



Prophecy

A Look
at the
Future

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Forward

A study of prophecy is a study of the past, present, and the future.

It is verified through the Holy Scripture and is revealed in both the old and the New Testaments. The Word of God devotes a large portion of its pages to the future.

From the book of Genesis to the book of Revelations we see that we are living in the time of the end. We are told not to add to the words of this book, as it is complete. All interpretations must line up perfectly with the Word of God.

Allow the revealed will of God to teach, assimilate, and dominate your mind.

Chapter 1

Prophecies Fulfilled

The word prophet is found over three hundred times in the Old Testament and more than one hundred times in the New Testament. The prophets spoke of their own time, they spoke of the near future and the far future.

False prophets were killed because they misrepresented a perfect God.

The foretelling of an event in such detail before it happens, so it's necessary to require divine guidance, is called prophecy. There are many distinct predictions in regard to our Divine Savior, Jesus Christ. In this lesson, we will discuss some of the prophecies that were foretold concerning the birth, the nature, the ministry, the crucifixion, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Prophecies in fulfillment concerning the birth of Jesus Christ:

Genesis 3:15 He was born of the seed of a woman.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Satan is our enemy. He will do anything he can to get us to follow his evil, deadly path. The phrase “you will strike his heel” refers to Satan’s repeated attempts to defeat Christ during his life on earth. “He will crush your head” foreshadows Satan’s defeat when Christ rose from the dead. A strike on the heel is not deadly, but a crushing blow to the head is. Already God was revealing his plan to defeat Satan and offer salvation to the world through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Prophecy fulfilled:

Galatians 4:4

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

“When the time had fully come,” God sent Jesus to earth to die for our sins. For centuries the Jews had been wondering when their Messiah would come—but God’s timing was perfect. We may sometimes wonder if God will ever respond to our prayers. But we must never doubt him or give up hope. At the right time, he will respond. Are you waiting for God’s timing? Trust his judgment and trust that he has your best interests in mind.

Jesus was born of a woman—he was human. He was born as a Jew—he was subject to God’s law and fulfilled it perfectly. Thus, Jesus was the perfect sacrifice because, although he was fully human, he never sinned. His death bought freedom for us who were enslaved to sin so that we could be adopted into God’s family.

Prophecy:

Jesus was born of a virgin.

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Prophecy fulfilled:

Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. [19] Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. [20] But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. [21] And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. [22] Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, [23] Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. [24] Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the

angel of the Lord had bidden him and took unto him his wife: [25] And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.

Why is the virgin birth important to the Christian faith? Jesus Christ, God's Son, had to be free from the sinful nature passed on to all other human beings by Adam. Because Jesus was born of a woman, he was a human being; but as the Son of God, Jesus was born without any trace of human sin. Jesus is both fully human and fully divine.

Because Jesus lived as a man, we know that he fully understands our experiences and struggles (Hebrews 4:15-16). Because he is God, he has the power and authority to deliver us from sin (Col. 2:13-15). We can tell Jesus all our thoughts, feelings, and needs. He has been where we are now, and he has the ability to help.

Prophecies fulfilled concerning the ministry of Christ: A messenger preceded the Ministry of Christ.

Isaiah 40:3

The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Preparing a straight highway means removing obstacles and rolling out the red carpet for the coming of the Lord. The desert is a picture of life's trials and sufferings. We are not immune to these, but they need not hinder our faith. Isaiah told people to prepare to see God work. John the Baptist used these words as he challenged the people to prepare for the coming Messiah (Matthew 3:3).

Prophecies fulfill concerning Christ nature Jesus pre-existed in creation.

Micah 5:2

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Ephratah was the district in which Bethlehem was located.

This ruler is Jesus, the Messiah. Micah accurately predicted Christ's birthplace hundreds of years before Jesus was born. The promised eternal King in David's line, who would come to live as a man, had been alive forever— "from of old, from ancient times." Although eternal, Christ entered human history as the man, Jesus of Nazareth.

Prophecy Fulfilled:

1 Peter 1:20

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

Christ's sacrifice for our sins was not an afterthought, not something God decided to do when the world spun out of control. The all-knowing, eternal God set this plan in motion long before the world was created. What a comfort it must have been to Jewish believers to know that God planned Christ's coming and his work of salvation long before the world began. This assured them that the law was not being scrapped because it didn't work, but that both the law and the coming of Christ were part of God's eternal plan.

Prophecies concerning the crucifixion of Jesus would be crucified with thieves: Isaiah 53:12

Therefore, will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

In the Old Testament, people offered animals as sacrifices for their sins. Here, the sinless servant of the Lord offers himself for our sins. He is the Lamb (Isaiah 53:7) offered for the sins of all people (John 1:29; Rev. 5:6-14). The Messiah suffered for our sakes, bearing our sins to make us acceptable to God. What can we say to such love? How will we respond to him?

Prophecy fulfilled:

Matthew 27:38

Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

Jesus was in great anguish over his approaching physical pain, separation from the Father, and death for the sins of the world. The divine course was set, but he, in his human nature, still struggled (Hebrews 5:7-9). Because of the anguish Jesus experienced, he can relate to our suffering. Jesus' strength to obey came from his relationship with God the Father, who is also the source of our strength (John 17:11, 15-16, 21, 26).

The resurrection and ascension of Jesus

Psalm 16:8-11

I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. [9] Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoice: my flesh also shall rest in hope. [10] For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. [11] Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand, there are pleasures for evermore.

This psalm is often called a Messianic psalm because it is quoted in the New Testament as referring to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Both Peter and Paul quoted from this psalm when speaking of Christ's bodily resurrection (see Acts 2:25-28, 31; Acts 13:35-37).

Prophecy fulfilled:

Acts 2:24-31

Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. [25] For David speaks concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: [26] Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover, also my flesh shall rest in hope: [27] Because thou wilt not leave my

soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer the Holy One to see corruption. [28] Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shall make me full of joy with thy countenance. [29] Men and brethren let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. [30] Therefore being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; [31] He seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

Peter began with a public proclamation of the resurrection at a time when many witnesses could verify it. This was a powerful statement because many of the people listening to Peter's words had been in Jerusalem 50 days earlier at Passover and may have seen or heard about the crucifixion and resurrection of this "great teacher." Jesus' resurrection was the ultimate sign that what he said about himself was true. Without the resurrection, we would have no reason to believe in Jesus (1 Cor. 15:14).

Jesus would ascend into heaven.

Psalm 68:18

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

This verse is applied to the ministry of the ascended Christ. It celebrates his victory over evil. It assures all of us who believe in Christ that by trusting him, we can overcome evil.

Prophecy fulfilled:

John 3:13

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

God is pictured as a conqueror marching to the gates and taking tribute from the fallen city. Paul uses that picture to teach that Christ, in his crucifixion and resurrection, was victorious over Satan. When Christ ascended to heaven, he gave gifts to the church, some of which Paul discusses in Ephesians 4:11-13.

Chapter 2

Jesus Prophecies

Jesus is the son of God and his only path to salvation. Jesus not only prophesied, but he is the fulfillment of many messianic prophecies. Jesus also prophesied about his own life and about the impact that the words would have on the world. He said that the words would never be forgotten that they would be told to people everywhere. Today, we can see with our own eyes, his words are the best-known of any person in history. We can also see that there are Christians in every part of the world.

All those who accept and believe that Jesus is the son of God will be saved.

Romans 10:9-10

That if thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shall be saved. [10] For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.

Have you ever been asked, “How do I become a Christian?” These verses give you the beautiful answer—salvation is as close as your own mouth and heart. People think it must be a complicated process, but it is not. If we believe in our hearts and say with our mouths that Christ is the risen Lord, we will be saved.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The gospel comes to a focus in this verse. God’s love is not static or self-centered; it reaches out and draws others in. Here God sets the pattern of true love, the basis for all love relationships—when you love someone dearly, you are willing to give freely to the point of self-sacrifice. God paid dearly with the life of his Son, the highest price he could pay. Jesus accepted our punishment, paid the price for our sins, and then offered us the new life that he had bought for us. When

we share the gospel with others, our love must be like Jesus'—willingly giving up our own comfort and security so that others might join us in receiving God's love.

