

no more secrets

Revealing Jesus - Discussion Guide #4

INQUIRY

1. How do people try to steal what is freely given? What ambitions can get in the way of trust?
4. What could be the dark side to unity?
5. Which is more dangerous: flattery or self-flattery?
6. How do we try to cheat death? What else in life do we try to cheat?

INQUEST

Babel. The ancient Akkadian word means “gate of the god,” but we remember it today for its similarity to the Hebrew word balel: “to confuse” or “to confound.” We associate it with the empire that grew up around the ancient site: Babylon. And it symbolizes for us humanity’s age-old quest to stand in place of God, to find some man-made shortcut to heaven. Read Genesis 11:1-9.

1. What motivated the builders of the tower of Babel?
2. How do we today want to “make a name for ourselves”?
3. Why would an all-knowing God investigate (verse 5) before taking action?
4. Why did God wish for people to spread out across the world?

Human nature insists on “fitting in.” People desire to keep up with society, following the latest trends, enjoying the newest gadgets, and mostly matching the world around them. When God set up the ancient nation of Israel, He wanted them to stand out and have their own unique system of government, but they eventually demanded to be just like everyone else. Read 1 Samuel 8.

1. Why did the people want a king?
2. How did God feel about their request?
3. Why were the Israelites not dissuaded by all the negative consequences of a monarchy?

When Jesus came to Earth, He repeatedly resisted people’s efforts to crown Him king. The people wanted Jesus to set them free from Roman domination, but Jesus avoided their efforts again and again. And since He refused to be their earthly king, the religious leaders sent him to the Romans to be executed. Their charge against him? The alleged crime of claiming to be a king. Confused by all this, the Roman governor Pilate decided to question Jesus for Himself. Read John 18:33-37.



1. If the people would have accepted Jesus as their king, why did they then seek to destroy him with that very accusation?
2. What did Jesus mean by "My kingdom is not of this world"?
3. How should we live as citizens of another world?

CROSS-EXAMINATION

"After the Fall, Satan bade his angels to inculcate the belief in man's natural immortality. Having induced the people to receive this error, they were to lead them to conclude that the sinner would live in eternal misery. Now the prince of darkness represents God as a revengeful tyrant, declaring that He plunges into hell all who do not please Him, that while they writhe in eternal flames, their Creator looks down on them with satisfaction. Thus the archfiend clothes with his attributes the Benefactor of mankind."

1. What is justice?
2. If the devil's primary accusation against God is that He is not fair, what does the doctrine of an eternally-burning hell say about God?
3. Why do so many people imagine that a loving God would eternally torture people?

"A large class are driven to the opposite error. They see that Scripture represents God as a being of love and compassion and cannot believe that He will consign His creatures to an eternally burning hell. Holding that the soul is naturally immortal, they conclude that all mankind will be saved. Thus the sinner can live in selfish pleasure, disregarding the requirements of God, and yet be received into His favor."

1. What makes universalism, the doctrine that all will be saved, appealing?
2. An old saying goes, "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." If God saved us despite our opposition to Him, forcing us to endure a sinless paradise, would we still be the same people?
3. It is said that the one thing we can take to heaven is our character. In what sense are we our characters? What would be lost if God saved the unrepentant?

"If it were true that all men passed directly to heaven at the hour of dissolution, we might well covet death rather than life. Many have been led by this belief to put an end to their existence. Overwhelmed with trouble and disappointment, it seems easy to break the thread of life and soar into the bliss of the eternal world."

1. The first lie the serpent told Eve was "You will not certainly die" (Genesis 3:4), yet the concept of an immortal soul claims that we never lose consciousness; instead, it suggests death means an immediate transition to heaven or hell or the spirit world. What difference does it make if death is a void rather than a continuation of existence?
2. If God is the Creator of life, what does that make death?
3. How can we encourage those who would embrace death to escape the pain of life?

"God does not force the will. He takes no pleasure in slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence."

1. Why does God not wish us to be mere robots following orders?
2. In what ways does God show us His wisdom, justice, and kindness?
3. What difference does it make to have a relationship based on trust rather than fear?

