

2/28/10

What to Believe?

We are talking about getting recentered in our basic faith in God. Last Sunday we dealt with the Bible and how it is unique among all books in the world and stands alone in archeological confirmation as well as fulfilled prophecy: 668 to be exact. Not to mention 40 writers contributing over 1500 years with none other than God Himself saying it was Me giving the words. There is nothing like the Bible.

Because of the overwhelming evidence we can be assured the Bible is the reliable source of truth. So today we want to unpack a few of the fundamental truths that the bible proclaims. It matters what God has to say about something. It matters what you believe because what you believe is what shapes your future. You become what you believe.

NAS Mat. 24:35 *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.”*

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels because they include many of the same stories, often in the same sequence, and sometimes the exact same wording.

The term synoptic comes from the Greek 'syn,' meaning "together," and 'optic,' meaning "seen".

The point being that not everything is repeated by all three gospels. When it is it means there is a strong emphasis on that statement or event. The above phrase is in all three gospels. This means God’s Word is eternal and will never be irrelevant or lose its power.

So what is one fundamental doctrine of the New Covenant that sets Christianity apart every other religion? Why it is that in the world you can be at any secular party and say you are an atheist, Buddhist, New Age Transcendentalist, Scientologist or Moonie and not raise any eyebrows in the room. There would be no pause in conversation. But just let one person say “I’m a Christian” and everyone stops, those close by get a little nervous acting because you have just created an awkward moment. What is it about Christianity that causes such a strong reaction?

Another thing, why do people curse the Name of God and his Son Jesus Christ? You never hear someone curse Buddha or Mohammad. Why is it that almost intuitively when rage erupts that God or His Son’s name emerges as a curse?

Truth Number One: Jesus is the Son of God and there is no salvation apart from knowing Christ.

I think that upsets the world as much as anything. It just flies in the face of our pluralistic, inclusivity, everybody's right, political correctness that pervades our culture. What does Jesus have to say?

Jesus made a statement that the moment He uttered it changed the game for all eternity.

NAS John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*

The Bible says that God is not a man that he should lie. He can't lie. Notice He didn't say I am a way but I am the way.

If Jesus had just not said that He could have gotten along with all the other religions of the day just fine. But those words changed everything. There was something about those words.

What causes the rub is the not the words but the truth behind the words.

If I stood up in a room full of people and said, "My name is Phillip Miles and I am the way, and the truth and the life and no one can come to God but through me" there would be maybe a moment of silence before the room erupted in hilarious laughter.

When Jesus said it, no one laughed. Truth has a way of resonating in your spirit. Truth has a way of bearing itself out in the hearts of people. Truth actually testifies of itself. People respond in many ways to truth. They can accept it, ignore it, reject it, attack it, attempt to undermine or distort it but truth does not change.

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There is no salvation apart from Christ.

Well what about all those people in Africa that have not heard the gospel. Are they going to hell? Well, first of all Africa is being evangelized faster than any nation on earth but back to the question. I don't know what God will do to those who have not heard the gospel. I do know what the bible says in **John 3:3** *unless a person is born again He shall not see the Kingdom of God.*

I've heard skeptics say, "I could never serve a God that would send innocent people to hell." Well, could you serve a God that loves people so much He sent His own son to die on a cross to save the entire world? People get all worked up about what they do not know. But each of us is responsible for what we do know. So for the skeptic that knows the truth, you need to stop worrying about those Africans. You need to think about your own need for God and how you will respond to the love He has for you.

So the first big doctrine you need to understand is that every road does not lead to heaven. That is the most ridiculous idea I've ever heard. "How do you get to Conway? Just drive and if you are sincere you will get there." Now I have heard that all dirt roads lead to Clemson but I don't think any rational person can say everybody's right.

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So the first big doctrine is that Jesus is the only way to the Father and eternal life.

The **Second Doctrine** has to do with the return of Christ.

So Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified and rose from the dead to save us. But that is not the end of the story.

NAS John 14:1 *"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."*

It's always about relationship. "Where I am you will be there with me."

Jesus is coming back to receive us to Himself. There are certain things that will take place before or when He returns that we need to know about.

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36 “However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.

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It has been close to 2000 years and Christ has not returned yet He compels us over and over to “keep watch” and be certain we are ready for His return.

After Christ returns He will judge each person according to their actions while living on earth.

How will that play out?

There will be two judgment days; two courts sessions if you will. The Great White Throne judgment and the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Great White Throne Judgment is for those who are not saved.

