

The Basics Of Our Faith:  
New Members Study



## **Welcome!**

We are thankful that you are considering membership at Safe Harbor Community Church. One of the hallmarks of our community, or at least what we desire to promote, is a unity in belief. The Bible writes, “can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). What we believe about God is especially important if we are going to walk together in a faith community. So, it is for this purpose that these video classes are offered. Many have expressed a desire to be a part of the new members class but, as often as we do them, many can’t make it. It has caused some frustration and so to eliminate this we have provided some simple videos and lessons. Once you have reviewed the videos and lessons, we ask that you set up a time to meet with the pastor to have any of your final questions answered. After you have met with the pastor, he will set up a time for you to sit with the Elders. Take your time with the material, pray and think about what is being said and finally ask as many questions as you like.

## Chapter One:

### The Bible

*We believe the Bible is the written word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit and without error in the original manuscripts. The Bible is the revelation of God's truth and is infallible and authoritative in all matters of faith and practice.*

The first lesson is on the Scriptures. What is this book that we hold so dearly? Is it the very word of God? Are God's thoughts derived from man's emotions, or are they simply the ideas of man as they try to explain an unexplainable universe? At Safe Harbor, we believe it is the very word of God. What we mean is that it is the inerrant and infallible word of God in its original autograph. "Inerrant" means without error. "Infallible" means without failing or unable to let you fall. Lastly, "in its original autograph" means as it was originally given. We recognize that there are scribal errors in the English but that these errors do not change the original meaning. These errors usually consist of names and places. In fact, no book in history has been scrutinized by literary critics more than the Bible.

Yet, it stands firm because of the number of manuscripts and the vast amount of time these manuscripts represent. The preservation of this book itself seems of divine origin because no books of antiquity demonstrate this level of consisten-



**1. Read Matthew 5:18. What is Jesus' view on the preservation of the Scriptures?**

Logically we would expect God to leave us something trustworthy to find out about him. Consider yourselves and how you are, by nature, relational beings. We want to be known and to know those that love us. Consider how hurt you would be if a friend described you in disparaging and untruthful ways to a neighbor. Now, remember, as creatures, we are the lesser, and God is the greater. If we want to be known and understood, how much more would he? It serves God no good if he faithfully gives the word only for it to be corrupted beyond recognition, as the critics falsely claim.

**2. What does Jesus say the meaning (or purpose) of eternal life is in John 17:3?**

So, if an infinite God wanted to be known by finite men, he would have to reveal himself. Consider parents with a desire to communicate with a newborn infant in a crib. The parents communicate with the baby by approaching the crib, leaning over, touching, and smiling at the baby. The distinction between God and man is even more significant than between an adult and a baby. John Wesley, the great preacher of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, wrote, "Bring me a worm that can comprehend man, and then I will show you a man that can comprehend the triune God." The human mind cannot even imagine the definition of God found in the Scriptures. This idea of God,

which is in man, cannot come from man, it had to come or be planted by God himself. That is how we describe the Scriptures, the mind of God revealed to man.

**3. Who does Peter claim as the source of Scripture in 2 Peter 1:21? Likewise, where did prophecy not come from?**

According to the Scriptures, God reveals himself in two ways. The first way is through general revelation, which is revealed by nature itself. Anyone who has been

out west, in a location without ambient light, will look at the heavens and be amazed. The first thought from most people is not, “It is amazing how the universe spontaneously created it-



self.” This is because it takes more faith to believe in a self-creating universe rather than a great mind creating and ordering the universe. The Psalmist writes, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night knowledge.” (Psalm 19:1-2). Although general revelation is useful, this kind of revelation can only direct us to a God that exists but cannot tell us anything about his purpose or intentions with us.