Chapter 4—*Everlasting Life*

Satan, who had incited rebellion in heaven, desired to bring the inhabitants of the earth to unite in his warfare against God. Adam and Eve had been perfectly happy in obedience to the law of God—a constant testimony against the claim Satan had urged in heaven that God's law was oppressive. Satan determined to cause their fall, that he might possess the earth and here establish his kingdom in opposition to the Most High.

Adam and Eve had been warned against this dangerous foe, but he worked in the dark, concealing his purpose. Employing as his medium the serpent, then a creature of fascinating appearance, he addressed Eve: "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Eve ventured to parley with him and fell victim to his wiles: "The woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:1-5.

Eve yielded, and through her influence Adam was led into sin. They accepted the words of the serpent; they distrusted their Creator and imagined that He was restricting their liberty.

But what did Adam find to be the meaning of the words, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"? Was he to be ushered into a more exalted existence? Adam did not find this to be the meaning of the divine sentence. God declared that as a penalty for his sin, man should return to the ground: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Genesis 3:19. The words of Satan, "Your eyes shall be opened," proved to be true in this sense only: their eyes were opened to discern their folly. They did know evil and tasted the bitter fruit of transgression.

The tree of life had the power of perpetuating life. Adam would have continued to enjoy free access to this tree and have lived forever, but when he sinned he was cut off from the tree of life and became subject to death. Immortality had been forfeited by transgression. There could have been no hope for the fallen race had not God, by the sacrifice of His Son, brought immortality within their reach. While "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," Christ "hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Only through Christ can immortality be obtained. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." Romans 5:12; 2 Timothy 1:10; John 3:36.

The First Lie

The one who promised life in disobedience was the great deceiver. And the declaration of the serpent in Eden—"Ye shall not surely die"—was the first sermon ever preached on the immortality of the soul. Yet this declaration, resting solely upon the authority of Satan, is echoed from pulpits and received by the majority of mankind as readily as by our first parents. The divine sentence, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20), is made to mean, The soul that sinneth, it shall *not* die, but live eternally. Had man after his fall been allowed free access to the tree of life, sin would have been

immortalized. But not one of the family of Adam has been permitted to partake of the life-giving fruit. Therefore there is no immortal sinner.

After the Fall, Satan bade his angels to inculcate the belief in man's natural immortality. Having induced the people to receive this error, they were to lead them to conclude that the sinner would live in eternal misery. Now the prince of darkness represents God as a revengeful tyrant, declaring that He plunges into hell all who do not please Him, that while they writhe in eternal flames, their Creator looks down on them with satisfaction. Thus the archfiend clothes with his attributes the Benefactor of mankind. Cruelty is satanic. God is love. Satan is the enemy who tempts man to sin and then destroys him if he can. How repugnant to love, mercy, and justice, is the doctrine that the wicked dead are tormented in an eternally burning hell, that for the sins of a brief earthly life they suffer torture as long as God shall live! A learned doctor of divinity said, "The sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever, making them sensible of how happy they are."

Where in God's Word is such teaching to be found? Are feelings of common humanity to be exchanged for the cruelty of the savage? No, such is not the teaching of the Book of God. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Ezekiel 33:11.

Does God delight in witnessing unceasing tortures? Is He regaled with the groans and shrieks of suffering creatures whom He holds in the flames? Can these horrid sounds be music in the ear of Infinite Love? Oh, dreadful blasphemy! God's glory is not enhanced by perpetuating sin through ceaseless ages.

The Heresy of Eternal Torment

Evil has been wrought by the heresy of eternal torment. The religion of the Bible, full of love and goodness, is darkened by superstition and clothed with terror. Satan has painted the character of God in false colors. Our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, even hated. The appalling views of God which have spread over the world from the teachings of the pulpit have made millions of skeptics and infidels.

Eternal torment is one of the false doctrines, the wine of abominations (Revelation 14:8; 17:2), which Babylon makes all nations drink. Ministers of Christ accepted this heresy from Rome as they received the false sabbath.* If we turn from God's Word and accept false doctrines because our fathers taught them, we fall under the condemnation pronounced on Babylon; we are drinking of the wine of her abominations.

A large class are driven to the opposite error. They see that Scripture represents God as a being of love and compassion and cannot believe that He will consign His creatures to an eternally burning hell. Holding that the soul is naturally immortal, they conclude that all mankind will be saved. Thus the sinner can live in selfish pleasure, disregarding the requirements of God, and yet be received into His favor. Such doctrine, presuming on God's mercy but ignoring His justice, pleases the carnal heart.

