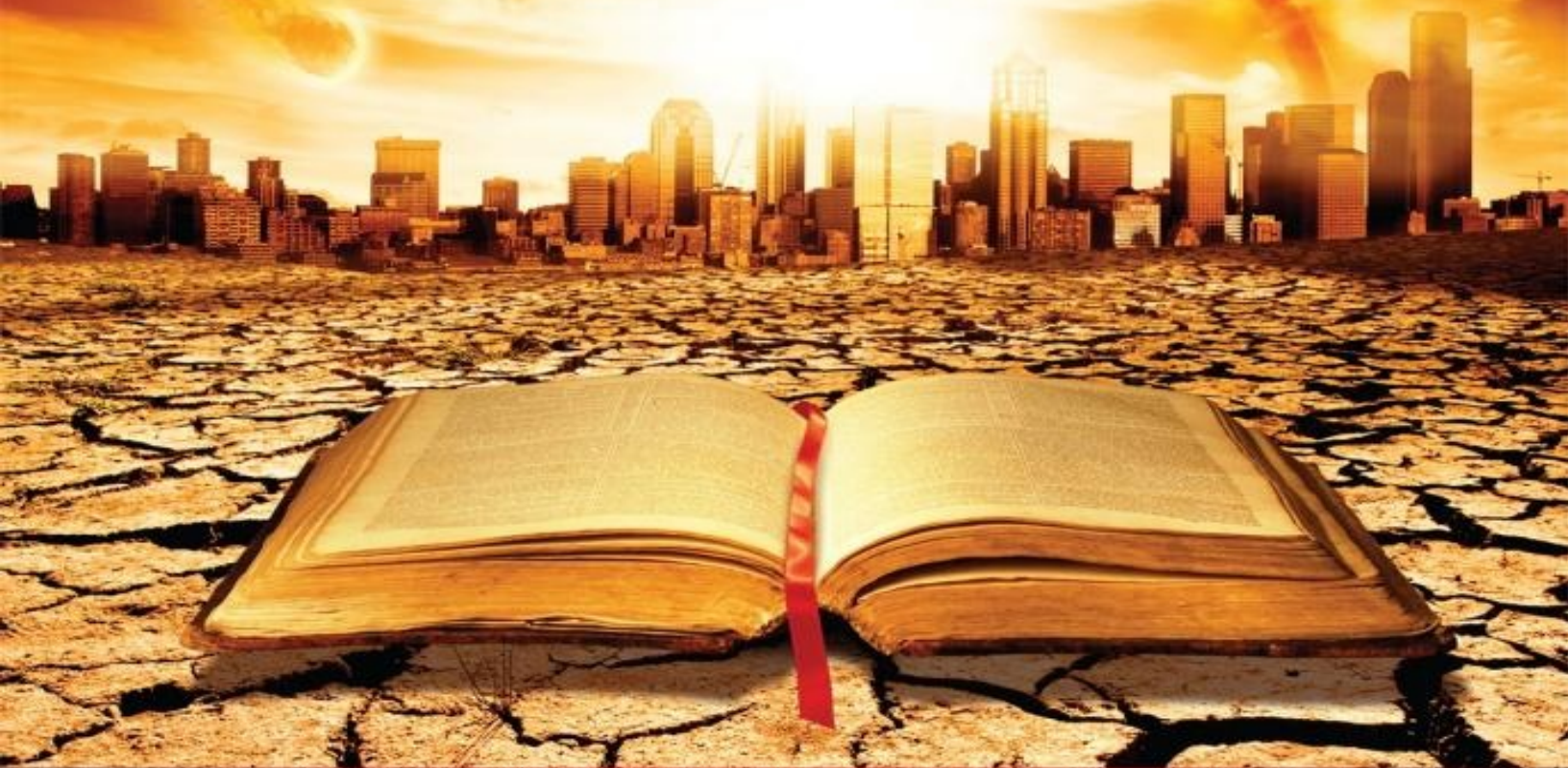
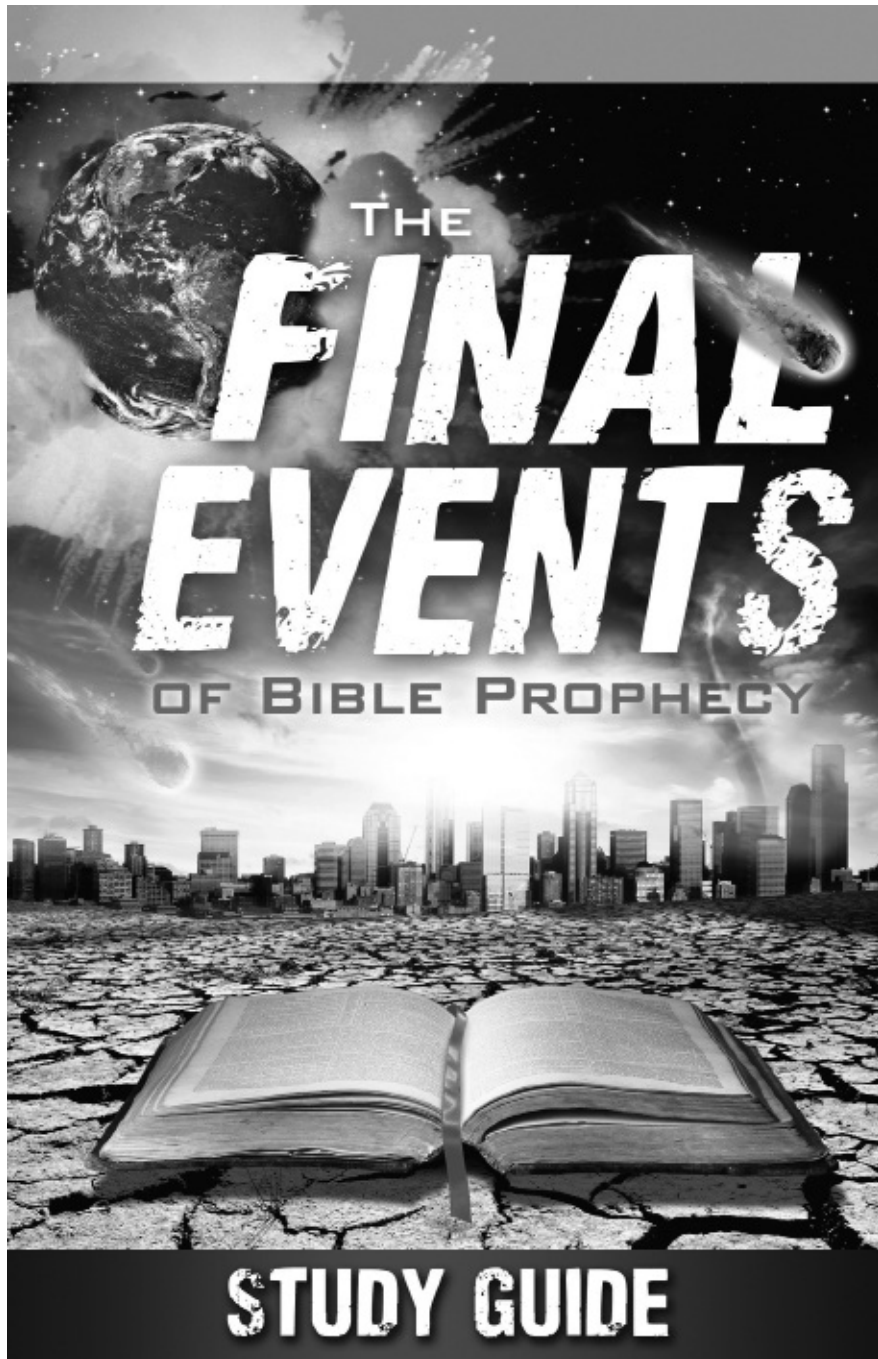




THE
FINAL
EVENTS
OF BIBLE PROPHECY



STUDY GUIDE



THE
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Signs of the End

In the Holy Land in an area called the Golan Heights, you can find signs in various languages: Hebrew, Arabic, French, and English. All say the same thing: “*Attention: Land Mines!*” Whole sections of the territory are filled with deadly mines, left over from war. And the signs warn people about the danger facing them if they walk in these areas.

The lyrics of a popular song once complained about all the signs in modern life: “Signs, signs, everywhere there’s signs ...” But really, aren’t most signs for our good? Who isn’t glad for signs that warn about poisons or dangerous road conditions or sharks in the water or even something as simple as: “Caution: Wet Paint”?