Mat. 25:31 *“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 “All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.*

After he separates them He will address both groups.

34 *“Then the King will say to those on His right, (Judgment Seat of Christ) ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

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(Today I’m not going to give a detailed look at the 1000 year reign of Christ, the bottomless pit, the beast or the anti Christ, etc. We are going to jump to the very end.)

Remember that judgment does not change God but justice is a part of God. **NLT John 3:19** *And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.*

Each person makes a choice. We choose darkness or light. If we choose darkness we choose judgment. If we choose light we choose salvation. That is why there are so many warnings and references to the return of Christ and judgment. We have ample opportunity to make the right choices.

All through Scripture the Bible talks about soon approaching Day of Judgment. I had to go to court one day to support a friend who had gotten into some serious trouble. As is usually the case we sat there for hours waiting for my friend’s case to come up. There were parents, children, spouses and friends packed into the court room waiting for their loved one’s case to be heard. During the wait as each case came before the judge I heard him say several times, “What did I tell you the last time you were in this court?” The defendant would hang his or her head and look down. The judge would continue, “Did I not tell you that if you ever stood before me again there would be no mercy? Today I’m revoking your parole and you will serve out the remaining years of your sentence behind bars. Next case please.” They had been duly warned. They had nothing to say.

Jesus is telling us right now, repent and be saved from the judgment to come. Turn from your wicked ways and receive the life I have to offer. If you believe Jesus came to earth, died for our sins and was raised from the dead as a first fruit of new life then you must believe He is returning to judge the world in righteousness.

For those of us who are Christians the story is completely different. For us judgment is all about rewards. It is more of an evaluation than judgment.

God is very clear and up front about His system of rewarding His children.

Paul writes this admonition to the church at Rome.

NAS Romans 14:10 *But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, (it is unalterable)*

*“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me,
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So we are all going to have to give an account but for what? On what basis will we qualify for a reward?

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What does this mean? We will be rewarded for good management, a generous heart, our prayer life and a Christ-like attitude. This accrues to our spiritual account and is a big deal to God.

Love gets rewarded. **1 Cor. 13.** Without love it “profits” you nothing. He is referring to reward. Prayer get rewarded. **Mat. 6:5** “When you pray get in the closet or secret place...God who sees in secret will reward you.” God rewards our generosity: “Give and it will be given to you pressed down...” **Lu. 6:38.**

The reward or blessing often comes while we are still alive.

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So each of us will stand before God and show how they responded to God’s call and giftings He placed within us. Everyone has different giftings.

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What a blessing if this season of the New Reality can wake us up to the fact that things will not stay the same forever. There is more than this life.

This is what God is trying to tell us. Wake up! I'm coming back. Store up treasure while you can.

There is this stir about the Mayan calendar that has predicted certain cataclysmic events in the past. The calendar ends in 2012 and some say it means the world will end then. My take on that is we may never see 2012. Christ can return at any moment and He commands us to be ready.

Today whosoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved. When the trumpet sounds this age comes to an end. Everything stops. No more prayers; no more labors; no more repenting.

John 9:4 *"All of us must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent me, for there is little time left before the night falls and all work comes to an end".*

I know some of you here have been preached to by your parents, your spouse, your friends; You say you just can't live the Christian life. It's just too hard to be a Christian. And on and on. In light of what we know right now you need to think about what you are going to say to God on that day.

As God's children we can get excited.

For those far from God, it is a day to reflect and decide. Everybody wants to know the future. Let me show you your future if you don't know God.

NAS Rev. 20:11 *"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."*

The end of this age will usher in a new age. For those of you who love the Lord, let me show you your future.

Rev. 21:1-4 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, (all about relationship) and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." (memory @ Phillip)

So what will we do in God's eternal Kingdom?

The Bible teaches that we are being prepared for our future. We are told that we will rule and reign with Christ forever. **2 Tim. 2:12**

In fact, several parables reference that. If we are faithful over little God will let us rule over so many cities.

The inference is that we will rule over certain civilizations yet to be named. The universe is vast. Who knows what God will have us doing?

But this we do know...

NLT 1 Cor. 2:9 *That is what is meant by the Scriptures which say that no mere man has ever seen, heard, or even imagined what wonderful things God has ready for those who love the Lord.*

So what is God saying to you today? What are you thinking?

The facts are we are promised a future with God beyond our wildest dreams.

If you don't know the Lord you must be thinking, this is not good.