Will Everyone Be Saved?

Believers in universal salvation wrest the Scriptures. The professed minister of Christ reiterates the falsehood uttered by the serpent in Eden, "Ye shall not surely die." "In the

* For more information about the Sabbath, see chapter 8 of this book.

day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods." He declares that the vilest of sinners—the murderer, the thief, the adulterer—will after death enter into immortal bliss. A pleasing fable indeed, suited to gratify the carnal heart!

If it were true that all men passed directly to heaven at the hour of dissolution, we might well covet death rather than life. Many have been led by this belief to put an end to their existence. Overwhelmed with trouble and disappointment, it seems easy to break the thread of life and soar into the bliss of the eternal world.

God has given in His Word decisive evidence that He will punish the transgressors of His law. Is He too merciful to execute justice upon the sinner? Look to the cross of Calvary. The death of the Son of God testifies that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), that every violation of God's law must receive retribution. Christ the sinless became sin for man. He bore the guilt of transgression and the hiding of His Father's face until His heart was broken and His life crushed out—all this that sinners might be redeemed. And every soul that refuses to partake of the atonement provided at such a cost must bear in his own person the guilt and punishment of transgression.

Conditions Are Specified

"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." This promise is only to those that thirst. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Revelation 21:6, 7. Conditions are specified. To inherit all things, we must overcome sin.

"It shall not be well with the wicked." Ecclesiastes 8:13. The sinner is treasuring up unto himself "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds," "tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Romans 2:5, 6, 9.

"No fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Ephesians 5:5, ARV; Revelation 22:14, 15.

God has given to men a declaration of His method of dealing with sin. "All the wicked will he destroy." "The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Psalms 145:20; 37:38. The authority of the divine government will put down rebellion, yet retributive justice will be consistent with the character of God as a merciful, benevolent being.

God does not force the will. He takes no pleasure in slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence.

The principles of the divine government are in harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies." Matthew 5:44. God executes justice on the wicked for the good of the universe and even for the good of those on whom His judgments are visited. He would make them happy if He could. He surrounds them with tokens of His love and follows them with offers of mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. Constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver. The Lord bears

long with their perversity; but will He chain these rebels to His side, force them to do His will?

Not Prepared to Enter Heaven

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader are not prepared to enter the presence of God. Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters. Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. What enjoyment could heaven offer those who are absorbed in selfish interests?

Could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? Years of probation were granted them, but they never trained the mind to love purity. They never learned the language of heaven. Now it is too late.

A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. Its purity and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place and would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God. Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. Their will has been exercised in revolt. When life is ended, it is too late to turn their thoughts from transgression to obedience, from hatred to love.

Two Destinies

"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." While life is the inheritance of the righteous, death is the portion of the wicked. "The second death" is placed in contrast with everlasting life. Romans 6:23; see Revelation 20:14.

In consequence of Adam's sin, death passed upon the whole human race. All alike go down into the grave. And through the plan of salvation, all are to be brought forth from their graves: "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust," "for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." But a distinction is made between the two classes brought forth: "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life: and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:22; John 5:28, 29.

The End of Suffering

They who have been "accounted worthy" of the resurrection of life are "blessed and holy." "On such the second death hath no power." Luke 20:35; Revelation 20:6. But those who have not secured pardon through repentance and faith must receive "the wages of sin," punishment "according to their works," ending in the "second death."

Since it is impossible for God to save the sinner in his sins, He deprives him of the existence which his transgressions have forfeited and of which he has proved himself unworthy. "Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently

consider his place, and it shall not be." "They shall be as though they had not been." Psalm 37:10; Obadiah 16. They sink into hopeless, eternal oblivion.

Thus will be made an end of sin. "Thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name forever and ever. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end." Psalm 9:5, 6. John, in the Revelation, hears a universal anthem of praise undisturbed by one note of discord. No lost souls blaspheme God as they writhe in never-ending torment. No wretched beings in hell will mingle their shrieks with the songs of the saved.

Upon the error of natural immortality rests the doctrine of consciousness in death. Like eternal torment, it is opposed to Scripture, to reason, and to our feelings of humanity.

