

The Master Plan Unveiled: Author's Study Guide & Leader Notes

HOW TO USE THESE NOTES

These notes are a companion to the questions at the end of each chapter. They are not an answer key, and the questions are not a quiz. For each question, the note shows the direction the question is pointing, says plainly what the chapter holds, and — where it helps a leader — adds a short word on how to guide the conversation.

Some questions are meant to fix a load-bearing idea clearly; the note names the intended direction. Others are meant to surface an honest tension with what a reader may have been taught; for those, the note does not hand you a verdict to deliver. It tells you what the tension is and what the chapter holds, so a reader can wrestle with it honestly. The wrestling is the reader's to do. The note is only a companion for it.

PROLOGUE

Overview. The Prologue stands before the story begins. It names what was already true before the first age: the God who was always love, the Father who wanted children, a cosmos already full of created beings, the way of zoe, the first refusal that set the anti-zoe operation running, and the whole map God was holding from the start — the destination certain, the path open.

Question 1. The chapter began with the observation that the Bible has more than one beginning, and that the New Testament writers know something that Genesis 1:1, by itself, does not say. Read 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 1:2, and 1 Peter 1:20 in the same sitting. What do these three passages assume was already happening before the world began? What would change, in how you read the rest of Scripture, if these passages are telling us something about a real *before* rather than only using a figure of speech?

Guided Response. This is an accent question — it asks the reader to notice the chapter's opening claim that the story has a beginning earlier than Genesis 1:1. All three passages speak of God acting before the world began: a purpose given before times eonian (2 Tim. 1:9), a promise made before the world began (Titus 1:2), a Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20). The direction to see is that these are not merely figures of speech. They assume God was already at work — already purposing, already promising, already holding the Lamb in readiness — before the world

we know existed. If that "before" is real, then Genesis 1:1 is the second beginning rather than the first, and the reader starts watching for the larger story the New Testament writers already knew.

Leader Note. The point is simply that there was a *before*. No one needs to settle what happened then — the chapters do that work. Listen for the reader catching the shift: the Bible's story is older and larger than Genesis 1:1 by itself.

Question 2. Read Ephesians 1:4–5 carefully. What does Paul say God did before the foundation of the world? What does he say God's purpose was in doing it? If the choosing was about children and the adoption was the good pleasure of God's will, what does that suggest about what the Father was holding in His mind before any of us existed?

Guided Response. Another accent question, pointing at the chapter's central pillar: the Father wanted children. Paul says God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestined us unto the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of His will (Eph. 1:4–5). The direction to notice is that before any of us existed, what God held in His mind was not first a system or a plan in the abstract — it was children, sons and daughters He wanted to be Father to. "The good pleasure of his will" is warm language; the choosing was about adoption, about family. The chapter says this plainly because so much theology states it too coolly. What the Father held before time was us.

Leader Note. The accent here is on the face of God's purpose — He wanted children, not pets or servants or subjects. Let the reader sit with how that warms the word "predestination" before question 3 takes it up directly.

Question 3. The chapter holds that predestination is of the design and the product, not of the path each child walks — and that free moral agency is the constitutive feature of what the design was for. The tradition you may have inherited may hold that predestination is of the path (some chosen, some not) or that predestination is of the destination (some saved, some not). Read Romans 8:29–30 together with Ephesians 1:4–5. Where do these passages appear to point in the same direction? Where might they leave room for the reading the chapter holds? What changes if predestination is read at the level of the design rather than at the level of each child's path?

Guided Response. This is a friction question, and one of the places where the book's reading meets a long and serious argument in the church. The tension is real: many readers have inherited a view in which predestination decides the path (who is chosen and who is not) or the destination (who is saved and who is lost). The chapter does not settle that argument by taking the Reformed or the Arminian side. It relocates the question. It holds that what God predestined is the design and the product — an

ecosystem built to bring forth matured creatures who freely love — not the particular path each child walks. On this reading, Romans 8:29–30 and Ephesians 1:4–5 both point at God's sure purpose for His children, and the freedom of each child is not a threat to that purpose but the very thing it was built to produce. The chapter's claim is that this dissolves the old quarrel rather than winning it: the Reformed are right that predestination is real and the end is secured; the Arminians are right that the creature's choice is its own; the two stop competing once you see they are speaking at different levels.

Leader Note. Do not let this become a Calvinism-versus-Arminianism debate to be won at the table. The question invites the reader to notice a third option, not to score a point. If a reader holds a strong inherited view, let them hold it and test it against the passages themselves — the useful question is "where might these verses leave room for reading predestination at the level of the design?" rather than "which camp is right?"

Question 4. The chapter holds that this life is one place in a longer curriculum, and that the Father's commitment to bringing every child home does not end at death. The tradition you may have inherited may hold that death is the final decision-point. What in the picture of God the chapter has named — the Father who held children in His mind before time, the design committed to producing matured creatures who freely love — sits comfortably with the inherited reading? What sits uncomfortably with it? Which reading seems to fit better with the Father pictured in this chapter, and why?

Guided Response. Another friction question, and for many readers the hardest one in the Prologue, because it touches what they have been taught about death and finality. The tension: the inherited view often holds that death is the last decision-point — that whatever is unfinished at death is fixed forever. The chapter holds something different: that this life is one place in a longer curriculum, and that the Father's commitment to bringing every child home does not stop at death. The book is not arguing the case here — the Prologue only sets the picture, and the later chapters carry it. What this question asks the reader to do is hold two things side by side: the God the chapter has just described — the Father who held children in His mind before time, who designed an ecosystem to produce matured creatures who freely love — and the inherited reading that death ends the story for those not yet home. The honest question is which reading fits the Father this chapter has painted.

Leader Note. This one can unsettle a reader, so let it be a wondering, not a verdict. The chapter has not yet shown how the longer curriculum works — that comes later; here it only asks whether the Father pictured in the Prologue seems like One who would stop at death. Let the reader notice the tension and carry it forward. No one has to resolve it tonight.

Question 5. The chapter holds that the cosmos was already full of created beings before the human curtain rose, and that some of them had already refused God before Adam was made. The tradition you may have inherited may have spoken of angels only briefly, as background. Read Job 38:4–7, Psalm 82:1, and Ephesians 6:12 in the same sitting. What do these passages take for granted about the creaturely orders that populate God's cosmos? What changes in how the rest of the story reads if these orders are part of what the Bible is actually saying?

Guided Response. This is mostly an accent question — it asks the reader to see one of the book's load-bearing settings: the cosmos was already full of created beings before the human story began. The three passages assume this without arguing it: the sons of God shouting for joy at the founding (Job 38:7), God judging in the divine council (Ps. 82:1), the principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph. 6:12). The direction to notice is that these orders are not background scenery the Bible mentions in passing — they are part of what Scripture is actually describing: a populated cosmos with assignments, with standing, and (for some) an already-running rebellion. The chapter's claim is that the human curtain rises on a stage already full, and that reading these orders as real furniture of the story changes how much of the rest of the Bible reads.

Leader Note. This is biblically grounded ground, not speculation, so a leader can hold it with confidence. The aim is recognition — "the Bible takes these orders for granted" — not a detailed map of the heavenly realms, which the book deliberately keeps modest.

Question 6. The chapter ends with the picture of God holding the whole map from before the first age, with the destination certain and the path open. Two images sit alongside each other: the designer of an ecosystem that works, and the master chess player whose every response is already prepared. Which image feels more familiar to you? Which one changes how you would read God's action through the long ages of suffering and apparent delay? What in Scripture appears to support each image?

Guided Response. An accent question that invites reflection rather than a single answer. The chapter offers two pictures of how God holds the whole map, working at different scales. The designer built an ecosystem — a machine, in the chapter's word — whose purpose is to bring forth matured creatures who freely love, and the machine cannot fail to produce what it was made for, because the One who designed it is the One sustaining it and the One committed to its outcome. The chess player reads the actual position the creatures' free choices have produced and acts through it — selecting, timing, placing his strength — without ever overriding a creature's will. The direction the chapter wants seen is that these are not rival pictures: the designer set the outcome, the chess player works every move along the way, and both are true at once. There is no single right answer to which image feels more familiar; that is the reader's own, and worth naming.

Leader Note. A good use of this question is to ask which image changes how a reader reads seasons of suffering and long delay. Both images hold that the outcome is secure; the chess-player image adds that God is actively at work inside the mess rather than waiting it out. Let readers say which one they needed to hear.

CHAPTER 1 — Age 1: The World That Then Was

Overview. Chapter 1 walks the first cosmos — the world before Adam. It reads Genesis 1:1 as the creation of a first cosmos, Genesis 1:2 as the condition that cosmos came into after a disruption, and Genesis 1:3 onward as God's recreation. It names the rebellion that broke out among the heavenly orders, the casting-down that followed, and the Spirit already hovering over the wreckage — the chess player making the move He had prepared.