Some people are repulsed by the idea of eternal life because their lives are miserable. But eternal life is not an extension of a person's miserable, mortal life; eternal life is God's life embodied in Christ given to all believers now as a guarantee that they will live forever. In eternal life, there is no death, sickness, enemy, evil, or sin. When we don't know Christ, we make choices as though this life is all we have. In reality, this life is just the introduction to eternity. Receive this new life by faith and begin to evaluate all that happens from an eternal perspective.

To "believe" is more than an intellectual agreement that Jesus is God. It means to put our trust and confidence in him that he alone can save us. It is to put Christ in charge of our present plans and eternal destiny. Believing is both trusting his words as reliable and relying on him for the power to change. If you have never trusted Christ, let this promise of everlasting life be yours—and believe.

Jesus tells all that he is the Messiah.

John 4:19-26

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. [20] Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. [21] Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. [22] Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. [23] But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. [24] God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. [25] The woman saith unto him, I know that the Messiah cometh which is called Christ. When he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

God is "a spirit" means he is not a physical being limited to one place. He is present everywhere and he can be worshiped anywhere, at any time. It is not where we worship that counts, but how we worship. Is your worship genuine and true? Do you have the Holy Spirit's help? How does the Holy Spirit help us worship?

The Holy Spirit prays for us (Romans 8:26), teaches us the words of Christ (John 14:26), and tells us we are loved (Romans 5:5).

When Jesus said, “salvation is from the Jews,” he meant that only through the Jewish Messiah would the whole world find salvation. God had promised that through the Jewish race the whole earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). The Old Testament prophets had called the Jews to be a light to the other nations of the world, bringing them to a knowledge of God; and they had predicted the Messiah’s coming. The woman at the well may have known of these passages and was expecting the Messiah, but she didn’t realize that she was talking to him!

Jesus prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed.

Luke 19:41-44

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, [42] Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. [43] For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, [44] And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

The Jewish leaders had rejected their King (Luke 19:47). They had gone too far. They had refused God’s offer of salvation in Jesus Christ when they were visited by God himself (“the time of God’s coming”), and soon their nation would suffer. God did not turn away from the Jewish people who obeyed him, however. He continues to offer salvation to the people he loves, both Jews and Gentiles. Eternal life is within your reach—accept it while the opportunity is still offered.

About 40 years after Jesus said these words, they came true. In A.D. 66, the Jews revolted against Roman control. Three years later Titus, son of Emperor Vespasian, was sent to crush the rebellion. Roman soldiers attacked Jerusalem and broke through the northern wall but still couldn’t take the city. Finally, they laid siege to it, and in A.D. 70 they were able to enter the severely weakened city and burn it. Six hundred thousand Jews were killed during Titus’s onslaught.

Jesus prophesied that the Jews would be exiled.

Luke 21:34

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

The “times of the Gentiles” began with Babylon’s destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the exile of the Jewish people. Israel was no longer an independent nation but was under the control of Gentile rulers. In Jesus’ day, Israel was governed by the Roman empire, and a Roman general would destroy the city in A.D. 70. Jesus was saying that the domination of God’s people by his enemies would continue until God decided to end it. The “times of the Gentiles” refers not just to the repeated destructions of Jerusalem, but also to the continuing and mounting persecution of God’s people until the end.

Jesus foretold his death and resurrection.

Matthew 20:17-19

And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, [18] Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, [19] And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

Jesus predicted his death and resurrection for the third time (see Matthew 16:21 and Matthew 17:22-23 for the first two times). But the disciples still didn’t understand what he meant. They continued to argue greedily over their positions in Christ’s kingdom (Matthew 20:20-28).

Jesus prophesied that the Temple would be destroyed.

Matthew 24:1-2

And Jesus went out and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. [2] And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Although no one knows exactly what this temple looked like, it must have been beautiful. Herod had helped the Jews remodel and beautify it, no doubt to stay on friendly terms with his subjects. Next to the inner temple, were the sacred objects.

Chapter 3

End Time Events

2 Timothy 3:1-5

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

Paul's reference to the "last days" reveals his sense of urgency. The last days began after Jesus' resurrection when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers at Pentecost. The "last days" will continue until Christ's second coming. This means that *we* are living in the last days. So we should make the most of the time that God has given us (Ephes. 5:16; Col. 4:5).

In many parts of the world today it is not especially difficult to be a Christian— people aren't jailed for reading the Bible or executed for preaching Christ. But Paul's descriptive list of behavior in the last days describes our society—even, unfortunately, the behavior of many Christians. Check your life against Paul's list. Don't give in to society's pressures. Don't settle for comfort without commitment. Stand up against evil by living as God would have his people live.

1 Timothy 4:1

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

It was important for Timothy to preach the gospel so that the Christian faith could spread throughout the world. We believe in Christ today because people like Timothy were faithful to their mission. It is still vitally important for believers to spread the gospel. Half the people who have ever lived are alive today, and most of them do not know Christ. He is coming soon, and he wants to find his faithful believers ready for him. It may be inconvenient to take a stand for Christ or to tell others about his love but preaching the Word of God is the most important responsibility the church and its members have been given. Be prepared for, courageous in, and sensitive to God-given opportunities to tell the Good News.

Matthew 24:6

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

The disciples asked Jesus for the sign of his coming and of the end of the age. Jesus' first response was "Watch out that no one deceives you." The fact is that whenever we look for signs, we become very susceptible to being deceived. There are many "false prophets" (Matthew 24:11,24) around with counterfeit signs of spiritual power and authority. The only sure way to keep from being deceived is to focus on Christ and his words. Don't look for special signs, and don't spend time looking at other people. Look at Christ.

Revelation 13:16-17

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

In every generation, Christians need to maintain a healthy skepticism about society's pleasures and rewards. In our educational, economic, and civic structures, there are incentives and rewards. Cooperating Christians must always support what is good and healthy about our society, but we must stand against sin. In some cases, such as Satan's system described here, the system or structure becomes so evil that there is no way to cooperate with it.

1 Peter 3:3-4

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.

"In the last days" scoffers will say that Jesus is never coming back, but Peter refutes their argument by explaining God's mastery over time. The "last days" is the time between Christ's first and second comings; thus we, like Peter, live in the last days. We must do the work to which God has called us and believe that he will return as he promised.

2 Timothy 3:1

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Paul's reference to the "last days" reveals his sense of urgency. The last days began after Jesus' resurrection when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers at Pentecost. The "last days" will continue until Christ's second coming. This means that *we* are living in the last days. So we should make the most of the time that God has given us (Ephes. 5:16; Col. 4:5).

In many parts of the world today it is difficult to be a Christian—people are jailed for reading the Bible or executed for preaching Christ. But Paul's descriptive list of behavior in the last days describes our society—even, unfortunately, the behavior of many Christians. Check your life against Paul's list. Don't give in to society's pressures. Don't settle for comfort without commitment. Stand up against evil and live as God would have you live.

Joel 2:28-32

And it shall come to pass afterward, [that] I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

Peter quoted this passage (see Acts 2:16-21)—the outpouring of the Spirit predicted by Joel occurred on Pentecost. While in the past, God's Spirit seemed available to kings, prophets, and judges, Joel envisioned a time when the Spirit would be available to every believer. Ezekiel also spoke of an outpouring of the Spirit (Ezekiel 39:28-29). God's Spirit is available now to anyone who calls on the Lord (Joel 2:32).

1 John 2:18

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

John is talking about the last days, the time between Christ's first and second comings. The first-century readers of 1 John lived in the last days, and so do we. During this time, antichrists (false teachers who pretend to be Christians and who lure weak members away from Christ) will appear. Finally, just before the world ends, one great antichrist will arise (Rev. 13; Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:10). We do not need to fear these evil people, however. The Holy Spirit shows us their errors, so

we will not be deceived. However, we must teach God's Word clearly and carefully to the peripheral, weak members among us so that they won't fall prey to these teachers who "come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matthew 7:15).