Something must change and the time is now. You must know that God loves you and He wants you to spend eternity with Him. Not only that He has a great life for you right now.

Three times in Hebrews it says this:

"Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

What does that say about God and His love for you?

I'm asking you right now to bow your heart to God. Today is the day to get right with God, receive His love and forgiveness and become a new person in Christ. Let's pray.

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Jesus is coming back to receive us to Himself. There are certain things that will take place before or when He returns that we need to know about.

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Remember that judgment does not change God but justice is a part of God. **NLT John 3:19** *And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.*

Each person makes a choice. We choose darkness or light. If we choose darkness we choose judgment. If we choose light we choose salvation. That is why there are so many warnings and references to the return of Christ and judgment. We have ample opportunity to make the right choices.

All through Scripture the Bible talks about soon approaching Day of Judgment. I had to go to court one day to support a friend who had gotten into some serious trouble. As is usually the case we sat there for hours waiting for my friend’s case to come up. There were parents, children, spouses and friends packed into the court room waiting for their loved one’s case to be heard. During the wait as each case came before the judge I heard him say several times, “What did I tell you the last time you were in this court?” The defendant would hang his or her head and look down. The judge would continue, “Did I not tell you that if you ever stood before me again there would be no mercy? Today I’m revoking your parole and you will serve out the remaining years of your sentence behind bars. Next case please.” They had been duly warned. They had nothing to say.

Jesus is telling us right now, repent and be saved from the judgment to come. Turn from your wicked ways and receive the life I have to offer. If you believe Jesus came to earth, died for our sins and was raised from the dead as a first fruit of new life then you must believe He is returning to judge the world in righteousness.

For those of us who are Christians the story is completely different. For us judgment is all about rewards. It is more of an evaluation than judgment.

God is very clear and up front about His system of rewarding His children.

Paul writes this admonition to the church at Rome.

NAS Romans 14:10 *But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, (it is unalterable)*

*“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall give praise to God.”*

12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

So we are all going to have to give an account but for what? On what basis will we qualify for a reward?

We will be held accountable for how we stewarded our gifts and abilities, our motives, our words, our attitudes, our money and our actions.

What does this mean? We will be rewarded for good management, a generous heart, our prayer life and a Christ-like attitude. This accrues to our spiritual account and is a big deal to God.

Love gets rewarded. **1 Cor. 13.** Without love it “profits” you nothing. He is referring to reward. Prayer get rewarded. **Mat. 6:5** “When you pray get in the closet or secret place...God who sees in secret will reward you.” God rewards our generosity: “Give and it will be given to you pressed down...” **Lu. 6:38.**

The reward or blessing often comes while we are still alive.

Luke 18:29 “Yes,” Jesus replied, “and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, **30** will be repaid many times over in this life, and will have eternal life in the world to come.”

So each of us will stand before God and show how they responded to God’s call and giftings He placed within us. Everyone has different giftings.

Remember: To whom much is given much is required. (10 talents/1talent)

NAS Heb. 13:17 *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.*

NAS James 3:1 *Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.*

What a blessing if this season of the New Reality can wake us up to the fact that things will not stay the same forever. There is more than this life.

This is what God is trying to tell us. Wake up! I'm coming back. Store up treasure while you can.

There is this stir about the Mayan calendar that has predicted certain cataclysmic events in the past. The calendar ends in 2012 and some say it means the world will end then. My take on that is we may never see 2012. Christ can return at any moment and He commands us to be ready.

Today whosoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved. When the trumpet sounds this age comes to an end. Everything stops. No more prayers; no more labors; no more repenting.

John 9:4 *"All of us must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent me, for there is little time left before the night falls and all work comes to an end".*

I know some of you here have been preached to by your parents, your spouse, your friends; You say you just can't live the Christian life. It's just too hard to be a Christian. And on and on. In light of what we know right now you need to think about what you are going to say to God on that day.

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God is very clear and up front about His system of rewarding His children.

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Love gets rewarded. **1 Cor. 13.** Without love it “profits” you nothing. He is referring to reward. Prayer get rewarded. **Mat. 6:5** “When you pray get in the closet or secret place...God who sees in secret will reward you.” God rewards our generosity: “Give and it will be given to you pressed down...” **Lu. 6:38.**

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Well what about all those people in Africa that have not heard the gospel. Are they going to hell? Well, first of all Africa is being evangelized faster than any nation on earth but back to the question. I don't know what God will do to those who have not heard the gospel. I do know what the bible says in **John 3:3** *unless a person is born again He shall not see the Kingdom of God.*

I've heard skeptics say, "I could never serve a God that would send innocent people to hell." Well, could you serve a God that loves people so much He sent His own son to die on a cross to save the entire world? People get all worked up about what they do not know. But each of us is responsible for what we do know. So for the skeptic that knows the truth, you need to stop worrying about those Africans. You need to think about your own need for God and how you will respond to the love He has for you.