**4. Read Romans 1:19-20. What leaves mankind without an excuse or an “out” before God? What is the source of this knowledge?**

Understanding God's mind requires God revealing it; this is what we call special revelation or the scriptures. This revelation comes through the instrumentality of men. God has chosen and validated certain people to be the revealers of his universal truth. As the book of Hebrews writes, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets...” (Hebrews 1:1). But how do we tell who he chose? After all, if someone came to me and said, “I had a message from God to the church,” I would take a few steps back rather than be filled with joy. There have always been false claims of divine inspiration. Therefore, consider how Moses, who gave us God’s law, was validated. Neither Egypt nor Israel had much reason to believe he was chosen by God. It would have been easier to believe he was a washed-up prince than anything useful to God. He began his transformation by trying to save Israel through the work of his own hands, which led to the killing of two Egyptians. This act resulted in him spending 40 years in the wilderness (learning humility). Afterward, he saw God in a burning bush and was sent back to Egypt to redeem his people. Yet nothing changed in the minds of Israel or Egypt until God began sending plagues through the direction of Moses. Everyone, including Pharaoh, realized this was not simply the voice of a man. So, when Moses revealed the law, Israel accepted it as the law of God. The 39 books of the Protestant Old Testament were always considered to be of divine origin by Israel. This was the

belief of Jesus himself, from which he often quoted to prove his divine authority.

**5. Read Mark 7:9-13. In Christ's rebuke, he claims two authors for the law, who are those two authors? What kind of authority does this give it?**

Regarding the New Testament, it was Christ who chose, from all his disciples, 12 men. These 12 were considered his Apostles, which means messengers. Not only were these men validated by Christ, who was raised from the dead, but they were also validated by God's many miracles through them. The New Testament was considered Scriptures because the books either had an Apostolic source or were validated by an Apostle. Once the line of Apostles ended, the Scriptures were viewed as complete because there was no way to validate anyone who said they possessed God's universal truth. All we need in order to discover God and find peace with him are written in these 66 books of the Old and New Testament.

**6. How does Peter describe the writings of Paul in 2 Peter 3:16?**

**7. How does Paul describe the Scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:16?**

The point of all this, is that Safe Harbor accepts what the Bible says about itself. To that end, we seek to interpret and apply it faithfully. In every generation, there are fresh attacks against it, and in each of the previous generations, these attacks failed. I guarantee, in your lifetime, there will be a new discovery or theory that seeks to

discredit the Bible. I also guarantee that if you give it a little time, the new discovery or theory will fall apart. Safe Harbor, like all churches, has its way of doing business but the true authority, from which everything rests, is the word of God.



## **Chapter Two:**

### **One God in Three Persons**

*We believe in the Holy Trinity. There is one God, who exists eternally in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

There are many systems under the umbrella of Christianity that reject the idea of Christ being God. In history, some groups have called him the greatest man who progressed closest to a divine ideal. Others have described him as an angel or some extra human identity. These groups cannot fathom or accept that Christ was one in essence but a separate person from the Godhead or that there is one God with three distinct persons. Even while I was in seminary, because of my previous background in math and science, this doctrine made me scratch my head and say, “Ah, what are you saying to me?” The problem occurs when we make human reason the arbiter of biblical truth, i.e. the only thing that is true is what I can reason myself. History demonstrates that human reason is often wrong from one generation to another. Now, I can already hear the critic say, ‘Yes, but bad reason is often replaced with better reason. That is the essence of science.’ And I would agree this is true, but only about subjects (finite) that reason can apprehend. The essence of God, or his infinite being, is beyond human reason; finite categories of logic based on cause and effect would not apply to an infinite being, who is uncaused. This is why I earlier quoted John Wesley, ‘show me a worm that can comprehend what

a man is, and I will show you a man that can comprehend the triune God.’ It is not that the Trinity is illogical but rather beyond the rules of a finite logic that our nature can comprehend. Trinity is accepted because there is no other way to understand the text and the self-revelation of our resurrected Lord.