Matthew 24:3

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the very place where the prophet Zechariah had predicted that the Messiah would stand when he came to establish his kingdom (Zech. 14:4). It was a fitting place for the disciples to ask Jesus when he would come in power and what they could expect then. Jesus' reply emphasized the events that would take place before the end of the age.

He pointed out that his disciples should be less concerned with knowing the exact date and more concerned with being prepared—living God's way consistently so that no matter when Jesus came in glory, he would claim them as his own.

Revelation 13:1

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

This beast was initially identified with Rome because the Roman empire, in its early days, encouraged an evil lifestyle, persecuted believers, and opposed God and his followers. But the beast also symbolizes the antichrist—not Satan, but someone under Satan's power and control. This antichrist looks like a combination of the four beasts that Daniel saw centuries earlier in a vision (Daniel 7). As the dragon (Revelation 12:17) is in opposition to God, so the beast from the sea is against Christ and may be seen as Satan's false messiah. The early Roman empire was strong and also anti-Christ (or against Christ's standards); many other individual powers throughout history have been anti-Christ. Many Christians

believe that Satan's evil will culminate in a final antichrist, one who will focus all the powers of evil against Jesus Christ and his followers.

Revelation 13 introduces Satan's (the dragon's) two evil accomplices: (1) the beast out of the sea (Revelation 13:1ff) and (2) the beast out of the earth (Revelation 13:11ff). Together, the three evil beings form an unholy trinity in direct opposition to the Holy Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

When Satan tempted Jesus in the desert, he wanted Jesus to show his power by turning stones into bread, to do miracles by jumping from a high place, and to gain political power by worshiping him (see Matthew 4:1-11). Satan's plan was to rule the world through Jesus, but Jesus refused to do Satan's bidding. Thus Satan turns to the fearsome beasts described in Revelation. To the beast out of the sea, he gives political power. To the beast out of the earth, he gives the power to do miracles. Both beasts work together to capture the control of the whole world. This unholy trinity—the dragon, the beast out of the sea, and the false prophet (see Revelation 16:13)—unite in a desperate attempt to overthrow God, but their efforts are doomed to failure. See what becomes of them in Revelation 19:19-21 and Revelation 20:10.

Matthew 24:22

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened.

Jesus, talking about the end times, telescoped near future and far future events, as did the Old Testament prophets. Many of these persecutions have already occurred; more is yet to come. But God is in control of even the length of persecutions. He will not forget his people. This is all we need to know about the future to motivate us to live rightly now.

Chapter 4

Signs of the End Time # 1

Each event is prophesied to come upon the world during the end times. Become aware of the actions and failure of each sign as the Scriptures are unfolded and the Holy Spirit gives Divine Revelation of his never changing word.

False teachers will fleece the people for money.

2 Peter 2:1-3

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction. [2] And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom, the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. [3] And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbers not.

Jesus had told the disciples that false teachers would come (Matthew 24:11; Mark 13:22-23). Peter had heard these words, and at this time he was seeing them come true. Just as false prophets had contradicted the true prophets in Old Testament times (see, for example, Jeremiah 23:16-40; Jeremiah 28:1-17), telling people only what they wanted to hear, so false teachers were twisting Christ's teachings and the words of his apostles. These teachers were belittling the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Some claimed that Jesus couldn't be God; others claimed that he couldn't have been a real man. These teachers allowed and even encouraged all kinds of wrong and immoral acts, especially sexual sin. We must be careful to avoid false teachers today. Any book, tape series, or TV message must be evaluated according to God's Word. Beware of special meanings or interpretations that belittle Christ or his work.

The people they teach should pay teachers, but these false teachers were attempting to make more money by distorting the truth and saying what people wanted to hear. They were more interested in making money than in teaching the truth. Peter and Paul both condemned the greedy, lying teachers (see 1 Timothy 6:5). Before you send money to any cause, evaluate it carefully. Is the teacher or

preacher clearly serving God or promoting his/her own interests? Will the money be used to promote valid ministry, or will it merely finance further promotions?

Homosexuality will be increasingly evident at the end of the age.

2 Timothy 3:3

Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

Paul's reference to the "last days" reveals his sense of urgency. The last days began after Jesus' resurrection when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers at Pentecost. The "last days" will continue until Christ's second coming. This means that *we* are living in the last days. So we should make the most of the time that God has given us (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5).

Paul's descriptive list of behavior in the last days describes our society—even, unfortunately, the behavior of many Christians. Check your life against Paul's list. Don't give in to society's pressures. Don't settle for comfort without commitment. Stand up against evil by living as God would have his people live.

Earthquakes will be in different places.

Matthew 24:7

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

The disciples asked Jesus for the sign of his coming and of the end of the age. Jesus' first response was "Watch out that no one deceives you." The fact is that whenever we look for signs, we become very susceptible to being deceived. There are many "false prophets" (Matthew 24:11, 24) around with counterfeit signs of spiritual power and authority. The only sure way to keep from being deceived is to focus on Christ and his words. Don't look for special signs, and don't spend time looking at other people. Look at Christ.

In the last days, people will be living stressful lives.

2 Timothy 3:1

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

Don't give in to society's pressures. Don't settle for comfort without commitment. Stand up against evil by living as God would have his people live.

In the last days, there will be many wars.

Matthew 24:6

And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Times of trial serve to sift true Christians from false or fair-weather Christians. When you are pressured to give up and turn your back on Christ, don't do it. Remember the benefits of standing firm and continue to live for Christ.

People will reject the laws of God as a moral code.

Matthew 24:12

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

With false teaching and loose morals comes a particularly destructive disease—the loss of true love for God and others. Sin cools your love for God and others by turning your focus on yourself. You cannot truly love if you think only of yourself.

Jesus predicted that his followers would be severely persecuted by those who hated what he stood for. In the midst of terrible persecutions, however, they could have hope, knowing that salvation was theirs. Times of trial serve to sift true Christians from false or fair-weather Christians. When you are pressured to give up and turn your back on Christ, don't do it. Remember the benefits of standing firm and continue to live for Christ.

In the last days, a cold religious system will deny God's power.

2 Timothy 3:5

Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

The “form” or appearance of godliness includes going to church, knowing Christian doctrine, using Christian clichés, and following a community’s Christian traditions. Such practices can make a person look good, but if the inner attitudes of belief, love, and worship are lacking, the outer appearance is meaningless. Paul warns us not to be deceived by people who only appear to be Christians. It may be difficult to distinguish them from true Christians at first, but their daily behavior will give them away. The characteristics described in 2 Timothy 3:2-4 are unmistakable.

In the last days, people will substitute fantasy for Christian truth.

2 Timothy 4:4

And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables.

Half the people who have ever lived are alive today, and most of them do not know Christ. He is coming soon, and he wants to find his faithful believers ready for him. It may be inconvenient to take a stand for Christ or to tell others about his love but preaching the Word of God is the most important responsibility the church and its members have been given. Be prepared for, courageous in, and sensitive to God-given opportunities to tell the Good News.

“Be prepared in season and out of season” means to always be ready to serve God in any situation, whether or not it is convenient. Be sensitive to the opportunities God gives you.

Paul told Timothy to “correct, rebuke and encourage.” It is difficult to accept correction, to be told we have to change. But no matter how much the truth hurts, we must be willing to listen to it, so we can more fully obey God.

Many will forsake the institution of marriage.

1 Timothy 4:3

Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

Paul said the false teachers were hypocritical liars who encouraged people to follow “deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.” Satan deceives people by offering a clever imitation of the real thing. The false teachers gave stringent rules (such as forbidding people to marry or to eat certain foods). This made them appear self-disciplined and righteous. Their strict disciplines for the body, however, could not remove sin (see Colossians 2:20-23). We must not be unduly impressed by a teacher’s style or credentials; we must look to his teaching about Jesus Christ. His conclusions about Christ show the source of his message.

Chapter 5

Signs of the End Times # 2

With false teaching and loose morals comes a particularly destructive disease—the loss of true love for God and others. Sin cools your love for God and others by turning your focus on yourself. You cannot truly love if you think only of yourself.