Yes, there’s no question—signs can play an important role in our daily life. They also have an important role in the Bible and in Bible prophecy, especially when it comes to what can be expected in the last days of earth’s history. That’s why the Bible talks about signs—signs of the end, signs to warn us about what is coming and help us prepare for the return of Christ. Seeing signs being fulfilled during trying times can give us comfort and assurance. And who couldn’t use some comfort and assurance these days?

What did Jesus say about signs?

John 13:19—“Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.”

Jesus told His disciples about things that would happen in the future, so that when these things would “come to pass,” they could trust His word and that He is who He said He was.

It’s the same with the signs of the end. Thousands of years ago, the Bible gave us warning signs, predictions, about what would happen in the last days. And if we know what those warning signs are, when we see them come to pass *just as predicted*, we can know that we are in the last days. And second, we can have

assurance that God is in control and that we can trust Him even during hard times.

Does God know the future?

Isaiah 46:9, 10—“Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the _____ from the _____, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.’ ”

Yes! We can trust what God says about the future.

What are some of the signs the Bible gives about last-day events?

1. *Daniel 12:4*—“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the _____ of the _____ ; many shall run to and fro, and _____ shall increase.”

The biblical prophet Daniel clearly predicted that just prior to the end of the world, we would witness a dramatic increase in knowledge. Has it happened? Of course. What we have witnessed in the past 100 years in science and technology would have stunned people who lived 260 years ago, much less 2,600 years ago, when Daniel wrote this prophecy. For instance, for 6,000 years man could travel no faster than the quickest horse. Now, voyages that once required months are achieved in hours. Could you imagine what someone even 100 years ago would think of holding a tiny box in their hand and talking to a friend who lived down the road, much less across the ocean, with it?

What are some other ways in which our knowledge has greatly increased from the time of Daniel? Has all this knowledge been good, or are there some things we’d be better off not knowing?

Another way we can understand that knowledge has increased is in knowledge of the Scriptures. So many events have unfolded in history from Daniel’s time till today—events that were predicted in the Bible. And looking back from the vantage point of living when we do, we can see just how accurately these events came to pass.

No question about it—that simple prediction from Daniel has been dramatically fulfilled, especially in the last hundred years. What a powerful sign of the times we are living in!

2. *Matthew 24:6, 7*—“And you will hear of _____ and _____ of _____ ... for nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.”

What makes this prediction so amazing is that it wasn't much more than a hundred years ago that people believed the world was heading toward a time of great moral, material, and spiritual progress. People in the late 19th century and early 20th century thought that mankind had all but arrived—that our great advances in science and technology would usher in a time of peace, prosperity, and wealth in which war would be a thing of the past, the work of barbarous ancients.

That hope lasted only until World War I, during which technology and science—which were supposed to make us better—were used to kill people in ways that our ancestors couldn't have imagined. Yet as bad as that war was, it was soon followed by World War II, in which more than 50 million people perished! And who today really thinks that war is a thing of the past?

Here were the best and brightest people a mere hundred years ago, predicting a time when war would be obsolete. And the Bible prophecy we just looked at, *written almost 2,000 years ago*, speaks about how wars would increase. Who was right—and who was wrong? What does this tell us about how much we can trust the Bible, especially over the predictions of mere humans?

Why can we trust what the Bible says?

2 Timothy 3:16—“All _____ is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

2 Peter 1:20–22—“Knowing this first, that no _____ of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the _____ .”

No question about it—we have good reasons to trust in the Bible and the signs it shares with us about the end time. Also, the good news is that however horrible these events are, we can draw comfort from knowing that none of this has taken God by surprise—that all these things have been predicted.

3. *Luke 21:11*— “And there will be great _____ in various places, and _____ and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs

from heaven.”

Who hasn't seen or witnessed the painful reality of this prediction? One of the most dramatic natural disasters occurred at the end of 2004, when an earthquake centered deep in the Indian Ocean caused the devastating tsunami that killed tens of thousands across Southern Asia. Meanwhile, rarely a week goes by when we don't hear about some new natural disaster: floods, famine, hurricanes, or earthquakes. Even with all our knowledge, all our science, all our technology, as humans we are still at the mercy of these forces so much greater than we are.

The Bible verse above also mentions “pestilences”—which we today would call epidemics or pandemics. Again, in recent years the world has been afflicted with such diseases as cholera, E. coli, SARS, HIV, bird flu, and the Swine flu.

Have you ever been in a natural disaster, or known someone who was? Have you been the victim of an epidemic, or known someone who was? How should knowing that these are signs of the end help us cope with these occurrences? How could we draw hope, even amid these tragedies, when others see nothing but despair?

Romans 8:28—“And we know that all things work together for _____ to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Luke 21:28—“Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your _____ draws near.”

4. *2 Timothy 3:1-3—“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good.”*

Again, there was a time when many of the world's best and brightest believed that human beings were capable of perfecting themselves through their own efforts. They thought that humans could, through education, science, and higher reason, *make* themselves good. Sadly, the atrocities of our century and the rapid moral degeneration we see around us show just how wrong these men were and just how right the Bible is—again!

Let's look around at the world today. Who was right about the human moral condition—the Bible or the “great” human thinkers who thought that people could perfect themselves through their own efforts?

Even the most calloused people can't help, at times, but be horrified about the moral state of humanity. Just when you think that people can't stoop any lower, what happens? You read about some even more unbelievably degenerate, immoral act.

And the text above in 2 Timothy describing the evil to prevail in the world in the end times—well, it includes more than moral degeneracy. It also foresees today's sectarian and ethnic violence, corporate greed, a bias against Bible morality, political corruption, child and spousal abuse, the growing death toll from criminal acts, the specter of world terrorism, and so much more.

What is one reason the Bible says that there is so much evil in the world?

Jeremiah 17:9—“The heart is _____ above all things, and desperately _____ ; Who can know it?”

In Noah's day, chronic moral decay led to global destruction from a flood. In Lot's time, the perverted depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah led to the annihilation of these cities by fire from heaven.

What does the Bible say the world will be like in the last days before Christ returns?

Luke 17:28-30—“Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They _____ , they _____ , they _____ , they _____ , they _____ , they _____ ; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.”

The current immoral generation—with its obsession with sex, violence, and greed—is plain and positive fulfillment of God's Word. Nothing short of the coming of the Lord will stem the tide of evil now engulfing the world. Without question, the Bible was again right on target with this sign of the end.

5. *1 Timothy 4:1—“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to _____ spirits and _____ of demons.”*

In recent years, an explosion of interest in the occult has occurred—a fascination with spiritualism and with those who think they can talk with the dead. A flood of movies and TV programs—such as *The Sixth Sense* and *Medium*—promote

the notion that the living can communicate with the dead. Yet the Bible is clear that the dead are “asleep”—that they cannot communicate with us.

What does the Bible say about what happens at death?

Psalm 146:4, KJV—“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his _____ perish.”

Ecclesiastes 9:5—“For the living know that they will die; But the dead _____ .”

Why is it so important to know about the state of the dead?

Many, including the rich and famous, are known to go to channelers, psychics, tarot card readers, and astrologers. Some time ago, the wife of a U.S. president used an astrologer for help in planning his speaking appointments!

Yes, for our supposedly intellectually sophisticated age, there remains an incredible amount of interest in the occult and supernatural practices, just as the Bible predicted. What are some of the manifestations of the occult and spiritualism that we face all the time?

Perhaps you’ve been noticing something: The signs of the end are not good signs. That is, they are almost always about bad things. That’s the nature of sin and what it means to live in a sinful, fallen world amid the great controversy between good and evil.

But there’s one more sign, one that’s very important, and one that’s very positive as well.

6. *Matthew 24:14*—“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in _____ as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

The once seemingly insurmountable task of communicating the gospel to the four corners of the earth has become a reality. Through missionaries, books, tapes, satellite broadcasts, and the internet, the gospel work is fast accelerating around the world. The message of salvation has never had wider distribution than today. The Bible has been translated into thousands of languages, and the great, solemn, last warning message of Christ’s second coming is now being presented in more than 900 languages and dialects. Nearly 95 percent of the world’s population has access to this message. Never in the history of the world has the gospel been communicated to the extent that it is now being broadcast.

Think about Jesus' words above. He was an itinerant preacher, not part of the established community, and He made this prediction thousands of years ago when only a small number of Jewish people believed in Him and the gospel.

Yet today, look at how the gospel has spread! Jesus knew what He was talking about. What a powerful sign of the end, don't you think?