So the first big doctrine you need to understand is that every road does not lead to heaven. That is the most ridiculous idea I've ever heard. "How do you get to Conway? Just drive and if you are sincere you will get there." Now I have heard that all dirt roads lead to Clemson but I don't think any rational person can say everybody's right.

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So the first big doctrine is that Jesus is the only way to the Father and eternal life.

The **Second Doctrine** has to do with the return of Christ.

So Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified and rose from the dead to save us. But that is not the end of the story.

NAS John 14:1 *"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."*

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Jesus is coming back to receive us to Himself. There are certain things that will take place before or when He returns that we need to know about.

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32 “Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. 33 In the same way, when you see all these things, you can know his return is very near, right at the door. 34 I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.

36 “However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.

37 “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. 38 In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. 39 People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

40 “Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left. 42 “So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming.

It has been close to 2000 years and Christ has not returned yet He compels us over and over to “keep watch” and be certain we are ready for His return.

After Christ returns He will judge each person according to their actions while living on earth.

How will that play out?

There will be two judgment days; two courts sessions if you will. The Great White Throne judgment and the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Great White Throne Judgment is for those who are not saved.

Mat. 25:31 *“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 “All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.*

After he separates them He will address both groups.

34 *“Then the King will say to those on His right, (Judgment Seat of Christ) ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

41 *“Then He will also say to those on His left, (Great White Throne) ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;*

(Today I’m not going to give a detailed look at the 1000 year reign of Christ, the bottomless pit, the beast or the anti Christ, etc. We are going to jump to the very end.)

Remember that judgment does not change God but justice is a part of God.

NLT John 3:19 *And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.*

Each person makes a choice. We choose darkness or light. If we choose darkness we choose judgment. If we choose light we choose salvation. That is why there are so many warnings and references to the return of Christ and judgment. We have ample opportunity to make the right choices.

All through Scripture the Bible talks about soon approaching Day of Judgment. I had to go to court one day to support a friend who had gotten into some serious trouble. As is usually the case we sat there for hours waiting for my friend’s case to come up. There were parents, children, spouses and friends packed into the court room waiting for their loved one’s case to be heard. During the wait as each case came before the judge I heard him say several times, “What did I tell you the last time you were in this court?” The defendant would hang his or her head and look down. The judge would continue, “Did I not tell you that if you ever stood before me again there would be no mercy? Today I’m revoking your parole and you will serve out the remaining years of your sentence behind bars. Next case please.” They had been duly warned. They had nothing to say.

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Remember that judgment does not change God but justice is a part of God. **NLT John 3:19** *And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.*

Each person makes a choice. We choose darkness or light. If we choose darkness we choose judgment. If we choose light we choose salvation. That is why there are so many warnings and references to the return of Christ and judgment. We have ample opportunity to make the right choices.

All through Scripture the Bible talks about soon approaching Day of Judgment. I had to go to court one day to support a friend who had gotten into some serious trouble. As is usually the case we sat there for hours waiting for my friend’s case to come up. There were parents, children, spouses and friends packed into the court room waiting for their loved one’s case to be heard. During the wait as each case came before the judge I heard him say several times, “What did I tell you the last time you were in this court?” The defendant would hang his or her head and look down. The judge would continue, “Did I not tell you that if you ever stood before me again there would be no mercy? Today I’m revoking your parole and you will serve out the remaining years of your sentence behind bars. Next case please.” They had been duly warned. They had nothing to say.

Jesus is telling us right now, repent and be saved from the judgment to come. Turn from your wicked ways and receive the life I have to offer. If you believe Jesus came to earth, died for our sins and was raised from the dead as a first fruit of new life then you must believe He is returning to judge the world in righteousness.

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There is this stir about the Mayan calendar that has predicted certain cataclysmic events in the past. The calendar ends in 2012 and some say it means the world will end then. My take on that is we may never see 2012. Christ can return at any moment and He commands us to be ready.

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The end of this age will usher in a new age. For those of you who love the Lord, let me show you your future.

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There is no salvation apart from Christ.

