

Christianity 101

*The Uncompromising Lectures of
Professor Grimes*

Christianity 101

by Jon Cooper

Copyright 2014 by Jon Cooper.
All Rights Reserved.

First Edition
11/3/14

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	7
Chapter 0.5: The Beauty of Toasters ...	11
Lecture 1: Course Introduction.....	19
Chapter 1.5: A Storm Is Coming	47
Lecture 2: God	57
Chapter 2.5: The Harbinger of Doom..	73
Lecture 3: The Bible.....	79
Chapter 3.5: Test Results	99
Lecture 4: Creation	105
Chapter 4.5: President Harris	135
Lecture 5: The Cross	145
Chapter 5.5: Condemned	161
Lecture 6: The Church	165
Chapter 6.5: The Fire	185
Lecture 7: The Afterlife.....	193
Chapter 7.5: It's Not Over Yet.....	211
Lecture 8: The Sacraments	215
Chapter 8.5: Laziness Is Bliss	227
Lecture 9: False Religions	233

Chapter 9.5: The Fall of Football	255
Lecture 10: Supernatural Beings	259
Chapter 10.5: Everything Matters	279
Lecture 11: Genuine Faith	283
Chapter 11.5: Consequences.....	305
Lecture 12: Traditions.....	309
Chapter 12.5: Andy's Revenge.....	331
Lecture 13: Eschatology.....	339
Chapter 13.5: The End	367

Introduction

In early 2007 my cousin Ben Farmer created a blog for me and urged me to start writing. I was a bit nervous about it, because I knew I wasn't a very good writer. However, the only way to get better was to practice, so I started posting two short stories a week. The stories weren't particularly great but they did get me into the habit of writing.

Ultimately I moved on to writing novels, but before that happened I wrote quite a few short stories. In four of them I created a character named Professor Grimes – a man who did not suffer fools gladly but was somehow always surrounded by them. Grimes appeared in four short stories: “The Perils of Theory”, “The Perils of History”, “The Perils of Translating”, and “The Perils of Sympathy”.

A few years later, I began researching paranormal subjects (aliens, crop circles, ghosts, and so forth). I was tempted to write a book of essays on that topic but I knew that

very few people enjoyed reading essays. So I decided to write a series of fictional lectures instead. I then realized that I had already created the perfect setting for those lectures: the eccentric Professor Grimes could teach this paranormal course. So *Paranormal Studies 313* was born. It turned out that people actually enjoyed that book – they thought it was a great story and they wanted to see more. At their request I decided to bring back Professor Grimes and have him teach another subject.

In this book we find the return of the esteemed professor – the man with a deep passion for the truth and an utter hatred of cell phones. He is about to begin teaching one of the worst groups of students that have ever been assembled. I can only wish him the best of luck – he's going to need it.

Jonathan Cooper
8/24/2014

Christianity 101

Chapter 0.5: The Beauty of Toasters

Deep in the heart of the Appalachia Mountains was a small, almost-forgotten town named Sunset Hills. The town was old and tired, and its glory days were long behind it. If you ever happened to visit that poor city you would find decaying houses, abandoned lots, and streets littered with trash and debris. It was not a place that attracted very many visitors. The few thousand residents who still lived there traveled out of town to work, because the city itself didn't offer much in the way of employment. Most of its businesses had closed long ago, leaving a Main Street that was full of empty, decaying buildings.

The one business that had not relocated was Sunset Hills University – a seminary that had been founded in 1848. Like the town, the school was struggling to get by. Years of neglect had turned the campus into an old,

decrepit wasteland. It had been in the town for so long that everyone assumed it would always be there, but the truth was its days were numbered. Years of poor management and bad decisions had brought it to the brink of disaster. No one knew it yet, but this was going to be its final semester.

Just outside that sad little town, hidden in a rather pleasant valley, was the house of Professor Grimes. This elderly gentleman had been a professor for his entire professional life, and over the past thirty years he had taught many classes at that particular university. In fact, Grimes had been there so long he could actually remember when Sunset Hills University was a prestigious seminary that attracted the best theological minds in the country. At one time his classes had been full of bright students – and utterly devoid of cell phones. But those days were long gone. There was a time when Grimes had great hope for the future, but now he wondered how much longer the school would be able to stay open.

Professor Grimes thought about the fate of the seminary as he sat in his kitchen. It was

late at night. His wife Margaret had gone to bed an hour ago, worn out after a long and hectic day. Four of his grandchildren had spent the weekend with them and provided the quiet couple with a great deal of excitement and chaos. Now that his dear crumb-crunchers had left (but sadly, had *not* taken their crumbs with them), Grimes was reviewing the classes he would teach the next day. Based on what he saw in the student roster, the fall semester of 2014 was going to be a true challenge.

The professor was teaching three classes that semester. Normally he would have carried a heavier load than that, but the seminary's enrollment had dropped sharply for the 10th year in a row. Given the condition of the campus, Grimes wasn't particularly surprised. Only the most desperate student would even consider enrolling in Sunset Hills University, and only the most desperate parent would allow them to do so. Things were so bad that the professor refused to take his grandchildren on a tour of the facility – he was afraid that one of the crumbling buildings might finally give way and collapse

on top of them.

The course that concerned Grimes the most was his Introduction to Christianity class. Grimes had been teaching that class for the past five years, as a response to a serious problem the seminary faced. Because Sunset Hills was such a terrible school, the only people who applied there were the ones who had been rejected from every other seminary in the entire country. This meant that they were the worst students in the nation. Many of these people were completely unprepared to be in college, but President Harris made the decision long ago that they would accept everyone, no matter how poor their academic record.

However, that created a problem: most of the students were unable to pass any of their classes. In order to keep people from dropping out (and depriving the school of much-needed tuition money), the seminary created a set of remedial classes that were designed to teach the freshmen students things they should have learned in grade school. It was theoretically possible for the students to test out of the classes, but very few ever did.

Professor Grimes had gone through the teaching process so many times. A group of students would fail the school's entrance exam, so they would be assigned to one of his classes. Most of those students wouldn't even bother to show up, so they would automatically fail. Since they failed they would be unable to take any other classes in their degree. At that point the sane students would quit, but a few chose the route of madness and persevered. One particular student enrolled in his introductory class for six semesters in a row – and never showed up for class once. How that student managed to get his parents to pay for three years of college, even though he failed every single class he ever took, was one of the great mysteries of life.

The only thing that made teaching worth the trouble was the occasional student who actually paid attention and learned something. A few people truly cared and wanted to learn, and those were the people the professor could help. The rest – well, the rest were out of his control. You can tell a student where the classroom is located, but

you can't legally force him to go inside and pay attention.

With a sigh, Professor Grimes placed the student roster back on the kitchen table. Out of that entire list he only saw two students that had any hope of passing his classes. Still, that gave him something to work with. He would give those two students as much wisdom as he could – and if some of the rest woke up from their in-class naps and started paying attention, well, that would be an added bonus.

But it wouldn't be easy. The facilities were crumbling and budgets had been cut to an all-time low. Grimes also had the university leadership to contend with – he wasn't sure if he could stop President Harris from making decisions that would doom the entire seminary. Plus, if history was any guide, at least one irate student would try to get him arrested. Getting through the fall semester was going to be difficult.

None of these things *had* to be that way, of course. If the university's leadership had made better decisions, the school would be in better shape. If the students had actually paid

attention at some point in their lives, they wouldn't have been condemned to attend Sunset Hills. But since everyone failed at their jobs, Grimes was left to pick up the pieces. They weren't *his* failures, but he had to deal with the consequences all the same.

It was times like this that made the professor appreciate the simple things in life. Like his toaster, for example. Grimes glanced at the gleaming silver-colored toaster that was sitting on his counter, nestled between the refrigerator and microwave. *That toaster is such a marvelous piece of engineering, the professor thought. It has been working flawlessly for the past ten years, doing exactly what it was designed to do. Whenever I put in a piece of bread and pull the lever down, the toaster toasts it and ejects it – every single time, without fail. Not once has it ever tried to hold the toast hostage. Not once has it ever gone on strike or issued any demands. It has never lied about me to the refrigerator or spread malicious rumors to the kitchen sink. It just quietly does its job, day in and day out.*

The toaster's attendance record is perfect. It never misses a single morning. It never sets

the toast on fire, or fails to eject it, or somehow turns the toast into a bagel. It does exactly what it is designed to do and is completely reliable.

If only people were more like that! If only they would do what they were designed to do. Life would be vastly better. However, I suppose we can't all be toasters. But perhaps – just perhaps – I can teach a few students to aspire to be as reliable and trustworthy as that humble kitchen appliance.

Professor Grimes turned out the kitchen light and went to bed. Tomorrow was the start of a new adventure.

Lecture 1: Course Introduction

Professor Grimes glanced down at his watch. *Twenty more minutes and then the class begins.*

The aging professor stood to his feet and glanced around the small room. The classroom was worn and tired. It was one of the most run-down rooms in the Rutledge Building, and the building itself was the oldest one on campus. The crumbling brick structure was supposed to have been torn down three years ago, but the seminary made a series of bad investments and ran out of money. Instead of building a new structure they were forced to make do with what they had.

That in itself would have been fine, if the school had bothered to keep up with repairs. Sadly, President Harris made the decision years ago to halt all building maintenance. He claimed that it was better to save that money

and spend it on new buildings. However, it turned out that when he said “new buildings” he actually meant “a new football stadium”. Who could possibly have foreseen that building an expensive new football stadium for a team that had not won a single game in years was *not* the ticket to riches that Harris had promised? Who could have imagined that no one – not even athletes – would want to attend a university whose buildings were one inspection away from being condemned as fire hazards?

Well, Professor Grimes could have imagined it. In fact, he warned the administration repeatedly that they were making a mistake. But it did little good.

This particular classroom was a sight to behold. The paint had flaked off the walls years ago and the ceiling was sagging in a few places. The floor was bare concrete – dirty, stained, and cracked. Two of the room’s four windows were broken, and the overhead fluorescent lights flickered ominously.

Thankfully, the room was furnished – the professor had seen to that himself. It took him quite a lot of effort to round up chairs that

weren't broken, but after attending a few local yard sales he was able to find what he needed. Unfortunately, that was all his meager budget had allowed. The room lacked any sort of modern amenities. There was no wifi, or internet access, or coffee, or air conditioning. The chalkboard that hung on the wall had to be at least as old as he was. At least the white chalk was new (a generous donation from one of the school's alumni).

Grimes, though, never wrote anything on his chalkboards. In the early days of his career he covered them with important material, but then he realized that none of his students ever took any notes of any kind. Since they couldn't be bothered to write down what he wrote on the chalkboard, over time Grimes just stopped writing anything. If the professor ever spotted a student who was an actual note-taker he was prepared to resume using the chalkboard, but that never happened.

The desk at the front of the room was no prize either. Most of the desk was charred, a sign that it had once been on fire. Professor Grimes often wondered what the story was behind that desk. Had an irate student once

set that classroom on fire, and no one bothered to remove the torched desk? Or, instead, had someone found that desk in a burned-out house and decided to carry it all the way to the seminary and then haul it up three flights of stairs? It was hard to tell which option was less insane.

A young woman walked into the room. The professor recognized her immediately. *That's Iris Pearson. She's attending this seminary with her husband. The two of them are training to be missionaries. I think they're hoping to plant churches in Ethiopia.*

As Iris took a seat in the middle of the room, she happened to notice the giant piece of industrial machinery that sat beside the professor's desk. "What is *that*?" she asked.

Professor Grimes smiled. "It's amazing what you can find on the internet these days, isn't it?"

The device was roughly the shape of the cube, and was five feet wide and four feet tall. It had a square opening at the top and was connected to the wall by a thick electrical cord. The box was made of a rough gray metal and had warnings plastered all over its side.

Iris eyed the warnings carefully. “Does that box really say that it can kill me?”

Professor Grimes nodded. “Indeed it does – but that can only happen if you jump inside it and turn it on, which I don’t recommend. You should also avoid jumping inside cement mixers, industrial grinding machines, and clothes dryers. The good news is that if you don’t come up here and bother it, it won’t bother you. In fact, it won’t do anything at all unless I insert the key and turn it on.”

“But what does it do?” Iris asked.

“It removes distractions from the classroom. I’ll explain when the rest of the class arrives.”

The professor sat down behind his desk and waited. Over the next ten minutes, four more people arrived. Professor Grimes knew them all. The first one was Brad Kramer, who entered the room wearing a rather expensive suit and tie. According to his application he wanted to become the pastor of a church. Brad definitely looked the part – he knew how to dress and he was a good public speaker. The only thing holding him back was a terrible

grasp of theology.

The second one was Isaac Keith, a music major. He wore a clean pair of blue jeans (not a single pair of holes to be seen!) and a collared shirt. Isaac had a distracted look about him, as if he had a thousand other things on his mind. From what Grimes could tell, Isaac was always busy but somehow never accomplished very much.

Next, Rob Brewer entered the room wearing blue jeans and a t-shirt. On his application he said he wanted to become a medical missionary. Rob hadn't said very much on his application – he was apparently the quiet type. Given his exam answers, though, Grimes was pretty sure that Rob had a lot to learn. The professor hoped that his knowledge of medicine was much better than his knowledge of the Bible.

The last student who entered the classroom was Wally Harding. In a class of mediocre and grossly incapable students, Wally truly stood out. Professor Grimes read his application five times but was unable to figure out what he wanted to do with his life – or if he was even capable of putting

together a coherent thought. When the professor first met him and asked him who he was, Wally had told him four times that it was Tuesday.

Frankly, Grimes was surprised to see Wally attend class at all. Ninety students had signed up for his course but only five people were present. The professor was disappointed at the turnout but he was not surprised. He knew from experience that thirty chairs would be more than enough to take care of the few students who would actually bother to come through the classroom door. If he was lucky he might hit a peak of 10 people in attendance – and that would only happen if a few students wandered into his classroom by mistake.

He looked down at his watch again. Five minutes to go.

“Hey professor?” Isaac asked. “What’s that big metal box for?”

Grimes looked over at the student and saw that he was furiously texting on his cell phone. “I use it to shred cell phones,” the professor said casually. “You see, they’re not allowed in here, and that box disposes of

them for me. *Permanently.*"

Isaac jerked his head up, his eyes wide. When he saw that the professor was serious he turned off his phone and stuck it in his pocket. "Oh, right. Sorry. It won't happen again."

The professor nodded but said nothing. He picked up his notes and rifled through them. As he expected, nothing was missing.

Brad spoke up, interrupting his thoughts. "You don't look very happy, professor."

Professor Grimes look at him for a moment. "Tell me something, young man. How long have you been going to church?"

Brad shrugged. "All my life, I guess."

"But how often have you actually attended services? Once a month?"

Brad shook his head. "More like once a week. Usually more than once a week, actually. I take church attendance very seriously."

The professor nodded. "Very good. If the average sermon you heard was a mere 30 minutes long, and if you heard two of them a week, that would mean you had 52 hours of Biblical teaching a year. Over the span of 10

years that would come out to 520 hours of Biblical instruction. A great deal can be covered in 500 hours of preaching!

“Now, if you were a new Christian or someone who had spent very little time in church, I could understand why you are so ignorant about Christianity. After all, no one is born knowing what the Bible says. You, however, have had hundreds of hours of Biblical instruction and yet you know nothing about the Bible! On the test you took when you enrolled into this seminary you could not tell me who led Israel out of Egypt. You had no idea who started the Reformation. You said that Noah was married to Joan of Arc. In fact,” and the professor began to turn purple, “when asked about Sodom and Gomorrah, you claimed *they were husband and wife!*¹”

“So?” Brad said.

“You said that the Sermon on the Mount

¹ I did not make up these answers. See “The Scandal of Biblical Illiteracy”, by Albert Mohler (the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary). The article was written on June 29, 2004. I don’t think things have improved since then.

was preached by Billy Graham ² !” the professor shouted. “And you want to be a *pastor*! My grandson Freddy knows a hundred times more about the Bible than you do – and he is 7 years old!”

“That’s kind of insulting,” Brad replied.

“No, what’s insulting is that every one of you said on your application that you feel your knowledge of Christianity is ‘exceptional’ – and yet *none* of you could explain the gospel. Since all of you lack an understanding of the most basic truth of Christianity, you were required to enroll in this class.”

The professor glanced at his watch. “Since it’s ten o’clock, we might as well get started. My name is Professor Grimes and this is Christianity 101. We are in room 313 of the Rutledge Building, and this class will be held on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at precisely 10:00 am all semester. Is there anyone who is in the wrong class?”

“Who would do a thing like that?” Brad asked.

“It’s easy to make mistakes,” the

² I didn’t make this up either.

professor replied. "This is a rather dilapidated campus and the buildings and rooms are not clearly labeled. Besides, this is a freshman-level course and the college experience takes some getting used to. However, let me be clear: this is Christianity 101, and if you are in the wrong room you need to leave *now*."

After looking around and not seeing anyone move, the professor nodded. "Very well. Now, the first order of—"

At that moment another student noisily burst through the door. The student was wearing a dirty pair of jeans, a white t-shirt that was full of holes, and sneakers that looked like they had been attacked by a bear. After glancing around he took a seat in the front of the room, opened his backpack, and took out his laptop.

The professor frowned. "I'm sorry, young man, but I'm afraid you can't do that. This class has a strict—"

"I can do whatever I want," the student shot back. "It's a free country. Get over it."

"—policy prohibiting all electronic devices," the professor continued calmly. "That computer is not allowed in here."

"I use it to take notes," he replied.

"You may *not* use a computer in here," Professor Grimes replied firmly. "Nor are you allowed to use a cell phone, a tablet, or a portable music device. I have also banned portable radios, television sets, refrigerators, and remote-controlled airplanes. I included a complete list in your class syllabus."

"I don't care," he replied.

"Young man, you had *better* care about it. That syllabus is your guide to life in this class, and your only hope of getting a passing grade. It lays out the rules and the consequences for breaking those rules. If you do not learn what my syllabus has to say and start abiding by it, you will fail."

"Still don't care."

The professor's frown deepened. He walked over to the student and stood directly in front of his chair. "What is your name?"

"Andy," he said, without looking up from his computer. The student logged in and pulled up a web browser. "Hey, give me some space, will you? Back off. I've got, like, stuff and things."

Professor Grimes glared at him. "Andy,

you are wasting my time, which I despise. You are also wasting class time, which I despise even more. I will say this only once. I *do not* allow electronic devices in here because I do not trust any of you to use them responsibly. If you were angels from Heaven then I might change my policy, but you are *far* from being angels. Before you were even allowed to register for my class you had to sign a document in which you agreed to not bring electronic devices in here without my express written permission. The document that you signed clearly stated that if you violated that provision I had the right to immediately seize and destroy the offending device. You, Andy, are in violation of that policy. If you do not put away that laptop *right now* I will destroy it.”

The student paused the online poker game he was playing and glanced up at the professor. “I bet you will,” he smirked. “Go ahead. I dare you. Give it your best shot.”

In one swift move the professor grabbed the computer and tossed it into his industrial shredder. Before Andy could react Grimes quickly removed a key from his pocket, placed it into a keyhole in the shredder, and turned

it. The shredder roared to life and filled the room with a horrible, gut-wrenching noise.

When the awful grinding noise finally stopped, Professor Grimes removed the key from the shredder and returned it to his pocket. "I have to say that burning electronic devices was much more satisfying, but unfortunately the fire marshal didn't like the fact that I was starting fires in my classrooms. However, the shredder does get the job done, so I won't complain."

Andy was furious. "How dare you steal my computer! How *dare* you! I'll have you arrested!"

"Let's review the situation," the professor said calmly. "First of all, it is impossible to sign up for this course online. In order to take this class you must go to my secretary's office and apply for it in person. When you did that, my secretary handed you a half-page document clearly stating that if you brought unapproved electronic devices into this room and used them during class, I had the right to destroy them. In order to take this class you had to agree to my right to do that. Moreover, before my secretary would

allow you to sign that document she actually *read it to you out loud*. You had to verbally state that you understood it and had no questions. Only after you made that confession and signed that document in the presence of a notary would my wife agree to enroll you.”

“But that’s outrageous! I-”

“You have no legal basis for a claim against me. I spelled out the rules for you in detail, long before you ever set foot in this classroom. When you violated them I reminded you of the rules *and* the consequences, and I offered you a chance to escape those consequences. When you continued to violate my rules I took an action that I had every legal right to take. In other words, I did exactly what I said I was going to do.”

“I’ll sue you!” the student yelled. “No one can do this to me!”

Professor Grimes shook his head. “Over the course of my career I have had many students threaten to take me to court. Believe it or not, one day one of them actually did. By the time his case was over the student was

expelled from the school, I collected a sizable amount of damages from him, and I got his lawyer permanently disbarred from practicing law. I may look old but I assure you I am not an easy target.”

Andy jumped up out of his chair and shook his fist at the professor. “I’ll get you,” he snarled. He then stormed out of the classroom and slammed the door behind him.

The professor looked at the students who were still in the class. Wally had somehow managed to sleep through the entire episode. Grimes had a feeling it would not be the first time.

“So what can we learn from this?” Grimes asked them.

“Um, pay more attention?” Iris said.

Professor Grimes smiled. “Yes, I do recommend that. But let’s take a look at what just happened. I have a very clear rule: no unpermitted electronic devices may be used in this classroom. I have spelled out the consequences of breaking that rule: if you disobey I will destroy that device. The young man who just left was aware of that rule, but he was not concerned about it. He rejected

my authority to make rules and my authority to enforce them. He believed that he had an absolute right to do as he wished and that no one could tell him otherwise.

“My rule may inconvenience you, but it is for the best. Young people such as yourselves have a great deal of trouble paying attention. It is much easier to focus if distractions are kept to a minimum. You may not agree with that decision, but as your teacher I have the right to make that call.

“Now, a rule that has no consequences is not much of a rule at all. In order for a rule to matter it *must* be enforced. What so upset our departed pupil is that I exercised my authority to do exactly what I said I was going to do. He learned that there really *are* consequences for breaking rules. His rejection of my rules does *not* mean that my rules do not apply to him. All it means is that he is going to suffer the consequences of being a rulebreaker – and that is something he is not going to enjoy.”

“I’ll say,” Isaac commented. “He’s going to hate you!”

“He should be upset with *himself*. I gave

him the opportunity to avoid the consequences of his actions, but he refused to change his behavior. He could have avoided destruction but he chose not to. He is the one who is responsible for his fate.

“The same thing can be said for all of us. God has laid down very clear rules for living in the universe that He created. If we wish to avoid His eternal wrath, all we have to do is be absolutely, completely perfect for every moment of our entire lives. We must never lie – not even once. We must never steal anything, however small. We must never commit adultery, or lust after someone, or dishonor our parents, or worship anyone other than God. Even the smallest infraction of any of His rules is punishable by eternal damnation.”

“But that’s totally impossible to do!” Iris exclaimed. “No one could ever live up to that.”

Professor Grimes nodded. “You are absolutely right. All of us are guilty before God, and no amount of good works can ever make things right. We have *no* hope of *ever* doing anything that could pay for our sins. Yet, when we were utterly lost and without hope,

God acted on our behalf. God, out of a deep and unfathomable love, sent His Son Jesus into this world. Jesus suffered on the cross and died for *our* sins. He took upon Himself the punishment that *we* rightfully deserved for our actions. Since He was declared guilty, we can be declared innocent. Our sins have been paid for by His death. Those who confess their sins and believe on Him will be given everlasting life and joy. However, those who refuse to repent and insist on living as they please will face God's wrath."

"Yeah, yeah, we know," Brad said.

The professor sighed. "I wish you did know. If you understood the gospel you wouldn't be in this classroom. All of you are here because you don't have the slightest understanding of what Christianity actually is."

"Of course we do!" Brad replied curtly. "God loves us and wants to make us happy."

Professor Grimes winced. "That is *exactly* why you are in this room, Brad – because of answers like that. Let me read something to you."

The professor picked up his Bible and opened it. "Hebrews 11 talks about some of

the great heroes of the Bible – men and women who were faithful to God. Let's take a look at what God had to say about these people who served Him faithfully. Verses 36-39 say this: 'And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise'."

The professor looked around the room. "Did you catch any of that? These people – who delighted God and who were faithful – were stoned to death. They were *murdered*. They were destitute and afflicted. They had to wander around in deserts and live in caves. In other words, they *suffered*. Suffered! In fact, they suffered terrible horrors. Why was that, Brad? If God loves us and wants us to be happy, why did these righteous people suffer

so much?”

Wally spoke up. “You gotta name it and claim it! There’s power in prayer, man.”

Professor Grimes was surprised to see that Wally was awake. Perhaps he wasn’t going to spend the semester asleep at his desk after all.

“Is that why Jesus was crucified?” the professor asked. “Did He forget to ‘name it and claim it’? Is that why He was so poor that He didn’t even have a home of his own?”

There was silence in the classroom. “All over the world today Christians are being beaten, imprisoned, and put to death. Why is that happening, Wally? During the Middle Ages many Christians were burned at the stake. Eleven of the apostles were put to death, even though they faithfully served Christ to their final, dying breath. Why didn’t they lead wealthy and fabulous lives? Where was their ‘best life now’?”

“What you all seem to have forgotten – or perhaps were never taught in the first place – is that Jesus promised us *suffering*, not wealth. In John 15:19 Jesus told His followers that the world would hate them,

and in the next verse He said the world would persecute them. In John 16:33 Jesus said that in this world we would suffer tribulation and trials. In other words, He warned us that the world that hated Him would also hate us, and the world that sought to murder Him would also seek to murder us. Following Jesus carries a very real and very serious cost. It is not a ticket to an easy life – which is something Christians all over the world can tell you.”

“That’s crazy!” Brad exclaimed. “Who would sign up for a deal like that?”

“That’s a good question. Tell me, young man: what happens if you *reject* that deal?”

“Well, you avoid all that crazy persecution, for one thing. That’s pretty big in my book.”

Professor Grimes nodded. “That’s true. The world tends to love those who are on its side. However, there’s a catch: God considers all those who are on the world’s side to be His enemies. James 4:4 says ‘whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God’. What does God do to His enemies?”

“He loves them,” Wally said.

The professor paused for a moment. “There is truth in that. All of us started out as God’s enemies – people who were lost in sin and living lives of rebellion against God. Yet, despite that, God offered salvation to the very people who were in rebellion against Him. He loved us even though we hated Him, and He offered us a chance to repent and be forgiven. Those who take it will be saved. However, those who *don’t* take it – those who choose to continue to live in sin – will be tormented for the rest of time. They will literally be burned alive for all of eternity – unable to die and unable to do anything but face endless billions of years of unbearable pain and agony.”

“That doesn’t seem very fair!” Brad said sourly.

“You’re absolutely right,” the professor agreed. “It would have been far more fair if God had just condemned *all* of us to Hell right from the start. After all, Jesus never did anything wrong. It wasn’t the least bit fair for *Him* to be tortured to death, since *we* were the ones who were guilty! Instead of being

fair God offered us *mercy*. Jesus paid our debt *with His own blood*. We did not deserve that, but God did it anyway. God did not owe us salvation, but He still provided it.

“What is truly amazing is that all those who repent and believe will be spared the consequences of their actions, because Jesus has taken the consequences of their sins upon Himself. *That* is the love of God. Those who refuse that offer and reject that love have only themselves to blame for what happens next.

“So yes, you can certainly choose to side with the world, and in doing so you may escape persecution. But instead of facing the wrath of man you will face the wrath of God – and that is far, far worse than you could ever imagine. As Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, ‘And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.’”

Wally spoke up. “But I don’t want to suffer!”

“I’m afraid that suffering is not optional,” Professor Grimes replied. “The only question is this: are you going to be faithful to God and

suffer in this life, and then spend eternity in peace and joy; or are you going to rebel against God in this life to avoid that suffering, and then spend an eternity of unbearable torment in unquenchable fire? Those are your only options. No matter how much you might wish the world was different, it's going to be one or the other."

The professor glanced down at his watch. "Next week we will begin our class by studying the person and characteristics of God. Be sure to read chapters 1 through—"

At that moment the door to class suddenly swung open and Andy barged in. A policeman followed close behind him.

"There he is, officer!" the student shouted. "He's the one who took my computer!"

Professor Grimes reached out and shook the policeman's hand warmly. "Good to see you, Bob. How are you doing these days?"

Officer Bob Wells smiled. "Life hasn't changed much since I last saw you earlier this morning. You've got a lively bunch this year, don't you?"

Andy interrupted. "Officer, you need to

arrest that man! He's a criminal! He's dangerous!"

Professor Grimes shook his head. "I have broken no laws. In fact—"

But Andy just couldn't take it anymore. In a fit of rage he lunged at the professor and hurled a punch at him. Grimes was so focused on his conversation with Officer Wells that he was caught completely off-guard. Andy's punch landed squarely on the professor's chest and knocked him down onto the floor.

Before Andy could land any more punches the policeman grabbed him. In a matter of seconds he had the student in handcuffs and was telling him his rights. Officer Wells then helped Professor Grimes back to his feet. "The usual charges?"

Grimes nodded as he tried to catch his breath. "Assault, public disturbance, etc. I'll be down later to fill out the paperwork."

"You can't do this to me!" Andy shouted. "You'll pay for this!"

"Really?" Professor Grimes asked. "You applied to this seminary to become a *pastor*, and during your first hour in class you tried to get your professor arrested and then

assaulted him. Not only have you failed the class, but the assault of a teacher results in automatic expulsion. Your career here is over.”

As Officer Wells led the screaming youth away, the professor turned to the class. “You’re all dismissed! I’ll see you on Wednesday.”

After the students left the room, Grimes gathered up his materials and looked around. He sighed deeply. *Another casualty*, he thought to himself. *But perhaps there is still hope for Andy. This is probably the first time in his life he has ever been told ‘No’, and the first time he has ever suffered consequences for his actions. Perhaps he will learn that there is a real world out there, and its rules cannot be ignored simply because he doesn’t like them. I tremble for those who never hear the word ‘No’ until they stand before God and are judged. That is a poor time to find out that choices have very real consequences.*

Chapter 1.5: A Storm Is Coming

The professor's last class of the day had come to an end. This time no one had assaulted him – instead, the three students who bothered to show up slept through his entire lecture. It was just as he expected: the only attentive class he had that semester was his ten o'clock class. His early and late classes were filled with nappers.

Grimes was tempted to go ahead and give them all failing grades, but he resisted that urge. After all, there was a chance that one of them might fill out their exams in their sleep and just happen to accidentally get the right answers. It had never happened before, but he would give them that chance.

In some ways the professor would have preferred having classes full of people like Andy. Although Andy was violent and hostile, he at least reacted to what Grimes had to say.

The professor's other students couldn't even be bothered to do that. They just slept at their desks and ignored him completely. Grimes knew from personal experience that he could tell them the school was on fire and they still wouldn't care.

Still, Grimes did have one lively class, and that was something. He could work with that.

Since he had no more lectures to give, the professor left the Rutledge Building and walked outside. The weather outside was a bit ominous – the temperature had fallen and the sky was overcast. The air was very still and humid.

Grimes walked across the campus courtyard to an old wooden bench that was near the faculty parking lot. At one time the bench had been painted green, but its paint had flaked off years ago. The bench looked worn and tired, but it was solidly built – and unlike everything else on campus it was *not* on the verge of collapse.

As the sun began to set the professor sat down on the bench and relaxed. His work for the day was done; now his only task was to wait for his wife Margaret to join him. As soon

as she was finished at the cafeteria the two of them would ride home together.

While Grimes waited, Iris Pearson walked by. “Oh, hi, professor!”

“Good evening,” he replied.

Iris stopped and looked at him. “Um, do you have a minute for a question? I’ve been wondering something.”

“Certainly. What’s on your mind?”

“Well, it’s about what you said earlier – how Christians are going to suffer and all. And I was wondering, why would God allow that? Couldn’t He just stop it from happening? It just seems really weird. Why does He let His followers suffer?”

“That is an excellent question, young lady. I think there are several answers. In John 15:20 Jesus was talking about that very issue and said ‘The servant is not greater than his lord.’ His point was that since Jesus suffered, it only made sense for His disciples to suffer as well. After all, how fair would it be if the God of the Universe led a life full of suffering, while His servants led lives of ease and comfort? Since He was persecuted it only makes sense for us to be persecuted as well.”

“But why?” Iris asked. “What does it accomplish?”

“It actually accomplishes quite a bit. The suffering and martyrdom of Christians is an incredibly powerful witnessing tool that God has used to save countless people. That is why some have said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. When we suffer for Christ and endure hardship for His name, it convicts the lost and leads them to repentance.

“However, it was impossible for Christ to be martyred thousands of times over thousands of years. Christ did suffer greatly, but there was still more suffering that needed to be done in order to witness to the lost. That is why Paul said In Colossians 1:24 that we need to ‘fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ’.”

Iris nodded. “I guess I understand. But suffering is really painful, you know? Isn’t there some other way?”

“Not according to Jesus. In Luke 17:1 Jesus said ‘It is impossible but that offences will come’. However, He also added ‘but woe unto him, through whom they come!’ Those

who persecute and torture Christians will suffer a terrible fate if they do not repent.”

Professor Grimes paused. “You have to realize, Iris, that life isn’t a game. The stakes are unimaginably high. As I said in class, there are only two possible outcomes to life: eternal joy and peace in a perfect world with no death or pain or sickness or suffering, or being burned alive for all of eternity with no hope of escape or relief. Jesus was willing to be tortured to death in order to save us from the wrath of God. There may be times when God calls upon us to suffer and perhaps even die as well in order to save others. Our personal comfort is *not* more important than the souls of other people. After all, we will have all of eternity to be comfortable. Our focus in this life should be saving the souls of men, no matter what the cost.”

“I guess that makes sense,” Iris said. “Thanks.”

Iris walked off, leaving the professor alone. Grimes looked off into the distance and saw that the sun was almost gone. Night was upon them.

He glanced at his watch. *Margaret*

should be done soon, he thought.

As he continued to wait, Officer Wells strolled by. "Good evening, professor."

"Hello, Bob. How are things going?"

"Oh, things have been pretty quiet, really. Not much ever happens in Sunset Hills. Your student Andy is the only excitement I've had all day."

Professor Grimes shook his head. "That incident was such a pity. I'm amazed he went off like that – but it wasn't the first time I've had trouble with a student. I don't know why they behave that way. It's so futile."

"It's the same old story," the officer replied. "So many young people make bad decisions and throw away their lives. But perhaps Andy will learn something from this."

"I sincerely hope so. He's already been expelled, and now he has an assault charge pending. Maybe this will lead him to rethink his life."