In the end time, there will be a cry for peace

1 Thessalonians. 5:1-3

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. [2] For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. [3] For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

Efforts to determine the date of Christ's return are foolish. Don't be misled by anyone who claims to know. We are told here that no one knows and that even believers will be surprised. The Lord will return suddenly and unexpectedly, warns Paul, so be ready! Because no one knows when Jesus will come back to earth, we should be ready at all times. Suppose he were to return today. How would he find you living? Are you ready to meet him? Live each day prepared to welcome Christ.

The possession of Jerusalem will be at the center of international turmoil

Zechariah 12:3

And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

This pictures the final siege against the people of Jerusalem. This speaks of a great future battle against Jerusalem. Some say it is Armageddon, the last great

battle on earth. Those who oppose God's people will not prevail forever. Eventually, evil, pain, and oppression will be abolished once and for all.

Knowledge Will Increase.

Daniel 12:4

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

Closing up and sealing the words of the scroll meant that it was to be kept safe and preserved. This was to be done so that believers of all times could look back on God's work in history and find hope. Daniel did not understand the exact meaning of the times and events in his vision. We can see events as they unfold, for we are in the end times. The whole book will not be understood until the climax of earth's history.

There will be an increase of Christian cults and false teachers within the church.

Matthew 24:11

And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many.

Matthew 24:24

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

The Old Testament frequently mentions false prophets (see 2 Kings 3:13; Isaiah 44:25; Jeremiah 23:16; Ezekiel 13:2-3; Micah 3:5; Zech. 13:2). False prophets claimed to receive messages from God, but they preached a "health and wealth" message. They said what the people wanted to hear, even when the nation was not following God as it should. There were false prophets in Jesus' day, and we have them today. They are the popular leaders who tell people what they want to hear— such as "God wants you to be rich," "Do whatever your desires tell you,"

or “There is no such thing as sin or hell.” Jesus said false teachers would come and he warned his disciples, as he warns us, not to listen to their dangerous words.

Only a solid foundation in God’s Word can equip us to perceive the errors and distortions in false teaching (2 Timothy 2:15). In times of persecution, even strong believers will find it difficult to be loyal. To keep from being deceived by false messiahs, we must understand that Jesus’ return will be unmistakable (Mark 13:26); no one will doubt that it is he. If you have to be told that the Messiah has come,

Many will have great fear.

Luke 21:26

Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

The picture of the coming persecutions and natural disasters is gloomy, but ultimately it is a cause not for worry but for great joy. When believers see these events happening, they will know that the return of their Messiah is near, and they can look forward to his reign of justice and peace. Rather than being terrified by what is happening in our world, we should confidently await Christ’s return to bring justice and restoration to his people.

The Gospel will be preached as a warning to all nations.

Matthew 24:14

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

There will be signs in the sun, the moon, the stars and upon the earth.

Luke 21:25-26

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

Jesus was saying that the domination of God's people by his enemies would continue until God decided to end it. The "times of the Gentiles" refers not just to the repeated destructions of Jerusalem, but also to the continuing and mounting persecution of God's people until the end.

The young people will become rebellious.

2 Timothy 3:2

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

The "last days" will continue until Christ's second coming. This means that *we* are living in the last days. So we should make the most of the time that God has given us (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5).

Don't settle for comfort without commitment. Stand up against evil by living as God would have his people live.

Men will mock the warning signs concerning the end of the age.

2 Peter 3:4

And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

"In the last days" scoffers will say that Jesus is never coming back, but Peter refutes their argument by explaining God's mastery over time. The "last days" is the time between Christ's first and second comings; thus we, like Peter, live in the last days. We must do the work to which God has called us and believe that he will return as he promised.

Chapter 6

The Antichrist

The anti-Christ will come as a political power to rule over the known world.

1 John 2:18

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time

John is talking about the last days, the time between Christ's first and second comings. The first-century readers of 1 John lived in the last days, and so do we. During this time, antichrists (false teachers who pretend to be Christians and who lure weak members away from Christ) will appear. Finally, just before the world ends, one great antichrist will arise (Rev. 13; Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:10). We do not need to fear these evil people, however. The Holy Spirit shows us their errors, so we will not be deceived. However, we must teach God's Word clearly and carefully to the peripheral, weak members among us so that they won't fall prey to these teachers who "come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matthew 7:15).

The antichrists were not total strangers to the church; they once had been in the church, but they did not really belong to it. John does not say why they left; it is clear that their reasons for joining in the first place were wrong. Some people may call themselves Christians for less than the best reasons. Perhaps going to church is a family tradition. Maybe they like the social and business contacts they make there. Or possibly going to church is a long-standing habit, and they have never stopped to ask themselves why they do it. What is your main reason for being a Christian? Unless it is a Christ-centered reason, you may not really belong. You don't have to settle for less than the best. You can become personally acquainted with Jesus Christ and become a loyal, trustworthy follower.

Revelation 19:20

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of

the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

The battle lines have been drawn, and the greatest confrontation in the history of the world is about to begin. The beast (the antichrist) and the false prophet have gathered the governments and armies of the earth under the antichrist's rule. The enemy armies believe they have come of their own volition; in reality, God has summoned them to battle in order to defeat them. That they would even presume to fight against God shows how their pride and rebellion have perverted their thinking. There really is no fight, however, because the victory was won when Jesus died on the cross for sin and rose from the dead. Thus, the evil leaders are immediately captured and sent to their punishment, and the forces of evil are annihilated.

The fiery lake of burning sulfur is the final destination of the wicked. This lake is different from the Abyss (bottomless pit) referred to in Revelation 9:1. The antichrist and the false prophet are thrown into the fiery lake. Then their leader, Satan himself, will be thrown into that lake (Revelation 20:10), and finally death and Hades (Revelation 20:14). Afterward, everyone whose name is not recorded in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

Revelation 20:10

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Satan's power is not eternal—he will meet his doom. He began his evil work in mankind at the beginning (Genesis 3:1-6) and continues it today, but he will be destroyed when he is thrown into the lake of burning sulfur. The devil will be released from the Abyss (“his prison,” Revelation 20:7), but he will never be released from the fiery lake. He will never be a threat to anyone again.

Moral characteristics of the anti-Christ as given by W. W. Fereday.

1. He will say in his heart that he will be like the most high God. Isaiah 14:4
2. He will stand against the Prince of princes. Daniel 8: 25
3. He will exalt himself above all that is called God 2 Thessalonians 2:4
4. He will exalt himself above every God. Daniel 11:36
5. He will show himself that he is God. 2 Thessalonians 2:4
6. He will deny both the father and the son. 1 John 2:22
7. He will be full of names of blasphemy Revelation 17:3

The anti-Christ will demonstrate his power.

1. He will make the earth to tremble, and he will shake kingdoms. Isaiah 14:16
2. He will make the world a wilderness. Isaiah 14:17
3. Times and laws will be given into his hands. Daniel 8:9
3. He shall do according to his will. Daniel 11:36
4. He shall stretch forth his hand upon the countries. Daniel 11:42
5. It's coming shall be with all power. 2 Thessalonians 2:9
6. Power will be given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations revelations. Revelation 13:7

The anti-Christ will be able to perform miracles.

1. Its coming shall be after the working of Satan, with power, signs, and lying wonders. 2 Thessalonians 2:9
2. He will make fire come down from heaven on the earth and shall deceive many. Revelation 13:13
3. He will give life unto the image of the beast. Revelation 13:15
4. All that dwell upon the earth will worship him whose names are not written in the Book of Life. Revelation 13:8
5. Whosoever shall not worship the image of the beast shall be killed. Revelation 13:15
6. All whose names are not written in the book of life shall wonder. Revelation 17:8

Names that are given to the antichrist:

1. Lucifer blasphemes by assuming Christ character of “The Morning Star”. Isaiah 14:12
2. Recall the king of Babylon Isaiah 14:4 4
3. Asshur or Assuria, as being king over the country. Isaiah 10:5
4. The horn that has eyes, as denoting intelligence and strength. Daniel 7:20
5. “The King” for whom Tophet to is prepared. Isaiah 30:33

The Lord will destroy the anti-Christ.

