

We believe in the personal, imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His Church, and His subsequent premillennial return to earth to establish His kingdom. –First Bible Church Constitution, Article III

Variations of This Question

Before we focus on the specific question, consider the fundamental assumption: Disagreement among Christians on a point of doctrine somehow disproves Christianity. For example, "If Christianity is true, then why are there so many divisions and denominations?" So your friend's reasoning might go like this:

Premise 1: If a group of people disagree on some things (A), then they disagree on all things (B).

Premise 2: Christians disagree on some things (A).

Conclusion: Therefore, Christians disagree on all things (B).

Premise 1: If a group of people disagree on all things, then their message is false.

Premise 2: Christians disagree on all things.

Therefore: Therefore, the Christian message is false.

Of course, while the arguments are valid, the premises are patently false, which leads to false conclusions (just replace "Christians" with "Atheists" or "Democrats" or "Republicans" or "Kiwanis" or "Auburn Fans" or "Alabama Fans" or "NASA Engineers").

Essentials vs. Non-Essentials

It's important to acknowledge the existence of division and disagreement within Christianity (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and dozens of Protestant denominations). Depending on their questions and your level of knowledge, you can go into church history, especially the Protestant Reformation. But usually, it's best not to get into these details. To keep the conversation on track, you can say something like this: "*While it's true that there is a great deal of disagreement on non-essential issues, there is remarkable agreement among Christians on essential issues.*" This takes you back to the gospel.

1. **Essential (Primary):** The essence of Christianity; the *sine qua non* (without which not). In other words, without this, it is not Christianity. Ex: Anything related to who Jesus is and how to be saved (the gospel).
2. **Non-essential (Secondary and Tertiary):** Though important, these are doctrines that genuine Christians may disagree on and are not necessary to understanding who Jesus is or how to be saved. Examples: how often to take Lord's Supper, sprinkling vs. immersion, infant baptism vs. believers' baptism (as long as no baptismal regeneration); real wine vs. grape juice, traditional vs. contemporary songs, instruments vs. no instruments, abstinence vs. moderate drinking, etc.).
3. These are **essential** points of doctrine that are clearly taught in Scripture and have been held throughout church history. As a minimum, memorize and be able to unpack the following items:
 1. **Apostles' Creed:** *I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. On the third day, he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.*
 2. **Five Solas of the Reformation:** According to Scripture alone, we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone.
 3. **The Three G's:** Only Jesus claimed to be God, was raised from the Grave, and offers salvation by Grace.
4. When it comes to the return of Christ, it is best to focus on these points of common agreement:
 1. "He is coming again to judge the living and the dead." This line in the Apostles' Creed captures the essence of the doctrine and comes directly from the apostles (2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5).

2. Here's what Bible believing Christians *agree* on, regarding the second coming of Christ. Christ's return is certain, public, visible, physical, unpredictable to all people, and ordained by a sovereign God. There is no way Christ cannot come back exactly when God ordains that he will.
3. Here's what Bible-believing Christians *disagree* on regarding the second coming of Christ because these issues are not taught as clearly in Scripture by God's design:

Amillennialism: Jesus reigns from heaven right now and will return suddenly; there is no future millennium.

Church Age	Return, Resurrection, and Judgment	Eternal State
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Postmillennialism: Jesus returns *after* (post-) the millennial kingdom.

Church Age is the Millennium	Return, Resurrection, and Judgment	Eternal State
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Historic (Classic) Premillennialism: Jesus returns *after* the great tribulation and *before* (pre-) the millennium.

Church Age	Resurrection, Rapture-believers; Return of Christ	Millennium	Resurrection, judgment- unbelievers	Eternal State
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Dispensational Premillennialism: Jesus returns before the great tribulation and *before* (pre-) the millennium.

Church Age Acts 2	Resurrection, Rapture-believers 1 Th. 4	7 years of tribulation Dan. 9	Return of Christ Acts 1:11 Zech. 14:4	Millennium Rev. 20	Resurrection, judgment- unbelievers Rev. 20	Eternal State Rev. 21,22
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Summary

While Bible-loving, gospel-preaching, Christ-exalting, intellectually rigorous Christians have disagreed on the details regarding the order of events leading up to the return of Christ, they all agree that Christ is certainly, visibly, bodily, coming again to judge the living and the dead. Our job is not to know when that will be, but to be ready at all times for it to happen.

An Application

To join First Bible Church, prospective members must first meet with at least two Elders in order to, among other things, "assure that such persons clearly understand and are in agreement with all the doctrines of the church stated in the Constitution." But not every person who seeks membership at First Bible Church is in agreement with "all the doctrines of the church stated in the Constitution." Therefore, the Elders must use wisdom and skill in guiding the prospective member while at the same time guarding the church.

Agreement on primary (essential) doctrines is required for membership. There are two secondary doctrines that are special cases: believers' baptism and premillennial eschatology. First Bible Church is irrevocably committed to believers' baptism and will not practice infant baptism. However, if a prospective member was baptized as an infant, and their conscience is satisfied, they will not be required to renounce that baptism and submit to rebaptism as a believer. Also, a prospective member may hold a view of eschatology other than the premillennial view. However, his or her view must fall within the bounds of historic and apostolic Christianity. In both cases, the member must not disturb the peace of the church or teach against First Bible Church's doctrinal statement.