

Signs Of Our Times

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Forward

Jesus used many illustrations, or *parables*, when speaking to the crowds.

A parable compares something familiar to something unfamiliar. It helps us understand spiritual truth by using everyday objects and relationships. Parables compel listeners to discover truth, while at the same time concealing the truth from those too lazy or too stubborn to see it.

In this study we look at many aspects of Israel, and how God dealt with them giving us an example of things that are happening now, and in the future.

Without an understanding of how believers must think about sin, and how sin can destroy and lead you into deception, you will not have true understanding of the personality of God.

Many year ago when the Lord impressed me to read the Bible from the beginning to end continually, I asked the Lord why this was important.

The answer spoken to my mind, was so I would understand the personality of God. It is a rewarding adventure.

You will view many scriptures that point the way to signs of our times.

Chapter 1



Stay alert to the signs of the times

Many will claim to be Christ

Matthew 24:4-5

Jesus told them, "Don't let anyone mislead you. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah.' They will lead many astray.

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.

The love of many will grow cold

Matthew 24:12

Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow 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 think only of yourself cannot truly love if you

Take heed so you will not be deceived.

Matthew 13:5-6

Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The plants sprang up quickly, but they soon wilted beneath the hot sun and died because the roots had no nourishment in the shallow soil.

Jesus used many illustrations, or *parables*, when speaking to the crowds. A parable compares something familiar to something unfamiliar. It helps us understand spiritual truth by using everyday objects and relationships. Parables compel listeners to discover truth, while at the same time concealing the truth from those too lazy or too stubborn to see it.

To those who are honestly searching, the truth becomes clear. We must be careful not to read too much into parables, forcing them to say what they don't mean. All parables have one meaning unless otherwise specified by Jesus.

Mark 13:5-6

Jesus replied, "Don't let anyone mislead you, because many will come in my name, claiming to be the Messiah. They will lead many astray."

What are the signs of the end times? There have been people in every generation since Christ's resurrection claiming to know exactly when Jesus would return. No one has been right yet, however, because Christ will return on God's timetable, not ours. Jesus predicted that before his return, false teachers claiming to have revelations from God would mislead many believers.

According to Scripture, the one clear sign of Christ's return will be his unmistakable appearance in the clouds, which will be seen by all people (Mark 13:26; Rev. 1:7). In other words, you do not have to wonder whether a certain person is the Messiah or whether these are the "end times." When Jesus returns, *you will know* beyond a doubt, because it will be evident to all true believers.

Beware of groups who claim special knowledge of the last days, because no one knows when that time will be (Mark 13:32). Be cautious about saying, "This is it!" but be bold in your total commitment to have your heart and life ready for Christ's return.\

The soil represents the hearts of those who follow Christ.

Matthew 13:23

The good soil represents the hearts of those who truly accept God's message and produce a huge harvest—thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted."

The four types of soil represent different responses to God's message. People respond differently because they are in different states of readiness. Some are hardened, others are shallow, distracting worries contaminates others, and some are receptive. How has God's Word taken root in your life? What kind of soil are you?

Many will come in the name of the Lord.

Luke 21:8

He replied, "Don't let anyone mislead you. For many will come in my name, claiming to be the Messiah and saying, 'The time has come!' But don't believe them.

Be aware when they say peace and safety.

1 Thess. 5:4

But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief.

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 "day of the Lord" is a future time when God will intervene directly and dramatically in world affairs. Predicted and discussed often in the Old Testament (Isaiah 13:6-12; Joel 2:28-32; Zeph. 1:14-18), the day of the Lord will include both punishment and blessing. Christ will judge sin and set up his eternal kingdom.

The day of the Lord will come as a thief.

2 Peter 3:10-11

But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and everything in them will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be exposed to judgment.

Since everything around us is going to melt away, what holy, godly lives you should be living!

The day of the Lord is the day of God's judgment on the earth. Here it is used in reference to Christ's return. Christ's second coming will be sudden and terrible for those who do not believe in him. But if we are morally clean and spiritually alert, it won't come as a surprise.

For other prophetic pictures of the day of the Lord, see Isaiah 34:4; Joel 3:15-16; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; Rev. 6:12-17. Realizing that the earth is going to be burned up, we should put our confidence in what is lasting and eternal and not be bound to earth and its treasures or pursuits. Do you spend more of your time piling up possessions, or striving to develop Christ like character?

Those who keep God's words will be blessed.

Rev. 22:7

"Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the prophecy written in this scroll."

The first of the Ten Commandments is “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Jesus said that the greatest command of Moses’ laws was “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). Here, at the end of the Bible, this truth is reiterated.

The angel instructs John to “worship God!” God alone is worthy of our worship and adoration. He is above all creation, even the angels. Are there people, ideas, goals, or possessions that occupy the central place in your life, crowding God out? Worship *only* God by allowing nothing to distract you from your devotion to him.