A pleasant female voice behind them interrupted their conversation. "I wouldn't count on that, dear."

Grimes turned around and saw that his wife was walking toward them. She was a

short woman with brown hair and a beautiful smile. The two of them had been born exactly one month apart, and had been married for 37 years. Their lives had not been easy but they had been full of joy. She was one of the few people in life that Grimes could truly count on.

“Why, hello my love. What news do you bring?”

“In the cafeteria I ran into Isaac Keith, who said he saw Andy a few hours ago. Andy is making picket signs and intends to stand in the courtyard and lead a protest against you. However, he seems to have a spelling problem. He tried to talk Isaac into carrying a sign that said ‘Down with Grime!’”

The professor laughed. “I think we can *all* get behind a message that condemns grime, mold, and other forms of dirt. If Andy wants to gain any traction he’ll have to learn how to spell my name.”

Officer Wells spoke up. “Do you want to take out a restraining order against him? I can have him barred from campus.”

Professor Grimes shook his head. “Just leave him be. He’s not harming anyone and

he's making a fool of himself. I don't think he'll last very long."

He turned to his wife. "Are you ready to go home?"

"That would be delightful," she replied.

Professor Grimes said goodbye to Officer Wells. He and his wife then walked across the street and into the faculty parking lot.

Grimes' automobile was parked in an inconspicuous place in the rear of the lot. He had the seniority to park closer to the campus, but he didn't mind walking. The professor didn't understand people's mad obsession with parking as close as possible to their destination. He was baffled by people who spent hours each week in the gym working out, and yet insisted on having the closest parking space they could find. In his opinion the fight over parking was a mild form of insanity. If you weren't disabled in some way then walking an extra five feet was not going to kill you.

The car that the Grimes family drove was not new. The professor had purchased it used twenty years ago, and like his toaster it had served him well ever since. It was a dark-blue

sedan with more than 350,000 miles on it. The car might be old, but Grimes kept it in perfect shape. He had every intention of keeping that car running as long as humanly possible.

Grimes opened the passenger side door for his wife, and she got into the car. He then walked around the car, entered the driver's seat, and began the drive home.

As the two were driving along, Margaret looked at the sky. "I think there's a storm coming."

"I couldn't agree more, dear. Sunset Hills University is about to get a dose of cold, hard reality. They can't keep putting things off forever."

"That's not what I mean," his wife replied. "I think there is an actual storm coming – as in, rain is going to fall out of the sky. It looks like things are going to get pretty bad."

"Oh, right! I see what you mean. Well, I hope things don't get too serious. The roof of my classroom is barely holding up as it is."

"Then you may want to take an umbrella to class tomorrow," Margaret replied.

"That would be a wise precaution," the

professor replied with a smile. “Still, I think it will take more than one storm to bring that roof down. But I suppose we will see what the semester brings. Between the storms that Andy brings and the storms that our climate generates, this may end up being an exciting semester.”

As usual, the professor was right – but he had no idea just *how* right he actually was.

Lecture 2: God

Lightning flashed, and a few seconds later the sound of thunder rolled through the classroom. Professor Grimes glanced outside and saw that the storm was getting worse. It had started raining earlier that morning and showed no sign of clearing up. Rain was now falling in torrents, reducing visibility to almost nothing. A moment later he heard what sounded like small rocks hitting against the glass window.

The professor walked over to the window and examined it. “Looks like we’re getting some hail today.”

“That’s a bit weird,” Rob commented. “We haven’t had hail in a while. I hope it doesn’t damage my car. I think my insurance would cover it, though, right?”

The professor walked back to his desk. “I don’t believe you have anything to worry about. This particular hailstorm is quite mild – the hail is small and relatively harmless. It’s

nothing like the hailstorm that will one day afflict mankind. Revelation 16:21 tells us that one day God will judge mankind through a mighty hailstorm – one whose hail weighs not ounces, but more than 70 pounds each.”

Rob frowned. “That would, like, *totally* destroy my car.”

“It would destroy a great deal. Which is the entire point – but we’ll save that discussion for our final class. You’re not quite ready to talk about the end of this age. Instead we’re going to talk about God.”

Professor Grimes checked his watch and then looked around the dilapidated classroom. He had four students today – Rob, Iris, Brad, and Wally. Given the weather, he was mildly surprised that anyone had attended. After all, it was not a good day to be walking across campus – and in his experience students would seize any excuse to skip classes that they were paying thousands of dollars to attend. Given the attendance record and grades of some of the students on campus, they could have saved a great deal of time and trouble if they had *not* enrolled in seminary and had instead taken

their money out back and set it on fire.

But enough of that. It was time to begin.

“Good morning, class. I hope you all did your assigned reading, because the topic of God is an enormous one. It’s—”

Wally spoke up. “You’re way overcomplicating things, prof. This isn’t hard. There’s a God out there and He wants to give us a fabulous life. All we have to do is ask for it and we’ll have lots of money and everything will be awesome. Oh – and He curses bad people. That’s really about it.”

The professor sighed. “I can see we have a lot of work to do today. Your concept of God reveals a staggering level of ignorance. You seem to have mistaken God for a magical genie. I assure you that the real God is *not* some kind of fairy godmother.

“The first thing you need to understand about God is that He is in charge *and you are not*. Colossians 1:16 tells us that God created the universe and everything that is in it. That means it belongs to Him and He gets to make the rules. You are *not* authorized to make your own rules or live as you please. Psalm 147:5 tells us that God’s understanding is

infinite – which means He *does* know what He is doing. Job 28:24 tells us that God sees everything that happens, and Hebrews 4:13 tells us that God sees everything that we do and will hold us accountable for our actions – which means we can't hide our actions from God.

“Not only does God know what we have done, but God also knows what we will do. Psalm 139:4 tells us that God knows everything we will say before we even say it, and Isaiah 46:9 tells us that God has perfect knowledge of the future. Plus, on the off-chance that you are somehow planning on fleeing from God, Psalm 139:7-12 tells us that there is *nowhere* you can go to avoid God's presence. Even death itself can't accomplish that.

“What this means is that you *cannot* escape God. You cannot hide anything that you do from God, and you cannot defeat Him. Whether you like it or not you *will* answer to God. His authority is absolute and non-optional.”

Another bolt of lightning flashed outside, and almost immediately afterward the

classroom was filled with the sound of thunder. The storm was moving closer.

“The second thing to know is that God does *not* exist for your benefit. God is not a butler or a vending machine. He is not hovering over you like some kind of maid, waiting for you to make a request so He can jump to your every whim. In fact, *you* were made for *His* glory. Revelation 4:11 tells us that we were created for His pleasure – not the other way around. God’s purpose in life is not to serve you. Instead, Hebrews 9:14 tells us that we are to serve Him.”

“But God is love,” Wally objected. “He loves us and cares for us and wants us to be happy. You’re making it sound like He’s our boss. It’s not like that at all.”

“You’re right,” Professor Grimes agreed. “God is *not* our boss and we are *not* His employees. The Bible refers to Him as our *master*, which is an altogether different thing. You can always quit your job and escape your boss, but you cannot escape God. The New Testament says repeatedly that Christians are actually Christ’s slaves. Acts 20:28 says that He purchased us with His blood, and we

belong to Him. Our lives, our desires, and even our hopes and dreams do not belong to us. Instead of living for ourselves, we are commanded to live for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom.

“In Romans 12:1 the apostle Paul called us a ‘living sacrifice’. All those who truly are Christians have given themselves and their lives to Christ. That means their lives have been *sacrificed*. If you are a Christian then your life doesn’t belong to you anymore. Instead it belongs to God, and your purpose in this world is to serve God – even if it costs you your comfort, your wealth, or even your very life.”

“But God loves us,” Wally insisted.

Professor Grimes nodded. “You are absolutely right. John 3:16 tells us that God loved us so much He sent His Son Jesus to die for us. Hebrews 13:5 says that God promised to never leave us or forsake us. He has also promised to give us grace, to comfort us, to watch over us, and to one day raise us from the dead into a life of everlasting joy and peace. The love of God is exceedingly great and vast – but that love is completely

misunderstood by this generation. Young people think ‘God loves me, so I can do whatever I want and get away with it.’ That is utter nonsense.”

Brad spoke up. “But God is forgiving, so what’s the big deal? If God will forgive me for sin then what difference does it make? Why not just do whatever I want?”

The professor frowned. “First of all, there’s the fact that the entire chapter of Romans 6 was written specifically to condemn that very line of thinking. Christians should *not* be sinning, and anyone who approaches sin as casually as you suggest cannot possibly be a Christian. In order to become a Christian you have to have a change of allegiance. You have to repent of your sins and literally give your life to God. You *cannot* be saved by saying ‘Lord, take me to Heaven when I die, but other than that stay out of my life.’ If Jesus is not your Master and if He is not in charge of your life then *you are not saved*, and you are bound for Hell.

“Yes, it is true that God forgives us. If He didn’t then there would be no hope for any of us. It’s also true that Christians do continue to

sin. But people who willingly lead lives of gross sin have never been saved at all. It doesn't work that way."

"Sure it does," Brad disagreed. "Nobody's perfect, and everyone sins. Some people just sin more than others. Sin isn't a big deal."

Professor Grimes sighed. "You have a very poor understanding of the gospel. When a person comes to Christ and is saved, God changes that person. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that he becomes a new creature – one who loves God and hates sin. Christ begins working in that person's life to make him more like Himself. Genuine salvation *always* results in a changed life – in fact, 1 John 2:3-5 tells us that obedience to God is one of the ways to tell if your salvation is genuine. A person who continues on sinning 'because God will forgive me' has never been saved. Holiness is *always* a fruit of genuine faith. *Always*. If holiness is lacking then salvation is lacking as well. You can't earn your salvation through holiness, but genuine salvation will produce holiness *every single time*."

"But that's not all. When the world sees

Christians sin, it comes to believe that Christians are hypocrites – people who preach one thing and practice something else. That damages our witness. Since our sin causes people to laugh at the gospel and reject it, that means the sin of Christians actually leads people to Hell. I'd call *that* pretty serious! Sin also damages us, it damages those around us, and it has terrible consequences – including death. On top of all that, each one of us *will* stand before God and give an account of our lives. No one gets to escape accountability."

Professor Grimes glanced out the window. It was still raining, but the hail and lightning had stopped. The storm was beginning to weaken – and the roof wasn't leaking. That was a good sign. Perhaps the building would survive the semester after all.

"But what about God?" Iris asked. "Who is He accountable to? Is it the person who made God?"

"No one made God," Professor Grimes replied. "He is a self-existent, uncreated being. He doesn't have a creator."

"Then where did he come from?"

“God didn’t ‘come from’ anywhere, because He has always existed. Only things that come into existence need a creator. If something does *not* exist one day and then *does* exist the next day, then something had to have caused it to come into existence. However, if something has *always* existed then it doesn’t need a cause. Since God has always existed, God does not need a cause. Psalm 90:2 tells us that God is eternal – He has no beginning and He has no end. There is no one else like Him. Angels, demons, and mankind are all created beings, but God is not.”

Brad spoke up. “But aren’t there three gods – the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit? How did all three of them manage to become eternal?”

“There aren’t three Gods – there is just one,” the professor corrected. “God is one Person who is composed of three beings. I John 5:7 tells us that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all one being. It’s what we call the Trinity.”

“That doesn’t make any sense,” Iris complained.

“But it is still true,” Professor Grimes replied. “It is even intuitive. We all understand the idea of a God who is inside us – that is the Holy Spirit. We understand the idea of a God who died for us on the cross – that is Jesus. We also understand the God whose presence is everywhere in the universe at once – that is God the Father. And we also understand that all three of these are not separate Gods, but the same God. On that level it is easy to comprehend.”

Iris shook her head. “I still don’t get it. One person can’t be three people, unless they have a personality disorder or something. It just doesn’t work that way.”

“But God is not like us. He is altogether different. He is infinitely wise and all-powerful, and His presence fills the universe. He is utterly unlike any other being that we have ever encountered.”

The professor thought for a moment. “Tell me, Iris. Do you have a good working knowledge of quantum physics?”

“Um, no.”

“What about neurology? Could you do brain surgery?”

“Of course not! I’m not a brain surgeon. That’s not my major!”

“So what you’re telling me is that there are many complicated things in this world that you don’t understand, and yet you don’t reject *them*. You don’t reject the idea of a brain just because you’re not a neurologist, nor do you reject the idea of a GPS because you don’t understand relativity. The world is full of things that utterly baffle you and yet you are content to accept them because you know they are true. The Trinity is something like that. You may not understand it, but it is absolutely true – and we must accept by faith that God has given us an accurate picture of who He is.

“If you refuse to believe in anything that you don’t understand then you had better stop using your television sets, cell phones, and computers. After all, why have faith in something that you don’t understand?”

“That’s silly!” Iris replied. “I don’t have to understand it to know that it works.”

“Exactly. We know what God is really like because He has told us. Since God is all-knowing, I strongly urge you to believe His

own account of Himself.”

Brad spoke up. “Hold on a minute. The Bible is what tells us about this Trinity thing. How do we know that it’s right?”

“That’s what we will talk about in our next class,” Professor Grimes replied. “We will study what the Bible is, where it came from, and why we can believe it.”

Just as the professor was about to dismiss the class, Iris spoke up. “So you’re telling us that God created us for Himself, right?”

“That’s right.”

“So what did God need us for? Was He lonely?”

Grimes laughed. “No, young lady, God was not lonely. God does not have any needs. He does not get hungry, or thirsty, or bored, nor does He run out of things to do. God was not looking for entertainment or companionship. Malachi 3:6 tells us that God never changes. He will never become any more or any less than what He is right now. He will never learn anything new, because He already knows everything there is to know and He also knows everything that will ever

happen throughout all the infinite ages of time. He will never be surprised or caught off-guard.”

“Then why were we made?” Iris asked.

“Romans 9:22-24 tells us that we were created to demonstrate God’s character. You see, God is a merciful God, but until we were created God had no way to demonstrate that because there was no one who needed mercy. God is forgiving, but until we were created there was no one to forgive. God is just, but until we were created there was no one who deserved God’s wrath. The existence of mankind allows God to reveal parts of His character that had been hidden for all the ages of eternity. All of these things – God’s mercy, forgiveness, justice, wrath, and more – can now be clearly seen for the very first time. In other words, God is using His creation to demonstrate aspects of Himself that had been previously hidden.”

The professor picked up his notes off his desk. “I’m afraid that’s all we have time for today. Be sure to read the next three chapters in your textbook for our next class. Our next topic will be the Bible. Oh – and take care out

there. You don't want to slip on any hail."

"I'm sure it's all melted by now," Brad remarked, as the class filed out the door.

"Unless it hasn't," the professor replied. "You can choose to exercise caution and try to avoid problems, or you can barge right into problems and suffer the consequences. It is your choice. I think that we should try to avoid suffering and pain, but I'm just a wise old man with a doctorate and decades of experience. What do I know?"

Brad shrugged his shoulders and walked out of the room, leaving Professor Grimes alone. Grimes walked over to the window and looked outside. He noticed that patches of the ground were covered in a white substance that, from this distance, almost looked like snow.

"I'm sure that hail down there is just imaginary," Grimes said cheerfully. "After all, if people don't believe in it then it can't possibly be true! What a world these young people live in."

Grimes then left the room, leaving the classroom empty.

Chapter 2.5: The Harbinger of Doom

Early the next morning Professor Grimes found himself standing on the roof of the Rutledge Building. The professor didn't normally spend a lot of time standing on the roofs of buildings, but Harold the janitor had told him that it was important.

Harold had worked for the university for as long as Grimes could remember. He seemed to be an ageless figure – he was simply always there, and he never really changed. In a school full of incompetent people Harold stood out by his determination to do his job and do it well. His devotion to his job never changed, and his uniform never changed either. He always wore blue overalls, a white shirt, and white sneakers, and his hair was neatly combed. Whenever Grimes spotted Harold on campus he was always busy doing something. Grimes considered

him to be an inspiration – he constantly worked for the good of the school, even when the school was determined to crash and burn. Of all the employees on campus, he was the one that best exemplified the dependability and work ethic of Grimes' toaster.

“Do you see all that damage?” Harold was saying. “That’s the handiwork of that little storm we had yesterday. I knew that weather front was going to be a bad one. I could just feel it, you know?”

The damage was far worse than Grimes had expected. Most of the shingles were gone and the roof was full of holes. In fact, the entire roof appeared to be on the verge of collapse.

“This roof completely lacks structural integrity,” Grimes commented. “In fact, I’m appalled! Do you realize that one of my classrooms is directly under that damaged section over there?”

“Yup – and that’s why I called you. You are on the verge of having a problem. I don’t think this roof can take much more. It is long past its expected lifespan. It should have been replaced ten years ago.”

“That’s putting it mildly! It looks like a stiff breeze could destroy it. But why are you telling me this? Shouldn’t maintenance be taking care of this? I know that department has been gutted, but there’s still—”

Harold shook his head. “The only guy left on the maintenance staff was fired last week so President Harris could afford new uniforms for the football team. The president said their old ones had grass stains that wouldn’t come out. I tried to tell him that the stains weren’t that serious and that a good—”

Grimes interrupted him. “Wait just a minute. Are you telling me that Harris spent the entire maintenance budget on *football uniforms? Again?*”

“That’s the size of it,” Harold replied.

“But last time he did that the board ruled—”

“Oh, he fired the board too. Did that last night, actually – you’ll probably get the memo sometime later today. Unless he also cut the budget for memos, that is. Still, it’s not like the board ever provided much oversight. They all reported directly to Harris and he kept them in line. The board should have

been *over* President Harris or independent in some way, but it's too late for that. What's done is done."

"What a surprise," Grimes said. "So it turns out I was right when I said that employees can't control someone who has the ability to fire them. I have been proven correct yet again. But surely even Harris can understand that this campus desperately needs repair! What's going to happen when this roof collapses?"

Harold shrugged. "Well, I guess you'll have to move your class. That is, unless you're in class when the roof collapses. If that happens you'll have a whole different set of problems."

"But this is intolerable! This roof needs emergency maintenance and it needs it *now* – before another storm hits. There's still time to solve this problem if we act quickly, but if this isn't fixed we may lose the entire building. That could take down the whole school!"

"You can try talking to them, but I just don't know. President Harris keeps telling me that there's no money available for repairs."

"And if the seminary closes there won't

be any money for *anything* – including paying the president’s salary.”

Harold nodded. “You’re preaching to the choir, professor. I agree with you. You know I’ve been right there with you all these years, fighting the good fight. But it’s just not going to happen. I already filed the report, but they’re not going to act on it.”

Professor Grimes surveyed the badly-damaged roof. “If they don’t act on it, we’re doomed,” he replied.

Lecture 3: The Bible

Professor Grimes glanced around the room before beginning his lecture. *Looks like we have eight people today*, he thought to himself. It was still less than a tenth of the people who had registered for that class, but it was the highest attendance he had seen all semester.

True, the three people in the back row were already asleep. But at least they had bothered to show up. They weren't going to get any extra points for sleeping through class, but at the very least it was a step in the right direction.

Professor Grimes shook his head. *If those students would just keep their eyes open and pay attention, why, they might learn something! Who knows what exciting places that might lead them.*

Outside Grimes could hear the roar of a lawn mower. He was tempted to close the windows to block out the noise, but the

building's air conditioner wasn't working and the breeze from the outside helped cool the room down.

On the bright side the roof hadn't collapsed yet, nor was it leaking. That might change if another storm came, but for now Grimes would count that among his blessings.

"Good morning, class," Professor Grimes said. "Today we are going to talk about the Bible."

Brad Kramer spoke up. "Don't we do that in all of our classes? Every day? I mean, this is a seminary, right? Of *course* we're going to be talking about the Bible. What else would we talk about?"

"Well, as I said in our previous class, we are going to be talking about *the Bible itself*. That is quite different from talking about material that is *in* the Bible. Specifically, we are going to discuss where the Bible came from and why we should trust it."

Wally spoke up. "My Bible came from the Christian bookstore. It was on sale."

Grimes sighed. "But that's not where the Bible came from, Wally. You can also go down to the local grocery store and buy a gallon of

milk, but grocery stores don't actually produce milk. The milk that you find in the store actually came from a cow, and getting the milk from that cow to the store was a long process. The same thing can be said for the Bible. It took thousands of years to create the Bible, and God used around 40 different people to write it."

"But no cows. Right?" Wally asked. "I mean, I don't think cows were involved."

"Yes and no," the professor said thoughtfully. "Cows certainly do appear in the Bible, and they occasionally play an important role. They have been a part of God's plan throughout history. However, they weren't directly involved with writing the text of the Word."

Professor Grimes paused for a moment. "Let me be clear: the Bible was written by God. It is His words, handed down to us through the centuries. It contains no errors and it is not of human origin. However, God did not personally write down its words. Instead He worked through prophets, priests, fishermen, and a tax collector – just to name a few. He also worked through a physician, a

shepherd, and a king.³”

Iris spoke up. “So God dictated it to them?”

“I’m afraid not. God did not use these people as secretaries, and the Bible is not dictation. Each of these men wrote with their own unique writing style, and their writing reflects their personality and background – but what they wrote was exactly what God intended to be written. Even though the Bible was written over a period of 1500 years by around 40 different people, it tells one coherent message.⁴ The Bible’s collection of 66 books are all in perfect agreement with one another. It is the most unique library that has ever been assembled – in fact, it is truly a divine and holy thing. It is called the Word of God, and it literally contains the words of God.”

“But it was written by people,” Brad said.

“No, it was written *through* people. God works through people all the time to

³ *Evidence for Christianity*, Josh McDowell, p20-21

⁴ *Evidence for Christianity*, Josh McDowell, p23-25

accomplish His will. For example, He uses them to preach the gospel and disciple the nations. When a pastor preaches the gospel and a soul is saved, the pastor didn't save that soul; instead God worked through that pastor to save that soul. The men who wrote the books of the Bible did not do so of their own accord; instead they wrote the message that God gave them."

"But the Bible is arbitrary," Brad objected. "There were a lot of things that could have been included in it, and there are lots of books out there besides the 66 that just happened to make the cut. When it came time to decide what was canon, people just decided what they liked best and went with it. We could have ended up with something completely different."

Professor Grimes looked at him curiously. "So you are claiming that after God spent more than a thousand years carefully conveying His message to dozens of people, He then decided to leave the canon itself to pure chance? You seriously believe that God inspired the Bible but played absolutely no role in making sure that good books weren't

left out of the canon and bad books weren't included? Why, you seem to think that all God wanted to do was get them written so He could go on vacation! That is simply preposterous. I find it impossible to believe He wasn't the least bit concerned with what happened to the 66 books He took so much time and care to write. That is simply not plausible. Of *course* God determined the canon. It is madness to think otherwise."

Brad frowned. "The canon was decided by a council – the council of something-or-other. The point is that it was done by a committee of people."

"You are greatly mistaken, young man. First of all, there were three councils, not one. Second, the Council of Laodicea in 363 AD, of Hippo in 393 AD, and Carthage in 397 AD did not *decide* what was canon. God is the one who authored the books and He is the one who decided which ones would be included in the Bible. All the councils did was recognize what the Church had already known for several hundred years – that the 27 books of

the New Testament really were of God.⁵ All three councils came to the same conclusion.”

Iris spoke up. “But what about the Old Testament?”

“Historically speaking, there has actually been very little controversy over the Old Testament canon. The evidence indicates it was established as early as the 4th century BC.⁶ In fact, Jesus Himself confirmed the Old Testament canon on three separate occasions – in Luke 24:44, John 10:31-36, and Luke 11:51. The only serious challenge to it arose around a thousand years later when the Catholic Church attempted to add the Apocrypha to the canon.⁷ However, it doesn’t take much effort to look at it and realize that the Apocrypha is *not* on par with the Scriptures. It’s too goofy and full of errors. Excluding it is definitely the right choice to make.”

Brad spoke up. “But couldn’t the councils have made a mistake? How do you know they

43 ⁵ *Evidence for Christianity*, Josh McDowell, p42-

⁶ *Evidence for Christianity*, Josh McDowell, p50

⁷ *Evidence for Christianity*, Josh McDowell, p54

got it right?”

“That’s an excellent question,” Professor Grimes. “However, that subject is well outside the scope of this introductory class. In my Christianity 210 course we will study the criteria the councils used and what differentiates Scripture from non-Scripture.”⁸

“Since I don’t have an entire semester to examine that topic, let’s look at it in a simplified way. Even today there are a lot of other books out there that claim to be inspired – the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Judas, etc. These books can easily be dismissed as frauds because they are all deeply flawed. The Bible is without error, and these other books are not. The Bible is without contradiction, but these other works attempt to introduce doctrine that is very different from what the Bible contains. That alone gives us ample reason to disqualify them.

“The truth is that there are simply no other serious contenders for the canon

⁸ Or you could read *Evidence for Christianity*, Josh McDowell, p42-57

outside of the 66 books that we already have. If there was another book that God inspired, we would definitely know about it. After all, the only other option is that God inspired it but then hid it from the Church – which is a preposterous idea.”

“Why?” Rob asked. “Couldn’t God be keeping it a secret until it’s needed?”

“Absolutely not,” the professor replied firmly. “In fact, if someone comes to you and tells you that they have new revelation from God that you need in order to live your life, you should run from them. The truth is that there is no new revelation – God has stopped doing that in this Age. Instead God gave us the Bible, which is complete. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that the Bible contains *all* of the information that we need in order to do *all* of the good works that God wants us to do. No doctrines, teachings, or revelation was omitted.”

“But how can you prove that?” Brad asked. “How can you possibly know that nothing important got left out?”

“Well, there are several ways. One reason is because I know God’s character. I

know that He is competent and wise. He would never write the Bible and then allow it to be lost or corrupted. He would never give us His words and then allow them to disappear, nor would He forget to include things that we needed. Isaiah 40:8 says that the word of God will stand forever, and in Matthew 24:35 Jesus said that His words would never pass away. God promised to preserve His Word, and I am convinced that God always keeps His promises.

“But there is more. God has given us a lot of evidence to show that the Bible we have today is the same Bible that God intended for us to have. His words have not been lost over time.”

The professor picked up his notes from his desk and looked through them, until he found the piece of paper he was looking for. “For example, according to F. E. Peters in *The Harvest of Hellenism*, the New Testament is the most frequently copied and widely circulated book in the entire ancient world. Charles Leach in *Our Bible: How We Got It* says that there are more than 25,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New

Testament in existence today. Twenty-five thousand! The second runner-up is Homer's *Iliad*, which only has 643 manuscript copies in existence. In other words, there is an *order of magnitude* more copies of the Bible than there are of anything else – which means there is far more manuscript evidence to support the Bible than there is to support any other document from the ancient world. On top of that, there is only a 250 to 300 year gap between the original manuscripts and the oldest known copy.⁹

Iris spoke up. “That seems like a long time, doesn’t it? I mean, 300 years ago the United States wasn’t even a country yet.”

“In the world of *nations*, it is true that 300 years is a long time. But in the world of ancient manuscripts 300 years is nothing at all. For example, the oldest known copies of the plays of Sophocles date to 1,400 years after his death – but scholars still believe those copies are reasonably accurate. It is not at all uncommon to have a thousand-year gap

⁹ *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, Kenyon, p4

between the original and the oldest existing copy.¹⁰ To have a gap of just 300 years is astonishing. But it gets even better: we possess manuscript fragments of the New Testament that date to within a century of the originals.¹¹ When it comes to manuscript evidence, the quality, quantity, and age gap for the New Testament is simply unbeaten. Nothing else even comes close. There are more reasons to trust the New Testament than there are to trust any other ancient document.”

“But what about the Old Testament?” Iris asked.

Professor Grimes selected a different sheet of paper from his notes. “The Old Testament also has excellent evidence to support it. Since it is so much older than the New Testament there are fewer copies that have survived the passage of time, but there are still more than 700 known ancient copies

¹⁰ *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, Kenyon, p4

¹¹ *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, Greenlee, p16

of it. ¹² Considering that some ancient manuscripts from other authors have come to us on the basis of *one surviving copy*, I would say that is remarkably impressive. On top of that, the Dead Sea Scrolls contains a copy of the book of Isaiah that dates back to the third century BC. ¹³ That is truly a staggering find, because that means we now have a copy of Isaiah's Messianic prophecies that predate the birth of Jesus by several hundred years."

"I don't get it," Brad said. "Why does that matter?"

"Because it silences the critics who claimed that the Isaiah prophecies were forgeries. You see, until the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, critics were fond of saying that the prophecies Jesus fulfilled were added to the Old Testament by the early Church in order to make Jesus seem like the Messiah. However, we can now prove that the prophecies were in *the originals*. The Old Testament prophesied about the life of Christ

¹² *Evidence for Christianity*, Josh McDowell, p106

¹³ *Evidence for Christianity*, Josh McDowell, p107

centuries before His birth in Bethlehem, and Jesus fulfilled all of those prophecies. That is a very significant argument in favor of Christ being exactly who He claimed to be – the Messiah and the Son of God.”

Outside the roar of the lawnmower stopped. Harold must have finished mowing the courtyard, which meant he would soon begin weed-eating. The groundskeeper was supposed to be the one who kept up with the lawn, but the school no longer had a groundskeeper. It was all up to Harold now. Grimes was partly surprised that the school had been smart enough to keep Harold employed – and then realized that if the school let him go there would be no one left to vacuum the President’s office. Perhaps there was a method to Harris’ madness.

Brad spoke up. “But you don’t have any of the originals, right? Sure, you have some old copies. But how can you know they’re the same as the originals? For all you know the Bible has changed tremendously over the millennia. There’s no telling what it might have originally said.”

Professor Grimes shook his head. “One

of the unique things about the Bible is that we know your argument is *not* true. Unlike all other known books from the ancient world, the Bible has *not* changed throughout the course of history. If you look at, say, records from two different periods in ancient Egypt, you can see that the same document underwent dramatic changes over the course of a thousand years. Clauses changed, text was left out, and different text was added. However, when we apply that same test to the Bible we find that it *remains consistent*. The Dead Sea Scrolls were a thousand years older than any other known copy of the Old Testament. Despite that thousand-year gap, the two documents *were the same*. They were word-for-word identical in more than 95% of the text, and the remaining 5% consisted of variations in spelling and obvious slips of the pen.¹⁴ In a thousand years the Bible *had not changed* – and the reason was because God preserved it.

“But that is not the only argument in its

¹⁴ *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Archer, p23-25

favor. The *accuracy* of the Bible is also phenomenal. If you take an apologetics or history course – which I highly recommend – you will study this in great detail. It's true that there are some things the Bible says that cannot be tested. For example, there is the statement that Jesus will return. That is a prophecy about the future, and the only way to test statements about the future is to wait and see what happens. However, the Bible also contains a great many statements that *can* be tested. The Bible talks about the reign of kings, the territory of nations, the existence of cities, and so forth, all of which can be put to a historical test to see if it is right or wrong. Interestingly, *none* of these testable statements have ever been found to be in error.¹⁵ Instead we find that whenever we *can* test what the Bible says, we find that the Bible is telling us the truth. Even proper names are transmitted with incredible accuracy.¹⁶ Since the Bible is accurate in all places where it *can*

¹⁵ *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Geisler, p52

¹⁶ *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament*, Wilson, p64, 71

be tested, it makes a lot of sense to believe it in the areas where it *can't* be tested."

Wally spoke up. "But the Bible is full of errors. They're everywhere."

"You are quite wrong," the professor replied. "Throughout the centuries people have tried very, very hard to find errors, and they utterly failed. Historians once claimed there never was a Sargon, and they were proven wrong. They claimed the Hittites never existed, and they were proven wrong. They claimed the Bible exaggerated the size of David's kingdom, and they were proven wrong. They claimed there never was a Belshazzar, and they were proven wrong. They said Sodom and Gomorrah were myths, and they were proven wrong. Time and time again the archaeological record has proven the naysayers wrong and has upheld the Biblical account.¹⁷"

Professor Grimes paused a moment to gather his thoughts. "What I am trying to say is that there are many excellent reasons to

¹⁷ *Evidence for Christianity*, Josh McDowell, p136-

trust the Bible. People today speak of ‘blind faith’, as if it is somehow a noble thing to trust something simply because you feel like trusting it. However, we don’t have to have blind faith in the Bible. There is excellent evidence to support its claims.”

Iris spoke up. “But we’re supposed to have faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God.”

Professor Grimes smiled. “Yes, that is true, but consider this: ‘faith’ is just another word for ‘trust’. What God wants us to do is trust Him and trust His Word. Now, if God had wanted to He could have simply said ‘Here is the Bible; you just have to take my word for it.’ He could have asked us to trust it simply because He said so – but that’s not what He did. Instead He has given us many proofs to validate the Bible. We have discussed a few of these proofs today, but there are countless others.

“The point is that faith in God is a very *reasonable* choice to make. We have a lot of solid, intelligent reasons for believing that the Bible hasn’t been corrupted. It is actually logical and rational to believe that the Bible is

accurate, is inspired by God, is inerrant, and has been preserved.”

The professor glanced at his watch. “Well, class, it looks like that’s all the time we have for today. In our next class we will have the first exam of the semester. It will cover everything we have discussed so far, so be prepared.”

The class groaned. “There’s a test already?” Rob asked.

“It’s shocking, isn’t it?” Grimes remarked. “Can you believe that the information in the syllabus I handed you was accurate, and that the exams are happening precisely when I said they would happen? Could life get any more scandalous than that?”

Brad spoke up. “It’s way too soon to have a test. We haven’t covered that much material.”

Professor Grimes smiled. “Then this should be an easy test, shouldn’t it?”

“What kind of test is it going to be?” Rob asked. “Essay? Multiple choice? True or false?”

“Is this a big part of our grade?” Brad asked.

Wally spoke up. “Can you give us the

answers in advance? And can you write them down for me? I don't like taking notes."

Professor Grimes sighed. "I have already given you the answers, Wally. My lectures have covered everything that will be on the test. In fact, the whole idea behind the tests is to *see if you have mastered the material in the lectures*.

"As far as the other questions go, why don't you *read the syllabus and find out*? You would be amazed to discover what you can learn by reading the handouts I've given you! Amazingly enough, I did *not* print those documents and give them to you for the sole purpose of massacring entire forests. Those pieces of paper are intended to *communicate something*. That's why they've got all those words on them. Try *reading* them and see what happens. Class dismissed!"