Question 1. Read Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 again, slowly, as if you had never been taught how to read them together. What does the first verse say God did? What does the second verse describe? Now read Isaiah 45:18 alongside them — God *created it not in vain*, formed it *to be inhabited*. The word translated *in vain* is the same Hebrew word translated *without form* in Genesis 1:2. What does Isaiah seem to be saying God did not create? What does that suggest about the condition Genesis 1:2 is describing?

Guided Response. An accent question, asking the reader to read Genesis 1:1–2 freshly. The chapter's reading: verse 1 says God created the heavens and the earth; verse 2 describes a condition — "without form, and void" — that the earth came to be in, not necessarily the raw state of something just made. Isaiah 45:18 is the hinge: God "created it not in vain" and "formed it to be inhabited," and the word for "in vain" (*tohu*) is the very word Genesis 1:2 uses for "without form." So Isaiah seems to say God did not create the earth in the *tohu* condition. The direction to notice is that if God did not make it that way, then Genesis 1:2 is describing a condition the earth fell into — a disruption — rather than its first moment.

Leader Note. Keep this as a slow-reading exercise, not a doctrine to defend. The aim is for the reader to see the words actually on the page — *tohu* standing in both Genesis and Isaiah — and to feel the question those words raise.

Question 2. The chapter holds that the Greek word *katabolē* in passages like *before the foundation of the world* deserves to be heard with its casting-down force. The tradition you may have inherited has heard the phrase as *foundation* — the time before creation began. Read Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:20, and 2 Peter 3:6 in the same sitting. What does Paul say God did before *the foundation of the world*? What does

Peter say the Lamb was foreordained before? In 2 Peter 3:6, what does Peter describe as having been *overflowed with water* and *perished* — and how does his wording compare with the flood language that follows in the next verses? Where might these passages point, if the Greek word is heard with its casting-down force?

Guided Response. This question establishes a piece of the chapter's reading and touches a gentle friction with the way the phrase is usually heard. Most English Bibles render *katabolē* as "foundation" — "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4, 1 Pet. 1:20) — which sounds like "before creation began." The chapter asks the reader to hear the Greek with its plainer force: *kata*, "down," and *ballō*, "to cast" — a casting-down. The direction: if the writers were hearing "casting-down," then "before the foundation of the world" may be reaching back not to creation's first instant but to the catastrophe that ended the prior world. Second Peter 3:6 is the supporting witness — Peter says "the world that then was... perished," and he holds that perishing distinct from Noah's flood in the verses that follow.

Leader Note. This is a word-study point, so let the reader look at the word rather than take the conclusion on trust. It is enough that they see "foundation" is one rendering and "casting-down" is another the Greek allows. The chapter asks for an open ear, not a verdict against the footnotes in their Bible.

Question 3. Read Job 38:4-7 carefully. God is asking Job where he was at the founding of the earth. Who is present at that founding, according to verse 7? What do they do? What does this passage take for granted about the creaturely orders that existed before the human creature was made? What changes in how the rest of the story reads if these orders are part of what the Bible is actually saying?

Guided Response. An accent question, reinforcing the Prologue's populated-cosmos setting from one vivid passage. In Job 38:4–7 God asks Job where he was at the founding of the earth, and verse 7 gives the scene: "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." The direction to notice is that created beings were already present at the founding, and they rejoiced. The passage takes for granted — without pausing to explain — that the heavenly orders existed before the human creature and were there to witness and celebrate the work. The chapter's point is that this is the Bible's own assumption, not an exotic addition: once these orders are read as real parts of the story, a great deal of the rest of Scripture (the council, the powers, the rebellion) reads as the continuation of something Genesis already assumed.

Leader Note. There is a quiet note of hope here worth surfacing: there was a time when the whole cosmos was at peace and sang together. The rebellion came later. The cosmos did not begin broken.

Question 4. The chapter walks Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 as two angles on a single refusal — a being who was set in his place by God and whose heart was lifted up to

grasp at being a source himself. Read Ezekiel 28:11-17 and Isaiah 14:12-15 together. What does each passage describe? Where do they appear to be addressing the same shape from different angles? What does it mean, for the rest of the story, that the rebellion against God did not begin in a garden with two humans, but in the heavenly orders long before the human curtain rose?

Guided Response. An accent question naming the chapter's reading of the first rebellion. The chapter walks Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 as two angles on a single refusal. Ezekiel sees a cherub set in his place by God, walking among the stones of fire, whose heart was lifted up. Isaiah sees a "son of the morning" who said in his heart, "I will... I will be like the Most High," and was brought down. The direction: these are two languages for one move — the grasping at being a source rather than a recipient, the refusal of the creature's given place. The chapter reads them past the human kings they also address (Tyre and Babylon) to the shape of the original refusal behind them. Why it matters for the rest of the story: the rebellion against God did not begin in a garden with two humans. It began in the heavenly orders, long before the human curtain rose — so when the serpent appears in Eden, the reader already knows an operation was running.

Leader Note. Some readers have been taught these passages are only about the human kings. You need not deny that layer; the chapter reads the kings and the deeper refusal together. Let the reader see the "two angles, one shape" move rather than argue the verses line by line.

Question 5. The chapter holds that the recreation in Genesis 1:3-31 is not the original creation of the cosmos but God's strategic response to a catastrophe that had already happened. The tradition you may have inherited has read Genesis 1:3-31 as the only act of creation — God beginning from nothing and ordering it across six days. Read Genesis 1:1-3 again with both readings in mind. What does each reading commit you to about the relationship between verses 1, 2, and 3? Which reading does Isaiah 45:18 sit more comfortably with? Which one does Jeremiah 4:23-26 sit more comfortably with? Where do the two readings point in the same direction? Where do they point in different directions?

Guided Response. This is the chapter's sharpest friction question, because it asks the reader to weigh a reading of Genesis 1 that differs from what many were taught. The inherited reading hears Genesis 1:3-31 as the one act of creation — God beginning from nothing and ordering it across six days. The chapter holds that Genesis 1:3-31 is a recreation — God's strategic response to a catastrophe that had already fallen on a prior cosmos. The tension is about how verses 1, 2, and 3 relate. The inherited reading ties them tightly: verse 1 summarizes, verse 2 describes the raw beginning, verse 3 starts the ordering. The chapter's reading sets a real seam between verse 1 (an original creation) and verse 2 (a condition that creation came into), with verse 3 beginning the recovery. Two passages are offered to test the readings against: Isaiah 45:18 (God did not create it

tohu) and Jeremiah 4:23–26 (a prophet shown a fruitful place become wilderness, "without form, and void," in Genesis 1:2's own words). The chapter's claim is that these sit more easily with a disruption than with a from-nothing first state.

Leader Note. This is the question most likely to bump against a reader's settled view of Genesis, so handle it as an honest comparison, not a correction. The useful framing is the one the question itself uses: "what does each reading commit you to about verses 1, 2, and 3?" Let the reader weigh the two against Isaiah and Jeremiah themselves. The chapter is not asking anyone to give up a high view of Scripture — it is reading Scripture closely and asking the reader to look at the same words. If a reader is troubled, it is enough that they see why the chapter reads it this way. Agreement can wait.

Question 6. The chapter ends with the image of the chess-player making the move he had prepared — the Spirit hovering over the waters of the disrupted cosmos, the recreation already running, the new creature about to be placed in a garden the Father had been preparing. What does it mean for God's relationship to evil and disruption that the response was already in readiness before the disruption came? What does it not mean — that is, what would it be wrong to conclude from this picture?

Guided Response. An accent question with a built-in guardrail — it asks both what the picture means and what it would be wrong to conclude. The image: the Spirit hovering over the waters of the disrupted cosmos is the chess player making the move He had prepared. What it means is that God's response to the disruption was already in readiness before the disruption came; the catastrophe did not catch Him without an answer; the recreation was already running. What it does not mean — and this is the guardrail the question wants the reader to find — is that God authored or needed the disruption. A response held in readiness is not the same as a plan that required the evil. The chapter is careful here: the rebellion's wickedness was the creatures' own; God's strategic readiness to bring good out of it was His. Both are real, and neither cancels the other.

Leader Note. Help the reader name the wrong conclusion out loud — "God must have wanted the fall so He could fix it" — and see why the chapter does not say that. The point is a God who is never caught without an answer, not a God who needs the catastrophe.

CHAPTER 2 — Age 2: The Ancient World

Overview. Chapter 2 brings the new creature into the story — Adam formed of dust and divine breath, the layered person; Eden as the protected nursery of the long curriculum; the Fall as the first running of the operation's signature against a human

creature; the expulsion as mercy; the strange boundary-crossing of Genesis 6; and the Flood as an anthropological judgment, distinct from the cosmic disruption that ended Age 1.