"Signs, signs, everywhere there's signs." It's true. We see the signs—signs of the end of the world—just as the Bible predicted. And these signs, however troubling in and of themselves, should give us confidence in the Word of God—confidence that, yes, Jesus is coming as He promised.

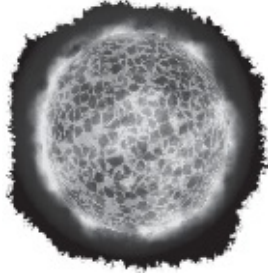
Most important, these signs should cause us to follow Paul's counsel to "... *examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith*" (2 **Corinthians 13:5**). Right now, whatever your past has been, you can repent of your sins and confess them to the Lord. Then ask Jesus for His forgiveness and salvation. He will receive you! Then you can have the assurance that you are accepted in Him. That's how you can begin preparation for the coming of Jesus, to which all these signs so clearly point.

What great hope does the Bible offer us, regardless of our past mistakes?

Romans 5:8—“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still _____, Christ died for us.”

Signs are all around us, telling us that we are living in the final days just before the second coming of Jesus. As you see the signs of the end being fulfilled, do you want to place your hope in Jesus? _____

Notes:



TWO

A World Polarized

The scene was familiar and all too common—a terrible crisis with lives lost and massive numbers of refugees with no place to go and little or no shelter. We’ve seen it repeatedly on TV.

This tragedy was, however, a bit different from a military coup. It didn’t take place in some impoverished nation where people, even in the best of times, struggle to survive the elements. No! This was in the United States of America in the 21st century!

We’re talking, of course, about Hurricane Katrina and the incredible damage it did to New Orleans. Who could have imagined the scenes of all those people struggling for food, water, and shelter, especially in the United States?

All of which goes to show that our world, despite all the advances it has made, is still a very dangerous place no matter where you live.

Yet none of this should be surprising, not when the Bible tells us what the world will be like before Jesus returns. We will be facing desperate times, and people will be looking for any leader, no matter who, to get them through it.

What kind of future does the world face before the second coming of Jesus?

1. *Matthew 24:21, 22—“For then there will be great _____, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were _____, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”*

Natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, are only one part of the “great tribulation” the world faces just before the second coming. Our whole world is reeling from the impact of unrelenting troubles of every kind.

The entire world economy seems out of balance, and the impact of that affects everyone. Nations all over the globe are at war or under the threat of war. Terrorists make the entire world unsafe. And so much of society seems to have lost its moral compass—its values and appreciation for all that is good and honorable.

Yet it really does seem as if the world, even with all the troubles it is facing now, is drifting toward something even more ominous. And, yes, people will be desperate, looking for someone to get them out of the dire straits they find themselves in.

Have you ever been in a desperate situation—one in which you were ready to do anything, to follow anyone, who could get you out of it?

Without question, in desperate times, people are ready to reach out for anyone who can help them—anyone they even *think* can help them.

What does the book of Revelation say will happen as a result of these terrible times?

Revelation 13:11, 12—“Then I saw another _____ coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the _____ of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to _____ the first beast.”

According to the Bible, there will be incredible powers in the last days, all inspired by Satan, that will seduce the world into a false system of worship.

But the good news is that not all will go along. God will have a people who will refuse to give their allegiance to these demonic powers. In fact, amid this highly polarized world, amid the great tribulation of the last days, God will have a people who will experience a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. These people will call the world to worship the true God—the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the only one truly deserving of our worship! (See **Revelation 14:6, 7.**)

The Bible describes it like this: *Revelation 18:1—“After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven ... and the earth was illuminated with his glory.”*

This great angel represents a group of people who will be boldly calling for all humanity to take their stand for the Lord. An atmosphere of revival will move

across the world, as these people, working under the power of the Holy Spirit, urge ministers and church members alike to stand for the Word of God and earnestly work for the salvation of souls.

What promise does the Bible give us about the power of the Holy Spirit in the last days before Christ's return?

2. *Joel 2:28, 29, 31—“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My _____ on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My _____ and on My _____ I will pour out My Spirit in those days ... before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.”*

Before Christ returns, the whole world will be divided into two great camps: those faithful to God, and those who aren't. In a sense, the world is somewhat like that now. However, many have not yet heard the true gospel of Jesus Christ; thus, they haven't had a real chance to make their choice for Him.

During the final crisis, God's people will be proclaiming His truth to all the world. Many who have not clearly heard the truth about Jesus will then get a chance to make their choice: Either worship the Lord, or worship the satanic beast power described in Revelation.

Read Revelation 12:7–12. What do these verses tell us about Satan, his anger, and his power to deceive?

Of the many ways the devil can deceive us, the power of the occult, spiritualism, and the New Age movement is one of his most effective.

What kind of supernatural manifestations should we expect in the last days?

3. *Revelation 16:14—“For they are spirits of demons, performing _____ ...”*

As the work of the Holy Spirit becomes more pronounced among God's faithful people, occult manifestations will intensify. Deceptive demons will appear to many, masquerading as loved ones who have passed away or as biblical saints of old. They speak words of peace and hope while presenting distorted doctrines containing deadly errors. These supernatural manifestations hold great influence with people, and few are willing to speak against them.

Even now, many people are getting caught up in these deceptions, one way or another. Look at how many palm readers and psychics are out there. You can find them on nearly every corner in some cities. People all over the world are dabbling in the occult, spiritualism, and the New Age movement. Recent trends in spirituality suggest that as more and more people are moving away from “traditional” Christianity, they are seeking “spirituality” through other means—among them, the occult and New Age teachings, which are all powerful deceptions!

Satan has other means of deception as well. Another ploy is that all through history, people have claimed to be Christ Himself or some other special heavenly messenger, and, unfortunately, many have believed them. It will be the same at the end of time too. What a masterful deception on the devil’s part!

How convincing will these deceptions be in the last days? Look at what Jesus says:

4. *Matthew 24:24, 25—“For false _____ and false _____ will rise and show great signs and wonders to _____, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.”*

Jesus is clear. These deceptions will be so powerful that even the elect could be deceived. Notice how Jesus says: “Behold, I have told you before.” That is, He wants us to know about these things in advance, so we don’t fall victim to these deceptions. And we don’t have to—not if we faithfully adhere to the truths given to us in the Word.

Regardless of how much the devil uses deception, he principally wants to manipulate people to turn away from God. Force, deception, and fear—these are some of the tools Satan uses.

What a contrast to the Lord, who seeks to draw all people to Him through the power of love. God wants us to serve Him because we love Him, because He died for our sins, and because He is worthy of our love.

Read Revelation 5:15. What does this tell us about why we should worship only the Lord and no one, nor anything, else?

A story from Colonial America tells about a man named Peter Miller, a friend of George Washington. Miller knew a man named Michael Whitman, a scoundrel who constantly did all he could against him.

One day Whitman was arrested for treason and sentenced to die. Miller traveled 70 miles—on foot!—to plead for the life of the traitor. “No, Peter,” General Washington said, “I cannot grant you the life of your friend.”

“My friend?” Miller responded. “He’s the bitterest enemy I have.”

“What?” the general replied. “You walked 70 miles on foot to save the life of an enemy? That’s a different thing entirely. I will grant the pardon.”

From that day forward, Whitman loved Peter Miller.

According to the Bible, that’s what Jesus did for us. We were at one time “enemies” of Christ because of our sins, but He died for us anyway, because He loves us. And what He asks in return is that we love Him back and show that love by keeping His commandments. *1 John 5:3, KJV*—“*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*”

Think about the cross—about the death of Jesus for you. How should you respond to that? Wouldn’t it be tragic for Christ to die for you, only for you to turn your back on it?

Yes, God wants us to serve and worship Him out of love. But this is not how Satan works. According to the Bible, he will seek to use the power of the state to force people into a false form of worship.

We know that in the last days, there will be a time of terrible trouble: Earthquakes, floods, wars, and a host of other evils will make people desperate for someone to come along and save them. Governments will fail to stem the growing tide of global wickedness and violence. In the midst of this political, moral, and environmental upheaval, people will desperately seek an effective way to halt the spread of universal immorality.

In response—as has happened at other times in history—religious and political leaders, urged on by suffering constituents, will call for stronger legal measures to restore peace to the land. As a result of this pressure, the government will pass misguided laws that directly conflict with the law of God.