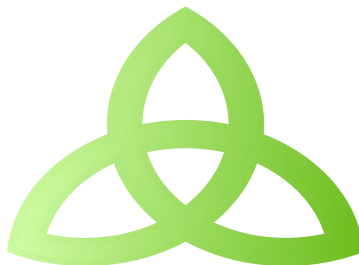
**8. Can you think of any denomination under the Christian umbrella that rejects the full divinity of Christ at birth?**

It starts in Genesis, where God says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...” (Gen 1:26). Now, some may believe before creating mankind, he was telling the angels what he was about to do, but that would be out of context. The plural pronouns of “us” and “our” are participants, not witnesses, of creation. Next, the word for Lord, Elohim, often used instead of Yahweh or Jehovah, is plural. Now, this alone is not proof; other Semite tribes referred to their gods in the plural, but it also should be remembered these tribes had a pantheon and did not exclaim that there was one God. In essence, the Hebrews declared that there is one God, but he is plural. In addition, there is the strange phenomenon of the “Angel of the Lord” (see Ex 3 and Zech 3). This angel referred to himself as Yahweh (Ex 3) and that he could “remove iniquity” (Zech 3), which is clearly an act only God can do. In fact, a different angel (not declared the Angel of the Lord) in the book of Revelation told John, as John tried to worship him, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of

Jesus. Worship God.” (Rev 19:10). Most theologians understand, the Old Testament Angel of the Lord, as a theophany (appearance of God) in the form of an Angel. He was both God and distinct from God. However, none of this is foolproof of the Trinity only that Israel understood a plurality about Yahweh.

**9. Read Joshua 5:13-15. If Angels are not to receive worship, according to the Angel in the book of Revelation (19:10), what does that tell us about this one? How is he identifying himself?**

Then, in the New Testament, Jesus comes and begins saying strange and difficult things, i.e., “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). In this passage, he declares himself older than the patriarch Abraham but then also plays on the name of God “I am” for his self-identity. According to the Apostle John, Jesus says, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), and yet Jesus prays to this Father as if they are not. He tells the Apostles that it is important that he leave so ‘the helper (Holy Spirit) may come’ (John 16:7). Then the command to baptize is in the “Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (Matt 28:19). Baptism or the mark of the one true



God is in three names. This mark is then echoed in the Apostle Paul's benediction: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of the Father, and Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (II Cor 13: 14). There are too many passages for a short lesson but what is clear is the Bible presents Jesus as God, the Father as God, and the Holy Spirit as God. They are distinct from each other, yet they are still one. This has come to be known as the Trinity. It is both difficult to wrap our heads around and yet clear from the text.

**10. In John 3:16, why did the Apostle use the words "only begotten" rather than created? (Hint: a dog begets puppies, a cat begets kittens, mankind begets children, therefore God would beget.... what?)**

The real weight of this is on the Divinity of Christ. If Christ were not both man and God (a mystery we will discuss later), he could not bear the sin of the world because the weight/debt of our sin is based on who we sin against. Our sin is against the infinite holiness of God. That means the weight or value of sin is infinite, as God is, and only an infinitely valuable being could remove it. However, this savior must also be a man for man is the guilty party. Therefore, these later traditions that just have a man or an angel as a savior cannot remove their infinite debt. The proof is that they all have formulas of meritorious service/work as necessary to remove sin. It makes sense if your savior is not big enough to remove all sin then you need another method. We at Safe Harbor confess that there is one God that exists in three distinct per-

sons: there is the Father who loves us and plans for our redemption; there is the Son who purchases this salvation for us; and finally, there is the Holy Spirit who applies this gift to us.

**11. Which of your sins did Jesus die for: the past only, the present and past only, or all of them, which includes the future? How could a finite savior do this?**

## **Chapter Three:**

### **All Have Sinned**

*We believe that all are sinners and totally unable to save themselves from God's displeasure, except by His mercy.*

The Church states that mankind are sinners. An immediate answer may be 'Duh' look around. Well, not so fast, because this statement assumes some things that our culture does not readily accept. First, that there is a God. Second, he is concerned about our behavior, choices, and desires. Third, that he will hold us accountable for these choices. Fourth, we can't, in any fashion, create a cure for our offenses against God.

#### **12. Do you think this culture should hear about sin?**

When you ask people the second question from *Evangelism Explosion*, namely, "If you were to die today and God said, 'why should I let you into my heaven?'" Probably 8 or 9 times out of ten the answer will be "I am a pretty good person" or "I try to do more good than bad." This minimization of the weight of sin is not just outside of the church but inside as well. The question, that needs to be asked to this answer is, "what is the definition of good and how do you know God shares that same definition with you?" The Bible says, "no one does good, no not even one" (Rom 3:12b). So, if you put good and bad on a sliding scale and on one side is Hitler and the other your dear Aunt Sally, who may have baked

wonderful apple pies and distributed them freely and yet never had time for Christ or his church, how do you decide the good that God must accept and the bad he does not?