Question 1. The chapter holds that the new creature is layered — body and soul and will and spirit, integrated into one person, with the heart as the integrating center where the dimensions come into coherence. Read Genesis 2:7 carefully. What two things does the verse name as constituting the new creature? Read Job 33:4 alongside it. What does Job's wording add to what Genesis is doing? What changes in how you think about being human if the dust and the breath together are what made the creature what he is — neither one alone, but the two integrated as one?

Guided Response. An accent question, opening the chapter's picture of what a human being is. Genesis 2:7 names two things together: dust ("the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground") and breath ("breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"). Job 33:4 adds that it is the breath of God that gives the creature his understanding. The direction to notice is that the human creature is neither dust alone nor breath alone, but the two integrated as one — body and soul and will and spirit held together, with the heart as the center where they come into coherence. The chapter's point is that this is what makes the human creature new: not a being of pure soul like the heavenly orders, not a body-creature like the animals, but the material and the spiritual made one. The layering matters because the dimensions do not all mature at the same rate — a truth the rest of the book leans on.

Leader Note. Keep this concrete: dust plus breath equals one whole creature. The aim is for the reader to feel that being human is an integration, not a soul wearing a body. The layers can be named simply — spirit, soul, will, body, heart — without anatomizing them.

Question 2. The chapter holds that Eden was the protected nursery of the long curriculum — a developmental beginning rather than a finished paradise that the Fall lost. The tradition you may have inherited may have held Eden as a state of perfect rest from which humanity fell. Read Genesis 2:15 — what is Adam told to do in the garden? Read Genesis 3:22-24 — what is at the entrance to Eden after Adam and Eve are sent out? Read Revelation 22:1-2 — what is at the destination at the end of the story? What changes between the beginning and the end? Where might Eden be pointing, if the work in the garden and the tree at the end are read as parts of the same long arc?

Guided Response. A friction question. Many readers inherited a picture of Eden as a finished paradise of perfect rest — the best state there was, lost in the Fall. The chapter holds something different: Eden was the protected nursery of a long curriculum, a developmental beginning rather than the destination. The tension shows up in the

details the question points to. Adam is given work in the garden (Gen. 2:15); a beginning has tasks, a finished paradise does not. After the expulsion, the way to the tree of life is kept (Gen. 3:22-24). And at the very end of the story, that same tree stands open in the city (Rev. 22:1-2). The chapter reads the garden's beginning and the city's open tree as two ends of one long arc: Eden was where the creature started, not where the creature was meant to stay. The Fall changed the route to the destination; it did not change the destination.

Leader Note. Don't argue a reader out of the paradise-lost picture; let the texts do the work. The useful move is to ask what changes between the garden's guarded tree and the city's open tree — the reader who sees an arc rather than only a loss has caught the chapter's reading.

Question 3. The chapter holds that the expulsion from Eden was mercy rather than punishment. Genesis 3:22-24 gives the reason explicitly. Read it slowly. What does the text say God is preventing? What would have happened, on the chapter's reading, if the new creature had eaten from the tree of life in his fallen state? Where might this leave the meaning of the cherubim and the flaming sword — as God closing a door, or as God keeping a way open?

Guided Response. Mostly an accent question — it asks the reader to read Genesis 3:22-24 and see what the text itself says God is doing. The reason is given plainly: lest the man "put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" — in his fallen state. The direction to notice is that the expulsion keeps the creature from being locked, forever, into the broken condition. On the chapter's reading, eating from the tree of life while fallen would have fixed the brokenness in place beyond repair. So the cherubim and the flaming sword are not only God shutting a door; they are God keeping a way open — holding the tree in reserve until the creature can come to it healed. The mercy is in the keeping.

Leader Note. This often reframes a verse readers have only ever heard as punishment. Let them sit with the "lest he... live for ever." The question underneath is whether a fallen creature living forever, unable to be healed, would have been mercy or its opposite.

Question 4. The chapter walks the Fall as the first running of a six-move signature against the new creature: the lie, grasping, shame, hiding, blame, and death. The tradition you may have inherited may have read the Fall primarily as Adam's failure of obedience to a command. Read Genesis 3:1-13 carefully. What does the serpent do first? What does the woman take? What do they reach for, and what do they reach away from? Where does the chapter's reading of a structural opposition with six specific moves sit alongside the inherited reading of the Fall as moral disobedience?

What does each reading commit you to about the nature of what was let into the new creature's experience?

Guided Response. A friction question. The inherited reading often hears the Fall mainly as Adam's failure to obey a command — a moral lapse. The chapter reads it as the first running, against a human creature, of a signature the rest of the book keeps recognizing: the lie ("ye shall not surely die"), the grasping (reaching to seize what was meant to be received), then shame, hiding, blame, and death. The tension is not that the disobedience reading is wrong — it is that it can be too small. The chapter's claim is that what happened in the garden was the same operation that had already run in the heavenly orders, now turned on the new creature, with its own specific shape. Reading it as a structure, not only a single bad choice, lets the reader recognize the same moves again later — in Cain, in Babel, in the empires — and see what is operating.

Leader Note. You need not set the two readings against each other. The chapter holds that it was disobedience and that the disobedience had a structure. Let the reader trace the six moves in Genesis 3 themselves; recognizing the pattern is the point, not winning an argument about it.

Question 5. The chapter reads the *sons of God* in Genesis 6:1-4 as heavenly beings transgressing into the flesh realm — a reading the New Testament writers seem to assume in 2 Peter 2:4-5 and Jude 6. The reading you may have inherited, particularly if your tradition stands in the line of Augustine, may have read the *sons of God* as the godly line of Seth marrying into the line of Cain. Both readings have been held by serious people across the church's long history. Read Genesis 6:1-4 alongside Job 1:6 and Job 38:7. What does the phrase *sons of God* refer to in those other passages? Read Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4-5 carefully — what do these passages name, and what do they connect it to? Where do the two readings point in the same direction? Where do they point in different directions? What does each reading commit you to about the kind of corruption the Flood was responding to?

Guided Response. This is the chapter's most contested question, and it deserves care, because serious believers have held both readings for a very long time. The inherited reading — especially in the Augustinian line — hears the "sons of God" in Genesis 6 as the godly line of Seth marrying into the line of Cain. The chapter reads the phrase as the New Testament writers seem to: heavenly beings transgressing into the flesh realm, a boundary-crossing that 2 Peter 2:4-5 and Jude 6 connect to angels who "kept not their first estate." The tension lives in the evidence the question points to: in Job 1:6 and 38:7 the same phrase, "sons of God," names the heavenly orders, not human family lines. The chapter takes that consistency seriously. The two readings commit you to different pictures of what the Flood was answering — a moral decline within humanity, or a corruption that came from outside it. The chapter holds the second, but it does not pretend the question is simple.

Leader Note. This is a genuine fork where good people differ; hold it as such. Name both readings fairly, let the reader weigh "sons of God" in Job against Genesis 6, and resist settling it at the table. The chapter's reading is offered, not imposed — a reader can keep wrestling and lose nothing.

Question 6. The chapter holds that the Flood is not the same kind of event as the Disruption that ended Age 1 — the Flood is an anthropological judgment rather than a cosmic one. Read 2 Peter 3:5-7 carefully. What does Peter describe in verse 6 as having *perished in the world that then was*? What does he describe in verse 7 as being *reserved unto fire*? How does the language of the Flood in the verses that follow (the rainbow, the covenant with Noah, the preservation of the human line through one family) compare with the language of the earlier perishing? Where might Peter be holding two different events at the same seam? What changes in how the long story reads if they are not the same event?

Guided Response. An accent question, drawing a distinction the chapter cares about. In 2 Peter 3:5-7 two events sit at the same seam: verse 6 looks back to "the world that then was" that "perished" — the cosmic disruption of Age 1 — while verse 7 speaks of the present heavens and earth "reserved unto fire." The direction to notice is that the Flood, which the surrounding story wraps in a rainbow, a covenant with Noah, and the preservation of the human line through one family, is a different kind of event from that earlier perishing. The chapter reads the Flood as an anthropological judgment — a judgment within the human story, cleansing a corrupted line while preserving the creature — not a cosmic catastrophe that ends a world. Keeping the two distinct keeps the long story's shape clear: Age 1 ended in cosmic disruption; Age 2's Flood is a judgment inside the ongoing human curriculum.

Leader Note. The handle that helps is "two events at one seam." Let the reader notice that Noah's flood comes wrapped in covenant and preservation language, where the earlier perishing does not. The point is the distinction, not a full theory of either event.

CHAPTER 3 — Age 3: The Age of This World

Overview. Chapter 3 walks the long middle of the story — the age we live in. The Law at Sinai as the writing-down of what was already inscribed; strategic providence worked through Joseph, Pharaoh, and Judas; the second Adam meeting in the wilderness the operation the first Adam met in the garden; the Cross as repair, revelation, and strategic masterwork at once; the crowd's choice of Barabbas; and the Resurrection as the bodily rising of a real man.