We have a powerful example in the book of Daniel about laws forcing people to choose between obeying God or obeying worldly powers. King Nebuchadnezzar made a decree that all the people in his kingdom needed to worship a colossal gold statue that he had made for himself. They were forced to “*worship the image*” (**Daniel 3:15**)—the image the king had set up—or face the penalty of

death.

Well, it's no coincidence that some of these same issues are found in the book of Revelation, in the context of the very things we have been studying, especially Satan's attempt to force all the world into false worship.

Talking about these end-time deceptions, Revelation says:

5. *Revelation 13:15*—“He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not _____ the _____ of the beast to be killed.”

Contrast this with *Daniel 3:15*—“Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and _____ the _____ which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

It's the same principle: Three Hebrew boys refused to violate one of the Ten Commandments—the one against worshipping images—and as a result they faced death. As it was, God miraculously spared them from that death, but they were ready to die rather than disobey God's commandments. (See **Daniel 3**.)

The same thing will happen in the last days. Laws will be passed that will pressure people, on the penalty of death, to “worship the image”—to worship something other than the Lord, the One who alone is worthy of our worship, because He alone is our Creator and our Redeemer. These laws will outwardly appear to promote morality, but in reality they prepare the world to embrace the mark of the beast and the Antichrist (**Revelation 13:14–17**). In fact, these laws will be in direct contradiction to the law of God.

It's going to be a difficult time. Here's how Daniel describes it:

Daniel 12:1—“And there shall be a time of _____ , such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time.”

Doesn't sound like fun, does it? No, it will be worse than anything the world has seen yet, and the world has been in some pretty horrible times before. During this time of mounting crisis, when the world is desperately seeking relief and looking for global stability, help appears in a most startling form. In various locations around the world, the shout is heard, “Jesus has come! Jesus has

returned!”

What important warning does the Bible give us?

6. *2 Corinthians 11:14*—“For _____ himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”

A radiant, charismatic being appears claiming to be the Son of God. An army of news agencies flocks to see this supernatural entity perform miracles. They hear him repeat many of the same words Jesus spoke in the Scriptures. This event is beamed to the world via satellite, and millions mistakenly believe that his appearance on television has fulfilled the Scripture that “*every eye will see him*” (**Revelation 1:7**).

Many people don’t realize it, but more than just Christians are expecting a savior to come. Jews are still awaiting the *Moschiah*—the Messiah. Muslims also believe that Jesus will return. Hindus expect a divine being, Kalki, to return. Buddhists are awaiting the Fifth Buddha. How easily all these people could be misled by Satan’s crowning work of deception!

What a powerful deception awaits those who are not prepared, who have not fortified their minds with the truth of God’s Word! When all the world declares that this being is the Savior, God’s faithful people will have to say, “No, this is the devil!”

Have you ever found yourself having to take an unpopular stand—yet you knew it was correct? What did you learn from the experience that could help you understand what God’s people will face in the end times?

The world is, even at this moment, facing some tremendous challenges. Who knows what terrible news we could face tomorrow? The truth is, things are only going to get worse as we enter the final days. But the good news in all this is that God has not forsaken us.

What hope can you take from this promise of Jesus?

7. *Matthew 28:20, KJV*—“And, lo, I am with you _____, even unto the _____ of the _____.”

As Hurricane Katrina powerfully proved, there is no safety in this world—and such events will only increase as the end draws near. Our only safety



THREE

Probation Closes

A young man had always dreamed of skydiving. He wanted more than anything else in the world to jump out of an airplane, and all through childhood he imagined what it would be like. When he was finally old enough, he decided to do it! He found the nearest “drop zone,” signed up for a class, and by the end of the afternoon, he was ready.

As he suited up in preparation, he started to get a bit nervous. “Oh, brother,” he thought. “Do I really want to do this?” The next thing he knew, he was sitting in an airplane with no door, the engine roaring. His heart started pounding. “Maybe this wasn’t such a good idea,” he thought. After the plane reached altitude, he was moved toward the open door. If he was going to back down, it was either now or never.

Then, the next thing he knew, he was out the door! “I wish I hadn’t done this!” But there was no turning back, no second chance. The decision to jump, once followed through, was impossible to reverse—*no matter how much he wished he could!*

Once he stepped out the door, that was it!

Have you ever followed through on an irreversible decision that you wished you could have undone? What lessons did you learn from that to possibly help you not do something similar again?

Now we’re going to look at something related in the Bible—a special time during the final events of earth’s history when everyone in the world is going to have to make a final decision, a decision that will be as irreversible as jumping out of an airplane.

To understand what this means, we need to pick up where we left off in our last study: the final end-time crisis before Jesus Christ returns. And central to that

crisis will be the work of Satan on earth.

What does Satan seek to do to the world?

1. *Revelation 12:9*—“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who _____ the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

Jesus said of Satan: “He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (**John 8:44**). And one of Satan’s greatest lies and deceptions will occur when He comes and impersonates Christ—and most of the world thinks he is the Savior.

Amid all this havoc and deception, however, God will have a faithful people, a faithful remnant, who will not fall for these deceptions but who will stand up and speak out against them.

How are these people described?

2. *Revelation 14:12*—“Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the _____ of _____ and the _____ of Jesus.”

No, not everyone is going to fall for Satan’s tricks, no matter how convincing. And one reason they won’t be misled is because they will have learned from the example of Jesus, when Satan tried to deceive Him and failed.

What can we learn from Jesus’ example regarding how to be protected from these deceptions?

Right after Jesus’ baptism, He went into the wilderness, where, after 40 days, He faced the fierce temptations of Satan. During these encounters, Satan appeared to Jesus as an angel of light from heaven and sought to ensnare Him in one of his deceptions.

What was one of Satan’s temptations?

3. *Matthew 4:8, 9*—“Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and _____ me.’ ”

How interesting that Satan tried to get Jesus to worship him. The Bible says that in the last days, satanic powers will try to turn people away from the worship of God to the worship of the beast. *“And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed”* (**Revelation 13:12**).

Satan is in the business of trying to recruit people to worship himself instead of God. Yet despite Satan’s wiles, God will have a group of faithful people proclaiming a special message to the world about genuine worship.

What message are these people proclaiming?

4. *Revelation 14:6, 7—“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of his judgment has come; and _____ Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.’ ”*

While many in the world are falling for Satan’s deceptions and worshiping the beast and his image, others are not. They are worshiping only the Creator, the One who made the heavens and the earth, the One who gave us life and breath, and who sustains us now. (See Acts 17:28.)

Why do you think we should worship only God the Creator? When we worship someone else or something aside from God, what commandment are we violating? (See Exodus 20:3.)

All this, however, leads to the question: How did Jesus defeat Satan when Satan sought to deceive Him?

What was Jesus’ response to Satan’s temptation?

5. *Matthew 4:10—“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is _____, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.” ’ ”*

Jesus knew that the being who came to Him was trying to deceive Him, for if he was truly from God, he would never have asked Jesus to do anything contrary to the Bible. Yet that is exactly what Satan tried to do, and that is why Jesus was able to recognize His deception and be protected from it.

How did Jesus respond to this temptation? He quoted the Bible. Jesus used the

Bible to drive Satan away. In the same way, in the last days, a people will choose to stand on the Bible and the Bible alone, for it will help them identify the deceptions of Satan and will point them to the path of truth and righteousness amid a time of crisis, confusion, and unrighteousness.

Indeed, soon the world is going to face the terrible crisis regarding true and false worship before Christ returns. Before it's all over, many critical events will unfold that test the human race. How thankful we should be that the Bible has revealed to us what those events are! How important that we take advantage of this knowledge and be prepared.

What terrible calamity awaits those who get caught up in the false system of worship that Satan will establish through force and deceit?

6. *Revelation 16:1, 2*—“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.’ So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome _____ came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who _____ his _____.”

Amid the trials of the last days, the hope that things might get better is crushed, as Revelation's seven last plagues begin to fall on the world in rapid succession. (See **Revelation 15:1**.) These are the most awful scourges ever experienced by man in the history of the world.

The first plague is an extremely painful and gruesome sore that breaks out and causes excruciating suffering for the lost. Six more devastating plagues quickly follow. The waters in our seas and floods turn to blood. The sun is given power to scorch men with intense heat. As plague after plague falls, terror reigns on the panic-stricken peoples of the world.

During this time, some of the saved—those who refuse to worship the beast or his image—find shelter in desolate and remote locations where they are protected and provided for by God's angels. Others are thrown into lonely prisons. Although seemingly forgotten by man, they are not forgotten by God. God's faithful ones are shielded from the plagues in the same way the children of Israel were preserved through the plagues of Egypt.

