



Harvest ready fields, looking northward at Mt. Garfield in the east end of the Grand Valley near Clifton, Colorado

Christian Church of God: Media Ministry

Expounding upon the Faith Once Delivered

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Dear Mr. W, We discussed each of these at our 6/10/14 Bible Study.

1. What actually happens when we die ? I will send you an article that well explains the entire situation regarding the state of the dead. Though ancient ideas have been brought in from pagan sources, the Bible is extremely clear as to the state of the dead, particularly with regard to consciousness. The best comparison is a sleep-like state. (Daniel 12:2) We are body / soul / spirit. (1st Thess. 5:23) The body is our physical flesh, the soul is that spark of energy that gives us physical life (as all life forms have), and the spirit is that God-given component which gives us intellect and consciousness, from which we derive and develop our unique character. The 'spirit in man' is what gives us our intelligence, (the counterpart in animals is what we call instinct, not a conscious thought process at all). Our spirit is also able to receive thoughts of outside spirit influences, both evil and righteous. When we die, we lose all consciousness, our physical form dissolves back to its elemental state, those earthly elements of which we are formed. Our soul (life) ends, but our spirit is placed in God's hands for future restoration to our future bodies, whether physical or spirit bodies, when we are resurrected. (Luke 23:46; Psalm 31:5 & Acts 7:59) But the major point is that we are not conscious in death. We remain unconscious until the resurrection. Those who died centuries ago will not realize any longer wait than those who died recently. The dead are not aware even of the passage of time. This Biblical fact is sufficient to expose the false teachings of going to heaven or going to hell.' (Psalm 146:4; Acts 2: 29 & 34; Genesis 3:19; Psalm 104:29)

2. Why is there more than one resurrection of the dead mentioned in the Bible? It is because God has a PLAN for providing the opportunity for salvation to all who have ever lived. The Saints only will rise first at the Second Coming. The rest of the dead will wait until after the end of the millennium (1000 years) to be raised. (Rev. 20:5) Those who HAD opportunity and who failed to avail themselves in this lifetime, will NOT rise in the second resurrection. (There is no second chance.) They will sleep on through until Final Sentencing. The final resurrection (called by many as the third), will see the raising up of ALL who have ever lived (excluding the Saints raised in the first resurrection). This final resurrection is NOT for further opportunity or for repentance. That is merely for the Final Sentencing of all the rest of humanity of all ages. God's Plan for humanity will not work IF there are no resurrections. It is this area of Biblical

understanding that the world's religions just don't comprehend, and that mostly in order to preserve their false teachings of what happens at the moment of death, the idea of going to heaven (or hell)! Revelation 14:14-20 explains the third resurrection scene, as does Matthew 25:31-46. No one will be condemned to the Biblical Lake of Fire without having earned condemnation by rejecting their opportunity for salvation.

3. When sinners die, do they cease to exist, go to a place of eternal punishment, or is there something else that happens to them ? This is addressed to some extent above. At death, we enter an unconscious state. Physically, we cease to exist, but for a time may leave bones to witness our former existence. No one goes to any place (other than the grave) from which they await their appropriate resurrection. Keep in mind the unconscious sleep-like state that the Bible describes death as being. Let's not forget that we all are sinners. It's a matter of whether or not we repented, were forgiven, received God's Spirit and are assigned (sealed) to the first resurrection. No-one will receive punishment before the Final sentencing event which occurs at the gathering of all nations together (the sheep-from-the-goats event), and no-one will be sentenced while in a state of unconscious death. All will arise in their physical state first, and from there, be separated out to their just assignment, spirit-form Life or death in the Lake of Fire, which is the second death. (Rev. 20:13-14) From the second death, there is extinction with NO possibility of being resurrected. That is FINAL! The Lake of Fire is not an ever-burning hell, but an all-consuming fire that will in the end consume even the institutions of death and the grave.