1. He shall be broken without hand. Daniel 8:25
2. The Lord with the breath of his lips shall destroy the wicked one. Isaiah 11:4
3. The Lord shall consume him with the breath of his lips and with the brightness of his coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:8
4. When he cometh forth who shall tread the wine-press of wrath, the beast is taken, and cast alive into the lake of fire. Revelation 19:15, 20.

The study of the anti-Christ may seem overwhelming and cause you to fear what is to come. I ask you to solemnly consider your position in Christ and rest in his absolute love and control of future events.

Chapter 7

The Mark of the Beast

The Beast is also called other names such as the anti-Christ

Revelation 13

In every generation, Christians need to maintain a healthy skepticism about society's pleasures and rewards. In our educational, economic, and civic structures, there are incentives and rewards. Cooperating Christians must always support what is good and healthy about our society, but we must stand against sin. In some cases, such as Satan's system described here, the system or structure becomes so evil that there is no way to cooperate with it.

This mark of the beast is designed to mock the seal that God places on his followers (Revelation 7:2-3). Just as God marks his people to save them, so Satan's beast marks his people to save them from the persecution that Satan will inflict upon God's followers. Identifying this particular mark is not as important as identifying the purpose of the mark. Those who accept it show their allegiance to Satan, their willingness to operate within the economic system he promotes, and their rebellion against God. To refuse the mark means to commit oneself entirely to God, preferring death to compromising one's faith in Christ.

The meaning of this number has been discussed more than that of any other part of the book of Revelation. The three sixes have been said to represent many things, including the number of man or the unholy trinity of Satan, the first beast, and the false prophet (Rev. 16:13). If the number seven is considered to be the perfect number in the Bible, and if three sevens represent complete perfection, then the number 666 falls completely short of perfection. The first readers of this book probably applied the number to the Emperor Nero, who symbolized all the evils of the Roman empire. (The Greek letters of Nero's name represent numbers that total 666.) Whatever specific application the number is given, the number symbolizes the Worldwide dominion and complete evil of this unholy trinity designed to undo Christ's work and overthrow him.

Understand the following Scriptures that relate to taking and becoming a part of the Mark of the beast system. The results are devastating.

Rev. 14:9-11

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, [10] The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: [11] And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

Rev. 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Those who worship the beast, accept his mark on their foreheads, and operate according to his world economic system will ultimately face God's judgment. Our world values money, power, and pleasure over God's leadership. To get what the world values, many people disown God and violate Christian principles. Thus, they must drink of the wine of God's wrath (see Psalm 75; Isaiah 51:17).

The ultimate result of sin is unending separation from God. Because human beings are created in God's image with an inborn thirst for fellowship with him, separation from God will be the ultimate torment and misery. Sin always brings misery, but in this life, we can choose to repent and restore our relationship with God. In eternity there will no longer be opportunity for repentance. If in this life we choose to be independent of God, in the next life we will be separated from him forever. Nobody is forced to choose eternal separation from God, and nobody suffers this fate by accident. Jesus invites all of us to open the door of our hearts to him (Rev. 3:20). If we do this, we will enjoy everlasting fellowship with him.

Rev. 14:16-18

And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. [17] And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. [18] And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle,

saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

This news about God's ultimate triumph should encourage God's people to remain faithful through every trial and persecution. They can do this, God promises, by trusting in Jesus and obeying the commands found in his Word. The secret to enduring, therefore, is trust and obedience. Trust God to give you patience to endure even the small trials you face daily; obey him even when obedience is unattractive or dangerous.

A warning to watch for false prophets and evil spirits:

John 4:1-11

When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, [2] (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) [3] He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.

Already opposition was rising against Jesus, especially from the Pharisees. They resented Jesus' popularity as well as his message, which challenged much of their teachings. Because Jesus was just beginning his ministry, it wasn't yet time to confront these leaders openly; so, he left Jerusalem and traveled north toward Galilee.

[4] And he must needs go through Samaria.

After the northern kingdom, with its capital at Samaria, fell to the Assyrians, many Jews were deported to Assyria, and foreigners were brought in to settle the land and help keep the peace (2 Kings 17:24). The intermarriage between those foreigners and the remaining Jews resulted in a mixed race, impure in the opinion of Jews who lived in the southern kingdom. Thus the pure Jews hated this mixed race called Samaritans because they felt that their fellow Jews who had intermarried had betrayed their people and nation. The Samaritans had set up an alternate center for worship on Mount Gerizim (John 4:20) to parallel the temple at Jerusalem, but it had been destroyed 150 years earlier. The Jews did everything

they could to avoid traveling through Samaria. But Jesus had no reason to live by such cultural restrictions. The route through Samaria was shorter, and that was the route he took.

[5] Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. [6] Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. [7] There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. [8] (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) [9] Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. (10) Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. [11] The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

Jacob's well was on the property originally owned by Jacob (Genesis 33:18-19). It was not a spring-fed well, but a well into which water seeped from rain and dew, collecting at the bottom. Wells were almost always located outside the city along the main road. Twice each day, morning and evening, women came to draw water. This woman came at noon, however, probably to avoid meeting people who knew her reputation. Jesus gave this woman an extraordinary message about fresh and pure water that would quench her spiritual thirst forever. What did Jesus mean by "living water?" In the Old Testament, many verses speak of thirsting after God as one thirsts for water (Psalm 42:1; Isaiah 55:1; Jeremiah 2:13; Zech. 13:1). God is called the fountain of life (Psalm 36:9) and the spring of living water (Jeremiah 17:13). In saying he would bring living water that could forever quench a person's thirst for God, Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah. Only the Messiah could give this gift that satisfies the soul's desire.

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Some people look for points of disagreement, so they can sow seeds of discord, discontent, and doubt. John the Baptist ended this theological argument by focusing on his devotion to Christ. It is divisive to try to force others to believe our way. Instead, let's witness about what Christ has done for us. How can anyone argue concerning that?

Chapter 8

The Second Coming of Christ

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: [17] Then we that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Knowing exactly when the dead will be raised, in relation to the other events at the second coming, is not as important as knowing why Paul wrote these words—to challenge believers to comfort and encourage one another when loved ones die. This passage can be a great comfort when any believer dies. The same love that should unite believers in this life (1 Thessalonians 4:9) will unite believers when Christ returns and reigns for eternity.

Because Jesus Christ came back to life, so will all believers. All Christians, including those living when Christ returns, will live with Christ forever. Therefore, we need not despair when loved ones die or world events take a tragic turn. God will turn our tragedies to triumphs, our poverty to riches, our pain to glory, and our defeat to victory. All believers throughout history will stand reunited in God’s very presence, safe and secure. As Paul comforted the Thessalonians with the promise of the resurrection, so we should comfort and reassure each other with this great hope.

The word rapture means caught up. The Church of Jesus Christ will be transported from earth to heaven in an instant. There will be no death for those who are raptured. We will be caught up in the air to be with Jesus. It is not difficult to understand why Paul would want this to occur when faced with the trials he was confronted with. No one knows when this will happen, but we are assured that it will happen.

Dr. Charles Ryrie compares those two theories concerning the rapture, but he also asked the variable important question for everyone to study as they face the end times. He asked, “Does it really make any difference when the Lord will come”? Whether his coming is before the great tribulation, or after the great tribulation, we will be blessed by the hope of his coming.

If the rapture is to occur prior to the tribulation, it could happen at any time. If the rapture is not to occur until the end of the tribulation we will find ourselves living through difficult times.

Because Revelation 3:10 promises to keep us from the hour of temptation, many believe that the church will be raptured prior to the tribulation.

Other Scriptures Concerning the Rapture

Matthew 24:29-31

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: [30] And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. [31] And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Luke 17:24 KJV

For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

The nations of the earth will mourn because unbelievers will suddenly realize they have chosen the wrong side. Everything they have scoffed about will be happening, and it will be too late for them.

