

## **Study Questions**

**For Use With:** What the Bible Says About the Future

Sam A. Smith

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## Study Questions

for What the Bible Says About the Future, by Sam A. Smith

### About this study guide

The questions below are keyed to What the Bible Says About the Future, by Sam A. Smith (first edition, available in PDF and print from Biblical Reader Communications on the Internet at <http://www.BiblicalReader.com>). If you choose to use the online version of the text, it will be necessary to use the PDF version, since the HTML version is not paginated and does not contain the appendices. (Numbers in parentheses refer to pages in the text. Those pages should be consulted when answering the questions.)

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### Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study of Biblical Future Prophecy

1. What are the six reasons given for studying future prophecy? (15-17)
2. What are the areas in which biblical conservatives generally agree concerning the future? (17-18)
3. What are the areas in which there is disagreement among biblical conservatives concerning the future? (18-21)
4. What are the two benefits given for studying future prophecies in their logical, rather than chronological order? (22)

### Chapter 2: A Tour of What the Bible Says About the Future

1. What is "dispensationalism?" (23)
2. What does each new dispensation require? (23)
3. What are some examples of dispensational transitions? (23)
4. What happens when we try to understand a passage apart from its dispensational context? (23-24)
5. Why is the regathering of Israel important to the unfolding of future events? (24-26)
6. Describe the rapture of the church. (26-27)
7. What is the "tribulation?" (28-34)
8. What event begins the tribulation period? (30)
9. What will happen in the first three and one half years of the tribulation period? (30)
10. What key events will occur at the midpoint of the tribulation period? (30)
11. What will happen in the second three and a half years of the tribulation period? (32-34)

12. Describe the events associated with the second coming of Christ to the earth. (32-34)
13. How long is the interlude between the tribulation and the millennium, and what events will occur at that time? (34)
14. What is the millennium? (34)
15. What four groups of people will enter the millennium? (35)
16. What will life in the millennium be like? (35)
17. What happens during the interlude between the millennium and the new creation? (36-37)
18. Briefly describe the new heavens and earth. (37)

### **Chapter 3: How Systems of Belief Affect Our View of Future Prophecy**

1. Why is it important to have a correct view of Israel and the church when trying to understand future prophecy? (39)
2. What are “dispensationalism” and “covenant theology?” (39)
3. What is “premillennialism?” (39-40)
4. What is “spiritualization?” (40)
5. Describe the historical eclipse of premillennialism. (40-42)
6. Who is the key figure in the introduction of amillennialism into the western church? (40-42)
7. Describe “postmillennialism.” (42-43)
8. What were the two distinct forms of postmillennialism (prior to the twentieth century)? (42)
9. What are the similarities between amillennialism and postmillennialism? (42-43)
10. What is “theonomic postmillennialism” (which originated in the late twentieth century)? (43)
11. Who are some of the figures involved in the revival of premillennialism? (43)
12. What are the two views of redemptive history? (43)
13. Describe covenant theology (44-45)
14. Describe the significance of the “covenant of grace” as conceptualized in covenant theology. (45)
15. What is a “dispensation?” (45)
16. What are some examples of dispensations being referred to by biblical writers?
17. How do dispensations relate to the plan of salvation? (45)
18. What distinguishes dispensational interpretation as a method of interpretation? (45-46)
19. What is one of the fundamental differences between covenantalism and dispensationalism that was pointed out? (46)

20. Consistent dispensational interpretation always leads to what view of the second coming and the millennium? (46)
21. What is the main point of controversy between covenantalism and dispensationalism? (46-47)
22. Why do dispensationalists object to viewing the church as Israel (or as a replacement for Israel)? (47-48)
23. How do covenantalists deal with the problems raised by applying the promises made to Israel to the church? (47-48)
24. What problems are associated with allegorical (non-literal, "spiritualized") interpretation? (48)
25. Why can the dispensationalist not arbitrarily manipulate the meaning of the text as can the covenantalist? (48)
26. What is "covenant premillennialism?" (50-51)
27. What is the major problem with covenant premillennialism? (50-51)
28. What is "progressive dispensationalism?" (51-52)
29. What are the major problems with progressive dispensationalism? (52)
30. Why is a consistently normal/literal method of interpretation superior? (52-3)
31. What are some of the problems with the application of the dual (normal/allegorical) system of interpretation? (53)