According to popular belief, the redeemed in heaven are acquainted with all that takes place on earth. But how could it be happiness to the dead to know the troubles of the living, to see them enduring the sorrows, disappointments, and anguish of life? And how revolting the belief that as soon as the breath leaves the body the soul of the impenitent is consigned to the flames of hell!

What say the Scriptures? Man is not conscious in death: "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." "The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything. . . . Their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun." "The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." "In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6; Isaiah 38:18, 19; Psalm 6:5.

Peter on the day of Pentecost declared that David "is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day." "For David is not ascended into the heavens." Acts 2:29, 34. The fact that David remains in the grave until the resurrection proves that the righteous do not go to heaven at death.

Resurrection to Eternal Life

When about to leave His disciples, Jesus did not tell them that they would soon come to Him: "I go to prepare a place for you," He said. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself." John 14:2, 3. Paul tells us further, that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." And he adds: "Comfort one another with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. At the coming of the Lord, the fetters of the tomb shall be broken and the "dead in Christ" shall be raised to eternal life.

All are to be judged according to the things written in the books and rewarded as their works have been. This judgment does not take place at death. "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." Acts 17:31; Jude 14, 15.

But if the dead already enjoy heaven or writhe in the flames of hell, what need of a future judgment? God's Word may be understood by common minds. But what candid mind can see either wisdom or justice in the current theory? Will the righteous receive the commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, . . . enter thou into the joy

of thy Lord," when they have been dwelling in His presence for long ages? Are the wicked summoned from torment to receive sentence from the Judge, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire"? Matthew 25:21, 41.

The theory of the immortality of the soul was one of those false doctrines that Rome borrowed from paganism. Martin Luther classed it with the "monstrous fables that form part of the Roman dunghill of decretals."¹ The Bible teaches that the dead sleep until the resurrection.

Immortality When Jesus Returns

Blessed rest for the weary righteous! Time, be it long or short, is but a moment to them. They sleep; they are awakened by the trump of God to a glorious immortality. "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. . . . So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Corinthians 15:52-54.

Called forth from their slumber, they begin to think just where they ceased. The last sensation was the pang of death; the last thought, that they were falling beneath the power of the grave. When they arise from the tomb, their first glad thought will be echoed in the triumphal shout: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" 1 Corinthians 15:55.

¹ E. Petavel, *The Problem of Immortality*, p. 255.

Sources

In the list below, under each chapter in the current work are listed the source chapters in *The Great Controversy* that correspond to it:

Chapter 1, “Why Is There Suffering?”

The Great Controversy, chapter 29

Chapter 2, “Hope for Triumph Over Evil”

The Great Controversy, chapters 30, 31

Chapter 3, “Dangerous Seductions”

The Great Controversy, chapter 32

Chapter 4, “Everlasting Life”

The Great Controversy, chapter 33

Chapter 5, “False Hope”

The Great Controversy, chapter 34

Chapter 6, “True Peace”

The Great Controversy, chapters 7, 27

Chapter 7, “Our Only Safeguard”

The Great Controversy, chapter 37

Chapter 8, “In Defense of the Truth”

The Great Controversy, chapters 3, 25, 26

Chapter 9, “Real Hope”