Nations shall rise against nation.

Matthew 24:7

The nations and kingdoms will proclaim war against each other, and there will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world.

You may not be facing intense persecution now, but Christians in other parts of the world are.

As you hear about Christians suffering for their faith, remember that they are your brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray for them. Ask God what you can do to help them in their troubles. When one part suffers, the *whole* body suffers. But when all the parts join together to ease the suffering, the whole body benefits (1 Cor. 12:26).

Mark 13:8

Nations and kingdoms will proclaim war against each other, and there will be earthquakes in many parts of the world, and famines. But all this will be only the beginning of the horrors to come.

As the early church began to grow, most of the disciples experienced the kind of persecution Jesus was talking about. Since the time of Christ, Christians have been persecuted in their own lands and on foreign mission fields. Though you may be safe from persecution now, your vision of God's kingdom must not be limited by what happens only to you.

A glance at a newspaper will reveal that many Christians in other parts of the world daily face hardships and persecution. Persecutions are an opportunity for Christians to witness for Christ to those opposed to him. These persecutions serve God's desire that the gospel be proclaimed to everyone.

There will be earthquakes, famines and pestilences.

Luke 21:11

There will be great earthquakes, and there will be famines and epidemics in many lands, and there will be terrifying things and great miraculous signs in the heavens.

These persecutions soon began. Luke recorded many of them in the book of Acts.

Paul wrote from prison that he suffered gladly because it helped him know Christ better and do Christ's work for the church (Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24).

The early church thrived despite intense persecution. In fact, late in the second century the church father Tertullian wrote, "The blood of Christians is seed," because opposition helped spread Christianity.

Chapter 2



Persecution of believers will take place

There will be tribulation, hate and murder for the name of the Lord

Matthew 24:9

"Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because of your allegiance to me.

You may not be facing intense persecution now, but Christians in other parts of the world are. As you hear about Christians suffering for their faith, remember that they are your brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray for them. Ask God what you can do to help them in their troubles. When one part suffers, the *whole* body suffers. But when all the parts join together to ease the suffering, the whole body benefits (1 Cor. 12:26).

There will be betrayal by family members.

Mark 13:9-11

But when these things begin to happen, watch out! You will be handed over to the courts and beaten in the synagogues.

You will be accused before governors and kings of being my followers. This will be your opportunity to tell them about me.

As the early church began to grow, most of the disciples experienced the kind of persecution Jesus was talking about. Since the time of Christ, Christians have been persecuted in their own lands and on foreign mission fields. Though you may be safe from persecution now, your vision of God's kingdom must not be limited by what happens only to you.

A glance at a newspaper will reveal that many Christians in other parts of the world daily face hardships and persecution. Persecutions are an opportunity for Christians to witness for Christ to those opposed to him. These persecutions serve God's desire that the gospel be proclaimed to everyone.

And the Good News must first be preached to every nation.

Luke 21:12-13

"But before all this occurs, there will be a time of great persecution.

You will be dragged into synagogues and prisons, and you will be accused before kings and governors of being my followers. [13] This will be your opportunity to tell them about me.

These persecutions soon began. Luke recorded many of them in the book of Acts.

Paul wrote from prison that he suffered gladly because it helped him know Christ better and do Christ's work for the church (Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24). The early church thrived despite intense persecution.

In fact, late in the second century the church father Tertullian wrote, "The blood of Christians is seed," because opposition helped spread Christianity.

Some will seek to kill you.

John 16:2-3

For you will be expelled from the synagogues, and the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing God a service. This is because they have never known the Father or me.

Saul (who later became Paul), under the authority of the high priest, went through the land hunting down and persecuting Christians, convinced that he was doing the right thing (Acts 9:1-2; Acts 26:9-11).

In his last moments with his disciples, Jesus

- (1) warned them about further persecution,
- (2) told them where, when, and why he was going, and
- (3) assured them that they would not be left alone, but that the Spirit would come. Jesus knew what lay ahead, and he did not want the disciples' faith shaken or destroyed.

God wants you to know you are not alone.

You have the Holy Spirit to comfort you, teach you truth, and help you.

Some are slain for their testimony

Rev. 6:9

And when the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of all who had been martyred for the word of God and for being faithful in their witness.

The altar represents the altar of sacrifice in the temple, where animals were sacrificed to atone for sins. Instead of the animals' blood at the base of the altar, John saw the souls of martyrs who had died for preaching the gospel.

These martyrs were told that still more would lose their lives for their belief in Christ (Rev. 6:11). In the face of warfare, famine, persecution, and death, Christians will be called on to stand firmly for what they believe. Only those who endure to the end will be rewarded by God (Mark 13:13).