4. When the righteous die, do they immediately go to heaven to claim their reward or is there something else that happens before this event ? No, they wait in their graves unconscious, the same as the wicked. Before going further, we should define terms. Reward suggests something earned. We can not earn remission of sins, salvation or eternal Life. Those are gifts of God. But there IS a reward, which results from merit, something we've earned, on top of salvation. That reward will be in accordance with our works, that which we DO (with the help of the power of God's Spirit). That reward will be brought and presented to us in the first resurrection, at the second coming. The fact that no-one receives their reward before the second coming also confirms the falsehood of heaven being the reward of the saved. (Revelation 11:18 & 22:12) And as to the idea of people spending eternity in heaven, there will come a point in time when God will dwell with men on earth, the Father and the Son will both live with His (Their) saints on the Earth. Enclosures I send will discuss that further.

5. When infants and young children die are they immediately granted eternal life? This question has long been a dilemma for Christians. They recognize the problem, but have no way of explaining it with any Biblical support. That is the case because they don't understand God's Plan as revealed thru His sayings, particularly through the resurrections. Religion largely rejects the resurrections teachings. Infants are like all others. They die and remain unconscious, awaiting their resurrection back to a physical life. We may correctly presume infants and small children never had time to become truly converted. In the second resurrection (they are properly assigned to that one in that they never had time to reject salvation either) they will arise and resume their lives, from that point in time (the age they attained at death) being given time to grow up and experience the full lifetime that circumstance s denied them. That is the blessing the second (after the 1000 years) resurrection provides them. The world's religions recognize the problem. Some have invented an unbiblical "age of accountability" to address the problem, others like Catholics invented the idea of Limbo or Purgatory to provide some form of opportunity beyond this lifetime. Give them credit for recognizing the problem, but they missed the mark in providing a true Biblical answer to it. Again, death is a sleep-like state, where there is no conscious thought. (Proverbs 11:7; Ecclesiastes 9:1-6 & Psalm 146:4) Think about this also. Will these infants remain infants forever in heaven? What age will their "eternal life" be at, should that be the case? Will they be assigned an age to which they never experienced? God's Plan works and provides a full life (with opportunity) to ALL.

6. What happens as the righteous of all ages rise to meet Christ in the clouds above the earth? As we see from Zechariah 14:4, they will then descend with Him to the Mount of Olives. Main stream religion has them, with Him, ascending up to Heaven, but then, consider, these same people believe the dead in Christ are already with Him up in Heaven! In THAT day, His feet will stand upon the Mount of Olives, and the subordination of all nations will begin. Initially, there will be a gathering of nations to fight Him, assembling on the Plains of Megiddo (aka the battle of Armageddon) and their complete defeat will facilitate the take-over process. These righteous people (mostly resurrected, with a percentage of alive-and-remaining Saints) will have been made immortal, given their spirit-form bodies, and will soon after be installed in positions of authority, some in the civil branch of government (kings) and some in the ecclesiastical branch (priests). (Rev. 1:5-7 & 5:9-10) We have a specific assignment for each of the twelve Apostles, they being installed as heads of each of the twelve tribes, which are prominent nations today, and will be the leading nations of the World to Come. (Matt. 19:28) Relating to this, notice the statement made by Paul in 1st Thess. 4:15, that we which are alive and remain will not precede (prevent in old English) the dead into the presence of the Lord. IF the dead were already ascended to Heaven to be with the Lord, as religion claims, WHY would Paul see need to make this statement. Paul obviously realized that those he was writing to did not believe the dead were conscious with the Lord in heaven!

7. After all of the righteous have been taken from the earth and only the righteous remain, what will stop God from destroying the earth and the rest of humanity? I presume you meant “only the unrighteous remain”. This question reflects all-the-righteous-being-removed-from-the-earth idea. That is understandable as a question, based on common religious perceptions, but the truth is, NO, there will be no time when there will not be righteous on the earth. The question is, in what form? What WILL happen is the dead in the Lord will be restored to conscious life as Spirit Beings, the living righteous will join them moments later. (1st Thess. 4:17) The righteous of all ages will then be immortal and will become the governing (controlling) force on earth, with and under Christ. So, the earth will not be abandoned to the unconverted / wicked. As a peripheral perspective, it is NOT God’s intention to destroy the earth, only to destroy those who destroy the earth. (Rev. 11:17-18) In His first actions, after his descent to the Jerusalem area, He will work to overcome all opposition. We can read of those first steps in doing so in Rev. 11:17-18. Those are the very steps, which will be the agenda of the Second Coming at the seventh (last) Trump. He justifiably will express His Wrath upon those who resent His coming and who oppose Him in anger. That opposition will be stopped in short order. It will then be appropriate to impose His Wrath upon His opponents, not necessarily all of physical humanity still living. Many religious people THINK they worship Christ, not realizing that they have been spoon fed false teachings by their apostate teachers. These will no doubt come over and embrace the Truth quickly, once they realize their errors. Just because many do not know the truth (they think they do) it does not translate into having His Wrath poured upon them, unless they exhibit rebellion and anger against Him, as we read.

