

## 22T08e INFER? – Church Age

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me today for an @ the PUNLA coffee table for INFER. I'm a scientist and engineer and in my profession, we use logical deductive reasoning. Another way to say it is, we infer things from other things. But it really is a guess, an educated guess but still just a guess. Believe it or not, many Christian doctrines use this same secular approach to interpret the Bible.

The question you need to ask is does it work? Well, that depends on what "it works" means. What is Right or Correct.

What do you know about the Origin of Life theories? This is all based on Darwin's Origin of the Species book and today his theories are often taught as fact despite requiring us to infer a lot to get from here to there. Modern Evolutionary Scientists believe and teach that all living creatures on earth, popped into existence accidentally from nothing. Well not exactly nothing, they claim amino acids and other unstable building blocks of life spontaneously came into existence all at the same time in exactly the right ratio and proximity to create the first living cell. Then that cell reproduced in an environment which had no other living things. And continued to reproduce and mutate until complex organisms evolved and eventually you and me. From death to life. Which is opposite of all observable science which always show life to death. This belief requires a lot of leaps of faith.

Leap of faith #1: Randomly everything needed for life, happened together at exact same time. Despite what you often hear in the media these days, we have not created life. In fact, we have not created any meaningful building blocks spontaneously. Not even in perfect laboratory conditions with proper mixtures and ratios. Life from something dead. Order from disorder. Of course this goes in the face of all scientific laws. We know from observable science, the world, the universe. Everything moves toward disorder spontaneously, not order. This is like putting a pile of dirt on your driveway and expecting a puppy to show up. The more likely outcome is your nice pile of dirt will slowly blow away and wash away until it is gone. From order to disorder. Dead things stay dead.

Leap of faith #2: Everything living creature evolved from this first single cell organism. Again order from disorder. Simple moving toward more complex. Now, we have plenty of single cell organism today, so not everything evolved over time. And these single cell organisms are quite complex. Not nearly as simple as we thought they were when Darwin penned his theory. It is true that living organisms have the same basic building blocks. It is true that we live on a planet with an amazing diverse and complex life.

To believe all this diversity and complexity had a single origin is contrary to rational thought or observed science. This religion of evolution and all its beliefs and leaps of faith are all done to attempt to prove God does not exist. The common phrase you will hear, is we don't know but it can't be God. If you don't know, then why can't it be God.

As Christians, we make fun of this because we know that the universe God designed does not go from dead to life or disorder to order. But for the atheist scientist they need to make these gigantic leaps of faith to sell their religion that God does not exist.

So, what happens when Christians do this same thing in our philosophy or bible interpretation. Let's talk about the Church Age.

How many of you believe we live in a period of time called "the Church Age"? I have to confess I never knew this was a thing until recently. I've also heard this called the Age of Grace. Dispensationalists generally define it as the time from the resurrection to the rapture of the church. Makes a lot of sense, since the church or body of Christ believers did not exist prior to the ministry of Jesus. We can argue about the starting point but you cannot argue that we do indeed live in a period of history when the church exists. I don't know about you but I go to a church. I belong to several groups of Jesus' followers. So, yes, I can agree we live in the church age.

But why do we need to define this. The primary reason is to demonstrate that the Church or Christians will be raptured prior to the "big trouble" at the end of this age, also called the "Great Tribulation". I'm not going to address rapture or great tribulation or end of times eschatology. I want to just look at the justification of the Church Age ending at a rapture prior to the Great Tribulation.

The classic reasoning goes like this, The "Church" is not mentioned after Chapter 3 of Revelation therefore, the church must be gone. That way the Christians will not have to face the "big trouble". It is true that the word church is not mentioned in the book of Revelation after Chapter 1-3. Revelation starts this way, Revelation 1:1-4 (NKJV) *<sup>1</sup>The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, <sup>2</sup>who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. <sup>3</sup>Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near. <sup>4</sup>John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:*

So, we know the Revelation of Jesus Christ was written to the seven churches in Asia. It clearly says this, and yes, the word church does not appear after Chapter 3

According to BlueLetter Bible, the word church appears 77 times in 76 verses in the KJV Bible in Matthew, Acts, 1Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippines, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, 1 Timothy, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 3 John and Revelation.

But what about Mark, Luke, John, Romans, 2 Tim, 2 Peter, 1 & 2 John and Jude, do these apply to the church since the word church does not appear. Or the book of Acts does not mention the church after Chapter 20, does this mean Chapter 21-28 don't apply to the church. or in Matthew the church is not mentioned after Chapter 18 but the teachings about end times are in Chapter 24, so do these scriptures not apply to the

church since the word church does not occur after Chapter 18. The logic of omitting scriptures from our “dispensation” or application based on whether the word “church” is present sounds silly if apply to any other book of the bible except Revelation.

So, okay I'm not serious. I'm just trying to make a point. The words saints, brethren, disciples, followers, elect and others are used throughout the new testament to refer to followers of Jesus or the Church. The church is not an institution, it is the body of believers, the body of Christ followers or Christians from all places, all denominations. One Church.

If I use the BlueLetterBible to search the KJV New Testament. I find 13 occurrences of Elect, 231 occurrence of Brethren, 243 occurrences of disciples, 8 occurrences of follower and 61 occurrences of Saints. . You can see Brethren and Disciples are most often used to identify Christ followers.

Saints is used in Acts and Romans and others when talking about the believers or church. And there is a reference to “the Saints” also included in Revelation Chapters 5 thru 20.

So why has this line in the sand been drawn only in Revelation Chapter 3. This is an attempt to provide a point of conclusion for the Church Age. No more church. but then why are there still Saints. There are lots of interpretations of that and that's not my point. It takes several leaps of faith to accept this concept.

Leap of Faith #1: Saints in Revelation means something different than it does everywhere else in the New Testament. Could be but it takes a huge leap of faith to get there.

Leap of Faith #2: The only scriptures that applies to us, the Church, are scriptures which the Church is clearly mentioned. If we used this definition, then most of the Bible would not apply to us including three of the four gospels. Could be true but again a huge leap of faith.

I am not going to list the many other leaps for faith necessary for us to believe this. I understand the desire to use this to prove the rapture will protect the church from the Big Trouble at the end. My point is not really about whether or not the Church Age ends at the end of Revelation Chapter 3 or not. I am actually indifferent because it does not matter. My point is does a doctrine like this help me to follow Jesus, help me to do the things Jesus has commanded me to do. Am I a better follower of Christ with this doctrine? The answer is No. This doctrine like all man-made doctrines, they may be true but if they don't help me be a better follower of Jesus, then why? Why are we so focused on these side issues, instead of where our focus should be? On King Jesus.

**Let's Pray. Father God, thank you for your word the Bible, Thank you for the holy spirit to guide us, so we don't need to guess. Help us to listen to you and allow you to give us the wisdom we lack such that we can have understanding. Give**

**us the strength and will to evaluate what people say to determine if it is from you Lord or just from men. And Lord I pray if I said anything wrong today the listener would remember only what you wanted them to hear. I pray these things in your name Lord Jesus, Amen**

Again, I can't say if this concept of "the Church age" is true or not. I can't say when it started or when it will stop or if it will stop. I cannot tell you if any of these viewpoints are valid or not. I'm not God. But you have to ask yourself, does this doctrine encourage you to follow Jesus or not. If it does not, then why do we teach it. If it does not make us better Christians, better followers of Jesus, then what is the point. Should we Infer ourselves to a place that makes us feel better, or should we spend our life following Jesus and preparing for the trouble Jesus told us we would face in this life. I'll leave that answer up to you.

Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table our series INFER? See you next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God Bless.