The martyrs are eager for God to bring justice to the earth, but they are told to wait. God is not waiting until a certain number is reached, but he is promising that those who suffer and die for their faith will not be forgotten. Rather, God will single them out for special honor.

We may wish for justice immediately, as these martyrs did, but we must be patient. God works according to his own timetable, and he promises justice. No suffering for the sake of God's kingdom, however, is wasted.

Chapter 3



Betrayal, deception, apostasy, & falling away

Matthew 24:10

And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other.

In his last moments with his disciples, Jesus (1) warned them about further persecution, (2) told them where, when, and why he was going, and (3) assured them that they would not be left alone, but that the Spirit would come. Jesus knew what lay ahead, and he did not want the disciples' faith shaken or destroyed. God wants you to know you are not alone. You have the Holy Spirit to comfort you, teach you truth, and help you.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all.

Romans 1:18

But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who push the truth away from themselves.

Why is God angry at sinful people? Because they have substituted the truth about him with a fantasy of their own imagination (Romans 1:25). They have stifled the truth God naturally reveals to all people in order to believe anything that supports their own self-centered life-styles. God cannot tolerate sin because his nature is morally perfect. He cannot ignore or condone such willful rebellion.

God wants to remove the sin and restore the sinner—and he is able to, as long as the sinner does not stubbornly distort or reject the truth. But his anger erupts against those who persist in sinning. Make sure you are not pursuing a fantasy rather than the true God. Don't suppress the truth about him merely to protect your own life-style.

Romans 1:18-3:20 develops Paul's argument that no one can claim by their own efforts or merit to be good in God's sight—not the masses, not the Romans, not even the Jews. All people everywhere deserve God's condemnation for their sin.

Does anyone have an excuse for not believing in God? The Bible answers an emphatic *no*. God has revealed what he is like in and through his creation. Every person, therefore, either accepts or rejects God. Don't be fooled. When the day comes for God to judge your response to him, no excuses will be accepted. Begin today to give your devotion and worship to him.

In these verses, Paul answers a common objection: How could a loving God send anyone to hell, especially someone who has never heard about Christ? In fact, says Paul, God has revealed himself plainly in the creation to *all* people.

And yet people reject even this basic knowledge of God. Also, everyone has an inner sense of what God requires, but they choose not to live up

to it. Put another way, people's moral standards are always better than their behavior. If people suppress God's truth in order to live their own way, they have no excuse. They know the truth, and they will have to endure the consequences of ignoring it.

Some people wonder why we need missionaries if people can know about God through nature (the creation).

The answer:

- (1) Although people know that God exists, they suppress that truth by their wickedness and thus refuse a relationship with him. Missionaries sensitively expose their error and point them to a new beginning.
- (2) Although people may believe there is a God, they refuse to commit themselves to him. Missionaries help persuade them, both through loving words and caring actions.
- (3) Missionaries convince people who reject God of the dangerous consequences of their actions.
- (4) Missionaries help the church obey the Great Commission of our Lord (Matthew 28:19-20). (5) Most important, though nature reveals God, people need to be told about Jesus and how, through him, they can have a personal relationship with God.

Knowing that God exists is not enough. People must learn that God is loving. They must understand what he did to demonstrate his love for us (Romans 5:8). They must be shown how to accept God's forgiveness of their sins. (See also Romans 10:14-15.)

Romans 1:32

They are fully aware of God's death penalty for those who do these things, yet they go right ahead and do them anyway. And, worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

Men will be lovers of themselves

2 Tim. 3:1-5

You should also know this, Timothy that in the last days there will be very difficult times.

For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred.

They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel and have no interest in what is good.

They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. You must stay away from people like that.

Men will not endure sound doctrine

2 Tim. 4:2-4

Preach the word of God. Be persistent, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.

For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to right teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever they want to hear. They will reject the truth and follow strange myths.

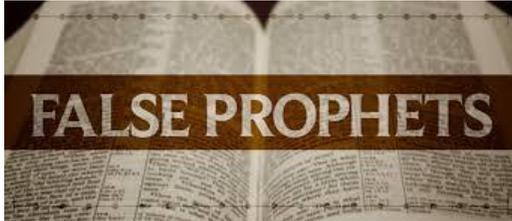
Four times in the book of Revelation John says he was “in the Spirit” (Rev. 1:10; Rev. 4:2; Rev. 17:3; Rev. 21:10). This expression means that the Holy Spirit was giving him a vision—showing him situations and events he could not have seen with mere human eyesight. All true prophecy comes from God through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

Many will follow destructive ways.

1 Peter 2:2-3

You must crave pure spiritual milk so that you can grow into the fullness of your salvation. Cry out for this nourishment as a baby cries for milk, now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness.

Chapter 4



False teachers will deceive many

Matthew 24:11

And many false prophets will appear and will lead many people astray.

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.