8. Those who hear Christ's words (i.e., his word) and believe what he says will have eternal life. What about those who have never heard his words? This is where the Plan of God becomes most wondrous and encouraging. There are uncountable billions who fit into this category. Life did not allow them a time or an opportunity to hear the Truth. There are others who may have heard, but didn’t have time to carry thru with their quest toward conversion. Many simply were not called in this age, or the age in which they lived. They are NOT lost, but are assigned to a later age. This matter is illustrated in the two harvests concept, pictured by the early and late harvests. The early Church understood the concept: that there will be an early harvest, pictured by the Day of Pentecost / Day of

Trumpets, and a later harvest, pictured in the Feast of Tabernacles / Last Great Day. James 5:7-8 speaks to this. God is that farmer type being spoken of there, raising His harvests, the smaller early one, and the late summer greater one later. Those who have never heard will, in the late era resurrection, spoken of in Revelation 20:5, be raised back to physical life, and given a generation to come to know and to obey the Truth as those in this present calling have been given opportunity to do. (But they will not have to deal with Satan, as he will be restrained during that era. (Rev. 20:)) Some few are called now, but that calling is limited, as we read in John 6:44. (This was uttered in the early harvest season (see v. 4)). But, in John 7:37, it appears there is a different situation, which there is. At this later time, "Whosoever wills" may come. It is no longer a calling-of-the -Father-only situation. This was uttered in a later Holy Day season, (see v. 7:2) that season of the year which represents the salvation of the entire world, or at least the opportunity for it. Salvation will THEN be opened to all, whereas it is limited to the Father's specific calling in this present age, His Early Harvest. The point is, all will hear and have opportunity to respond to the opportunity for salvation, either in this age, or in or after the millennium, when the current dead (who have not spurned their opportunity already) will be restored to physical life to pursue the opportunity that they never had.

9. Is today the only day of salvation? Have God the father and Jesus Christ been trying to save all of humanity from the time of Adam to this present day? No. This is "a" day, not the only day. Religion does not understand this one simple consideration, so they can't deal with, or explain, all those unconverted peoples' true destiny. Particularly enigmatic are those who died too young to ever be realistically considered as having achieved salvation. If the Father was intent upon calling all now, why do we see so few being specifically called of the Father? Why would John have even made such a statement as in 6:44, IF he believed all were afforded their calling in this age, in this lifetime?

10. There is no doubt that each person will have an opportunity to obey God's code of righteous conduct. The only question is when each person will be given this opportunity? Correct. It's a matter of when. But, all will have that opportunity. "God is not willing that any should perish", and those who do, will have themselves to blame, not their lack of opportunity.

11. One of the terms of the agreement at Mount Sinai was that the people would obey the creator's words, and, if they did obey, they would receive a tremendous blessing. However, if all things were predetermined, why would God make an agreement which had terms and conditions attached to it? Those promises offering material blessing were conditional. Their blessings were physical (at first). The idea of spiritual blessings were hidden within the meanings of the things they were given to do, but prior to the open giving of the Holy Spirit, (only after Christ's ascension) spiritual salvation was only alluded to as a future condition. In the early covenant era, their blessings were primarily national, and to some degree personal, but they were limited to the physical realm. The personal responses of the nation, and the individuals, were not predetermined, only the outcome was predetermined should the people nationally or individually fail to keep their word to faithfully obey. We, of course, know the record of history on their part. Israel, the whole of both houses (Ezek. 37:) waits for that day when the blinders that were placed over their perceptions, on account of their disbelief / disobedience, will be removed. That will be during the millennial age and the Great White Throne (Last Great Day) judgment periods.

Thank you for such excellent questions.