:1-2} b) "For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come." {Hebrews 13:14} Here everything decays.

12. What Happens If I Die Before the End?

A. At death

Q1. What is the nature of death? A: Separation.

1. Nature of death. - Death means separation. The pain of loneliness. When death occurs, two things are separated that are essential for life. God did not create man to die; that was man's doing. The Scriptures tell us of three types of death that entered God's perfect creation through one act of man. a) Spiritual death is the separation from God's spiritual blessings. Unable to do God's will - St. Paul wrote, "You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience." {Ephesians 2:1–2} The holy God must separate from sin. b) Temporal death is the separation from God's temporal blessings. - God said to Adam, "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." "Adam" means "earthy." {Genesis 3:19} c) Eternal death is the separation from God's eternal blessings. - "When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, they will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might." {2 Thessalonians 1:7–9} Hell is where God's helpful presence does not exist.

2. At death the soul leaves the body. We cannot determine the exact time. - There is no reason for the soul to remain with the body once the body is incapable of doing anything. When the body stops functioning, the LORD calls the soul for judgment. a) "Before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." (Flowery

words to describe dying.) {Ecclesiastes 12:6-7} b) "Because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man." {Romans 5:17} Eventually death claims its prey. c) "Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!' And having said this he breathed his last." Separation of body and soul. {Luke 23:46}

Q2. What happens to the soul immediately at death? A: The soul is judged by God.

3. The soul goes immediately to heaven or hell. There is no courtroom delay. - The Bible makes it clear that people should expect immediate processing of the soul at death. There will be no service queue or backup during busy seasons. One moment alive and the next in one's eternal home is the LORD's timeline. In an instant. a) Jesus said, "The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes." {Luke 16:22-23} b) "And he said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'" {Luke 23:43} c) "And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'" {Acts 7:59} The human mind develops a "death script" of what it expects to happen. As death approaches, it shuts down the senses and plays the script. People believe that they are actual experiencing what is in the script.

   Q3. How can we tell which decrease people are in heaven? A: We cannot know before Judgment Day.

4. The judgment is solely God's. - The Bible tells us that there are two requirements to be saved, namely that 1) we need to believe in Jesus in our hearts and that 2) we confess our faith with our mouths and our lives. As humans, we can judge a person's confession of faith (our business). Based on their confession, we accept or exclude them into church membership and permit or forbid them to attend the Lord's Supper with us. - However, we cannot tell whether they really have faith or are heretics, hypocrites, or synergists (God's business). It is false comfort to tell someone their relative is in heaven, because no matter how strong a believer that a person appears to be, we do not know his or her heart. a) Paul wrote, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." {Romans 10:9} b) "The Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." {1 Samuel 16:7} We should not judge based on what human eyes see. c) Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" {Matthew 7:21–23} Beware of thinking, "He/she led a good Christian life."

5. Conclusive judgment at moment of death. - God's judgment at death is conclusive. We should not draft arguments to prepare for it. There will be no reconsideration or second chances. No appeals. People often feel remorse at someone's death if they feel that they could have done more to make sure that the person was in the faith. No matter how much or how little someone has done for the deceased, it becomes a moot point at death. We should not suffer regrets. The person's spiritual situation has passed out of our hands into God's. Certainly, we would like to see our loved ones in heaven, but we will be just as happy whether they are there or not. The LORD is faithful to His elect. a) "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment." {Hebrews 9:27} b) "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Believe while you can. {2 Corinthians 6:2} c) Jesus said, "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (Be dedicated to God, not humans.) And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." {Matthew

10:37–38} Theology of the cross.

B. After death

1. What happens in the intermediate state? We have little information. - The soul leaves the body for judgment, but what does it experience without the body? The Bible gives us no details about this time period. Humans see that the body is decaying, but they cannot see what is happening to the soul. a) "I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better." {Philippians 1:23} The soul goes to judgment, but what is the period before Judgment Day like? b) "When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne." {Revelation 6:9}

   Q4. What is soul sleep? A: The non-scriptural doctrine that the soul is without activity until Judgment Day.

2. Soul sleep? - Could the soul be asleep, waiting for the resurrection? No, there is no Biblical evidence for soul sleep in which the soul is not cognizant of its existence until Judgment Day. On the other hand, we do not know how the LORD's timeline works in eternity compared to our timeline here on earth. This is a mystery that God has not revealed to us. a) Jesus said, "The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in hell, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes." {Luke 16:22-23} b) Jesus said, "'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living." {Matthew 22:32}

   Q5. Can those in heaven contact people still on earth? A: No. People in heaven are in eternal bliss. They are no longer troubled by the things of this earth.

3. Contact with people on earth? No ghosts to prowl. - There is no Biblical evidence that the dead can contact or do anything for the living. In fact, there is no reason that the dead should have any interest in what is happening on earth. The blessed are enjoying eternal rest, while the damned are not going to be let out of hell to hang around the earth. The blessed in heaven have no desire for earthly things, and the cursed in hell are obsessed with their pains. a) Already judged – Jesus said, "He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" {Luke 16:31} b) Prayers only through Jesus Christ – "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all." {1 Timothy 2:5}

C. Final considerations

   Q6. What is the purpose of Judgment Day? A: 1) Reuniting body and soul. 2) Making God's judgment public.

1. The purpose of Judgment Day. 1) Recombine bodies and souls. 2) Make the fate of everyone public knowledge. - Judgment Day will see the judging of the living for the first time, but its primary function will be to pronounce final judgment publicly, an eternal declaration that cannot be changed. The souls of the deceased are already experiencing bliss or torments, but on Judgment Day their bodies will be reunited with their souls so the whole being will experience bliss or torments.

2. No reincarnation. There is no second chance for those who claim to believe in Jesus but do not repent. - Reincarnation is a human invention, that has no Biblical support, to circumvent the need for repentance. Repentance is essential to salvation. It is a series of ladders of work righteousness, rather than just one. It opposes salvation through Christ alone. a) "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment." {Hebrews 9:27} No second chance.

   Q7. What is the basis of a belief in purgatory? A: It is the result of a papal decree. People hope to

be allowed to sin and still be saved.

3. No purgatory. - The concept of limited suffering for purification before entering heaven is just another way for people to avoid repentance, hoping to be able to work off their favorite transgressions as a debt. There is no way for people to keep their favorite sins and get into heaven eventually. There is no Biblical support for this idea. a) By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. {Hebrews 10:10} b) The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. {1 John 1:7}

4. Does the Old Testament teach differently? - The Old Testament does not teach about heaven and the resurrection as clearly as the New Testament, but it does teach about them. The often-used phrase "gathered to his fathers" meant that there was a fraternity of those who had died in faith, awaiting the call of the LORD. The Old Testament has a different vocabulary than the New Testament. The Hebrew way of expressing things differs from the Greek way. a) "Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!" {Isaiah 26:19} b) The sons of Korah wrote, "But God will ransom (rescue) my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me." {Psalm 49:15} c) Jesus said, "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him." The patriarchs continued to be living beings. {Luke 20:37-38}

   Q8. What should our attitude toward death be? A: It is the gate to heaven. We will accept it when God calls.

5. The believers' attitude toward death. - Death is certain for all who will not be alive at the second returning of Christ. Death ends physical life. It is foolish not to prepare for it. One's relatives can bury one's dead body, but there is nothing that they can do for one's dead soul, no matter how many masses they pay for a priest to say. Men handle the physical remains; God handles the soul. Death is the gate to heaven for believers, when the LORD decides that we have served His purpose here. It is the gateway to hell for all who do not believe in Jesus Christ. a) Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." When Jesus returns, there will be a resurrection. {John 14:2-3} b) "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.'" {John 11:25-26}

6. The believers' preparation for death. It is good to prepare for one's own funeral. - It is certainly a good idea to keep all one's records in good order so that when one dies, one's family does not have to struggle with one's estate. It is unkind to punish one's relatives by leaving lot of junk to dispose of. However, the real preparation for death is to study God's Word so that the Holy Spirit will have the material to strengthen and preserve one's faith. a) St. Peter wrote, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith." {1 Peter 5:8–9} The enemy is real and dedicated to our destruction. We are in a deadly struggle. b) St. Paul wrote, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication." {Ephesians 6:13–18}

13. Applying the Bible's Teachings

A. We live in faith.

1. We repent now. [A good time to review the essence of what actions of God are necessary for saving faith.] - In American society there always seems to be plenty of time for do-overs and second chances. If a deadline is missed, another opportunity will be given in some form or another. The LORD however tells us that the time to repent and believe is now. When death comes, there will be no more chances, but only a grim judgment. a) St. Paul said, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent (The first of Luther's theses), 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." {Acts 17:30-31} b) "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness (stay close to God), waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!" {2 Peter 3:11-12} c) "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." "Wash your robes and make them white." {1 John 3:2-3}

   Q1. What is involved in living in faith in view of the end times? A: Daily repentance, looking to Jesus alone, and standing firm to the end.