#### **Chapter 4: Understanding Apocalyptic Literature**

1. What does the term, "apocalyptic" mean? (55)
2. In the Bible, what are the distinguishing features of apocalyptic literature? (55)
3. What is the problem with viewing apocalyptic literature in the Bible as a separate literary genre? (55-56)
4. What method of interpretation must we use to determine the meaning of future prophecy? Why? (56)
5. What are the three general interpretive principles that were given? (56-57)
6. How does one determine the dispensational context of a passage? (57)
7. Discuss the problem of "time relationships" in biblical prophecy. (58)
8. In prophecy that makes use of symbols, what is the interpreter's greatest challenge? (58-59)
9. What are some procedures that might help to determine the meaning of a symbol? (58-59)
10. What is a "prophetic parable?" (59-60)
11. What four things should one keep in mind when seeking to interpret prophetic parables? (59-60)
12. How does the larger context of prophecy relate to the interpretation of any particular prophetic passage? (60)

13. What constitutes the “complete description” of a prophetic event (so far as we have it)? (60)
14. Explain what the “single sense” of Scripture means. (60-61)
15. How many correct interpretations of a passage can there be? Why? (60-61)
16. Explain the phenomena of “near” verses “far” fulfillment of prophecy, and why this does not argue for double fulfillment. (61)

### **Chapter 5: The Kingdom of God and the Millennium**

1. What are the three aspects of the kingdom of God? (63)
2. What is the “universal aspect” of the kingdom? (63-64)
3. What is the “visible aspect” of the kingdom of God? (64)
4. Where do we first learn that the visible aspect of the kingdom is to occur in two phases? Explain your answer. (64)
5. What is the “invisible aspect” of the kingdom? (64-66)
6. What is “the kingdom of Heaven,” as developed in the Gospel of Matthew? (64-66)
7. According to the diagram on page 65, what aspects of the kingdom do the redeemed participate in?
8. According to the diagram on page 65, what aspects of the kingdom do the unredeemed participate in?

[On the kingdom of Heaven, see questions for Appendix F: *The Kingdom of Heaven and the Course of the Present Age*, below.]

9. What are the two phases of the visible kingdom of God? (69)
10. What four covenants shape the Old Testament idea of the visible kingdom of God? Where are these covenants found in the Bible? (66-74)
11. Explain how the covenants and the prophecies work together to give us a picture of the future. (66)
13. What promises did God make to Abraham personally in the Abrahamic covenant? (70)
14. What promises did God make to Abraham’s descendants in the Abrahamic covenant? (70-71)
15. What promises were made to Israel under the Palestinian covenant? (71-72)
16. What promises were made to David under the Davidic covenant? (72-73)
17. What promises were made to Israel under the new covenant? (74)
18. Has the new covenant been fulfilled? (74)
19. What are the three reasons given for believing that God has not abandoned His covenant with Abraham? (75-77)
20. What kind of covenant did God make with Abraham in Genesis 15:9-21, and what is the significance of God alone walking between the pieces of the animals? (75-76)

21. Explain why faithlessness cannot invalidate the covenant God made with Abraham. (75-76)
22. Explain the distinction between the “validity” of the Abrahamic covenant and its “enjoyment.” (75-76)
23. If the covenants have neither been fulfilled nor invalidated, what is the implication? (77-78)

[On premillennialism, see the Questions for Appendix C: *The Biblical Basis of Premillennialism*, below.]

24. Discuss the timing of the millennium (*i.e.*, when will it begin)? (79)
25. Discuss the location of the millennium (*i.e.*, where will it take place)? (79-82)
26. How long will the millennium last? How do we know? (82)
27. Summarize the general character of the millennium. (82-86)
28. What events will occur in the millennium, and when? (86-88)

