



*Grace be unto you, and peace,
from God our Father,
and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Thessalonians 1:1

The Day of the Lord

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Forward

Zephaniah 1:15 describes the day of the Lord as "tribulation, trouble, or distress".

By this we know that the great tribulation (a day unlike any other), and the Day of the Lord (a day unlike any other), are speaking of the same time. Yes, the Day of the Lord, is clearly described as tribulation, distress, trouble.

Zephaniah 1:

14 The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hastens greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of waste and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

16 A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

17 And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

As you read these Biblical accounts from the prophesy of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. Be aware that we are living in the time of the end. The Day of the Lord, could began at any time.

Chapter 1

The Day of the Lord

1 Thes. 5:1-3

I really don't need to write to you about how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters. For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. When people are saying, "All is well; everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall upon them as suddenly as a woman's birth pains begin when her child is about to be born. And there will be no escape.

Times and dates" refers to the knowledge of what will happen in the future, specifically to the return of Christ.

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.

Predictions discussed often in the Old Testament

Isaiah 13:6-12

Scream in terror, for the Lord's time has arrived—the time for the Almighty to destroy. Every arm is paralyzed with fear. Even the strongest hearts melt and are afraid. Fear grips them with terrible pangs, like those of a woman about to give birth. They look helplessly at one another as the flames of the burning city reflect on their faces.

For see, the day of the Lord is coming—the terrible day of his fury and fierce anger. The land will be destroyed and all the sinners with it. [10] The heavens will be black above them. No light will shine from stars or sun or moon.

“I, the Lord, will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their sin. I will crush the arrogance of the proud and the haughtiness of the mighty. Few will be left alive when I have finished my work.

Joel 2:28-32

“Then after I have poured out my rains again, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. In those days, I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, men and women alike. “I will cause wonders in the heavens and on the earth—blood and fire and pillars of smoke. [31] The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and terrible day of the Lord arrives. And anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. There will be people on Mount Zion in Jerusalem who escape, just as the Lord has said. These will be among the survivors whom the Lord has called.

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 God's Spirit is available now to anyone who calls on the Lord .

These “wonders” would give a hint or a picture of a coming event.

The “day of the LORD” is used here as God's appointed time to judge the nations Joel 1:15. Judgment and mercy go hand in hand. Joel had said that if the people repented, the Lord would save them from judgment

In this Day of Judgment and catastrophe, therefore, some will be saved. God's intention is not to destroy but to heal and to save. However, we must accept his salvation or we will certainly perish with the unrepentant.

Joel 2:12-14

That is why the Lord says, “Turn to me now, while there is time! Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don't tear your clothing in your grief; instead, tear your hearts.” Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you. Who knows? Perhaps even yet he will give you a reprieve, sending you a blessing instead of this terrible curse. Perhaps he will give you so much that you will be able to offer grain and wine to the Lord your God as before!

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 by tearing one's clothes, but God didn't want an outward display of penitence without true inward repentance (1 Samuel 16:7;

You attitude must be toward God, rather than an outward action.

1 Samuel 16:7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn’t make decisions the way you do! People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at a person’s thoughts and intentions.”

Saul was tall and handsome; he was an impressive-looking man. Samuel may have been trying to find someone who looked like Saul to be Israel’s next king, but God warned him against judging by appearance alone. When people judge by outward appearance, they may overlook quality individuals who lack the particular physical qualities society currently admires.

Chapter 2

Appearance are often Deceitful

Fortunately, God judges by faith and character, not appearances. And because only God can see on the inside, only he can accurately judge people. Most people spend hours each week maintaining their outward appearance; they should do even more to develop their inner character. While everyone can see your face, only you and God know what your heart really looks like. What steps are you taking to improve your heart’s attitude?

Other Old Testament references concerning the Day of the Lord

Joel 1:15

The day of the Lord is on the way, the day when destruction comes from the Almighty. How terrible that day will be!

The “day of the LORD” is a common phrase in the Old Testament and in the book of Joel (see Joel 2:1, 11, 31; Joel 3:14). It always refers to some extraordinary happening, whether a present event (like a locust plague), an event in the near future (like the destruction of Jerusalem or the defeat of enemy nations), or the final period of history when God will defeat all the forces of evil.

Even when the day of the Lord refers to a present event, it also foreshadows the final day of the Lord. This final event of history has two aspects to it: (1) the last judgment on all evil and sin and (2) the final reward for faithful believers.