Chapter 3.5: Test Results

Professor Grimes was in his office on the fourth floor of Old Main. It wasn't a very large office – in fact, it wasn't much bigger than a closet, but the professor made it work. The office's bare concrete floor was covered in an oriental rug he had purchased twenty years ago, and the bare concrete walls were covered in diagrams, timelines, documents, and pictures of his children. A tiny metal desk (battered and a bit rusted) took up most of the floor space. To the professor's right was a single cracked window that gave him a decent view of the campus courtyard.

Most professors had a chair in front of their desk so visitors would have a place to sit. Grimes' office was far too small for that – if anyone came to visit they would have to stand. The professor had considered trying to obtain a bigger office, but since no students ever came to him for help he really didn't see the point.

Grimes had just finished grading the exams for his Christianity 101 class. It hadn't taken him very long. Only four people had even shown up to take the test – Brad, Wally, Isaac, and Iris. Wally's was the easiest to grade, because all he did was sign his name and turn in a blank piece of paper. The professor wasn't sure why he even bothered; did he think that turning in blank exam was somehow better than skipping the test altogether? Professor Grimes was *not* going to give Wally points for knowing how to spell his own name – and even if he were, Wally wouldn't qualify because he actually spelled his name wrong. Professor Grimes fully expected him to drop the class – but knowing Wally, there was no telling what he was going to do. That student was a mystery.

Isaac and Iris had both done fairly decently. Neither of them were going to get an A, or even a B for that matter (the professor refused to grade on a curve), but if they kept studying they would probably pass. Both of them showed clear signs of improvement from their disastrous entrance exam. It was entirely possible that they were

actually learning something.

That just left Brad. Brad was certainly intelligent and he was definitely paying attention, but he had still managed to get every single question wrong. It seemed that Brad had his own ideas about theology and he was determined to answer things *his* way. He didn't really care what the professor had taught. It was almost as if he was daring the professor to fail him.

Unfortunately for Brad, Grimes would not hesitate to do exactly that. Like many students who came before him, Brad needed to learn that in the world of theology people were not allowed to make up their own doctrines. *Theology, like math, is the pursuit of truth*, Grimes thought. *In the mathematical world there are right answers and wrong answers. 10 plus 19 always adds up to 29. People cannot make up their own answers and then tell their teacher that in their opinion the answer is really 33. They also cannot say 'Don't judge me, man. 29 is right for you, but 33 is right for me. You need to respect my choices.'* Since their 'different opinion' does not match the correct answer, it

is wrong – and if people accumulate enough wrong answers they will fail the class. That is how things work in the land of reality.

Theology is no different – in fact, if anything, it is even more strict. There are right answers and wrong answers. People cannot make up their own answers and go with it, and they also cannot claim that ‘their truth’ is somehow different from the truth that applies to everyone else. They have to stick to God’s truth or else they will fail. In fact, failing the class is the least of their problems because at the end of their life God is going to hold them accountable. If they fail that test – if God determines that an individual rejected His truth and did their own thing – then the consequence would be eternal damnation. The stakes are incredibly high.

On top of all that, God has already given mankind all the answers. There is no reason to fail His test, because all you have to do is accept the truths that God has already provided. If you repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ then you will be saved. But some people have no intention of doing that.

Speaking of living in denial–

The professor glanced out his window. The afternoon had gone and evening had come, but there were still students milling around the courtyard. One student in particular caught his attention. Andy was standing in the middle of campus, holding up signs and chanting. One sign read "Down with Grimes!" The other one said "Overthrow The Evil Overlord Grimes!"

At least he spelled my name right, the professor thought. And he's not accusing me of any war crimes yet. This is definitely an improvement over last semester.

Grimes noticed that no one was paying Andy any attention. The irate student had been picketing all day, but no one had joined him. His effort was not having any effect.

Professor Grimes sincerely hoped that Andy would give it up and go home. He was only hurting himself, wasting his time on a fruitless effort. Doubling down on his mistakes wasn't going to make them any better. Only corrective action would do any good.

But was Andy smart enough to learn? Only time would tell.

Lecture 4: Creation

As usual Professor Grimes arrived at his classroom twenty minutes before class was scheduled to start. However, the moment he stepped through the doorway he realized that today was not going to be an ordinary day. The night before there had been a terrible storm, and the Rutledge Building's damaged roof had apparently been unable to bear the strain. After years of neglect it had finally caved in and filled the room with shingles, broken support beams, and debris – not to mention crushing his desk and the chairs he had worked so hard to find. The room now offered a clear view of a very cloudy sky that was threatening to rain yet again.

Despite this devastation, the professor was pleased to see that his industrial shredder had survived the collapse. The falling roof had avoided it completely. Apparently even the roof knew not to mess with Professor Grimes. *And class was not in*

session when this calamity occurred, Grimes thought to himself. All in all, this disaster really could have been far worse.

“Oh there you are,” a voice said behind him. Grimes turned around and saw Harold the janitor calling out to him. “You’ve got a bit of a mess in there! It’s going to take a while to clean it up, I think. But I won’t be able to get to it right away. I’ve got four other rooms in the same condition.”

“You’re going to try to clean this up? By yourself?” Grimes asked, surprised. “But why? Is the school going to put on a new roof?”

“Probably not. But cleaning things up is my job, you know. If I don’t do it then who will?”

“But it’s a waste of time, Harold! If President Harris isn’t going to repair the roof then cleaning the room won’t make things any better. In fact, if the school continues to refuse to maintain this building it they’ll have to condemn it.”

“You really think they’re smart enough to condemn this fire trap?” Harold asked dubiously.

“I’ll call the inspector myself this

afternoon and force the issue. He'll come out, take one look at this facility, and be horrified out of his mind. After he condemns it the school will have no choice: they will have to repair this structure or tear it down."

Harold frowned. "President Harris is not going to like that. He'll blame you, you know."

"Yes, I know. It's clearly my fault that he refused to allocate even one dime to the maintenance of this facility. It's my fault he allowed this building to decay to the point where a single storm could destroy the roof. It's also my fault that the storm hit last night, because I control the weather with the power of my mind."

Harold looked surprised. "You really control the weather?"

"Of course not! Don't be ridiculous." Grimes sighed. "Well, I suppose I need to find a different classroom. Are there any that are still intact?"

"You can try the room across the hall. It doesn't have a roof anymore either, but I cleared out all the debris so it should be fine. As long as it doesn't rain again, that is. If it does you might get wet."

“Thanks,” the professor replied.

So Grimes waited just outside the classroom door. As his students approached he explained the situation and redirected them to the room across the hall. When it came time to begin his class he walked into the room, counted the number of students who had arrived, and began his lecture.

“Good morning, class. As you can see, last night’s storm did quite a bit of damage. I’m going to have to find another room for us to meet in. Until—”

“I’ll say,” Isaac interrupted. “This room doesn’t have any chairs.”

“Or a cell phone shredder,” Brad pointed out. “Does that mean we can use our electronic devices now?”

“Absolutely not,” the professor replied firmly. “My shredder is just across the hall. It would be no trouble at all to confiscate your device and walk over there to destroy it. In fact, it would positively brighten my day.”

“Aw man,” Brad muttered. “So what are we supposed to do? Just stand here while you lecture us?”

“It’s your choice, young man. You can

either stand there or sit on the floor – it makes no difference to me. As I was saying, sometime before our next class I will try to find another classroom. When I acquire one I will contact you and give you the details. For now, however, this room will have to do.”

“Unless it rains,” Isaac replied. “And it kinda looks like it might rain.”

“Then I suggest you start praying that it *doesn’t* rain,” the professor replied.

Grimes glanced down at his notes. “Today we are going to talk about the creation of the universe. This is undoubtedly going to be the most controversial topic that we will cover this semester. Yet, interestingly, the Bible itself is quite clear on this subject.”

“But there are lots of different opinions,” Wally said.

“The Bible only has *one* opinion,” Professor Grimes replied firmly. “The Bible was *not* written in order to give a debating society a bunch of different positions to argue about. Instead it presents the truth about reality. There is *one* correct interpretation of each Biblical doctrine and there are many incorrect interpretations. If people are

arguing over what the Bible says then that means somebody has got it wrong. It is possible that both people are wrong, but it is *not* possible that both opposing positions are correct.”

“But we just need to preach Jesus,” Wally insisted. “Spending time arguing over doctrine isn’t going to save anybody. It’s not like any of that stuff really matters.”

“It matters *tremendously*,” Professor Grimes said firmly. “*No one* in the Bible *ever* said that defending God’s revealed truth about reality is a waste of time. That is one of the dumbest things I have ever heard. The apostles spent a great deal of time defending doctrine. After all, doctrine is just another word for truth. You might as well say ‘Who cares about the truth?’ The truth *matters*. Every last one of God’s words *matters*. It is utter stupidity to say ‘I’m going to ignore 95% of what God told me to believe and just preach Jesus.’ The whole reason the Bible isn’t a 5-page pamphlet is because *all of it matters*.”

Wally opened his mouth, but Grimes cut him off. “On top of that, one of the very last

things Jesus said before His ascension was that we were to make disciples of nations. Do you know how you make disciples of nations? You *teach them doctrine*. But you can't do that if you don't know doctrine, now, can you? The Bible is *not* some kind of buffet where you can pick the parts you like and disregard the rest. All of it matters and all of it should be defended."

Brad spoke up. "But what difference does it make how the world came into existence? I mean, seriously. Who cares?"

"Well, let's take a look at it and see. I'll explain to you the Bible's account of our origins, and then we'll discuss society's account of our origins. At the end of the class we'll compare the two and see if it makes any difference.

"According to Genesis 1, God created the world in six normal-length days – days that consisted of one evening and one morning. On the first day God created the Earth, separated the light from the darkness, and created the angels. On the second day God created a firmament that divided the waters above the firmament from the waters

underneath it.”

“Hold on,” Iris interrupted. “What does that mean?”

Rob spoke up. “It means God created the sky.”

“Really?” Professor Grimes replied. “The Bible says that there are waters above the firmament. So where are the waters that are above the sky?”

“I don’t know. That’s just what everyone says. Maybe it’s poetic or something.”

Grimes sighed. “So when we don’t understand a passage we should just assume it’s poetic and move on? I guess that’s one way to make sure we never understand what the Bible teaches. The *right* way to figure out things like this is to search the rest of the Bible for more clues. If you continue reading the chapter you’ll find that in Genesis 1:14 we are told that God put the stars within the firmament. That means that the ‘ocean in the sky’ is actually above the stars.”

“But there is no ocean in the sky!” Brad objected. “That’s preposterous.”

“Is it? The Bible says in Psalm 148:4 that there are waters above the Heavens. How do

you know what is beyond the stars? Have you gone out there and looked?”

“But it’s a crazy idea,” Brad insisted.

“Only because you’ve already decided in advance that it doesn’t make sense. But Ezekiel 1:22 tells us that the firmament is like crystal, and Revelation 4:6 and 15:2 tells us that before the throne of God there is a crystal sea of glass. I believe that the firmament is a barrier God created to separate the home of mankind from the place where God dwells. It was built to act as a protective wall – an isolation chamber, if you will. Since God knew mankind was going to sin He created a barrier to isolate our realm from His. I find it interesting that of all the days of creation, this is the only one where God did *not* say that what He had done was good.”

“But why?” Iris asked. “Isn’t everything that God does good?”

“It’s because God was already having to take protective steps to guard against our sin. He knew what was coming and He was not happy about it. Our sin was *not* a good thing. Yet, thankfully, things will not always be this

way. One day God will put an end to all evil and death, and God and man will live together on the New Earth. When that happens there will no longer need to be a barrier between us. We will at last be able to live in harmony together.”

Wally spoke up. “A New Earth? I thought we went to Heaven when we died.”

“We’ll discuss that topic later this semester. But to get back to the lesson: on the first day God created the Earth and separated the light from the darkness. On the second day God created the firmament. On the third day God separated the dry land on Earth from the seas, and created plant life. On the fourth day God created the sun, moon, and stars.”

“Hold on,” Brad objected. “That’s impossible. Plant life didn’t arise until billions of years after the stars were formed.”

Professor Grimes shook his head. “That’s not what the Bible says. It tells us that plants came first and the stars came second. In fact, it says that the entire creation process took just six days, not billions and billions of years.”

“But—”

The professor cut him off. “We’ll get to

evolution in a minute. As I was saying, on the fifth day God created sea life and birds. On the sixth day God created land animals and insects.”

“But birds evolved from land animals!” Brad exclaimed. “The Bible has it backwards.”

“I’ll get to that in a minute,” the professor repeated. “As I was saying, on the sixth day God also created mankind. He then rested on the seventh day. When God was finished He had created a perfect world. In this world there was no sin, or suffering, or pain, or death. There was no cancer or disease. There were no wars or riots or crime. It was a place of perfect peace and harmony. God even walked with man in the garden in the cool of the day. There was no separation between God and man. It was, quite literally, utopia.

“But then something happened. Genesis 2:9 tells us that God placed a tree in the Garden of Eden – the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He—”

“An apple tree,” Wally said.

“It was *not* an apple tree,” Grimes said firmly. “That is a vicious slander upon apple tree farmers everywhere. Nowhere does the

Bible identify apples as the forbidden fruit. In fact, the Bible actually mentions apples and does not blame them for anything. That entire theory is ludicrous. But as I was saying, God told mankind *not* to eat of that Tree, because if they ate of it they would destroy utopia.”

Iris spoke up. “But that’s not what God said. He told them that the day they ate the fruit they would die.”

The professor hesitated. “It’s true that is how that passage is translated in most Bibles, but that’s not what the Hebrew actually means. A better translation would be that in the day they ate it they would *begin* to die. In other words, death would enter the world. They wouldn’t die that day but they would begin the process of dying, until death finally claimed their lives. In other words, Utopia would be no more.

“As we know – or as you would know if you had studied your Bibles – Genesis 3 tells us that Eve ate the forbidden fruit, then gave it to Adam and he ate it as well. Sin and death entered the world, and that one act changed everything. The reason we have crime,

disease, cancer, destruction, and death is because of that sin in the Garden. If mankind had not sinned we would all still be living in a perfect world. The reason suffering and pain exists is because mankind chose their own will over God's will. They chose to sin – and the consequences have been horrific. The death toll for that sin is now in the billions.”

“All because of that one sin?” Iris asked.

“That’s what the Bible says,” the professor replied. “Romans 5:12 tells us that sin entered into the world through one man, and death through sin. That one sin opened the door to all the pain and suffering that we see today. It is where death came from. Death isn’t some natural part of existence; it is a direct consequence of that sin in the Garden of Eden.

“But let’s look at what evolution has to say. Evolution says that random chance created the world and there is no God. There’s a lot I could say about the evidence for God’s existence, but since all of you are attending a seminary I’m going to assume you already believe in God. Therefore I’m instead going to take a look at what many Christians

believe: that God used evolution to create the world.

“In that scenario the universe started with a Big Bang. Over billions of years stars and planets slowly formed. Life began on Earth in a primordial pond of some sort, and that single cell life form gradually evolved into more advanced life forms through the mechanism of natural selection and mutations. Now, mutations are an unpleasant business, and they take a long time. But God didn’t really care. He took two billion years to create the life forms we see today, using a process filled with death, suffering, cancer, and disease. God actually *invented* death – He used it to create the world, and designed a creation process that deliberately slaughtered uncountable trillions of creatures. An all-powerful God could have simply spoken them into existence, but God couldn’t be bothered to do that. He would rather use a process full of pain and death, because hey, why not?

“So over time simple forms of life gave rise to more complex forms, and eventually humanoids developed into modern man.

There was no Adam or Eve; there were just lots of creatures who gradually became more humanlike over time. Mankind never sinned in the Garden because there was no Tree of Knowledge and there was no Garden. Mankind wasn't responsible for death; God was. At the end of this process God had a world full of suffering and pain and evil – the world that God had made. The Lord then looked at it and said 'You know what? This is all very good. I like this world. This is how I want things to be.'"

Iris spoke up. "That's horrible! God's not like that. He hates death. He called death 'the enemy' and will defeat it one day."

"That is indeed what I Corinthians 15:26 says," the professor agreed. "But theistic evolution teaches that God loves death, that God used suffering and death to create the world, and that the world exists as it does today because that's how God made it. But it gets worse. If evolution is true then there never was an Adam or Eve or a sin in the Garden of Eden. Their sin didn't bring death into the world because they never existed at all – and because death existed for billions of

years before mankind ever appeared. That creates a serious problem. In fact, if evolution is true then *Christianity is false*. If evolution really happened then no one can be saved."

Brad laughed. "That's silly! Lots of people believe in evolution and are saved."

"That's *not* what I said," the professor replied. "I did *not* say that *believing* in evolution would send you to Hell. What I did say is that *if evolution is actually true* then salvation is impossible. You see, Romans 5 makes it very clear that Christ's death can only save us *if* sin and death entered the world through Adam. If death existed before Adam then Christ's death cannot save us. If Adam never existed then Christ's death cannot save us. If the story of original sin is a fairy tale then salvation is impossible. Salvation is *only* possible if God created the world the way He said He did – in six days."

Brad shook his head. "Evolution has been proven scientifically. It's more than just a theory – it's how it happened. The evidence is overwhelming."

"Evolution is a fairy tale for grown-ups," Professor Grimes said firmly. "So tell me, Brad.

What evidence convinces you that evolution is true?"

"The fossils," Brad said confidently.

"What fossils?"

"Well, you know, the fossil record. There are fossils there. They prove evolution."

"But what fossils prove evolution? What in the fossil record has convinced you to discard what God Himself said about how He created the world and replace it with something completely different?"

"Fossils prove evolution," Brad insisted. "They just do."

"Does it? But be honest. You don't actually believe in evolution because of the fossil evidence, do you? If you did then *you could tell me what that evidence actually was*. But like most people of your generation you believe in evolution because you've been told that it's true. You can't explain *why* it's true because you have no idea. I've met some students who can do more than mumble something vague about fossils, but the vast majority of you are not like that. You believe it simply because you've been told to believe

it.¹⁸”

Isaac spoke up. “What about cave fish? They evolved.”

The professor nodded. “They did indeed. They started out with perfectly good eyes, but after being trapped in a cave for who knows how long they mutated and lost the ability to see. In other words, your evidence for evolution is a fish who lost its eyesight.”

“Well, that did give the fish a survival advantage,” Isaac pointed out. “Since eyes are a useless liability in the dark, fish without eyes would have a greater chance of survival.”

“Indeed,” Professor Grimes said. “But you seem to be overlooking the fact that the fish now has less genetic information than it had before. Natural selection led to a *decrease* in information. Incidentally, that is the same way diseases evolve resistance to

¹⁸ I did not make this up. If you go up to college students and ask them what evidence convinces them that evolution is true, most of them won’t have the faintest idea. A few will be able to say something, but they are the exception. Ray Comfort had a field day doing this in his video “Evolution vs God”, which he posted for free on YouTube.

drugs: the proteins that the drugs were targeting mutate, making the drugs ineffective. This gives the bacteria a greater chance of survival, but it represents a loss of genetic information. The altered protein is damaged and less efficient.¹⁹ No one denies that this sort of evolution happens – not even creationists.

“However, this is actually very bad news for evolution. If natural selection and mutations lead to a decrease in genetic information then that means that you cannot evolve a simple form of life into a more complicated one. After all, you can only evolve from a primordial life form into a turtle if you *increase* the amount of genetic information. You need to *gain* features, not lose them! That is where the theory of evolution falls part, because *that never happens*.

“J. Bergman once did a study of the mutations mentioned in Biological Abstracts

¹⁹ “Antibiotic Resistance of Bacteria: An Example of Evolution in Action?”, Dr. Georgia Purdom, answer-singenesi.org

and Medline. Out of 453,732 mentions of mutations, there were only 186 references to beneficial mutations. Every single one of those ‘beneficial’ mutations resulted in the *loss of genetic information*. There was not a single instance of an organism gaining new genetic information.²⁰ It simply *never happens*. Mutations *always* result in a loss of information. Even when the mutations help the organism survive, the organism has less information than it started out with. You simply cannot evolve an amoeba into an insurance salesman by removing genetic information.”

Brad spoke up. “But what about Haeckel’s embryos? The whole process of evolution is recapitulated by embryos. It’s a fact.”

“It’s actually a well-known forgery,” the professor replied. “He faked those embryos, and that has been known for a very long

²⁰ *Genetic Entropy and the Mystery of the Genome*, Dr. J. C. Sanford, p26-27

time.²¹ But textbooks keep teaching his tired lies because you will believe them without question. After all, it's in the textbook so it has to be true, right?"

Iris frowned. "But textbooks are checked, aren't they? Surely people wouldn't be able to print anything that wasn't true."

The professor sighed. "One of the biggest problems in the world today is that people just believe whatever they are told to believe without ever stopping to think about it. You don't think it through to see if it makes sense. You don't research it to see if the author is lying to you. You don't check the sources to see if they are sound. You don't check the original data to see if the conclusions even make sense. You just believe what you are told, like good little brainwashed zombies, and then go home and feel good about yourselves.

"Stop and think for a minute! Evolution teaches that mutations gave rise to all life we

²¹ "What Biology Textbooks Never Told You About Evolution", Royal Truman, answersingenesis.org

see today. Mutations! That's like saying if you go to a garage sale and find an old encyclopedia from 1939, you can bring it up to take by randomly changing letters throughout the volumes. Do you know what would actually happen if you did that? You would get garbage! Why on earth would you ever believe that you could improve *anything* by making billions of random changes to it? Does that seem remotely plausible to you? How could a process that *damages* the organism 99.9% of the time, and is neutral the other 0.1% of the time, possibly be so beneficial that it could evolve eyes, a liver, and a brain?"

Brad spoke up. "But natural selection can weed out the bad changes."

"Except it can't," Professor Grimes said. "The ability of natural select to filter out the damage that mutations do is vastly overstated. Removing 'unwanted' mutations is vastly harder and more costly than you imagine – especially when you stop to consider that the vast majority of mutations

have no outward signs.²² In fact, evidence indicates that the fitness of the human genome is actually *decreasing* by 1%-2% per generation thanks to mutations.²³ The process of natural selection and mutations is completely incapable of being the engine of evolution.”

Brad shook his head. “It’s all just a matter of time. Given enough time, monkeys could type the complete works of Shakespeare.”

“No they couldn’t,” Professor Grimes said firmly. “Let’s do some math, shall we? Suppose we wanted a monkey to type the 23rd Psalm, which has just 603 letters. Let’s say the monkey has a typewriter with 50 keys – 26 uppercase letters, 10 numbers, a spacebar, and 13 symbols for punctuation. A very standard layout, with no lowercase letters to worry about. The chance of typing the right 603 letters is 50^{603} . If that monkey typed one character per second and never stopped for a break, it would only take that

²² *Genetic Entropy and the Mystery of the Genome*, Dr. J. C. Sanford, p56-64

²³ *Genetic Entropy and the Mystery of the Genome*, Dr. J. C. Sanford, p65

monkey 9.552×10^{1016} years to get it right. By contrast, evolutionists claim that our universe is only 1.5×10^9 years old.²⁴ It doesn't matter if you filled the entire planet full of monkeys and had them type away for a billion years. They would be utterly incapable of typing *even one short Psalm*, let alone any of the works of Shakespeare.

"Billions of years may seem like a long time to you, but it's not nearly long enough. I assure you that the human genetic code – or even the genetic code of a fruit fly – is infinitely more complicated than Psalm 23. For example, suppose you took 100,000 billion billion billion billion billion blind people – which is enough people to fill our entire star system. Let's say that you gave them all a Rubik's cube and wanted them all to solve it at exactly the same time. How likely is that?"

"It's complete nonsense," Brad said.

"That happens to be the same chance of evolving just *one* of the biopolymers that life

²⁴ "Could monkeys type the 23rd Psalm?", answersingenesis.org

depends on.²⁵ Just one of them! Do you have any idea how preposterous evolution really is? If people really believed that mutations were good then they would stand in front of X-ray machines until they developed superpowers. Nobody does that because people realize the simple truth that *mutations are really bad*. Expecting mutations to evolve single-cell life forms into mammals is like expecting an F5 tornado to rip through a junkyard and assemble a 747.²⁶ It's completely preposterous. It could never happen. An entire universe of galaxies and 15 billion years isn't nearly enough time."

Brad shook his head. "But we're here, so it must have happened."

The professor sighed. "If I told you that my industrial shredder evolved over millions of years as natural forces shaped the metal into the form you see today, would you believe me?"

"Of course not! It was obviously built by

²⁵ Example from Sir Fred Hoyle, Professor of Astronomy at Cambridge

²⁶ This example is also from Sir Fred Hoyle

somebody. It even has the company's logo on the side."

Professor Grimes nodded. "Exactly. So how can you not see that the life on this planet is vastly more complicated than that shredder? Believing that life created itself by random chance is even *more* preposterous than believing that my shredder evolved from some sort of primordial shredder goo. On top of that, God already told us how He created the world – and Jesus reaffirmed that account. Considering that Colossians 1:13-16 tells us that Jesus is the one who created the world in the first place, I think it makes a great deal of sense to *believe Him*."

"But scientists—"

"Have an agenda," Grimes interrupted. "They are *not* disinterested scholars who are looking for the truth regardless of where it might lead. In John 3:19 Jesus said that men loved darkness and hated the light because their deeds were evil. Mankind does *not* want to find God, and they especially do not want to discover proof of God's existence and power. Men are no more interested in finding God than mice are interested in finding the

cat. But tell me something, Brad. If you don't believe what Jesus told you about how He created the world then why would you trust Him on any other subject?"

"I don't think it's like that at all," Brad replied. "I think God was trying to tell us all along that things evolved over time. People just misunderstood, that's all."

"Misunderstood? Maybe the reason they 'misunderstood' is because they interpreted Genesis 1 to mean *what it actually says*, instead of changing the definitions of words to mean things they have never meant. Maybe it's because when Exodus 20:11 said that God created the world 'in six days', they assumed that 'six days' meant 'six days' and not '14 billion years'. Get serious, Brad. No one who reads Genesis 1 ever comes away thinking 'Ah, so evolution created the world'. The text *cannot* be honestly interpreted to mean that. If people interpreted legal contracts the way that liberals interpret the first eleven chapters of the Bible, they would find themselves in prison for fraud. You don't get to redefine words and passages to fit your theories. The text says *exactly what it means*.

“God is either honest or a liar. He either knows how to communicate with mankind or He doesn’t. If God used evolution to create the world then God lied to us, because that’s not at all what He said. God was quite clear in Genesis 1 that each animal reproduced after its own kind; He never, *ever* said that one kind of animal evolved into other kinds over long passages of time.

“Now, if God *really was* trying to tell us that He evolved the world, that can only mean that He is a complete moron with an incredibly poor grasp of communication. In fact, He failed so hard at communicating that you might as well throw out your Bible, because you have no hope of understanding it. Its text could literally mean anything.

“However, we know that God is not a liar or a moron, and He is certainly not incompetent. Therefore, the most logical thing to do is to take Genesis 1 to mean exactly what it says: God created the world in six days. Evolution is therefore a lie.”

Wally spoke up. “I’m getting all wet here.”

“No, you’re getting lectured,” Grimes replied.

Wally pointed up. "I mean I think water is falling out of the sky."

Grimes nodded. "Brilliant observation. That is a phenomenon known as rain. You have probably seen it before, because it rains on a regular basis. Fortunately for you it is not raining very hard. In fact, it's barely sprinkling."

"I don't like it. Why are you letting it rain?"

"It's not going to do you any harm," the professor replied. "You didn't bring any books with you, or any paper to take notes. I've also forbidden all electronic devices, so if you followed my rules you don't have anything that might get ruined. Unless you are the Wicked Witch of the West and will melt when you come into contact with water, you should be safe."

Brad spoke up. "You can't expect us to pay attention when it's raining, do you?"

Grimes looked at him. "Can I *ever* expect you to pay attention? Have any of you learned anything today?"

"I learned that monkeys are bad typists," Wally said.

Professor Grimes sighed and looked at his watch. "Fantastic. Well, since we truly are

out of time I guess you are dismissed. I'll try to find a new location to hold our classes and will let you know where we will be meeting in the future. Class dismissed!"

Chapter 4.5: President Harris

That afternoon, Professor Grimes walked over to Old Main and up the rickety wooden stairs to the office of the university president. (At one time there had been a functional elevator, but it had been out of order for the past five years.) Grimes did not like interacting with President Harris but he felt he had no choice. After talking with Harold the janitor about the collapse of the Rutledge Building's roof he decided to look into the situation personally. Someone had to make the president understand the urgency of the situation, and if Grimes didn't do it then no one would.

Professor Grimes walked into the president's outer office and up to his secretary's desk. "I'm here to see President Harris," he announced.

Judy, the middle-aged lady who had

served as the president's secretary for the past year, looked at the professor. The president had told her that he was busy and did not want to be disturbed. She knew that he was actually just surfing the internet, but he *had* said he wasn't to be disturbed and he *was* the one in charge. It was her duty to enforce his wishes.

But Judy had crossed paths with the eccentric Professor Grimes before. She hadn't worked at the university long but she had already learned from experience that it was impossible to win an encounter with him. Somehow Grimes always had a way of coming out on top. She could tell him no and refuse to let him in, but in the end Grimes would meet with the president whether Judy allowed it or not.

So why go through the trouble of telling him no? What was it going to accomplish? Besides, she didn't get paid enough to try to stop people like Grimes. That would take an army – and even then, she'd bet on Grimes.

Judy looked at the professor, nodded, and pressed a button on her intercom. "Frank? Professor Grimes is here to see you. I'm

sending him in.”

“Wait!” President Harris shouted. “I said I’m not to be disturbed.”

“I didn’t ask for your opinion,” Judy replied. “He’s coming in whether you want him to or not.”

Professor Grimes smiled. “Thank you, miss.” Grimes briskly strolled past Judy, opened the door to the president’s office, and walked inside. He then closed the door behind him and took a seat.

The office of the university president was incredibly roomy and luxurious. The furniture was made of imported leather and the bookshelves were made of mahogany. Rare paintings hung on the walls, and the carpet alone cost more than Professor Grimes’ car. Everywhere the professor looked he saw expensive furnishings, gold plating, and extravagant wealth. Grimes didn’t even want to know how much President Harris’ pen collection cost. The school might be falling apart, but this office was a pocket of riches.

It made Grimes wonder exactly who was keeping an eye on the president’s expense account, and who was auditing it to make

sure that the money was being spent in accordance with school guidelines. He had a feeling the answer was 'nobody'. Harold the janitor could do many things, but he was not a trained accountant.

President Harris was not happy to see him. "What do you think you're doing in here, Grimes? I told Judy I didn't want to be disturbed."

Grimes frowned. "I don't want to be disturbed either, and yet I find myself *very* disturbed. Do you know why I am disturbed? It's because the roof of my building has collapsed."

"Too bad," President Harris said. He turned his attention back to the online solitaire game he was playing, and placed the red 5 on the black 6.

"Yes, it is indeed 'too bad'. This campus has nine buildings. Four of them no longer have roofs, and two of them – including the building where I hold all my classes – is in danger of complete collapse. Do you know what that means?"

"You bet I do! It means you're going to pester me and interrupt my moment of peace.

You're a real pest, Grimes – the pestiest kind of pest. I'd fire you, but you have tenure, and apparently that means you can't be fired. I'm not a big fan of tenure, Grimes, you know that? It makes life so much harder for winners like me."

"Winners?" Grimes echoed. "I'm not seeing a lot of winning going on here, Harris. You don't seem to realize that the county building inspector is on his way here, and when he gets here and sees the condition of this campus he is going to *shut this seminary down*. I don't know how you have managed to keep him from condemning us for all these years, but things can no longer be ignored. The condition of our facilities is now statewide news, and people all over the county are talking about it. The inspector *will* be here tomorrow, he *will* see the horrific condition of our campus, and he *will* condemn everything."

"He won't condemn the new stadium," President Harris said. "That's in great condition."

"That's not going to be much of a consolation prize when he *shuts down the*

entire university! You need to take action right now or else this will be *the end*. Our buildings need emergency maintenance. It is the only thing that can possibly save us.”

“Oh, I’m going to take action, all right. I’m sure we can convince him to leave the school open until the end of the semester. I bet that’s doable.”

“And what good will that do?” Professor Grimes demanded. “If that’s all you do then you are just putting off the inevitable. Do you have a plan to repair everything by then? Are you going to use that time to start fixing all the problems we’re having?”

“Grimes, Grimes, Grimes,” President Harris said. “You know, everything isn’t about *you*. All I need to do is buy some more time so I can find a job at another school. I really couldn’t care less what happens to this dump. You’ve really got to get your priorities right, professor. A few extra months will do *me* a world of good.”

Professor Grimes glared at him. “And you really think that you will be able to find another job after you’ve trashed this university and ran it into the ground? Who on

earth would even consider hiring you?"

President Harris shrugged. "There are lots of morons out there. Besides, all you need to do is bribe the right people and you're in. I'm sure I'll find something! I suppose if all else fails I could always blackmail somebody, but it usually doesn't come to that. I'm sure I'll be able to make something work. Now it *is* true that *you* will be in a lot of trouble when this school closes down, but I consider that an added bonus. I've always sort of hoped you would get run over by a bus or something."

Grimes paused a moment before replying. "You are a truly terrible human being. There is nothing the least bit Christlike about you. How do you hope to escape the fires of Hell? What will you do when you stand before God and are held accountable for the terrible things you have done?"

Harris shrugged. "Right now I just want you to get out of my office. Was there some reason you decided to come in here and afflict me?"

"Of course there was! Haven't you been paying attention to anything I've said? My

classroom has been destroyed. I need something done so I can continue teaching my students.”

“Hey – that’s not *my* problem. Sounds to me like you’re just going to have to suffer.”

“You’re really not going to help me? You’re not going to do anything?”

“Hmmm,” the president said thoughtfully. He stared at his computer screen. “You know, there is something I’m going to do.”

“What’s that?” Professor Grimes asked.

President Harris moved the mouse. “I’m going to put this red 7 on that black 8.”

Grimes’ eyes narrowed. “This is not the end of this. I will be back.”

“Not if I lock my office door,” the president replied. “If you come in here again I’ll have you arrested for breaking and entering. I’ve got rights, you know.”

“You’re the most defective president I’ve ever seen,” Grimes said angrily. “If you were a toaster you would have been recalled years ago. You are a menace to society. I blame you for the destruction of this campus.”

“Says the loser with the tiny office,” Harris replied. “You are such a sad, sad little

man.”

As Grimes got up to leave, President Harris smiled. “I’m going to win, Grimes, and you’re going to lose. I’m going to retire a multi-millionaire and you’re going to get murdered by some deranged student. Compared to me, you are nothing but a big steaming pile of failure. How does that make you feel?”