**13. Have you ever thought that there was a sliding scale of good and bad that God judged us by?**

Let us consider what sin is. According to the Apostle John, “sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). It is considering what God says, or for the unbeliever knowing the good written on your heart and dismissing in whole or in part as irrelevant to your situation. It is not doing what we are commanded to do and/or doing what we are commanded not to do. It becomes even more weighty when we consider Christ’s view on the subject. He states, “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed sexual immorality with her in his heart” (Matt 5:28). Ignoring this particular sin of lust, notice that Christ amplifies sin to the desire of our heart. Sin, on any level, is telling God, “You will not be God over me, at least not in this area!”

**14. How is saying “it’s just a little white lie” or “no one is perfect” the minimization of sin?**



How weighty is the issue? Ask yourself what will happen if you tell the IRS you are not going to pay taxes anymore or if you lived in a totalitarian state and said, “I understand your law but feel it should not apply to me?” It does not matter if we forget or ignore our offenses against the King of Heaven, he does not forget. The Apostle John wrote in Revelation, “and the dead were judged by what was written in the book of life, according to what they had done” (Rev 20:12b). Similarly, God states, “I will by no means let the guilty go unpunished” (Ex 34:7).

**15. If somebody regularly did bad things to you, how reticent would you be to forget this in your ongoing relationship?**

The love of God is that knowing we are sinners, he sent his son to remedy it. Jesus would become sin for us and be judged because of us. However, to ignore the weight of this sin is to ignore the love of God. God cannot forget our sins or ignore them, and that is why he sent his son. So, if God can't ignore it, neither should we. It is not that we should live dreary and guilt-ridden lives, but there was a heavy cost to make salvation possible. We confess it strongly because we want people to be liberated from it through Christ. In addition, we warn the world because if they don't find freedom and mercy through Christ, they will stand before God and must explain to a Holy and just God why they had the right and privilege to ignore his law. There is no mercy at that point, only justice, which no one can escape without Christ.



**16. What kind of God could simply forgive and forget sin and then decide to put his son on the cross? Does this point to the cruel nature of God or, rather, the absolute necessity of Christ's death to take away sin?**

## Chapter Four:

### Saved by Grace through Christ Alone.

*We believe that we are saved by God's Grace alone through faith in Christ Alone.*

*We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who, through His perfect life and sacrificial death, atoned for the sins of all who will trust him alone for salvation.*

In a world of 'quid pro quo' and 'nothing comes for free,' this doctrine can be hard to understand. Many folks who visit us come from other faith traditions or have developed personal thoughts, believing divine blessings are God's response to human actions. This causes two reactions regarding salvation: it either leaves them with a sense that they have not done enough or worse, an arrogance that they have. The Apostle Paul writes, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." (Eph 2:8-9). We are saved by grace and not by human action. It is gifted, not rewarded to us.

**17. What is a gift? Do we expect return actions for the gifts we give?**

The word grace means the unmerited favor of God. God has done something for us. It begins with the Godhead deciding to save us from our folly and sin, which without remedy would eternally condemn us to him.

Many people believe that God just has the power to forgive/forget wrongdoing, but this is incorrect; God, by his nature, must deal with sin. The prophet Habakkuk writes, “Your eyes are too pure to look upon evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.” And Moses writes that you “will by no means clear the guilty.” (Exodus 34:7). This makes sense if we look at our own nature. We may forget little transgressions that do not affect our life. For example, if a young child tells a lie, we likely will correct the child, expect some recompense, and then move on. However, what if a callous murderer willfully and without concern for your family murdered everyone? Even if, during the court proceedings, the murderer communicated that they were sorry, the desire to let them go would not be there. An understanding of justice in your heart would demand that payment be made, which likely would be for the rest of the criminal’s life. The point is that not understanding the requirement to pay for sin reflects our own minimization of what sin is and how God looks at it. As I wrote previously, every sin is telling the King of kings that we don’t have to comply, that we are our own god, and that God is officially un-throned. You may not want to look at it that way but again our opinions don’t matter.