Question 1. The chapter holds that the Law given at Sinai is the codification, for one people in one place at one time, of what was already universally inscribed — the way of zoe that was operative in Abel, in Abraham, in Melchizedek, in Job, long before any written commandment. The tradition you may have inherited may have held the Law as the moment God instituted moral structure, with patriarchal-era figures living under a different (or no) moral structure beforehand. Read Genesis 4:3-5 (Cain and Abel's offerings, with no recorded prior command). Read Genesis 14:18 (Melchizedek as priest of the most high God, with no prior priesthood). Read Job 1:5 (Job offering burnt offerings continually). What do these passages take for granted about what was already operative before any written code? What changes in how you read Sinai if the Law is making readable what was already inscribed, rather than instituting what had not been there before?

Guided Response. A friction question. Many readers inherited a picture in which the Law at Sinai is the moment God first instituted moral structure — as if the patriarchs before it lived under no moral order, or a wholly different one. The chapter holds that the Law was the codification, for one people in one place at one time, of the way of zoe that had been inscribed in every creature from the beginning. The evidence the question points to is the patriarchal-era figures who already knew what to do without a written code: Abel bringing the right offering with no recorded command, Melchizedek a priest of the most high God with no prior priesthood, Job offering sacrifices continually. The direction: Sinai made readable, for one nation, what was already written into all. Reading it this way changes how Law and grace relate — the Law is not a different system from the way of zoe but its written form for a season.

Leader Note. The reader does not have to lower the Law to see this; the chapter holds it in high honor. The shift is from "Sinai began the moral order" to "Sinai wrote down an order already there." Let the reader test it against Abel, Melchizedek, and Job.

Question 2. The chapter holds that strategic providence is God acting in time through the freely-made choices of His creatures — selecting and using freely-formed material without overriding any creature's will. The tradition you may have inherited may have held one of two positions. One holds that God's sovereignty involves His direct determination of every creaturely choice (the Reformed sovereign-decree position). The other holds that God's role is essentially permissive, leaving the creature's choices outside His action (a strong Arminian position). The chapter walks three worked examples — Joseph's brothers, Pharaoh, and Judas. Read Genesis 50:20 (Joseph's words to his brothers). Read Romans 9:17 (Paul's reading of Pharaoh). Read Acts 2:23 (Peter's reading of the Cross). Where do these passages appear to hold the creature's wickedness and God's strategic action together at different levels? What does each passage commit you to about how God acts in time? Where do the inherited readings sit alongside the chapter's reading?

Guided Response. A friction question, and the chapter's fullest treatment of how God acts in time — the same question the Prologue raised, now worked through three hard cases. The two inherited positions sit at the poles: one holds that God directly determines every creaturely choice (the Reformed sovereign-decree position); the other holds that God's role is essentially permissive, leaving the creature's choices outside His action (a strong Arminian position). The chapter holds strategic providence between them: God selects, times, places, and uses freely-made choices without ever reaching inside to coerce a will. The three passages hold the two levels together — Joseph's "ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Gen. 50:20); Paul's reading of Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17); Peter's reading of the Cross as the "determinate counsel" worked through "wicked hands" (Acts 2:23). In each, the creature's wickedness is real and the creature's own; God's strategic use of it is also real and His. Both, at different levels, neither cancelling the other.

Leader Note. This is the place a group most wants to relitigate Calvinism and Arminianism — gently keep it from becoming that. The worked examples are the teachers. Ask where each passage holds the wickedness and the strategy together at different levels, rather than which system is correct.

Question 3. The chapter holds the second Adam in the wilderness as the answer to the first Adam in the garden — the same operation running the same kind of moves against a human creature, with the result reversed. Read Genesis 3:1-6 and Matthew 4:1-11 alongside each other. What does the operation offer in each scene? What does the creature take in the first scene? What does the Pattern Son refuse in the second? What does He hold to in each refusal? What does it mean for the rest of the curriculum that a human creature has now walked the path the first Adam did not walk?

Guided Response. An accent question. The chapter sets Matthew 4:1-11 against Genesis 3:1-6: the same operation, running the same kind of moves against a human creature, with the result reversed. In the garden the creature took what was offered and reached away from trust in the Father; in the wilderness the Pattern Son refused each offer and held to the word and the worship of God. The direction to notice is that a human creature has now walked the path the first Adam did not walk — from inside the same conditions, against the same operation. This matters for the whole curriculum: the road the first Adam failed has now been walked all the way through by one of us, and that opens the road for the rest.

Leader Note. Let the reader lay the two scenes side by side and see the mirror — what was offered, what was taken in the first, what was refused in the second. Keep the weight where the chapter puts it: not "now you must succeed where Adam failed," but "One of us already has — and that is what opens the road for the rest."

Question 4. The chapter holds three things at once at the Cross — repair, revelation, and strategic masterwork — and holds that all three are needed to see what the Cross actually did. The tradition you may have inherited may have held one of these aspects as the whole meaning of the Cross (the Cross as substitutionary repair, or the Cross as moral revelation of God's love, or the Cross as victory over the powers). Read 1 Peter 2:24 (the Cross as repair). Read 1 John 4:9-10 (the Cross as revelation of love). Read Colossians 2:15 (the Cross as the spoiling of the powers). What does each passage hold? Where might the three aspects point in the same direction? What does it commit you to about the Cross if you have to hold one aspect alone? What does it commit you to if all three are running together?

Guided Response. A friction question handled as a both/and rather than a contest. The chapter holds three things at the Cross at once, and holds that all three are needed to see what it did: repair (the Pattern Son bearing what the way of zoe requires in this realm — "who his own self bare our sins," 1 Pet. 2:24); revelation (the Cross showing the love of God — 1 John 4:9-10); and strategic masterwork (the spoiling of the powers — "having spoiled principalities and powers," Col. 2:15), the trap the operation sprang on itself. The tension the question names is that traditions have often elevated one of these as the whole meaning. The chapter's claim is that no single aspect carries the Cross alone; held together, they show the full work — sin repaired, love revealed, the operation undone, in one act.

Leader Note. This is less a disagreement to settle than a fullness to recover. If a reader holds one aspect strongly, affirm it and add the others rather than displacing theirs. The direction is "all three running together," not "yours is wrong."

Question 5. The chapter reads the crowd's choice of Barabbas as a form of communion gone wrong — a real togetherness gathered around the wrong center. The tradition you may have inherited may have read the Barabbas scene primarily as the people's rejection of the Messiah, without naming the kind of communion the rejection involved. Read Matthew 27:15-23 carefully. What does the text show the crowd doing together? What is the center the crowd is gathered around? What kind of unity is being expressed? Where might it be true that the crowd's togetherness is real and that the togetherness is the wrong shape? What does this suggest about how easily real communion can be inverted while still feeling like communion?

Guided Response. Mostly an accent question, deepening a scene readers know. The chapter reads the crowd's choice of Barabbas (Matt. 27:15-23) as a real togetherness gathered around the wrong center — communion gone wrong. The direction to notice is that the crowd is genuinely united; they act together, cry out together, there is real belonging in the moment. But the center they are gathered around is the release of a murderer and the death of the innocent. The chapter's name for this is parody-communion: a counterfeit togetherness that wears the look of communion while gutting

its life. The unsettling point is how easily real communion can be inverted while still feeling like communion — a thing the book names again wherever the operation gathers people around a false center.

Leader Note. The teaching value here is recognition: the crowd's unity was real, and that is exactly what made it dangerous. Help the reader see that "it felt like belonging" is not proof that something is good — communion has to be gathered around the right center.

Question 6. The chapter holds the Resurrection as the bodily rising of a particular Jewish man on a particular Sunday morning — and holds that the structural claims about new creation, firstfruits, and the inauguration of the new humanity all rest on the personal-particular event. The reading you may have inherited may treat the Resurrection primarily as a spiritual or symbolic reality, or may treat it as the bodily event but skip quickly to its theological meaning. Read Luke 24:36-43 (the broiled fish), John 20:24-29 (Thomas and the wounds), and 1 Corinthians 15:14-19 (Paul's argument that the Resurrection's bodiliness is load-bearing). What does each passage assume about what kind of event the Resurrection was? What changes in how you read the rest of the New Testament if the Resurrection is read first as the bodily rising of a real man, and only then as the inauguration of the new creation? What would be lost if the bodily event were treated as optional?

Guided Response. An accent question, and one the chapter wants held firmly. The reading it guards against treats the Resurrection mainly as a spiritual or symbolic reality, or grants the bodily event but hurries past it to the meaning. The chapter holds the Resurrection first as the bodily rising of a particular man on a particular morning: the risen Jesus eats broiled fish (Luke 24:36-43), shows Thomas the wounds (John 20:24-29), and Paul stakes everything on its bodiliness — "if Christ be not raised... ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:14-19). The direction: the structural claims the book makes — new creation, firstfruits, the inaugurated new humanity — all rest on the personal-particular event. If the bodily rising were optional, the structure built on it would have nothing under it.