Professor Grimes sighed. “Do you ever think about the future, Harris? Has it ever occurred to you that I am going to spend eternity living with God in complete joy, while you are going to spend eternity facing the unending wrath of God and being tormented by a fire that never goes out? Is being burned alive for eternity really worth it?”

“That sounds like loser talk to me,” the president replied. “If you want to scare me you’ll have to work harder than that. I think you’re just jealous.”

“I would not trade places with you for all the money in the world,” Grimes said firmly. “May God have mercy on your soul.”

The professor walked out of the office and closed the door, leaving President Harris

alone with his game of solitaire.

Lecture 5: The Cross

It was a beautiful fall day. The sun was shining, the sky was blue, and there was not a cloud to be seen. It was a bit warm and humid, but there was a cool breeze. It was a great day to be outside – which was very fortunate, considering that’s where Professor Grimes was going to have to hold his class. He had managed to round up a few chairs, but despite his best efforts he could not locate an unoccupied classroom. Every room that had not been destroyed was already taken.

So the professor had found a nice grassy spot in a field by the campus (far away from where Andy was picketing), and informed his reluctant students that they would be meeting in the great outdoors.

Rob Brewer was not convinced that meeting outside was a good idea. “What are we going to do if it rains? Do I need to start bringing an umbrella?”

“An umbrella is always advisable in the

case of rain,” Professor Grimes replied. “However, I have put in a requisition for a tent and I hope to have it in my possession by the next time we meet. That should shelter us from the elements.”

“But not from the heat,” Isaac commented. “It’s just way too hot to be meeting outside. This is the warmest fall I’ve ever seen.”

“Then I guess you will just have to suffer,” the professor replied cheerfully. “Speaking of which, suffering is going to be our topic for today. We will be studying the cross of Christ, and we will begin our lecture by talking about the nation of Israel.”

“Israel?” Iris asked. “What do they have to do with it?”

“Everything! You see, long ago God chose Abraham and told him that He was going to turn him into a mighty nation. Abraham believed God’s promises, and God kept His word. Abraham’s descendants moved to Egypt during a time of great famine, and while in Egypt they grew into a mighty nation. However, the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites and abused them terribly. So God

raised up Moses and used him to rescue His people from Pharaoh. Moses then led them to Mount Sinai, where God gave them His Law.”

“The Mosaic Law,” Brad said.

“Right. God gave them that law and told them that He would bless the Israelites if they kept it, but He would curse them if they disobeyed it. As it turned out, Israel utterly failed at keeping the Mosaic Law. Oh, they might serve God for a short time, but they would always fall away. Time and time again God sent prophets to urge them to repent, but the people ignored them. They were stubborn and insisted on doing things their own way. They were a hard-hearted and rebellious people – much like us, really.”

Overheard Grimes heard the roar of a helicopter. He glanced up and saw that it was a news chopper, which seemed to be taking video footage of the Rutledge Building. Apparently it wasn’t every day that an entire campus was condemned for code violations.

Iris spoke up. “Weren’t there sheep involved? And sacrifices?”

“Yes there were,” Professor Grimes

replied. "A big part of the Mosaic Law was something called the levitical system. God set aside the Levites to maintain the tabernacle. The Levites who descended from Aaron, Moses' older brother, were set aside as priests. It was their job to offer sacrifices on behalf of the sins of the people."

"And those were animal sacrifices, right?"

"Right. A number of different types of animals were sacrificed – such as birds, cows, and sheep, among others. There were six major types of sacrifices and each one carried its own meaning. There were also special holy days that had their own special sacrifices. If you ever take my Levitical Studies course you will learn all about the details of this rather complicated system. But the point is that sacrifices were offered on behalf of the sins of the people. In order for the people to obtain forgiveness for their sins, something innocent had to die."

"That doesn't seem very fair," Brad remarked. "Those poor animals didn't do anything wrong."

The professor nodded. "That was the whole point. If those animals *had* done

something wrong then they couldn't have been sacrificed, because it wouldn't have done any good. The sacrifice had to be innocent because only an innocent creature could take upon itself the punishment that the guilty person deserved. That is how forgiveness works. You see, God simply cannot say 'Oh, you're sorry, so we're all good now. You're free to go.' Your sins *must* be punished. God cannot sweep them under the rug and pretend that they never happened. The only way you can escape punishment is if some innocent person suffers in your place. That is the only way you can ever obtain forgiveness."

Iris spoke up. "So you're saying that animals had to die on behalf of people?"

"That is the way the system worked. However, it didn't *really* work. Hebrews 10:4 tells us that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away our sins. Animal sacrifices simply could not bring forgiveness. The real purpose of that system was to point the Israelites to their need for a Savior. God gave them the Law to teach them that they were incapable of keeping the Law. God gave them

the sacrificial system to teach them that someone was going to have to die in order to purchase forgiveness for their sins. Galatians 3:24 says that the entire system was a schoolmaster that pointed us to Jesus – the One who would keep the law perfectly (because Israel could not do it) and who would die in our place (because He was innocent of all wrongdoing).

“This is why the identity of Jesus is so important. He had to be utterly sinless because if He ever sinned He would not be innocent, and only an innocent party could suffer on behalf of the guilty. He also had to be born of a virgin, because if He was not He would have inherited the sin nature of Adam and would then be just as guilty as the rest of us.”

“But only if He sinned,” Brad said.

Professor Grimes shook his head. “The Bible tells us that when Adam sinned, that sin made all of his descendants guilty as well. Psalm 51:5 says that we are sinful beings from the moment of conception – which occurs long before we are even born. In other words, we are already guilty in the sight of God

before we even take our very first breath.”

“But that’s not fair!”

“It is *vital*,” the professor replied. “Romans 5:12-19 tells us that since Adam’s sin made all of us guilty, Christ’s sacrifice can make all of us forgiven. That is how it works. We are made guilty by the sin of one man, and we are set free by the sacrifice of one man. Incidentally, this goes right back to what we talked about in our last class. Since Adam’s sin brought death into the world, Christ’s sacrifice can defeat death once and for all. The fall of Adam can be undone by the victory of Christ.

“So Christ fulfilled the plan that God had made before He even created the world. He—”

Brad interrupted. “What do you mean, before He created the world? Mankind didn’t even exist back then!”

“That is correct. However, God knows all things and has a perfect knowledge of the future. Before God even created mankind He already knew everything that we would ever do. He knew that His perfect world would be destroyed by sin, and He knew that Adam would fall and mankind would need a savior.

Revelation 13:8 tells us that God planned for His Son Jesus to die on the cross before He even created the world. Jesus created the world *knowing* what He would have to do and what it would cost Him to save it.”

“Wow,” Iris exclaimed. “We were worth that much?”

“Goodness, no!” the professor replied. “The lives of all of mankind combined are worth infinitely less than the life of the Son of God. Our value doesn’t even *begin* to compare to His. Psalm 8:1 tells us that God’s name has been glorified above the Heavens, while Romans 7:24 says we are utterly wretched, sinful men. Jesus did *not* say ‘Well, their lives are worth much more than mine, so I’d better go and save them.’ Quite the opposite. John 3:16 says that Jesus saved us because He *loved us*, not because we were worth it. His great, unfathomable love for us – a love we could never earn or deserve – compelled Him to save us even though the price was unfathomably high. The cross is *not* a testament to our worth. It is a testament to the surpassing love of God.

“So, when the time was right, Jesus took

on the form of a man and was born of a virgin in Bethlehem. The one who had been God for all of eternity became the God-Man – fully God and yet now fully Man as well.”

“What was the point of that?” Iris asked. “Was that really necessary?”

“Absolutely. In order to die in the place of men Jesus had to first become a man. Also, Hebrews 2 tells us that He was made like us in every way so He could be a faithful High Priest – someone who was tempted as we are, but who never sinned; someone who could understand our pains, because He Himself suffered pain as well. Since He went through trials Himself, He can help those who are tempted and who are troubled.

“Jesus did exactly what His Father commanded Him to do, and exactly what was prophesied in the Old Testament. He led a perfect life, He suffered, and He died a cruel, torturous death on the cross. He was the Lamb of God who died for the sins of the people. He fulfilled the Old Testament system and put an end to it.”

Isaac spoke up. “But the Jews kept sacrificing animals after Jesus died. They only

stopped when the Romans destroyed the Temple. In fact, the Jews today want to build another Temple so they can go back to sacrificing animals.”

“That’s true,” the professor agreed. “But that is because they rejected their Messiah – which had terrible consequences. In Matthew 23:33-39 Jesus pronounced a curse on the generation that had rejected Him. He warned them that God would judge them for the blood of all the martyrs in the Old Testament, and He would leave their house desolate – and that is exactly what God did. The reason Jerusalem was sacked in 70 AD and the Temple was destroyed was because the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah. That was God’s judgment upon them.

“Yes, the Jews did try to continue on with the sacrificial system, but that did not please God. That was an act of rebellion, not an act of obedience. After the Resurrection God gave them clear signs that what they were doing was wrong, but they refused to listen.

“For example, once a year on the Day of Atonement the High Priest offered a sacrifice for the sins of the entire nation. During that

holy day the High Priest received two goats. One of these goats would become the sacrifice, while the other goat would be driven away. The choice of which goat got sacrificed was made by casting lots. The priest would blindly reach into an urn that had a white ball and a black ball, and would select a ball with each hand. The white ball indicated the sacrifice and the black ball indicated the goat that would be driven away.

“After the lots were chosen, the white ball goat was sacrificed and two crimson strips were taken. One strip was tied to the goat that was about to be driven away, while the other one was tied to the Temple door. Amazingly, each time the lot was chosen the white ball *always* appeared in the priest’s right hand. Each time the goat was driven away, the crimson strip on the door turned white as soon as the goat had disappeared. This behavior never changed – until Christ died.

“For the forty years that followed His resurrection, until the Temple was destroyed, the white ball always appeared in the left hand and the crimson strip no longer turned

white. The priests knew exactly what that meant: *the sacrifice wasn't working anymore*. God wasn't accepting it. The odds of that ball appearing in the left hand 40 times in a row is more than a trillion to one, but Israel still refused to listen.²⁷ Since they rejected their Messiah and refused to repent *even after Jesus bodily rose from the dead and appeared to hundreds of witnesses*, God destroyed Jerusalem and scattered them among the nations."

"That's freaky," Rob commented. "How could they miss a miracle like that?"

Professor Grimes shrugged. "Keep in mind that that very same generation had actually seen Jesus *in person* and they missed that. They saw Him heal the blind, cast out demons, and raise the dead, and they missed that. They crucified Jesus and He then rose back to life on the third day, and they missed that. There was no amount of evidence that could convince them – not even *Jesus literally coming back from the dead*.

²⁷ "Talmudim on Temple Doors", Wendy Wippel, omegaletter.com

“This leads us to a very important truth: what convinces someone to become a Christian is *not* our evidence or our arguments, but the power of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 2:1 says that we were dead in our sins. Just as a dead person won’t respond to you no matter what you say to them, people who are dead in their sins are incapable of responding to God. In order for a person to become saved the Holy Ghost has to spiritually raise them from the dead. He has to change their heart before they can respond and be converted.

“1 Corinthians 1:21 tells us that God has chosen to use the mechanism of preaching the gospel to perform this miracle. In Mark 16:15 Jesus commanded His Church to go through the world and preach the gospel. As the gospel is preached, God works through it to convert people and save them. In other words, it is *not* the job of missionaries to save people. Instead it is the job of missionaries to preach the gospel. The Holy Spirit is the one who works through the gospel to save the lost and bring them to Christ. As Christians we are simply the messengers.”

Professor Grimes glanced at his watch. “There is a great deal more I could say about Christ’s ministry, trial, and crucifixion, but I see I am running out of time. However, your textbook does cover those topics, so I suggest you pay close attention to what it says – it will be on your next exam. The main point I want to bring out is that just as the lambs in the Old Testament were sacrificed for the sins of the people, so Jesus Christ was literally sacrificed for our sins. He was nailed to a real Roman cross, where He suffered, bled, and finally died for our sins.

“After Jesus was dead He was buried in a tomb, and three days later He arose back to life. He died a physical death and experienced a physical resurrection. By coming back to life He proved that He was exactly who He said He was – the Messiah, the Son of God, who came to take away the sins of the world. He paid for our sins, accomplished our atonement, and conquered death itself. Jesus then appeared to His astonished disciples, commanded them to spread the gospel to the nations, and ascended into Heaven. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that He is in Heaven now making

intercession for us.”

Iris spoke up. “But one day He will come back.”

The professor smiled. “Indeed He will – and that is something we will talk about in our very last class. But for now it appears we have run out of time. Incidentally, I want to remind everyone that our second exam will take place during next week’s class, so make sure you are prepared for that. That test *will* be a significant part of your grade. Also, since that class will be taken up by the exam, we will continue our discussion of the Church in the following session.”

Isaac spoke up. “It is really hot out here. Like, seriously. It’s hot. Isn’t there something you can do?”

“Can you turn down the sun?” Wally asked. “Or maybe move it? That might help.”

Grimes smiled. “As I said earlier, I am in the process of acquiring a tent. That should act as shade and keep the sun from scorching your delicate heads. However, remember that you are here to learn, not to be comfortable. While I *can* promise to teach you the class material, I *cannot* promise you a

comfortable, trouble-free life. You may be forced to endure the horrible fate of spending a beautiful day outdoors, and you may have to invest in some sunscreen. Class dismissed!”

After the class left, the professor gathered up the chairs they left behind, folded them up, and carried them away.

Chapter 5.5: Condemned

The city building inspector had done his work – in fact, he had done it with great speed and thoroughness. It took Rick Valdez remarkably little time to condemn every single structure that the university owned. He even condemned the parking lots, which Grimes didn't realize was possible. Everything was going to have to be torn down.

However, President Harris had made good on his word. He somehow persuaded Valdez to allow the university to remain open until the semester ended. Technically all the President really did was arrange to keep the city's bulldozers and wreckers away from the campus until the day after finals week, but it amounted to the same thing. Sunset Hills Seminary would be allowed to finish its last semester.

That left just one question: were any of the buildings on campus still safe to use (relatively speaking, of course), or did

Professor Grimes need to relocate all of his classes outside? He knew of only one person who would know the answer to that riddle, and that was Harold the janitor.

“So what’s the situation, Harold?” Grimes asked.

The professor and the janitor were standing in the university courtyard, looking up at the building that used to house Grimes’ class. At one time the Rutledge Building had been a fine structure, but those days had passed more than a hundred years ago. According to the city inspector it was a miracle that the building was even standing. Valdez claimed it should have collapsed years ago.

“Well, it’s not a pretty picture,” Harold replied. “The whole roof has gone now – caved right in, it did. That exposed the floor of the top floor to the elements, and now that’s falling in too. Frankly, I think Valdez is right. That whole building is about to come down, and it wouldn’t surprise me a bit if it collapsed in a week or two. The truth is it’s always had structural problems. If I were you I wouldn’t get anywhere near it. If you do

have to walk by it, try to stay out of the crush zone.”

“Are there *any* buildings that you trust?” Grimes asked. “The inspector was pretty hard on all of them.”

“Well, there are two buildings left that are in better shape than Rutledge, but one of them is Old Main and the other one doesn’t have any empty classrooms. Unless you can talk President Harris into giving up one of the faculty offices in Old Main I’m afraid you are just out of luck.”

Professor Grimes looked around. “Well, I suppose it had to come to this eventually. You realize what all this means, don’t you?”

“You bet! It means you’re going to have to keep holding your classes outside.”

Grimes shook his head. “That’s not what I was talking about. This is the end, Harold. It’s over. Every single building is going to be torn down. It’s high time you started looking for a new job. This campus has reached its final days and its date of execution has been officially scheduled.”

“Well, maybe so, but the semester’s not over yet. And in the meantime you’ve got a

class to teach and I've got things to clean. Until the end finally does come we're just going to have to make the best of things."

"Your dedication is an inspiration to us all," the professor replied. "I don't know what I'd do without you. Speaking of that, do you happen to have any supplies? Any chairs, perhaps, or maybe a desk I could use?"

Harold laughed. "Supplies! Boy, that'll be the day. The campus doesn't even provide me with a lawnmower – I have to bring my own. There are no supplies to be had. By the time the football team's budget is paid there just isn't any money left."

"Then I will just have to make do with what I can find. I suppose it could be worse."

"Yup. For example, the buildings could be on fire. That would make teaching a lot tougher – what with the flames and all."

"Indeed it would," Professor Grimes agreed. "Indeed it would. Let's hope it never comes to that."

Lecture 6: The Church

The class of Christianity 101 was not happy. Despite Professor Grimes' best efforts he had been unable to convince the university to provide him with a tent. Instead he had been forced to make do with a giant black tarp that was being held up by a series of strategically placed poles. Underneath the tarp were five chairs, the industrial shredder, and a very long extension cord that connected the shredder to an external wall outlet a thousand feet away. Grimes' classroom might not have walls, but he wasn't about to give up his ability to destroy electronic devices. As long as his shredder was there he was pleased.

His class, though, was less pleased. The tarp did technically shield them from the elements, but it left a great deal to be desired. It was hot, humid, and pouring rain, and every now and then a gust of wind blew rain into their faces and got them all wet.

"I can't believe they won't even give us a

lousy tent,” Brad grumbled as he took his seat. “Just where does our tuition money go, anyway?”

“These days it mostly goes to maintain the football stadium,” the professor replied. Outside the tarp the rain poured even harder. The ground was soaking wet, and a giant mud puddle was forming right where the students were sitting. Grimes was glad he had not picked today to wear his white sneakers.

“That stadium is such a waste,” Isaac complained. “The Sunset Hills team hasn’t won a single game in my entire lifetime. I’m surprised we’re even allowed to be in the league.”

The professor shrugged. “That is one of life’s great mysteries. Apparently that rather dubious decision made a great deal of sense to President Harris. He is the one who made the strategic choice to devote all of our resources to that stadium. In my opinion that decision did not prove to be a good one, but I don’t think Harris has learned anything. I suppose his inability to learn from his mistakes is another one of life’s great mysteries.

“Speaking of mysteries, today we are going to talk about one of the great mysteries of the Bible: the Church.”

“The church is a mystery?” Iris exclaimed. “What’s so mysterious about the church? I mean, there’s a church on every block around here. They’re not hiding or anything.”

“True. In this country it is very easy to find a church – although finding a *faithful* church is an altogether different story. What I mean by ‘mystery’ is that the institution of the Church is a relatively new thing in human history. It is something God did not reveal until New Testament times. Despite what you may have been told, there was no Church in the Old Testament.”

“Sure there was,” Brad commented. “In the Old Testament the Church was Israel.”

“I’m afraid not,” the professor replied. “Many people believe that, but it is not true. Throughout the entire Old Testament the nation of Israel is *never* referred to as the Church – not even once. The same is true in the New Testament. You can read your Bible from cover to cover but you will never find a verse that says that Israel and the Church are

one and the same. They are two completely different entities.

“The truth is that Israel is Israel and the Church is the Church. Just because there are Jews in the Church does not mean that Israel and the Church are the same. After all, there are Frenchmen in the Church but that does not mean that the Church is France. Israel is the nation of the Jews, whereas the Church is the collection of all Christians who are living in this age of history. The Church did not come into existence until the day of Pentecost, which took place several weeks after Christ’s ascension.”

Brad spoke up. “But there were Christians in the Old Testament.”

“Yes there were – but they were not a part of the Church any more than being a member of your local church makes you an Israelite. The Church is a new institution. There are many differences between Israel and the Church, and the two should *not* be confused.

“For example, the nation of Israel is composed of the children of Jacob. If you are a descendent of Jacob then you are an

Israelite. The Church, however, is composed of all those – both Jew and Gentile – who have repented of their sins and believed in Christ. In other words, Israel is composed almost entirely of unbelievers, while the Church is composed only of believers.

“These two groups have also been given different promises. For example, in Genesis 17:8 and 48:4 God gave Israel a permanent right to what used to be called the land of Canaan. That land was given to them as an ‘everlasting possession’. As long as the world exists that land will be theirs. However, the Church has not been given any territory in this world at all. Instead God said in Hebrews 11:16 that He has prepared for us a heavenly city – which is what we’ll talk about in our next class.

“There is also the issue of prophetic destiny. Since Israel rebelled against God and rejected Jesus, He punished them by scattering the Jews all over the world. Hosea 3:4-5 tells us that the Jews will abide without a king or a Temple for a long time, but then in the latter days God will gather them back as a nation. That prophecy has been fulfilled. The

Jews were without a country for a long time, but in 1948 Israel became a nation once more. God kept His word.

“Daniel 9:24-27 goes further and says that Israel’s rebellion will not last forever because God has set aside a period of time to chastise them and bring an end to their sins. They will go through a terrible time of suffering and will almost be annihilated, but at the end of that period they will repent and cry out to Jesus their Messiah for salvation. Zechariah 12:10 says that they will ‘look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him’. When they repent and cry out to Jesus, He will return and defeat their enemies. Jesus will then establish His throne in Jerusalem and rule over the entire world.

“The Church, however, has not been in rebellion. This is because *by definition* the Church is composed only of people who have *accepted* Jesus as Messiah. When that terrible time of suffering comes the Lord will take the Church out of the world so that they will not have to endure His wrath.”

Iris spoke up. “But Christians are suffering all over the world. In fact, they’ve

been persecuted for thousands of years.”

“That’s true,” the professor agreed. “But there is a key difference. It is one thing for Christians to be persecuted. As I explained in our very first class, Jesus told us that in this world we would be persecuted. Since He suffered, we will suffer as well. We do not deserve to be treated better than He was.

“However, one day God will pour out His wrath upon the world. Facing the wrath of God is *very* different from facing persecution. I Thessalonians 5:9 tells us that God has not appointed us to face His wrath, but instead has delivered us from it. This is something that we can see throughout history. When God poured out His wrath upon the ancient world and destroyed it all in the Flood, He first put Noah in the Ark so they would not be harmed. When God poured out His wrath upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, He first sent His angels to rescue Lot so that he would not be destroyed in the fire that was about to fall from heaven. When God poured out His wrath upon Egypt, He prevented the plagues from striking the Israelites in Goshen. When God will one day pour out His wrath

upon this world, He will first remove His Church. It is true that Christians suffer, but they will not face the wrath of God. That is one thing we will be spared – but we'll talk about that in our final class.

“As I was saying, after the Lord rose from the dead He told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came. Acts 2 tells us that on the day of Pentecost the disciples were all gathered together in one place. The Holy Spirit then came upon them and they went out and started preaching.”

Brad spoke up. “But what does that have to do with the Church?”

“It has everything to do with it! A few very significant things happened on that day. First of all, Jesus promised to give us the Holy Spirit, and that is the day it happened. Ever since then all Christians have had the Spirit, and no matter what happens they *cannot* lose it. In fact, in Romans 8:9 the apostle Paul said that if you don't have the Spirit then you are not a Christian at all. That is a remarkable change from the Old Testament, where very few people ever had the Spirit, and those who did have it had to be very careful lest, like

Samson, they sinned and lost the Spirit. That is one of the key distinguishing characteristics of the Church: unlike those who came before us (and unlike those who will come after the Church is gone), we have the Spirit as a permanent possession.

“There is also the significance of the day of Pentecost itself. That day is also referred to as the Festival of Loaves, and was one of the Jewish festivals that God gave Israel in the Mosaic Law. In that Festival the priest waved two different loaves before the Lord and then joined them together. The festival signified that whereas there used to be two different groups of people – Jew and Gentile – the day would come when they would be brought together into one body. On the day of Pentecost that is exactly what happened: the Jews and Gentiles came together as one in the body of the Church.”

Brad spoke up. “So you’re saying that there isn’t an Israel anymore?”

“Of course not! Israel is never going to be destroyed. God chose her as His people and He will never abandon her. What I *am* saying is that within the Church itself there is no

distinction between Jew and Gentile. In the Old Testament the Gentiles were unclean; they could not enter the Temple. That has changed. Gentiles are no longer the unclean ones who are cast out of the Temple and kept away from the holy place; instead we have been grafted in to God's family. However, Israel and the Church are *not* the same, and God has different plans for them – which is something we've already discussed.

“Another thing to think about is that the New Testament refers to the Church as the Bride of Christ. However, John the Baptist did not consider himself to be a part of the Bride. Instead in John 3:29 he called himself a friend of the bridegroom. If the Church began on the day of Pentecost – which occurred some time after John the Baptist was beheaded by Herod – then that makes sense. After all, he couldn't possibly be a part of a group that didn't come into existence until after he was dead.”

Rob spoke up. “But what about the Pharisees? Weren't they the Church of Christ's day?”

“They most certainly were not,” the

professor said firmly. "That bunch of self-righteous hypocrites were the *religious leaders* of Christ's day, which is an altogether different thing. There are lots of very religious people in the world who are very, very far from God. Remember, the Church is composed strictly of Christians, and the Pharisees hunted down Christians and murdered them. The Pharisees were most definitely *not* Christians, and therefore they were not a part of the Church. Besides, the Church didn't exist before Christ died, so they couldn't have been members of it."

Brad spoke up. "But there are lots of unbelievers in churches across the country."

The professor sighed. "There is a huge difference between your local church and the Bride of Christ. The global Church is composed of all those who have come to believe in Christ since the day of Pentecost. However, your local church is composed of a random group of people who happened to show up in a particular building on a particular date and time. Those two things are *not* the same. Going down to your local church and joining it is utterly meaningless if

you are not a believer in Christ. God does *not* look at the local church rolls when determining who gets into Heaven.

“Another example of this same sort of confusion can be found in what this world erroneously refers to as ‘gay marriage’. When two men go down to the local courthouse and get united in a legal contract, the world refers to it as marriage. However, it is most certainly *not* marriage. Marriage is an institution defined and created by God Himself, and it is the union of a man and a woman. The world can try all it wants to change that definition, but God is not interested in their efforts. The world may call it marriage, but it will never actually *be* marriage. Instead it will be exactly what God has always said it is: a very serious sin.”

“But it’s legal,” Brad protested.

“So is murder,” Professor Grimes replied. “All over the world it is perfectly legal for mothers to murder their own children, as long as they do it either before their child is born or while their child is being born. There is even growing support for the right to murder your children after they are born. But

being legal *doesn't make it right*. God still condemns it as a terrible sin, and God is the one that we will answer to. I realize there are Christians all over the world who have no problem with adultery, murder, homosexuality, abortion, and many other extremely serious sins, but that does *not* mean God has changed His views on the matter. I assure you that on Judgment Day no one will be able to use the 'but it was legal!' defense. God has His own standard, and all of mankind's laws and arguments will never change it. The opinions of our culture will never change God's mind."

Outside the flimsy tarp the storm had not let up. A small muddy stream was now flowing between the classroom chairs. Lightning flashed in the distance, but it was so far away that the thunder could not be heard. The tarp was keeping out the rain – but just barely; it was beginning to sag.

But Grimes lectured on. He was not going to let the rain stop him. He had a job to do and he was going to get it done – even if the creek did rise. He would not be thwarted by a simple storm.

“My point is that the Church is a new institution, created by God in this era of history and charged with spreading the gospel over all the world and discipling the nations. That is why we are still here on this planet: to tell others about Jesus. That is our primary mission.

“Today there are many people who are very confused about the purpose of the Church. They seem to believe that its goal is to save the environment, or fight global warming, or helping people lose weight, or whatever the current fad happens to be. I agree it is a good thing to feed the poor and help the needy, but we must never forget that that *cannot* be our goal. Feeding the poor will do them no good if they still die and go to Hell. Christ charged us with *preaching the gospel to the world*. That is the only thing that can save people from an eternity of fiery judgment. What the world desperately needs is *the gospel*, and Christ commanded the Church to deliver it.”

Wally interrupted. “You know, I like the sound of that. If churches would actually deliver their stuff to my house then I wouldn’t

have to show up. That would be even more convenient than drive-thru sermons! You might be on to something.”

Brad spoke up. “Couldn’t you just watch televangelists? How is that any different?”

“They never pass the communion bread to me,” Wally complained.

Professor Grimes groaned. “No, no, no, and *no!* God requires Christians to study their Bibles, to pray, and to attend church on a regular basis. Now, this does not mean that it is a sin to skip church on Wednesday nights. The Bible never mentions Wednesday night services, and it never requires people to attend church every single time their local church holds a service. However, Hebrews 10:25 says you are not allowed to stop attending church altogether and just stay home. You really do have to show up in person.”

“But why?” Rob asked. “I mean, there are lots of good sermons online. What’s the point?”

“It’s not just about the sermon, you know. When you attend church you experience Christian fellowship. You join with others in

the worship of God. You give your offerings to further the kingdom of God. You have the chance to use your spiritual gifts to help other believers – and you give others a chance to help you. God did not mean for Christians to become hermits who lived in caves. We are supposed to be a Body that works together – and in order to do that we have to actually *show up* and be together.”

“That just sounds so boring,” Wally complained. “It’s too much work.”

Professor Grimes looked at him, puzzled. “Young man, you are attending a *seminary*. The whole point of this institution is to train people to work in churches, to help churches grow, and to found churches in foreign nations. If you don’t even want to *attend* church then what on earth are you doing in this school?”

Wally shrugged. “It was the only one within walking distance of my house. It would have been too much work to go anywhere else.”

Grimes sighed. “As I was saying, the local church is composed of many different parts. One thing I want to emphasize is that the

church is a *group of people*, not a building. In the Old Testament God actually manifested His glory in the Temple itself. When the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies he could literally see the glory of God. However, God doesn't do that anymore. In this era of history our bodies are actually the temple of God. I Corinthians 6:19 says that the Lord now dwells inside *us* instead of inside a building in the Middle East. The only thing special about the church building is that it's where the congregation gathers together to meet. Remember that, class: the *people* are the church. That is going to be on your next exam.

"The other thing I want to point out is that the pastor is *not* the head of the Church. Ephesians 5:23 says that Jesus Christ has that role. Instead, pastors are actually the shepherds of their flock. It is their job to care for the sheep – but the sheep belong to Christ, not to him. Pastors will be held accountable for their actions, and should live accordingly. If they abuse their position then they will have to answer for it."

Iris spoke up. "What about deacons and elders?"

“It is their job to serve the congregation,” Professor Grimes replied. “Unfortunately I am running out of time, so I’m going to have to wrap this up. In your sophomore and junior years you will be eligible to take an advanced course on the structure of the Church. There you will learn all about how churches should function, what the different roles in the church are, and what deacons, elders, and pastors should be doing. Since this is a basic introductory course I won’t go into all of that detail.”

“But there isn’t going to be a sophomore year at Sunset Hills,” Iris pointed out. “How can we take your advanced class if you’re not going to be teaching it?”

“This isn’t the only seminary left in the world,” Grimes replied. “You will be able to continue your studies elsewhere – if you pass this class, that is. If you don’t pass then you will find even the easiest theological courses a bit too difficult for you.”

At that moment a powerful gust of wind caught the tarp and blew it down the field. Since the class no longer had any protection from the elements, the torrential rain began

soaking them. The students immediately began screaming.

“You are dismissed!” Professor Grimes said calmly, as rain poured down onto his head. “I’ll find a nice, dry place for us to meet next time – even if I have to commandeer the President’s office. I will be in touch!”

Chapter 6.5: The Fire

The next afternoon Professor Grimes received word that the police wanted to speak to him. However, by the time the professor arrived on campus the excitement was over. People were still milling around the scene, but the reporters had left. The firemen had put away their equipment and were cleaning up the area. Officer Wells had already put Andy in handcuffs and read him his rights.

When Grimes walked up to the scene he saw the remains of a car. It was actually a depressing sight, because Grimes recognized that particular vehicle. At one time it had been a beautiful, limited-edition Cadillac. It was a true collector's piece and had been kept in pristine condition. Grimes didn't collect antique cars, but he knew that particular vehicle was easily worth six figures.

At least, it *had* been worth a small fortune. Now it was just a burnt-out husk. It looked like it had been through a zombie

apocalypse. The tires were melted, the windows were broken, the paint had been burned off, and the interior had been utterly incinerated. None of it looked salvageable.

“What’s going on?” Grimes asked Office Wells. “My wife told me that you requested my presence. What seems to be the trouble?”

“It’s Andy,” Officer Wells said. “He said he wanted to speak with you.”

“You bet I did!” Andy said proudly. “Do you see that? Huh? What do you think now? I bet it makes you sorry you ever attacked me, doesn’t it?”

Professor Grimes looked at the remains of the car, then looked back at Andy. “First of all, I never attacked you. As I recall, *you* were the one who slugged me – and in the presence of a police officer, no less! Second, are you claiming responsibility for setting that car on fire?”

“You bet I am! I poured gasoline all over that car – *your* car – and then set it on fire. Man, you should have seen it light up! Let me tell you, you totally deserved it. It was the only way to make you understand that stealing is wrong.”

Professor Grimes turned to the police officer. "You *did* tell Andy that he had the right to remain silent, didn't you? And that any confessions would be used against him in a court of law?"

"I did," the officer replied. "But he won't stop talking."

Grimes shook his head. "Andy, am I to understand that you set this car on fire in an act of vengeance?"

Andy nodded. "It was a teaching moment. I'm teaching you a lesson, professor. Just like Jesus!"

"Just like Jesus'?" Grimes echoed. "Young man, you are seriously mistaken. Jesus Christ never committed arson, nor did He condone such acts. There is nothing loving or kind about acting like a violent felon. You have committed a terrible crime and a grave sin."

"I'd rather think of it as tough love," Andy said proudly. "What are you going to do now? Huh? Are you going to tell me you're sorry? Are you going to apologize? I'm winning this, aren't I?"

Professor Grimes paused. He had a lot

that he wanted to say, but he was searching for the right words. "Andy, why do you think that I drive a very expensive antique Cadillac?"

Andy looked confused. "Well, I mean, I just asked some random guy and he said that this car was yours. It wasn't hard to track down or anything."

"Tell me something, young man. Did you really not notice the sign in front of that parked car that said 'Reserved For The President'? What did you think that sign meant? Did you think that 'President' was some kind of code word for 'Grimes'?"

Andy looked over at the sign and realized that he hadn't noticed it before. He read it and shrugged. "Eh, signs make mistakes all the time. Who pays attention to things like that?"

"The words on that sign *matter*, Andy. That parking space belongs to President Harris, and he is the only person who is allowed to park there. The extremely expensive car that you just confessed to destroying did not belong to me. It belonged to Harris, who is not going to be happy about this. I assure you that he *will* prosecute you,

and you *will* be doing jail time. That car was worth at least a hundred thousand dollars.”