How were the children of Israel protected from the final plague that came upon the nation of Egypt?

7. *Exodus 12:12, 13*—“For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. Now the _____ shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the _____, I will pass over you; and the _____ shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.”

The blood mentioned in this text was the blood of the Passover lamb, which the Jews were instructed to slay. They were then to put the lamb’s blood over the doorposts of their houses. When the Lord’s angel saw the blood, he “passed over” those houses (hence the name Passover, which religious Jews still celebrate today!), and they were spared the horrible judgment that fell upon Egypt.

What does this blood represent?

8. *1 Corinthians 5:7*—“For indeed _____, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

The blood of the sacrificial Passover lamb is a symbol for the blood of Jesus, our Savior, which He would shed for the sins of the world. The Hebrews were protected from the plague, not because they were especially holy or good, but because they were covered by the righteousness of Jesus, symbolized by the blood that was shed and placed over their doorposts.

In the same way, God’s faithful people in the last days will be protected from the plagues because they are covered by the blood of Jesus. They have rendered full and unequivocal obedience to God, trusting in the righteousness of Jesus. That is, they have a faith in Him that leads to obedience. That’s why they are described as those who “*keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus*” (**Revelation 14:12**). Their faith in God, in Jesus, who has forgiven their sins and covered them in His righteousness, has caused them to love and obey the Lord. And that love is revealed in obedience to His commandments.

What is your understanding of what it means to have faith in Jesus?

However, because their love of God leads to obedience to His commandments, they will be in direct conflict with the beast power, and thus face persecution because they refuse to engage in the false worship that is demanded of everyone in world. “*He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that*

the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed” (Revelation 13:15).

Amid these difficult times, God’s faithful remnant, though persecuted, will stand as powerful witnesses for the Lord. Many people will hear from them truths that they had never heard before, and will be given a final chance to take their stand with those who “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

During this time, God makes what important pronouncement?

9. *Revelation 22:11—“He who is _____ , let him be unjust still; he who is _____ , let him be filthy still; he who is _____ , let him be righteous still; he who is _____ , let him be holy still.”*

This text teaches that a time will come when every choice about whether to be “holy” and “righteous” in Jesus will be irrevocably sealed. A time is coming when it will be too late to change sides. It will be like the young man who stepped out of the airplane door—it was too late to go back.

Think of Noah’s ark. Noah preached for many years, giving anyone who wanted a chance to get on board and be saved from the coming global flood. But once the door to the ark was closed, that was it. Their choices were sealed forever.

This text teaches the same thing. It has been called the “close of probation”—when each person’s choice, either to follow the Lord in faith and obedience or to worship the beast and his image, will be final and unchanging.

What is God’s will for each of us?

10. *2 Peter 3:9—“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should _____ but that all should come to repentance.”*

All we have to do is look to the cross, where Jesus died, so that not one of us has to perish. Christ died so that “*whoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*” (**John 3:16**). The Son of God gave Himself up, bearing the sins of the world, in order that everyone could have the opportunity for eternal life in Him. That’s how much He wants us all to have salvation!

Yet God never forces the will. He wants us to come to Him of our own free choice. What **Revelation 22:11** teaches is that one day that option to choose

sides will be over.

Considering all these things, why is it so important not to delay a decision for surrendering to Jesus?

As all people have made a choice either for or against Jesus and the plagues are poured out, Satan will stir up powerful enmity against those who refuse to follow the false worship that he has instituted.

Who are those who face the wrath of Satan?

11. *Revelation 12:17*—“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the _____ of _____ and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Persuaded by the false Christ, the miserable lost believe their only hope for relief from the devastating plagues is to eliminate those who oppose them. Thus, the decision is made to search out and exterminate, in one day, the people of God who stubbornly hold to the Scriptures. (See **Revelation 13:15**.)

This is the final battle of Armageddon. However often popular Christian literature equates Armageddon with a military battle in the Middle East, it's so much bigger than that. It is really a worldwide spiritual battle between the forces of good and evil—a battle in which Satan and his forces make a desperate attempt to exterminate God's people and control the world.

And though things don't look good for the faithful minority, the tiny remnant who—despite economic sanctions and the threats of death—stand firm for Jesus, the fact is they have nothing to fear, because the Lord will step in and rescue them at the end of time.

How can we prepare to make sure we are on the Lord's side before probation closes and our choices are sealed forever? Right now is the time to make your decision. Will you place yourself on the side of Christ?

Notes:



FOUR

The King Returns

A wealthy man's worst nightmare comes true—he receives a note that his son has been kidnapped. The criminals demand a hefty ransom: the majority of his vast wealth. But the father immediately pays all that they ask for. He gathers the money in a suitcase and, after following instructions, leaves the money where he has been told.

The kidnapers get the money and tell the man where to go to get his child. The strange thing is, the father doesn't do it. He simply pays the money—but never goes to get his ransomed son! If that sounds ridiculous, it is. What parent would do that, especially after paying such a large ransom? If that seems ridiculous, even more so is the idea that Jesus Christ will not return to the earth and get those whom He has ransomed with His own life.

What did Jesus do for us at the cross?

1. *1 Timothy 2:5, 6—“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a _____ for all, to be testified in due time.”*

According to the Word of God (**Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45**), Jesus paid a ransom for us on the cross. He gave His life to pay the penalty for our sins so we don't have to pay that penalty ourselves, which would be eternal death. Because He did that, we can have the assurance that He will return and take back those for whom He paid the ultimate price. Why would Jesus pay such a costly ransom for us, yet leave us here? In a sense, what Jesus did for us on the cross at the first coming is our greatest guarantee of His second coming.

How eager are you for this world to end and for a new one, a perfect one, to begin? How has your eagerness shaped you?

Just before Jesus' return, the whole world will be arrayed against God's faithful

remnant—those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus. It seems that all is lost: How can such a small group be delivered from the vast powers of the earth determined to wipe them out?

The answer is Jesus.

What were Christ's followers told by an angel just after Jesus returned to heaven?

2. *Acts 1:11*—“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in _____ as you saw Him go into heaven.”

In “like manner”—Jesus was going to come back to them the same way He left. How did He leave? The Bible says that Jesus was there, speaking with His followers, when ... what happened?

“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel” (Acts 1: 9, 10).

Imagine—they were standing there and, suddenly, Jesus just rose up into the clouds. In a similar manner, He is going to return to the earth. What does all this mean?

Many popular books in recent years talk about a secret return of Jesus, so that some aren't even aware He has come back. In this theory, He returns quietly, invisibly. The only sign that He has come is that many people are raptured; that is, they suddenly disappear and are transported to heaven. You could be sitting next to your spouse in your car when he or she vanishes, with nothing remaining but his or her clothes. Many believe that things like this will be the only evidence—for those “left behind”—that Christ has returned.

Yet the Bible is clear about the manner of Christ's return, and it will be something quite different from this notion of a “secret rapture.”

What do these texts tell us about how Jesus will come back?

3. *Matthew 24:30, 31*—“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will _____ the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with _____ and great glory. And He will

send His angels with a great _____ of a _____ , and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Revelation 1:7—“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and _____ will see Him.”

Matthew 24:24–27—“For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it. For as the _____ comes from the _____ and _____ to the _____ , so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

All these texts—and many others—hardly sound like they are talking about a quiet, secret event! Rather, these present the coming of Jesus as a worldwide event that no one is going to miss!

Today, many different teachings exist about the manner of Christ’s coming. Some people say that His return is only spiritual or symbolic; they say that the second coming occurs only when Christian communities live up to a strong commitment to social justice and when they work tirelessly for peace and equality. The second coming is like a social event to them.

Others say that the second coming takes place at conversion—that it is what happens in a heart when someone comes to know Christ for him- or herself. The second coming is kind of a personal, internal event, nothing more. Still others insist that Jesus will come quietly, snatching away His followers, while everyone else is “left behind.”

Yet the few texts we just looked at portray something very different. In fact, the Bible has a lot to say about the manner of the second coming—and it is radically different from the popular views we’ve just considered.

The second coming will be:

1. A literal event (**Acts 1:9–11**)
2. A visible event (**Revelation 1:7**)
3. A worldwide event (**Matthew 24:26, 27**)
4. An audible event (**1 Thessalonians 4:16**)
5. A physical event (**Revelation 16:18**)
6. A decisive event (**Matthew 24:29–31**)

7. A glorious event (**Matthew 25:31**)
8. A transforming event (**Luke 21:25–28**)
9. A bright event (**2 Thessalonians 2:8**)

Looking at these texts, what is the only possible conclusion we can draw about the true manner of Christ’s return?