2. We look to Jesus alone. - "Keeping one's options open" may be good advice in many circumstances. Avoiding "burning bridges" prevents one from "painting oneself into a corner." When it comes to the salvation of our souls, however, there is only one option that saves, and it must be exercised to be effective. Christ and Christ alone is the only way to eternal salvation. Failing to take that option will be a damning experience. No Jesus & …. a) Jesus said, "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." {John 6:40} b) Jesus said, "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." {Matthew 10:32-33}

3. We stand firm in faith until the end. - "Don't waffle" is not a cliché for the Christian; it is the requirement for a healthy eternity. When you have what you want in a deal, don't risk the deal for what you don't need. Stay focused on the finish line. Good in business and good in theology. a) Jesus said, "But the one who endures to the end will be saved." {Matthew 24:13} b) "For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end." Not just a good start. {Hebrews 3:14} c) Jesus said, "I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown." {Revelation 3:11} d) God said, "And you, son of man [Ezekiel], say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins. Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die." {Ezekiel 33:12-13} A warning against believing and then cheating by intentional sinning.

   Q3. What does the phrase "Grace is free but not cheap" mean? A: Jesus gives us free salvation, but we should not assume it is our right and abuse it by indifference to the Christian life.

4. Grace is free, but it is not cheap. - Unfortunately, the visible church often gives the impression that all a person needs to be saved is to say, "I believe in Jesus." While a person certainly must believe in the saving work of Jesus to be saved, the statement is often made by numerous people who will not be saved. The following is critical: First, one must believe in the Jesus of the Scriptures, which means one must know the Jesus of the Scriptures, and believe in one's heart, not simply have head

knowledge of Him. Secondly, one's heart must have been changed by the Holy Spirit to place God first, not merely give Him a place at the table with one's other gods. a) "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth (pet sins), there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries." {Hebrew 10:26-27} b) "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.' Hanging with the wrong crowd. Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning." {1 Corinthians 15:33-34} c) "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law [instruction] he meditates day and night." Continually studying God's Word. {Psalm 1:1–2} d) Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." {Matthew 6:24} What really runs your life?

Q5. How can the return of Christ be both Law and Gospel? A: Law – unbelievers will be judged according to the Law. Gospel – believers will be saved and rewarded based on the Gospel.

5. Summary. - a) Law and Gospel (Book by C.F.W. Walther) – Jesus said, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." A clear statement in two verses. {John 3:17-18} b) The return of Christ is Law – When Christ returns, the unbelievers will be judged by the strictest application of the Law. Everything in the Law will be applied to determine their punishment. c) The return of Christ is Gospel – When Christ returns, the believers will be rewarded based on the spirit of the Gospel in which all sins are covered by the blood of Christ, and His righteousness is their righteousness.

B. We do not embrace this world.

Q2. What is meant by the phrase "not embracing the world"? Give examples. A: Not being obsessed by worldly things, such as worldly goods, pleasures, achievements.

1. We don't set our hearts on this world. - The things of this world may seem desirable, but they have no lasting value. They will either decay or be destroyed, or they will go to someone else. While we are free to enjoy them while they are readily available, we should be willing to be satisfied with only the food, clothing and shelter necessary to sustain us. Nothing here is important. a) Jesus said about the farmer with the bumper crop, "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'" {Luke 12:20} b) "As we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient (earthly tings pass from us), but the things that are unseen are eternal." {2 Corinthians 4:18} c) "And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile." Look to God. {1 Peter 1:17}

Q6. What is the Christian attitude toward injustices in the world? A: They will happen. We should not participate in them, but in general we cannot fix them.

2. We don't fret over injustices on earth. - In a sinful world injustice is the standard rather than the exception. It is therefore a waste of God-given time to fret over the existence of injustice and try to find some way to get even. The LORD will judge when the right time comes. Leave righting things to God. a) "Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked, for the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be put out." {Proverbs 24:19-20} b) "Before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity." {Psalm 98:9} We always want to fix things in our own ways. c) "Since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are

afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." {2 Thessalonians 1:6-7}

3. We have something great to look forward to. - When the goal is in sight, one can put up with a lot of things to reach it. The goal we are pursuing is far greater than any of the difficulties that we will encounter to obtain it, so we need to keep our focus on that goal. a) "Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." {Titus 2:13} b) "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." We wait in hope. {1 Peter 1:13} c) "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." {Romans 8:23} d) "So that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ." {1 Corinthians 1:7}

C. We live the Christian life.

1. We use our God-given gifts faithfully. - The LORD has given everyone some gifts. They may be numerous and spectacular or few and modest. It doesn't matter. We play the ball where it lies. Our only purpose on earth is to serve the LORD and those whom the LORD has been pleased to allow us to encounter. For this we use the gifts He has given us, rather than musing about how much more we could do if He had only given us more. a) Jesus said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal (Everything here will be lost.), but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." {Matthew 6:19-21} b) "For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living." Do what you need to do to live while you wait. {2 Thessalonians 3:11-12}

2. We have comfort in life's struggles. - Regardless of how hard a sports contest is, eventually the whistle blows or the gun sounds, and the contest is over. The game of life on earth also has an end. There is an end game. Every evening we can take comfort in the fact that we are one day closer to our eternal home. a) "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." Our bodies will fail us. {Romans 8:18} b) "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." {2 Corinthians 4:16-17}

   Q7. What is a "spiritual Pollyanna"? A: Radiating joy because of our life in Christ.

3. We warn and encourage others. - Christians need to be spiritual Pollyannas. We are so "glad, glad, glad" that Jesus Christ came to redeem us, that we want everyone to feel reassured. The Gospel. On the other hand, we are Elijahs shaking our fingers and warning against the folly of ignoring the LORD. The time is short; the consequences are grave. The Law. a) "But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand." {Ezekiel 33:6} We need to proclaim and teach the message. b) "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom." {2 Timothy 4:1-2} c) Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." {Matthew 9:37–38}

   Q4. What does "working today, planning for tomorrow" mean? A: We do what is needed for this life. We study God's Word to build treasure in heaven.

4. We work today, and we plan for tomorrow. - Vince Lombardi would say that there is no good time

to lose. We need to work while we have opportunity. Yet we must keep in mind that the work is not an end in itself. Building the visible church is only incidental to our real mission – reaching souls with the Gospel. The message is more important than the structure. The reward in heaven for doing this far exceeds the results of the work on earth. a) Jesus said, "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work." {John 9:4} b) "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." {1 Corinthians 15:58}

14. Millennialism

The Roman Catholic Church is like the Sadducees – saving people through the work of the church
Millennialists are like the Pharisees – trying to perfect the people

A. The idea of a millennium_- A period when things are great for Christians.

Q1. What is the Millennium? A: a 1000-year period when Christians prosper.

1. We all want to be on the winning team. What really is Christianity? a) The theology of the cross – Christians live under the theology of the cross. Like others, in their lives they suffer because they live in a sinful world. There are personal discomforts and tragedies. There are national and global issues that trouble their hearts and minds. But more than this, Christians suffer because of their faith. This can be through active persecution, through the disdain of others, and/or through lost opportunities because they cannot go along with evil practices. Light of the world – proclaim the Word. We cannot sit on our hands or just do churchly activities. b) Desire for a victory lap – People understand the concept of "paying one's dues." To get ahead in this world, it is often necessary for someone to accept less pay and worse working conditions than others to prove himself before getting the position of greater pay and prestige. Christians are tempted to want to receive an earthly reward for bearing the cross before the world and to thereby show the unbelievers who really lived the right kind of life. A millennium is therefore appealing. A visible reward for doing good works.

Q2. What are the sources of the idea of the Millennium? A: Jewish messiahism and Revelation 20.

2. Jewish Messiahism. a) Restoration of Davidic kingdom (a physical kingdom) – The Israelites never appreciated the kingdom of David until they had lost it. They lost it because they ignored their part of the LORD's covenant with them. Ever since, they have sought a way to restore that earthly kingdom. - "The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy." {2 Chronicles 36:15–16} They wanted back what they had wasted. b) Reward for keeping the Law – The Jews have felt that they have borne the brunt of service to the LORD by having to keep His laws. Therefore, the LORD owed them a chance to be the rulers over the godless Gentiles. Some of those Jews who became Christians brought the idea of the restoration of an earthly kingdom with them into the Christian church. The right to rule and even "cheat" the Gentiles. - Jesus said, "The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'" I…I…I {Luke 18:11–12}

3. The idea comes from misreading Revelation 20. a) Definition of Millennium – "Millennium" comes from the Latin words "*mille*" meaning "thousand" and "*annus*" meaning "year." It is therefore a 1000-year period. b) Millennium in Revelation – Revelation, a book of figurative language, used the number 1000 to designate a period of relative reduction in Satan's attacks on mankind. - "Then I saw an angel [Christ] coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and

sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended." All symbolic of what will really happen. - "After that he must be released for a little while. Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who 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 for a thousand years." - "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection (spiritual life). Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death (eternal death) has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years." {Revelation 20: 1-6}

Q3. What are the reasons churches believe in Millennialism? A: Churches are lured by the ability to offer their members something that is tangible.