Leader Note. This one is more steady than contested for most readers; the work is to keep the order right — bodily event first, then meaning. Let the broiled fish and the wounds do their plain work before any theology is drawn from them.

CHAPTER 4 — Age 4: The Regeneration / The Church Age

Overview. Chapter 4 walks the age opened at Pentecost — the age we are still inside. The way of zoe written now on the heart by the indwelling Spirit; the firstfruits squadron

as the leading edge of what every person becomes; the councils as the Church learning to say what was already revealed; the operation defeated at the Cross yet still working the field; counterfeit communion gathered around false centers; and the present as the work of occupying until He comes.

Question 1. The chapter holds that the great shift at Pentecost was not a change in the way of zoe but a change in where it is written — from tablets of stone outside the creature to the heart inside the creature, by the indwelling Spirit. The tradition you may have inherited may have read the new covenant mainly as the cancelling of the old law, or mainly as forgiveness, without naming this shift of location. Read Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:26-27, and Romans 8:3-4 together. What do these passages say is being changed, and what is being kept the same? What does it mean for your own life that the same way that stood outside Israel on stone is now being written inside you by the Spirit?

Guided Response. An accent question. The inherited reading often hears the new covenant mainly as the cancelling of the old law, or as forgiveness, without naming the shift the chapter cares about. The three passages name it together: the law written on the heart (Jer. 31:33); a new heart and God's Spirit put within (Ezek. 36:26-27); the righteousness of the law fulfilled in those who walk after the Spirit (Rom. 8:3-4). The direction to notice is that what changed at Pentecost was not the way of zoe but where it is written — moved from tablets of stone outside the creature to the heart inside, by the indwelling Spirit. The same way that once stood outside Israel on stone is now being written within the believer. It lands personally: the life you are being formed into is the very structure of God's own life, written in you from the inside.

Leader Note. The accent is on location, not cancellation. Help the reader feel that the Spirit is not enforcing an external rule but writing God's own way into them. The same way; a new place; a new power to live it.

Question 2. The chapter holds that the firstfruits squadron is real and distinct, and at the same time is the leading edge of what every human person eventually becomes — not an elite set permanently above the rest. The tradition you may have inherited may have read the overcomers and firstfruits as a closed company, or may have dropped the firstfruits-distinct-company language entirely as a kind of elitism. Read Romans 11:16 (the firstfruit and the lump), 1 Corinthians 15:22-23 (each in his own order), and Philippians 3:12-14 (Paul's "not as though I had already attained"). Where do these passages hold "first" and "all" together? What does Paul's own posture protect the doctrine from becoming? What changes if the firstfruits are the front edge of one harvest rather than a separate harvest?

Guided Response. A friction question that has to hold two truths at once. Two inherited readings pull apart here: one treats the overcomers and firstfruits as a closed

company permanently above the rest; the other drops the firstfruits-distinct-company language altogether as a kind of elitism. The chapter holds both halves the texts hold: the firstfruits are real and distinct, and they are the leading edge of what every human person eventually becomes — not a class apart. Romans 11:16 ("if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy") keeps the first sheaf and the whole field as one crop; 1 Corinthians 15:22-23 keeps "all" and "every man in his own order" together; Paul's own "not as though I had already attained" (Phil. 3:12-14) keeps the doctrine from hardening into a badge. The direction: the firstfruits are the front edge of one harvest, not a separate harvest. Hold both and the elitism falls away without the company dissolving.

Leader Note. If a reader leans toward "special few," point them to the lump that is holy because the firstfruit is. If a reader recoils from any distinct company, point them to "every man in his own order." The chapter's gift is holding both; let the reader feel the tension resolve rather than choosing a side.

Question 3. The chapter holds that the doctrines did not become true at the councils — they became sayable there; the Church was learning to put into words what had already been revealed in the Son and the Spirit. The tradition you may have inherited may have read the patristic period either as the Church finally arriving at the truth, or as the Church burying the simple gospel under philosophy. Read Acts 2:33 (the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in one sentence) and then consider that the Council of Nicaea came almost three hundred years later. What was already present at Pentecost that the council later put into words? What changes in how you hold the creeds if they are the Church's careful speech about a reality that was there from the beginning, rather than the reality itself?

Guided Response. A friction question with a gentle resolution. Two inherited readings sit at the poles: that the patristic councils were where the Church finally arrived at the truth, or that they were where the Church buried the simple gospel under philosophy. The chapter holds a third thing: the doctrines did not become true at the councils — they became sayable there. The reality was already present. At Pentecost the Father, the Son, and the Spirit stand together in one sentence (Acts 2:33), almost three hundred years before Nicaea put the relation into careful words. The direction: the creeds are the Church's careful speech about a reality that was there from the beginning — neither the reality itself nor a corruption of it. This is the book's whole way of reading doctrine: truths come into clear view when the age requires them, having been real all along.

Leader Note. This frees a reader from two anxieties: that the creeds invented the faith, and that the creeds betrayed it. The councils named what was already given. Let the reader hold Acts 2:33 next to Nicaea's distance in time and feel the point.

Question 4. The chapter holds a paradox at the center of the whole age: the operation was defeated at the Cross and is still at work in the field. The tradition you may have inherited may have held one side without the other — either that the powers are simply finished and no longer a real factor, or that the powers are so strong that the Cross's victory feels merely future. Read Colossians 2:15 (the powers spoiled at the Cross) and Ephesians 6:12 (the wrestling that still goes on). How can both be fully true? What does it change in how you live this age if the enemy you wrestle is a defeated enemy working ground he no longer truly holds?

Guided Response. A friction question that asks the reader to hold a paradox. Two inherited halves pull apart: that the powers are simply finished and no longer a real factor, or that they are so strong the Cross's victory feels merely future. The chapter holds both sides of what Scripture says: the powers were spoiled at the Cross (Col. 2:15), and yet the wrestling still goes on (Eph. 6:12). The direction to notice is that both are fully true at once — the enemy is a defeated enemy still working ground he no longer truly holds. The decisive move has been made; the mopping-up has not finished. This changes how the age is lived: the believer wrestles a real but beaten foe, not an open question. The outcome is not in doubt; the field is still contested.

Leader Note. Help the reader name both truths without softening either. "Defeated and still dangerous" is not a contradiction; it is the shape of this age. The pastoral weight is confidence without complacency.

Question 5. The chapter holds that the operation still knows how to gather people — that it can build a real togetherness around a false center, a counterfeit of the very communion the gospel offers. The reading you may have inherited may treat counterfeit religion mainly as false belief, without naming the genuine sense of belonging it can create. Read Exodus 32:1-6 (the people gathered, feasting and worshipping — around a golden calf) and Acts 19:23-34 (a whole city united in one long cry for Diana). What is real about the togetherness in each scene? What is the center it gathers around? What kind of unity is being expressed? Where might it be true that the belonging is genuine and the center is wrong — and what does that suggest about how carefully real communion has to be guarded?

Guided Response. Mostly an accent question, sharpening a pattern the book has been tracing. The reading it corrects treats counterfeit religion mainly as wrong belief, without naming the genuine belonging it can create. The chapter holds that the operation still knows how to gather people — to build a real togetherness around a false center. The two scenes show it: the people gathered, feasting and worshipping around the golden calf (Exod. 32:1-6); a whole city united for hours in one cry for Diana (Acts 19:23-34). The direction to notice is that the belonging in both is real — and that is exactly the danger. A counterfeit of communion can satisfy the hunger for togetherness while gathered around the wrong center. The chapter's point is how carefully real

communion has to be guarded, because the felt warmth of belonging is not by itself a sign that the center is true.

Leader Note. The recognition to aim for: real belonging can form around the wrong thing. Help the reader feel why "but it felt like community" is not enough — the test is the center, not the warmth.

Question 6. The chapter holds that we are inside this age, not reading about a finished one — and that the waiting is not passive but is the work of occupying until He comes. The tradition you may have inherited may have treated the present either as a holding pattern to be endured until the end, or as a time with no particular shape at all. Read Acts 1:7-8 (the times are the Father's; you shall be witnesses), Luke 19:13 (occupy till I come), and 1 Corinthians 11:26 (proclaiming His death till He come). What does each passage give the waiting community to do? What changes in how you live this week if the waiting is itself the work, and you are inside the age the chapter has been describing?

Guided Response. An accent question, landing the chapter in the reader's own present. The inherited readings it gently corrects treat the present either as a holding pattern to be endured or as a stretch of time with no particular shape. The chapter holds that we are inside this age, not reading about a finished one, and that the waiting is itself work. The passages give the waiting community its task: the times are the Father's, and "ye shall be witnesses" (Acts 1:7-8); "occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13); proclaiming His death "till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26). The direction to notice is that the waiting is active — witness, occupation, proclamation — the work of the age, not a pause before it. This lands on the reader's week: the time between is not empty; it is given.