**18. If we did not pay our debt to the IRS, what would their forgiveness look like?**

**19 Why do you think Israel sacrificed animals before Christ came? Was it because sin was a big deal or no so big deal?**

So, God needs justice, but how does God gain this from mankind? We have all sinned against a holy infinite God. No man can take away this sin because all have the same sin. So, he sent Jesus, who was both man and God. As John writes, “In the beginning was the word (Jesus) and the word (Jesus) was with God and the word (Jesus) was God.” (John 1:1). Jesus then lived within the law, never breaking a command. As Peter writes “He committed no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (I Peter 2:22). Then he was executed on a Roman cross by the evil of men but with the permission of God the Father. He felt all the physical, emotional and spiritual suffering that our sin deserves. This is what the prophet Isaiah wrote about him, “all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – everyone – to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isa 53:6). A harsh punishment for harsh crimes and Jesus did this voluntarily.

**20. A lamb was used as a sacrificial animal to cleanse from sin in the Old Testament. Why do you think John the Baptist called Jesus, the Lamb of God?**



This free gift, i.e. being cleansed from sin and being made new, comes by faith, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved...” (Acts 16:31). What it means is that Jesus acts as the substitute. We are found guilty, but punishment is placed on him. There is not a transference of guilt but there is a transference of debt. Not only this but his righteousness/goodness is also credited to us. This is what Jesus meant when he said that a man must be born-again to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (John 3:3). We are made new by having our sin taken from us and then given credit for what we did not accomplish. This is hard to understand because who would do something like this for us. That is the love of Christ.

**21. Have you personally asked Jesus to forgive you of your sin and be your Lord and savior? If unsure, take a minute and pray to him now. Don't worry about what to say, he already knows that you may not be comfortable with it. However, confessing you know about your sin and the penalties earned and asking for forgiveness through Christ is how it all starts. Then let the pastor know you did this.**

This is non-negotiable for us at Safe Harbor Reformed Church. The Love of God is that he provided for us a way to be cleansed (John 3:16), not that he ignores sin. This is why we confess that there is only one way to heaven and that is through Christ. As Christ himself said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.” Some may think

of this as intolerable and they won't join a church like ours, (believing all other religious ways/works are foolish). However, the alternative is more disturbing, i.e. that God would torture and kill his son when there were other plausible alternatives. Christ loved us to suffer all pain imaginable and for this reason we do not negotiate this doctrine.

**22. Does this Church believe Jesus is “a” way or “the” way?**



## **Chapter Five:**

### **Covenant God**

*We believe that God is gracious and faithful to His people not simply as individuals but as families in successive generations according to His Covenant promises.*

Most people that read the bible have come across this word “covenant.” Yet, many don’t understand the biblical use. In our culture covenant means agreement between two parties. This definition partially works in the bible but also partially does not. For example, we believe in the beginning God established a Covenant of Work with man, “But like Adam they transgressed the covenant there they dealt faithlessly with me,” (Hosea 6:7). Here there is no agreement on Adam’s side. It’s the covenant of a sovereign, where a king declares ‘I have blessed you and will continue to bless you, but these are the terms.’ Adam was created in this blessed state and when he sinned, he broke the terms of the covenant. At this point all of mankind was in trouble, so God established a new covenant, the Covenant of Grace. This is the agreement that he would send one of Adam’s heirs that would fulfill the terms of complete obedience and relieve man of the curse (Gen 3:15). Obviously, this heir was Jesus Christ, and the rest of the Old Testament reveals through shadows, types and direct prophecy how he would accomplish this (i.e. Isaiah 53). Natural man is

born into the broken covenant of Adam but, through faith in the finished work of Christ, is brought into the new covenant established by Christ (Rom 5:12-21).

