



## On the Old Testament, Trust and Church Growth

**WHO:** Pastor Bob Clark from Christ Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Indiana. This was my second trip to Kenya as an ITEM representative to All Nations College.

**WHERE:** The Full Gospel Church of Thika, Kenya, one of the site locations for All Nations College. As was the case last August, pastor Moses and the congregation of FCG provided graciously for all of our needs during the week.

**WHEN:** February 25-28. I preached the previous Sunday at the Amazing Grace Church of Gatanga, which is northeast of Thika.

**WHAT I TAUGHT:** “Last Things” was an exciting and challenging topic to teach to the 20-25 students who attended. The focus on eschatology worked well with the course I taught last August, Biblical Theology, picking up on the theme of “Consummation.”

**WHAT I LEARNED:** There is a great need for sound biblical teaching. Bad teaching abounds. For example, I was asked: “How should I respond to the pastor who says that the amount of my offering will directly affect the condition and decoration of my room in God’s mansion?”

I didn’t say anything for at least 15 seconds. That’s a long time for me. That pastor is obviously padding his pockets, and I told the person who asked me that it was false doctrine. I tried to put things in the simplest terms I could. If I can’t add anything to the work of Christ’s salvation, how could I add to Christ’s work in preparing a room for me in heaven?

**WHY IT MATTERS:** The details of eschatology can be difficult. But at its core, it’s simple. It’s about hope. Paul said that the present sufferings of this life cannot be compared to the glory that awaits us. If we looked at that verse once, we looked at it 25 times.

We can talk about the tribulation and a-millennialism and whatever else until we’re blue in the face. How does any of that help the person who is suffering? What do we do to give him hope? It has to be that whatever we go through in this life, it cannot compare to what God has waiting for us. That is the thrust and heart of eschatology.

**WHAT I PRAYED ABOUT ON THE FLIGHT HOME:** While I would not want to minimize the pleasure and privilege of the teaching portion of my visit to Thika, I came away from my time with the students with so much more. I was humbled by their sacrifice and service for the church in Kenya. The Lord enables them to do so much with so little.

I don’t know if I always appreciate the opportunity we have to impact the church in Kenya and other countries for generations. Those of us who have had formal seminary training have been given such a

blessing; I fear I often take those blessings for granted. I am so grateful for the opportunity through ITEM to work with my brothers and sisters in Kenya.



## Narrow Gate, Difficult Path and Future of Everything

For most Christians, eschatology remains both a foreign word and a distant discussion best left alone or to theologians. Just hearing the word causes our eyes to glaze over as we remember some confusing past sermon or study that left us more in a tangled, jumbled mix of disconnected verses than in a sense of wonder for the future and hope for tomorrow. For most Christians, eschatology seems only theoretical and mystical, and not very relevant or practical.

If that description resonates with you, then you may want to check out a book recently written by Bill Boekestein, one of our instructors and the pastor of Immanuel Fellowship Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan. His latest book is *The Future of Everything*, and it's based on Bill's notes that he used to teach



### How to Contribute

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eschatology for ITEM two years ago in Croatia. Boekestein writes that the picture Christ paints of a narrow gate and difficult path leading to heaven is God's way of urging believers to use great effort to show others about that gate and path.

## Is ITEM a Good Deal?

Whether we are buying a product or donating to a ministry, most of us want to be sure we're getting a good deal. It's no different at ITEM. It's fair for those who donate to us to ask, does ITEM deliver a good deal for training indigenous Christian leaders and a good investment for your missions dollars?

We have devised a metric to study that—we call it “cost-per-student-classroom-hour.” We keep careful records of how many students attend each session and how many hours instructors taught in that session. We add up our total costs (administrative costs, field locations support, translation costs, accommodations, transportation for getting instructors to the fields), and divide that total by the number of students and the hours they are in class.

That gives us the cost-per-student-classroom-hour. For 2018, that figure was **\$10.77**. That means ITEM pays \$10.77 for each classroom hour of instruction. In U.S. seminaries, the average cost per student classroom hour is more than \$100.

### Prayer Requests

1. Praise for these classes in March: Tom Smith's teaching of Church History at Kiev Regional Bible College (KRBC) in Ukraine; Bill Wilton, Perry Tinklenberg and Fritz Harms' leading a preaching conference at ERSU and KRBC, in Ukraine; and Rob Toornstra and Bill Wilton leading a preaching conference in Romania.
2. Pray for another busy schedule in April. Phil de Hart will teach Old Testament Intro in Indonesia, and Steve Swets and Marc Jagt will teach Christ-centered Preaching in Kenya.