4. The reasons churches believe in the Millennium. a) Revenge against the unfaithful – Sending the evildoers to God's punishment in hell is not enough for some people. They want the opportunity to rule those who they felt harmed them in this life. The Millennium will be a chance to show up these people. Getting even. b) Second opportunity – Some view the Millennium as a way people will get a second chance, if they muffed their first chance. Once the real situation becomes clear, many more people will repent and turn to Christ. When they see the earthly benefits of repentance. c) Theology of glory. Enjoy the fruit of faithfulness – Many people have the feeling that heaven will be boring. Therefore, they want a chance to do the things that they like here on earth where they will be in charge and can live the good life. Have earthly enjoyment.

B. Understanding the theology of the Millennium

Q4. What is Biblically wrong with the idea of the Millennium? A: It contradicts the biblical timeline. It interprets figurative language literally.

1. Problem #1 – the 1000 years is not intended to be literal. a) Whole passage is symbolic – The "dragon," "key," "chain," and "abyss" are all symbolic. (reading into Scripture) Not even the strongest Millennialist believes that Satan really is a dragon or that he can be bound by a physical chain. Yet when it comes to the 1000 years, they will insist that that is most literal. b) One thousand is symbolic elsewhere – A thousand is a big number, and it is ten cubed. Ten is the Biblical number for completeness. Scripture must be consistent. Ten cubed is then completeness in every direction, that is, in all things. The Bible uses 1000 to mean a large size and to mean completeness. Using Scripture to interpret Scripture forces us to reject a physical Millennium. - "But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." {2 Peter 3:8} 1000 = a long period - "And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel." {Revelation 7:4} 1000 = a large number

2. Problem #2 – the Millennium is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture. a) Unclear in terms of the clear – One must always use the clear passages of Scripture to interpret the more difficult passages. One needs a foundation for a doctrine. It must fit with the rest of Scripture. There are no clear passages that mention the 1000-year reign, in fact, none other at all. Major doctrines are never established on a single verse of the Bible. - They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" {Luke 24:32} Need to compare everything. b) Sudden return (not after 1000 years) – The clear passages emphasize the sudden return of Jesus. It will not be telegraphed by 1000 years. The Millennium is a 1000-year warning of the end. - Jesus said, "For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." {Matthew 24:27} - Paul wrote, "For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." {1 Thessalonians 5:2} - Peter wrote, "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." {2 Peter 3:10}

Q5. In what ways does the Bible use the number 1000? A: It is used for completeness, sometimes multiple dimensions of completeness.

3. The proper explanation of the 1000 years. a) Satan limited – Binding someone limits his freedom of action. So does locking someone into a dungeon. These symbolize that Satan's activities would be restricted during a long period, the New Testament era when the Christian church would spread throughout the world. An aid in spreading the Word. b) The last days – At some point Satan will be released from this confinement and launch his final attack upon the Christian church, gathering its opponents into a final effort to destroy it. Once again, the language of a great physical battle is symbolic. {Revelation 20:7-10} This is a spiritual fight.

C. Millennialism and restoration prophecies

Q6. Why do Millennialists separate the Jews and Gentiles? A: They believe that God has given separate covenants to the each.

1. Nature of restoration prophecies. a) Millennialists lean on Old Testament prophecies – In the Old Testament, the coming of the Messiah is associated with both the redemption of the people and the establishment of a kingdom of universal peace. A two-fold purpose. Observant Jews still believe that the Messiah will do both when He comes. b) The New Testament on these restoration prophecies – Jesus makes clear that the redemption and the kingdom will be the results of two separate comings, rather than one. At His first coming, He completed the redemption of mankind and launch the church. At His second coming, He will judge those who failed to take advantage of His redemption, and He will set up a heavenly kingdom for those who did accept His redeeming grace.

2. Prophecies about the church – prophecy and fulfillment. a) "In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner for the peoples–him shall the nations seek, and his resting place shall be glorious." {Isaiah 11:10} – {Romans 15:12} b) "Thus says the LORD: 'In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you.'" {Isaiah 49:8a} – {2 Corinthians 6:2} c) "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor." {Isaiah 61:1-2a} – {Luke 4:18-19} Christ leading his church. d) "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' it shall be said to them, 'Children of the living God.'" {Hosea 1:10} – {Romans 9:26} Christ will gather all people.

3. Prophecies about heaven – prophecy and fulfillment. a) Comfort - "He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken." {Isaiah 25:8} – {Revelation 7:17} b) Radiance of God - "The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory." {Isaiah 60:19} – {Revelation 21:23} c) New world - "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind." {Isaiah 65:17} – {2 Peter 3:13} d) Intimate relationship - "My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." {Ezekiel 37:27} – {Revelation 21:3}

D. The negative fallout of Millennialism

1. Millennialism robs Christians of the comfort of OT prophecies. a) Prophecies that do not speak to the church – If many of the prophecies of the Old Testament do not speak about the church, then

they are irrelevant to Christians today. Millennialists believe that the church is working with questionable direction because the critical era is the Millennium, not the current era of the Christian church. It focuses on the Millennium, not the work of the church. b) Separates Jew from Gentile – While the coming of Jesus marked the end of the separation of the Jews and the Gentiles because both have sinned and both have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, the Millennialists continue to separate the two, with a special provision for the Jews. It fails to create one body of the saved. - Paul wrote, "For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility." {Ephesians 2:14-16} Clear declaration of Scripture.

2. Millennialism takes away the immanency of Judgment Day. a) Nothing to fear from a sudden return – The warnings of Jesus' imminent return are irrelevant to the Millennialist, because he does not believe in such a return. There is no urgency. b) No hope of a rescue – When things go badly for us, the Millennialist can give us no comfort of the hope of a sudden rescue from this life to a new life in heaven. Therefore hope is muted. At best, life will drag on and hopefully improve in the Millennial period.

Q7. Why is the idea of the Millennium harmful to faith and to the church? A: It changes the focus of the church from heaven. It removes the immediacy of Judgment Day. It separates Jews and Gentiles.

3. Millennialism takes the focus off the church and heaven. a) Preparation for the Millennium has priority – For the Millennialist the Millennium is where his heart is, and it is therefore the center of his preparation. It is what he looks forward to, and this distorts his view of Christ's work. They want to sell the idea of the Millennium and bring it about by governmental reform (like the Pharisees). b) Spiritual blessings are degraded – Because the Millennialist is waiting for the bountiful physical blessings of Millennium, the spiritual blessings for our personal lives and the work of the church are down-graded and even ignored. One cannot serve two masters, and the Millennium is a more immediate master to those who believe in it. Millennialists have their eyes fixed on the Millennium, not heaven.

15. Postmillennialism

A. Introduction to postmillennialism

Q1. What is the idea behind postmillennialism? A: People are getting better.

Q6. Has the Millennium already started? If not, when will it start? A: It is unknown whether the Millennium has started. There is no sign for its beginning.

1. The idea of postmillennialism. a) A period of 1000 years before Christ returns – When postmillennialists read the number 1000 in Revelation, they assume that this period will occur before the return of Christ. Their sequence of events is millennium, Judgment Day and heaven. The key factor for them is therefore to determine when this millennial period will start because there is no event to mark its beginning. At some point the Millennium will magically start. b) The world enters a golden age of prosperity – Postmillennialists see the millennium as an era of growing prosperity and of Christianity converting most of the people on the earth.

Q2. How did postmillennialism arise? A: From the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution.