Righteousness and truth will prevail, but not before much suffering (Zech. 14:1-3). If you trust the Lord, looking toward this final day should give you hope, because then all who are faithful will be united forever with God.

Without God, destruction is sure. Those who have not personally accepted God's love and forgiveness will stand before him with no appeal. Be sure to call on God's love and mercy while you have the opportunity

And anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. There will be people on Mount Zion in Jerusalem who escape, just as the Lord has said. These will be among the survivors whom the Lord has called.

Ezekiel 39:28-29

Then my people will know that I am the Lord their God—responsible for sending them away to exile and responsible for bringing them home. I will leave none of my people behind. And I will never again turn my back on them, for I will pour out my Spirit upon them, says the Sovereign Lord."

Both in this prophecy and in Joel 2:28-29, God promises to pour out his Spirit on mankind. The early church believed this began to be fulfilled at Pentecost, when God's Holy Spirit came to live in all believers (Acts 2:1-18).

Zech. 14:1-3

Watch, for the day of the Lord is coming when your possessions will be plundered right in front of you! On that day I will gather all the nations to fight against Jerusalem. The city will be taken, the houses plundered, and the women raped. Half the population will be taken away into captivity, and half will be left among the ruins of the city.

[3] Then the Lord will go out to fight against those nations, as he has fought in times past.

Many times in the Bible we are encouraged to watch for the day of the Lord. What if you knew exactly when this would happen? Would you live differently? Christ could return at any moment. Be ready for him by studying the Scriptures carefully and by making sure that you live as he intends—in obedience and spiritual readiness.

This chapter portrays the eventual triumph of the Messiah over all the earth and his reign over God's people. But the chronological order of these future events is not clear. They show that God has various ways of dealing with his people. Now we are to watch as the events unfold and God provides an escape for his people.

Zeph. 1:14-18

"That terrible day of the Lord is near. Swiftly it comes—a day when strong men will cry bitterly. It is a day when the Lord's anger will be poured out. It is a day of terrible distress and anguish, a day of ruin and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, of clouds, blackness, trumpet calls, and battle cries. Down go the walled cities and strongest battlements!

"Because you have sinned against the Lord, I will make you as helpless as a blind man searching for a path. Your blood will be poured out into the dust, and your bodies will lie there rotting on the ground."

Your silver and gold will be of no use to you on that day of the Lord's anger. For the whole land will be devoured by the fire of his jealousy. He will make a terrifying end of all the people on earth.

God is Holy and will actively Judge

Some people think of God as an indulgent heavenly grandfather, nice to have around, but not a real force in shaping modern life. They don't believe in his power or his coming judgment. But God is holy, and therefore he will actively judge and justly punish everyone who is content to live in sin, indifferent to him, or unconcerned about justice. When people are indifferent to God, they tend to think that he is indifferent to them and their sin. They will be surprised to find that "the great day of the LORD is near."

The great day of the Lord was near; the Babylonians would soon come and destroy Jerusalem. The day of the Lord is also near for us. God promises a final judgment, a day of worldwide destruction (Rev. 20:12-15). The Babylonian conquest occurred just as surely and horribly as Zephaniah had predicted. And God's final day of judgment is also sure—but so is his ability to save. To be spared from judgment, recognize that you have sinned, that your sin will bring judgment, that you cannot save yourself, and that God alone can save you.

Money is not evil in itself, but it is useless to save us. In this life, money can warp our perspective, giving us feelings of security and power.

Just as the Israelites' wealth could not save them from the Babylonian invasion, so at the final judgment, our riches will be worthless. Only Christ's redemptive work on our behalf matters for eternity. Christ alone will ransom us if we believe in him. Don't trust money; trust Christ.

Peter quoted Old Testament Prophecy.

Acts 2:16-21

No, what you see was predicted centuries ago by the prophet Joel:
'In the last days, God said, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions,
and your old men will dream dreams.

In those days I will pour out my Spirit upon all my servants, men and women alike,
and they will prophesy.

And I will cause wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below—
blood and fire and clouds of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, and the
moon will turn blood red before that great and glorious day of the Lord arrives.

And anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Chapter 3

The Day of the Lord comes Unexpectedly

1 Thes. 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. For you are all children of the light and of the day. We don't belong to darkness and night. So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be sober. Night is the time for sleep and the time when people get drunk. But let us who live in the light think clearly, protected by the body armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.

For God decided to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us.