### **Chapter 6: The Tribulation**

1. What is “the tribulation?” (89)
2. What are the two stated purposes of the tribulation period? (89-93)
3. What are some of the earliest mentions of the tribulation in the Bible? (93-98)
4. According to the figure on page 95, what are the most widely mentioned aspects of the tribulation period?
5. What book of the Bible provides the first and most precise chronological information about the tribulation? (96)
6. From the biblical background given in pages 93 to 99, give a brief sketch of the tribulation period.
7. What are the two preconditions to the tribulation period? (100)
8. What is the significance of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan. 2) and Daniel’s vision (Dan. 7) to future prophecy? (100-109)
9. How do Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Daniel’s vision, and the prophecy of the seventy “weeks” help us to understand the two preconditions to the tribulation? (100-109)
10. The first four kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan. 2) and Daniel’s vision (Dan. 7) are referred to under what label? Who applied this label, and in what context? (108)
11. What event begins the tribulation period? (110)
12. What event signals the midpoint of the tribulation period? (109)
13. Why must the Jewish temple be rebuilt prior to the midpoint of the tribulation period? (110-111)
14. What do the “seals” of Revelation represent? (112)
15. Which seals are broken in the first half of the period, and what occurs during the time of each of those seals? (112-113)

16. When does the invasion of Israel by many nations (described in Ezekiel 38-39) likely occur? How does this event relate to Israel's national conversion? (113-117)
17. Briefly list the events given for the second half of the tribulation period. (118-146)
18. What is involved in the abomination that takes place in the temple? (119)
19. Describe the "new world economic and religious order." (120-121)
20. Describe the ministry of God's two prophets. (121)
21. Describe the martyrdom of Christians. (122-123)
22. What is the nature of the sixth seal of Revelation? (123-125)
23. What is the significance of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses? (125)
24. According to the text, when does the day of God's wrath likely begin? Give the reasons used in support of this position. (125-131)
25. Explain the author's reasoning as to how 2 Thessalonians 2:1-9 indicates that the day of the LORD cannot begin until sometime in the second half of the tribulation period. (128-130, *cf.* 220-221)
26. What is the character of the first four trumpet judgments? (131-133)
27. List the last three trumpet judgments (also referred to as the "woe judgments"). (133-135)
28. List the seven bowl judgments. (135-141)
29. What are the three key passages describing the second coming of Christ? (145)
30. What are the nine elements associated with the second coming that were listed in the text? Include Scripture references for each. (146)

### **Chapter 7: Tribulation Chronology**

1. To what does "absolute external chronology" refer? (147-148)
2. Explain the problem with developing an absolute external chronology. (147-148)
3. To what does "relative external chronology" refer? (148-157)
4. What evidence was presented as proof that the tribulation is a future (as opposed to past or present) event? (147-157)
5. What difference do you think the external chronology would make to biblical interpretation in general (*i.e.*, what is the significance of viewing the tribulation as a future (as opposed to a past or present) event?
6. What is the relationship (chronologically) of the tribulation to the millennium? (157)
7. Why does "internal chronology" present the greatest challenge to the student of tribulation prophecy? (158)
8. How is the length of the tribulation established, and confirmed? (158-164)
9. In the prophecy of the seventy "weeks" (Dan. 9:24-27), how do we know that the seventieth "week" is seven years long? (158-162)
10. Describe the major divisions within the tribulation period. (164-165)

11. What is the length of the second half of the tribulation period in days, and how do we know this? (164-165)
12. What are the three key passages of Scripture that contribute to our knowledge of the chronology of the tribulation period? (165-170)
13. In the Matthew 24:4-31 passage describing the tribulation period, how do we know that verse 15 is recursive (starting back at the middle of the period)?
14. Based upon your own reading of Matthew 24:4-31, and your study of the chronology presented in Figure 7.4 (169), approximately where would you place the severe persecution described in Matthew 24:16-20?
15. Using your answer from question 14 above, where would you place the fifth seal of Revelation? Defend your answer.
16. Based on your answer to question 15 above, what general information can you deduce about the chronology of the seals of Revelation (as to which seals fall in each division of the period).
17. Based on your own study of the chronology of Revelation presented in Figure 7.5 (171), why does the account of the slaying of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:3-14—which happens very near the end of the period) precede the account of the rise of the false religious system (Rev. 13—which occurs near the middle of the period)?
18. Based on your study of the chronology of Revelation presented in Figure 7.5 (171), how do we know that the events of Revelation 12:7-12 actually occur (in time) before the events of chapters 8-11?
19. If the day of the Lord is limited to the seventh seal of Revelation, based on the chronology presented in Figure 7.7 (179), what general observations could you make about the nature of the tribulation period (*i.e.*, how much of the tribulation period would constitute divine wrath)?
20. Based on your own study of this chapter, what benefit do you see to the study of tribulation chronology? Has this information clarified your understanding of the events and character of the period?