2. The history of postmillennialism. a) The Enlightenment – The period called the Enlightenment, which occurred as the influence of the Renaissance spread, caused some people to believe that the earthly realm could become a utopian paradise. People seemed to be getting better. Utopian communities like the Amana Colonies were founded. - The problem with the Enlightenment is that

it causes people to become less, not more, dedicated to the Christian faith because they came to rely more on their own reason and less on the Scriptures. People became less dependent on God. b) The Industrial Revolution (18th & 19th centuries) – The rapid progress in raising the standard of living because of inventions and discoveries encouraged the idea that the world was about to turn the corner into an era of universal prosperity. European control of the world would guide this development. Economies seemed to be getting better. Growth of the Masons. - The material wealth produced by the Industrial Revolution causes people to look to that wealth rather than to God for their wellbeing. Self-reliance & the American Dream. Materialism greatly undermined Christianity as God seemed to become increasingly unnecessary. c) The wars and persecutions of the 20th century – The 20th century dealt a terrible blow to postmillennialism with more than 100 million civilians killed in wars and persecutions. Evil did not go away. Economic problems and natural disasters caused many to think that the world was not about to see a millennial utopia. The movement declined. - The 20th and 21st centuries have seen Christianity spread throughout the world, but they have also seen a decline in the commitment to the teaching of the Scriptures. Christianity became wide but not deep. The percentage of church members who are Christian in name only has greatly increased.

Q3. What are some current manifestations of postmillennialism? A: Social gospel and Christian reconstructionism.

3. Current manifestations of postmillennialism. a) The Social Gospel – In order to hasten the millennium along, many churches began spending some of their resources on trying to improve the living conditions and the economic climate of the poorer areas of the world. The Great Society, improving the lot of the poor, often with welfare instead of work. - This emphasis on earthly needs has redirected the churches' efforts away from spreading the Gospel and has encouraged a belief in universalism and universal entitlement. b) Christian Reconstructionism – Some churches looked to reshaping national laws to be the same as the laws given to Old Testament Israel. - This effort has led to increasing conflicts between the church and the state over which issues each should control and to worsening divisions within Christianity over the proper role of government. (Like the theocracy in Iran.) It has stirred up a vehement resentment among non-Christians. Political dynamite.

B. The tribulation of Christians
   1. Tribulation prophesied. - The Bible is very clear that the end will be preceded by turmoil and persecutions. Postmillennialism denies this. As a result, the church will be stressed, and many people will fall away from the church. Postmillennialism has no place on its timeline for this era. a) Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." {John 16:33} Sin makes this world an unpleasant place. b) "When they [Paul and Barnabus] had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." Postmillennialists deny the effects of sin. {Acts 14:21-22} c) St. Paul wrote, "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty." {2 Timothy 3:1} d) Paul wrote, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." {2 Timothy 3:12} We should expect persecution. e) Paul wrote, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons." {1 Timothy 4:1} f) Jesus said, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" {Luke 18:8} How great will this falling away be?

Q4. What is Preterism? A: The belief that tribulation prophecies were fulfilled in 70 AD and that Jesus came then.

2. Preterism. - Preterism is the belief that the tribulations prophesied in the Bible took place before AD 70. a) Full Preterism – The second coming of Christ occurred in AD 70. The church is now in a holding pattern awaiting the beginning of the millennium and yet another return of Christ, a third coming in which he will judge the world. Three comings of Christ? - How Christ allegedly returned to earth in AD 70 and what happened during this return is not recorded in the Bible or in any other recognized historical document. How Christ left the earth again is also not recorded. This was made up out of whole cloth. b) Partial Preterism – The tribulation has occurred, but Christ has not yet come and will not come until the millennium has occurred. – Problem: Most persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire occurred after, not before, AD 70, in fact, more than 200 years after AD 70.

   Q5. What is the issue with Matthew 24? A: Jesus is talking about two major events and interleaving details about them.

3. Matthew 24 is at center of debate. a) Postmillennialists – These people believe that all the terrible events listed in chapter 24 must have occurred by AD 70 because verse 34 says it will happen before the end of the generation living at Jesus' time. (Overemphasis on one prophecy.) This is a classic example of people becoming hung up on one verse or one chapter of the Scriptures and then interpreting everything in light of that narrow section rather than considering all the relevant parts of the Scriptures. b) Proper meaning – In Matthew 24, Jesus was using the destruction of Jerusalem as a fore-shadowing of the end of the world. In such a prophetic vision the details of both a future near-term foreshadowing event and a far-term much greater event are given. Generation can mean length of life or period of time. It is as if the speaker were looking into the distance and seeing all the events but does not separate those which are closer from those which are farther. This technique is used by prophets in the Old Testament as well. For example, David was promised an heir for his throne (short-term: Solomon, long-term: Jesus). A divine way of expressing near and later events. c) Matthew 24:34 – Some of the Jews who heard Jesus speak would certainly live to see the destruction of Jerusalem, giving a short-term fulfilment to Jesus' statement. But the "evil generation," i.e., those who are evil in thoughts and actions against whom Jesus was preaching at this time in his ministry, would continue to exist until Judgment Day. The "evil generation" did not end in 70 AD. - Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place." {Matthew 24:34} (Fall of Jerusalem) - Jesus also said, "See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once." {Luke 21:8–9} (End of the world)

4. Preterists find fulfillment in AD 70. a) All the signs for Jesus' return were completed – Preterists point to various events as the fulfillment of all the prophecies before the fall of Jerusalem. Therefore, Christians do not have to be concerned about them anymore. This "one and done" concept indicate that the signs will not persist, but Scripture says otherwise. - Jesus said, "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains." {Matthew 24:6–8} b) Start of "millennium" uncertain – Throughout the Bible when important events happen, God has given signs to show that His hand is causing the event, but there is no sign found for the beginning of the Millennium. Because they have no starting gun for the Millennium, some think it has already started, some expect it soon, and some are not sure how long it will really be. Strange that there is no way to tell. - Samuel said, "And this shall be the sign to you [Saul] that the Lord has anointed you to be prince over his heritage. When you depart from me today, you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah, and they will say to you, 'The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has ceased to care about the donkeys and is anxious about you'" {1 Samuel 10:1–2} Important things need to be clearly

definite. - The angel said, "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." {Luke 2:12} - "And as he [Jesus] sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?'" {Mark 13:3–4}

C. Errors of postmillennialism

1. Postmillennialism represents church growth. - Postmillennialists see the church continuing to grow forever into a large, dominant structure. Although the Bible says that few will be saved, this statement is ignored in favor of verses that compare the kingdom of God with things that are growing. Obsession with numerical growth over spiritual understanding. - Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." {Matthew 7:13–14} Few will actually believe. - Jesus said, "For many are called, but few are chosen." {Matthew 22:14} - "And someone said to him, 'Lord, will those who are saved be few?' And he said to them, 'Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.'" {Luke 13:23–24} a) "He [Jesus] put another parable before them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'" {Matthew 13:31-32} This passage merely says that the kingdom of God will grow, even though it starts small. It does not say that most of the people on the earth will eventually become part of it. b) Jesus said, "And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God." {Luke 13:29} This statement does not give the relative numbers of people who will come, but only that they will be diverse. There is a real problem with reading things into Scripture, such as "massive structure" & "most people."

   Q7. What is the church growth movement? A: Efforts to increase the size of the church by any means that works.

   Q8. What is the theology of glory? A: That Christians will live well on earth.

2. Postmillennialism ignores tribulation. - Because many postmillennialists believe the tribulation is past, they ignore the persecution of Christians today, and they do not take into their considerations what might happen in the future. They look for a rosy earthly future, rather than one marred by difficulty and persecution. They believe in a "theology of glory" rather than the "theology of the cross." Things are always improving. a) "And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he [Jesus] said to them, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'" {Mark 8:34} Real Christianity is demanding. b) Paul wrote, "Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring." {2 Thessalonians 1:4} Christians should expect to suffer.

3. A false hope. - a) Unpreparedness for tribulation – When things get really bad, such as in the world wars or the economic depressions, postmillennialists feel despair because the hopeful signs of the Millennium are gone. The problems of the 20th century diminished the ranks of the postmillennialists. - "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling." {Psalm 46:1–3} Ignoring it will not make tribulation go away. b) Theology of glory – "Feel good" Christianity, also called the "theology of glory," is based on the teaching that Christians should be enjoying life because that is what is expected in the Millennium. More Christians and more joy mean the

Millennium is closer or has already started. Sin and repentance are not too critical because Judgment Day is likely a long way off at the end of the Millennium, since we certainly have not had a thousand years of good life on earth yet. It is urgent that people repent regularly. - Solomon wrote, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man." {Proverbs 6:10–11} Ignoring what the Scriptures actually say and creating a phony "era of joy" is a recipe for spiritual disaster. Laxity leads to disaster.

16. Premillennialism

In postmillennialism most of the righteous people will miss out on it because they are dead.

A. Introduction

Q1. What is the idea behind premillennialism? A: Jesus comes before the Millennium.

1. The main ideas of premillennialism. a) The return of Jesus and the resurrection of the righteous begin the Millennium. b) There is a 7-year period of distress at the end of the Millennium. c) The resurrection of the unrighteous and the final judgment occur on Judgment Day.