Leader Note. Bring this one home to the ordinary week. The question is not "how do we pass the time until the end?" but "what is the waiting itself for?" Let the reader name one concrete way the waiting is work in their own life.

CHAPTER 5 — Age 5: The Restoration of All Things (The Second Advent)

Overview. Chapter 5 walks the turn in the story — the return of the King. The meeting in the air as a royal welcome rather than an escape; the first resurrection as the first of an order; creation waiting for the sons of God to be revealed; the enemy defeated, long at work, now bound, and loosed once more for a moment; the earth healed through its restored stewards under the one Mediator; and the Second Advent as the change of conditions that opens the real work rather than closing the book.

Question 1. The chapter holds that when the saints "meet the Lord in the air," they are going out to welcome a returning King and coming back down with Him — not being carried away from the earth. The tradition you may have inherited may have read this moment mainly as a removal, a being-taken-up-and-out. Read Acts 1:11 (He returns the same way He left — coming down) and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (the descent, the meeting, "so shall we ever be with the Lord"). If He is coming down, and they go up to meet Him, which direction does the whole company end up moving? What changes in how you picture His coming if the meeting is a welcome rather than an escape?

Guided Response. A friction question, because many readers inherited this moment as a removal — a being-caught-up-and-out of the world. The chapter reads it as a royal welcome. Acts 1:11 says He returns the same way He left — coming down. First Thessalonians 4:16-17 has the Lord descend, the saints rise to meet Him, and "so shall we ever be with the Lord." The question the chapter presses is simple: if He is coming down, and they go up to meet Him, which direction does the whole company end up moving? The picture is a city going out to welcome a returning King and coming back in with Him — not the King collecting His people to take them away. The direction to notice is that the meeting is a welcome, not an escape; the King is being received back to the realm He came to restore.

Leader Note. This gently unsettles a familiar picture, so let the geometry do it: down, then up to meet, then which way home? Don't make it a fight about rapture systems; let the reader follow the direction of travel and notice where everyone ends up.

Question 2. The chapter holds that the first resurrection is the first of an order — a firstfruits company raised first, with the rest of the harvest still to come — and that this company is the leading edge of what every person eventually becomes, not an elite fenced off from the rest. Read 1 Corinthians 15:22-23 ("every man in his own order"), Revelation 20:6 (the first resurrection), and Romans 11:16 (the firstfruit and the lump). What does the word first imply about what comes after? How do these passages keep "first" and "all" together rather than pitting them against each other?

Guided Response. An accent question, and the return of the firstfruits reading at the moment it arrives. The chapter holds that the first resurrection is exactly that — the first of an order, a firstfruits company raised first with the rest of the harvest still to come, and the leading edge of what every person eventually becomes rather than an elite fenced off from the rest. The word first does the work: "every man in his own order" (1 Cor. 15:22-23) implies an order, with more to follow; "the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:6) implies others after it; the holy firstfruit makes the whole lump holy (Rom. 11:16). The direction to notice is how these passages keep "first" and "all" together rather than against each other. First does not mean only.

Leader Note. Tie this back to the firstfruits squadron the earlier chapters introduced. The key word is first — let the reader hear what it implies about what comes after. The company is real, and the destination is one.

Question 3. The chapter holds that creation has been waiting, most of all, for the sons of God to be revealed — because their revealing is the beginning of creation's own release. Read Romans 8:19-22 slowly. Why would the ground, the animals, the whole non-human world be waiting on the manifestation of people? What does this say about the kind of creature a human being was made to be, and about what our brokenness has done to more than just ourselves?

Guided Response. An accent question, and one of the book's tender ones. Romans 8:19-22 has the whole creation waiting, groaning, for the manifestation of the sons of God. The direction to notice is why the ground, the animals, the whole non-human world would be waiting on the revealing of people. The chapter's reading: the human creature was made to be creation's steward — the place where God's life reaches the rest of the world — so the brokenness of the steward broke more than the steward, and the healing of the steward begins creation's own release. This says something about the kind of creature a human being is: not a guest in the world but a keeper of it, whose maturity and whose ruin both reach far beyond himself.

Leader Note. Let the reader feel the weight of being waited on by creation. The point is not guilt but vocation — the human creature matters to the whole world's healing. Sit with "why would the ground be waiting on people?" before drawing conclusions.

Question 4. The chapter holds two things about the enemy that must be held together: he was defeated at the Cross, he has gone on working the field through this whole age, and he is now bound from working it at all — yet even this binding is not his final end. Read Colossians 2:15 (defeated at the Cross), Revelation 20:1-3 (bound for the long day), and Revelation 20:7 (loosed once more for a moment afterward). What does it tell you about what the enemy actually is that, given one more chance at the very end, he does the same thing again? What kind of power has nothing new to offer?

Guided Response. An accent question that gathers the enemy's whole arc into one view. The chapter holds several things together: he was defeated at the Cross (Col. 2:15), he has gone on working the field through this age, he is now bound from working it at all (Rev. 20:1-3), and even this binding is not his final end — he is loosed once more for a moment (Rev. 20:7). The direction the question presses is what it tells you about what the enemy actually is that, given one last chance at the very end, he does the same thing again. The chapter's reading: a power with nothing of its own, able only to repeat the one move it has ever had. The loosing is not a new threat; it is a final exposure.

Leader Note. Don't let the group get tangled in the mechanics of the binding and the loosing; the arc's point is pastoral, not chronological. Ask what changes in how a reader faces the enemy this week, knowing the outcome was settled at the Cross and the final act only exposes what he always was.

Question 5. The chapter holds that the earth is healed through its restored stewards — and at the same time insists that Christ alone is the one Mediator, and the matured company are only the hands His reign works through. Read 1 Timothy 2:5 (one Mediator) alongside Romans 8:19-21 (creation set free through the children of God) and Colossians 1:20 (all things reconciled through Him). How can creatures truly share in His work without becoming a second savior beside Him? Where is the line, and why does the chapter guard it so carefully?

Guided Response. A friction question the chapter itself guards carefully. It holds two things that could seem to pull apart: the earth is healed through its restored stewards (creation set free through the children of God, Rom. 8:19-21; all things reconciled through him, Col. 1:20), and at the same time Christ alone is the one Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). The tension the question raises is real: how can creatures truly share in His work without becoming a second savior beside Him? The chapter's answer holds the line firmly — the restored stewards are not a second set of saviors; they are the hands His reign works through. The work is His; they are how it reaches the ground. The direction to notice is that sharing in Christ's work and replacing Christ's mediation are not the same thing, and the chapter will not blur them.

Leader Note. This is a place to hold a guardrail, not open a debate. If a reader worries the stewards are being made into mediators, point to the chapter's own line: the work is His, they are how it reaches the ground. One Mediator; many hands.

Question 6. The chapter holds that the Second Advent is the change of conditions, not the finished work — the earth begins to breathe, but is not yet made whole. The tradition you may have inherited may have treated the return as the end of the story, the last page. Read Acts 3:21 — its language of "the times of restitution of all things" — and notice the word begins running all through this chapter. What is different about living toward a return that opens the real work rather than closing the book? What would it change in how you wait if what you are waiting for is a beginning?

Guided Response. A friction question, gently posed. Many readers inherited the return as the end of the story — the last page. The chapter holds it as the change of conditions, not the finished work: the earth begins to breathe, but is not yet made whole. The language the question points to is Acts 3:21 — "the times of restitution of all things" — with the word begins running all through the chapter. The direction to notice is that the return opens the real work rather than closing the book. This changes how a reader

waits: if what you are waiting for is a beginning, the long ages after the return are not an anticlimax but the place where the restitution of all things actually unfolds.

Leader Note. The reorientation here is from "the end" to "the beginning of the end's work." Ask the reader how it would change their waiting to be waiting for a door opening rather than a book closing. The hope gets larger, not smaller.

CHAPTER 6 — Age 6: The Thousand Years (The Millennial Reign)

Overview. Chapter 6 walks the long day — the thousand-year reign. The matured company reigning as servants in the form of the King; the nations learning the way of zoe by watching it lived rather than having it forced; the freedom of the coming preserved even with the King in plain sight; the wolf and the lamb as the sign of changed conditions; the enemy loosed at the end to show he never had anything of his own; and the long day as a threshold, not the last page.

Question 1. The chapter holds that the matured company reign the way the King reigns — as servants, not as conquerors lifted over a lower order. The picture you may have inherited may have imagined the millennium as the triumph of the winners: thrones and crowns and a great many to rule over. Read Luke 22:24-27, Philippians 2:5-8, and Matthew 20:25-28. What does Jesus say greatness actually is in His kingdom? If those made like Him reign in the same form, what would such a reign look like from the inside of a town where they live? What is the difference between a ruler who is served and a ruler who serves?