As you near the end of a long race, your legs ache, your throat burns, and your whole body cries out for you to stop. This is when friends and fans are most valuable. Their encouragement helps you push through the pain to the finish line. In the same way, Christians are to encourage one another. A word of encouragement offered at the right moment can be the difference between finishing well and collapsing along the way. Look around you. Be sensitive to others' need for encouragement, and offer supportive words or actions.

Put on the Helmet of Salvation

Ephes. 6:13-17

Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News, so that you will be fully prepared.

In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

In the Christian life we battle against rulers and authorities (the powerful evil forces of fallen angels headed by Satan, who is a vicious fighter, see 1 Peter 5:8). To withstand their attacks, we must depend on God's strength and use every piece of his armor. Paul is not only giving this counsel to the church, the body of Christ, but to all individuals within the church. The whole body needs to be armed. As you do battle against "the powers of this dark world," fight in the strength of the church, whose power comes from the Holy Spirit.

These who are not "flesh and blood" are demons over whom Satan has control. They are not mere fantasies—they are very real. We face a powerful army whose goal is to defeat Christ's church. When we believe in Christ, these beings become our enemies, and they try every device to turn us away from him and back to sin. Although we are assured of victory, we must engage in the struggle until Christ returns, because Satan is constantly battling against all who are on the Lord's side. We need supernatural power to defeat Satan, and God has provided this by giving us his Holy Spirit within us, and his armor surrounding us. If you feel discouraged, remember Jesus' words to Peter: "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18).

Chapter 4

GOD'S ARMOR FOR US

We are engaged in a spiritual battle—all believers find themselves subject to Satan's attacks because they are no longer on Satan's side. Thus, Paul tells us to use every piece of God's armor to resist Satan's attacks and to stand true to God in the midst of those attacks.

The Belt of Truth

Satan fights with lies, and sometimes his lies sound like truth; but only believers have God's truth, which can defeat Satan's lies

Breastplate of Righteousness

Satan often attacks our hearts—the seat of our emotions, self-worth, and trust. God's righteousness is the breastplate that protects our hearts and ensures his approval. He approves of us because he loves us and sent his Son to die for us

Footgear and Readiness to spread the Good News

Satan wants us to think that telling others the Good News is a worthless and hopeless task—the size of the task is too big and the negative responses are too much to handle. But the footgear God gives us is the motivation to continue to proclaim the true peace that is available in God—news everyone needs to hear

The Shield of Faith

What we see are Satan's attacks in the form of insults, setbacks, and temptations.

But the shield of faith protects us from Satan's flaming arrows. With God's perspective, we can see beyond our circumstances and know that ultimate victory is ours.

The Helmet of Salvation

Satan wants to make us doubt God, Jesus, and our salvation. The helmet protects our minds from doubting God's saving work for us.

1 Thess. 5:10 -12

[10] He died for us so that we can live with him forever, whether we are dead or alive at the time of his return. So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

As you near the end of a long race, your legs ache, your throat burns, and your whole body cries out for you to stop. This is when friends and fans are most valuable. Their encouragement helps you push through the pain to the finish line. In the same way, Christians are to encourage one another. A word of encouragement offered at the right moment can be the difference between finishing well and collapsing along the way. Look around you. Be sensitive to others' need for encouragement, and offer supportive words or actions.

Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong.

1 Thes: 5:13

Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other.

“Those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord” probably refers to elders and deacons in the church.

How can you show respect to and hold in the “highest regard” your pastor and other church leaders? Express your appreciation, tell them how you have been helped by their leadership and teaching, and thank them for their ministry in your life. If you say nothing, how will they know where you stand? Remember, they need and deserve your support and love.

1 Thes. 5:14-15

Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone.

See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to everyone else.

Don't loaf around with the idle; warn them. Don't yell at the timid and weak; encourage and help them. At times it's difficult to distinguish between idleness and timidity. Two people may be doing nothing—one out of laziness and the other out of shyness or fear of doing something wrong.

The key to ministry is sensitivity: sensing the condition of each person and offering the appropriate remedy for each situation. You can't effectively help until you know the problem. You can't apply the medicine until you know where the wound is.

Chapter 5

A View of the Anti-Christ

2 Thes. 2:1-17

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, or a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us, don't believe them.

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.

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.

He will exalt himself and defy every god there is and tear down every object of adoration and worship. He will position himself in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God. Don't you remember that I told you this when I was with you? And you know what is holding him back, for he can be revealed only when his time comes.

