



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

Midweek Experience Curriculum

Eschatology: The Doctrine of Future Things | Overcoming

2015

November

Bible References

Exodus 33:18-23

Luke 9:22

Luke 9:28

1 Corinthians 15:28

Matthew 20:1-16

Revelation 19:7

Revelation 19:9

Revelation 21:2

NAC Catechism

10 The doctrine of future things

God's actions are aimed at making salvation accessible to mankind. His will to save applies to all people in the past, the present, and the future. The history of salvation progresses according to the wise plan of God (see 4.4). The knowledge that God is faithful enables us to confidently wait for the fulfilment of further divine promises (Hebrews 10: 23).

The doctrine of future things (eschatology) is based on Holy Scripture. Many references to events in the future of salvation history are contained in the gospels and the letters of the Apostles.

Some key statements are recorded in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which speaks of future things in figurative terms. In this important source of hope for the future, the Lord repeatedly reinforces the promise of His return, reveals the progress of the history of salvation, and thereby grants insights into His future actions.

the wise plan of God, and we can be confident in God's faithfulness to us.

The doctrine of eschatology is based on Holy Scripture and many references to events in the future of salvation history are contained in the gospels and the letters of the apostles. Some key statements are recorded in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which speaks of future things in figurative terms. All of these sources, along with word, sacrament, and fellowship in the divine services, are important sources of "hope for the future." Let's enjoy this final month of the year as we focus on these "last things," which will ultimately usher in the new heaven and new earth when God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Discussion Questions:

1. As your facilitator walks through the chronology of the plan of salvation, discuss the meaning of each event. **(Go to the end of the guide for the chronology. Events that are listed next to each other occur concurrently.)**

- a. Were you surprised by the order of these events?

- b. Had you realized before this activity that some events are concurrent?

- c. What does the chronology of the plan of salvation tell you about God?

2. When Moses was frustrated God came to him (Exodus 33:18-23). How are moments of frustration an opportunity to witness God's glory?

NAC Catechism Q&A

Additional questions from chapter 10 - find the answers in the Catechism Q&A

559. What will happen at the return of Christ?

563. Are there any characteristics for those who will belong to the bridal congregation?

564. Does the Bible relate any other characteristics of the bridal congregation?

577. What transpires during the period of the kingdom of peace on earth?

3. When you think about your future, do you have hope? How do you balance hope with the uncertainty that we often feel?

4. Read Matthew 20: 1-16. How would you use this parable to explain that eternal fellowship with God in the new creation will be available to all souls who decide for the Lord, regardless of when they made their decision?

5. If you believe that the Lord is preparing a bridal congregation for His return in order to serve with Him during the 1000 years of peace, how should your preparation look now in order to be equipped for that role?

6. Revelation 19: 7,9 and 21: 2 What do these biblical images of bride and marriage teach us about the relationship between Christ and His Church now and in the future?

Please see your Catechism or Catechism Q&A book, Chapter 10, for more information.

Session 2: Overcoming

This month we've been hearing a lot about future things. Paul wrote in Ephesians, "for it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). We've all been offered the gift of grace, but we still make the choice to accept it or not. Even though salvation is a free gift from God, we're still required to battle for it in a number of different ways. This is the process of overcoming.

Simply making the decision to follow Jesus can be a battle because deciding to follow Him means that something else has to be let go. Remember the rich young man? He asked the Lord what he had to do to gain eternal life. After claiming that he had kept all of the commandments since his youth, Jesus challenged him to let go his of current lifestyle and follow Him, "if you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." This man was faced with the choice of continuing to live in the comfort of his current lifestyle or let it go in order to grasp hold of eternal life. How many of us struggle with this very same choice today?

To remain in our relationship with Christ each day, we must be willing to square off in a recurring battle with the "old Adam"—the person we used to be before Jesus changed us. The first apostles had the same struggle: Peter denied the Lord, Thomas doubted, others returned to fishing after the Lord's death. Their struggle was with who they used to be versus who they were called to be. But Jesus encouraged them to launch His Church and spread His message. All of us have been called on purpose by God in order to be transformed and to be His messengers to the world.

By deciding to follow Jesus, we've made a decision to be an overcomer. If we sincerely want to be accepted by the Lord at His return then we need to work on a daily basis at overcoming challenges that distract us from our purpose. That might mean making an adjustment to our lifestyle, letting go of a certain habit, or fighting an addiction, for instance. Being a disciple of Jesus isn't easy, but He offers encouragement. In John 16:33, Jesus says, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Ultimately, what we need to overcome is sin. Be aware that the enemy of the Lord is always at work in the world and does his very best to

imprison us in our sin. Jesus died so all could be set free from the prison of sin, but as with any crafty enemy, the devil refuses to be defeated. Just as the Lord reminds us of His love and grace, the devil works to remind us of who we used to be and how our weaknesses distance us from God. We have to diligently fight sin by repenting and asking for the Holy Spirit's activity in our lives.