False prophets and false Christ will deceive many.

Matthew 13:22

The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the Good News, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares of this life and the lure of wealth, so no crop is produced.

How easy it is to agree with Christ with no intention of obeying. It is easy to denounce worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth, and still do nothing to change our ways. In light of eternal life with God, are your present worries justified? If you had everything you could want but forfeited eternal life with God, would those things be so desirable?

False teachers will follow deceiving ways.

1 Tim. 4:1

Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from what we believe; they will follow lying spirits and teachings that come from demons.

The “later times” began with Christ’s resurrection and will continue until his return when he will set up his kingdom and judge all humanity.

False teachers were and still are a threat to the church. Jesus and the apostles repeatedly warned against them (see, for example, Mark 13:21-23; Acts 20:28-31; 2 Thes. 2:1-12; 2 Peter 3:3-7).

The danger that Timothy faced in Ephesus seems to have come from certain people in the church who were following some Greek philosophers who taught that the body was evil and that only the soul mattered.

The false teachers refused to believe that the God of creation was good, because his very contact with the physical world would have soiled him. Though these Greek-influenced church members honored Jesus, they could not believe he was truly human. Paul knew that their teachings, if left unchecked, would greatly distort Christian truth.

It is not enough that a teacher appears to know what he is talking about, is disciplined and moral, or says that he is speaking for God. If his words contradict the Bible, his teaching is false. Like Timothy, we must guard against any teaching that causes believers to dilute or reject any aspect of their faith. Such false teaching can be very direct or extremely subtle.

False prophets will speak boastful deceitful ways to entice people

2 Peter 2:18-19

They brag about themselves with empty, foolish boasting. With lustful desire as their bait, they lure back into sin those who have just escaped from such wicked living. They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves to sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you.

Chapter 5



Great distress of nations

Ezekiel 9:4-6

He said to him, "Walk through the streets of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of all those who weep and sigh because of the sins they see around them."

Then I heard the Lord say to the other men, "Follow him through the city and kill everyone whose forehead is not marked. Show no mercy; have no pity! Kill them all—old and young, girls and women and little children.

But do not touch anyone with the mark. Begin your task right here at the Temple." So they began by killing the seventy leaders.

God told the man with the writing kit to put a mark on those who were faithful to God. Their faithfulness was determined by their sensitivity to and sorrow over their nation's sin. Those with the mark were spared when the six men began to destroy the wicked people. During the exodus, the Israelites put a mark of blood on their doorframes to save them from death. In the final days, God will mark the foreheads of those destined for salvation (Rev. 7:3), and Satan will mark his followers

(Rev. 13:16-17), who, like him, are destined for destruction. When God punishes sin, he won't forget his promise to preserve his people.

The spiritual leaders ("elders") of Israel blatantly promoted their idolatrous beliefs, and the people abandoned God and followed them. Spiritual leaders are especially accountable to God because they are entrusted with the task of teaching the truth (see James 3:1). When they pervert the truth, they can lead countless people away from God and even cause a nation to fall. It is not surprising, then, that when God began to judge the nation, he started at the temple and worked outward (see 1 Peter 4:17). How sad it is that in the temple, the one place where they should have been teaching God's truth, they were teaching lies.

The angel of the Lord camps round about those that fear the Lord

Psalm 34:1

A psalm of David, regarding the time he pretended to be insane in front of Abimelech, who sent him away. I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises.

God promises great blessings to his people, but many of these blessings require our active participation. He will deliver us from fear (Psalm 34:4), save us out of our troubles (Psalm 34:6), guard and deliver us (Psalm 34:7), show us goodness (Psalm 34:8), supply our needs (Psalm 34:9), listen when we talk to him (Psalm 34:15), and redeem us (Psalm 34:22), but we must do our part. We can appropriate his blessings when we seek him (Psalm 34:4, 10), cry out to him (Psalm 34:6, 17),

trust him (Psalm 34:8), fear him (Psalm 34:7, 9), refrain from lying (Psalm 34:13), turn from evil, do good and seek peace (Psalm 34:14), are humble (Psalm 34:18), and serve him (Psalm 34:22).

The Lord knows how to deliver the righteous out of temptations

2 Peter 2:1-4

But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach their destructive heresies about God and even turn against their Master who bought them. Theirs will be a swift and terrible end.

Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of them, Christ and his true way will be slandered. In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction is on the way.

For God did not spare even the angels when they sinned; he threw them into hell, in gloomy caves and darkness until the judgment day.

No harm will come to believers until they are sealed with God's seal

Rev. 7:3

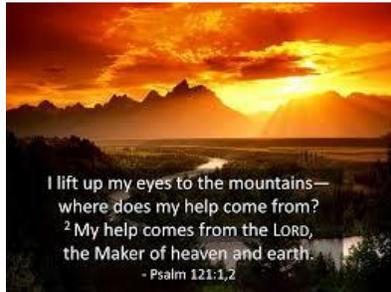
"Wait! Don't hurt the land or the sea or the trees until we have placed the seal of God on the foreheads of his servants."