Guided Response. An accent question correcting a familiar picture. Many imagine the millennium as the triumph of the winners — thrones, crowns, a great many to rule over. The chapter holds that the matured company reign the way the King reigns: as servants, not as conquerors lifted over a lower order. The passages give Jesus's own definition of greatness in His kingdom — the greatest is the one who serves (Luke 22:24-27; Matt. 20:25-28), the mind of Christ who emptied Himself and took the form of a servant (Phil. 2:5-8). The direction to notice is that those made like Him reign in His form. From inside a town where they live, such a reign would look like service, teaching, presence — not domination. The chapter's distinction: the difference between a ruler who is served and a ruler who serves.

Leader Note. Ask the reader to picture the reign from inside an ordinary town under it — what would it actually feel like? The point is that the matured ones reign in the King's shape, and the King washed feet. Greatness here is service made visible.

Question 2. The chapter holds that the nations learn the way of zoe by watching it lived, not by having it forced on them. The picture you may have inherited may have read the millennium as a kingdom imposed from above, or as law laid down by decree. Read Isaiah 2:2-3 and Micah 4:1-2 slowly. Who goes up the mountain, and who sends them? What does it mean that the people themselves say, "Come ye, and let us go up... he will teach us... and we will walk"? What is the difference between a law that is enforced and a way that is shown?

Guided Response. A friction question, gently posed. The inherited picture often reads the millennium as a kingdom imposed from above, or law laid down by decree. The chapter holds that the nations learn the way of zoe by watching it lived. The prophets' own pictures press the point: the nations are not marched to the mountain — they stream to it, saying to one another, "Come ye, and let us go up... he will teach us... and we will walk" (Isa. 2:2-3; Mic. 4:1-2). The direction to notice is the difference between a law that is enforced and a way that is shown. The teaching goes forth and the walking follows, and both are freely done. Even in the reign, God draws rather than compels.

Leader Note. Let the "we will" running through Isaiah do the work — the people send themselves up the mountain. The contrast to hold is enforced law versus shown way. The reign persuades; it does not conscript.

Question 3. The chapter holds that even in a healed world, with the King in plain sight, no one is forced into the life of zoe — they are drawn, taught, and they come freely. The picture you may have inherited may have assumed that once the King is visibly reigning, choice is over and belief is simply compelled. Read Isaiah 2:3 again (the "we will" running all through it) and Revelation 22:17 ("whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"). Why would God still leave the coming free when He could simply compel it? What does that tell you about the kind of family He has wanted from the very beginning?

Guided Response. A friction question touching one of the book's deepest commitments. The inherited assumption is that once the King is visibly reigning, choice is effectively over — belief is simply compelled by the sheer fact of His presence. The chapter holds that even in a healed world, with the King in plain sight, no one is forced into the life of zoe; they are drawn, taught, and they come freely. Isaiah's "we will" runs all through the vision; Revelation 22:17 keeps it open to the very end — "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The question worth sitting with is why God would still leave the coming free when He could simply compel it. The chapter's answer is the whole book's answer: He has wanted, from the beginning, children who freely love Him, and a love that could be compelled would not be that.

Leader Note. This connects straight back to the Prologue's "love requires freedom." Ask why God refuses to compel even when He easily could. The reader who sees that the freedom is the point — not an obstacle to it — has the chapter's heart.

Question 4. The chapter holds that Isaiah's pictures of the wolf and the lamb are not sentiment or decoration but the sign of a real change in the conditions of the world. The reading you may have inherited may have taken them either as merely literal animal scenes or as mere poetry. Read Isaiah 11:6-9 and 65:25. What reason does Isaiah give for the creatures no longer hurting and destroying ("for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD")? Is he describing a few tamed animals, or a world whose deepest conditions have been changed?

Guided Response. An accent question about how to read a famous image. The chapter holds that Isaiah's wolf and lamb are neither sentiment nor mere poetry, but the sign of a real change in the world's conditions. The reason Isaiah gives is the hinge: the creatures no longer hurt or destroy "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD" (Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25). The direction to notice is that this is not a few tamed animals and not a decorative metaphor — it is a world whose deepest conditions have been changed, so that the old order of predation and fear gives way. The knowledge of the LORD filling the earth is the cause; the peace among the creatures is the visible sign of it.

Leader Note. Steer between the two thin readings — "just literal animals" and "just poetry." The reason clause is the key: the change in the creatures follows a change in the whole world. Let the reader weigh what kind of change could reach that far.

Question 5. The chapter holds that the enemy is let loose one last time at the end of the long day — not because he has found new power, but to show in the open that he never had anything of his own. Read Revelation 20:7-10. Given a thousand years bound and then one more chance, what does he do? What kind of power is it that, offered everything, can only do the same old thing again? Why might it matter, for every creature who comes after, that the question "could it have gone some other way?" is answered here once and for all?

Guided Response. An accent question, and a sober one. The chapter holds that the enemy is let loose one last time at the end of the long day — not because he has found new power, but to show in the open that he never had anything of his own. The question the chapter presses: given a thousand years bound and then one more chance, what does he do? He does the same thing again. The direction to notice is what kind of power that is — one that, offered everything, can only repeat its single move. Why it matters for every creature who comes after is that the question "could it have gone some other way?" is answered here, once and for all, in the open. The loosing is a final demonstration, not a battle in doubt.

Leader Note. The point is exposure, not suspense. Help the reader see that the enemy's repetition is the proof of his emptiness — and that settling the question in the open matters for everyone who comes later. Keep it sober; the chapter does not make a spectacle of it.

Question 6. The chapter holds that the long day is not the last page but a threshold — the guarded tree of Eden is behind, the Cross has built the bridge, and the tree in the city stands open still ahead. The picture you may have inherited may have treated the millennium as the end of the story. Read Genesis 3:24 (the way to the tree kept) and Revelation 22:2 (the tree in the city, its leaves for the healing of the nations). What was the first tree guarded against, and what has changed so that the last tree stands open? What does it do to your sense of the whole story to find that even the thousand years is leading somewhere further on?

Guided Response. A friction question, gently posed. The inherited picture often treats the millennium as the end of the story. The chapter holds it as a threshold: the guarded tree of Eden is behind, the Cross has built the bridge, and the tree in the city stands open still ahead. The two passages mark the arc — the way to the tree kept (Gen. 3:24) and the tree in the city, its leaves for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2). The direction to notice is what changed between the guarded tree and the open one, and that even the thousand years is leading somewhere further on. The long day is not the destination; it is the next-to-last stretch of a road that opens onto more.

Leader Note. This is the three-trees arc again, one tree short of its end. Ask what had to change for the guarded tree to become the open tree. The reader who feels the story still moving past the millennium has caught it.

CHAPTER 7 — Age 7: The New Heavens and New Earth

Overview. Chapter 7 walks the homecoming. The great white throne as a seam where the rest of the harvest is raised, not a final courtroom of fixed fates; the new heaven and new earth as this creation made new; the world healed through its restored keepers under the one Mediator; the three harvests gathered each in its season; the fire that burns the refusal and not the creature, and the freely-chosen return; and the long story ending at the third tree — which opens onto one more day.

Question 1. The chapter holds that the great white throne is not the final courtroom where each person's eternity is fixed, once and for all, into one of two settled fates, but a seam — the place where the rest of the harvest is raised and where each creature stands at the point its long journey has reached. Read Revelation 20:11-12. What are the books said to hold? Is a true record of where someone stands

the same thing as a sentence on where they will end? What changes in your reading if the throne is a threshold the rest of the harvest crosses rather than a door shut for good?

Guided Response. A major friction question, because it touches what many readers have most firmly inherited. The familiar picture is the great white throne as the final courtroom, where each person's eternity is fixed once and for all into one of two settled fates. The chapter holds it as a seam — the place where the rest of the harvest is raised and where each creature stands at the point its long journey has reached. The question's own pressure is precise: the books are said to hold a record (Rev. 20:11-12) — and a true record of where someone stands is not the same thing as a sentence on where they will end. The direction to notice is the difference between a threshold the harvest crosses and a door shut for good. The chapter reads the throne as the former. This is offered into a strong inherited reading, so it asks for an open hearing, not a quick verdict.

Leader Note. Tread gently; for many readers this verse carries decades of teaching. Do not argue them out of it. Let the distinction the question draws — a record of where someone stands versus a final sentence — sit with them. The chapter's reading can be heard without being forced.

Question 2. The chapter holds that the new heaven and new earth are this creation made new — renewed and healed — not a different world built to replace one that was thrown away. The picture you may have inherited may have imagined the whole world destroyed and another one made from scratch. Read Revelation 21:1-3 and 2 Peter 3:13. What does Peter say the new earth is for? When the great voice announces that the tabernacle of God is with men, which way does God move — up and away, or down to where His creatures already are? What is the difference between a world replaced and a world made new?