A Look into the Throne-Room:

Rev. 4:1

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

Rev. 4-5 records glimpses into Christ's glory. Here we see into the throne room of heaven. God is on the throne and orchestrating all the events that John will record. The world is not spinning out of control; the God of creation will carry out his plans as Christ initiates the final battle with the forces of evil. John shows us heaven before showing us earth so that we will not be frightened by future events.

Be Faithful to Watch:

Mark 13:32-37

But of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. [33] Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. [34] For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. [35] Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: [36] Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. [37] And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

When Jesus said that even he did not know the time of the end, he was affirming his humanity. Of course, God the Father knows the time, and Jesus and the Father are one. But when Jesus became a man, he voluntarily gave up the unlimited use of his divine attributes.

The emphasis of this verse is not on Jesus' lack of knowledge, but rather on the fact that no one knows. It is God the Father's secret to be revealed when he wills. No one can predict by Scripture or science the exact day of Jesus' return. Jesus is teaching that preparation, not calculation, is needed.

Matthew 24:31

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Jesus predicted that his followers would be severely persecuted by those who hated what he stood for. In the midst of terrible persecutions, however, they could have hope, knowing that salvation was theirs. Times of trial serve to sift true Christians from false or fair-weather Christians. When you are pressured to give up

and turn your back on Christ, don't do it. Remember the benefits of standing firm and continue to live for Christ.

Daniel 12:7

And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that lives forever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

Time, times and half a time" may add up to 3 1/2 years and may be taken as either literal or figurative. "The power of the holy people" seems to be crushed again and again throughout history. God's recurring purpose in this is to break the pride and self-sufficiency of his rebellious people and to bring them to accept him as their Lord.

Luke 21:34-36

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. [35] For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. [36] Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Jesus told the disciples to keep a constant watch for his return. Although nearly 2,000 years have passed since he spoke these words, their truth remains: Christ is coming again, and we need to watch and be spiritually fit. This means working faithfully at the tasks God has given us. Don't let your mind and spirit be dulled by careless living, drinking, or the foolish pursuit of pleasure. Don't let life's anxieties overburden you, so that you will be ready to move at God's command.

Only days after telling the disciples to pray that they might escape persecution, Jesus himself asked God to spare him the agonies of the cross if that was God's will (Luke 22:41-42). It is abnormal to *want* to suffer, but as Jesus' followers we are willing to suffer if by doing so we can help build God's kingdom.

We have two wonderful promises to help us as we suffer: God will always be with us (Matthew 28:20), and he will one day rescue us and give us eternal life (Rev. 21:1-4).

The doctrine of the rapture is to be a source of comfort and encouragement. Paul writes to “Comfort one another with these words”.

There will always be questions about future events, but the fact that Jesus will return is the bottom line and is the source of comfort to believers. The rapture should encourage our hearts as we look at the future with new hope.

Chapter 9

Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus involves the exercise of God's power. This power brought him to life in a new glorified state.

Jesus gave his life on the cross. Because he is alive, week two show a rise on the day of resurrection and give glory to God. There will be a final resurrection.

Matthew 10:7-8

And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. [8] Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

The Jews were waiting for the Messiah to usher in his kingdom. They hoped for a political and military kingdom that would free them from Roman rule and bring back the days of glory under David and Solomon. But Jesus was talking about a spiritual kingdom. The gospel today is that the kingdom is still *near*. Jesus, the Messiah, has already begun his kingdom on earth in the hearts of his followers. One day the kingdom will be fully realized. Then evil will be destroyed, and all people will live in peace with one another.

Jesus gave the disciples a principle to guide their actions as they ministered to others: "Freely you have received, freely give." Because God has showered us with his blessings, we should give generously to others of our time, love, and possessions.

Jesus is the resurrection:

John 11:25-26

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: [26] and whosoever lives and believeth in me shall never die. Believes thou this?

Jesus has power over life and death as well as power to forgive sins. This is because he is the Creator of life (see John 14:6). He who *is* life can surely restore

life. Whoever believes in Christ has a spiritual life that death cannot conquer or diminish in any way. When we realize his power and how wonderful his offer to us really is, how can we help but commit our lives to him! To those of us who believe, what wonderful assurance and certainty we have: “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19).

Death cannot separate you from God.

Romans 8:38-39

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39] Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

No matter what happen, no matter where we are, we can never be lost to his love. Suffering should not drive us away from God but help us to identify with him further and allow his love to reach us and heal us.

These verses contain one of the most comforting promises in all Scripture. Believers have always had to face hardships in many forms: persecution, illness, imprisonment, or even death. These could cause them to fear that Christ has abandoned them. But Paul exclaims that it is *impossible* to be separated from Christ. His death for us is proof of his unconquerable love. Nothing can stop Christ’s constant presence with us. God tells us how great his love is so that we will feel totally secure in him. If we believe these overwhelming assurances, we will not be afraid.

The power of Christ will raise you up.

1 Cor. 6:14

And God hath both risen up the Lord and will also raise up us by his own power.

Romans 8:11

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you.

The Holy Spirit is God's promise or guarantee of eternal life for those who believe in him. The Spirit is in us now by faith, and by faith we are certain to live with Christ forever. See Romans 8:23; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:14.

Those who have been resurrected will be brought into the presence of the Lord.

2 Cor. 4:14

Knowing that he that raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus and shall present us with you.

1 Peter 1:3-4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you,

Peter's words offer joy and hope in times of trouble, and he bases his confidence on what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. We're called into a *living* hope of eternal life (1 Peter 1:3). Our hope is not only for the future; eternal life begins when we trust Christ and join God's family. No matter what pain or trial we face in this life, we know that it is not our final experience. Eventually we will live with Christ forever.

The Jews had looked forward to an inheritance in the promised land of Canaan (Numbers 32:19; Deut. 2:12; Deut. 19:9). Christians now look forward to a family inheritance in the eternal city of God. God has reserved the inheritance; it will never fade or decay; it will be unstained by sin. The best part is that *you* have an inheritance if you have trusted Christ as your Savior. Many saints were resurrected at Jesus crucifixion. See Matthew 27:52-53.

Below is an account of people who were resurrected as recorded in the Bible.

Elijah resurrected the son of Zarephath's widow. 1 Kings 17:17-24

Elisha resurrected the son of the great Shunamite woman 2 Kings 4:35

A dead man comes back to life when he touches Elisha's bones. 2 Kings 13:21

Jesus resurrects the Widow's son of Nain. Luke 7:13-15

Jesus raises Jairus daughter from the dead. Matt. 9:25

Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. John 11:43-44

Peter raises Tabitha from the dead. Acts 9:36-42

Paul raises Eutychus from the dead. Acts 20:9-12

Jesus was raised from the dead.

Matthew 28:5-7

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. [6] He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. [7] And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goes before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

The angel who announced the good news of the resurrection to the women gave them four messages:

(1) *Do not be afraid.* The reality of the resurrection brings joy, not fear. When you are afraid, remember the empty tomb.

(2) *He is not here.* Jesus is not dead and is not to be looked for among the dead. He is alive, with his people.

(3) *Come and see.* The women could check the evidence themselves. The tomb was empty then, and it is empty today. The resurrection is a historical fact.

(4) *Go quickly and tell.* They were to spread the joy of the resurrection. We too are to spread the great news about Jesus' resurrection.

Jesus' resurrection is the key to the Christian faith. Why?

(1) Just as he promised, Jesus rose from the dead. We can be confident, therefore, that he will accomplish all he has promised.

(2) Jesus' bodily resurrection shows us that the living Christ is ruler of God's eternal kingdom, not a false prophet or imposter.

(3) We can be certain of our resurrection because he was resurrected. Death is not the end—there is future life.

(4) The power that brought Jesus back to life is available to us to bring our spiritually dead selves back to life.

(5) The resurrection is the basis for the church's witness to the world. Jesus is more than just a human leader; he is the Son of God.

John 5:28-29

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, [29] And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Those who have rebelled against Christ will be resurrected too, but to hear God's judgment against them and to be sentenced to eternity apart from him. There are those who wish to live well on earth, ignore God, and then see death as final rest. Jesus does not allow unbelieving people to see death as the end of it all. There is a judgment to face.