The sixth seal has been opened, and the people of the earth have tried to hide from God, saying, “Who can stand?” (Rev. 6:12-17). Just when all hope seems lost, four angels hold back the four winds of judgment until God’s people are sealed as his own. Only then will God open the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1).

A seal on a scroll or document identified and protected its contents. God places his own seal on his followers, identifying them as his own and guaranteeing his protection over their souls. This shows how valuable we are to him. Our physical bodies may be beaten, maimed, or even destroyed, but *nothing* can harm our souls when we have been sealed by God. See Ephes. 1:13 for the seal of the Holy Spirit.

God’s seal is placed on the foreheads of his servants. This seal is the exact opposite of the mark of the beast explained in Rev. 13:16. These two marks place the people in two distinct categories—those owned by God and those owned by Satan.

Chapter 6



God's protection during calamity

Ezekiel 9:4-6

He said to him, "Walk through the streets of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of all those who weep and sigh because of the sins they see around them."

Then I heard the Lord say to the other men, "Follow him through the city and kill everyone whose forehead is not marked. Show no mercy; have no pity! Kill them all—old and young, girls and women and little children. But do not touch anyone with the mark. Begin your task right here at the Temple." So they began by killing the seventy leaders.

God told the man with the writing kit to put a mark on those who were faithful to God. Their faithfulness was determined by their sensitivity to and sorrow over their nation's sin.

Those with the mark were spared when the six men began to destroy the wicked people. During the exodus, the Israelites put a mark of blood on their doorframes to save them from death. In the final days,

God will mark the foreheads of those destined for salvation (Rev. 7:3), and Satan will mark his followers (Rev. 13:16-17), who, like him, are

destined for destruction. When God punishes sin, he won't forget his promise to preserve his people.

The spiritual leaders ("elders") of Israel blatantly promoted their idolatrous beliefs, and the people abandoned God and followed them. Spiritual leaders are especially accountable to God because they are entrusted with the task of teaching the truth (see James 3:1).

When they pervert the truth, they can lead countless people away from God and even cause a nation to fall. It is not surprising, then, that when God began to judge the nation he started at the temple and worked outward (see 1 Peter 4:17).

How sad it is that in the temple, the one place where they should have been teaching God's truth, they were teaching lies.

Protection by the angels

Psalm 34:7

**For the angel of the Lord guards all who fear him,
and he rescues them.**

God promises great blessings to his people, but many of these blessings require our active participation.

He will deliver us from fear (Psalm 34:4), save us out of our troubles (Psalm 34:6), guard and deliver us (Psalm 34:7), show us goodness (Psalm 34:8), supply our needs (Psalm 34:9), listen when we talk to him (Psalm 34:15), and redeem us (Psalm 34:22), but we must do our part.

We can appropriate his blessings when we seek him (Psalm 34:4, 10), cry out to him (Psalm 34:6, 17), trust him (Psalm 34:8), fear him (Psalm 34:7, 9), refrain from lying (Psalm 34:13), turn from evil, do good and seek peace (Psalm 34:14), are humble (Psalm 34:18), and serve him (Psalm 34:22).

God knows how to deliver the godly

2 Peter 2:4-9

For God did not spare even the angels when they sinned; he threw them into hell, in gloomy caves and darkness until the judgment day. And God did not spare the ancient world—except for Noah and his family of seven.

Noah warned the world of God's righteous judgment. Then God destroyed the whole world of ungodly people with a vast flood. Later, he turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into heaps of ashes and swept them off the face of the earth. He made them an example of what will happen to ungodly people.

But at the same time, God rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a good man who was sick of all the immorality and wickedness around him.

Yes, he was a righteous man who was distressed by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day.

So you see, the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while punishing the wicked right up until the day of judgment.

If God did not spare angels, or people who lived before the flood, or the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah, he would not spare these false teachers. Some people would have us believe that God will save all people because he is so loving.

But it is foolish to think that he will cancel the last judgment. These three examples should warn us clearly that God judges sin and that unrepentant sinners cannot escape.

Servants of God sealed

Rev. 7:3

"Wait! Don't hurt the land or the sea or the trees until we have placed the seal of God on the foreheads of his servants."

God's seal is placed on the foreheads of his servants. This seal is the exact opposite of the mark of the beast explained in Rev. 13:16. These two marks place the people in two distinct categories—those owned by God and those owned by Satan.

Chapter 7



Signs in the sky

Micah 1:3-4

Look! The Lord is coming! He leaves his throne in heaven and comes to earth, walking on the high places. They melt beneath his feet and flow into the valleys like wax in a fire, like water pouring down a hill.