The Bible has hundreds of references regarding the coming of Jesus. All of these unite in declaring that the second coming will be a literal, visible, audible, and worldwide event. In fact, the words used in the Bible give the impression of an unparalleled earthshaking of majesty and glory. Jesus is described as coming with “clouds”; “lightning”; “a trumpet”; “a shout”; “power”; “glory”; “angels”; “brightness”; “flaming fire”; etc.

The Bible makes it clear that the return of Christ will be the most spectacular event of all history. Nothing will ever be the same again. This world as we know it will end.

According to the Bible, what happens to the wicked when Jesus returns?

4. *Revelation 6:15, 16*—“*And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, _____ themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and _____ us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!’*”

While God’s faithful people are hiding and fleeing, the Lord returns and, suddenly, all those who were pursuing them and seeking their destruction now find themselves fleeing and hiding from Jesus, who returns in the “clouds of heaven” (a biblical expression for a host of bright angels in the sky). Instantly, the tide is turned in favor of God’s people, who rejoice in the coming of their Lord!

By contrast, having rejected all the opportunities to know the Lord—to know the truth, to know the hope of eternal life in Christ—the world’s lost now have to reap the final fruits of their rebellion. They had spurned every chance to change their lives, to come to the Lord, to have their sins forgiven, to have the promise of eternal life.

What does this tell us about how important it is for us to make our decision

for Christ—and not to delay in making that choice? What crucial principle is revealed in this text?

5. *Matthew 12:30*—“He who is not with Me is _____ Me, and he who does not gather with Me _____ abroad.”

There is no middle ground. We must make a choice for Jesus, or else we are making a choice for the other side—the side of the lost, the side of those who will flee from the Lord when He returns.

In stark contrast to the fate of the lost, all those who through history have followed God, this is their time of glory and triumph in Jesus!

Years ago, doctors discovered that electricity plays a role in the human body. While hardly news today, this idea seemed remarkable when first discovered. Fascinated with this notion, a doctor in the 1800s offered cash to a condemned convict—to buy beer and beef—in exchange for his body after his hanging. The researcher’s idea was simple: If electricity is the life force, could it be used to revive a dead person? The deal was made. After the man died, the doctor attached electric wires to the dead body. After the switch was pulled, the body kicked, twisted, contorted, genuflected, even smiled—everything, it seemed, but resurrect.

How successful have been humanity’s efforts to beat death? What, then, is our only hope?

We are indeed helpless in the face of death. And that’s precisely why, according to the Bible, Jesus came—to do for us what we have never been able to do for ourselves—to once and for all beat death.

What will be the most dramatic event when Christ comes back?

6. *1 Thessalonians 4:16*—“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the _____ in Christ will _____ first.”

What an incredible promise! Christ is coming in the clouds of heaven. It is going to be a worldwide, even universal, event. Every eye shall see Him. And if that weren’t enough, when He comes back, those who have died in the Lord will be raised to life!

Throughout the whole earth, a great army of saints arises from countless graves.

They now appear clothed with youthful, glorified, and immortal bodies; without a trace of disease or deformity. They are finally receiving the glorious promise that was given them through the death of Christ. The eternal life they have longed for is now being revealed—a life that can never be taken from them!

So far, though, we have only talked about what happens to the dead in Christ when He returns. We saw the wonderful promises that when He does come back, those who have died in Him will be raised to life. What a hope we can have for loved ones who died in the Lord!

But what about the fate of God’s final remnant people—those who were fleeing for their lives from the wicked and their Satan-inspired attempt to rid the world of them? What can they hope for amid this terrible time of trouble?

What will happen to God’s people living at the time of the second coming?

7. *1 Thessalonians 4:17*—“Then we who are alive and remain shall be _____ with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the _____. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

With the fiery world convulsing below them, the redeemed of the earth take flight, rising above the destruction. They rise up to join their Savior in the midst of the clouds of angels. The veil separating them from their Lord has forever been removed, and they behold their God and His heavenly angels face to face.

Think about what that means. In an instant, our bodies will be changed. That’s what the Bible says: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (**1 Corinthians 15:51, 52**). We shall be transformed in that we are instantly given new, incorruptible bodies, just like those who were resurrected from the dead! Talk about a hope!

How can you make these wonderful promises of the second coming your own?

What have we seen so far? The wicked are destroyed at the second coming of Jesus ... while the dead who are saved are resurrected to eternal life and those who are alive when Christ returns are given new bodies; both of these groups, together, are taken from the earth.

What happens to the earth after these events unfold?

8. *Jeremiah 25:33*—“And at that day the _____ of the Lord shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be _____, or _____, or buried; they shall become _____ on the ground.”

During the second coming, chaos reigns on the planet. Oceans boil, earthquakes occur, islands vanish, and dark, angry clouds pummel the earth with gigantic hailstones. It is not a pretty time, for sure.

The wicked who manage to survive these catastrophes are soon destroyed by the brightness of the Lord’s presence and the continuing global upheaval of nature. Their bodies lay scattered across the face of the ravaged planet.

For the first time since its creation, the earth is now completely devoid of any living human. Only Satan and his fallen angels are left to behold the results of their rebellion. The earth, once teeming with human life and activity, becomes a vast wasteland, revealing the horrible fruits of sin and rebellion.

Now, and not tomorrow, is the time to choose Christ as your Savior—the one who redeemed you with His blood and seeks to come back and retrieve what cost Him so much. Looking at the options we face, what in this world could possibly be worth the loss of our eternal life? Will you choose Christ today? _____

Notes:

FIVE



The Millennium

In certain parts of the world, a person could be sitting at home when they hear an ominous knock on the door. Standing outside: the dreaded secret police.

“Please come with us,” the officers might say. “We have a few questions. It shouldn’t take long. You will be home for dinner.”

Before dinner? Maybe *10 years later or longer*—that is, if they ever came home at all! Through the years, and even today, thousands have been arrested like this. They rarely have trials at all. But if they do, they are often done in secret, where much of the “evidence” against them is fabricated. In short, they don’t get justice.

In contrast to this kind of brutal system, a free society is supposed to ensure that these government abuses don’t occur. It’s considered the most basic form of justice, not to mention decency and fairness, for trials to be open to the public, with the evidence presented fairly, so that folks can know the facts of the case.

If it’s that ideal with faulty human courts, how much more fair and just will it be with God—a God who promises justice and judgment at the end of time?

What do these texts say about God?

1. *Job 8:3*—“Does God _____ judgment? Or does the Almighty _____ justice?”

Psalms 89:14—“_____ and _____ are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face.”

Jeremiah 23:5—“ ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘That I will raise to David a Branch righteousness; And a King shall reign and prosper, And execute _____ and _____ in the earth.’”

All through the Bible, the justice and fairness of God is seen. Indeed, one of the great attributes of God is that He is just, and His justice will be done in a world

where we see so little of it now.

A person once wrote that if you accept just one idea—that “God is just”—then you have to believe in some sort of afterlife, in some sort of existence beyond what we see in this world now.

The reason? It’s simple. If God is just, we certainly don’t see much of that justice in this world now. Innocent people are often killed, victims of oppression, murder, war, and disease. Meanwhile, so often the wicked, the unjust, and the guilty live freely and unpunished. Many of the world’s rich exploit the poor—often getting richer and richer, while the poor get poorer and poorer.

Therefore, if God is just, then some kind of final reckoning will be needed—some kind of final act of justice to make up for all the injustice done here on earth.

What hope do you have for the promise that God’s ultimate justice will be seen in the world? What do these texts tell us about God’s judgment?

2. *Psalm 9:8*—“He shall judge the world in _____, and He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.”

Psalm 96:13—“For He is coming, for He is coming to _____ the _____. He shall judge the world with _____, and the peoples with His truth.”

The Bible clearly teaches that God is just and that He will judge the earth with fairness and righteousness. God does not run the universe as some dictators do here on earth. Instead, everything is going to be open, transparent, and free for all to see just how fair and merciful and loving and just our Lord really is. And the Lord promises that justice will come.

What does God promise us here?

3. *Romans 12:19*—“Beloved, do not _____ yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘_____ is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”

What should this promise mean to us, especially if we feel that we have been greatly wronged and that those who have wronged us have not been punished for their actions?

There are many things in life that we can’t have assurance about, true? But if there is one thing you can trust, it is that God’s final justice will be done. And

the amazing thing is, the Bible tells us that we can have a part in seeing just how that justice will be ministered!