Because of the resurrection power, there will an everlasting joy for you in heaven.

Chapter 10

The Catching Away

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: [17] Then we that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Knowing exactly when the dead will be raised, in relation to the other events at the second coming, is not as important as knowing why Paul wrote these words—to challenge believers to comfort and encourage one another when loved ones die. This passage can be a great comfort when any believer dies. The same love that should unite believers in this life (1 Thessalonians 4:9) will unite believers when Christ returns and reigns for eternity.

Because Jesus Christ came back to life, so will all believers. All Christians, including those living when Christ returns, will live with Christ forever. Therefore, we need not despair when loved ones die or world events take a tragic turn. God will turn our tragedies to triumphs, our poverty to riches, our pain to glory, and our defeat to victory. All believers throughout history will stand reunited in God’s very presence, safe and secure. As Paul comforted the Thessalonians with the promise of the resurrection, so we should comfort and reassure each other with this great hope.

The word rapture means caught up. The Church of Jesus Christ will be transported from earth to heaven in an instant. There will be no death for those who are raptured. We will be caught up in the air to be with Jesus. It is not difficult to understand why Paul would want this to occur when faced with the trials he was confronted with. No one knows when this will happen, but we are assured that it will happen.

Dr. Charles Ryrie compares those two theories concerning the rapture, but he also asked the variable important question for everyone to study as they face the end times. He asked, “Does it really make any difference when the Lord will come”? Whether his coming is before the great tribulation, or after the great tribulation, we will be blessed by the hope of his coming.

If the rapture is to occur prior to the tribulation, it could happen at any time. If the rapture is not to occur until the end of the tribulation we will find ourselves living through difficult times.

Because Revelation 3:10 promises to keep us from the hour of temptation, many believe that the church will be raptured prior to the tribulation.

Other Scriptures Concerning the Rapture

Matthew 24:29-31

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: [30] And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. [31] And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The nations of the earth will mourn because unbelievers will suddenly realize they have chosen the wrong side. Everything they have scoffed about will be happening, and it will be too late for them.

A Look into the Throne-Room:

Rev. 4:1

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

Rev. 4-5 records glimpses into Christ's glory. Here we see into the throne room of heaven. God is on the throne and orchestrating all the events that John will record. The world is not spinning out of control; the God of creation will carry out his plans as Christ initiates the final battle with the forces of evil. John shows us heaven before showing us earth so that we will not be frightened by future events.

Be Faithful to Watch:

Mark 13:32-37

But of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. [33] Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. [34] For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. [35] Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: [36] Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. [37] And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

When Jesus said that even he did not know the time of the end, he was affirming his humanity. Of course, God the Father knows the time, and Jesus and the Father are one. But when Jesus became a man, he voluntarily gave up the unlimited use of his divine attributes.

The emphasis of this verse is not on Jesus' lack of knowledge, but rather on the fact that no one knows. It is God the Father's secret to be revealed when he wills. No one can predict by Scripture or science the exact day of Jesus' return. Jesus is teaching that preparation, not calculation, is needed.

Matthew 24:31

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Jesus predicted that his followers would be severely persecuted by those who hated what he stood for. In the midst of terrible persecutions, however, they could have hope, knowing that salvation was theirs. Times of trial serve to sift true Christians from false or fair-weather Christians. When you are pressured to give up and turn your back on Christ, don't do it. Remember the benefits of standing firm and continue to live for Christ.

Daniel 12:7

And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that lives forever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

Time, times and half a time” may add up to 3 1/2 years and may be taken as either literal or figurative. “The power of the holy people” seems to be crushed again and again throughout history. God’s recurring purpose in this is to break the pride and self-sufficiency of his rebellious people and to bring them to accept him as their Lord.

Luke 21:34-36

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. [35] For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. [36] Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

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The earth as we know it will not last forever, but after God’s great judgment, he will create a new earth (see Romans 8:18-21; 2 Peter 3:7-13). God had also promised Isaiah that he would create a new and eternal earth (Isaiah 65:17; Isaiah 66:22). The sea in John’s time was viewed as dangerous and changeable. It was also the source of the beast (Rev. 13:1). We don’t know how the new earth will look or where it will be, but God and his followers—those whose names are written in the book of life—will be united to live there forever. Will you be there?

The New Jerusalem is where God lives among his people. Instead of our going up to meet him, he comes down to be with us, just as God became man in Jesus Christ and lived among us (John 1:14). Wherever God reigns, there is peace, security, and love.

Have you ever wondered what eternity will be like? The “Holy City, the new Jerusalem” is described as the place where God will “wipe every tear from their eyes.” Forevermore, there will be no death, pain, sorrow, or crying. What a wonderful truth! No matter what you are going through, it’s not the last word—God has written the final chapter, and it is about true fulfillment and eternal joy for those who love him. We do not know as much as we would like, but it is enough to know that eternity with God will be more wonderful than we could ever imagine.

Chapter 11

The New Heaven and the New Earth

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WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ETERNITY

It is a place prepared for us.

John 14:2-3

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.

I go to prepare a place for you. [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Heaven will be Unlimited by physical proprieties.

John 20:19

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

John 20:26

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

Jesus wasn't hard on Thomas for his doubts. Despite his skepticism, Thomas was still loyal to the believers and to Jesus himself. Some people need to doubt before they believe. If doubt leads to questions, questions lead to answers, and the answers are accepted, then doubt has done good work. It is when doubt becomes stubbornness and stubbornness becomes a life-style that doubt harms faith. When you doubt, don't stop there. Let your doubt deepen your faith as you continue to search for the answer.

We will be like Jesus.

1 John 3:2

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

The Christian life is a process of becoming more and more like Christ (see Romans 8:29). This process will not be complete until we see Christ face to face (1 Cor. 13:12; Phil. 3:21) but knowing that it is our ultimate destiny should motivate us to purify ourselves. To purify means to keep morally straight, free from the corruption of sin. God also purifies us, but there is action we must take to remain morally fit (see 1 Tim. 5:22; James 4:8; 1 Peter 1:22).

Our experience will be wonderful.

1 Cor. 2:9

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Church discipline should seek restoration. Two mistakes in church discipline should be avoided—being too lenient and not correcting mistakes or being too harsh and not forgiving the sinner. There is a time to confront and a time to comfort.

There will be a new environment.

Rev. 21:1

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

Four times in the book of Revelation John says he was “in the Spirit” (Rev. 1:10; Rev. 4:2; Rev. 17:3; Rev. 21:10). This expression means that the Holy Spirit was giving him a vision—showing him situations and events he could not have seen with mere human eyesight. All true prophecy comes from God through the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

We will have a new experience of God's presence.

Rev. 21:3

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Have you ever wondered what eternity will be like? The “Holy City, the new Jerusalem” is described as the place where God will “wipe every tear from their eyes.” Forevermore, there will be no death, pain, sorrow, or crying. What a wonderful truth! No matter what you are going through, it’s not the last word—God has written the final chapter, and it is about true fulfillment and eternal joy for

those who love him. We do not know as much as we would like, but it is enough to know that eternity with God will be more wonderful than we could ever imagine.

We will have new emotions.

Rev. 21:4

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Isaiah Views the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Isaiah 65:25

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

In Isaiah 65:17-19 we have a pictorial description of the new heavens and the new earth. They are eternal, and in them safety, peace, and plenty will be available to all (see also Isaiah 66:22-23; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1). Isaiah 65:20-25 may refer to the reign of Christ on earth because sin and death have not yet been finally destroyed.

Isaiah 2:4

And he shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

God gave Isaiah the gift of seeing the future. At this time, God showed Isaiah what would eventually happen to Jerusalem. Rev. 21 depicts the glorious fulfillment of this prophecy in the New Jerusalem, where only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will be allowed to enter. God made a covenant (promise) with his people and will never break it. God's faithfulness gives us hope for the future.