**23. Have you ever made a sovereign agreement with your children, i.e. ‘I will let you do this thing but you will have to...’?**

This is particularly important regarding families. As revelation progresses, we discover how this Covenant of Grace spreads. God tells Abraham, “I will establish this covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.” (Gen 17:7). This same language is repeated in the book of Acts when Peter says, “and the promise is to you and your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:39). God’s grace is most seen within families, where one generation teaches and demonstrates the importance of this relationship. So, if God normally operates through family, then the family is most important structure to the church. This is also why the world/the Devil strike at family structures most. In this world it is only God’s definition of family that can keep our members from the chaos emerging around us. God’s promises are very real, therefore, train your children up to know him. In addition, for those older children that seem lost, don’t give up on them nor assume God is done with them. At this point, what they need most is for a faithful parent to plead, through pray-



er, about these covenant promises. We promise to do the same for you.

**24. What is the nature of God's promise regarding our children? Is it a real promise?**

## **Chapter Six:**

### **The Holy Spirit**

*We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells God's people and gives them the strength and wisdom to trust Christ and follow Him.*

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. As mentioned earlier, the Trinity is one of the hardest concepts to understand but is clearly revealed in the Scriptures. It is difficult because we are dealing with a being that is beyond our beings. Well, the Holy Spirit is the third person of this incomprehensible being. His presence is well documented in the scriptures. He hovers over the waters at creation (Gen 1:2), he is recognized in the baptismal formula given by Christ, "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" (Matt 28:19), lastly he is the great comforter the Apostles anticipate at the ascension of Christ (John 16:7).

Like the Father and the Son, the Spirit very much has personhood, meaning he is not a divine force from a Star Wars movie. The Apostle Paul says that we can grieve this Spirit (Eph 4:30) and Luke tells us he teaches us (Luke 12:12). Each member of the Trinity is involved in our salvation: the Father sets the terms of the covenant, the Son fulfills the terms, and the Holy Spirit

applies the terms. It is the Holy Spirit that has been operating and enabling us to understand our need for salvation. As Christ said to Nicodemus the priest, “that which is born of flesh is flesh and that Which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). We are born again through the operation of the Spirit.

**25. Read John 3:1-8. Who appears responsible for our salvation?**

However, this is not a one and done situation for we were saved for a purpose. Paul writes, “he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom 8:29). Without getting into the intricacies of the word predestined, notice the end goal, conformity to the likeness of Christ. All of us will change and grow in holiness as we live for Christ. The Holy Spirit is the guide, teacher, encourager, disciplinarian of it all. He enlightens our minds (John 16:13), convicts of sin (John 16:8), gives us gifts for the health of the church and redemption of others (I Cor 12:1-7), he sanctifies us working on our holiness (2 Thess 2:13), he dwells inside of believers (1 John 3:24), will raise you from the dead on judgment day (Rom 8:11), and lastly helps us pray (Rom 8:26).

**26. How do you think we can grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph4:30)**

Some churches have an emphasis on the individual gifts given to believers. At safe harbor we have an emphasis on the purpose of the Holy Spirit, which is the redemption of the lost and the personal holiness of the saved.

## **Chapter Seven: Christ's Return**

*We believe that Jesus will return, bodily and visibly, to judge all mankind and to receive His people to Himself.*

The “End Times” is a hot topic in Christian circles. In almost every generation, Christians were convinced, because of world events, that Christ’s return was imminent. The only thing required for membership, here, is that the believer agrees he will return. The how, what, when or why of the event, is not necessary for membership. Hopefully, you will discover the wide range of people, that have demonstrated themselves faithful to the gospel and maintaining differing interpretations of the text. We will, however, discuss a few topics that we all agree on.

First is the element of time. Why is it taking so long when there are texts that seem to indicate an imminent return of Christ. Peter answers this question, writing, in the last days they 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” (II Pet 3:4). Peter then responds with, “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,” (II Peter 3:8). He ends by giving assurance

that, whatever the Lord's timing is, all things will be made new, and this present system of the universe will be burned up. Most of the parables that figure his departure and return also have the element of time grafted in. The reason for the duration of time is that certain things were going to happen before his return.