Well what about all those people in Africa that have not heard the gospel. Are they going to hell? Well, first of all Africa is being evangelized faster than any nation on earth but back to the question. I don't know what God will do to those who have not heard the gospel. I do know what the bible says in **John 3:3** *unless a person is born again He shall not see the Kingdom of God.*

I've heard skeptics say, "I could never serve a God that would send innocent people to hell." Well, could you serve a God that loves people so much He sent His own son to die on a cross to save the entire world? People get all worked up about what they do not know. But each of us is responsible for what we do know. So for the skeptic that knows the truth, you need to stop worrying about those Africans. You need to think about your own need for God and how you will respond to the love He has for you.

So the first big doctrine you need to understand is that every road does not lead to heaven. That is the most ridiculous idea I've ever heard. "How do you get to Conway? Just drive and if you are sincere you will get there." Now I have heard that all dirt roads lead to Clemson but I don't think any rational person can say everybody's right.

Jesus made the claim and performed the miracles to back it up.

NLT Mark 2:9 *"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk'?" 10 "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the paralytic, 11 "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."*

So the first big doctrine is that Jesus is the only way to the Father and eternal life.

The **Second Doctrine** has to do with the return of Christ.

So Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified and rose from the dead to save us. But that is not the end of the story.

NAS John 14:1 *"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."*

It's always about relationship. "Where I am you will be there with me."

Jesus is coming back to receive us to Himself. There are certain things that will take place before or when He returns that we need to know about.

NLT Mat. 24:30 *And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.*

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NAS Acts 4:7 *When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, 9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. 11 "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone. 12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."*

There is no salvation apart from Christ.

Well what about all those people in Africa that have not heard the gospel. Are they going to hell? Well, first of all Africa is being evangelized faster than any nation on earth but back to the question. I don't know what God will do to those who have not heard the gospel. I do know what the bible says in **John 3:3** *unless a person is born again He shall not see the Kingdom of God.*

I've heard skeptics say, "I could never serve a God that would send innocent people to hell." Well, could you serve a God that loves people so much He sent His own son to die on a cross to save the entire world? People get all worked up about what they do not know. But each of us is responsible for what we do know. So for the skeptic that knows the truth, you need to stop worrying about those Africans. You need to think about your own need for God and how you will respond to the love He has for you.

So the first big doctrine you need to understand is that every road does not lead to heaven. That is the most ridiculous idea I've ever heard. "How do you get to Conway? Just drive and if you are sincere you will get there." Now I have heard that all dirt roads lead to Clemson but I don't think any rational person can say everybody's right.

Jesus made the claim and performed the miracles to back it up.

NLT Mark 2:9 *"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk'?"* 10 *"But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"*—*He said to the paralytic,* 11 *"I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."*

So the first big doctrine is that Jesus is the only way to the Father and eternal life.

The **Second Doctrine** has to do with the return of Christ.

So Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified and rose from the dead to save us. But that is not the end of the story.

NAS John 14:1 *"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."*

It's always about relationship. "Where I am you will be there with me."

Jesus is coming back to receive us to Himself. There are certain things that will take place before or when He returns that we need to know about.

NLT Mat. 24:30 *And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.*

32 “Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. 33 In the same way, when you see all these things, you can know his return is very near, right at the door. 34 I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.

36 “However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.

37 “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. 38 In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. 39 People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

40 “Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left. 42 “So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming.

It has been close to 2000 years and Christ has not returned yet He compels us over and over to “keep watch” and be certain we are ready for His return.

After Christ returns He will judge each person according to their actions while living on earth.

How will that play out?

There will be two judgment days; two courts sessions if you will. The Great White Throne judgment and the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Great White Throne Judgment is for those who are not saved.

Mat. 25:31 *“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 “All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.*

After he separates them He will address both groups.

34 *“Then the King will say to those on His right, (Judgment Seat of Christ) ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

41 *“Then He will also say to those on His left, (Great White Throne) ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;*

(Today I’m not going to give a detailed look at the 1000 year reign of Christ, the bottomless pit, the beast or the anti Christ, etc. We are going to jump to the very end.)

Remember that judgment does not change God but justice is a part of God.

NLT John 3:19 *And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.*

Each person makes a choice. We choose darkness or light. If we choose darkness we choose judgment. If we choose light we choose salvation. That is why there are so many warnings and references to the return of Christ and judgment. We have ample opportunity to make the right choices.