Q2. How did premillennialism arise? A: Jews entering the Christian church brought their myths with them. A few early fathers believed in a Millennium. The influence of the Renaissance & *The Beloved City*.

2. The history of premillennialism. a) Jewish myths (Postmillennialism is closely related to the Jewish view of God's plan of salvation.) – Many Jews thought there would be only one coming of the Messiah and that He would both redeem them and set up an earthly kingdom which would dominate the world. Some Jews who believed this joined the Christian church and brought these ideas into it. b) Early fathers – Even though the early church never endorsed premillennialism and eventually repudiated it, some early church fathers such as Papias, Justin Martyr and Irenaeus did believe in an earthly millennial kingdom. (This error was repudiated.) c) *The Beloved City* (1627) (1400-year gap) by Johann Altsted – This book spawned numerous utopian religious communities throughout the subsequent years (like the Amana Colonies) and again became popular in the 1900's. False idea returned as a result of the Renaissance and the great dreams of Humanism. These communities wanted to be prepared for the Millennium by living the life beforehand that they expected would exist in it. d) Decline of postmillennialism – With the turmoil of the 20th century, many began to believe that only the physical return of Jesus could begin straightening out the world. This changed the timeline for many millennialists. They changed their theology to support their ultimate object, a kingdom of the righteous on earth. Earthly over heavenly.

3. The second coming and final judgment are separate. a) Second coming – At the second coming, all the believers will rise from the dead with glorified bodies and reign with Christ on earth for 1000 years while Satan is inhibited from interfering with this period of prosperity. Worldly wealth and power. As was the case for the millennial Jews, the emphasis is on material prosperity rather than spiritual benefits. b) Millennium – During the Millennium, all the believers will continue to live while unbelievers will continue to die and suffer disease. Two types of people living on earth at the same time. At the end of this period, the remaining unbelievers will band together with all the forces of evil for a final battle in which they will be destroyed. c) Judgment Day – On Judgment Day all the unbelievers will rise to be judged along with the believers (at last!).

Q3. Why are two resurrections necessary? A: The righteous must rise to be part of the Millennium. The unrighteous only need to be punished.

4. There are two resurrections. a) Only the dead in Christ at the first resurrection – The resurrection of only the believers at the first resurrection at the second coming of Christ would mean that the earth would be shared by those who had glorified bodies and those who didn't. What sort of dynamic

would exist between these two groups? Would the believers have jobs? Would new believers immediately get glorified bodies? The questions are endless. How would this work? If poorly, why would believers have to endure it? If well, why end it for heaven? b) The unbelievers at the second resurrection – Unbelievers would continue dying, and all of them would be raised only at the end of the Millennium for judgment. There would be no incentive to be an unbeliever under this situation unless the unbelievers could commit crimes against Christians without legal consequences. Why would anyone want to be an unbeliever in such a world?

B. Revelation 20

Q4. What is the issue with Revelation 20? A: Whether the saints rule in heaven or on earth.

1. For premillennialists, everything hangs on Revelation 20. a) Physical reign of saints - Premillennialists believe that this reign of the saints is on earth during the millennial period. Revelation, however, is a look into the spiritual realm, not a preview of earthly history. This reign of the saints is in heaven and occurs from the time that their souls (not the bodies) there arrive after their death until Judgment Day. Revelation was written for the comfort of Christians, so Christian martyrs are emphasized here. - "Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who 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 for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection." {Revelation 20:4-6} b) Final judgment - The mechanism of Judgment Day must also be taken as a symbolic representation of the process. Certainly, the LORD, with a perfect knowledge of history, does not need record books to make his judgments. Punishing "Death" as if it were a person is also symbolic. Pictures that are meant to emphasize God's control. - "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. (Reminds one of the cartoon of God writing in a book.) Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done." - "And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. (They are treated like people.) This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." {Revelation 20:11-15}

Q5. When is the final judgment in premillennialism? A: On the last day.

2. The Bible presents a unitary event. - We see this by first looking at the clear passages to establish the doctrinal framework and then by using that framework to interpret the less clear and prophetic passages of Scripture. The statements of Jesus are much clearer than are the vision of the apostle John and serve as the basis of our understanding of the end times. (Remember both are given to us by the Holy Spirit so there can be no conflict.) a) Believers and unbelievers are raised together – Nowhere is there evidence of two resurrections (This is clearly an invention). - Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." {John 5:28-29} - St. Paul said, "Having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust." {Acts 24:15} b) Judgment will come to both at once – Jesus' mission at His second coming is judgment. He is not merely coming with an occupation force. - Jesus said (a clear explanation of the judgment), "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit

on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.…And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." {Matthew 25:31–46} - Paul wrote, "Since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when (very important word, not "sometime after") the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might." {2 Thessalonians 1:6-9}

Q6. What are the hermeneutics issues with premillennialism? A: The meaning of "literal interpretation." When to use a figurative interpretation.

3. It's a matter of hermeneutics. a) Literal interpretation – Any competent biblical scholar will interpret the Bible literally, as one would interpret any other book. By "literal," we mean that the interpretation must be in the genre in which the text of interest is written "in context." History must be interpreted as history; poetry must be interpreted as poetry, and narrative must be interpreted as narrative. Interpretation must also take into consideration the textual, historical, and situational contexts. b) Figurative language is not narrative. – It is always a mistake to take figurative language in any book, and especially in the Bible, in a narrative sense. For example, in fairy tales there are creatures and situations that cannot exist in the real world. To treat these things in a fairy tale in the same way as we treat things in the real world would distort our view of the world. Things in a fairy tale may symbolize things in the real world but one cannot transfer properties between them. c) Using the clear to explain the complex – It is also a mistake to fail to use clearly expressed statements in the Bible to help us understand the more complex statements. If one starts by imposing a meaning upon a complex statement and then twisting the meaning of clear statements to support that meaning, theological error is certain to result. For example, Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." It would be bad theology to claim that all Christian must go around dragging heavy wooden crosses. Crosses are the burdens which come with faith. Why visions? Jesus said, "That while seeing they may not see, and while hearing they may not understand."

C. Other errors of premillennialism

Q7. Why is the bulk conversion of the Jews not accurate theology? A: The Scripture often says that only a remnant of the Jews will be saved.

1. The bulk conversion of the Jews - a) Scriptural source - Below is the Biblical reference that is used to support the idea that most of the Jews will be converted to Christianity before the end of the world. Millennialists naturally believe that this will happen during the Millennium. - "Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob'; 'And this will be my (the new) covenant with them when I take away their sins.'" {Romans 11:25-27} b) The context of this verse is Romans chapters 9-11. - In these chapters, Paul discusses the relationship of the Jews to the Gentiles. He notes that most of the Jews had been unfaithful, and this led the LORD to give the Gentiles the opportunity to be the focus of Paul's missionary outreach. Yet Paul realizes that in each generation there will still be Jews who will be reached with the Gospel, so he does not exclude them from his missionary effort. - "I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them." {Romans 11:13-14} c) All Israel (It is important to understand this!) - The "all Israel" of Romans 11:26 therefore refers to the whole number of the Jews that have been elected to be saved. Gentiles will continue to be saved until that number has been reached. The prophets of the Old

Testament continued to stress that only a remnant of the Jews would return to serving the LORD. Most of them in every generation would not. - "A remnant (must read this in the context of the Old Testament) will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return." {Isaiah 10:21-22} - Paul quoted Isaiah, "And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, for the LORD will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay." {Romans 9:27–28} A Jewish tree of salvation with Gentiles grafted in will result.

2. The devil has brought about confusion. - The best way to make someone fail at a task is to distract their concentration (a wild goose chase). If they are drawn into wasting their time in unproductive pursuits, they cannot do the work assigned. The Millennium is a quagmire that draws people's focus from the preaching of the Law and the Gospel. a) False paradises: Jesus said, "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it." {Matthew 24:23–26} "Look, He is coming and bringing a Millennium!"

   Q8. How does premillennialism give people a second chance at salvation? A: Those unbelievers alive at the second coming may become believers after it.

3. The door has been opened for a second chance. - The millennium gives people living when Jesus returns a second chance to repent and believe in Christ. The Bible, however, says that when the LORD returns, there will be immediate judgment on the unbelievers. One cannot be saved after this bridegroom has arrived!!! a) Jesus said, "While they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." {Matthew 25:10-13} Big point: Jesus said, "My kingdom is **not** of this world!!!"

17. Dispensationalism

Sola Scriptura means that nothing can be added to or removed from Scripture in our use of it. Some who have added to or subtracted from Scripture in the past: Papacy, John Calvin, Jacobus Arminius, Millennialists, Oral Roberts, Pelagius, Joseph Smith.