This describes a wonderful future of peace when instruments of war will be converted to instruments of farming, when we will be taught God's laws and will obey them. Although we know that eventually God will remove all sin and thus the causes of war, conflicts, and other problems, we should not wait for him to act before we begin to obey him. Just as Judah was told in Isaiah 2:5, we should walk in his light now. Though our eternal reward awaits us, we already can enjoy many benefits of obedience now as we apply God's Word to our lives.

Isaiah 51:6-7

Lift up your eyes to the heavens and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. Harken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

Isaiah encouraged those who follow God's laws. He gave them hope when they faced people's reproach or insults because of their faith. We need not fear when people insult us for our faith because God is with us and truth will prevail. If people make fun of you or dislike you because you believe in God, remember that they are not against you personally but against God. God will deal with them; you should concentrate on loving and obeying him.

Isaiah 11:6-9

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. [7] And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. [8] And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. [9] They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

A golden age is yet to come, a time of peace when children could play with formerly dangerous animals. Not all of this was fulfilled at Christ's first coming. For example, nature has not returned to its intended balance and harmony (see

Romans 8:9-22). Such perfect tranquility is possible only when Christ reigns over the earth.

A Great Promise is given:

1 Chron. 29:11

Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.

David contrasts God's everlasting nature with the fleeting lives of his people. Nothing lasts unless it is rooted in God's unchanging character. If our most impressive deeds fade as dust before God, where should we place our confidence? Only in a relationship with God can we find anything permanent. His love never fades, and nothing can take it away.

Here, we have a pictorial description of the new heavens and the new earth. They are eternal, and in them safety, peace, and plenty will be available to all (see also Isaiah 66:22-23; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1). Isaiah 65:20-25 may refer to the reign of Christ on earth because sin and death have not yet been finally destroyed.

Chapter 12

The Final Judgment

All people die physically, but Christ died so that we would not have to die spiritually. We can have wonderful confidence in his saving work for us, doing away with sin—past, present, and future. He has forgiven our past sin—when he died on the cross, he sacrificed himself once for all (Hebrews 9:26); he has given us the Holy Spirit to help us deal with present sin; he appears for us now in heaven as our high priest (Hebrews 9:24); and he promises to return (Hebrews 9:28) and raise us to eternal life in a world where sin will be banished.

All people will face the judgment.

Hebrews 9:27

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: Christ ushered in the new era of grace and forgiveness. We are still living in the “end of the ages.” The day of the Lord has begun and will be completed at Christ’s return.

Romans 14:10-12

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. [11] For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. [12] So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Have you ever been asked, “How do I become a Christian?” These verses give you the beautiful answer—salvation is as close as your own mouth and heart.

People think it must be a complicated process, but it is not. If we believe in our hearts and say with our mouths that Christ is the risen Lord, we will be saved.

This verse must be read in context. Paul is not saying Christians will never be put to shame or be disappointed. There will be times when people will let us down and when circumstances will take a turn for the worse. Paul is saying that God will keep his side of the bargain—those who call on him will be saved. God will never fail to provide righteousness to those who believe.

Both the Living and the dead shall answer for their lives at the judgment.

11 Peter 4:5

Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

The basis of salvation is our belief in Jesus (Acts 16:31), but the basis for judgment is how we have lived. Those who inflict persecution are marked for punishment when they stand before God. Believers have nothing to fear, however, because Jesus will be the final Judge over all (John 5:22; 2 Tim. 4:1).

Many people in the early church had concerns about life after death. In Thessalonica, Christians worried that loved ones who died before Christ's return might never see Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Peter's readers needed to be reminded that the dead (both the faithful and their oppressors) would be judged. The judgment will be perfectly fair, he pointed out, because even the dead have heard the gospel (see also 1 Peter 3:18-19). The Good News was first announced when Jesus Christ preached on the earth, but it has been operating since before the creation of the world (Ephes. 1:4), and it affects all people, the dead as well as the living.

The Devil will be cast out.

John 12:31

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

The prince of this world is Satan, an angel who rebelled against God. Satan is real, not symbolic, and is constantly working against God and those who obey him.

Satan tempted Eve in the garden and persuaded her to sin; he tempted Jesus in the desert and did not persuade him to fall (Matthew 4:1-11). Satan has great power, but people can be delivered from his reign of spiritual darkness because of Christ's victory on the cross. Satan is powerful, but Jesus is much more powerful. Jesus' resurrection shattered Satan's deathly power (Col. 1:13-14). To overcome Satan, we need faithful allegiance to God's Word, determination to stay away from sin, and the support of other believers.

All things that offend will be cast into a furnace of fire.

Matthew 13:39-43

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. [40] As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so, shall it be in the end of this world. [41] The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; [42] And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. [43] Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

At the end of the world, angels will separate the evil from the good. There are true and false believers in churches today, but we should be cautious in our judgments because only Christ is qualified to make the final separation. If you start judging, you may damage some of the good “plants.” It’s more important to judge our own response to God than to analyze others’ responses.

Jesus often uses these terms to refer to the coming judgment. The weeping indicates sorrow or remorse, and gnashing of teeth shows extreme anxiety or pain. Those who say they don’t care what happens to them after they die don’t realize what they are saying. They will be punished for living in selfishness and indifference to God.

Those who receive God’s favor stand in bright contrast to those who receive his judgment. A similar illustration is used in Daniel 12:3.

Matthew 25:31-46

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

God will separate his obedient followers from pretenders and unbelievers. The real evidence of our belief is the way we act. To treat all persons, we encounter as if they are Jesus is no easy task. What we do for others demonstrates what we really think about Jesus’ words to us—feed the hungry, give the homeless a place to stay, look after the sick. How well do your actions separate you from pretenders and unbelievers?

[32] And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats:

Jesus used sheep and goats to picture the division between believers and unbelievers. Sheep and goats often grazed together but were separated when it came time to shear the sheep. Ezekiel 34:17-24 also refers to the separation of sheep and goats.

[33] And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. [34] Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: [35] For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: [36] Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. [37] Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? [38] When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? [39] Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? [40] And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

This parable describes acts of mercy we all can do every day. These acts do not depend on wealth, ability, or intelligence; they are simple acts freely given and freely received. We have no excuse to neglect those who have deep needs, and we cannot hand over this responsibility to the church or government. Jesus demands our personal involvement in caring for others' needs (Isaiah 58:7).

There has been much discussion about the identity of the "brothers." Some have said they are the Jews; others say they are all Christians; still others say they are suffering people everywhere. Such a debate is much like the lawyer's earlier question to Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). The point of this parable is not the who, but the what—the importance of serving where service is needed. The focus of this parable is that we should love every person and serves anyone we can. Such love for others glorifies God by reflecting our love for him

[41] Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: [42] For I was an hungry, and you gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: [43] I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. [44] Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? [45] Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. [46] And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Eternal punishment takes place in hell (the lake of fire, or Gehenna), the place of punishment after death for all those who refuse to repent. In the Bible, three words are used in connection with eternal punishment.

Sheol, or “the grave,” is used in the Old Testament to mean the place of the dead, generally thought to be under the earth. (See Job 24:19; Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 38:10.)

Hades is the Greek word for the underworld, the realm of the dead. It is the word used in the New Testament for Sheol. (See Matthew 16:18; Rev. 1:18; Rev. 20:13-14.)

Gehenna, or hell, was named after the Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem where children were sacrificed by fire to the pagan gods (see 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3). This is the place of eternal fire (Matthew 5:22; Matthew 10:28; Mark 9:43; Luke 12:5; James 3:6; Rev. 19:20) prepared for the devil, his angels, and all those who do not believe in God and accept Jesus as their Saviour. (Matthew 25:46; Rev. 20:9-10).

This is the final and eternal state of the wicked after the resurrection and the last judgment.

When Jesus warns against unbelief, he is trying to save us from agonizing punishment.

Acts 17:31

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Paul did not leave his message unfinished. He confronted his listeners with Jesus' resurrection and its meaning to all people—either blessing or punishment. The Greeks had no concept of judgment. Most of them preferred worshiping many gods instead of just one, and the concept of resurrection was unbelievable and offensive to them. Paul did not hold back the truth, however, no matter what they might think.