For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way.

Then the man of lawlessness will be revealed whom the Lord Jesus will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

Throughout history there have been individuals who epitomized evil and who were hostile to everything Christ stands for (see 1 John 2:18; John 4:3; 2 John 1:7). These antichrists have lived in every generation and will continue to work their evil. Then just before Christ's second coming, "the man of lawlessness. . . the man doomed to destruction," a completely evil man, will arise. He will be Satan's tool, equipped with Satan's power (2 Thes. 2:9). This lawless man will be *the* antichrist.

It is dangerous, however, to label any person as the antichrist and to try to predict Christ's coming based on that assumption. Paul mentions the antichrist, not so we might identify him specifically, but so we might be ready for anything that threatens our faith.

If our faith is strong, we don't need to be afraid of what lies ahead, because we know that this lawless man has already been defeated by God, no matter how powerful he becomes or how terrible our situation seems. God is in control, and he will be victorious over the antichrist.

Our task is to be prepared for Christ's return and to spread the gospel so that even more people will also be prepared.

When Paul first wrote to the Thessalonians, they were in danger of losing hope in the second coming. Then they shifted to the opposite extreme—some of them thought that Jesus would be coming at any minute. Paul tried to restore the balance by describing certain events that would happen before Christ's return.

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.

Who holds back the lawless one? We do not know for certain. Three possibilities have been suggested: (1) government and law, which help to curb evil; (2) the ministry and activity of the church and the effects of the gospel; or (3) the Holy Spirit. The Bible is not clear on who this restrainer is, only that he will not restrain forever. But we should not fear this time when the restraint is removed—God is far stronger than the man of lawlessness, and God will save his people.

“The secret power of lawlessness is already at work” means that the work that this antichrist will do is already going on. *Secret* means something no one can discover, but something God will reveal. *Lawlessness* is the hidden, subtle, underlying force from which all sin springs.

Civilization still has a veneer of decency through law enforcement, education, science, and reason. Although we are horrified by criminal acts, we have yet to see the real horror of complete lawlessness.

This will happen when “the one who now holds it back (possibly the Holy Spirit). . . is taken out of the way.” Why will God allow this to happen? To show people and nations their own sinfulness, and to show them by bitter experience the true alternative to the lordship of Christ. People totally without God can act no better than vicious animals. Lawlessness, to a certain extent, is already going on, but the man of lawlessness has not yet been revealed.

God will send Great Deception

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, he is not from God.

As for us, we always thank God for you, dear brothers and sisters loved by the Lord. We are thankful that God chose you to be among the first to experience salvation, a salvation that came through the Spirit who makes you holy and by your belief in the truth.

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.

You can now share the Good News

He called you to salvation when we told you the Good News; now you can share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on everything we taught you both in person and by letter.

May our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and in his special favor gave us everlasting comfort and good hope,

Comfort your hearts and give you strength in every good thing you do and say.

Chapter 6

Preparing for the Day of the Lord

Malachi 3:13-4:6

"You have said terrible things about me," says the Lord. "But you say, 'What do you mean? How have we spoken against you?'"

"You have said, 'What's the use of serving God? What have we gained by obeying his commands or by trying to show the Lord Almighty that we are sorry for our sins? From now on we will say, "Blessed are the arrogant." For those who do evil get rich, and those who dare God to punish them go free of harm.' "

These verses describe the people's arrogant attitude toward God. When we ask, "What good does it do to serve God?" we are really asking, "What good does it do for *me*?" Our focus is selfish. Our real question should be, "What good does it do for God?" We must serve God just because he is God and deserves to be served.

The "scroll of remembrance" may or may not be an actual book. The point is that God will remember those who remain faithful to him, and who love, fear, honor, and respect him.

The Teachings in the Old Testament end with Hope.

Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and loved to think about him. "They will be my people," says the Lord Almighty. "On the day when I act, they will be my own special treasure. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient and dutiful child.

God's treasured possessions are those people who are faithful to him.

This fulfills the promise he made in the covenant to his people (Exodus 19:5). According to 1 Peter 2:9, believers are God's treasured possession. Have you committed your life to God for safekeeping?