Our last study left off with the second coming of Jesus, when the Lord returned in the clouds of heaven—and the dead in Christ were raised to eternal life and those faithful ones alive at His return were clothed in immortality; however, the lost, those who spurned God’s offer of salvation, were destroyed in the turmoil of the cataclysm surrounding the return of Jesus.

What else happens on the earth after Christ returns?

4. *Revelation 20:1, 2*—“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of ... Satan, and bound him for a _____ years.”

Surrounded by the world they ruined, Satan and his angels find themselves bound on earth for a thousand years. They are imprisoned on this dark, desolate, and abysmal planet. Alone with his demons, Satan must simply wait and ponder his future punishment. On every side, he beholds mangled cities, scorched forests, and dry bones—all the terrible results of his war against heaven. Bound, as it were, in one vast, dark bottomless pit with no one to tempt or manipulate, he is absolutely miserable.

This time period when Satan is bound to the earth is what Christians have called “the millennium.” The word itself is not found in the Bible, but it is simply a composite of the Latin words *mille* (thousand) and *annum* (years). There are among Christians various ideas about the millennium. Some believe that the millennium has already started! Others say that Jesus will come and rule the world for a peaceful period of 1,000 years.

But what does the Bible really teach about the millennium? The following helps us piece together the evidence.

What happens to God’s people when Jesus returns?

5. *Matthew 24:30, 31*— “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will _____ His _____ from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the

other.”

The first thing that happens at the start of the millennium is that all of God’s people from one end of heaven to the other are gathered. The “four winds” represent the four corners of the compass, and “heaven” here simply means the sky; thus, all of God’s people around the world are gathered together with Jesus, their Lord.

What else happens?

6. *1 Thessalonians 4:15–17*— “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord _____ . And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

As we saw in the last study, not only are the living “elect” gathered together when Christ returns, but the faithful dead are raised and, together with those who are alive, they are taken up into the air to meet the Lord! Thus, all of God’s redeemed are swept up off the earth, taken into the air to meet Jesus. This is all the start of the millennium!

Where are all of these people taken after they meet the Lord “in the air”?

7. *John 14:1–3*— “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to _____ a _____ for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I _____ , there _____ may be also.”

The great hope of the second coming, the great hope of the gospel itself, is that we are going to be taken off this sin-sick and devastated planet and brought to heaven with Jesus.

Are you longing to be among those who are taken off this earth when Jesus comes?

The Bible has much more to say about what happens during this special time.

We saw in the last study that the living wicked are destroyed (2 Thessalonians 2:8–12; 2 Peter 3:9, 10). What, though, is the state of the earth after Christ has taken His people to heaven and the last humans on earth are dead?

8. *Jeremiah 25:32, 33*—“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Behold, _____ shall go forth From nation to nation, And a great whirlwind shall be raised up From the _____ of the earth. And at that day the slain of the Lord shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be _____, or _____, or _____; they shall become refuse on the ground.’”

Jeremiah 4:23–25—“I beheld the earth, and indeed it was _____, and _____; and the heavens, they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, And all the hills moved back and forth. I beheld, and indeed there was no _____, And all the birds of the heavens had fled.”

From what we can gather from these texts, the earth doesn’t sound like a habitable place. In fact, it seems like the earth is a desolate, barren, and unfriendly place, does it not? Any suggestion then that life will continue on earth immediately after the second coming and during the thousand years is wrong from a biblical perspective.

It is with this background that we can better understand the text we have already seen: “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of ... Satan, and bound him for a thousand years” (**Revelation 20:1, 2**).

Satan will be bound on this earth for 1,000 years. The saints will be in heaven, the wicked will be dead, and the devil and his demons will be confined to the earth and unable to tempt anyone into sin.

The question arises, though: What does that phrase *bottomless pit* mean? How can that help us understand where Satan is chained? These two words are translated from a single Greek word, *abussos*, which means a dark, desolate region—a state of chaos. In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, *abussos* is used to describe the earth in its original chaotic condition, when it was “without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (**Genesis 1:2**). We just saw that very thing in **Jeremiah 4:23–25**, which used the words “without form, and void.” This shows not only that the earth will be

returned to a state similar to how it was before the Lord began creating life on it, it also shows that this is where Satan is going to be for that thousand years.

We have seen the fate of the lost and Satan during the millennium. But what about God's redeemed—those who have been rescued from the earth?

9. *Revelation 20:4*—“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. ... And they lived and reigned with Christ for a _____ years.”

Revelation 20:6—“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a _____ years.”

Notice the similarity in the time-frame between **Revelation 20:4, 6**—and **Revelation 20:1, 2**. Both passages talk about a thousand years, the millennium. In one, Satan is bound to the “bottomless pit;” in the other, God’s people sit on thrones and judgment is committed unto them.

Judgment? Could we really have a role in judgment? That is what the text clearly says. It must be the judgment of the lost. No doubt, questions will be asked, such as: *Why are those people not saved? Why are some of our loved ones—maybe people whom we thought were good Christians—not here?* We might even have some questions about the worthiness of some who *are* in heaven? This is the time given to us to find out.

What amazing promise is found in this text?

10. *1 Corinthians 4:5, KJV*—“Therefore _____ nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the _____ of darkness, and will make manifest the _____ of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

Here God tells us not to judge people and their hearts now. Wait until He comes and the millennium begins, and then all these secret things, including the motives of hearts, will be made known. The point is that God will allow us to see just how fairly He is going to deal with the lost. We can see for ourselves, as the hidden thoughts of the lost are now vividly exposed and the veil is pulled aside revealing spiritual battles that raged for every soul. Even the actions and motives of fallen angels will be clearly seen.

How easy it is to want to sit in judgment on people now? Why is it wrong to do that?

We are told repeatedly in the Bible to not judge others' hearts. That's because we simply don't have all the facts. How often have you judged someone, only to discover how wrong you were about him or her? Or at the same time, how often have you been unfairly judged? The tenor of the Bible is that we must wait: The time of judging will come, and it will then be a fair judgment.

What does this text tell us?

11. *1 Corinthians 6:2, 3*—“Do you not know that the saints will judge the _____ ? ... Do you not know that we shall judge _____ ?”

Obviously, this verse does not mean that the saints will determine who will be saved or lost—God has already done that. The work of judgment during the 1,000 years will involve the saints thoroughly going over the case of each wicked person and angel, so that no question remains in the minds of the redeemed concerning God's mercy and justice. Before a single sinner receives his or her final punishment, fellow humans who know and understand the struggles of life on earth carefully review their records. All the words and deeds of the wicked are weighed against the Word of God. The justice of their sentence is affirmed, and the degree of their punishment determined.

Finally, at the end of the thousand years, Jesus and the redeemed prepare to return to earth. The time has come for Satan, his angels, and the lost to face the ultimate consequences of their actions. Soon the meek will inherit the earth, but God must first carry out the final phase of His judgment and purge the universe of sin.

God's system of justice isn't anything like what people have faced under some of the world's horrible despots. It's even better than the free world's system of justice, because even then, mistakes are made. It's during the millennium, then, when all things will be fully revealed—when perfect justice will be revealed.

What does Paul promise us in this text?

12. *1 Corinthians 13:12, NASB*—“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.”

Look at all the wonderful promises we have in Jesus! Will you surrender yourself to Him now? _____

Notes:

SIX



The End of Sin

Deep beneath the French-Swiss border is a 17-mile long circular tunnel. It is the world's largest atom-smasher—a massive machine designed to hurl subatomic particles at each other at tremendous speeds. The idea behind this multibillion-dollar particle accelerator is to uncover the secret behind the nature of atoms. So they collide atoms to create smaller and smaller particles.

Several people, however, were concerned that as the experiments progress, the giant machine will cause black holes that could destroy the world. Some even filed a lawsuit trying to stop the experiments. Well, the lawsuit failed. The atom smasher has begun its testing and ... we're still here!

Man-made devices, no matter how destructive, are not going to bring about the end of this world. However, the world as we know it *is* going to end.

This study looks at how that will happen.

As we left off last time, the earth was desolate, with Satan and his angels imprisoned here for a thousand years to ponder the results of their terrible rebellion, while the world's lost are dead. Meanwhile, in heaven, the saved have been able to learn all sorts of things that were previously hidden to them—things that help them understand the fairness of God's judgment. Or as Paul says about what will happen when Christ returns: "*Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known*" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

What happens after the end of the millennium?