A. Introduction to dispensationalism

0. The smarter-than-God syndrome. - The fundamental error of dispensationalism and all end-times alternatives is the sinful belief that man can figure out what God did not tell us. These people claim to take the Bible literally, but then they add ideas that are not in the Bible to build a complex fantasy world. They find their world very satisfying and use ideas that they have introduced to marginalize any Scriptural passage that does not mesh with their creation.

   Q1. What is dispensationalism? A: The belief that God has treated people differently during different eras.

1. The idea of dispensationalism. This is a crazy idea. The LORD deals with people differently (has different dispensations) during different periods of human history. This is complete fabrication, creating explanations where the Bible is silent. a) Innocence – creation to fall. b) Conscience – fall to flood. c) Government – flood to Abraham. d) Promise – Abraham to Moses. e) Law – Moses to 1st coming. f) Grace – 1st coming to 2nd coming. g) Kingdom – 2nd coming to eternity. - Paul wrote, "For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified

by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith." {Romans 3:22–25}

Q2. What is the history of dispensationalism? A: Started by an Anglican priest in Ireland in 1830. *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909). *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970's).

2. The history of dispensationalism. Amazing! Eternal truth started in 1830! a) John Nelson Darby (19th century) – was an Anglican churchman in Ireland who interpreted Old Testament prophecies as not being of the Christian church but of referring to a literal earthly kingdom. b) Scofield Reference Bible (1909) – edited and annotated by the American Bible student Cyrus Scofield (Congregationalist, later Presbyterian minister, somewhat scandalous life) c) *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Linsay (1970's) – popularized dispensationalism through fiction.

   Q3. What is the first cornerstone of dispensationalism? Discuss. A: It demands literal interpretation of all passages of the Old Testament.

3. Dispensationalism's first cornerstone. It claims that the Old Testament trumps the New Testament. - Dispensationalism insists on literal interpretation of prophecy in the Bible, no matter how figurative the texts are, based on their context. a) Literal temple of Ezekiel 40-48 – This is a vision but accepted as literal. b) Literal return of Elijah – Based on Malachi, it is claimed that Elijah will physically be resurrected to serve the role of herald, despite the fact Jesus said in Matthew 11:13-14 that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy. - "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction." {Malachi 4:5-6} - Jesus said, "For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come." {Matthew 11:13–14} c) Literal 12,000 from each tribe of Israel (The history of Israel strongly suggests that all the tribes were not equally faithful.) – These numbers are claimed to be literal even though the tribe of Dan is missing and the loyalty of the tribes to the LORD differed greatly. - "And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed, 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 from the tribe of Gad, 12,000 from the tribe of Asher, 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh, 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 from the tribe of Levi, 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar, 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed." {Revelation 7:4-8}

   Q4. What is the second cornerstone of dispensationalism? A: Israel and the church are separate dispensations.

4. Dispensationalism's second cornerstone – church and Israel are separate. a) Mosaic covenant continues in effect – Although the Mosaic covenant was designed as a teaching device to prepare a people for the coming of the Savior, dispensationalism makes it – namely the Law – into a major part of the means of salvation. b) Church is a transitional expediency – Jesus offered the Jews a kingdom when He came the first time and they rejected it, so the church was established as an interim measure until the second coming. Where does the Bible say that??? (There is no New-Testament reference to this offer, and it conflicts with Jesus' stated purpose for coming.) The New Testament is just ignored when inconvenient. - "Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior." {Ephesians 5:23} - "To bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." {Ephesians 3:9–10}

B. The errors of dispensationalism

When one wants to understand the Bible, one must decide where one is going to start with one's interpretation to be consistent. One also needs to know the language.

1. Misunderstanding Old Testament prophecy. a) The word "everlasting" – The Old Testament used the words עוֹלָם and כָּל־הַיָּמִים to mean a long and indefinite time period, not necessarily an unending time period, the latter being a hard concept to grasp. Dispensationalists want to go beyond what simple language can express and put God into a verbal strait jacket. - "And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting [עוֹלָם] possession, and I will be their God." {Genesis 17:8} - The Jews were not "time people" like us but viewed things in terms of human lifespans. "The Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifices forever [כָּל־הַיָּמִים]." {Jeremiah 33:18} b) The church was unknown by Old Testament prophets – The Old Testament prophets did not determine what would happen in the New Testament times. The LORD gave them only a vague picture of the future. Yet Paul, a Jew, could quote Hosea about the church. - Paul wrote, "He has prepared beforehand for glory–even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.' And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.' " {Romans 9:23-26} Gentiles will be grafted in. c) New Testament does not interpret the Old Testament – But it does. The New Testament regularly interprets the Old. - Paul wrote, "Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar." {Galatians 4:24}

   Q5. How does dispensationalism misunderstand Old Testament prophecy? A: It takes every prophecy of Old Testament literally instead of taking them as foreshadowing New Testament events.

2. God does not intend all prophecy to be literally understood, as in a narrative. - Some things no one takes literally, so that rule that everything must be taken literally is not really a rule. Some versus are unquestionably figurative; therefore, figurativeness must be considered an option. a) "In that day I will raise up the booth (habitat) of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old." {Amos 9:11} b) "Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain." {Isaiah 40:4} c) "And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk." {Joel 3:18}

   Q6. What is relationship between Israel and the NT church in dispensationalism? A: None. The church should encourage Israel.

3. New Testament says the church is the new Israel. This transition took place in the New Testament. - Paul made very clear that the church is now the community of the LORD. Hebrews makes clear that Jesus performed the necessary obedience and sacrifice to save mankind, so the Old Testament covenant is no longer necessary. a) "But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. (Gentile Christians are part of the same tree as the Jews.) Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft

them in again. For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree." {Romans 11:17-24} b) "Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham….There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (There is no race factor.) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." {Galatians 3:7, 28-29} Paul seals the deal. c) "For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility….This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." {Ephesians 2:14-16; 3:6} This is abundantly clear.

Q7. How does dispensationalism minimize Christ and the church? A: It points to the old covenant. It clings to rules rather than repentance.

4. Dispensationalism minimizes Christ and the church. a) Cross is an afterthought – This is a case of having one's eyes tightly closed and screaming "There are no donuts in the bakery." This teaching is a denial God's eternal Decree of Redemption. It is denying the obvious. - "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men." {Acts 2:23} b) Retreat from Christ – The Old Testament was the shadow, and Christ is the reality. Why would anyone prefer the shadow to the substance? - "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world (for dog – vomit, for clean pigs - mud), whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain." {Galatians 4:9-11} - "The law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities." {Hebrews 10:1} To what might be rather than to what is. c) Times have changed – With Christ having come, the need for the practices of the Old Testament has ceased. - "For then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." {Hebrews 9:26} The Old Testament is gone; it has been fulfilled.

C. Nation of Israel

Q8. What is the attitude of dispensationalism toward the nation of Israel? A: Israel's success is critical to it.

1. Dispensationalism is mesmerized with the modern state of Israel. a) More Zionist than many Jews – Dispensationalism needs a state of Israel to justify its beliefs. Although modern Jews do not follow the covenant, the mere fact that a state of Israel exists supports the fantasy. It's a matter of land rather than of heart. b) Linking prophecies to current Mideast events – Dispensationalism tries to link the dreams and visions of the prophets to modern events to show that progress toward the millennial era is being made. It is like reading tea leaves.

2. Role of the modern state of Israel. - a) Original Israel was based on a conditional promise – While the promise to give the land of Israel to the descendants of Abraham was one-sided and certain, the retaining of the land was based on a two-sided covenant, and Israel failed to keep its side of the covenant. One must understand the nature of these covenants. - "You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my rules and do them, that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out." Keeping the land was made conditional. {Leviticus 20:22} Also see Deuteronomy 28. b) Most Israelis are not religious – Only about 20% of the current Israeli population follows even the New Testament version of Judaism, and none follows the Old Testament version. c) "Forever" of promise is spiritual – The Bible states the things of God will endure, not the things of man. Earthly kingdoms rise and fall. The current state of Israel is a product of the works of man, not the promise

of the LORD. - "You, LORD, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment." {Hebrews 1:10-11} The world is but a stage for God's drama of man's sin and God's grace.

18. The Tribulation and the Rapture

The world is full of phantasies that will not happen. We will not be going to exoplanets because of the limitations imposed by physics. We will not be building large colonies on moons and planets because of the limitations imposed by human physiology. We will not have a utopia on earth because of the limitations imposed by human psychology. In studying the Scriptures (hermeneutics) we must beware of trying to help the Holy Spirit out by adding our ideas to what the Bible says just because we think our ideas are so good.

A. The tribulation

Q4. What is the Great Tribulation? A: A period of great physical, mental, and spiritual stress placed on Christians and perhaps others.