Exodus 19:5

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

Why did God choose Israel as his nation? God knew that no nation on earth was good enough to deserve to be called his people, his “treasured possession.” He chose Israel, not because of anything they had done, but in his love and mercy he chose Israel in spite of the wrong the nation had done and would do. Why did he want to have a special nation on earth? Believers represent his way of life, to teach his Word, and to be an agent of salvation to the world. “All nations on earth” would be blessed through Abraham’s descendants (Genesis 18:18). Gentiles and kings would come to the Lord through Israel, predicted Isaiah (Isaiah 60:3). Through the nation of Israel, the Messiah, God’s chosen Son, would be born. God chose one nation and put it through a rigorous training program, so that one day it could be a channel for his blessings to the whole world.

1 Peter 2:9

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

Christians sometimes speak of “the priesthood of all believers.” In Old Testament times, people did not approach God directly. A priest acted as intermediary between God and sinful human beings. With Christ’s victory on the cross, that pattern changed. Now we can come directly into God’s presence without fear (Hebrews 4:16), and we are given the responsibility of bringing others to him also (2 Cor. 5:18-21). When we are united with Christ as members of his body, we join in his priestly work of reconciling God and man.

People often base their self-concept on their accomplishments. But our relationship with Christ is far more important than our jobs, successes, wealth, or knowledge.

We have been called to represent Christ to Others

We have been chosen by God as his very own children, and we have been called to represent him to others. Remember that your value comes from being one of God’s children, not from what you can achieve. You have worth because of what *God does*, not because of what you do.

Then you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not."

The Lord Almighty says, "The day of judgment is coming, burning like a furnace. The arrogant and the wicked will be burned up like straw on that day. They will be consumed like a tree—roots and all. "But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture.

In the day of the Lord, God's wrath toward the wicked will burn like a furnace (Malachi 4:1). But he will be like the healing warmth of the sun to those who love and obey him. John the Baptist prophesied that with the coming of Jesus, the dawn was about to break with light for those in sin's darkness (Luke 1:76-79). In Isaiah 60:20 and Rev. 21:23-24 we learn that no light will be needed in God's holy city, because God himself will be the light.

These last verses of the Old Testament are filled with hope. Regardless of how life looks now, God controls the future, and everything will be made right. We who have loved and served God look forward to a joyful celebration. This hope for the future becomes ours when we trust God with our lives.

On the day when I act, you will tread upon the wicked as if they were dust under your feet," says the Lord Almighty.

"Remember to obey the instructions of my servant Moses, all the laws and regulations that I gave him on Mount Sinai for all Israel. "Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord arrives. His preaching will turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the hearts of children to their parents. Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse."

Elijah was one of the greatest prophets who ever lived (his story is recorded in 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2). With Malachi's death, the voice of God's prophets would be silent for 400 years. Then a prophet would come, like Elijah, to herald Christ's coming (Matthew 17:10-13; Luke 1:17). This prophet was John the Baptist. John prepared people's hearts for Jesus by urging people to repent of their sins. Christ's coming would bring unity and peace, but also judgment on those who refused to turn from their sins.

Malachi gives us practical guidelines about commitment to God. God deserves the best we have to offer (Malachi 1:7-10). We must be willing to change our wrong

ways of living (Malachi 2:1-2). We should make family a lifelong priority (Malachi 2:13-16). We should welcome God's refining process in our lives (Malachi 3:3). We should tithe our income (Malachi 3:8-12). There is no room for pride (Malachi 3:13-15).

Malachi closes his messages by pointing to that great final day of judgment. For those who are committed to God, judgment day will be a day of joy because it will usher in eternity in God's presence. Those who have ignored God will be "stubble," to be burned up (Malachi 4:1). To help the people prepare for that Day of Judgment, God would send a prophet like Elijah (John the Baptist), who would prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah. The New Testament begins with this prophet calling the people to turn from their sins and to turn toward God. Such a commitment to God demands great sacrifice on our part, but we can be sure it will be worth it all in the end.

Chapter 7

Prophecies Preceding the Return of Jesus

A Study in Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:1-51

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.

[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.

[4] And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. [5] For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. [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. [7] For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. [8] All these are the beginning of sorrows. [9] Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake

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).

[10] And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. [11] And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. [12] And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. [13] But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

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.

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.

[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. [15] When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) [16] Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

What was this “abomination that causes desolation” mentioned by both Daniel and Jesus? Rather than one specific object, event, or person, it could be seen as any deliberate attempt to mock and deny the reality of God's presence. Daniel's prediction came true in 168 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed a pig to Zeus on the sacred temple altar (Daniel 9:27; Daniel 11:30-31). Jesus' words were remembered in A.D. 70 when Titus placed an idol on the site of the burned temple after destroying Jerusalem. In the end times the antichrist will set up an image of himself and order everyone to worship it (2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 13:14-15). These are all “abominations” that mock God.

