

The Destiny of the Church

The church is destined to suffer

- We will experience suffering because we live in a fallen world (Gen 3:16-19 John 16:33)
- We will experience suffering as a part of God's plan to glorify himself (John 9:1-3; 2 Cor 4:16-17)
- We will experience suffering because it helps us rely on God and not ourselves (2 Cor 1:8-10)
- We will experience suffering because we are being disciplined by a loving father for our good that we might develop holiness, perseverance, and character (Heb 12:7; Jam 1:2-3; Rom 5:3-5)
- We will experience suffering because we choose to follow Christ (John 15:20-21; Phil 1:29; 2 Tim 3:12; 1 Pet 4:12-13)
- We may experience as part of the tribulation. The Bible gives indication of a terrible period of seven year, the later 3-1/2 of which are significantly worse than the first (Dan 9:26-27, Matt 24:4-31; 2 Thes 2:1-12; Rev 11:2-3). There are those who argue that believers will be rescued by Jesus by being "caught up...in the clouds" (1 Thes 4:17, rapture) prior to tribulation, in the middle of the tribulation, or after the tribulation. There are also those who believe there is no rapture and that all who are alive at the end of the tribulation simply live with Christ during the millennium. A conclusive argument is hard to make which is why BridgePoint doesn't take a stance on the issue in its Statement of Faith.

The church is destined to be judged

- All people—believer or non-believer, Jew or Gentile—will be judged by God (Rom 2:12-16, 14:10; Heb 9:27-28)
- Non-believers will be judged at the Great White Throne for their unwillingness to trust in Christ and will experience a terrible eternity apart from God (Matt 24:36-51; Rev 20:11-15)
- Believers will be judged for their measure of faithful obedience to the Head of the church. The faith part of the obedience is examined through a judgment of our motives (1 Cor 4:5). This judgment will give rise to rewards as appropriate, and will destroy that which is sinful or worthless. (1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 5:9-10; 1 Pet 3:5; Matt 25:14-30). Since it is impossible to please God without faith, we should not view this as faith to get in, then works to get rewards. But rather, faith to get in, followed by continued faithful living to receive rewards.

The church is destined to be vindicated and victorious

- Dan 7:23-27
- Malachi 4:1-2
- Rev 17:12-14; 20:7-10

The church is destined to made up of people from every nation and tongue

- The end will not come until the gospel is preached to all nations (Acts 1:8; Matt 24:14)
- People from every nation will respond to God's call (Ps 87; Isa 19:18-25; 66:19-21; Luke 13:29)
- At the end of time, Jesus will be worshipped by people from every nation and language (Rev 7:9-10) and they shall enjoy God forever (Rev 21:24-26)

At least part of the church is destined to be among those who will reign during the millennial kingdom

- There is a some speculation as to who will be on earth during the millennial reign of Christ on earth (possibilities: the 144,000, Rev 14:1ff; or those who did not take the mark of the beast but were not martyred during the tribulation, Rev 17:14), but we know for certain that one part of the church – those who were beheaded during the tribulation because of their testimony for Jesus and the word of God (Rev 20:4) -- will be there.

The church is destined to enjoy the presence of God forever

- We enjoy His presence while on earth through the indwelling life of the Holy Spirit...eternal life has began already for those who believe (John 3:36; 5:24)
- When our earthly bodies die, we will enjoy his presence in paradise (John 23:43), possibly also known as Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:19-31)
- After the millennial kingdom, we will enjoy his presence in a new heaven and new earth (Isa 65:17-25; Rev 21:1-3, 22-24; 2 Pet 3:13). The new heaven has a new Jerusalem which will come to earth and in which the Triune God will dwell among men as he did in the garden. Revelation 22:1-4 provides a picture of the new Eden.
- We will enjoy his presence in a new body (1 Cor 15:42-44)
 - This body will be different than what we now experience. It will be as different as a seed is from the plant that grows from it (1 Cor 15:44).
 - It will not be made up of flesh and blood (1 Cor 15:50) that will decay. It will be imperishable (1 Cor 15:52) and spiritual (1 Cor 15:44).
 - It will bear the likeness of Jesus (1 Cor 15:49; Phil 3:21). If he is the "first fruits" of those who died, it follows the righteous will be the "second fruits" and will have bodies similar to his resurrected body. This suggests that we will have a body that bears resemblance to our present body and physicality, but is not bound by present physical laws (Luke 24:36-39; John 20:26-27).
- We will enjoy his presence apart from pain and evil. The curse will be ended. (Rev 21:4,27, 22:3a)

Because of our destiny, we as members of the church body should...

- Endure and even embrace suffering by continuing to do what is right (Jas 1:2-4; Heb 12:2-3; 1 Pet 2:20-22)
- Not be concerned with gaining justice for ourselves, since we know that in the end God will ensure justice and victory. (Rom 12:17-21; 1 Pet 2:23)
- Live with the unseen in mind (2 Cor 4:18; Heb 11:24-27) by living lives that are more concerned about eternity than about now. (Mark 9:47-48; Matthew 10:28).
- Put aside "fleshly" living and uphold the truth (Rom 13:12-14; 2 Tim 2:14-19; Pet 3:10-14) so that we are not ashamed at Christ's coming
- Not worry about the accumulation of earthly possessions, but be good stewards of the wealth, time and energy God has given us (Matt 6:19-21, 25-34; Luke 12:27-34; Matt 24:14-30; Luke 19:11-27)
- Eagerly call others from every nation to trust in Christ so that they may join in the destiny of the church (Matt 28:19-20; Rom 9:1-3; 10:1, 11:13-14)
- We should not overly grieve for those who died and know Christ (1 Thes 4:13)