“Wait a minute. What do you mean, it wasn’t your car?”

“Andy, my car isn’t even parked in this lot. You torched the wrong car, and you are in a lot of trouble.”

“Oh yeah? Well – I’ll get you yet! You just wait. I’ll find your car and burn it if I have to burn the whole campus down! It’s the only way you’ll ever understand that stealing is wrong. Do you hear me?”

Officer Wells looked at Andy, then looked back at the professor. “Do you really think he would do it?”

“Why wouldn’t he?” Grimes asked. “All I can say is that if you let him out on bail you will deeply regret it. Andy is a menace to society.”

“No, *you’re* the menace,” Andy shot back. “You’re the intolerant one who goes around destroying other people’s property! You can’t pin that on me. When are you going to learn to respect other people’s things? When are you going to learn to love and tolerate?”

“Yes, nothing says ‘tolerance’ quite like

arson,” the professor replied, sighing. “Andy, listen to yourself. Do you even realize what you’re saying? Your behavior has been out of control since my very first class! You have refused to abide by my rules – rules that you agreed, *in writing*, to follow. You assaulted me. You picketed me. You committed a serious felony, and now you are threatening an arson attack that could jeopardize the lives of hundreds of people. You are not only on the road to a federal penitentiary, but you are also on the road to Hell.

“You’ve got to stop this, Andy. This is the time to change. Repent of your sins now, before you get yourself into even more trouble. This isn’t going to end well for you.”

“Oh yeah? Well – just wait until next time! I’ll get you yet, professor. Just wait and see! I’ll make you sorry if it’s the last thing I ever do!”

Professor Grimes shook his head as the police officer put him in the patrol car and drove off. He had no doubt that he would see Andy again – but he didn’t fear for his safety. Andy was the one he was worried about.

“If you do not repent, you will perish,”

Grimes muttered to himself. “Why would you choose that fate, Andy? Even the devils tremble at the wrath of God. What is it going to take for you to learn that your actions are not right in the sight of God?”

Lecture 7: The Afterlife

True to his word, the next time Professor Grimes' class met it did not meet outside. Instead of being battered by the elements, the intrepid students of Christianity 101 found themselves in the lowest sub-basement of Old Main. It was a dark and dreary place, and the room had a faint musty smell. The only light came from a few bare lightbulbs that dangled from wires from the ceiling. Dusty crates lined the walls, and there were cobwebs everywhere. Grimes would not have been surprised to find the skeleton of some poor lost student stashed away in a corner.

Still, it wasn't outdoors, so the professor was pleased. As an added bonus the room was both cool and dry. Grimes had cleared away some floor space in the basement's corner to hold his lectures. Since the basement lacked chairs, he rearranged some of the smaller crates into rows and threw a

sheet over them to act as a makeshift bench. It wasn't much, but it would do.

Grimes also had moved his industrial shredder to the basement and verified that it was still working. If a cell phone emergency arose he would be prepared.

"Good morning, class!" the professor announced. "Welcome to your new classroom."

"It's kind of dreary down here," Brad complained. "Are you sure there aren't skeletons lurking in the shadows?"

"Would you rather that we met outside in the rain? That can be arranged, you know."

"I guess not. But when are we going to get a proper class back?"

The professor smiled. "Probably the day money rains down from the sky and wishes come true. If you find a genie in a magic lamp then we might be able to acquire better accommodations. Until then we will continue to meet down here."

Wally spoke up. "But why bother meeting at all? Why not just call it a day and send us all home? I mean, after all, there isn't going to be another semester. Why are we

still having class?”

“Because you *desperately* need it,” the professor said firmly. “You are planning on spending the rest of your life as a professional in the field of theology, and yet your knowledge of theology is so poor that it defies comprehension. I know grade school children who could run rings around you. If you cannot find a way to pass this theology course then you need to find a new career path in life.”

Wally yawned. “I think you worry too much. You need to relax and chill out! When the time comes, God will tell me everything I need to know. Studying is, like, a total waste of time.”

Professor Grimes shook his head. “You are badly misinformed. God has *already* told you everything you need to know, and He put it in the Bible and commanded you to study it. God is *not* going to magically give you special knowledge whenever important situations come up in life. If you can’t be bothered to actually pay attention to the things God said in His Word, then you are going to go through life as an ignorant mess. In fact, God said that

if you can't be bothered to study His Word then you *will* be ashamed when you stand before Him and are judged for the way you wasted your life."

"That's harsh, man," Wally grumbled.

"We do not live in fairyland," the professor replied. "The world is not a place of gumdrops and candy and talking purple unicorns. This is reality, and the stakes are high – incredibly high, as a matter of fact. Which brings us to the topic of today's class. We are going to be discussing the afterlife."

"But how is that possible?" Iris asked. "The Bible says that 'eye has not seen, nor ear heard, what God has prepared for those who love him'."

Professor Grimes let out a long sigh. "Yes, 1 Corinthians 2:9 does say that. But tell me something, young lady. Did you ever look up that verse in the Bible and see what the very next verse said? Do you even know what that chapter is talking about?"

"Not really. Is it important?"

"It's *always* important! Context is everything. The *very next phrase* in the Bible is 'But God has revealed them to us by his

Spirit'. That verse is *not* saying that God has hidden something from us; it is saying precisely the opposite – that God has *revealed* something to us! On top of that, 1 Corinthians 2 is talking about *Christ*, not Heaven. That verse has *absolutely nothing* to do with the afterlife.

“The truth is that God has said a great deal about what happens after death. The Bible contains a tremendous amount of information about it – and sadly, its teachings have been pretty much ignored by the modern generation of Christians. Instead of believing what God has said, people have ignored God and believed whatever Hollywood told them. As a result, people believe all sorts of silly things that aren’t true.

“We are going to start our discussion by talking about Hell. Jesus–”

“What a buzzkill, man,” Wally grumbled. “Why do you have to start on such a downer?”

“As I was saying before I was interrupted, Jesus talked far more about Hell than He did about Heaven. The truth is that we don’t talk about Hell nearly enough, and we don’t take it very seriously. People treat it as if it is some

sort of joke – but there is nothing funny about it. Hell is a very real place and a very serious danger. It is Hell, not Heaven, that is our default destination. You don't have to do anything to go to Hell because *you are already going there by default*. Since we have all sinned against God, all of us are guilty – and the punishment for our sins is an eternity of fiery torment. It doesn't matter if you consider yourself to be a 'good person' or to have lived a 'good life'. God is not the least bit interested in any of that. If you have not repented of your sins and believed in Christ then you are going to go to Hell. The only way to escape is through Jesus Christ. John 14:6 is very clear about this."

Brad spoke up. "But God is a God of love! He would never send a good person to Hell."

"There are no good unsaved people," Professor Grimes said firmly. "In the eyes of God there are only two groups of people: those who *have* been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and those who *have not* been redeemed. God considers all those who have *not* been redeemed to be desperately wicked, and He will send them all to Hell if they do not

repent. It doesn't matter if *you* think they are sweet and kind; what matters is that God sees them as utterly depraved sinners. God takes their sins far more seriously than you do. The only reason God considers Christians to be holy is because God has credited to them the righteousness of Christ."

"What on earth does that mean?" Rob asked.

"It means that when God looks at a Christian He doesn't see all the sins they've committed. Instead He sees the perfect righteousness of Christ. The Bible says that Christians are dressed in Christ's righteousness. That is why they can enter Heaven – and, in fact, that is the only way anyone can enter Heaven. But back to the subject at hand. Hell is both very real and very terrible. Jesus said—"

Wally interrupted. "Hell is separation from God. It's where God puts people who don't want Him."

Professor Grimes sighed. "Hell is *not* separation from God. It's quite the opposite: it is a place where God eternally pours out His wrath upon the wicked. God is *very much*

present in Hell. People have this idea that demons run Hell and spend their time tormenting the souls that are trapped there, but nothing could be further from the truth. The reality is that according to Matthew 25:41, God actually created the 'everlasting fire' as a place to torment *demons*. Revelation 20:10-15 says that when the great Day of Judgment comes, God will take the devil himself and the wicked and will cast them into the Lake of Fire, where they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. They will spend all of eternity experiencing the unending wrath of God."

Iris spoke up. "Wait a minute. Is that lake of fire the same thing as Hell?"

"No, it's not. When the wicked die they are sent to Hell, which Jesus said in Mark 9:47-48 is a terrible place of fire and pain. The wicked will remain in Hell until the Day of Judgment. Revelation 20:11-15 says that on that day all the wicked will be taken out of Hell and judged for their wickedness. They will then be cast into a separate place that the Bible calls the Lake of Fire. All those who did not repent and believe in Christ will be

tormented by fire for all of eternity, with no hope of escape or relief.”

Wally spoke up. “I don’t like the way you keep calling them *wicked*. There are lots of good people out there who don’t believe in God.”

“You are greatly mistaken, young man. When God uses the word ‘good’ He doesn’t mean the same thing that you do. To us a good person is someone who helps old ladies across the street, or who is kind to children, or who donates to worthy causes. To God a good person is someone who has no sins charged to their account. If a person has *any* sins that are not paid for then He considers that person to be wicked and He *will* cast him into Hell. That is why the gospel is so important – it is the only way to pay for our sins.”

“But I thought that everyone went to Heaven,” Brad replied.

Professor Grimes shook his head. “That’s not what Jesus said. In Matthew 7:13-14 He quite clearly stated that the road to Hell was wide and *many* people would go down that road to their everlasting destruction. He

furthermore said that the road to eternal life was narrow and few people would find it. Jesus did *not* agree that everyone goes to Heaven – and I have no doubt that He would know.”

“But that doesn’t make sense!” Brad complained. “A good God would never send anyone to Hell. That’s not loving at all.”

“God is not a one-dimensional stick figure,” the professor replied. “You act as if God’s only quality is love, and you define love to mean ‘doing whatever makes people happy’. But that is utter nonsense. God also happens to be *just*. Mankind has committed terrible sins against God, and those sins must be judged. Oh, sure, *we* don’t think they’re so terrible. We don’t really care that we’ve lied, cheated, murdered, committed adultery, stolen things, and have done all sorts of acts that are abominations in God’s sight. Since they’re not a big deal to us we can’t imagine that they’re a big deal to God.

“But our sins are a *huge* deal to God. We have wronged a God who is both infinite and holy, and that is an extremely serious matter. Think of it this way. If you deliberately burned

down the house of a mob boss, no one would be the least bit surprised if some henchmen showed up at your door and made your life *very* uncomfortable. After all, you committed a crime against a very powerful person, and he is not going to rest until you have suffered for it. Everyone would agree that what you did was incredibly stupid. You angered the wrong person.

“God is *vastly* more powerful than any person on Earth, and He is also vastly more holy. The most serious and terrible thing you could ever do is sin against God. It is a billion times more dangerous than sinning against the most notorious crime lord on Earth. God has infinite power, and He will not rest until justice is done. You cannot escape or hide from Him. Since you have sinned against Him – and *all* of you are guilty of this – then that sin must be paid for. If your sin is not paid for by the death of Christ then God will hold you personally responsible for it.”

Brad spoke up. “But couldn’t God just sweep those sins under the rug? Couldn’t He just say ‘Hey, no big deal’? Wouldn’t that be the loving thing to do?”

“That would be a deeply unjust thing to do,” Professor Grimes replied. “Justice demands that crimes be punished. Since a crime was committed, the criminal must suffer. If God just ignored sins then He would be unjust. Sin *must* be punished – and that is where the love of God comes in. Since sin must be punished, that means the only way we can be set free is if some innocent person suffers on our behalf. However, there aren’t any innocent people. Romans 5:12 says that *all* have sinned. Since all of us are guilty, God sent His sinless Son to suffer and die on our behalf. *That* is the love of God – that Jesus, who did no wrong, would suffer and die in our place. All who repent and believe will have their sins forgiven and will inherit eternal life.”

Iris spoke up. “But isn’t eternal life kind of boring? I mean, it sounds like it’s just one really long church service. I don’t know if I could stand that. It doesn’t sound like there will be very much to do.”

“That is exactly the perception I was talking about earlier,” Professor Grimes replied. “People have this idea that Heaven is an incredibly boring place – a vague, white

existence where people float around on harps, bored out of their minds, wishing they had brought a magazine or something to read. That picture of Heaven is utterly ridiculous.

“The first thing we need to realize is that it is *not* our destiny to float around as disembodied spirits on some sort of spiritual plane. Yes, it is true that when Christians die they leave their body behind and go to Heaven. However, beings in the afterlife have a body of some sort. We can see this from Luke 16:19-31, where Jesus tells the account of the rich man and Lazarus. Both of them died and went on to the afterlife. The rich man, who was being tormented by the fires of Hell, begged Lazarus (who was *not* in Hell) to dip his finger into water and comfort him. Since disembodied spirits don’t have fingers, that can only mean that Lazarus had a body of some kind.

“However, whatever body Lazarus had was just a temporary one. We know this because I Thessalonians 4:16-17 tells us that when the Lord Jesus Christ returns He will raise all Christians from the dead. That means that our original body, which had died and

returned to dust, will be brought back to life again. This time, however, it will be made incorruptible and perfect. 1 Corinthians 15 talks about this body at length and tells us that it will no longer be subject to aging, death, or disease. It will be full of life and full of glory.”

Iris spoke up. “And then we’ll go to Heaven with that new body?”

“Yes we will – but that’s not the end of the story. We will remain in Heaven while God pours out His wrath upon the world during the time known as the Tribulation. When the Tribulation is over will come back to Earth with Christ to reign with Him, but that is something I will cover in greater detail in our last class. The point I want to make is that during the Day of Judgment, God will condemn the wicked for their sins and cast them into the Lake of Fire. At that time He will utterly put an end to all sin, death, suffering, and pain. All of the things that have made our lives so hard will be done away with forever.

“God will then destroy this universe and create a new one – a perfect place that will never know pain, or suffering, or death, and

that will never have any wicked people. God will create a new Earth and will place all of us there to live forever. In fact, God will actually leave Heaven and move in with us on Earth, where God and Man will live together. *That* is our future – not to live as disembodied spirits in Heaven but to live on a perfect Earth, with perfect immortal bodies, with God Himself.”

Iris spoke up. “So what you’re saying is that we’re *not* going to live in Heaven forever, but instead are going to spend eternity on the new Earth that God will make?”

“Exactly!” the professor exclaimed. “That puts things in a different light, doesn’t it? It’s certainly hard to imagine what it would be like to live as a spirit in a world made of clouds. However, it’s vastly easier to imagine living on a perfect world. But there’s more! The Bible says that God has prepared for us a *city*.”

“A city?” Iris asked.

“Yes – the New Jerusalem. Revelation 21 and 22 has a great deal to say about it. It’s a vast city that is 1,500 miles on each side and has streets of gold and rivers of living water. It is an astonishing place. The Bible refers to that city as our mother and our home. In

other words, we will spend eternity living in a *city* in a perfect world. We will *not* be spending eternity as a disembodied spirit floating on a cloud somewhere.”

Brad spoke up. “Oh, come on. You don’t really believe in that whole mansions thing, do you? Most Bibles these days translate it as ‘rooms’.”

Professor Grimes sighed. “There is a great deal I could say about ‘most translations of the Bible’, but since all that is way over your head I will refrain myself. The truth of the matter is that the translation ‘mansion’ in John 14:2 is not at all unfair, and I believe it makes a great deal of sense. Think about it, young man. Are you telling me that after a lifetime of suffering on behalf of Christ, when we finally get to that Heavenly city – the one that God has spent *two thousand years* preparing for us – God is going to shove us into a one-room closet for all of eternity and tell us to have fun? Is *that* really what you think of God?”

“Actually, I don’t think we’ll have homes at all,” Brad explained.

“I see – so you think God will condemn all

of His children to be *homeless* for eternity? We're going to live in a city so extravagant that its very *streets* are paved with gold, but we will be so desperately poor that we won't even have a chair to sit down on? God – who created an uncountable array of stars and galaxies *in order to serve as a night-light for the Earth* – couldn't be bothered to build a house for the Bride that He died to save? I think that's completely preposterous."

There was silence for a minute. The light bulb hanging over their head gently swung from side to side, casting shadows on the wall.

Iris finally spoke up. "But what are we going to be doing there? I mean, eternity is a long time, isn't it?"

"We're going to be doing *more*," Professor Grimes replied. "Throughout the Bible God said that if we are faithful in the things of this life, God will give us much greater responsibilities. He acted as if the things of this world were relatively small and minor compared to what He would give us to do in the future. In Luke 19 He spoke of a man who gave his servants a small sum of money to manage. When they did well, their master

rewarded them by giving them entire *cities* to manage. The idea was that the things of this life were *small* compared to the responsibilities that were to come. Whatever is going to be in our future, it will be much greater than what we've encountered so far – and that is something to think about.”

The professor glanced at his watch. “It looks like that’s all the time we have for today. Be sure to read the next chapter in your book. Next time we will talk about the church sacraments. You are dismissed!”

Chapter 7.5: It's Not Over Yet

Professor Grimes was sitting on the bench, waiting for his wife to join him. It had been a long day and he was looking forward to going home. On the bright side, his students had come to accept their new classroom location. True, the sub-basement of Old Main was not his favorite meeting place, but considering the circumstances he was content. The only problem now was that almost no one was on track to pass any of his classes. With one or two exceptions it looked like he was going to have to fail everyone.

It made him wonder why he had stayed at Sunset Hills for so long. *I should have realized long ago that this place couldn't be saved*, he thought to himself. *Yet here I am, continuing to teach people who have no intention of learning anything. Perhaps persistence is unwise when one is pursuing a*

failing strategy.

While Grimes was lost in his thoughts, Officer Wells happened to stroll by. “Ah, there you are,” the police offer said. “I’ve been looking for you.”

“Really? I’m not a hard man to find.”

“Well, I haven’t been looking very hard. I just wanted to talk to you about Andy.”

Professor Grimes nodded. “Oh yes – the young man who set fire to President Harris’ car. As I recall, Harris was not pleased about the incident. I believe he is pressing charges.”

“Yes, he certainly is. But what I wanted to tell you is that Andy posted bail. He’s not in prison.”

“Really? But how is that even legal? Couldn’t the judge see that Andy was a dangerous arsonist who fully intended on committing even more felonies? The evidence against him was overwhelming! Andy should *not* be allowed to roam around. He is going to strike again – you can count on it. He is dangerously unstable.”

Wells shrugged. “Well, you know how it goes. The judge decided Andy was just a deluded kid who got caught up in the heat of

the moment. He doesn't think that Andy would do any actual harm. After all, lots of people want to burn their schools down. It's a youth thing."

"That's preposterous!" Professor Grimes exclaimed. "That's one of the stupidest things I've ever heard. There are very few people who would *ever* set fire to someone's car – and there are even fewer who would confess to doing it in front of a police officer and *then* add that they intend on continuing a life of arson. *Andy is dangerous*. He is going to keep escalating his actions until someone stops him."

"Well, maybe so. At any rate, if he does happen to cause you trouble just let me know."

"And what good will that do?" Grimes asked. "Are you going to slap him on the wrist and say 'naughty naughty'? Your catch-and-release program does not exactly fill me with confidence."

Officer Wells shook his head, smiling. "You're always the pessimist, aren't you? That's one thing I can count on in life – you're always going to see the dark side of things. Really, though. What's the worst thing that

could happen?”

“I guess all of us are going to find out, aren’t we?” Professor Grimes replied.

Lecture 8: The Sacraments

Although Professor Grimes' students were not excited about meeting in the cluttered and dark basement of Old Main, the professor had made the best of the situation. He and Harold had carried away about a dozen of the crates, freeing up more floor space. Grimes brought in a few floor lamps to make the room a bit brighter. He even retrieved the old chalkboard from his former classroom and hung it on the wall – and he had managed to find some actual chairs. The basement was still a bit ominous and unappealing, but at least it was functional.

“Are we really going to be meeting here the rest of the semester?” Brad asked.

“Absolutely,” the professor replied. “Considering the overall state of the campus, this area is in fairly good shape. It will serve our purposes just fine.”

“But none of my other classes are held in basements,” Brad complained.

“You are only taking two other classes,” the professor pointed out. “In fact, you’re not even a full-time student. It just so happens that the two other classes you are taking didn’t have their classrooms destroyed in the storm, and so they can continue to meet in their assigned locations. This class *did* have its room destroyed, and there aren’t any other rooms available. It makes no sense to seize a room from another class and force them to meet elsewhere. Since our classroom was destroyed, we are the ones who must suffer.”

“I still don’t like it,” Brad muttered.

Professor Grimes shook his head. “If having to meet in a basement is too much pain and suffering for you, then you are not going to like Christianity at all. As I pointed out in our very first class, Jesus promised His disciples that their lives would be full of suffering. Since they were not of the world, the world would hate them – and that’s how things have been ever since. For thousands of years Christians have been hated, reviled, imprisoned, tortured, and executed for their faith. In our day this persecution is *spreading*, not receding. If you want a nice, comfy life

then Christianity is not the religion to pick.

“Of course Christianity *is* the only religion that can actually save you from going to Hell, so there’s that. You can have an easy life and a terrible eternity, or you can have a challenging life and an amazing eternity. Those are your options.”

Wally spoke up. “But there are lots of other religions out there, and they’re not all bad. Some of them have some pretty nice people in them.”

Professor Grimes sighed. “In John 14:6 Jesus told Thomas that He was the *only* way to be saved. If ‘leading people to an eternity of being burned alive’ is bad, then all other religions really *are* bad – but we’ll discuss that next week when we talk about false religions. Today we are going to talk about the sacraments.”

The professor suddenly heard a cell phone go off. “EMERGENCY ALERT,” the phone shouted. “THERE IS A TORNADO WARN-”

Isaac immediately whipped his cell phone out of his pocket and turned it off. His face was bright red. “Sorry,” he muttered. “I

didn't know it would do that when it was set to vibrate." He put the phone back in his pocket.

"Thank you," the professor replied. "See? Was turning off the phone really that hard? If Andy had simply turned off his computer then—"

"Wait a minute," Brad interrupted. "Did that phone just say there was a tornado warning for this area?"

"I believe so. In the event of a tornado warning the best thing to do is seek shelter in a safe place – like, for example, a basement. However, as it turns out you are *already* in a basement! So your best option is to stay right here and pay attention."

Brad grumbled but didn't say anything else.

Professor Grimes resumed his lecture. "As I was saying, today's class will be an easy one. There are only two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both of these are fairly simple, so it shouldn't take—"

Wally interrupted. "The Catholic Church says there are more than just two. I think there are nine or something."

“Catholicism claims there are seven sacraments,” the professor corrected. “However, they are mistaken. The truth is they are mistaken about a great many things, but we’ll cover that in our next class. The Bible only contains two sacraments, and since its opinion is the only one that matters, that is what we are going to discuss.

“The first sacrament is baptism. Baptism is something that each Christian is commanded to do as soon as possible after being saved. It publicly announces to the world that they are now a Christian, and it identifies them with Christ’s death and resurrection. It—”

“Doesn’t it wash away your sins?” Wally asked.

“No, it definitely does *not*,” the professor replied. “I Peter 3:21 explicitly says that baptism does *not* wash away our sins or obtain forgiveness. Our sins were forgiven by Christ’s death on the cross, and they cannot possibly be forgiven by anything else. Baptism plays absolutely no role in the process. I John 1:7 says that the *blood of Jesus* cleanses us from sin – not the waters of baptism. In fact,

you can only be baptized *after* you have become a Christian, and since your sins are forgiven when you are saved, that means there are no unforgiven sins left by the time you are baptized.

“Now, it is true that being baptized is not required for salvation. Despite what some denominations teach, you won’t go to Hell if you don’t get baptized. In Luke 23:43 Jesus told the thief who was dying on the cross beside Him that he would be in Paradise – and that thief did *not* have time to go get baptized during his crucifixion. However, baptism is a command and it is one we should not take lightly. If you are a Christian and you have not been baptized then you should get baptized immediately.

“Baptism itself is simple and painless. It—”

Wally interrupted. “In my church people sprinkle water on your head.”

The professor sighed. “The word baptism comes from the Greek word for *immerse*. In fact, you could actually translate ‘baptize someone’ to mean ‘immerse someone in water’. The idea that sprinkling water on someone’s head is the same thing as

immersing them is preposterous. It astonishes me that there isn't a single command in the Bible that Christians haven't managed to get wrong. When you baptize someone you take them and immerse them in water. It's that simple."

"But what about the magic words?" Wally asked.

"What magic words?"

"You know – the words people say when someone is baptized. What about them?"

"There are no magic words," Professor Grimes said firmly. "Baptism is not some sort of magical rite where a certain magical incantation grants you magical powers. A lot of pastors say different things during the baptism ceremony and there's no harm in that. The person who baptized me said 'Buried with Him in baptism, and raised to walk in the newness of life'.²⁸ It did the job."

"But shouldn't it be more exact than that?" Brad asked. "It sounds to me like you're just making it up as you go along."

²⁸ For the record, I did not make that up. That's actually what was said at my baptism.

“It is unwise to be more exact than the text of the Scripture. The New Testament does not say ‘In the sacrament of baptism say these exact words, then immerse them in water for two seconds while standing to their left, and make sure the act is done on a Tuesday at high noon’. Some churches have come up with incredibly specific ways of doing things, but the Bible simply does not support that. Adding additional details to what the Bible says and then insisting that everyone do it that way ‘or else’ is *bad*. God gets very angry when people add to His Word.”

The professor went to pick up his notes and then realized that he didn’t have a desk anymore. Since his old desk in the Rutledge Building was a charred and water-damaged husk, he didn’t think it was worthwhile to bring it down into the basement. However, since he didn’t have a desk he no longer had a place to lay out his notes. *I’ll have to do something about that*, he thought to himself.

Instead, Grimes walked over to his briefcase, opened it, and took out his notes. “The next and last sacrament is the Lord’s Supper. This one is also very simple, but that

hasn't stopped people from getting some very wrong ideas about it. On the eve of Christ's crucifixion He had His last meal with His disciples. Matthew 26:26 says that Jesus took bread, broke it, and gave it to the twelve. He told them to partake of the bread because it symbolically represented His body, which was about to be broken for them. He then passed around a cup of wine and told them to drink it because it symbolically represented His blood, which was about to be shed in order to forgive their sins. After they had done these things He told them to continue to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a way to remember His sacrifice on the cross.

"In order to become a Christian you must repent of your sins and accept Christ as your Lord and Savior. You must partake of His death and have your sins washed away by His blood. The Lord's Supper is a way for Christians to commemorate His death. It reminds us of His sacrifice and of the price He paid to purchase forgiveness for our sins."

Wally spoke up. "Catholics call it the Mass."

The professor paused and then frowned.

“Catholic Mass is a very poor counterfeit of communion. First of all, Catholicism teaches that during the Mass the bread becomes the literal body of Christ, and the wine becomes the literal blood of Christ. They believe that communion involves *actually eating Christ’s body*. That is why Catholics will rush into burning buildings to save the communion wafers. They don’t want Christ’s body to be burned up in the fire.”

Brad looked surprised. “They do that?”

Professor Grimes nodded. “Oh yes – but it’s an utter waste of time. The Bible is very clear that communion is *symbolic*. The idea that you are actually eating Christ’s literal body, like some sort of cannibal, is both horrifying and unbiblical. It is *not* supported by the Word of God. On top of all that, Catholicism teaches that Christ is sacrificed again every single time Mass is held – and yet Hebrews 9:28 teaches that Christ was sacrificed *once* for sins. The Catholic beliefs about communion are a gross distortion of what the Bible actually teaches.”

The professor glanced down at his notes. “One thing I would like to emphasize is that

communion may only be taken by those who are actually Christians, and Christians ought to take it with reverence and care. In 1 Corinthians 11:30 the apostle Paul told the Corinthian church that since they were grossly misusing communion, to the point of actually getting drunk on the communion wine, God was striking some of them with illness *and death*. God takes this sacrament very seriously, and we ought to take it seriously as well. We should examine ourselves and make sure that we are partaking of it in a worthy manner.

“Finally, I would like to point out that the Bible does not specify how often communion should be celebrated. Jesus simply said ‘As often as you do this, do this in remembrance of me’. Some churches celebrate communion every Sunday. Others do it once a month, and still others do it once a quarter. Since Jesus did not issue a hard-and-fast rule – and He certainly could have, if He had desired to do so – we cannot either. Christians have liberty to decide how often they celebrate it. However, they *are* required to celebrate it and they should not take it lightly.”

Professor Grimes paused. He knew that there was a storm outside, but the basement was so deep and the walls were so thick that he had trouble hearing it. Or maybe he was just old and his hearing wasn't what it used to be.

“That brings us to the end of our lesson today. Next time we will discuss false religions. You are dismissed – although, if there is still a tornado warning in effect, you may wish to linger here until it passes.”

Chapter 8.5: Laziness Is Bliss

When Professor Grimes emerged from the sub-basement of Old Main, he saw that the storm had hit closer to campus than he realized. There were broken branches everywhere, and signs had been blown over. The campus courtyard had several inches of standing water. Worst of all, the Rutledge Building had actually collapsed. Grimes was thankful that he had forced the seminary to stop using that building and had helped Harold the janitor rope it off and evacuate it. If they had not proactively shut it down a few days ago, its collapse would surely have killed many people.

Professor Grimes was sorry to see that building go. He had taught many classes in that rotting structure and had made a lot of good memories. Grimes had even led a number of students to Christ in its halls –

students who had nearly begun pastoring churches without ever having come to Christ themselves. It was a genuine shame that neglect had led to the Rutledge Building's destruction. It deserved a better ending than that.

As Professor Grimes gazed at the ruined structure, Dr. Judith Hale walked by. "Why hello, professor," Dr. Hale called out. "Still holding classes in that dreary basement? Don't you find that rather dull?"

"It's better than meeting outside in the rain," Professor Grimes replied. "Speaking of that, where are you holding your classes these days? Didn't you used to teach in the Rutledge Building as well?"

"Yes, I certainly did. Sadly, ever since the roof collapsed I haven't been able to hold any more classes. There simply aren't any free rooms available."

"You haven't been holding class?" Professor Grimes exclaimed, surprised. "Then what have you been doing all this time? That storm happened weeks ago!"

"Why, I'm doing what everyone else is doing – I've given my class their final grades

and sent them all home. *My* semester is over.”

“But that’s outrageous! You can’t possibly award the final grades this early in the semester. When the storm happened the students hadn’t even completed half of the required hours yet! Dismissing class like that is against university policy.”

“Well, trying to teach a class without a classroom is against *my* policy. Besides, none of the students seemed to mind. I gave them all A’s, you know. They were delighted.”

“I bet they were,” Professor Grimes replied. “However, the accreditation board is *not* going to be delighted. You’re making a mockery of this entire university.”

“Really, professor, you’re terribly droll. Take a look around! The buildings are falling down, President Harris is stealing money from the school left and right, and the students don’t care. Why do you even bother?”

“The president is doing what?” Grimes asked.

“Embezzling, of course. How do you think he could afford to live so extravagantly on the meager salary we pay him? He’s been doing it

for years.”

“And you knew about this?”

“Of course! It’s not like he’s been hiding it. In fact, I’ve been getting in on the act myself. Since the ship is going down anyway you might as well take whatever you can grab. It’s not like anyone is ever going to care.”

“Aren’t you the least bit worried about the consequences of all this?” Professor Grimes asked. “Don’t you think this might come back to haunt you?”

“Of course not! Don’t be ridiculous. After all, things have worked out well so far.”

“So did the life of the rich man in Luke 16. He had a fabulous life – right up until he died and found himself in Hell. That’s when it dawned on him that he had made a terrible mistake – but by then it was far too late to correct it. Do you not realize that you will stand before God and be judged for your actions? God will hold you accountable for everything you’ve done – including the incredibly poor way you have handled this semester. Do you have any idea what it will be like to face an angry God, knowing you have utterly despised both His Law and His mercy?”

“You’re being a bit overdramatic, aren’t you?” Dr. Hale asked. “It’s always doom and gloom with you. ‘Repent, for the end is near’ and whatnot. You and that toaster of yours needs to get a life.”

Professor Grimes shook his head. “I am warning you, Judith: you may not take sin very seriously, but I assure you that God does. You are truly a sorry excuse for a seminary professor. May God have mercy on your soul.”

Dr. Hale laughed at him and walked off.

Lecture 9: False Religions

By now the class had gotten used to meeting in the dark, dreary basement. Professor Grimes in particular had become accustomed to the new class location, and had even managed to find a makeshift desk. True, it wasn't an actual desk; it was just a large crate that he had dragged over from the corner. But it gave him a place to lay his notes, and that's all he needed.

"Good morning, class," the professor said cheerfully.

"How can you possibly tell that it's morning?" Brad said sourly.

"Just because this basement has no windows does not mean that the beautiful day that is outside has suddenly vanished. It is still there whether we can see it or not. If you didn't happen to notice the sun and the sky on your way to class, then I suggest you open your eyes and learn to observe what is around you."

“If you say so,” Brad replied.

Professor Grimes chose to ignore him. “Today we are going to talk about false religions. By this time you should be familiar with Christianity – although, based on your test scores, I have some serious doubts about that. Since we’ve already covered the gospel it’s time that we covered things that are *not* the gospel. The truth is that there are only two different religions: you are either saved by God’s grace or you are saved by your own works. Christianity falls into the first category, while all other religions fall into the second category.”

Wally spoke up. “There’s, like, a whole lot more than just two religions. I bet there’s thousands of them.”

Professor Grimes shook his head. “It may seem like there are many different religions in the world, but they’re just different window dressing on the same idea. Only Christianity teaches that God saves you. All other religions teach that you must save yourself by your own good works. They’re all just different variations on the same idea – and they all lead to Hell.

"Now, some false religions are more subtle than others. The one that I want to talk about first is the one that I think is the most dangerous of them all. That would be—"

"Islam!" Iris exclaimed.

"I'm afraid not," the professor replied. "Oh, I agree that Islam is very dangerous and is causing a great deal of harm. It is definitely a false religion and we *are* going to talk about it today. But there is another false religion that has caused far more damage over a much longer period of time. You see, Islam is not the only religion that has forced people to convert at the point of a sword, and that has sent out armies to murder their enemies. No, the false religion that I'm thinking about is Catholicism."

Iris looked surprised. "You think the Catholic Church is more evil than Islam? Really?"