Jerusalem was the capital city of Judah (the southern kingdom); Samaria was the capital city of Israel (the northern kingdom). The destruction of Samaria was literally fulfilled during Micah's lifetime, in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:1-18), just as he had predicted.

The trumpets will sound

Rev. 8:7-11

The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood were thrown down upon the earth, and one-third of the earth was set on fire. One-third of the trees were burned, and all the grass was burned.

Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and a great mountain of fire was thrown into the sea. And one-third of the water in the sea became blood. And one-third of all things living in the sea died. And one-third of all the ships on the sea were destroyed.

Then the third angel blew his trumpet, and a great flaming star fell out of the sky, burning like a torch. It fell upon one-third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star was Bitterness. It made one-third of the water bitter, and many people died because the water was so bitter.

The sun and moon will grow dark

Joel 2:10

The earth quakes as they advance, and the heavens tremble. The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars no longer shine.

God told the people to turn to him while there was still time. Destruction would soon be upon them. Time is also running out for us. Because we don't know when our lives will end, we should trust and obey God now, while we can. Don't let anything hold you back from turning to him.

Deep remorse was often shown by tearing (rending) one's clothes. But God didn't want an outward display of penitence without true inward repentance (1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 23:1-36). Be sure your attitude toward God is correct, not just your outward actions.

Mark 13:24-25

"At that time, after those horrible days end,
the sun will be darkened,
the moon will not give light,
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the powers of heaven will be shaken.

Rev. 8:12-13

Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and one-third of the sun was struck, and one-third of the moon, and one-third of the stars, and they became dark. And one-third of the day was dark and one-third of the night also.

Then I looked up. And I heard a single eagle crying loudly as it flew through the air, "Terror, terror, terror to all who belong to this world because of what will happen when the last three angels blow their trumpets."

Since only one-third of the earth is destroyed by these trumpet judgments, this is only a partial judgment from God. His full wrath is yet to be unleashed.

Wormwood is a plant with a very bitter taste, and it stands for the bitterness of God's judgment.

Habakkuk used the image of a vulture to symbolize swiftness and destruction (see Habakkuk 1:8). The picture here is of a strong, powerful bird flying over all the earth, warning of the terrors yet to come. While both believers and unbelievers experience the terrors described in Rev. 8:7-12, the "inhabitants of the earth" are the unbelievers who will meet spiritual harm through the next three trumpet judgments.

God has guaranteed believers protection from spiritual harm (Rev. 7:2-3).

In Rev. 6:10, the martyrs call out to God, “How long. . . until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” As we see the world’s wickedness, we too may cry out to God, “How long?” In the following chapters, the judgment comes at last.

We may be distressed and impatient, but God has his plan and his timing, and we must learn to trust him to know what is best. Judgment is coming—be sure of that. Thank God for the time he has given you to turn from sin. Use the available time to work to help others turn to him.

Chapter 8



Demonic beasts will arise from the pit

Rev. 9:1-6

Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen to earth from the sky, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. When he opened it, smoke poured out as though from a huge furnace, and the sunlight and air were darkened by the smoke.

Then locusts came from the smoke and descended on the earth, and they were given power to sting like scorpions. They were told not to hurt the grass or plants or trees but to attack all the people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

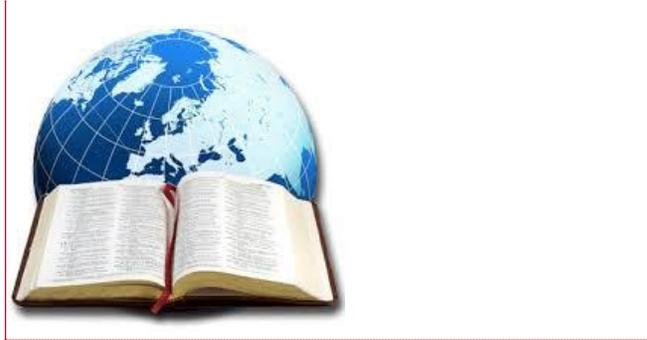
They were told not to kill them but to torture them for five months with agony like the pain of scorpion stings.

In those days people will seek death but will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee away!

Rev. 9:11

Their king is the angel from the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon—the Destroyer.

Chapter 9



Gospel preached in the whole world

Matthew 24:14

And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then, finally, the end will come.

Jesus said that before he returns, the gospel of the kingdom (the message of salvation) would be preached throughout the world. This was the disciples' mission—and it is ours today.

Jesus talked about the end times and final judgment to show his followers the urgency of spreading the good news of salvation to everyone.

Commented [HB1]:

Mark 3:9-10

Jesus instructed his disciples to bring around a boat and to have it ready in case he was crowded off the beach. There had been many healings that day. As a result, many sick people were crowding around him, trying to touch him.