[17] Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18) Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. [19] And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! [20] But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day: [21] For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. [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 are 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.

[23] Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. [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. [25] Behold, I have told you before. [26] Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. [27] For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. [28] For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Jesus' warnings about false teachers still hold true. Upon close examination it becomes clear that many nice-sounding messages don't agree with God's message in the Bible. Only a solid foundation in God's Word can equip us to perceive the errors and distortions in false teaching.

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, then he hasn't (Matthew 24:27). Christ's coming will be obvious to everyone.

[29] 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.

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.

[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.

[32] Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: [33] So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. [34] Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. [35] Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. [36] But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

It is good that we don't know exactly when Christ will return. If we knew the precise date, we might be tempted to be lazy in our work for Christ. Worse yet, we might plan to keep sinning and then turn to God right at the end. Heaven is not our only goal; we have work to do here. And we must keep on doing it until death or until we see the unmistakable return of our Savior.

[37] But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. [38] For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, [39] And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. [40] Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. [41] Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. [42] Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Christ's second coming will be swift and sudden. There will be no opportunity for last-minute repentance or bargaining. The choice we have already made will determine our eternal destiny.

[43] But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. [44] Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Jesus' purpose in telling about his return is not to stimulate predictions and calculations about the date, but to warn us to be prepared. Will you be ready? The only safe choice is to obey him *today* (Matthew 24:46).

[45] Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? [46] Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. [47] Verily I say unto you, That he

shall make him ruler over all his goods. [48] But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delays his coming; [49] And shall begin to smite his fellow servant, and to eat and drink with the drunken; [50] The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, [51] And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Knowing that Christ's return will be sudden and unexpected should motivate us always to be prepared. We are not to live irresponsibly—sitting and waiting, doing nothing; seeking self-serving pleasure; using his tarrying as an excuse not to do God's work of building his kingdom; developing a false security based on precise calculations of events; or letting our curiosity about the end times divert us from doing God's work.

Chapter 8

Some Scoff at the Lord's Return.

2 Peter 3:1-4

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: [2] That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: [3] Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, [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.

God's Word is Consistent

2 Peter 3:5-7

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: [6] Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: [7] But the heavens

and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

In Noah's day the earth was judged by water; at the second coming it will be judged by fire. This fire is described in Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:10-15.

Rev. 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.

Rev. 20:10-15

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 for ever and ever.

[11] And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. [12] And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. [13] And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. [14] And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. [15] And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into 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.

God's Word is not Effected by Time

2 Peter 3:8-9

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

God may have seemed slow to these believers as they faced persecution every day and longed to be delivered. But God is not slow; he just is not on *our* timetable (Psalm 90:4). Jesus is waiting so that more sinners will repent and turn to him. We must not sit and wait for Christ to return, but we should live with the realization that time is short and that we have important work to do. Be ready to meet Christ any time, even today; yet plan your course of service as though he may not return for many years.

Paul Describes the Coming of the Lord

1 Thes. 4:13-18

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. [14] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. [15] For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them

which are asleep. [16] 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 which 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. [18] Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The Thessalonians were wondering why many of their fellow believers had fallen asleep (died) and what would happen to them when Christ returned. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to understand that death is not the end of the story. When Christ returns, all believers—dead and alive—will be reunited, never to suffer or die again.

What does Paul mean when he says, “according to the Lord’s own word”? Either this was something that the Lord had revealed directly to Paul, or it was a teaching of Jesus that had been passed along orally by the apostles and other Christians.

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 Thes. 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 Day of the Lord will not Overtake Christians

1 Thes. 5:4-6

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. [5] Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the

night, nor of darkness. [6] Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

Mark 13:32-37

But of that day and that hour knoweth 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.

Do you place the same importance on preparing for Christ's return, the most important event in your life? Its results will last for eternity. You dare not postpone your preparations because you do not know when his return will occur. The way to prepare is to study God's Word and live by its instructions each day. Only then will you be ready.

The entire thirteenth chapter of Mark tells us how to live while we wait for Christ's return: (1) We are not to be misled by confusing claims or speculative interpretations of what will happen (Mark 13:5-6). (2) We should not be afraid to tell people about Christ, despite what they might say or do to us (Mark 13:9-11). (3) We must stand firm by faith and not be surprised by persecutions (Mark 13:13). (4) We must be morally alert, obedient to the commands for living found in God's Word. This chapter was not given to promote discussions on prophetic timetables, but to stimulate right living for God in a world where he is largely ignored.