Professor Grimes nodded. "I'm afraid so. Today most people view the Catholic Church as some sort of nice organization that isn't that different from Protestant churches. That is one of the things that makes it so dangerous: modern Christians have so little

discernment that they can't distinguish real Christianity from counterfeits. That is *not* the case with Islam – at least, not yet. Only a complete moron would confuse Islam with Christianity, but practically everyone confuses Catholicism's teachings with the gospel. That makes it incredibly dangerous. It is an enemy that the Church is not fighting.

“Let's start by looking at the doctrines of Catholicism. We unfortunately don't have enough time to cover all of their heresies – and there are a *lot* of them – but we can hit upon the main point, and that is this: Catholicism teaches that you are saved by works. In the Council of Trent, which was written in the 16th century and reconfirmed by Vatican II in the 1960s, the Catholic Church stated that if you believe that you are saved by grace alone, apart from works, then you are going to Hell. Regardless of what individual Catholics may tell you, or what the priest down the road has to say, *that is their official stance*. The Catholic Church officially teaches that if you believe that works are a *fruit* of your salvation and not the *cause* of it then you are going to Hell. The Council of

Trent is very clear about this and wanted everyone to know that you are saved *by your own deeds*, and not by anything Christ did for you.”

Wally spoke up. “But that’s not what my Catholic friends tell me. They believe they are saved by grace.”

“Did you ask them what they mean by ‘grace’?” the professor asked. “One common tactic of false religions is to take words and give them new meanings, to deceive people into thinking that everything is fine. To a Protestant grace means that God forgives you because of Christ’s death, and you contribute absolutely nothing to your salvation. To a Catholic grace means that God gives you the ability to keep His Law and avoid sins that make you lose your salvation, so that your lifetime of good deeds can earn you entrance into Heaven. Those two definitions are *not at all* the same thing. The Catholic Church has redefined ‘grace’ to mean ‘works’.”

“That’s not very honest,” Iris spoke up.

“Well, Satan is the father of lies,” Professor Grimes pointed out. “The devil will do whatever he can to drag as many people

as possible to Hell. It is *very* common for false religions to lie to you about what they actually believe. Islam freely allows Muslims to lie about Islamic beliefs if it makes Islam look better, and Mormons have the same concept – it’s called ‘lying for the Lord’. Of course, the reality is that they are actually lying for their father the devil.

“Incidentally, the best way to find out what other religions actually teach is to read their official books of doctrine that are targeted at people who have already accepted the religion. Those books will be honest because they are aimed at ‘the choir’, so to speak. But don’t expect any honesty from the people who come to your door and try to convert you. I’ve dealt with them before and I have yet to meet a group that was willing to tell me what they *really* believed. They always lie.²⁹”

Brad spoke up. “Now there’s a cynical

²⁹ This has happened to me. Mormons will come to my door and lie to me about their beliefs. When I use their official sources of doctrine to reveal their lies, they suddenly tell me they can’t talk anymore and have to leave. It would be funny if it wasn’t so sad.

attitude for you.”

“Do you always dismiss truths you don’t like as ‘cynicism’?” Professor Grimes asked. “If you call something ‘cynical’ do you think that it somehow makes unpleasant realities go away?”

Brad didn’t respond, so the professor continued. “As I was saying, Catholicism is a works-based religion. That is very unfortunate for them because the Bible says repeatedly that we are saved by grace, and *not of works*. If you don’t believe me you can look up Ephesians 2:8-9 and read it for yourself. Genuine salvation is *not of works*, period. In fact, the entire book of Galatians was written because that church had rejected the gospel of grace and had turned to works! Paul warned them that if they did not repent they would be lost. A works gospel *cannot* save you. Therefore, all organizations that teach a works gospel – such as Catholicism – are false religions. This means the Catholic Church is leading billions of people to Hell.”

“That’s horrible,” Iris replied.

“It most certainly is. It astonishes me that anyone considers the Catholic Church to be

Christian. All it takes is a cursory look at what that organization really teaches to discover how different their message is from the gospel. For instance, Catholicism teaches that baptism is required for salvation – unlike the Bible, which says no such thing. Catholicism teaches that baptism purifies people from their sins, whereas the Bible explicitly says baptism does *not* do that. Catholicism teaches that in order to be saved you need the sacraments that only the Catholic Church provides – which means you cannot be saved apart from the Catholic Church. That, too, is a lie from Hell. The Bible teaches that if you repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you will be saved. Church membership is *not* required.

“Catholicism, though, says that faith in Christ is simply not enough. You can repent and believe in Jesus as much as you want, but you’ll still go to Hell if you don’t live a life of good works, avoid sins that take away your salvation, aren’t a member of the Catholic Church, aren’t baptized, and so forth. They teach that Christ’s death alone *cannot* save you. The blood of Christ *cannot* wash away

your sins. Instead it's up to *you* to live a good life and earn your salvation. In fact, they even teach that if you believe you are saved, you have sinned the sin of presumption.³⁰

"I don't understand," Iris said. "What does that even mean?"

"Well, the Bible teaches that when you become a Christian, you are saved at that point and that is the end of it. You can *know* you are saved and you don't have to worry about doing something and becoming lost again. The reason you are saved is because Christ's death paid for your sins. Since your sins were paid for by His death, there's nothing you can do to add to that and there's nothing you can do to take away from that. Jesus handled the entire payment, so you are good to go. The transaction is finished. Since you weren't responsible for paying the bill, you can't do anything to mess it up.

"However, Catholicism teaches that in order to avoid Hell you have to live an entire

³⁰ *Understanding Roman Catholicism*, by Rick Jones. I recommend reading the whole book – it's short and to the point, and covers a whole lot of ground.

life of good works, making the right decisions and doing the right things. You can *never* actually ‘be’ saved because at any moment you might slip up and ruin everything. You are always just one wrong decision away from Hell.”

Iris spoke up. “That’s terrible! How could anyone live that way?”

“Many people actually *prefer* it,” the professor replied. “They don’t want to be saved by God’s grace. The truth is that people *want* to earn their way to Heaven. They want to pay their own way, to prove that they are special people who are better than everyone else. They don’t like the idea that they need a Savior. Sadly for them, you *can’t* earn your way to Heaven. You will either enter Heaven *solely* on the basis of God’s grace, or you won’t enter Heaven at all.”

Wally spoke up. “But Catholics believe in Jesus! That makes them Christian.”

Professor Grimes sighed. “Yes, they do believe in Jesus – but they deny the power of the cross. They reject the idea that Christ’s death can save you, and instead teach that you must save yourself. They reject the idea

that He suffered for your sins, and instead teach that you must suffer for your own sins in Purgatory. They reject the idea that repenting and believing is enough to save you, and instead teach that your salvation depends upon your works. In other words, they reject the message that Christ taught. Since they have utterly rejected the gospel and replaced it with a Satanic lie, they are not a Christian group.”

Brad spoke up. “But weren’t they the Church in the Middle Ages? I mean, for a long time that’s all there was.”

“I’m afraid that isn’t true. In fact, it’s actually quite the opposite. For more than a thousand years the Catholic Church *persecuted* the real church. They have tirelessly hunted down and murdered all those who rejected their false gospel and clung to the belief of salvation by faith alone. During the course of their existence they have murdered an estimated *fifty million people*.³¹

³¹ This number seems to appear in multiple places; for example, in Dowling’s *History of Romanism*. However, the actual number could be lower or very

No other organization in the history of the world has done more to attack Christianity over a longer period of time, and with more bloodshed, than the Catholic Church.”

“Fifty million people?” Iris asked, shocked. “How is that possible?”

“If you enroll in my church history course – which might be difficult, since there won’t be another semester after this one – you would discover *exactly* how that was possible in rather gory detail. The truth of what the Catholic Church has done throughout history is utterly horrifying. For more than a thousand years they relentlessly hunted down those who disagreed with their doctrine and murdered them. They murdered people for owning Bibles, or even parts of Bibles. The Pope sent out his armies to raze entire cities to the ground and murder all their inhabitants. They tortured to death and murdered men, women, and children *by the*

much higher. In 2006 David Plaisted did a study entitled “Estimates of the Number Killed by the Papacy in the Middle Ages and Later” that did a thorough analysis of that number. The evidence indicates the actual death toll could be far larger than a “mere” 50 million.

thousands – and they did so without pity or remorse. To this day they have never apologized for the millions that they slaughtered. Today people are terrified of Islam because Islamic terrorists behead people and murder Christians. However, for more than *a thousand years* it was the Catholic Church who terrorized the world. In fact, the last time they tried to execute someone was in 1902. There was a man who was giving away Bibles, and the Archbishop of Sucre in Bolivia demanded that he be put to death for it. The only reason the Catholic Church has stopped murdering people is because they no longer have the power to do so.³²

“That’s horrible,” Iris replied.

“It is far, far more horrible than you know. If you ever read what the Catholic Church has actually been doing, you would be deeply shaken. People despise the name of Hitler for his genocidal campaigns – and rightly so – but

³² *Rome and the Bible*, by David Cloud. It’s not a short book, but it’s quite gripping and is extremely well documented. Catholicism is far more vicious and has killed far more people than most people realize.

the Catholic Church has killed vastly more people. There is nothing remotely Christian about them.”

Professor Grimes picked up a sheet of paper from his makeshift desk. “But getting back to your point, Wally – one thing you must realize is that it’s not enough to believe in *a* Jesus. In order to be saved you must believe in the *real* Jesus. For instance, suppose that you went into your backyard, picked up a rock, and called it Jesus. You can pray to that rock all you want, but it’s not going to save you. Calling it Jesus does not *make* it Jesus. In order to be saved you must believe in *the real Jesus* – the Jesus of the Bible. Believing in a counterfeit Jesus will do you no good. That is one of the problems with Mormonism.”

Isaac spoke up. “Are those the people who come to your door and pester you?”

“Well, they do go door to door, but they’re not the only ones who do so. Jehovah’s Witnesses do the same thing. Now, in our day Mormons desperately want people to think that they are Christians, but they are

most assuredly *not*.³³ Their teachings are utterly bizarre. For example, they reject the idea that there is only one God. They teach that God the Father was born as an ordinary man and then lived a life of good works and earned His way to Godhood. They also teach that many people throughout eternity have earned their way to godhood. In fact, if you are a good Mormon you can do the same thing. The fact that Isaiah 44:6 says that there is only one God, and besides Him *there are no other gods*, is apparently of no concern to them.

“Likewise, they reject the idea that Jesus is part of the eternal Trinity. In fact, they reject the idea of the Trinity altogether and call that belief ‘apostasy’. They teach that Jesus earned His position through a life of service and good works. They teach that Jesus

³³ *Mormonism 101*, by Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson. I also wrote an entire paper on Mormonism, which you can find in my book *Collected Sunday School Lessons (2010 – 2011)*. That paper goes into far more detail, and includes many quotes from actual Mormon leaders. You can read it for yourself – they really do make all these weird claims.

and Satan are brothers who competed to see who would be allowed to save mankind. They teach that Jesus was *not* born of a virgin but was conceived the way all children are conceived. They even teach that the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden was a good thing. They believe that Eve made the right decision and celebrate her ‘wisdom and courage’.”

Iris spoke up. “But didn’t God curse Adam and Eve for what they did?”

“Oh yes,” Professor Grimes said. “The Bible is very clear that Eve made the *wrong* decision and that untold horrors have fallen upon the world because of the Fall. But that doesn’t concern the Mormons. They claim that what Eve did was a ‘transgression’, and transgressions aren’t sins. Considering that I John 3:4 says that *sin is the transgression of the law*, that is an exceptionally stupid thing to say.

“But that’s not all! Mormonism teaches that Christ didn’t suffer for our sins on the Cross; no, instead He suffered in the Garden, when He sweat blood. They actually reject the idea that we are saved by Christ’s death on the cross, and that His blood can wash

away our sins. Like the Catholic Church, they teach that you must earn your way into what they call the ‘celestial kingdom’.”

Iris spoke up. “So you have to live a good life to be saved?”

Professor Grimes hesitated. “It’s more complicated than that. Mormons believe that all men are basically good and are saved unconditionally. Only extremely wicked people will go to Hell. Everyone else will be fine. However, if you want to reach the highest ranks of Heaven then you need to be a good Mormon and live a good life. Under the Mormon system you only have to become a Mormon if you want to reach the highest levels of glory. Otherwise, as long as you’re a fairly decent human being, you can be an atheist and God isn’t going to care. You won’t reach Heaven, but you’ll live comfortably on the earthly kingdom and your life will be fine. Hell is only for the worst of the worst.

“Mormonism is, therefore, a form of universalism. It denies many of Christ’s teachings: that many people will go to Hell and few people will go to Heaven; that Christ is the only way to be saved; and that all those

who do not repent and believe will face the eternal wrath of God. It replaces the gospel with a system of works.”

Professor Grimes glanced at his watch. “We are running out of time, but I would like to point out that Islam does the same thing. All of these—”

Wally spoke up. “But isn’t Allah the same thing as God?”

The professor frowned. “Most certainly not! Allah is more closely related to our concept of the devil. Allah is not part of the Trinity; Muslims utterly reject that teaching. Unlike the God of the Bible, Allah is not holy. He can do good or evil, and he can keep his promises or break them. He can do whatever he wants because there are no limits on his behavior.

“Muslims do believe in Jesus but they reject the idea that He was God, or that He died for the sins of mankind. They accept Him only as a prophet and not as a Savior. There is also the not-insignificant fact that Islam is an incredibly violent and bloody religion.”

Wally interrupted. “No it’s not. In fact, the word Islam means peace. The terrorists

aren't practicing true Islam at all."

"You could not be more wrong," Professor Grimes replied. "The word 'Islam' does not mean peace; it means *submission* – as in, submit to Islam or die. The Koran is full of references to murdering all those who refuse to submit. It urges the complete genocide of the entire Jewish race. The truth is the terrorists are actually the ones who are taking Islam seriously. They are following in the footsteps of their bloody forefather, Mohammed – who led armies to kill all those who opposed him and his teachings.

"On top of that, Islam is a works-based religion. The reason so many Muslims are willing to die in jihad is because it is a guaranteed way to be saved. Apart from jihad there isn't any way to be sure that Allah is happy with you and will grant you entrance into paradise. Only killing other people in a holy war guarantees salvation."

Iris spoke up. "And you still think Catholicism is worse than Islam?"

"Look at it this way: no Christian with a functioning brain would mistake an Islamic terrorist who beheads children for a true

Christian. Islam is an obvious lie. However, *millions* of Christians mistake Catholics for true believers. People will stand up and witness to Muslims, but they won't evangelize Catholics because they think they're already saved. The most dangerous lie is the one that people believe, not the one that people immediately see through and reject."

Professor Grimes glanced at his watch. "I can see that we have run out of time for today. There are obviously many other false religions out there; if you are interested in learning about them feel free to sign up for my class on false religions and cults. I'm not sure where I'll be teaching next semester, but I'm sure I'll be teaching somewhere. As long as the truth needs to be taught I will be out there teaching it. Class dismissed!"

"Hold on a minute!" Isaac exclaimed. "You didn't tell us what our next topic was going to be."

Professor Grimes eyed him curiously. "If I had, would you have studied for it and read the assigned reading?"

"Um, maybe," Isaac replied.

“Then I have good news for you, young man! The class syllabus – which I gave to you weeks ago – lists all of our sessions and includes what chapters each lecture covers and what the topic of that lecture is going to be. Despite inclement weather, the collapse of buildings, and criminal negligence in high places, we have stuck to that schedule without interruption. We will cover exactly what that syllabus says we are going to cover.”

“Which is...?” Isaac asked.

The professor sighed. “Just read chapter 19, like your syllabus says.”

Chapter 9.5: The Fall of Football

That afternoon, Harold the janitor stopped by Professor Grimes' office. "Did you hear about the football stadium?" he asked.

Professor Grimes shook his head. "I stay as far away from that structure as possible. I have never been a fan of sports – especially when they suck all the money out of a school and allow it to collapse into ruin. Is there something going on that I should know about?"

"I'll say. Remember Valdez, the inspector? I just talked to him a few minutes ago. It turns out he's not just condemning every building on campus; he's also condemned the football stadium. It has got to go."

"Really?" Grimes asked, surprised. "But the stadium is practically brand-new! President Harris spared no expense when he built that ridiculous monstrosity. What could

possibly be wrong with it?"

"As it turns out, pretty much everything. It was horribly designed, it wasn't built to code, and it used substandard materials. The whole thing is a disaster just waiting to happen. In fact, it's so badly built that it's going to be demolished along with every other building. Apparently it can't be saved."

"I am genuinely surprised," the professor said. "I thought that stadium would last forever as a monument to President Harris' foolishness. He wasted millions upon millions of dollars building that blasted structure. How could it possibly have been built so poorly?"

Harold shrugged. "It really makes you wonder where all that money went, doesn't it?"

"Indeed it does," Professor Grimes said thoughtfully. "So what is the president going to do now?"

"Well, at the moment he's trying to file a massive insurance claim. He told the insurance company that the buildings were damaged in the storm, and they needed to fund the reconstruction of the entire campus. However, the insurance company isn't buying

it – in fact, they cancelled our policy. They claim that Valdez’ report proves that the buildings collapsed due to neglect, and they accuse Harris of violating the terms of their insurance policy and lying about regular inspections.”

“Regular inspections?” Grimes asked.

Harold nodded. “Every year Harris has submitted detailed inspections to the insurance company, claiming that everything was fine and the school was in full compliance. The only problem is he’d been forging the results every year. It looks like that’s now caught up with him, and the insurance company is refusing to pay a single dime. So, of course, Harris is suing them for breach of contract. The case will probably drag on for years.”

Grimes sighed. “So the school doesn’t have any money to keep its buildings from literally falling apart, but it does have the money to pay lawyers millions of dollars to fight a case that we have no hope of winning. It’s madness, Harold – sheer madness.”

Harold shrugged. “But what are you going to do? How can you fight so much

apathy?”

“That is an excellent question,” Grimes replied. “There probably isn’t much that you or I can do – but I imagine the IRS is a different story. They seem quite good at getting results.”

“The IRS?” Harold echoed, perplexed. “What are they going to do?”

Grimes smiled. “Up to now they haven’t done anything, because they haven’t been aware that there was a problem. But I’ve taken some steps to enlighten them. Based on some conversations I’ve had with them recently, I believe they are going to ask some very pointed questions to some people who are not going to have very good answers. It just might turn out that crime does not pay after all.”

Lecture 10: Supernatural Beings

“Good morning, class,” Professor Grimes said cheerfully. “Today we’re going to talk about supernatural beings.”

“You mean superheroes?” Wally asked. “I’m a big fan of Superman. Is he in the Bible?”

“Not exactly,” the professor replied. “Now, Samson is in the Bible, and he is probably the closest thing you will find to a real-life superhero. His strength was quite astounding! Sadly, his morals were terrible and his life didn’t turn out well. But we’re not going to talk about supermen, or X-Men, or anything of that nature. Instead we are going to talk about supernatural beings – namely, angels and demons.”

“My grandfather is an angel,” Isaac commented. “He died a year ago.”

“I’m sorry for your loss, young man, but I’m afraid that your grandfather is *not* an

angel. Despite what most people think, human beings do not become angels when they die. You see, angels are a special class of beings that were created by God for a particular purpose. It is impossible for anyone to become an angel.”

Wally spoke up. “But what if you earn your wings?”

The professor sighed. *This is going to be a long day*, he thought to himself. “As I said before, angels are a separate type of being. You can no more become an angel than you could become a tiger or an ostrich. People *cannot* change their species. Second, most of the angels that appear in the Bible don’t even have wings. The seraphim and the cherubim have wings, but the angels that God uses as messengers are never described as having wings.”

“Then—” Wally began, but the professor interrupted him.

“As I was saying, God created angels on the first day of the Creation week, and they witnessed God’s creation of the world. Job 38:7 tells us that they actually shouted for joy as they witnessed that glorious moment.

Angels are both immortal and very powerful. Also – and I want to emphasize this – they do *not* spend their time in Heaven floating around and playing harps. Instead they are *warriors*. They protect the people of God and they resist the forces of the devil.

“I’d also like to point out that all angels mentioned in the Bible are male. There is no hint that female angels even exist.”

“Then how do they reproduce?” Brad asked.

“They *don’t* reproduce. Every single angel was formed by a divine act of creation by God Himself. In Mark 12:25 Jesus told us that angels do not marry or have children. Their purpose is to serve God, and God uses them to protect His people.”

Iris spoke up. “Don’t angels do miracles?”

“Absolutely! Angels are both wise and powerful, and God has used them at key moments all throughout history. For example, in Matthew 28:2 we are told that an angel rolled away the stone from Christ’s tomb. Acts 12:5-10 tells us of a time when an angel freed the apostle Peter from prison. 2 Kings 19:35 recounts the time when an angel

assassinated the entire army of the king of Assyria in a *single night*, killing 185,000 people. Yet, the power of angels is not unlimited. During the time of Daniel an angel tried to get to him to deliver a message, but was unable to do so. Daniel 10:13 says that Michael the archangel had to come and help in order to break through the satanic line.”

“Why didn’t one of the other archangels come?” Wally asked.

“Because there is only *one* archangel, and that is Michael. He is the captain of the angels. Jude 1:9 even mentions a time when he stood against the devil himself.”

“Isn’t the devil a fallen angel?” Iris asked.

“That is correct. In fact, all of the demons were originally angels. Lucifer – who fell and became the devil – was originally created as the highest angel. Ezekiel 28:16 says that he was the ‘covering cherub’. All of the other cherubs were positioned below the throne of God, but Lucifer was positioned above the throne – as a type of covering, you might say. The Bible says that Lucifer was full of beauty and wisdom and was clothed with precious gems – but that beauty corrupted him. He led

a revolt against God and a third of the angels joined him. That is when some of the angels became demons.”

“And God threw them out of Heaven,” Brad said.

Professor Grimes shook his head. “While it is true that Satan spends his time roaming over the Earth, seeking to cause harm to those who live there, it is *not* true that his access to Heaven has been revoked. In Job 1 we are told that Satan regularly goes to Heaven and stands before God, and while he is there he accuses God’s people and tries to get God to curse them. In fact, the name ‘Satan’ actually means ‘the accuser’. Revelation 12:7-10 tells us that Satan will not be cast out of Heaven until midway through the Tribulation. That is when he will lose his ability to accuse God’s people.”

Iris spoke up. “Is it true that we have guardian angels?”

“That’s a good question,” Professor Grimes said. “The Bible does tell us that God uses His angels to guard His people. However, the Bible *doesn’t* say that each person has their own angel assigned to them who

watches over them 24/7. In the case of Lot, God sent a pair of angels to him when he was in danger, and they dragged him out of Sodom right before God destroyed it. It's possible that we do have angels who watch over us all the time, but it's also possible that God only sends His angels to us when we actually need them. In either case God does use His angels to protect us.

"However, Revelation 22:8-9 tells us that we are *not* allowed to worship angels. Prayer and worship are reserved for God alone. Angels are quite powerful and they have done amazing things, but they are not deity and should not be treated as deity."

"Doesn't 'angel' mean 'messenger'?" Iris asked.

"That's correct. Angels delivered God's messages quite a few times. For example, in Luke 1:26-38 the angel Gabriel told Mary that she was going to give birth to Christ. In that same chapter an angel told Elizabeth's husband Zecharias that Elizabeth was going to give birth to John the Baptist – and then took away Zecharias' power to speak when he doubted the angel's word. In Luke 2:9-14

angels announced the birth of Christ to shepherds – but, and I want to emphasize this, they did *not* sing. They *said* that Christ was born but they did not *sing* about it. People attribute far too much singing to angels. They are not some sort of musical group.”

The professor glanced through his notes. “One other thing about angels that might interest you is that they occasionally assist God in forming His plans. I Kings 22 records a time when God asked the angels in Heaven what they thought would be the best way to have King Ahab die in battle. God then took their suggestions, picked the one that He liked the best, and had the angel execute that plan.

“Now, I want to emphasize that God did *not* do this because He was confused, or because he didn’t have any good ideas, or because he wasn’t sure how to handle the situation. God has all knowledge and all power and is perfectly capable of carrying out His affairs without the help of angels – or without *our* help, for that matter. But just as God chooses to work through us to spread the gospel, God also chooses to work His will

through angels.”

“That is really weird,” Wally said.

“The Bible is full of amazing things,” the professor replied. “People who don’t read their Bibles miss out on all sorts of astonishing truths. For example, Daniel 4 tells us that there are times when angels actually take the initiative to do things on behalf of the glory of God. In other words, although angels do carry out God’s commands, they are not unfeeling robots who simply wait around until they get an order. They are capable of taking the initiative and being proactive.

“Which brings us to demons. They, unfortunately, are very proactive in the spread of evil. As I said earlier, demons are angels who rebelled against God and chose the path of evil. They are *not* some kind of separate species. Also, despite what Mormons will try to tell you, the devil is *not* the brother of Christ. Jesus is the uncreated God; the devil is a created angel.

“It’s also worth noting that Revelation 12:4 indicates that only one-third of the angels participated in Satan’s rebellion. This

means that angels outnumber demons 2-to-1.”

Brad interrupted. “Don’t the demons run Hell and torment people and stuff?”

Professor Grimes sighed. “Haven’t we already covered this? Demons only torment people in *this* life. They do not run Hell, and the devil is not Hell’s CEO. In fact, God created Hell as a place to torment demons. Demons do not want to go to Hell any more than you do; in fact, Matthew 8:29 tells us that when Jesus walked the Earth the demons were terrified that He was going to begin tormenting them ‘before the time’.

“Demons know their fate. One day Jesus will cast them into the Lake of Fire, where they will be tormented day and night, forever and ever. They will *not* be tormenting others; instead they will be endlessly tortured. Satan’s reign will last for a while longer, but Revelation 20:10 tells us that he will join the damned in the eternal flames. His doom is assured and they know it.”

Isaac spoke up. “You know, I bet the war in Heaven was really something. I wish I had been there to see it.”

Professor Grimes looked at him. “The war in Heaven hasn’t happened yet. That battle takes place halfway during the Tribulation, after the Church has been raptured and is in Heaven. If you are a genuine Christian then you will be in Heaven when it occurs. You aren’t going to miss it.”

“But I thought it happened when Satan rebelled,” Isaac replied.

“I’m afraid not – and that is why it is so important for people to read their Bibles, instead of just believing everything they are told. Revelation 12 clearly indicates that the famous War in Heaven has *not* happened yet. First of all, Revelation puts it chronologically in the middle of the Tribulation, and the Tribulation hasn’t happened yet. Second, when Satan is cast out of Heaven he no longer has access to Heaven and he can no longer accuse the saints – and yet in the book of Job the devil had no problem going before God and accusing Job. Since the rebellion of Satan took place long before Job was born, that means Satan had not yet lost his Heavenly access – and therefore the war couldn’t have taken place yet. Third, we are told that the

moment this war happens and Satan is evicted, the saints in Heaven rejoice because the accuser of the brethren is cast out. If that war happened at the beginning of time, there wouldn't have been any saints in Heaven to rejoice, and Satan couldn't possibly have earned the label of the accuser because there wouldn't have been any people around to accuse!"

"Oh," Isaac said.

"One thing I want to emphasize is that the devil is our adversary. I Peter 5:8 says he is a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He is your enemy and he very much wants to destroy your life. He actively resists the gospel and he has the power to cause great disasters. As we can see in the case of Job, not only did he strike Job with a terrible and painful illness, but he also killed Job's servants and children. In other words, Satan has the power to cause both illness and death – but only if God allows it."

Iris spoke up. "So Satan has to get permission from God before he does things?"

The professor nodded. "Job 1:10 tells us that God puts a hedge around His people, and

Satan can only get through it with God's permission. Now, there are times when God allows Satan through the hedge in order to further His plans or test His people. In the case of Job, God allowed him to be afflicted in order to test his faith. This goes back to another important truth – sometimes God's plan is carried out through pain and suffering. Joseph went through years of both slavery and prison in order to save the life of millions of people in the seven years of famine. Jesus Himself was tortured to death in order to save the souls of men. God's road for us is often a painful one.

“Now, I want to emphasize that not all illness is caused by the curse of Satan. There are a lot of things that happen because we live in a fallen world. But there are other times when our lives are touched by evil and we fall under satanic attack. That is why Paul said in Ephesians 6 to put on the full armor of God, so we can resist the devil's attacks.”

Iris spoke up. “But how can we tell the difference between ordinary suffering and demonic suffering?”

“Well, young lady, the truth is that

suffering is suffering. It's really not that important to determine *why* a tragedy happened to us – that is, as long as it wasn't caused by our own stupidity. If we burn our own house down, recognizing that and correcting it is *very* important. And if we become ill because we abused drugs and destroyed our body, then we need to learn from that as well. But when something that is beyond our control afflicts us and makes our life hard, the important thing is to trust God and use His grace to work our way through it – not to try to guess what God is doing. Leave God's purposes up to God. Your job is to be faithful in all circumstances of life."

"So how do we fight the devil?" Iris asked.

"With the armor of God," the professor replied. "It's all in Ephesians 6. I don't have time here to do a thorough exegesis of that passage, but you should definitely read it when you have a chance. The key to fighting the devil is *resisting him*. Know what the Bible really says and stand firm in its truth. When you are tempted, stand on the commands of God and refuse to give in to evil. When you are tempted to doubt, choose instead to have

faith in God. The great problem that many people have when fighting the devil is that they don't put up a struggle. When the devil tempts them they just give right in without even thinking about it. But if you fight him – if you believe what the Bible says and choose to stand your ground – you *will* win, because the devil does not have any power over Christians. Satan *cannot* force you to sin. All he can do is ask you to sin, and you must then agree. If you don't agree then there's nothing he can do."

Wally spoke up. "So where do aliens fit into all this?"

Professor Grimes hesitated. "Aliens and ghosts are both covered in my Paranormal Studies 313 class. In that course I cover both of those groups in detail. However, since this is probably going to be the last semester that this university ever sees, I suppose it wouldn't hurt to mention them briefly.³⁴"

³⁴ This section is a brief summary of the chapter on aliens from *Paranormal Studies 313*. That same material can also be found in my book *Class 4: Supernatural Beings*. (In fact, this entire chapter is really a brief summary of that book.)

“What is there to say?” Brad asked. “They’re imaginary. UFOs are all a hoax.”

“It’s not quite that simple,” the professor replied. “I agree that UFOs aren’t what they appear to be, but I think that makes them *more* dangerous, not less. There are a number of characteristics of UFO sightings and abductions that are fairly striking. First of all, the supposed aliens have a deep hatred for Christianity. They have no interest in talking about science, or their home planet, or anything that you would naturally expect that an alien would want to talk about. No, the aliens prefer to spend their time talking about religion – and there is only one religion that they want to talk about. That would be the tenants of Christianity.

“The aliens *hate* Christianity and go out of their way to try to discredit it. They claim that the Bible is not reliable. They say that Jesus was an alien. They say that aliens created humans. They make a whole host of claims that are calculated to make people doubt the Word of God. Now, they’re not interested in trying to discredit *other* religions; they just oppose Christianity. They hate that

one particular religion with a passion.

“The other odd thing is that aliens only seem to abduct people who have had some prior contact with the occult. No born-again Christian has ever been abducted. Even more interesting, there is only one known way to stop an alien abduction that is in progress. The only people who successfully escaped an abduction attempt did so by calling on the name of Jesus. When that name was uttered the aliens got scared and fled.”

Brad spoke up. “You can’t possibly be serious!”

“Oh, but I am – and it is all documented. Aliens are *terrified* of the name of Jesus. So, what we seem to have here are a group of powerful beings who hate Christianity, who cannot abduct Christians, who are terrified of the name of Jesus, and who enjoy abducting and torturing people. In other words, aliens are a perfect match for demons.”

“So you think demons have spaceships?” Wally asked.

“No, I don’t. But I do know that Satan is the father of lies, and that demons have vast powers of deception. It wouldn’t be very hard

for a supernatural being to create a convincing illusion – especially since virtually all the physical evidence for UFOs involves bright lights, electrical disturbances, broken branches, and burn marks. That sort of thing would be a pretty easy trick for a demon to pull off.”

“But what would be the point?” Iris asked. “Why bother?”

“Because of the tremendous impact it has on people! When a person comes into contact with an alien and is fed their lies, it radically changes their belief system. Contacts like that have led many people deep into paganism and the occult. It is a very effective tool for the devil to lead people away from God.”

“So what about ghosts?”³⁵ Brad asked. “Are they demons too?”

Professor Grimes glanced at his watch. “Well, let’s stop and think about that. The Bible says that when people die they either go to Heaven or to Hell. Nobody is given the

³⁵ This also came from my book *Class 4: Supernatural Beings*, which has more to say about ghosts.

option of wandering around the world as a disembodied spirit, so ghosts can't be the departed spirits of the dead. No holy angel of God would ever pretend to be a dead person – that would be a lie, and angels don't lie.

“Therefore there are only two possibilities. One is that all ghost sightings – and there have been many – are a hoax. I think that is rather unlikely, since I have personally encountered such situations and can vouch that some hauntings are quite real.³⁶ The second possibility is that ghosts are demons, who are trying to trick people into believing lies about the afterlife. I think that is far more likely.”

Brad spoke up. “Is there anything that you *don't* blame demons for?”

The professor looked at him. “I'm pretty sure that they aren't responsible for the grades you've been getting on my exams. I think that is entirely the fault of your study habits – or perhaps your *lack* of study habits.

³⁶ I have encountered two buildings in my life that were genuinely haunted by demons. You do *not* want to *ever* visit places like that. They are bad news.

Blaming the devil for your grade point average isn't going to get you very far.

“And that's all the time we have for today. Class dismissed!”

Chapter 10.5: Everything Matters

Professor Grimes was on the way to his office when he heard a voice call out to him. “Excuse me – professor?”

Grimes turned around and saw that the voice came from Iris Pearson. “Oh, hello Iris! How can I help you?”

Iris hurried over to him. She opened her mouth, and then hesitated. “Well – this is kind of a weird question, I guess. Here’s the thing. Isn’t it true that the seminary is being shut down, the teachers are sending their students home, and things are pretty much a mess?”

“Yes, it’s quite true,” the professor replied. “These are this university’s final days.”

“Right. Well, I don’t know if it’s true, but I’ve heard stories that things are pretty bad. Whoever built these buildings didn’t seem to care if they did a good job or not. No one

seems to care about anything. The teachers don't care. President Harris doesn't care. Everything is falling apart because no one can be bothered to care. Even though this school is supposed to be training people to serve God and all, people just don't seem to care."