### **Chapter 8: The Rapture of the Church**

1. Why is the rapture of great significance to the church? (183)
2. What are the three facts about the rapture that we learn from Paul? (184)
3. Describe the rapture of the church. (184-185)
4. Who will be included in the rapture? (185-189)
5. How is the issue of the unique nature of the church related to the rapture? (186-189)
6. What is “the church,” according to the text? (186)
7. What evidence is given to support the distinctness of the church from Israel? (186-188)
8. According to the text, what is the extent (beginning and end) of the church age? (188-189)

9. What are the names of the dispensational rapture views that could be classed as “pre-wrath?” (pp.189-190)
10. What are the names of the rapture views that could not be classified as “pre-wrath?” (189-190)
11. What are the five arguments given in support of pretribulationism? (190-195)
12. What does the designation, “contingent,” or “fixed-point” mean in relation to rapture views? (191)
13. Why does the doctrine of the imminency of the rapture not prove pretribulationism? (195-196)
14. Why does the wrath argument not prove pretribulationism? (197-200)
15. What is the, “a seal, is a seal, is a seal” argument? (197-199)
16. What problems result from viewing the entire tribulation as divine wrath? (197-200)
17. Briefly describe the midtribulational rapture theory. (202-203)
18. What are the three major problems associated with the midtribulational rapture theory? (202-203)
19. Compare and contrast the midtribulational rapture theory with Rosenthal’s pre-wrath rapture theory. (197-208)
20. What are the major problems with Rosenthal’s pre-wrath theory? (205-208)
21. Describe the “partial rapture theory.” (208)
22. What is the principal problem with the partial rapture theory? (208-213)
23. Describe the imminent pre-wrath view. (213)
24. What is the line of reasoning used to support the imminent pre-wrath view? (213-221)
25. If the doctrine of the imminency of the rapture doesn’t prove pretribulationism, what, if anything, does it prove? (213-218)
26. If the wrath argument doesn’t prove pretribulationism, what, if anything, does it prove? (218-221)
27. What arguments can be made to support the notion that the wrath of God is limited to the second half of the tribulation period (or some portion thereof)? (220-221, see also chapters 6-7)
28. Describe “classic posttribulationism.” (221-222)
29. List the arguments used in support of classic posttribulationism, and the problems given for each of those arguments. (222-225)
30. Describe “imminent posttribulationism.” (225-226)
31. What is the most significant problem with imminent posttribulationism?
32. Examine the illustration on page 209 and describe what these three views of the rapture have in common and how they differ.
33. Examine the illustration on page 215 and describe what these three views of the rapture have in common and how they differ

## **Chapter 9: What Eternity Will Be Like**

1. What is eternity? (227)
2. Who is the source of virtually everything we know about Heaven and Hell? (228)
3. What insight do the New Testament letters (Romans-Jude) add to our understanding of Heaven and Hell? (228)
4. Describe the events leading up to the final judgment, and the judgment itself. (229-232)
5. Where is the only detailed description of the new heavens and earth found? (232)
6. Describe, the new heavens and earth. (232-234)
7. Where is the only detailed description of Heaven (the New Jerusalem) found? (234)
8. Why do you think there will be no temple in the New Jerusalem?
9. Why will the redeemed be in need of healing as they enter eternity? (236)

## **Chapter 10: The Resurrections and Judgments**

1. What are some of the earliest mentions of the resurrection in Scripture? (237-238)
2. What did Jesus teach regarding the resurrection? (238)
3. Who are the two main sources of detailed information on the resurrection in the New Testament, and what did they communicate concerning it? (238-239)
4. Describe the first resurrection. (239-240)
5. Describe the second resurrection. (240-241)
6. Describe the judgment of the church. (241)
7. What is the purpose of the judgment of the Church? (241-242)
8. What are some misconceptions that believers have regarding eternal rewards? (242)
9. What is the “judgment of the nations?” (244)
10. Describe the final judgment of the unredeemed. (244)

## **Appendix A: Chronological-Topical Index to Future Prophecy**

1. Assume you are studying Zechariah 14:1-8. Using the Chronological-Topical Index, find all of the cross-references to this passage.
2. Assume that you are interested in knowing more about the rapture of the church. Using the Chronological-Topical Index, find all of the references to the rapture.
3. Using the Chronological-Topical Index, find all of the references to the future conversion of Israel.