**27. Do you believe you are living in the times of the end?**

One of the key events, which is the second thing interpreters agree with, is the coming of the Gentiles to the house of God (Is 60). Before Christ ascended, he gave the mandate to preach "to the end of the earth" (Acts 1: 8). This has been our history since Christ ascended, i.e. people coming to faith of every tribe and language. My ancestors are of Irish decent, and I am thankful for the missionaries that came and preached the gospel with great danger against their life. The prophets predicted that time would come. So, one reason Christ delays, is he wants to save more people.

**28. What is your national heritage? Do you know the name of one of the first missionaries that came to your ancestral land? Google it and tell the group something about this saint?**

Another event is the time of The Great Tribulation. This tribulation is close to the end of things and can be found in Revelation 20:7-8. The church of Christ has previously gone through many regional tribulations. Today we could just look at the nation of China or some African states to witness regional tribulation. However, this

Great Tribulation is more universal and global. No Christian seems able to escape it.

A third event is the coming of the Man of Lawlessness (II Thess 2:1-4). Whoever, this man is he comes as a messianic figure and will be trusted by the world. Yet, his heart is against God and focused on leading the world against God. He is the instrument, used by the Devil, to usher in the great tribulation.

**29. If you were to unknowingly bump into the Man of Lawlessness (anti-Christ), do you think you would like him, why or why not?**

The last event is the defeat of all of Christ's enemies. Paul writes, "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom of God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (I Cor 15: 24-25). Christ mission is to see Satan's temper tantrum through.

**30. If you know the end score of the game, why would someone choose to play for the losing side?**

The above is simply for information. The new member/believer just really needs to believe, trust and hope in Christ's return. We must believe he is making all things new. I have viewed many church web sites and found some taking our view regarding foundational information, but others are very particular about end times belief. So why have we taken the approach to say so lit-

tle? The truth is there are Godly theologians that have looked at this differently. For example, my son is named after the preacher Robert Murray Mccheyne, and two of my favorite theologians are Jonathan Edwards and Augustine. All three of them have a different view of end times. This does not mean I don't have a basis of interpretation, but it does mean I respect these men and the basis of their interpretation. If our people can agree that the Scripture is infallible, but our interpretation is not in all matters, then we can struggle together to understand these texts. There will be plenty of opportunities to go deeper if desired.

## **Chapter Eight:**

### **The Lordship of Christ?**

*We believe that all aspects of our lives are to be lived to the glory of God under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.*

A point often missed with some Christians is that Christ is king now. I think, because of the way the world works around us and how the Devil seems to have the upper hand, many think the reign of Christ is in the future. I would direct your attention to Revelation chapter 4-5 and ask yourself what is the first thing that Christ did after he ascended into heaven. For context chapter four is the throne room of God. Now, like all apocalyptic literature, these chapters are filled with figurative language. But at root, it is the throne room of our almighty God, and he is holding a scroll that none in heaven or earth can open. This scroll is the mind of God or his purpose for creation and history. Enter Christ in chapter five. He alone can take this scroll and all the angels and departed saints worship him. This is his coronation. Before leaving the disciples Christ said, “all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me” (Matt 28:18). The point is he is King now!

So, what is happening around us? Well like the fall itself, it is a grand rebellion that has grown as the population on earth has grown. At the same time his faithful



servants have grown in number as well. Remember, when considering the authority of the Devil and Christ, we are not dealing with equal and opposite powers. This is not a Buddhist Yin Yang concept. The Devil is not winning, he is just throwing a huge temper tantrum. The scriptures say, “And we know for those that love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Rom 8:28). Revelation, itself is a book describing how God shapes this temper tantrum for the ultimate redemption of all, even the earth itself.

Why do I mention all this? Because Christ is not just the King of the universe, he is the king of us as individuals. Yes, he loves us and helps us to grow in our responsibilities, but we also have a duty as good citizens of this Kingdom to grow in our personal holiness. Paul writes, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (I Cor 10:31). We need to be reminded that this favorable status we have as the saved and adopted children of God, came as a cost. We are not our own, we were purchased at a great price (1 Cor 6:20). The one who chose and saved us is also the King of kings and Lord of lords. Pray that our lives and this church can reflect this.