Those who do not watch should hold fast and repent

Rev. 3:1-3

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

[2] Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. [3] Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

The wealthy city of Sardis was actually in two locations. The older section of the city was on a mountain, and, when its population outgrew the spot, a newer section was built in the valley below.

The “seven spirits of God” is another name for the Holy Spirit. The seven stars are the messengers, or leaders, of the churches (see Rev. 2:1).

The problem in the Sardis church was not heresy, but spiritual death. In spite of its reputation for being active, Sardis was infested with sin. Its deeds were evil and its clothes soiled. The Spirit has no words of commendation for this church that looked so good on the outside but was so corrupt on the inside.

The church at Sardis was urged to obey the Christian truth they had heard when they first believed in Christ, to get back to the basics of the faith. It is important to grow in our knowledge of the Lord, to deepen our understanding through careful study. But no matter how much we learn, we must never abandon the basic truths about Jesus. Jesus will always be God’s Son, and his sacrifice for our sins is permanent. No new truth from God will ever contradict these Biblical teachings.

Chapter 9

Christ's Coming will usher in a New Order

Rev. 21:1-5

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. [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. [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. [5] 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.

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.

God is the Creator. The Bible begins with the majestic story of his creation of the universe, and it concludes with his creation of a new heaven and a new earth. This is a tremendous hope and encouragement for the believer. When we are with God, with our sins forgiven and our future secure, we will be like Christ. We will be made perfect like him.

The City of the Redeemed

Hebrews 11:10

For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Abraham's life was filled with faith. At God's command, he left home and went to another land—obeying without question (Genesis 12:1ff). He believed the covenant that God made with him (Genesis 12:2-3; Genesis 13:14-16; Genesis 15:1-6). In obedience to God, Abraham was even willing to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19). Do not be surprised if God asks you to give up secure, familiar surroundings in order to carry out his will. For further information on Abraham, see his Profile.

Hebrews 11:13-14

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. [14] For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

That we are “aliens and strangers” may be an awareness forced on us by circumstances. It may come late in life or as the result of difficult times. But this world is not our home. We cannot live here forever (see also 1 Peter 1:1). It is best for us not to be so attached to this world's desires and possessions that we can't move out at God's command.

These people of faith died without receiving all that God had promised, but they never lost their vision of heaven (“a better country—a heavenly one”). Many Christians become frustrated and defeated because their needs, wants, expectations, and demands are not immediately met when they believe in Christ. They become impatient and want to quit. Are you discouraged because the achievement of your goal seems far away? Take courage from these heroes of faith who lived and died without seeing the fruit of their faith on earth and yet continued to believe (see Hebrews 11:36-39).

Chapter 10

The Day of the Lord should Inspire Holy Living.

1 Tim. 4:8

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

In our society, much emphasis is placed on physical fitness, but spiritual health (godliness) is even more important. Our physical health is susceptible to disease and injury, but faith can sustain us through these tragedies. To train ourselves to be godly, we must develop our faith by using our God-given abilities in the service of the church (see 1 Tim. 4:14-16). Christ is the Savior for all, but his salvation becomes effective only for those who trust him.

1 Tim. 6:17-19

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; [18] That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; [19] Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Ephesus was a wealthy city, and the Ephesian church probably had many wealthy members. Paul advised Timothy to deal with any potential problems by teaching that having riches carries great responsibility. Those who have money must be generous, but they may not be arrogant just because they have a lot to give. They must be careful not to put their hope in money instead of in the living God for their security. Even if we don't have material wealth, we can be rich in good deeds. No matter how poor we are, we have something to share with someone.

What we know about Eternity

The Bible devotes much less space to describing eternity than it does to convincing people that eternal life is available as a free gift from God. Most of the brief descriptions of eternity would be more accurately called hints, since they use terms and ideas from present experience to describe what we cannot fully grasp until we are there ourselves. These references hint at aspects of what our future will be like if we have accepted Christ's gift of eternal life.

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.

Unlimited by physical properties

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

1 Cor. 13:12

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

New emotions and there will be no more death

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.

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.

Complete your preparation for the day of the Lord.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation.

Additional comments taken from:

Life Application Study Bible. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