4. Using the Chronological-Topical Index, find the time period to which Joel 3:20-21 refers. What are the cross-references to this passage?

### **Appendix B: The Problem With Covenant Theology**

1. What is “covenant theology?” (259-260)
2. How did covenant theology develop? (260-262)
3. What is “dispensationalism?” (263-264)
4. Which system (covenant theology or dispensationalism) is built upon a presuppositional theology (rather than a biblical theology)? (263)
5. Modern dispensationalism is fairly new (about three hundred years old). Why is this relative newness irrelevant? (264)
6. What view of the millennium (premillennial, amillennial, or postmillennial) was generally held in the very early church (to the extent that they left us any information on this subject)? (264-265)
7. What Christian scholar is generally credited with incorporating “spiritualization” into biblical interpretation (though he was by no means the first to do so)? (265)
8. Who had more influence than any other church figure in developing and promoting the “dual hermeneutic?” (265-266)
9. What is the central tenet of the covenantal system? (268-269)
10. What are the three covenants that comprise the tri-covenantal system? (268-269)
11. Who was the first person to articulate the tri-covenantal system? Give the approximate date.
12. Where are the three covenants in the tri-covenantal system referred to in Scripture? (268-271)
13. What is the view of redemptive history (as relates to Israel and the church) that flows from the covenant of grace? (269)
14. Is there any biblical support for employing the allegorical method of interpretation to future prophecy? (270-271)
15. What are the problems with each of the “covenants” in the tri-covenantal system? (271-272)
16. What biblical evidence is there for the existence of dispensations in biblical history? (273)
17. What features distinguish dispensational interpretation? (274-275)
18. Describe the problem of departing from the literal meaning of the text when interpreting Scripture. (275-276)
19. According to the text, what is the purpose of the covenant of grace in the covenantal system? (269)
20. Should figures of speech and symbols be understood literally? Explain your answer. (277-278)

21. What three reasons were given for the superiority of normal/literal interpretation? (278-279)
22. What are the three key advantages of the literal method of interpretation? (279)

### **Appendix C: The Biblical Basis of Premillennialism**

1. What is "premillennialism?" (p.281)
2. List three major passages of the Bible that explicitly teach premillennialism. (282-284)
3. What is it that covenantalists characteristically confuse regarding the kingdom? Explain your answer. (285-286)
4. Why must there be a future earthly kingdom built around a regenerated nation of Israel? Develop your answer. (286-300)
5. Where is the Abrahamic covenant found, and what are its provisions? (286-290)
6. Where are the ancillary covenants (the Palestinian, Davidic, and new covenants) found, and what are the provisions of these covenants? (290-295)
7. What three reasons were given for believing that the Abrahamic covenant and its ancillary covenants have not been invalidated? (295-298)
8. What is the condition that must be met in order for the Abrahamic covenant to be fulfilled? (295)
9. If there is a condition that must be met in order for the Abrahamic covenant to be fulfilled, how can it be maintained that the covenant is "unconditional?" (295)
10. Explain the difference between the "validity" of the Abrahamic covenant and its "enjoyment." (295)
11. Explain the position of covenant theology with respect to the validity of the Abrahamic covenant. (295)
12. Who is, "the Israel of God," mentioned in Galatians 3:8-9? Explain and support your answer. (299)
13. The church occupies a unique place in the overall prophetic program. Describe that place. (299-300)

### **Appendix D: Who is "the Seed of Abraham?"**

1. Why is the question, "Who is the seed of Abraham?" of great importance to both general interpretation and the interpretation of prophecy? (301-302)
2. What issue is at the heart of the divide between the reformed faith and premillennialism? (301)
3. What are the two positions that reformed theologians have taken with regard to the promises of the Abrahamic covenant? (301-302)
4. What is "replacement theology?" (301-302)
5. What are the two forms of premillennialism? (301-302)