While Jesus was drawing fire from the religious leaders, he was gaining great popularity among the people. Some were curious, some sought healing, some wanted evidence to use against him, and others wanted to know if Jesus truly was the Messiah.

Most of them could only dimly guess at the real meaning of what was happening among them. Today crowds still follow Jesus, and they come for the same variety of reasons. What is your primary reason for following Jesus?

Rev. 14:6

And I saw another angel flying through the heavens, carrying the everlasting Good News to preach to the people who belong to this world—to every nation, tribe, language, and people.

Some believe that this is a final, worldwide appeal to all people to recognize the one true God.

No one will have the excuse of never hearing God's truth. Others, however, see this as an announcement of judgment rather than as an appeal.

The people of the world have had their chance to proclaim their allegiance to God, and now God's great judgment is about to begin. If you are reading this, you have already heard God's truth. You know that God's final judgment will not be put off forever.

Have you joyfully received the everlasting Good News? Have you confessed your sins and trusted in Christ to save you? If so, you have nothing to fear from God's judgment. The Judge of all the earth is your Savior!

Chapter 10



The antichrist will emerge.

2 Thes. 2:1-3

And now, brothers and sisters let us tell you about the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered together to meet him. Please don't be so easily shaken and troubled by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Even if they claim to have had a vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us, don't believe them. Don't be fooled by what they say.

For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction.

Paul describes the end of the world and Christ's second coming. He says that great suffering and trouble lie ahead, but evil will not prevail, because Christ will return to judge all people.

Although Paul presents a few signs of the end times, his emphasis, like Jesus' (Mark 13), is the need for each person to prepare for Christ's return by living rightly day by day. If we are ready, we won't have to be concerned about the preceding events or the timing of Christ's return.

God controls all events. (See 1 Thes. 4-5 for Paul's earlier teaching on this subject.)

In the Bible, the *day of the Lord* is used in two ways: it can mean the end times (beginning with Christ's birth and continuing until today), and it can mean the final judgment day (in the future). Because some false teachers were saying that judgment day had come, many believers were waiting expectantly for their vindication and for relief from suffering. But judgment day had not yet come; other events would have to happen first.

"Prophecy, report, or letter" could refer to the fact that false teaching had come from: (1) someone claiming to have had a divine revelation; (2) someone passing on a teaching as though it were from Paul; or (3) someone distributing a letter supposedly written by Paul.

Deceived because they did not love the truth

2 Thes. 2:9-12

This evil man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. He will use every kind of wicked deception to fool those who are on their way to destruction because they refuse to believe the truth that would save them.

So God will send great deception upon them, and they will believe all these lies. Then they will be condemned for not believing the truth and for enjoying the evil they do.

This lawless one will use “counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders” to deceive and draw a following.

Miracles from God can help strengthen our faith and lead people to Christ, but all miracles are not necessarily from God. Christ’s miracles were significant, not just because of their power, but because of their purpose—to help, to heal, and to point us to God.

The man of lawlessness will have power to do amazing things, but his power will be from Satan. He will use this power to destroy and to lead people away from God and toward himself. If any so-called religious personality draws attention only to himself or herself, his or her work is not from God.

This man of lawlessness with his power and miracles will deceive those who have refused to believe God’s truth. God gives people freedom to turn their backs on him and believe Satan’s lies. If they say no to the truth, they will experience the consequences of their sin.

Chapter 11



Christ will return

Rev. 1:7-8

Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him—even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the earth will weep because of him. Yes! Amen!

"I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come, the Almighty One."

Many hesitate to witness about their faith in Christ because they don't feel the change in their lives has been spectacular enough. But you qualify as a witness for Jesus because of what he has done for you, not because of what you have done for him. Christ demonstrated his great love by setting us free from our sins through his death on the cross ("freed us from our sins by his blood"), guaranteeing us a place in his kingdom, and making us priests to administer God's love to others. The fact that the all-powerful God has offered eternal life to you is nothing short of spectacular.

Jesus is portrayed as an all-powerful King, victorious in battle, glorious in peace. He is not just a humble earthly teacher, he is the glorious God. When you read John's description of the vision, keep in mind that his words are not just good advice; they are truth from the King of kings. Don't just read his words for their interesting and amazing portrayal of the future. Let the truth about Christ penetrate your life, deepen your faith in him, and strengthen your commitment to follow him no matter what the cost.

John is announcing the return of Jesus to earth (see also Matthew 24; Mark 13; 1 Thes. 4:15-18). Jesus' second coming will be *visible* and *victorious*. All people will see him arrive (Mark 13:26), and they will *know* it is Jesus. When he comes, he will conquer evil and judge all people according to their deeds (Rev. 20:11-15).