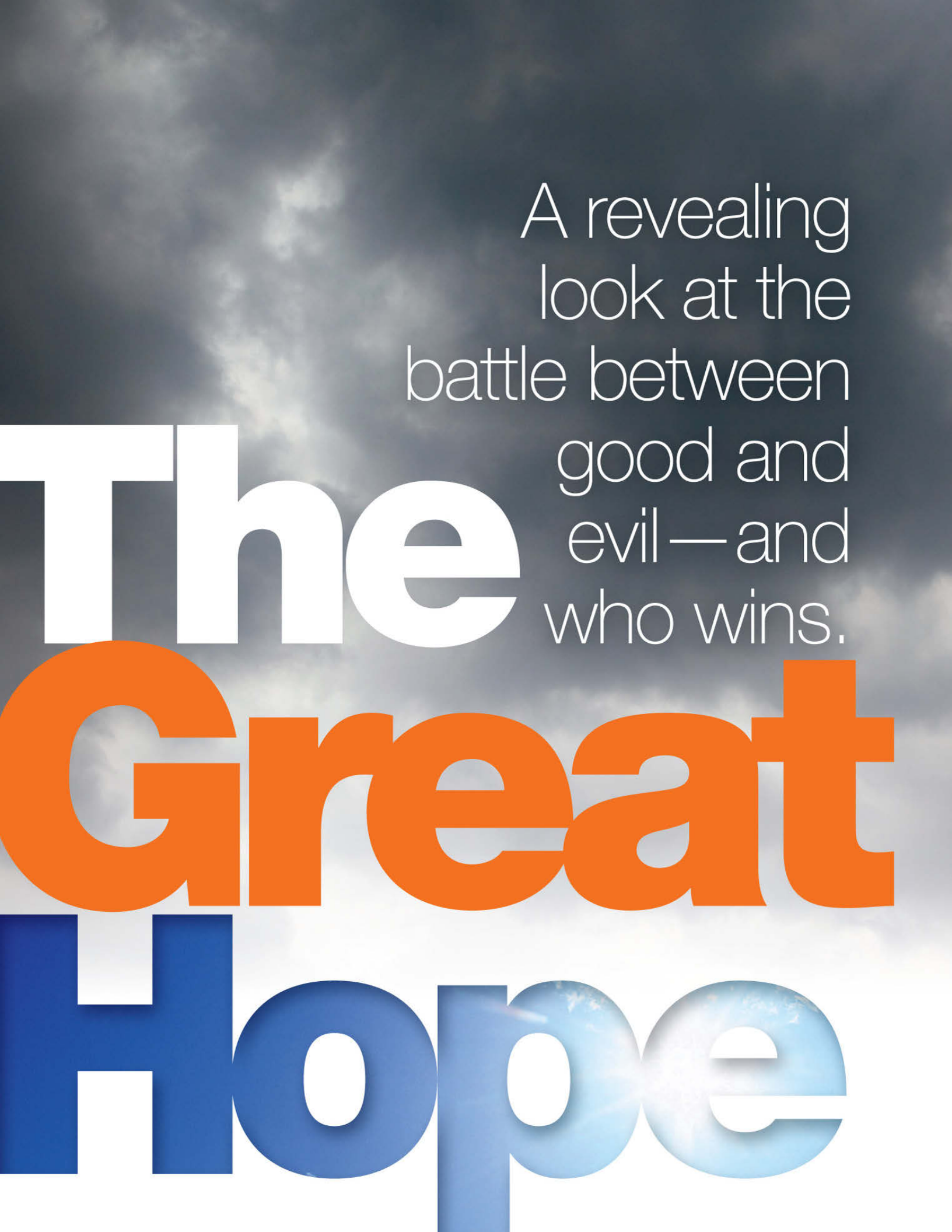
The Great Controversy, chapters 1, 17, 36, 38, 39

Chapter 10, “The Great Rescue”

The Great Controversy, chapter 40

Chapter 11, “Victory of Love”

The Great Controversy, chapter 42



A revealing
look at the
battle between
good and
evil — and
who wins.

The Great Hope





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How it all began

YG began just after the turn of the century as a high-energy, contemporary worship service highlighting multimedia, upbeat music, and timely, creative messages – all focused on reaching young adults. Today, YG transcends age and program boundaries, making authentic efforts to foster the great commandment and great commission in new generations. www.vimeo.com/channels/ygchurch



Intimacy

We are wholeheartedly pursuing a 24/7 experience of the living GOD. Our worship is for His fame. Each week Younger Generation Church offers a powerful worship experience, Saturday mornings, 10:15 am [Central], where we authentically gather to focus our attention and adoration on Christ Jesus. www.YGchurch.com



Community

We express best who GOD is by doing life together well. Our relationships express His love. Younger Generation Church enjoys LIFEgroups affording our members an opportunity to build inspiring community and foster healthy relationships. We love having fun and taking time to enjoy each other's company. www.facebook.com/ygchurch



Grace

We are compelled to share the hope we have with others. Our compassionate witness reveals His Good News as real. Younger Generation Church generously shares the grace of Jesus Christ with whomever we might serve. Feeding the hungry, encouraging the orphan, consoling the widow—being grace dispensers to the least of these bring us joy. @YGChurch