6. What is the position of premillennialism with regard to the promises made to Abraham? (302)
7. Do premillennialists recognize the existence of a “spiritual seed” of Abraham? (302)
8. What do premillennialists believe with regard to the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham’s seed? (302)
9. Summarize the evidence supporting the fact that God did indeed make promises to Abraham’s physical seed. (303-310)
10. What were the four reasons given for believing that the promises made to Abraham have not been invalidated? (310-323)
11. How does Romans 11:1-36 demonstrate that God’s plan includes a future for national Israel when they return to him in faith? (314-323)
12. Why does Matthew 21:43 not imply the disinheritance of Israel? (323-325)
13. What are the three key passages of Scripture that communicate the truth that there is a spiritual seed of Abraham? (326-329)
14. Describe the “seed of Abraham” that will inherit the promises. (In what sense will they be Abraham’s “seed?”) (329-334)

#### **Appendix E: Regeneration and Indwelling in the Old Testament**

1. What is the only means of eternal salvation? (337)
2. Some covenantalists argue for uniformity throughout redemptive history in the application of the various components of salvation (justification, regeneration/indwelling, sanctification, etc.). Why do they do this? (337)
3. For what did the Old Testament saints await for the remission of their sins? (337-338)
4. What is meant when it is stated that regeneration and indwelling are “co-extensive.”
5. What are the two lines of reasoning used by some covenantalists to prove that the Old Testament saints were regenerated and indwelt? (340-341)
6. What is the basic logical error involved in using the two lines of reasoning above (question 5)? (341-345)
7. Is there any direct biblical evidence to support the immediate regeneration and indwelling of the Old Testament saints? (346)
8. What argument was presented to prove that the Old Testament saints were not immediately regenerated and indwelt? (346-355)

#### **Appendix F: The Kingdom of Heaven and the Course of the Present Age**

1. Generally, how do covenantalists interpret the parables of Matthew 13? (361-362)
2. All of the parables of Matthew 13 teach the same central truth using different analogies, what is that central truth? (361-367)
3. Summarize Paul’s testimony concerning the course of the present age. (368-369)

4. Summarize Peter's testimony concerning the course of the present age. (370)
5. Summarize Jude's testimony concerning the course of the present age. (370-371)
6. Summarize John's testimony concerning the course of the present age. (371-373)
7. Why is it not reasonable to interpret the parable of the leavening of the lump of meal (Matt. 13:33) to mean that the world will be largely converted to Christ? Derive your answer from a comprehensive examination of the material in Appendix F.

### **Appendix G: The Amillennial Conception of the Kingdom**

1. What is the typical amillennial conception of the kingdom of God? (375)
2. What critical distinction do amillennialists fail to make? (375)
3. Why must there be a spiritual aspect to the kingdom of God? (375-376)
4. Why did Christ not emphasize the physical aspect of the kingdom in his earthly teaching? (376)
5. Where do amillennialists begin in constructing their view of the kingdom? (376)
6. What did the writers of the New Testament gospels assume about their readers? (376)
7. How does the amillennialist's understanding of the kingdom, as derived from the gospels, affect their interpretation of the Old Testament? (377-378)
8. Why is the reinterpretation of the Old Testament, in light of the New Testament, theologically unsound? (378-381)
9. Explain why amillennialists' reinterpretation of the Old Testament in light of the New Testament raises questions regarding the inspiration of Scripture. (379-381)
10. Explain the amillennialist's use of Joel 2:28-29 in Acts 2:16 as proof that future prophecy should be taken non-literally. (379-381)
11. The fact that amillennialists concede they must reinterpret (spiritualize) the Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom is evidence of what? (382)
12. What is the sequence of major events as derived from the book of Revelation? (382-383)
13. What is "progressive parallelism?" (383)
14. What is the problem with progressive parallelism? (383)
15. How does the teaching of Revelation fit with the teaching of the Old Testament? (384)
16. What significance can be attached to the fact that the last book of the Bible teaches precisely the same view of the kingdom as does the Old Testament—when understood normally?