There's also the battle for unity in our congregations. A unity killer in our congregations today can be gossip. Like a sharp knife, gossip cuts through oneness and creates division. Gossip presents a battle that we all must overcome in order for our congregations to be healthy and to grow. Paul encouraged the congregation in Ephesus to strive for unity when he wrote, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3).

How do we fight together against things that steal our unity today? Here's an idea: instead of focusing on what divides us, let's focus on what unites us: Jesus, and our desire to be like Him.

Another battle is one we can fight for our neighbor, as the Apostle Paul did. Paul writes to the Colossians, "For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea" (Colossians 2:1). Paul fought for these people so they'd come to know Jesus. We can also fight for our neighbors by interceding for them in prayer and meeting them where they are, realizing we're all sinners. Let's stand up for the salvation of others and let's ask for help in finding people with whom we can share God's love.

By living a life of faith with the willingness to overcome, we are positioning ourselves to better understand our dependence on grace in order to receive the future reward of eternal fellowship with our Heavenly Father. Revelation 3:21 says, "to Him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." As we conclude this session, be encouraged. Don't be afraid of the battles that must be fought. The Lord is with us!

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is overcoming a process? Why is it important? Why is it a struggle?

Bible References

John 16:33

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Romans 12:21

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

1 John 5:4

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

Going Deeper

Above all the grace and the gifts that Christ gives to his beloved is that of overcoming self.

- Francis of Assisi

Facilitator Note

Discussion Question #4

This question is referring to personal sin versus sin committed against another.

2. In the process of overcoming, why is repentance a critical step?

3. In your personal process of overcoming, what are you doing and what is God doing?

4. What is the difference between overcoming a personal sinful behavior and overcoming a grudge or offence? **(See facilitator note.)**

5. How is it possible to overcome the feeling of injustice?

6. What makes it hard to give up your current lifestyle for eternal life?

7. How would you define “gossip”?

8. Do you see gossip in your congregation? How can you personally help reduce gossip in your congregation?

9. What are you in the process overcoming? How can your small group help in this process?

Chronology of the Plan of Salvation

Explanations from the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church, Chapter 10

BLUE - Old Testament Events

Deliverance of Noah

Election and blessing of the patriarchs

Covenant with Israel

GREEN - New Testament and Current Events

Birth, sacrifice, resurrection, ascension into heaven of Jesus Christ

Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

Spread of the Gospel by the early apostles

Development of Christianity without occupied apostle ministry

Reoccupation of the apostle ministry

Preparation of the bridal congregation

RED - Future Things

Return of Christ

The expectation that the Lord's promises will be fulfilled, together with the hope of personally experiencing Christ's return and being caught up to Him, remain at the core of the New Apostolic faith today.

Rapture of the bridal congregation

The living who have allowed themselves to be prepared for His coming will receive a body that is like the glorious body of Christ.

Resurrection of the dead in Christ

At the return of Christ, the dead who have died in Him will be the first to resurrect.

First Resurrection¹

Those who are numbered to the bride of the Lord will only be revealed at the return of Christ.

Marriage feast in heaven

The marriage of the Lamb follows directly after the bride has been caught up to heaven. This image for the eschatological marriage feast is a reference to the everlasting fellowship of the firstlings with the Lord.

Great Tribulation

After the return of Christ, a time will begin in which both mankind and the creation will be exposed to the power of Satan. Everything will suffer under the circumstances associated with this.

Coming of the Lord with power and great glory, Satan bound

The Lord foretold this event by referring to His coming “with power and great glory” (Matthew 24: 29–30). Jesus Christ will then reveal His divine power on earth for all to see (Revelation 1: 7). He, the King of kings and Lord of lords, will take away all power from Satan and his followers, and thus put an end to the time of the great tribulation.

Resurrection of the martyrs

In connection with Christ’s coming with power and great glory, the martyrs from the great tribulation are promised resurrection.

Establishment of the kingdom of peace

After the conclusion of the first resurrection, Christ will establish His kingdom of peace on earth. Then the rule of Jesus Christ as King will be manifested without restriction. He is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9: 6).

First Resurrection¹

All those who were caught up in the rapture at the return of Christ, as well as the martyrs from the great tribulation, will share in the first resurrection. They will not have to partake in the Last Judgement.

Satan released

The kingdom of peace will come to an end when Satan is released and given one last opportunity to tempt mankind.

Ultimate defeat of Satan

After his ultimate defeat, he will be condemned and “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone” (Revelation 20: 7–10). Evil in all its manifestations will then have been rendered powerless forever.

Resurrection of the dead

Then follows the resurrection of the dead for judgement (Revelation 20: 11–15). Christ will then judge all human beings who did not take part in the first resurrection.

Judgement

Those who find grace in the Last Judgement will become inhabitants of God’s new creation and will be permitted to have eternal fellowship with Him.

God’s new creation

For those who already reigned with Christ in the kingdom of peace as a royal priesthood, the following promise will be fulfilled in the new creation: “... and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22: 3–5).

¹ The term does not refer to a point in time, but should be explained as describing the order of the resurrection. The first resurrection includes the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the transformation and rapture of the firstlings as well as the resurrection of the martyrs from the great tribulation (cf. CNC, no. 10.5).