

End Times

What happens to the U.S., China in the end times?  
 Is the army that attacks “from the north” Russia?  
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Is it enough to confess my sin in private moments to  
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 church body in order for God to forgive me?  
 Is it wrong to pray to the Saints or to Mary?  
 Is it wrong to pray the rosary?

3

**Q:** What happens to the U.S., China in the end times?  
 Is the army that attacks “from the north” Russia?

**A:** First, it’s important to note that there is no explicit  
 textual evidence to the United States, China, or Russia to  
 be found in any passage of Scripture. However, over the  
 years, many modern Bible interpreters have made some  
 connections between the countries described in  
 Revelation and modern world powers.

4

**A:** Some have argued that Revelation 16:12-16 refers  
 to China’s ability to march on Jerusalem when  
 the Euphrates River dries up. A confederation of  
 “kings from the east” are assembled and participate  
 in the battle of Armageddon. All of the armies of the  
 east are destroyed at the conclusion of that battle  
 (Revelation 19:11-21).

5

**A:** Some have argued that the end times prophecies of  
 Ezekiel 38-39 refer to what we know as Russia. One author  
 says, “Magog is a land “in the far north,” from Israel’s point  
 of view (Ezekiel 38:15; 39:2). Most Bible commentators  
 interpret “Magog” as Russia—and, indeed, Russia is straight  
 north of Israel, all the way up to the Arctic Circle. According  
 to this view, “Rosh” is a reference to Russia, “Meshek” is  
 either Moscow or the people north of the Black Sea (the  
 area of southern Russia and Ukraine), and “Tubal,” which is  
 always listed with Meshek in Scripture, is identified as a city  
 in Siberia or an area in central Turkey.

6

**A:** Some have tried very hard to place the United States  
 somewhere within end times prophecies, but most  
 agree that there is no clear connection between any of  
 the locations referred to in Revelation or the prophets.  
 It could be that the U.S. is included among the nations  
 who reject God and are judged when the angels begin to  
 facilitate the destruction of the earth. It could be that  
 the U.S. relationship with Israel continues to deteriorate  
 to the extent that such judgment is deserved. We just  
 don’t know for sure.

7

**Q: With the reference in Revelation, were dragons real at some point?**

**A: The reference to the dragon in Revelation 12, 13, 16, and 20 are all ultimately referring to John's understanding of Satan himself.**

**"And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years..." (Revelation 20:2 ESV)**

8

**A: Our understanding of dragons has been affected strongly first by stories, then by movies which depict fire-breathing beasts of various sizes and shapes. It is very unlikely that such creatures ever existed.**

9

**Q: Why do you believe in the pre-Tribulation rapture?**

**A: Let's start by defining terms:**

**tribulation = a time of suffering and despair**

**The Tribulation = a period of seven years of great suffering which has yet to occur. Also called "the day of the Lord (Joel 2), the "latter days" (Deut. 4:30), the "seventieth seven" (Daniel 9:27-30), and "the times of great distress" (Daniel 12:1)**

10

**A: Rapture = the collecting or the "snatching" away of God's people at a time of God's choosing.**

**The rapture is described primarily in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 1 Corinthians 15:50–54. God will resurrect all believers who have died, give them glorified bodies, and take them from the earth, along with all living believers, who will also be given glorified bodies at that time.**

11

### **Rapture**

**Questions about the rapture:**

**Who will it include and when will it happen?**

**One clear answer on who will be included:**

**Those who are "in Christ"**

**Three positions on the timing of rapture:**

**That it will happen before the tribulation (pre-trib)**

**That it will happen in the middle of the tribulation (mid-trib)**

**That it will happen at the conclusion of the tribulation (post-trib)**

12

**A: Our church has historically held to a pre-tribulational view of the timing of the rapture. We have held to the position that the church will be taken away from the earth before the final tribulation begins and the wrath of God is poured out on all who have not claimed Christ as Lord and Savior. We also have recognized in our doctrinal statement that there are many who hold different views about this question and are welcome to worship with us as long as any one position does not become divisive or a salvation issue.**