“Those who pierced him” could refer to the Roman soldiers who pierced Jesus' side as he hung on the cross or to the Jews who were responsible for his death. John saw Jesus' death with his own eyes, and he never forgot the horror of it (see John 19:34-35; see also Zech. 12:10).

Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The Lord God is the beginning and the end. God the Father is the eternal Lord and Ruler of the past, present, and future (see also Rev. 4:8; Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 48:12-15).

Without him you have nothing that is eternal, nothing that can change your life, nothing that can save you from sin. Is the Lord your reason for living, “the Alpha and the Omega” of your life? Honor the One who is the beginning and the end of all existence, wisdom, and power.

Mark 13:26

Then everyone will see the Son of Man arrive on the clouds with great power and glory.

Matthew 24:30-31

And then at last, the sign of the coming of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the nations of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man arrive on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And he will send forth his angels with the sound of a mighty trumpet blast, and they will gather together his chosen ones from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.

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.

Luke 21:27-28

Then everyone will see the Son of Man arrive on the clouds with power and great glory. So when all these things begin to happen, stand straight and look up, for your salvation is near!"

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.

Chapter 12



Satan will be bound

Rev. 20:1-3

Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a heavy chain in his hand.

He seized the dragon—that old serpent, the Devil, Satan—and bound him in chains for a thousand years.

The angel threw him into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked so Satan could not deceive the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished. Afterward he would be released again for a little while.

The 1,000 years are often referred to as the *Millennium* (Latin for *1,000*). Just how and when this 1,000 years takes place is understood differently among Christian scholars. The three major positions on this issue are called postmillennialism, premillennialism, and a millennialism.

Chapter 13



The first Resurrection & the Millennium

Rev. 20:1-3

Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a heavy chain in his hand. He seized the dragon—that old serpent, the Devil, Satan—and bound him in chains for a thousand years.

The angel threw him into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked so Satan could not deceive the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished. Afterward he would be released again for a little while.

1 Cor. 15:51-52

But let me tell you a wonderful secret God has revealed to us. Not all of us will die, but we will all be transformed. It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown.

For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die.

Rev. 20:4-6

Then I saw thrones, and the people sitting on them had been given the authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus, for proclaiming the word of God. And I saw the souls of those who had not worshiped the beast or his statue, nor accepted his mark on their forehead or their hands. They came to life again, and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

This is the first resurrection. (The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended.) Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. For them the second death holds no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him a thousand years.

Chapter 14



The Judgment and the lake of fire

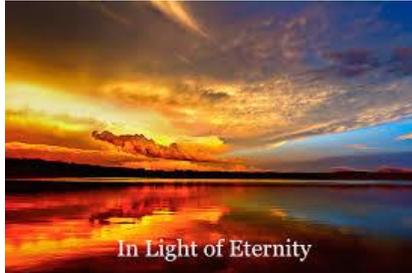
Rev. 20:13-14

The sea gave up the dead in it, and death and the grave gave up the dead in them. They were all judged according to their deeds. [14] And death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death—the lake of fire.

At the judgment, the books are opened. They represent God's judgment, and in them are recorded the deeds of everyone, good or evil. We are not saved by deeds, but deeds are seen as clear evidence of a person's actual relationship with God. The book of life contains the names of those who have put their trust in Christ to save them.

Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire. God's judgment is finished. The lake of fire is the ultimate destination of everything wicked—Satan, the beast, the false prophet, the demons, death, Hades, and all those whose names are not recorded in the book of life because they did not place their faith in Jesus Christ. John's vision does not permit any gray areas in God's judgment. If by faith we have not identified with Christ, confessing him as Lord, there will be no hope, no second chance, no other appeal.

Chapter 15



The new heavens and the new earth

Rev. 21:1-2

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. [2] And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

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?

Rev. 21:3-5

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. 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. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, write: for these words are true and faithful.

Rev. 21:27

Nothing evil will be allowed to enter—no one who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The “cowardly” are not those who are fainthearted in their faith or who sometimes doubt or question, but those who turn back from following God. They are not brave enough to stand up for Christ; they are not humble enough to accept his authority over their lives. They are put in the same list as the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the liars, the idolaters, the sexually immoral, and those practicing magic arts.

People who overcome “stand firm to the end” (Mark 13:13). They will receive the blessings that God promised:

- (1) Eating from the tree of life (Rev. 2:7),
- (2) escaping from the lake of fire (the “second death,” Rev. 2:11),

- (3) Receiving a special name (Rev. 2:17),
- (4) Having authority over the nations (Rev. 2:26),
- (5) Being included in the book of life (Rev. 3:5),
- (6) Being a pillar in God's spiritual temple (Rev. 3:12), and
- (7) Sitting with Christ on his throne (Rev. 3:21).

Those who can endure the testing of evil and remain faithful will be rewarded by God.

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