1. Jesus prophesized that the end of the world will be preceded by tribulation which will be very challenging for Christians to endure, perhaps both physically and spiritually. Dispensationalists claim that this period of tribulation will be immediately before the Millennium and will last for seven years.

Q1. What is the significance of Matthew 24:15-28? A: There will be tribulation.

2. Matthew 24:15-28 - a) Text – Jesus said, "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather." This is a blended prophesy covering both the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. b) Jesus does not define the length of the tribulation (We cannot deduce it from the Bible.), nor does he explain how the tribulation will play out. It appears that the tribulation will arise suddenly. What will cause it? Will the tribulation affect everyone or only the Christians? Jesus warned us several times that following him would not be easy and that we should not become complacent. If he had wanted us to know more, he would have told us and not have left it to us to figure it out.

Q2. What is the significance of Daniel 9:24-27? A: God has a plan for man's salvation.

3. Daniel 9:24-27. a) Text – "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city

and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator." This text is hard to interpret, but it certainly tells us that God has a well-ordered plan. b) Supposed support – Dispensationalists suppose that each week is a seven-year period. The initial 69 weeks would then be the time from the rebuilding of the Temple to the coming of Christ. Their timeline then requires a major interruption to take in the New Testament period before the seven years of tribulation. This is a serious flaw in the Dispensationalists' model. They have abandoned the literal interpretation of the Bible that they advocate and inserted a major correction to salvage their theory. They need to deny Jesus' statement to save their model. c) Real meaning – As one of the least clear visions of the Bible, it is difficult to assign any meaning which does not require unusual assumptions. Exact numbers indicate fixed times for the things mentioned to be accomplished. Ten is used in the Bible for completeness and seven for the LORD interacting with man. Taken together, these factors give a framework for trying to understand this vision which seems to relate to the LORD's completing His plan of salvation. God's interaction with man is complete. There are no firm footings, however, on which to build a framework which will tell us anything that is necessary for our salvation. This passage tells us that God has a firm timetable for his plan of salvation, but He did not lay it out clearly for us to understand. d) "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look." {1 Peter 1:10–12} Even the prophets did not understand the full meaning of what they were writing, nor did the angels.

Q3. What is the significance of Revelation 4-19? A: God will win despite a terrible spiritual struggle with the host of hell over the people of the earth.

4. Revelation 4-19. a) Supposed support – It is assumed that the seven visions of Revelation are the events of the seven years of tribulation, one vision per year. The gory details of these visions will physically occur upon earth, giving great distress. The false claim is that the seven visions apply on earth, one vision per year. b) Real meaning – The seven visions of Revelation are parallel accounts of the spiritual events that are occurring during the New Testament times. In this way they are similar to the 2 dreams that the LORD gave Pharaoh, different contexts, but the same meaning. The message of Revelation is repeated several times because of its importance. The spiritual battle for the souls of people is intense, but the LORD will prevail. These visions are parallel spiritual accounts. They are hard to understand, Dr. Siegbert's book entitled *Revelation – That Distance Triumph Song* can help. c) Once again, 1 Peter 1:10–12 can help us to realize why God gave us the book of Revelation. God wants us to know that He has a firm plan for our salvation. Moreover, He also wants us to know that there is a tremendous effort on the part of the hellish hosts to interfere with that plan. In the end God wins, but there are many trials that Satan and his host will inflict on the earth and its inhabitants in the meantime. We are to learn from Revelation to take these spiritual battles seriously, but <u>we are not expected to translate them into events</u> in the physical world.

B. The rapture

Q5. What is the rapture? A: The snatching of Christians from the earth before the Great Tribulation.

1. The rapture in dispensationalism. - Just before the tribulation, believers will quietly be snatched from the earth and taken to live with the LORD. Believers who die during the tribulation will be

raised when Jesus comes at the end of the tribulation to start the Millennium. In dispensationalism things just keep getting weirder and weirder.

2. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. a) Text is clearly about Judgment Day. – "For the LORD Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the LORD in the air, and so we will always be with the LORD." b) Supposed support (A few words from here, a few words from here, and soon the Bible say anything you want.) – The word rapture comes from the Latin and means "to be caught up." Although these verses do not really follow the dispensationalism timeline because the snatching occurs on Judgment Day rather than before the tribulation, the idea of being caught up is in them, so they are regarded as a proof passage. c) Real meaning – The passage clearly refers to Judgment Day and gives a few details concerning the process by which the believers, both dead and alive, will be collected to be with Christ as He begins His judgment. The order is given of dead rising first and then those alive being added to their number. d) Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when **all** who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." {John 5:28–29} Jesus is very clear here.

C. Timeline of events - Premillennialism

Q6. What are the meanings of Pretrib, Midtrib, and Posttrib? A: The rapture will occur either before, in the middle of, or after the Great Tribulation.

1. The rapture – Is it before, after or in the middle of the tribulation? a) Pretrib – "Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth." {Revelation 3:10} – (Looking for something that fits.) This is fishing in Revelation. Note that this verse is part of the Jesus' letters to the churches, namely, to the church in Philadelphia. The church in Philadelphia ceased to exist many years ago and will not be present for the supposed Millennium, so the tribulation mentioned here happened long ago. b) Midtrib – "And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator." {Daniel 9:27} – (Building on the unclear.) This is fishing in Daniel. Jesus never referred to this passage in speaking about the tribulation, and there is no clear indication who this "desolator" is or how this passage applies to the return of Jesus. c) Posttrib – For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short." {Matthew 24:21-22} (Linking a clear tribulation passage falsely to the Millennium) – Certainly, Jesus will come after all human history is complete, including the tribulation which he has prophesized will come, as Christians believed long before dispensationalism.

Q7. What is the dispensationalism chart of future events? A: A very complex diagram with many events.

2. Dispensationalism chart of future events. (It is a complete fantasy with lots of additions to Scripture.) a) Church is raptured. (This is a "silent rapture," not as predicted in the Scriptures.) b) Jewish remnant replaces church and preaches Gospel. c) Roman Empire revived, and Antichrist arises. d) Antichrist makes treaty with Israel, and the temple is rebuilt. e) After three and a half years, Antichrist breaks the treaty and starts persecutions. f) The False Prophet arises, seducing many. g) Catastrophic divine judgments occur in the Tribulation. h) World war culminates in battle

of Armageddon. i) Christ comes and believers are raised. j) Christ rules for 1000 years from Jerusalem. k) There is a final rebellion. l) The final judgment takes place after resurrection of the wicked. m) Eternity begins with a new heaven and new earth.

3. Simple clear New Testament picture. a) First coming of Christ. b) New Testament church (Millennium, ending in intense tribulation). c) Second coming of Christ. d) Eternity begins.

D. Dispensationalism and date setting (They both use similar distortions of Scripture.)

1. Those who try to determine the date on which Jesus will return go directly against Jesus' words which state that that information is not known outside the Godhead. This shows an incredible audacity, and people who do this can hardly expect a better verdict from Jesus than the builders of the Tower of Babel received, who also defied God's word and were unrepentant of their sin. a) Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. {Matthew 24:35–36} People want to read the signs too closely. b) Jesus said, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority." {Acts 1:7}

   Q8. How does dispensationalism devalue the role of the church? A: It places the spiritual focus on the Millennium, not on repentance. It replaces the church with the Jews.

2. Those who teach dispensationalism, while claiming to believe in the literal interpretation of the Bible, have created a new non-biblical (false) religion where God treats people differently in regard to their salvation based on who they are and when they lived. To establish one's teachings based on the visions in the Bible instead of the clear words of Jesus is to build upon sand. a) Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. {Matthew 7:15–16} b) John wrote, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." {Revelation 22:18-19} Warning about adding to Scripture.

19. Lutheranism and the End Times

Q1. What is the Lutheran position on millennialism? A: It rejects the millennium because it is inconsistent with the biblical timeline.

A. The Lutheran Heritage

1. Martin Luther. a) Historic Christian position (The clear reading of Scripture) – The Christian church has historically opposed millennialism because it contradicts the clear timeline of the end times given by Christ and the apostles. b) Challenge of the Anabaptists (who were basically anarchists) – Various of the Anabaptists groups were anti-government in nature and desirous of establishing a "kingdom of the saints." They believed the millennium would start when they succeeded in ridding the earth of the current governments.

   Q2. What is the Lutheran position on the Antichrist? A: The institution of the papacy is the Great Antichrist predicted in the Bible because it has all the characteristics listed for it.

2. The Lutheran Confessions. a) Condemnation of Millennialism – Because millennialism was part of a broader pattern of reading ideas into the Scriptures (novelty), the Luther Confessions attacked it in the same way they attacked papal distortions of the Scriptures. b) Identification of the Antichrist (This was not a new idea developed by Lutherans.) – The Lutheran Confessions agreed with the idea that had existed among some scholars in the Roman Church that the papacy was the Antichrist and that no extraordinary person should be expected during the end times.