13

**Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.**

**(1 Corinthians 15:51-52 ESV)**

14

**But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.**

15

**For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.**

**(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 ESV)**

16

**Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"**

17

**And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.**

18

**"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

**(Matthew 24:1-14 ESV)**

19

**Q: How is timing a factor in the doctrine of predestination?**

**A: Let's start with a summary of the concept of predestination:**

**Greek *proorizo*:  
determining beforehand, deciding ahead of time**

20

**And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.  
(Romans 8:28-30 ESV)**

21

**A: Numerous scriptures refer to believers in Christ being chosen (Matthew 24:22, 31; Mark 13:20, 27; Romans 8:33, 9:11, 11:5-7, 28; Ephesians 1:11; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Timothy 5:21; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1-2, 2:9; 2 Peter 1:10).**

**Predestination is the biblical doctrine that God in His sovereignty chooses certain individuals to be saved.**

22

**A: Regarding predestination, there are two issues related to timing:**

**When does God know God's choice?  
When do I know God's choice?**

**Because God exists and operates outside of time, we can conclude that God knows what our outcome will be from the moment we are conceived.**

23

**O Lord, you have searched me and known me!  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.  
(Psalm 139:1-6 ESV)**

24

**For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.  
(Psalm 139:13-16 ESV)**

25

**A:** The timing of when we become aware of God's choice is not a static thing. We each have the opportunity to discover the truth of the Gospel on our own terms and in our own time, even though we don't know how much time we have to do so. We also have the choice to receive the gift of salvation and obey Christ the first time we hear it or the 27<sup>th</sup> time we hear it. That timing is not something we refer to a calendar to find. That timing takes place as God draws us to Himself and we see, however imperfectly, who He is and what our need is.

26

**A:** The Biblical truth that God sovereignly chooses who will be saved does not and never has negated human responsibility to respond to the Gospel in concrete, tangible ways (Romans 10:9-10, 2 Corinthians 13:5, etc.) God repeatedly calls us to repent of sin, lay down our lives, and follow Jesus (Mark 8:31-38). This is something that we can and must do for ourselves as we become more aware of the work of the Holy Spirit to feel our way towards him (Acts 17:16-31).

27

**A:** The tension between predestination and free will lives on in God's word, and God makes no attempt to rectify the tension. We can and should thrive in this tensions, trusting God's sovereign will while also waking up each day desiring to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord (Colossians 1:9-14).

28

**Q: Purgatory - Is it Biblical?**

**A:** According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, Purgatory is "a place or condition of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in God's grace, are not entirely free from venial faults, or have not fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions." In other words, Catholics believe that Purgatory is a place that a Christian's soul goes to after death to be cleansed of sins that have yet to be paid for in life.

29

**A:** This teaching is unbiblical because it fails to account for the full effect of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 ESV)

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5 ESV)

30

**A:** Paul repeatedly voices his expectation and desire to be away from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6-8, Philippians 1:22-23). Jesus' death was sufficient to cleanse us from our sin (1 John 1:9, Hebrews 7:27) and there's nothing we can do to save ourselves (Ephesians 2:8-9), which means that purgatory has no possible meaning for believers.

31

**Q: Is cremation Biblical?**

**A: There are no direct Scriptural commands for or against cremation. One argument is that because believers will receive a new body after this “tent” gives out (2 Corinthians 5:1-11), the physical body is essentially meaningless at death (1 Cor. 15:35-49).**

**Therefore, cremation is a legitimate option for people to consider.**

32

**Q: Is it enough to confess my sin in private moments to God, or do I need to confess it in a testimony before the church body in order for God to forgive me?**

**Is it wrong to pray to the Saints or to Mary?**

**Is it wrong to pray the rosary?**

**A: Prayer is a spiritual discipline that is clearly defined in Scripture. Confession of sin is one function of prayer that should be carefully considered and understood by believers.**

33

**“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
(Matthew 6:7-13 ESV)**

34

**A: Nowhere in Scripture is anyone ever commanded to pray to anyone besides God Himself (either to the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit.)**

**All faith traditions that have used other formulations or any human being to be prayed to have move away from Scripture and created their own faith system which has no basis in the Bible as we know it and teach it here at HCC.**

**This includes prayers of confession.**

35

**If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9 ESV)**

**And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (James 5:15-16 ESV)**

36

**A: God will forgive sin because Jesus makes forgiveness possible by shedding His blood on the cross for us. The act of confessing sin in front of the church does not facilitate anyone receiving forgiveness, but it does help people come out of the darkness of secret sin and live in the light of honest repentance as we seek help to battle against our sin (see John 3:16-21 among others).**

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