"That is true as well," Professor Grimes agreed. "This school is plagued by apathy. Of course, the same can be said for this age in which we live. Christ Himself warned that the times before His return would be filled with apostasy and a total disregard for the truth. Even people who claim the name of Christ don't actually take Him very seriously. That's how we know that His return is quite near indeed."

"Ok," Iris said. "I get that. But why do *you* care? I mean, you keep on teaching even though pretty much no one shows up to your classes. You still do your best, even though it doesn't really matter."

"But it *does* matter," the professor replied. "Doing our best always matters, no matter what the situation is or what those around us are doing. That is because everything that Christians do is to be done as

if it was a personal favor to Jesus Christ Himself. Colossians 3:24 tells us that since Jesus is our Master, He is the one we are working for and He is the one who will reward us. The actions in our lives are full of meaning because our lives are being lived for *Him*, not for us.

“Yes, it’s true that many people skip my classes. But there are some who *do* show up, and that gives me the opportunity to tell them things that are of incredible importance to their life. The things we have talked about this semester – and the things we still have left to cover – are of eternal significance. They are literally the difference between Heaven and Hell; between an eternity of joy and an eternity of being burned alive. These things *really matter*, and if people don’t take them seriously that doesn’t make them any less important.”

“But doesn’t it get hard?” Iris asked. “I mean, pretty much no one listens to you.”

“That’s quite true – but for that matter, the same could be said about Jesus. Very few people throughout history have ever listened to Him. Most refuse to take Him seriously,

even though He created the world and will one day judge everyone who has ever lived. But my job – and the job of all of us, really – is to be faithful regardless of our circumstances. I’m going to teach even if there is only one person there to listen. I’m going to do the very best job I can, no matter what is going on around me. That is our calling in this world – to be faithful even if no one else is faithful.

“And it’s not like this is the first time in history that this has ever happened. Remember Noah? God searched the entire world and found only *one* righteous person in it. Things aren’t quite that bad here – not yet, at any rate.”

“I guess I understand,” Iris said. “Thanks.”

“You are quite welcome, young lady. If you ever have any more questions, please don’t hesitate to ask. After all, if you do not seek the answer to your questions then you will probably never find it.”

Lecture 11: Genuine Faith

“Today I am going to give you the most important test in your life,” Professor Grimes announced.

The class let out a collective groan. “Again?” Brad asked. “But, seriously, we just took a test two classes ago! We’ve only had like one lecture since then. There’s no way it’s time for another test.”

Iris spoke up. “I didn’t see anything about a test on the syllabus.”

Professor Grimes nodded. “All of that is very true. However, there are many kind of tests in life and very few of them involve a pen and some paper. For example, each day of your life your character is tested. Your moral values are tested. Your punctuality is tested. Your willingness to get the job done is tested. Despite what you may think, life is full of tests – and how you do on them determines the sort of life you have, and where you will end up when your life is over.

“The test I am going to give you today is not a formal test. I’m not going to be handing out exams and I’m not going to give out any grades. But that does not make this test any less important. If you fail this test and do nothing to remedy that situation, you will find yourself in a great deal of trouble – because God is the one who is going to be grading you.”

Wally spoke up. “How did you get God to start grading your exams?”

Professor Grimes sighed. “God is *always* grading you, Wally. As I explained in our second lecture, He watches everything you say and He knows everything you do. The day will come when you will have to stand before God and give an account of what you have said and what you have done. If your sins are covered by the blood of Christ then you will be rewarded for your acts of service. However, if you died without ever believing in Christ then God will hold you accountable for all the wicked acts that you have ever done. He will cast you into the Lake of Fire, where you will be tormented for all of eternity.”

Brad spoke up. “I thought people went to Hell when they died. The unsaved, I mean.”

“Didn’t you listen to anything I said when we talked about the afterlife? It’s no wonder you’re failing this class! As I explained in that rather lengthy lecture, Hell is just a holding place where the wicked await their final judgment. Revelation 20 tells us that after Satan launches his final attack against God (which is something we’ll cover in our last lesson), the Lord will remove everyone from Hell so they can stand before Him and be judged. At that time they will be condemned for all the evil they have done, and God will cast them into a place the Bible calls the Lake of Fire. Technically speaking, it isn’t accurate to talk about people spending eternity in Hell. Hell is actually a holding cell, where people await their final judgment – which, I assure you, will not be any more tolerable than Hell itself.”

Iris spoke up. “So what is this test you’re going to give us?”

“It is a test of faith,” the professor replied. “In Matthew 7:14 Jesus said that the road to salvation was narrow and few people would find it. In Matthew 7:22-23 He added that *many* people would think they were saved,

but in reality they weren't actually saved at all. When the Day of Judgment comes there will be many people who will tell Jesus that they were His servants, but Jesus will turn them away and say that He never knew them.

"In other words, the world is full of people who think that they are Christians *but who are actually lost*. This is a very serious situation, because it means that billions of people think they are on the road to Heaven when they are actually on the road to Hell. Now, if you already *know* that you are lost and on the road to Hell then you might be motivated to do something about it. But if you think you're going to Heaven when you're really not, then you have a serious problem. It's very, very difficult to get those people to seriously consider the fact that they are lost. Their false assurance inoculates them against the gospel."

Brad spoke up. "Well, I know for sure that *I'm* saved. I still remember the wonderful feeling I had when I went up to the altar and got saved. I'll never forget that moment."

"And you are willing to base your entire eternity on a *feeling*?" Professor Grimes

asked. "It may surprise you to know that Mormons also claim that when they converted to Mormonism they had a wonderful, life-changing feeling. Catholics say exactly the same thing. There are even atheists who had a good feeling about abandoning Christianity and rejecting all belief in God. All a good feeling means is that *you felt good about that decision*. It says absolutely nothing about whether that decision was right or wrong. There are people in this world who do terrible, horrific things and yet feel very good about it."

Iris spoke up. "But that's how I've always been told to verify my salvation. My pastor said to go back to that moment and claim it."

"And what about the Bible?" Professor Grimes asked. "Can you find that particular bit of advice anywhere in its pages? Did your pastor offer you any Scriptural support for that bit of advice?"

"Well, not that I can think of," Iris admitted.

The professor sighed. "It is very important to take everything that you are told and compare it with the teachings of the

Word of God. There are many people who are quite wrong about what the Bible says, and there are others who will outright lie about its teachings. If you cannot verify the claims that you hear then you *must* reject them. Do not *ever* believe something just because someone told you to believe it. Your faith must be rooted in the teachings of the Bible, not in what so-and-so told you.

“The truth is that the Bible offers a very concrete and practical way to test ourselves to see if our salvation is genuine – and its directions do *not* involve trying to remember a feeling you had ten years ago. Today we are going to study what the Bible actually has to say about this matter.”

Wally spoke up. “And then you’re going to grade us?”

“No, God is going to grade you. But what I have to say will tell you what sort of grade you’re going to get. That way if you’re going to fail you can take action to change your fate while there is still time to do so.”

The professor picked up his notes off his makeshift desk. “So how can we tell if our salvation is genuine? The answer is found in

the book of I John. In fact, I John 5:13 tells us that John actually wrote that epistle so people could know whether their salvation was genuine. You see, God does not want us to go through our lives wondering if our faith is real. He wants us to *know* that we are saved and then rest in that assurance. I John presents us with the acid test.

“The first point that the apostle John makes is that all genuine believers have admitted that they are sinners and have asked Jesus to forgive them of their sins. We find this in I John 1:8-10. This may seem obvious, but it is vital, and there are millions of people who fail this test. If you claim that you have no sin, or that your good deeds are enough to get you to Heaven – as millions of people do – then you are a lost soul on the road to Hell. If you have never repented of your sins and asked Jesus to forgive you for what you have done, then you are a lost soul on the road to Hell. You *cannot* get to Heaven on the basis of your good deeds. You must confess your sins and seek God’s forgiveness for them.”

Brad spoke up. “But what if you’ve been

a pretty good person who has never done anything really bad?"

"God's standard is *very* different from yours," Professor Grimes replied. "If you have ever told so much as a single lie then you are a liar, and that is enough to send you to Hell. If you have ever stolen even a single thing then you are a thief, and that is enough to send you to Hell. If you have ever lusted after someone then you are an adulterer, and that is enough to send you to Hell. In the sight of God there are *no* people who have never 'done anything really bad'. There are only depraved sinners who richly deserve His judgment.

"So that is point number one. The second point is that genuine Christians submit to the lordship of Christ. We find this in I John 2:3-5. What this means is that genuine believers seek after holiness and try to obey God's commands. Now, this doesn't mean that they obey God perfectly, but it *does* mean that they hate their sin and they try to live a life of obedience."

Iris spoke up. "So in order to stay saved we have to obey God?"

Professor Grimes shook his head. “You have it backwards. When a person becomes a Christian God changes them and gives them a new heart. Since they are now saved and are no longer in bondage to sin, that person will *want* to obey God. He will hate his sin and will seek after holiness. The fact that he is trying to live a life that pleases God is a sign that he really *has* been changed and truly is a Christian. In other words, a life of good works is evidence that your salvation was real. Likewise, if a person does not have any of the fruits of the Spirit and is living a life of utter depravity, that is a sign that his faith is *not* real.

“The issue in our day is that there is a whole class of people who has come to God and said ‘Jesus, keep me from going to Hell, but don’t you dare try to tell me what to do. I’m going to live my life as I see fit and I want you to stay out of it.’ That sort of prayer *cannot* save you. If you reject the authority of Christ over your life and refuse to obey Him then you are not a Christian at all. In order to be saved Jesus must be your Savior *and* your Lord. *This is not optional*. No one who lives their life saying ‘God, you have no right to tell

me what to do!’ is a Christian.”

Wally spoke up. “But what if I disagree with the Bible?”

“Young man, that is *not* an option. As I explained weeks ago, the Bible is the Word of God and was written by God Himself. Its teachings are absolutely binding. If you disagree with what it says then that means *you are wrong* and you need to change. If your opinions do not match the opinions in the Bible then your opinions are wrong and *you* need to change. If you reject the Bible and say ‘Eh, I disagree with that stuff and I’m going to do my own thing’, then that is very strong evidence that you are not a Christian. No one with genuine faith would ever dare to do such a thing. Genuine believers tremble at the commands of God. They do not ignore them.”

Iris spoke up. “But I hear people do that all the time.”

“As do I,” the professor replied. “That is one of the reasons why I believe that very few people in our churches are actually saved. It frightens me that people have so little fear of God that they feel free to say things like ‘God,

your commands and opinions are completely wrong and you need to change'. That is a strong sign that they are actually children of the devil. True Christians fear God and hold His commands in high esteem. They do not treat God like some sort of foolish child who needs to be corrected."

The professor returned his attention to his notes. "So that is point number two. Point number three is that genuine Christians are characterized by love – both for other Christians and even for their enemies. We find this in I John 2:9-11. Now, this doesn't mean that Christians don't occasionally sin and do things that they later regret. However, it *does* mean that they are not characterized by anger and malice. I John 4:20 is very clear about this: it is impossible to hate your fellow men, who you *have* seen, and love a God who you *haven't* seen. If you have nothing but hatred in your heart for other people then that means you also have hatred in your heart for God."

Iris spoke up. "But what about criminals and murderers? Isn't murdering people bad? Don't those people deserve to be hated?"

“Well, that is a good question. I am *not* saying that we should accept murder, or that we should act as if it’s not a serious crime. We should vigorously oppose such appalling behavior and we should seek to stamp it out. I also want to point out that there are times when it is appropriate to get angry. Christ Himself got angry on a number of occasions, and yet Christ never sinned. But Jesus was also clear in Matthew 5:44 that we are to love our *enemies*. We really should show love and compassion to those who hate us and try to tear us apart.

“Now, let me add that the Biblical definition of love is quite different from the modern counterfeit. Love does not mean ‘only say nice things to people’. It means that you need to act in ways that honor God – and at times that may mean condemning them for their sin, removing them from their fellowship, and even arresting and prosecuting them. There is nothing loving about telling a murderer ‘Oh, it’s ok that you killed those people. We’re going to show you love by not arresting you or trying to stop you.’ That is madness. What the murderer needs is

for someone to stop him. He needs to be condemned and told to repent of his terrible sins and seek forgiveness from Christ. Buying him a chainsaw is the *wrong* thing to do.”

Wally spoke up. “But the Bible says we’re not supposed to judge other people.”

“No it does *not*,” Professor Grimes said firmly. “What Jesus actually said in Matthew 7:1-5 is that you should not condemn others for sins that you yourself are guilty of. Instead you should repent of your sins and *then* tell others to stop sinning. That way you are not being a hypocrite. The truth is that the Bible actually commands us to tell others to repent of their sins. In fact, the gospel itself is a condemnation of sin!

“That brings us to the fourth point. In order to be a genuine Christian you must believe that Jesus is the Messiah. We find this in I John 2:22-23.”

Iris spoke up. “Isn’t that the very definition of Christianity?”

“You would certainly think so – and yet I once knew a young man who claimed to be a Christian but said he did not believe in

Jesus.³⁷ It was madness! In order to be saved you must believe that Jesus is God Himself – the uncreated and eternal God who is part of the Trinity. You must believe that Jesus became a man, lived a perfect life, and then died for the sins of man. You must believe that He rose from the dead. In other words, you must believe the Bible’s account of Jesus.

“This is very important, because there are many people who believe in a false Jesus. For example, Muslims believe in a person called Jesus but their Jesus was not God and did not die for anyone’s sins. He was just a prophet. Likewise, Mormons believe in a person called Jesus but their Jesus was just a man who lived a good life and earned his way to godhood. Those religions believe in a *false* Jesus – and you cannot be saved by believing in someone who isn’t real. If you take a rock out of your backyard, turn it into an idol, and name it ‘Jesus’ and worship it, the fact that

³⁷ This is a true story; I did not make this up. I actually did once meet someone who claimed that very thing, and I spent almost an hour trying to get him to understand how foolish he was being. (Did he repent and believe? Sadly, no, he did not.)

you gave it the name Jesus does *not* somehow give it magical power to save you. In order to be saved you must believe in the real Jesus.”

Brad spoke up. “Catholics believe in the real Jesus.”

“But as I pointed out in an earlier lecture, they deny His power to save you. They teach that you must earn your way to Heaven through a life of good works. Believing in the real Jesus isn’t going to help you if you are trying to earn your way to Heaven. You cannot be saved by Jesus if you have rejected His sacrifice.

“So that is point number four. Point number five is a simple one: genuine Christians have their heart set on the things of God, and not on the carnal things of this world. I John 2:15-17 is very blunt: if you love the things of this world then the love of the Father is not in you.”

Brad spoke up. “That sounds kind of vague to me.”

“There’s nothing the least bit vague about it! Jesus said that you cannot serve two masters. Either you *are* working for the glory

of God and the advancement of His kingdom, or you *are not*. Your life is either going to be all about God and what He wants, or it is going to be all about you and what you want. Are you passionate about holiness and the gospel, or is your focus instead on the latest toys? Are you trying to save souls, or are you trying to get a big house, a nice car, and a lot of money? Who are you *really* serving with the precious few years that God gave you on this world?

You see, the Bible tells us that everything in this world is just temporary. 2 Peter 3:10 says that God is going to utterly destroy this planet and everything that it contains. Your big house, your nice car, your money and your fame are all going to be burnt up – destroyed by what the Bible calls ‘fervent heat’. You’re not going to get to keep *any* of it. You might as well be building sandcastles on the beach! Since none of these things matter – and, in fact, since they actually distract us from God – genuine believers don’t really care about the things of this world and instead are passionate about building God’s kingdom. That is their focus.”

Iris spoke up. “Does that mean that everything we do has to be spiritual? Is God only pleased with us if we become full-time missionaries to Africa?”

“Not at all,” the professor replied. “In Ephesians 6:5-8 the apostle Paul told the slaves of Rome to serve their masters well, because in doing so they were honoring God. It’s like I said at the beginning of this lecture: all of life is a test. When we get out of bed and take care of our families, that can bring honor to God. When we go to work and do a good job for a boss who doesn’t appreciate it, that can bring honor to God. Honoring the Lord isn’t something that is limited to Sunday morning worship services. When we live a quiet life, pursue holiness, and serve others, that brings honor to God. Micah 6:8 puts it this way: ‘...what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?’ We make this so much harder than it needs to be.”

Professor Grimes looked back at his notes. “And that brings us to the very last point – and this is an important one. So far we have seen that a genuine Christian is

someone who has repented of his sins, has wholly submitted to the authority of Christ, has a life characterized by love, has put their faith in the *real* Jesus, and seeks God's kingdom instead of their own. But there is one more point, and it is crucial: you must *continue in the faith*. Anyone who abandons their faith in God and dies without repenting was never a Christian at all. I John 2:19 says that their faith was phony."

Iris spoke up. "How is that different from losing your salvation?"

"Well, as I said in an earlier class, you cannot lose your salvation. If you *could* lose your salvation then that would mean you could also *keep* your salvation, by living a good life and making the right decisions. At that point, though, you're not trusting in Christ anymore – you're trusting in your ability to do the right thing. In other words, a salvation that can be lost by your works is a salvation that can also be kept by your works. But as we discussed earlier, salvation is *not of works*. Since you cannot earn your salvation, that means you cannot lose it. Once you become a Christian you are sealed and cannot

be lost. Your salvation depends upon the perfection of Christ, and He is not going to change.

“The situation that the apostle John talks about is a little different. Imagine that you had a chair sitting in the corner. From what you can tell it looks like a pretty good chair, and it seems to be pretty solid. Since it looks good you finally decide to sit on it – but when you do so the chair collapses. The chair *seemed* to be good, but it actually wasn’t any good at all. When you tested that chair you found out that its supposed strength was just an illusion.

“People’s faith can be like that. A person may say that they believe God and they may think that they really do love God, but the storms of life will reveal the truth. When a loved one dies and they get angry with God and abandon Him, they reveal who they truly were all along. Like the chair that collapsed, it turns out that they didn’t *really* believe that God loves them or that all things work together for good. They didn’t really trust Him at all. Their faith was just a sham – it fell apart the moment it was tested. All the trial

did was reveal what God already knew – that their faith was worthless.

“If your faith is genuine then it will last a lifetime. You may struggle with doubts from time to time and you might go through some terrible trials – but in the end you will die in the faith. In other words, real faith *lasts*. It doesn’t last because you are trying to keep it; instead it lasts because it is genuine.”

Iris spoke up. “So you’re saying that people who renounce their faith weren’t actually believers at all.”

“Exactly,” Professor Grimes said.

He paused a moment and looked at his students. “As I said at the beginning of class, this is the most important test that you will ever take. If you want to avoid facing the eternal wrath of God, you *must* be a Christian. There are many people who have deluded themselves into thinking that they are Christians when they actually aren’t Christians at all. *Do not be one of them!* Pay attention to what the Bible has to say, and examine yourself. Are you sure that your faith is real? After all, you are betting all of eternity on it – and if you die in your sins you won’t be

able to fix things. It will be far too late for that. This is your chance to examine yourself, *before* you stand before God and are judged. Don't waste it.

"Is there anything that anyone wishes to say?"

There was utter silence in the class. No one said a word.

"Very well. Then you are dismissed – but think about what I have said. This is one exam that you cannot afford to fail."

Chapter 11.5: Consequences

Another day of classes had come to an end. The semester was almost over. Grimes only had two more lectures to give, and then it would be time for finals week. After the finals were over the county would come and level all of the fire traps that had been masquerading as buildings. Then the Sunset Hills seminary would be finished.

Professor Grimes and his wife were in their aging car, on their way home. It was dark outside. The stars should have been shining, but the sky was overcast and the world was cloaked in darkness. Margaret drove the car over the winding country roads that led to their home. Her husband sat quietly, lost in thought.

Margaret finally broke the silence. "I heard that President Harris got arrested today."

“Indeed he did,” Grimes replied. “It turns out that embezzling is illegal. Apparently there’s been a lot of embezzling going around. The indictment named quite a few names.”

“How did we miss all that corruption?” Margaret asked. “It took us far too long to discover the truth and tip off the authorities. We should have realized what was going on years ago. I guess I just never thought that Harris had enough energy to embezzle money. He seemed so lazy and shiftless.”

“Not to mention incompetent,” Grimes added. “I, too, believed that his enthusiasm for the new football stadium was nothing more sinister than pure idiocy. I have dealt with morons for so long that I overlooked the obvious. But I am fairly certain that the IRS and the FBI are not going to make that same mistake. President Harris has a long road in front of him and it’s not going to be a pleasant one.”

“Well, he certainly got what was coming to him,” his wife replied. “I can’t say he will be missed.”

Grimes sighed. “This isn’t a complete victory, you know. Harris went undetected for

so long that his actions bankrupted the university and drove it into the ground. My best efforts were not enough to save it. He ruined an institution of higher learning and he brought great reproach to the name of Christ. Although I am glad he is gone, his devastating legacy remains. I don't think it's possible to fix what he has done."

"But at least he's been stopped before he can do this again."

"That is true," Grimes replied. "And perhaps this will cause him to rethink his life and seek repentance. After all, if he does not change then he will face a worse fate."

"Speaking of that, did you really give Dr. Hale your fire-and-brimstone speech? When I talked to her just before she was arrested she was really angry with you. Apparently you ticked her off."

"You know, people never think about the long term," Grimes replied thoughtfully. "All they care about is what benefits them right now, in this very second. They don't stop to think that they are going to live forever *somewhere*, and that their eternal destination is going to affect them for a *very*

long time. They don't stop to consider their actions and ask 'Are there going to be consequences for this? If I do this, how will God respond?' They don't realize that God is both very real and very dangerous."

"That doesn't answer my question," his wife replied.

"Yes, I did talk to Dr. Hale. Apparently Harris wasn't the only one doing some embezzling. Hale seemed to have this notion that anything she could get away with couldn't possibly be all that bad. I told her otherwise."

Professor Grimes sighed. "Sometimes I feel like I am living in the middle of an insane asylum. Where did all the sane people go? When did the fools of this world stage a revolution and take over the country? It just astonishes me that people could watch Jesus raise someone from the dead and then go away thinking that the right response to that is to *put Christ to death*. People are deeply irrational."

"Well, at least you're there to tell them that," his wife replied.

Grimes smiled. "Indeed."

Lecture 12: Traditions

“We are approaching the end of the semester,” Professor Grimes announced. “Our next class will be our last one. After that will be finals week, and then this university will cease to exist. I can say with some assurance that at least *one* of you just might pass this course. That is something to be proud of. Considering where all of you started, getting a passing grade means that you have actually learned something. Your knowledge of theology has increased substantially.”

Iris spoke up. “What are you going to do once the semester is over? Are you going to retire?”

“Definitely not,” Professor Grimes replied. “As long as there is ignorance in the world, and as long as I am alive and able, I will continue to battle that ignorance. However, after this class has ended I think I might take a sabbatical from teaching. I might even do a little bit of writing. We’ll just have to see.”

“Today, though, we’re not going to talk about my future career plans. Instead we are going to talk about traditions.”

Wally spoke up. “Like Christmas trees and stockings? I’ve never understood why people hang stockings over their fireplace. Who, exactly, thought that hanging socks in their living room was a good idea?”

“That is an excellent question – and it’s one of the things I discuss in my Holiday Trivia class. We also discuss the physics of flying reindeer and the time challenges involved with delivering presents all over the world in a single night. The math is actually quite fascinating.”

“Seriously?” Brad asked. “You teach a Holiday Trivia class?”

Professor Grimes laughed. “Goodness, no! That would be a complete waste of time. I would hate to have to explain to your parents why they are paying this university large sums of money to have me talk about socks and sock-related activities. Anyway, as I was saying, we are going to talk about traditions – specifically, church traditions.

“One of the many problems with the

modern church is that it has abandoned the Word of God. The number of heresies that are out there is almost endless. Some churches teach that there is no Hell and everyone goes to Heaven. Others teach that God's primary goal in life is for you to be happy, and that if you give your life to Jesus then God will make you healthy, wealthy, and famous. Pastors deny the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, original sin, and a whole list of other critical doctrines. In other words, apostasy is everywhere. In fact, apostasy is so prevalent that the truth is hard to find.

"I also find it irritating that people can't even get the little things right. For example, despite what most people think, all angels are *men*, not women, and angels rarely sing. There is a famous hymn called 'Hark, the Herald Angel Sings', and yet the Bible says that the angels which heralded the birth of Christ *did no singing whatsoever*. Also, the forbidden fruit was *not* an apple and the wise men were *not* present with the shepherds at the birth of Christ. They actually arrived years later."

"They did what?" Iris asked.

Professor Grimes nodded. “The wise men saw Christ’s star in the East, and then they packed their bags and went on a long journey to visit Him. They arrived long after He was born; in fact, He was probably a toddler when they finally got there. That’s why Herod killed all the children in that area who were 2 years old or younger. The wise men didn’t have private jets, you know. It was a long journey to Jerusalem.”

“But nativity scenes always have the wise men,” Wally protested.

“And some of them also have Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. But that doesn’t mean Rudolph was actually there.”

The professor glanced back at his notes. “The point is that Christians don’t have a lot of discernment and aren’t very careful about what they believe or how they behave. They just believe whatever they’re told. They don’t bother to check the Bible to see if their beliefs are even vaguely related to the truth. Calling them ‘sheep’ is a very accurate metaphor, because they just go wherever you lead them. Errors can last for generations because people don’t bother to do their homework.”

“That’s kind of insulting,” Brad said.

“Insulting? It’s richly deserved! How do you think *God* feels about all this? Do you think it pleases Him when His own people can’t even bother to *read* the Bible, much less study it? Do you think He is glad when Christians can’t even get the basic doctrines *of their own religion* correct? Do you have any idea how ashamed Christians are going to be when they stand before God and realize that they wasted their entire lives?”

“But Heaven is a place of happiness,” Wally said. “Everyone is happy there all the time.”

“No, the New Heaven and Earth are a place of happiness,” Professor Grimes replied. “There is a difference. Revelation 6:9-10 tells us of some martyrs in Heaven who are crying out to God for vengeance. Even though these martyrs are in Heaven, they are *not* happy little balls of fuzzy contentment. Instead they are begging God to punish those who ruthlessly murdered them. They are not crying out ‘Man, life is good’. Instead they are saying ‘God, please avenge our blood’. You need to read your Bible.

“There are two traditions that I want to talk about, because they are so prevalent and because they illustrate the point I am trying to make. The first one has to do with the Sabbath.”

Iris spoke up. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” she quoted.

“Right. That’s what I want to discuss. When God gave the Mosaic Law to Israel He commanded them to set aside the seventh day of the week as a day of rest. You can find this in Exodus 20:9-11 and Exodus 30:13-17. On that day people were not allowed to work, under pain of death. Anyone who violated that command was dragged out of the camp and had rocks thrown at them until they died.”

“Wow,” Wally said. “Harsh.”

“Oh yes! The commandment was very strict. You could *not* work on that day. You could not buy or sell on that day. Exodus 35:3 even said that you could not kindle a fire on that day. It was a day of rest, and you were either going to rest or you were going to be executed for not resting.

“God said in Exodus 30:13 that He gave that commandment to the Jews as a sign that

the Jews were God's special people – that they were set apart and holy. Resting on the seventh day signified that they were different from everyone else. However – and I want to emphasize this – there is more to the story. God also gave the Jewish people a calendar full of holy days. The Sabbath is one of these, *but it is not the only one*. There were actually *seven* other Jewish festivals that the Jews were required to keep, and those festivals also involved days of rest. Leviticus 23 gives a complete list of them.”

Iris spoke up. “What were those festivals?”

Professor Grimes sighed. “Unfortunately, we don’t have time to get into the details. I do cover them in my Levitical Studies class, but since I won’t be teaching next semester you won’t have a chance to take it. My point is that God gave the Jewish people an entire calendar of Sabbaths and Holy Days that He required them to keep. The Sabbath was just one in a long list.”

Brad spoke up. “So what?”

“Don’t you see what I’m getting at?” the professor asked. “Don’t you find it a bit

strange that Christians are so adamant about keeping *one* of the Jewish holy days, but have no interest in enforcing any of the other holy days that God required the Jews to keep? Doesn't that raise a red flag that something, somewhere is terribly wrong?"

Brad shrugged. "Not really. Who cares?"

"*God* cares! Christians have completely disregarded the details surrounding the command – and the details matter. Today if you talk to Christians, pretty much everyone believes that Sunday is supposed to be a day of rest. Working on Sunday is a sin. Mowing your lawn on Sunday is a sin. You have to keep Sunday holy because that's what the Ten Commandments say.

"Except that's *not* what the Ten Commandments say. Exodus 20:10 says that the Sabbath was the *seventh* day of the week, not the first. What Christians have done is taken one of the Jewish Holy Days out of an entire calendar that is full of them, changed the day that it's supposed to fall on, and then claimed that keeping that one day is binding to all Christians – even though none of the other Jewish holy days matter. This is in spite

of the fact that Colossians 2:16-17 and Romans 14:5-10 explicitly teaches that Christians are *not* bound to keep *any* of the Jewish Holy Days. They can keep them if they wish but it's not required. They have liberty to do as they please."

Wally spoke up. "The Sabbath was moved to Sunday after Christ rose from the dead. That's why we go to Church on Sunday."

Professor Grimes shook his head. "The Sabbath has *not* been moved. The only person who could possibly move it is God, and He has not done so. It is true that Christians do gather together to worship God on Sunday in order to celebrate the day that Christ rose from the dead. But that has nothing to do with Sabbath keeping! The Sabbath was a day of *rest*, not a day of worship. The commandment does not say 'Six days you will labor and do all your work, but on the Sabbath you will go to Church and listen to your pastor'."

Brad interrupted. "But surely it's not a sin to rest on Sunday, right?"

"Of course not! The apostle Paul made the point that you are free to keep any of the

holy days – or none of them at all. If you want to esteem one day above another then you are allowed to do that. But what you *cannot* do – what the Bible *expressly forbids* – is judging someone else on the basis of keeping holy days. And that is precisely what many people do. They condemn others for not resting on Sunday, and they believe that they are superior because they refrain from performing certain activities on that day. This is despite the fact that had they lived back in the days of the Old Testament, they would have been stoned to death for keeping the wrong day – and even if they *had* kept the right day, their idea of ‘keeping’ the Sabbath falls woefully short of the Biblical standard. Remember, you weren’t even allowed to kindle a fire on the Sabbath *even in wintertime*. How many people have *you* seen keep the Sabbath by not heating their homes in January?

“My point here is that the Church has two problems: it fails to condemn things that are very blatant sins, like adultery and homosexuality, and it *does* condemn things that are not sins at all – like not keeping the

first day of the week holy. It strains at gnats and swallows camels.”

Brad spoke up. “But does it really matter? I mean, in the grand scheme of things, who cares?”

“Does reality matter?” Professor Grimes echoed. “Well, let’s stop and think about that. Does what God said make any difference? Can’t we just ignore God’s commands and do as we please? Can we just pretend like God isn’t there? That’s what you’re really getting at, isn’t it? Can’t we just overthrow God and appoint ourselves as gods instead?

“You know, I happen to think that being held accountable by God is a *very serious matter*, and one we ought not take lightly. Erasing God’s words and replacing them with our own is a horrifying sin. Christ had a lot of very bad things to say about the Pharisees’ habit of ignoring what God actually said and instead enforcing their own ludicrous traditions. God does *not* take it lightly when His words are overruled and we do our own thing instead.

“This all goes back to a much bigger

problem: modern man simply does not take God very seriously. We don't really believe that anything we ever do will come back to haunt us. We think that since God didn't strike us dead the first time we sinned, that means He either isn't real at all or He's some kind of cosmic pushover. We overlook what 2 Peter 3:9 says – that the *reason* God hasn't judged us yet is because He is giving us a chance to repent of our sins and be saved. Those who do not take the opportunity He is giving them are going to find themselves in a great deal of trouble – trouble they will not be able to escape.”

Wally spoke up. “You know, prof, you're kind of a downer, you know that? It's always doom and gloom with you. All you do is hand out clouds of doom to people.”

Professor Grimes sighed. “If you saw someone mistakenly pick up a glass of poison and start to drink it, the right thing to do is *not* say ‘Hey there! Love your new shoes. So what did you think of the game last night?’ The right thing to do is tell them that *they are about to drink poison and they need to stop*. When you see people on the road to Hell, the

right thing to do is *try to stop them*. When you see people making terrible mistakes that will torment them for the rest of time, the proper course of action is to *tell them that what they are doing is wrong*. That is exactly what Christ did – as I said earlier, He spoke far more of Hell than He did about Heaven. People need to be told about the grave danger they are in – not that they have nice fingernails.”

The professor looked through his notes. “Getting back to the topic at hand – speaking of church traditions, one particular tradition that bothers me tremendously is tithing.”

“Let me guess,” Brad interrupted. “You think that more people should tithe.”

Professor Grimes shook his head. “It’s actually quite the opposite. I wish that churches would stop teaching tithing altogether. Giving 10% of your gross income to your local church is *not* tithing. Calling it tithing does not make it tithing any more than calling this building an elephant would cause it to start asking for peanuts. The modern church has completely butchered the Bible’s teachings on giving beyond all recognition.”

Iris spoke up. “But shouldn’t people give

money to their churches?”

The professor paused. “What I want is for churches to teach what the Bible actually says about giving, and that is precisely what they are *not* doing. In order to understand what I mean I’m going to have to give you a brief lecture from my levitical studies class. You need to know a little bit of history in order to understand how badly the Church has gone astray.

“After Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, he brought them to Mount Sinai. At that mountain God gave Moses the levitical system. Under that system the people could only interact with God by going through the priests. The common person was simply not holy enough to approach God without being killed on the spot. So they would instead bring their sacrifices to the priests, who were specially trained and sanctified, and the priests would offer the sacrifices on their behalf. It is important to note that *only* the priests could do this, and in order to be a priest you had to be of the tribe of Levi. If you were not a Levite then you could not be a priest. It was not allowed.”

“So it was a genetic thing?” Iris asked.

“That’s right. In Numbers 8:19 God singled out one tribe to act as a go-between between God and man, and that was the tribe of Levi. Numbers 18:22-23 said no one else was allowed to do it on pain of death. Now, since this tribe was responsible for the Temple, the sacrifices, the judicial system, and educating the people, they couldn’t spend their time farming land and raising sheep. It simply wasn’t possible for them to do everything else and still be full-time farmers. So in Numbers 18:21 and 24 God instituted another way to support them, and that was the tithe.”

“Hold on,” Isaac said. “The Levites ran the judicial system too?”