3. Period of Lutheran orthodoxy (1580-1675). a) Strong disciplinary action against Millennialists – Despite the inroads that Calvinists made into Lutheran territories under the guise of being

Lutherans, a strong position was maintained against millennialism because Calvinists also opposed it. (Calvinists did not do everything wrong.) b) Theologians stressed Biblically correct doctrine – Lutheran theologians expressed the scriptural position in a strong manner and frequently to prevent millennialism from gaining a foothold. False doctrine must be actively fought.

Q3. What is the movement that weakened the Lutheran position on these doctrines? Why? A: Pietism. It emphasized behavior rather than beliefs.

B. Influence of Pietism

1. Pietism. a.) Philip Spener (1635-1703) – *Pia Desideria* (1675) – Because Pietism emphasized godly living, it was only natural that some earthly reward for godly living should be identified. The Millennium (an earthly reward for being good) was therefore a perfect fit to encourage people to improve their lives so they could be part of the good earthly life when it came. b) Johann A. Bengel (1687-1749) (a rogue theologian) – *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* – He gave academic credibility to the teaching of millennialism, which influenced many Lutheran pastors.

   Q4. What synod was the advocate of tolerance of millennial teachings? A: Iowa Synod

2. American Lutheran millennialists of the 1800's. a) George Peters (1825-1909) – *The Theocratic Kingdom* – This work on millennialism promoted and developed extensive justification for it. It preyed on the ignorant. It created a picture easy for those not educated in Biblical interpretation to accept in the General Synod. b) Joseph Seiss (1823-1904) – He argued that the Augsburg Confession only condemned postmillennialism, not premillennialism. This is a ridiculous position! He advocated the latter in the General Council. c) Iowa Synod – Because most of its clergy had been trained by Wilhelm Loehe in Germany, they were tolerant of millennialism, and some taught it openly. They wanted some things left as open questions. Tried to leave open what Scripture had closed.

3. Georg Schieferdecker (1815-1891) and the Missouri Synod. a) President of the Western District of the Missouri Synod – Schieferdecker was part of the original group which came from Saxony to found the Missouri Synod. He became a respected leader. b) Expelled in 1857 for millennialism – When his fellow pastors began to suspect that he accepted millennialism, they asked him pointed questions and expelled him when he could not give satisfactory answers. The LCMS did not hesitate to do this. He joined the Iowa Synod until he recanted. c) Walther drew a firm line against millennialism – The first president of the Missouri Synod set the tone against millennialism which remains to this day.

4. American Lutheran millennialists since 1900. a) Church of the Lutheran Brethren – This small church body is totally committed to millennialism, which is part of its doctrinal statement. Totally corrupt. b) Association of Free Lutheran Congregations – This somewhat larger church body is composed of churches which fled various Lutheran church mergers. It is open to various doctrines associated with the millennium (weakness), although these are not part of its doctrinal statements.

C. Request for tolerance

1. 1867 meetings with Iowa Synod. a) Wisconsin Synod Convention – Members of the Iowa Synod sought to convince the Wisconsin Synod convention to tolerate millennialism, but pastors led by Adolf Hoenecke held the day, and the Iowa Synod position was rejected. This was a matter of real danger for confessional Lutheranism. b) Milwaukee Colloquy – The Missouri Synod and Iowa Synod met in Milwaukee to determine whether the first resurrection was a physical resurrection before the last day and whether the papacy is the great Antichrist were settled doctrines. They failed to reach agreement.

   Q5. Why did the Sandusky Declaration and the Common Confession fail to produce fellowship?

A: They glossed over differences rather than resolving them.

2. ALC – Missouri Synod fellowship talks. a) Sandusky Declaration (1938) – In an effort to reach a fellowship agreement between the Missouri Synod and the old American Lutheran Church, the latter adopted the Sandusky Declaration (which was a response to the Brief Statement of the LCMS) as its doctrinal position, which requested tolerance of key millennialist ideas. The Wisconsin Synod rejected the document, and the Missouri Synod did not act on it. b) Common Confession (1950) - In an effort to reach a fellowship agreement between the Missouri Synod and the old American Lutheran Church, they both adopted the Common Confession, which failed to clearly resolve some millennialist issues. It blurred issues. The Wisconsin Synod rejected this document. c) Doctrine of the Antichrist – The ALC wanted to consider the identification of the papacy as the Antichrist to be a historical position rather than one which is actively held by the church in its teachings. Tried to reopen another settled issue. This led to the Wisconsin Synod making a formal statement on the issue.

   Q6. How does millennialism undermine Christian teaching? A: It causes people to focus on preparing for an earthly realm rather than the heavenly realm.

3. Remarks. a) Care must be taken in dealing with biblical prophecy – While some things are clear in the Scriptures about what will happen in the end times, one must be careful not to overstate the information given in the Scriptures. Some people are struggling to grasp the Biblical teaching, but their uncertainty does not affect what the Bible teaches. One must be careful not to misstate this issue. b) In all cases where people question biblical teachings, we must react to them based on whether they are weak brethren who are struggling to understand the scriptural doctrine correctly or persistent errorists who have decided to amend what the Scriptures teach with their own ideas. The Scriptures only give a limited amount of information about the end times, so humans are tempted to grope for more and make overzealous statements. Nevertheless, we cannot tolerance those who add their ideas to what the Bible teaches or ignore passages that conflict with their ideas. c) Millennialism corrodes other doctrines of the church by trying to explain what the Scripture doesn't. – Millennialists deny specific statements of Jesus and the apostles which are clear and easy to understand, thereby subtracting from the Scriptures. They create their own, non-forced interpretation of visions which contain ideas which do not appear elsewhere in the Bible, therefore adding to the Scriptures. – Millennialism is not in harmony with Scripture because it redirects people's focus from the nature of Christ's eternal work of salvation (the eternal Decree of Redemption) to obtaining an earthly paradise. It opens numerous doors to attach false doctrine to the Gospel message or to replace it altogether.

D. Conclusion

1. Salvation is made possible through the objective justification of all sinners that was earned by Jesus. a) Role of Jesus – Understanding the role of Jesus in man's salvation (i.e., vicarious atonement) and the impossible situation that man is in without Jesus (i.e. totally depravity) must be the center of the church's teaching, but the church must not become weak on the nature of total depravity. b) Return of Jesus – Nothing improves until Jesus returns. It is folly to waste effort on earthly things that will not last, except to the extent that they are necessary for sustaining our lives. We are like travelers who must live "light."

2. Salvation requires the subjective justification worked by the Holy Spirit. a) Role of Holy Spirit – Understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing individuals to faith and sustaining that faith within them must dominate the Christian's life of faith. b) Work of conversion (What the Holy Spirit would make of us.) – When the Holy Spirit brings someone to faith, He creates a "new man" in that human's heart 1) who clings to Jesus' work of salvation, 2) who repudiates self and places himself/herself under the cross, desiring to serve only the LORD (1st commandment), 3) whose happiness is meditating on God's Word (Psalm 1), and 4) who repents sincerely of all his/her sins

(1st of Luther's 95 theses). The Christian therefore desires to follow his/her God and Lord, not speculate on how He does His divine activities.

3. Waiting for Jesus. a) Focus on the second coming - The return of Jesus is imminent, so the Christain's focus must be kept on it. Millennialism is a worthless sideshow. Even if it were true, no one should care about it. b) Working to build the church while there is time – Only those things done for Christ will last. We have been commissioned to build the kingdom of the LORD, not sit on our hands. Those are our marching orders, so let us not spend time on fairy tales.

E. Confessional Statements (Where confessional Lutheran bodies stand.)
   1. Augsburg Confession. a) Affirmed: Jesus comes on Last Day. b) Denied: Millennialism. c) Denied: No hell.
   2. This We Believe. a) Affirmed: Second coming of Jesus. b) Affirmed: Date unknowable. c) Affirmed: Return on last day. d) Affirmed: Last day will be Judgment Day. e) Denied: Millennialism. f) Denied: Antichrist is yet to come. g) Denied: Reincarnation. h) Denied: Figurative second coming and judgment.
   3. WELS Statement on the Antichrist (1959). a) Affirmed: Papacy is Antichrist. b) Denied: Antichrist is secular power(s). c) Denied: Doctrine that papacy is Antichrist is uncertain.
   4. Brief statement of LCMS (1932). a) Affirmed: Church is under the cross until Judgment Day (Art. 42). b) Affirmed: Papacy is Antichrist (Art. 43). c) Denied: Millennialism (Art. 42).