Guided Response. A friction question, gently posed. The inherited picture often imagines the whole world destroyed and a different one built from scratch. The chapter holds that the new heaven and new earth are this creation made new — renewed and healed, not replaced. The passages point the direction: when the great voice announces that "the tabernacle of God is with men" (Rev. 21:1-3), God moves down to where His creatures already are, rather than up and away; and Peter's new earth is one "wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13) — a world set right, not discarded. The direction to notice is the difference between a world replaced and a world made new. The God of this story comes down to dwell; He does not abandon the work of His hands.

Leader Note. The hinge is the direction God moves — down, to dwell. Ask the reader which way the great voice in Revelation 21 has God going. A world made new honors the creation God called good; a world replaced quietly writes it off.

Question 3. The chapter holds that the whole created world is healed through the healing of the very people who were given its care, and that this healing is Christ's own work reaching the ground through His restored keepers — never a second salvation set up beside His. Read Romans 8:19-22, 1 Timothy 2:5, and Colossians 1:20. What is the creation said to be waiting for? Why would the healing of the world run home along the same road its wound once ran down? And what keeps the restored keepers from being mistaken for saviors in their own right?

Guided Response. A friction question with the same guardrail Chapter 5 set. The chapter holds that the whole created world is healed through the healing of the very people given its care, and that this healing is Christ's own work reaching the ground through His restored keepers — never a second salvation beside His. Creation waits for the revealing of the children of God (Rom. 8:19-22); all things are reconciled through him (Col. 1:20); there is one Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). The question's insight is that the healing runs home along the same road the wound ran down — the creature's ruin reached creation through the steward, so the creature's healing reaches creation the same way. What keeps the restored keepers from being mistaken for saviors is the line the chapter holds: the work is His; they are how it reaches the ground.

Leader Note. As in Chapter 5, hold the guardrail rather than debating it. The image that helps: the healing runs home down the same road the wound ran down. One Mediator; restored hands.

Question 4. The chapter holds that the dead are raised in three harvests — barley, then wheat, then grape — each gathered in its own season, the way Israel's year brought in its crops. The picture you may have inherited may have imagined a single raising, or a sorting of the saved from the lost. Read 1 Corinthians 15:22-24 (the "every man in his own order"). Who are the "all" in "in Christ shall all be made alive"? If the harvests come in their seasons, what does that say about the ones gathered last — are they a different crop, or the same crop ripening more slowly?

Guided Response. An accent question naming the harvest structure plainly. The inherited picture often imagines either a single raising, or a sorting of the saved from the lost. The chapter holds that the dead are raised in three harvests — barley, then wheat, then grape — each gathered in its own season, after the pattern of Israel's farming year. The passage anchors it: "in Christ shall all be made alive... every man in his own order" (1 Cor. 15:22-24). The "all" who are made alive in Christ are the same "all" who died in Adam. The direction to notice is what the seasons imply about the ones gathered last: they are not a different crop but the same crop ripening more slowly. The harvests come home in their order; the home they come to is one.

Leader Note. The image carries the meaning: one field, three harvests, each in its season. Ask whether the late-gathered grape is a different crop or the same crop ripening slower. The destination is one; only the timing differs.

Question 5. The chapter holds that the fire the last company passes through is not endless torment and not the snuffing-out of the creature, but God's own love burning away everything that keeps a creature from being able to come home — and that the coming home, when it comes, is freely chosen, never forced. The picture you may have inherited may have been a fire with no end and no purpose, or else a love that finally overrides the will. Read Hebrews 12:29 (our God a consuming fire) and Luke 15:11-24 (the prodigal). What does the fire burn — the creature, or the refusal in the creature? In the story Jesus told, who actually makes the journey home, and what is the father doing while the son is still a great way off? Why might God want a freely given love badly enough to wait ages for it?

Guided Response. A major friction question, and one to handle with real care, because it meets two very different inherited pictures. Some readers inherited a fire with no end and no purpose; others, in reaction, a love that finally overrides the will. The chapter holds neither. The fire is God's own consuming love (Heb. 12:29), and what it burns is not the creature but the refusal in the creature — it lasts as long as the refusal lasts and not a moment longer. And the coming home, when it comes, is freely chosen, never forced: the prodigal rises and walks home himself, while the father is already running to meet him (Luke 15:11-24). The direction the question presses: what does the fire burn — the creature, or the refusal? Who makes the journey home in the story Jesus told? Why might God want a freely given love badly enough to wait ages for it? The chapter's restraint matters here — it does not draw a calendar of the journey; it holds what is given.

Leader Note. This is the most pastorally charged question in the book; let it be a wondering, not a verdict to deliver. Stay with the prodigal — who walks, and what the father is doing while the son is still far off. If a reader is unsettled, it is enough that they see what the chapter holds and why; no one needs to settle eternity at the table tonight.

Question 6. The chapter holds that the long story ends at the third tree — the guarded tree of Eden behind us, the tree of the Cross as the bridge across the distance, the tree in the city standing open at last — and that even this ending opens onto one more day. Read Genesis 3:24 (the way to the tree kept), John 12:32 (lifted up, to draw all), and Revelation 22:1-2 (the open tree, its leaves for the healing of the nations). What was the first tree guarded against, and what has changed so that the last tree can stand open? When every lost thing has been brought home and God is "all in all," what could a day beyond even that be for?

Guided Response. An accent question that gathers the whole arc. The chapter holds that the long story ends at the third tree — the guarded tree of Eden behind us, the tree of the Cross as the bridge across the distance, the tree in the city standing open at last — and that even this ending opens onto one more day. The passages mark the arc: the way to the tree kept (Gen. 3:24); the Pattern Son lifted up to draw all (John 12:32); the open tree, its leaves for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:1-2). The direction to notice is what changed so that the last tree can stand open where the first was guarded — and that when every lost thing has been brought home and God is "all in all," there is still a day beyond even that. The closing piece will walk into it.

Leader Note. This is the three-trees arc complete, and a doorway to the Eighth Day. Ask what had to happen for the guarded tree to become the open one — the bridge in the middle is the answer. Then let the question's last note land: a day beyond even "all in all."

THE EIGHTH DAY — A Final Reflection

Overview. The closing piece steps inside the home the ages were for. It is not a new age but the settled home on the far side of the seven — the eighth day, where the matured ones freely live what all the ages grew in them. Its three Final Reflection questions are different in kind from the chapter pages: they are not teaching questions but personal ones, turning the whole book toward the reader's own present life. They are meant to be met quietly, the way the closing piece intends, rather than worked over. The notes below are lighter for that reason — they protect the landing rather than steer it.

Question 1. The home is not a place we climb up to, but the place God comes down to — God with us, to stay. Read Revelation 21:3. When you picture being fully at home with God, with nothing left to fear and nothing left to prove, what in you is most tired and most ready for it?

Guided Response. This first reflection turns the book's destination toward the reader's own weariness. The closing piece has held that the home is not a place we climb up to but the place God comes down to — "the tabernacle of God is with men" (Rev. 21:3), God with us, to stay. This question does not ask for an idea; it asks the reader to notice what in them is most tired and most ready to be fully at home, with nothing left to fear and nothing left to prove. There is no right answer. The work of the question is the noticing.

Leader Note. This is reflection, not instruction. Let there be silence; do not rush to fill it. If the group shares, receive what is said without fixing it. Some will answer only inwardly, and that is right.

Question 2. The matured ones could turn away and do not — not because they cannot, but because love has become who they are. Read Joshua 24:15. Where in your own life are you still learning to choose the life with God freely, because you want it, rather than because you feel you have to?

Guided Response. This reflection turns the book's picture of mature freedom toward the reader's present. The matured ones could turn away and do not — not because they cannot, but because love has become who they are. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Josh. 24:15) is offered here not as a one-time decision but as the shape of a life still being formed. The question asks the reader where, right now, they are still learning to choose the life with God because they want it, rather than because they feel they have to. It names a direction of growth, not a failure to confess.

Leader Note. Keep this from sliding into guilt. The freedom the book describes is grown into over time, not demanded all at once. The honest answer is usually "somewhere," and naming the place gently is enough.

Question 3. The eighth day is already reaching back into your ordinary days, in every small free yes. Read Luke 24:1-6. Where have you already tasted the home — a moment of love, or forgiveness, or truth, or rest — in the middle of an ordinary day? What might change if you believed that your life now, in Christ, is already becoming that home?

Guided Response. The last reflection brings the whole book to rest on the reader's ordinary life. The eighth day is already reaching back into ordinary days — the resurrection came on the first day of the week (Luke 24:1-6), and the book's final word is that the reader's life now, in Christ, is already becoming the home the ages are for. The question asks the reader to remember a moment they have already tasted it — love, forgiveness, truth, or rest in the middle of an ordinary day — and to consider what changes if those moments are not exceptions but foretastes. It is the book handing the story back to the reader's own present.

Leader Note. This is where the book lands; let it land. The aim is not analysis but recognition — a remembered moment of grace, seen newly as a foretaste. Close gently here; the book has said its last word, and this question lets the reader carry it home.