“That’s right. Deuteronomy 17:9-12 says they would actually hear cases and render judgments. I don’t have the time to get into that, though. The point is that the Levites were essentially specialists, not farmers. Because of this God commanded that at the end of every year, the Israelites were to bring a tenth of their increase to the Levites. This means that they looked at how much they

had at the beginning of the year, compared it to how much they had now, and then gave God one tenth of the difference. Deuteronomy 14:22 says that the tithe was not a tax on their *income*, but on their *increase*.

“As I said, this tithe was given to the Levites. Now, all of the Levites worked with the Temple in some way, but only some of them were actually priests. The rest of the Levites maintained the Temple and did other tasks. Numbers 18:25-28 says that the Levites were to give one tenth of what *they* received to the priests who actually offered the sacrifices. This means that of the 10% that the Israelites gave, the priests themselves only got a tenth of that. On top of that, Deuteronomy 26:12 says that every third year the entire tithe was given to the poor – which reduced their income even further.

“Now, Deuteronomy 14:26 says that if you happened to live too far away to bring your tithe of crops and livestock to the Temple (because the tithe was paid in food, not in money), God said that you could sell your offering, buy whatever you wanted, and

enjoy it before the Lord.”

Brad spoke up. “Are you serious?”

“Yes, that’s exactly what it says. So, to recap: once a year the Israelites would figure out the net increase of their wealth and give the Levites a tenth of that. The Levites, in turn, would give one tenth of *that* to the priests who actually ran the Temple – except every third year, when the entire offering was given to the poor. Only the Levites were allowed to receive the tithe, and the tithe had to be brought to the Temple in Jerusalem. If you couldn’t make to the Temple then you were supposed to use the tithe to buy whatever you wanted and then eat it before God.”

“Really?” Brad said. “That’s what the tithe is?”

“Yes, that’s what the tithe is. The truth is that no one has tithed in two thousand years, because the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD and all of the Levites are now gone. This means it is actually *impossible* to tithe. First of all, there are no Levites anymore, and only the Levites could receive the tithe. Second, there is no Temple, and the tithe had to be brought to the Temple. So even if you were

bound and determined to obey the Mosaic Law of tithing, you could not do it. It is physically impossible.

“And let’s not pretend that what’s going on today is even remotely related to tithing. The Biblical tithe was of your net increase, not of your gross income. The priests only received one tenth of the tithe, or 1% of Israel’s increase. *Nobody* is giving away the entire tithe every third year to the poor. What we are doing today bears no relation to what the Bible says at all.”

Wally spoke up. “But pastors are basically priests, right?”

“Not in the slightest!” Professor Grimes replied. “Israel needed priests to act as a mediator between God and man. Today, however, Jesus is our mediator and high priest. If you want to talk to God then just *talk to God* – you don’t need to ask your pastor to talk to God for you! If you want to confess your sins and get forgiveness then just go to God and do it yourself – you don’t have to ask your pastor to kill a sheep outside the sanctuary. Your pastor is *not* your mediator and he does *not* forgive your sins. Pastors are

not priests. They have a completely different function.”

Iris spoke up. “So if we can’t tithe then what *are* we supposed to be doing?”

“We are supposed to be following the system of giving that God established in the New Testament – instead of trying to keep an Old Testament law that is physically impossible to keep. The new system is very simple: you belong wholly to God, and therefore you are required to serve Him with all of your abilities and possessions.

“Imagine that you are an investment banker and a client has given you a set of assets that he wants you to invest. That is how God sees you. Everything that God gave to you was given for the express purpose of glorifying God and building up His kingdom. In other words, your possessions actually belong to God, and He expects a good return on His investment.”

Iris spoke up. “Does that mean I need sell all my possessions and give all the money to God? Are Christians supposed to take vows of poverty?”

“Not at all. God gave King David and King

Solomon incredible wealth, and He never criticized them for having it. God blessed Abraham with tremendous riches and never condemned him for daring to have money. Being wealthy is not a sin.

“2 Corinthians 9:7 says that God loves a cheerful giver, and that each person should give what they have purposed in their heart to give. The point is that we need a change of attitude. For too long churches have told people ‘You need to give God His 10% cut, and then you can keep the rest for yourself.’ But the truth is that God owns you and everything about you. We need to instead ask ourselves: how can I serve God? How can I wisely use what He has given me for the advancement of His kingdom? Am I living my life and spending my money for God’s glory, or for my own? Who am I *really* living for? *That* is what churches should be teaching, instead of this 10% nonsense. God wants 100% of us, not a tenth.”

Wally spoke up. “That sounds really expensive.”

“It’s only expensive if your heart is set on the things of this world. If you don’t really

care about money or fame or power, but you *do* care about God and the gospel, then using your money to save the souls of men will seem like a fantastic bargain. You're trading something that has no real value for something that is of eternal significance! It's an amazing deal."

Professor Grimes looked at his watch. "And once again I see that we are out of time. Class dismissed! Next week will be our final class, where – fittingly – we will discuss the end of things."

"The end of what things?" Wally asked.

"Why, the end of all things, of course," the professor answered.

Chapter 12.5: Andy's Revenge

Professor Grimes and Officer Wells were walking along the sidewalk that ran beside the campus courtyard. Grimes had finished his classes for the day and was looking forward to a relaxing weekend. The semester was almost over – and that was a good feeling, because the past few months had been very difficult. There was just one more lecture to deliver to each of his classes, and then his days of teaching at Sunset Hills would be brought to a close.

That also meant that his opportunity to spend time with his good friend Bob Wells was about to come to an end. Once the semester was finished Grimes planned on selling his home and moving to another part of the country. He hadn't decided where to go yet; he had received offers from several seminaries, and Grimes wanted to take the

time to visit them all before he and his wife came to a decision. But no matter what seminary they chose, the Grimes family would be leaving the area – and leaving behind the few friends they had made. It would be the start of a new life for them.

Grimes and Wells stopped at the crosswalk and waited for the light to turn red. The street wasn't very busy. Sunset Hills was such a small town that even rush hour traffic was pretty thin. Most of the seminary's students had already bailed and gone home, leaving the city's population even smaller. There was hardly a car to be seen.

"So do you have any plans this weekend?" Officer Wells asked.

"Absolutely! I've got a stack of old books to read, and a comfortable porch chair to read them in. I am all set for a splendid weekend."

"Sounds – um, delightful, I guess," the police officer replied. "Have you ever considered doing something that was actually fun?"

"What could be more fun than reading?" Grimes asked.

The light turned red, and the one car that

was on the road stopped. Grimes looked both ways to make sure that traffic had really stopped, and then they both began walking across the street.

“Well, pretty much *everything* is more fun than reading,” Officer Wells replied. “For example, watching paint dry is *much* more fun. So is mowing the lawn, or being attacked by squirrels. What you really need to do—”

Out of the corner of his eye Grimes saw a quick motion. When the professor turned his head he saw a car hurtling toward them with no intention of stopping. In a split second Grimes made eye contact with the driver.

It was Andy. He had floored it and was deliberately trying to run the professor over.

Grimes had only a second to respond. He grabbed the police officer and leaped out of the way. Andy turned the wheel to try to hit Grimes, but Andy reacted too slowly. The car screamed by – running the light and narrowly missing a head-on collision with another car.

As the two men got up off the ground, Grimes kept his attention focused on his former student. He saw Andy slam on the

brakes and bring his vehicle to a screeching halt. Andy then jumped out of his car, grabbed a baseball bat from the back seat, and came running toward them with a murderous look in his eye.

Officer Wells drew his gun and aimed it at Andy. "Stop right there! Drop your weapon and put your hands over your head!"

Andy refused to stop. He kept running toward the two men at full speed.

When Andy had almost reached them, Wells fired three shots at Andy. Two of the shots missed, but the third bullet struck Andy's left leg. Andy screamed and dropped to the ground. The baseball bat rolled out of his grasp, and a bloodstain began forming on his jeans. Fortunately for Andy, the bullet had not broken any of his bones and had missed any major arteries. However, Andy was still in a great deal of pain, and he was not happy about it.

As the officer rushed over to subdue and arrest the injured student, Andy began yelling at him. "What is your problem? I was trying to kill the professor, not you! Have you lost your mind? Are you stupid or something?"

Professor Grimes looked at him, astonished. “Andy, you just tried to murder two men in broad daylight – one of them a police officer! When you failed you then tried to murder them *again*, even though the policeman had his gun pointed right at you. What on earth did you think was going to happen? How did you think this was going to turn out?”

“You are a bad, bad man!” Andy shouted. “You should be ashamed of yourself. Look at what you’ve done!”

Once Andy was restrained, Officer Wells read him his rights and then took out his cell phone to call for an ambulance. While he made the call, Grimes tried to reason with his former student.

“Andy, when are you going to realize that *you* are the root cause of all of your problems? You sinned and blamed it on someone else. You tried to fix your sin by sinning some more, and when that didn’t work out you resorted to committing felonies. When arson failed you turned to murder, and then became angry that the world was full of bloodshed. When mercy was offered you responded with

violence.”

“I’m bleeding all over the street, you monster,” Andy shouted. “Look at what you did! This is all your fault!”

“You know, your parents should have named you Cain,” Professor Grimes replied. “That police officer had every right to kill you. Yet when he spared your life, you responded by cursing and moaning about it. You aren’t the least bit sorry for anything you’ve done and you have every intention of causing more harm.

“Tell me something, Andy. This isn’t about that laptop, is it? This is about you getting your way no matter what the cost. You would be willing to burn down the whole world if that’s what it took.”

“I’ll get you,” Andy muttered, as Office Wells attempted to apply first aid to Andy’s bleeding leg. “Just you wait. I will find you and I will make you pay for what you’ve done to my life. You will pay for this!”

In the distance Grimes could hear the siren of an approaching ambulance. The city was responding very quickly to Bob’s call for help. Andy certainly did need help – but he

needed far more than medical assistance.

“You can’t win,” Grimes said at last. “You are in a war against God, not against me, and there can be no victory against God. You will either surrender or you will perish. The choice is yours.”

Lecture 13: Eschatology

“This is our final lecture,” Professor Grimes announced to his class. “Next week we have the finals, and then you will receive your grades and this school will be razed to the ground. I suspect that many of you will be unhappy with your grades, but that is your doing, not mine. You will be judged based on the choices that you made. If you made poor choices then you can expect to receive poor results.”

Brad spoke up. “You do realize that our grades don’t make any difference, right? No one is ever going to care how well we did in this class. We’re all going to have to switch to a new school next semester, and the credits for this joke of a class don’t transfer. So even if we did well it wouldn’t matter.”

“Let’s stop and think about that,” Professor Grimes said. “The reason you were required to take this class in the first place is because your knowledge of Christianity was

so poor that you had no chance of passing any other theological class you would ever take. If you took this class and passed it then that would mean you had learned enough to have a fighting chance of passing other classes in the future. However, if you failed this class then that means there is no hope for you. It is time you found a different career, because theological knowledge is beyond your grasp.”

Wally spoke up. “That kind of sounds like an insult.”

“Really? Tell me something. Is it insulting if I tell you that you cannot flap your arms and fly off into the sunset?”

“That is the weirdest thing I’ve ever heard. Isn’t it, like, totally obvious that I can’t do that?”

“I would certainly hope so,” the professor replied. “Telling you that you cannot do something *that you actually cannot do* is not insulting; it is something you need to hear. If you cannot pass this class then the reality is you will not be able to pass any other classes in your major. Since that is the case, you need to either take this class again and actually pay attention this time, or else you need to find

another line of work. Those are your options.”

The professor turned his attention to his notes. “As I was saying, in this class we are going to take a brief, high-level look at the doctrine of eschatology. Eschatology is the study of last things – specifically the return of Christ, the events surrounding the return of Christ, and what happens after the return of Christ. This is a critical field of study.”

Brad spoke up. “C’mon, professor. With you *everything* is a ‘critical field of study.’”

“That is because the whole purpose of this class is to teach you the critical doctrines of Christianity! Everything I am teaching you is, in fact, of great importance. That is the whole reason I am trying to teach it to you.”

“I don’t know,” Wally said. “All of this end-times stuff is controversial, and I don’t know that it really matters. It doesn’t really affect me and it’s all going to pan out in the end anyway. Why bother studying it at all?”

“Ah, yes, the famous ‘pan-millennial’ position,” Professor Grimes said. “Tell me, Wally. When you read a book, do you skip the final few chapters on the grounds that the ending of the story doesn’t really matter?”

“I don’t read books,” Wally replied.

“Given your grades I can’t say that I’m surprised. But the point is people *care* about how stories end. They become unhappy if their TV show or movie cuts off before it comes to its conclusion. In the real world *the ending matters*. How is it that you care a great deal about the final moments of a meaningless TV show, and yet are completely uninterested in the ending of history itself?”

“It’s not that big a deal,” Brad said. “God wins in the end. Do we really need to know more than that?”

“Well, *God* obviously thought you did,” Professor Grimes replied. “If prophecy didn’t matter then He would never have put it in the Bible to begin with. An astonishing 27% of the Bible is actually prophecy – which works out to 8,352 verses that cover that topic. 62 of the 66 books of the Bible talk about prophecy, and all nine New Testament authors discuss it. Aside from the subjects of salvation and faith, the most prominent theme in the New Testament is the Second Coming of Jesus

Christ.³⁸ The fact that God spent *that much time* talking about the subject is a pretty good indication that it *matters* and that God wants us to care about it. In fact, Revelation 1:3 says there is actually a special blessing for people who read Revelation and pay attention to it.

“There is also the fact that in Matthew 24:3 when Christ’s disciples asked Him about this subject, He did not say ‘Hey, guys, it doesn’t really matter. Just focus on kingdom stuff and you’ll be fine.’ No, instead He answered their question in great detail and told them to watch, be alert, and pay attention so they would not be deceived.”

“Deceived about what?” Iris asked.

“Deceived by liars and false prophets. Just think about all the people who have proclaimed that Jesus was going to return on a certain day. A great many false teachers have made predictions during the past two thousand years, and many people have been deceived. Countless lives have been ruined because people didn’t know what the Bible

³⁸ *Christ’s Prophetic Plans*, by John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue

actually taught, and as a result were led astray.”

Wally spoke up. “But anyone who was fooled by those predictions was just being really dumb. It was obvious those teachers were batty.”

“How so?” Professor Grimes asked.

“Because, like, every time someone makes a prediction like that, it’s wrong.”

“But how do you know that they’re not going to be right this time?”

Wally shrugged. “They just aren’t. It never happens.”

Professor Grimes sighed. “By that same logic, you could say that since you haven’t died yet it’s obvious that you will never die at all! If you don’t know what the Bible teaches then you are a prime target for being deceived. But *you*, Wally, have chosen a path that is even worse than being mistaken. You have decided to protect yourself by not caring at all. Of all the positions that you could possibly take, God considers ‘not caring about what He said’ to *be worse than being wrong*. In fact, in Revelation 3:15-16 Jesus said that attitude makes Him want to vomit.”

“That’s totally gross,” Wally said.

“So is your attitude toward Scripture. As Christians we do not have the option of saying ‘I’m going to care about these doctrines, but I’m not going to care about those’. God requires you to care about *everything* that He said – and He said repeatedly that His return is of great importance. In fact, one of the very first things mentioned in the Lord’s Prayer is a request that God’s millennial kingdom would begin so that His will would be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.”

Brad spoke up. “But all this stuff is such a pain to study, and there are so many different opinions. I still don’t see how it actually affects me anyway. Can’t we just be prepared for Jesus to return and leave it at that?”

“That’s a good question,” Professor Grimes said. “Tell me something, young man: what, exactly, are you preparing for? Preterism teaches that Jesus already came back, so people who believe that aren’t looking for Him to return at all. Dominionism teaches that Christ isn’t going to come back until the church conquers the Earth, so they’re preparing for a massive revival that

puts the church in charge of every government. People who are post-tribulational believe that they are going to have to live through the reign of the antichrist, so they're preparing for Hell on Earth. People who are pre-tribulational believe that Jesus could return at any moment to take them to Heaven, so they are looking for the imminent return of Christ.

"As you can see, there is no such thing as 'just be prepared'. Your end-times view determines what you think is going to happen in the future, and that impacts the way you live your life. It should be obvious that someone who thinks that all Hell is about to break loose is going to make different choices from someone who expects that, any day now, the Church will take over the world and usher in an age of total peace and happiness."

Iris spoke up. "But there are so many different theories. How can you possibly tell who is right and who is wrong? Aren't there smart people on all sides?"

"No matter how smart they may be, two opinions that contradict each other cannot both be right. They *can* both be wrong,

however – and smart people are wrong all the time. Yes, it is true that there are many different views. In order to find out who is right, you just do what people have always done when there are multiple contradictory opinions: you analyze the evidence and determine who is right and who is wrong. I agree that it is hard, and it does take time. But it is *not* impossible.

“There are four basic eschatological views. The one that you have probably never heard of before is Preterism. Preterism teaches that the book of Revelation was fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem. They teach that Jesus returned at that time, and no one realized it until almost two thousand years later. Even His own disciples completely missed His return.”

“Really?” Iris asked.

“Yes, really. In fact, there are two flavors of Preterism. Full preterism teaches that not only has Jesus already come back, but the dead have been raised and the final judgment has already happened. They believe that Jesus isn’t going to come back because He

already came back thousands of years ago. As you can imagine, most people have an extremely hard time taking that view seriously. Partial preterists teach that while Jesus has come back, He came back in a secret way that went unnoticed by everybody, and the raising of the dead is still in the future.”

“That’s really strange,” iris said. “Do people really believe that?”

“Yes, they do – even though preterism is very easy to disprove. Remember, preterism teaches that the events prophesied in Revelation were fulfilled in 70 AD. In order for this interpretation to be true, Revelation must have been written *before* 70 AD. After all, if it was written *after* 70 AD and was prophesying events that were still in the future when it was written, then preterism is clearly false. As it turns out, the early church father Irenaeus (who lived from 120-202 AD) recorded that Revelation was written in the early 90s – twenty years *after* 70 AD. Not only did the early church record that date, but the book itself testifies to it as well. Revelation 1:9 says that the apostle John wrote the book while imprisoned on Patmos, and history

records that John was sent there by the Emperor Domitian, who ruled from 81 to 96 AD. Revelation 2:13 also speaks of the martyrdom of Antipas, who was killed in 92 AD. All of this means that Revelation could not possibly have been written before 70 AD, which means that preterism is wrong. So that is one view that we can eliminate.

“The second view, which is also fairly uncommon, is the historical view. It holds that the book of Revelation is a portrayal of various major historical events that take place between Christ’s ascension and Christ’s return. People who hold to that view spend a great deal of time studying Revelation and trying to connect its verses to events throughout history.”

“That makes sense,” Brad said.

“But it is deeply flawed,” Professor Grimes said. “First of all, it is very difficult to find events that correspond to what Revelation says. It’s also very arbitrary – it is up to *you* to decide what events Revelation might be talking about. That brings up the second problem: 2 Peter 1:20 makes it clear that no Scripture has a private interpretation.

You are not allowed to use things outside of the Bible to interpret Biblical symbolism. When the Bible uses symbolism, you have to interpret that symbol by finding the passage *in the Bible* that defines what that symbol means, and then you use that definition. You can never, ever assign your own interpretation to symbols. You have to use the interpretation that God provided.”

“Hold on,” Iris said. “Are you saying that the Bible actually explains itself?”

“That’s exactly what I mean, and that is where the historical view goes wrong. Instead of using the Bible’s interpretation, it comes up with its own. That is why it fails – and that removes two of the four possibilities. That leaves only two left: amillennialism and premillennialism.”

“That’s a real mouthful,” Isaac commented.

“True, but the terms are meaningful once you understand them. Both terms come from the idea of the Millennium – the time spoken of in Revelation 20, when Jesus will reign over the world and usher in a thousand years of piece. The a-millennial view teaches

that the Millennium is symbolic of the period we are living in now – the Church Age – and that the book of Revelation is a symbolic look at the struggle between good and evil. People who are amillennial don't believe that there will be a real antichrist, or Mark of the Beast, or anything like that. They think it's just symbolic – kind of like an allegory.

“The pre-millennial view is just the opposite. People who hold to that view believe that when Jesus returns, He will establish a literal kingdom on Earth and will rule over the world as a king for a thousand years. They believe that there will be an actual antichrist and a real Mark of the Beast. They believe that the judgments in Revelation – things like destroying all life in the sea, an earthquake that levels all cities, and a rain of 70-pound hailstones – are real events that are going to happen during a terrible seven-year period called the Tribulation.

“As you can see, these two views are radically different. They cannot both be correct.”

“So which one is right?” Iris asked.

“Well, let's examine the details and find

out. Since these two views have a completely different interpretation of Revelation 20, let's take a look at that chapter and see what it has to say. If you turn there and read the chapter, the first thing it says is that an angel took Satan, bound him with a great chain, and locked him away in the bottomless pit for a thousand years so he could no longer deceive the nations. After that, the martyrs who were executed for their faith in Christ were raised from the dead, and they reigned with Christ over the nations for a thousand years.

"Now, the amillennial view says that all of this is just symbolic. They say that this passage is talking about Christ's victory over Satan on the cross, and that the Church Age is the same thing as the millennium."

Brad spoke up. "It does sound pretty plausible to me."

Professor Grimes shook his head. "It only sounds plausible if you gloss over all of the details. If Revelation 20 was talking about Christ's victory on the cross then it would say that *the Lamb of God* bound Satan. But it *doesn't say that!* Instead, even though Revelation 19 has a great deal to say about

Jesus, the book *stops* talking about Jesus and says that an angel – *not* Christ – went and bound Satan. That doesn't align with the crucifixion at all! The being who died on that cross and conquered Satan and death itself was *not* an angel, but was Jesus Christ. So that is a serious problem. On top of that, Revelation says that after this event happens Satan is rendered completely harmless. He can no longer deceive the nations or cause any type of harm. He is locked away and removed from the scene.

“Yet I Peter 5:8 tells us that Satan is a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Ephesians 6 commands us to be on guard against the devil, because he will destroy us if he can. In Matthew 13:19 Jesus tells us that the devil snatches the Word away from some people who hear the gospel so that they will not be saved. In other words, the devil is a very dangerous enemy who actively deceives and destroys people. This presents a very serious problem for amillennialism, because that theory teaches that Satan has already been bound and rendered utterly harmless! If Satan is bound right now, then being bound

has no meaning whatsoever. It is *completely ridiculous* to think that Satan was bound at the cross and hasn't caused any trouble at all in the past two thousand years. It's just not plausible. Not one of the apostles ever taught that.

"As if that were not enough evidence against amillennialism, there is also the fact that during the millennium the martyrs are raised from the dead and reign with Christ over the world. Yet, in this age, it is ridiculous to say that the martyrs are reigning over anything. The Church has been hated and persecuted for two millennia. This is not an age of peace; it has been an age of martyrdom. The martyrs are *dying*, not reigning! The whole argument of amillennialism falls apart when you look at the details. It just doesn't work."

"But lots of people believe it," Brad said.

"Yes they do. But the truth is that people usually believe the first thing they hear, and then they stick to that for the rest of their lives. You see, very few people actually study their Bibles on their own to find out what it actually teaches. People really aren't that

interested in believing what the Bible has to say; instead they just believe whatever other people tell them to believe. If someone else comes along and says ‘Your beliefs are wrong, and here are the Biblical passages to prove it,’ they will just dismiss them out of hand. Their beliefs are already established and no amount of arguing, evidence, or facts will change their mind.

“It’s really quite sad how little Christians care about what their Bibles actually say. It is common for pastors to refuse to teach certain Bible passages on the grounds that their congregations don’t want to hear it.³⁹ Many pastors value their jobs far more than they value what God has actually said. I have had Christians tell me that the apostle Paul was wrong.⁴⁰ They have told me that they disagree with the Bible. They have their own way of looking at things, and they’re not going to let what God actually said get in the

³⁹ I am not making this up. I really have had a pastor tell me “Yes, what you say is true, and I know it is true, but the congregation doesn’t want to hear it so I’m not going to preach it.” This is not uncommon.

⁴⁰ Yes, I really have. I’m not making this up either.

way of their beliefs. These people are fools, and they will suffer for their stubborn refusal to listen to God.”

Iris spoke up. “So you’re premillennial, then.”

“That is where the evidence has taken me,” Professor Grimes replied.

Brad spoke up. “But all this rapture stuff is nonsense! You can’t really expect me to believe that one day Jesus will come back and beam us all up, just so Christians won’t have to be persecuted. That view is total garbage. God doesn’t do things like that.”

Professor Grimes sighed. “Haven’t we already talked about this? The Rapture isn’t about escaping *persecution*, young man. The Tribulation is a time when God pours out His wrath upon the world. Being spared the wrath of an angry God is *completely* different from being spared persecution. I Thessalonians 5:9 makes it clear that God has not appointed us to wrath.

“But concerning the topic of God sparing His people, have you not read the Bible? Did you not pay attention in Sunday School? God rescues His people from His wrath all the time!

Before God poured out His wrath upon Sodom and Gomorrah, He sent His angels to remove Lot so that they did not experience His wrath. When God poured out His wrath upon an Egypt that would not let Israel go, He spared the Israelites in Goshen from experiencing His plagues. When Israel marched on the city of Jericho, He—

“But that’s not the same thing,” Brad interrupted. “God didn’t magically beam them up into Heaven. That whole idea is ridiculous.”

“Enoch would disagree with you,” Professor Grimes replied. “In Genesis 5:24 we are told that Enoch walked with God, ‘and then he was not; for God took him’. Hebrews 11:5 explains that since Enoch’s faith pleased God, the Lord translated him so that he would not see death. In other words, God *raptured* him. And when did God do this? Three generations before the Flood came that destroyed the world. In other words, God spared Enoch from experiencing the Flood *by rapturing him*.”

“God is going to do exactly the same thing with us. Just as Enoch walked with God,

the Church also walks with God. Just as Enoch had faith, the true Church has faith as well. Revelation 3:10 says that since the true Church was faithful to Christ, Jesus is going to keep them from the hour that would come upon the entire world, to try all those who dwell upon the world. Jesus didn't say that He would keep them safe during that hour, but that He would *keep them from that hour altogether*. That means we're not going to be here when that period happens! Luke 21:34-36 says that the Tribulation will be a snare to everyone in the entire world – but that it is possible to escape that time altogether. How? *By not being here when it happens.*

“1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 paints a very clear picture of what is going to take place: the Lord will return to this world and raise those who are dead in Christ. Then those who are alive in Christ will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and at that point we will ever be with the Lord. Given all the promises that God has made to His people, we know that this takes place before the Tribulation begins.”

Iris spoke up. “But I thought that Jesus returned *after* the Tribulation. Does He come

back twice, or something?”

Professor Grimes glanced at his watch. “That’s a good question. In order to understand the answer you have to know the timeline of end-times events, and that’s a very large subject.⁴¹ I actually teach a course on eschatology, but since this is our last class you’re not going to be able to take it. However, I’ll try to give you a brief summary of what’s going to happen.

“At some point in the future – and no one knows when this will be, which is why it is impossible to pick a date – Jesus will return. As I just explained, He will raise all of those in the Church who have died, and He will convert all living Christians into perfect, immortal beings. These ‘translated’ Christians will meet the Lord in the air, and He will take them back to Heaven – leaving behind all those who were not Christians.

“Some time after this, the being known as the antichrist will sign a seven-year treaty

⁴¹ I wrote a whole book on this topic: *Even So, Come, Lord Jesus*. This chapter is largely a summary of material from that book.

with Israel. The signing of this treaty will begin the Tribulation – a seven-year period of time that Christ said was the most terrible time there ever was or ever would be. In fact, in Matthew 24:22 He said that if He did not return and put a stop to it, all life on Earth would die.”

“Wow!” Iris exclaimed. “That’s pretty bad.”

“Those seven years will be a truly terrible time. God will judge the world for its wickedness and will pour out His wrath upon the ungodly. But that time has another purpose as well: according to Daniel 9:24, God will use it to put an end to Israel’s sin and bring them to a point of repentance.

“You see, halfway through that terrible time the antichrist will enter the Temple in Jerusalem and declare himself to be God. Revelation 13 tells us that he will demand that all people worship him, and he will create an idol called the Image of the Beast. The antichrist will demand that everyone worship the image, and he will execute all those who refuse. He will also demand that everyone take the Mark of the Beast. Those

who don't take it will be hunted down and killed – but those who *do* take it will be thrown into the Lake of Fire when Jesus Christ returns.

“While the antichrist carries out his terrible program, Israel will flee to a place of safety and will hide. Millions of people will be saved during that time, and the antichrist will find them and put millions of them to death. Meanwhile, God's judgments will kill more than half of the world's population. There will be death on a scale that the world has never seen.

“At the end of the Tribulation, the antichrist will conquer Jerusalem and march his armies to the remnant of Israel. At that time Israel will realize what they have done. They will repent of rejecting the Messiah and will ask Him to return – and He will do exactly that. Revelation 19 tells us that Jesus will return to Earth with His Church, but His Church will not do any fighting. Instead Jesus will single-handedly kill the antichrist, wipe out his armies, and cast that wicked person into the Lake of Fire.”

Iris spoke up. “So Jesus really is going to

return twice?"

"You are correct. The first time Jesus returns He will rapture His Church. The second time He returns He will rescue Israel and destroy the antichrist and his armies. At that time Christ will round up the remaining population of the world and judge them. Those who refused the Mark and trusted in Christ will be spared. However, Revelation 14:9-11 says all those who took the Mark will be tormented with fire and brimstone forever. When this judgment is over, all the wicked will be gone.

"But this is not the end. Revelation 20 tells us that Jesus will then establish His Kingdom on Earth and will reign as king from Jerusalem over the entire world. All the righteous who have ever died will be raised from the dead, including the martyrs of the tribulation. Jesus will reign on Earth for a thousand years, and Christians will reign with Him. During that time evil will not be tolerated."

"But who would be evil?" Iris asked. "I thought all the wicked were gone!"

"You are forgetting about the children of

the tribulation survivors. Those who survived the Tribulation will go on to repopulate the world, and – unlike those who were raptured and resurrected – these survivors and their children will be tempted to sin. However, the Millennium will be characterized by peace. Isaiah 2:4 tells us that nations will no longer fight against other nations. Habakkuk 2:14 says that the knowledge of God will cover the world as the waters cover the sea. Wickedness will not be tolerated, for Christ will rule with a rod of iron – and the devil will be locked away and unable to cause any trouble.

“But that is not the end either. Revelation 20:7-10 tells us that after a thousand years of peace, the devil will be set free. He will deceive the nations and convince the world to rebel against God. Satan will go all over the world and gather a mighty army, with the intent of attacking God Himself. But he will fail. God will send down fire from Heaven and consume the devil’s army – and will then cast Satan himself into the Lake of Fire.

“That is when the final judgment happens. Revelation 20:11-15 says that God

will take all of the wicked out of Hell and will judge them for everything they have done. All of the righteous – whose names are written in the Book of Life – will be set free. However, the rest will be cast into the Lake of Fire, where all those who rejected Christ will burn for all of eternity. Death itself will be destroyed, and no one will die anymore.”

Iris spoke up. “And *that’s* the end?”

“Oh no!” Professor Grimes replied. “Revelation 21 says that after these things God will destroy this universe and create a new one. This new Heaven and Earth will be a perfect place. Revelation 21:4 says that in that world there will be no more crying, or pain, or death. The world will be populated by perfect immortals. There will be no wicked there, and the devil will never be set free again. As if all that were not enough, since there will never again be sin in the world, God will move to Earth and will live there with His people. Throughout all the ages of eternity God and Man will live together in perfect harmony on the new Earth that He will create.”

Iris spoke up. “So you’re saying that we are going to spend eternity living on *Earth*?”

“Exactly! Only it will be a much, much better world than this one – it will be perfect in every way.”

“And *that* is the end?”

Professor Grimes shook his head. “It’s only the beginning. The Bible says that for all of eternity we will serve God by reigning over His creation. We are a race of kings, and Revelation 22:5 tells us that we will rule with Christ for all of eternity. Isaiah 9:7 says that Christ’s kingdom will continue to grow *forever*. If anything, the New Earth is where things are going to get very interesting. That is when we will begin to embrace our eternal destiny.

“And that is where I must stop. Don’t forget – next week is finals week. There won’t be a lecture next time but there *will* be an exam, and if you do not take that exam you cannot possibly pass this class. I’ll expect to see all of you there. Class dismissed!”

Chapter 13.5: The End

For the very last time Professor Grimes found himself in his tiny office in Old Main. The semester had come to an end, and his work at Sunset Hills was done. Grimes had taught his last class, graded his last exam, and posted his last grade. There was nothing more to do.

Now the professor found himself packing up his things. In a few hours the county was going to come and bulldoze the entire school. Nothing would remain standing – so if there was anything he wanted to keep, now was the time to rescue it.

The professor felt like he should be sad about the school's destruction, but it was difficult to shed any tears. In a way he felt a sense of relief because he knew this particular trial had finally come to an end. Grimes had spent so many years fighting the faculty, trying to keep the school going despite the poor decisions of President Harris. In the end he had only delayed the inevitable,

for the university had collapsed anyway. True, some of the evildoers had been carted off to prison; Harris and a few other teachers were now being prosecuted for serious crimes. But the school itself had not survived.

Yet Grimes' teaching career had not been in vain. As always, a few of his students had actually passed his classes. Iris and Isaac had paid attention, studied, and did well enough to earn a passing grade. They had actually *learned* something, and they would carry that knowledge on into the future. Grimes had no doubt that they would be able to finish their degrees in other schools. As for the rest – well, the professor wished them luck; they would need it.

As the professor removed the last picture from the wall and placed it in the small cardboard box he had brought with him, his thoughts returned to Andy. Officer Wells had told him that morning that Andy was in prison, being held without bail. Apparently he had threatened to kill the judge at his bail hearing, and this time he was taken seriously. Andy's behavior was so unhinged that it was likely he would be declared criminally insane. He was

a deeply troubled student – in fact, he was demented enough to reach #4 on Grimes' list of psychopathic former students.

At the bail hearing Andy had repeated his threats against the professor, but Grimes felt that he had seen the last of that student. Grimes and his wife were going to sell their house and move to a different school – a much better one. That gave his family the entire spring semester to pick the school, pack up their things, and move across the country.

He might even be able to get some reading done. That would be nice.

Professor Grimes took one last look around his office, to make sure he had left behind nothing of value. When he was satisfied, he closed the cardboard box and picked it up, cradling it under his arm.

"Well, I'm off to have another adventure," he said aloud. He then walked out of his office, out of Old Main, and off the campus.

Professor Grimes had left the building.