All through Scripture the Bible talks about soon approaching Day of Judgment. I had to go to court one day to support a friend who had gotten into some serious trouble. As is usually the case we sat there for hours waiting for my friend’s case to come up. There were parents, children, spouses and friends packed into the court room waiting for their loved one’s case to be heard. During the wait as each case came before the judge I heard him say several times, “What did I tell you the last time you were in this court?” The defendant would hang his or her head and look down. The judge would continue, “Did I not tell you that if you ever stood before me again there would be no mercy? Today I’m revoking your parole and you will serve out the remaining years of your sentence behind bars. Next case please.” They had been duly warned. They had nothing to say.

Jesus is telling us right now, repent and be saved from the judgment to come. Turn from your wicked ways and receive the life I have to offer. If you believe Jesus came to earth, died for our sins and was raised from the dead as a first fruit of new life then you must believe He is returning to judge the world in righteousness.

For those of us who are Christians the story is completely different. For us judgment is all about rewards. It is more of an evaluation than judgment.

God is very clear and up front about His system of rewarding His children.

Paul writes this admonition to the church at Rome.

NAS Romans 14:10 *But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, (it is unalterable)*

*“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall give praise to God.”*

12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

So we are all going to have to give an account but for what? On what basis will we qualify for a reward?

We will be held accountable for how we stewarded our gifts and abilities, our motives, our words, our attitudes, our money and our actions.

What does this mean? We will be rewarded for good management, a generous heart, our prayer life and a Christ-like attitude. This accrues to our spiritual account and is a big deal to God.

Love gets rewarded. **1 Cor. 13.** Without love it “profits” you nothing. He is referring to reward. Prayer get rewarded. **Mat. 6:5** “When you pray get in the closet or secret place...God who sees in secret will reward you.” God rewards our generosity: “Give and it will be given to you pressed down...” **Lu. 6:38.**

The reward or blessing often comes while we are still alive.

Luke 18:29 “Yes,” Jesus replied, “and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, **30** will be repaid many times over in this life, and will have eternal life in the world to come.”

So each of us will stand before God and show how they responded to God’s call and giftings He placed within us. Everyone has different giftings.

Remember: To whom much is given much is required. (10 talents/1talent)

NAS Heb. 13:17 *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.*

NAS James 3:1 *Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.*

What a blessing if this season of the New Reality can wake us up to the fact that things will not stay the same forever. There is more than this life.

This is what God is trying to tell us. Wake up! I'm coming back. Store up treasure while you can.

There is this stir about the Mayan calendar that has predicted certain cataclysmic events in the past. The calendar ends in 2012 and some say it means the world will end then. My take on that is we may never see 2012. Christ can return at any moment and He commands us to be ready.

Today whosoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved. When the trumpet sounds this age comes to an end. Everything stops. No more prayers; no more labors; no more repenting.

John 9:4 *"All of us must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent me, for there is little time left before the night falls and all work comes to an end".*

I know some of you here have been preached to by your parents, your spouse, your friends; You say you just can't live the Christian life. It's just too hard to be a Christian. And on and on. In light of what we know right now you need to think about what you are going to say to God on that day.

As God's children we can get excited.

For those far from God, it is a day to reflect and decide. Everybody wants to know the future. Let me show you your future if you don't know God.

NAS Rev. 20:11 *"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."*

The end of this age will usher in a new age. For those of you who love the Lord, let me show you your future.

Rev. 21:1-4 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, (all about relationship) and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." (memory @ Phillip)

So what will we do in God's eternal Kingdom?

The Bible teaches that we are being prepared for our future. We are told that we will rule and reign with Christ forever. **2 Tim. 2:12**

In fact, several parables reference that. If we are faithful over little God will let us rule over so many cities.

The inference is that we will rule over certain civilizations yet to be named. The universe is vast. Who knows what God will have us doing?

But this we do know...

NLT 1 Cor. 2:9 *That is what is meant by the Scriptures which say that no mere man has ever seen, heard, or even imagined what wonderful things God has ready for those who love the Lord.*

So what is God saying to you today? What are you thinking?

The facts are we are promised a future with God beyond our wildest dreams.

If you don't know the Lord you must be thinking, this is not good.

Something must change and the time is now. You must know that God loves you and He wants you to spend eternity with Him. Not only that He has a great life for you right now.

Three times in Hebrews it says this:

"Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

What does that say about God and His love for you?

I'm asking you right now to bow your heart to God. Today is the day to get right with God, receive His love and forgiveness and become a new person in Christ. Let's pray.