1. *Revelation 21:2*—“Then I, John, saw the holy city, _____ coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

A New Jerusalem? The word “Jerusalem” means city of peace. Unfortunately, the Old Jerusalem has seldom been a peaceful place. The ancient city has rarely

followed God’s Word, and thus it was destroyed more than once. This New Jerusalem, however, will last forever. And the good news is that, through Jesus, we all can be citizens in that city!

In **Revelation 21:2**, John sees this New Jerusalem coming down from heaven. What is this all about? After this thousand-year period in heaven, Christ and the redeemed, with the New Jerusalem, return to the earth. As the city draws near to the desolate planet, Jesus commands the wicked dead to rise from their dusty graves.

When does this resurrection of the lost take place?

2. *Revelation 20:5*—“*But the rest of the dead did not live again until the _____ were finished.*”

Notice, again, the thousand years—the time period, we learned, is called the millennium. As we have seen in the previous study, during those thousand years, the saved were reigning with God in heaven, involved in the work of judgment. “*And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years*” (**Revelation 20:4**). The lost, however—those killed during the turmoil surrounding the last days and the second coming and the lost dead of all ages—all are asleep in the ground, dead, until the end of this thousand years.

Then at the command of God, the unsaved from every time and place are resurrected. They are resurrected with the same mortal bodies they possessed before their death. As Jesus descends, His feet touch the Mount of Olives. A tremendous earthquake splits the mount and transforms it into a great plain (**Zechariah 14:4**). Then the New Jerusalem—the massive city of God—descends from the heavens, and its foundation comes to rest on the plain Jesus prepared for it.

According to the Bible, what options do people face at the various resurrections?

3. *John 5:28, 29, KJV*—“*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of _____ ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of _____ .*”

Which resurrection should we all strive to be part of?

4. *Revelation 20:5, 6*—“This is the _____ . Blessed and holy is he who has part in the _____ resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

Daniel 12:2—“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to _____ life, Some to shame and everlasting _____ .”

Two resurrections will occur. The first resurrection takes place at the second coming. This is the resurrection of those who, through all the vast ages, had died in Christ: Adam, Abraham, David, Peter, Paul, and the faithful ones who gave their lives to Jesus, who trusted in His righteousness, and who sought to live a life of faith and obedience. The first resurrection is the resurrection that occurs at the beginning of the millennium—the resurrection that leads to this countless multitude being with Jesus in the New Jerusalem.

Then, sadly, there’s the second resurrection—the one that occurs at the end of the millennium, after the work of judgment has gone on in heaven for a thousand years. This is the resurrection of the lost, of those who have rejected the salvation offered in Christ and now have to face the fruits of their actions. What a tragedy, especially when, through Jesus, every one of them could have had salvation, could have had forgiveness and eternal life. Because Christ would have pardoned them through His own mercy and grace! Yet each of the lost, in his or her own way, rejected that mercy and grace.

Why is it so important to be part of the first resurrection? What promises can you claim now to make that promise your own? (See John 3:16; Romans 10:9; Galatians 3:11.)

Imagine now this incredible scene: the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, has come down to earth and lands over the footprint where the Jerusalem of old once existed. (The New Jerusalem is much, much bigger.)

What happens next?

5. *Revelation 20:7, 8*—“Now when the _____ years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations ... to gather them together to _____ .”

Notice again: the thousand years. The saints have been in heaven in the New

Jerusalem ruling with Christ for a thousand years. When the New Jerusalem descends from heaven, Jesus raises the wicked from all ages. So now outside the city, what do we have but the vast multitudes of the world's lost—each for whom Christ died and paid the penalty of their sins but who spurned the salvation offered them? And now, after this time, Satan is freed to “deceive the nations.” What nations could these be other than those comprised of all the lost raised in the second resurrection?

What is happening here? Amazingly, Satan manages to deceive his followers one last time, and he rallies them in an effort to capture the heavenly city by force. Generals and military men of all ages now apply their combined skills to prepare for what is expected to be an epic battle. By this very act, the unsaved reveal that their hearts are unchanged. If possible, they would tear God from His throne and seize the Holy City by force. They do not seem to realize that their futile war is lost before it even begins.

Judgment day has come. The time has come for those who, regardless of their past, could have been forgiven by Jesus, to now face the penalty of their sins, which is eternal death.

What comes next?

6. *Revelation 20:12—“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened ... and the _____ were judged according to their works.”*

The text is clear: The “dead”—that is, the dead in sin and in trespass and in iniquity—though resurrected, are now facing judgment. Finally, we can see all the promises of God's justice and judgment taking place. The Hitlers and the Stalins and the pimps and the violent and the criminals and all those who through the ages thought that they could get away with their crimes finally face the justice that they long deserved. They are now going to be judged by their works, without the Mediator, Jesus Christ, standing in their stead to represent them and plead their case with His blood. (See **1 John 2:1.**)

What do these texts tell us?

“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14). “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness” (Acts

17:31). *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting”* (**Galatians 6:7, 8**).

Why, then, is it so important for each of us to acknowledge our sin and seek to be right with God through the work of Jesus on our behalf?

God has promised that justice will be done. All the evil deeds in the world that have gone unpunished for so long will, one day, be accounted for. A just God would do nothing else. We, though, have to learn to trust Him until that day comes.

Satan, however, still isn’t done. What does he lead the lost to try to do to God’s New Jerusalem?

7. *Revelation 20:7, 8—“Now when the _____ years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to _____ the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to _____, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.”*

Sadly, all the lost, still in rebellion against God, fall again for Satan’s tricks, and they seek to do battle against the Holy City. What a futile move on their part, for the days of sin and Satan and rebellion are about to close forever. Thus, they are gathered, a number as great as the sands of the sea, and they compass about God’s city, ready to attack it. (See **Ezekiel 38:16**.)

But what happens? Suddenly, high above the city, the Lord appears on His glorious throne. All the feeble war plans of the wicked are immediately arrested as they gaze up at the throne of God. The lost then become painfully aware of every sin they have ever committed. They recall every time they silenced their conscience, every time they turned from the pleadings of the Holy Spirit. Some had gone to the grave believing that they had successfully hidden their sins of murder, crime, and vice from all. With shame they experience firsthand the words of Jesus found in **Luke 12**—*“For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.”*

As a vivid panorama of their lives plays before them, each lost soul understands completely that, by his or her own choice, he or she rejected salvation. As they

stare upon the beauty of the Holy City, their greatest punishment comes from knowing that they could have had a place inside the city themselves—that it was never God’s intention for them to be outside that city.

For whom were the fires of hell prepared?

8. *Matthew 25:41*—“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the _____ and his _____.’”

God’s plan was always the destruction of Satan and his rebellious angels—not for that to happen to any one of us. Thanks to Jesus, we don’t have to be there among those who will be punished. Yet unfortunately, many will. Tragically, the peace and security of those inside the city will never be theirs. The feeling of hopeless despair that sweeps over them is beyond words. The rebellious can’t deny God’s justice in declaring them guilty. With one voice, they cry out, “Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.” And falling prostrate, they worship the Prince of life.

What proclamation does everyone make before God?

9. *Romans 14:11*—“For it is written: ‘As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.’”

Think about what this means. The saved have had a thousand years to get all their questions answered. (“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts” [1 **Corinthians 4:5**].) Meanwhile, heaven makes this proclamation: “Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus” (**Revelation 16:5**). And now, even the lost confess the justice and truth of God’s ways.

What does all this tell us about the openness, the fairness, and the goodness of God?

In spite of their confession, the lost make a last desperate attempt to take a city that could have been theirs—that was offered them through the blood of Jesus. The wicked attack. But it’s all for nothing.

What happens next?

10. *Revelation 20:9*—“They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And _____ came down from God out of heaven and _____ them.”

Finally, the time has come for the lost to face the irreversible consequences of their actions. Suddenly, fire and brimstone fall from the heavens. The earth breaks up, and fire explodes from the molten caverns beneath. And as the inferno engulfs the wicked, the righteous remain safe and secure within the massive walls and gates of the New Jerusalem.

All sinners are punished according to what they’ve done. Those with fewer sins than others are destroyed more quickly, while those who are guilty of horrific evil against humanity suffer longer. And Satan, the instigator of all sin, is forced to suffer the most. For God, the punishment of the wicked is a painful act, but it is something that His justice demands.

This is a good place to deal with the great misconception about an eternally burning hell-fire—the idea that God will burn the lost for all eternity, regardless of their sins. Notice what the text itself says: that fire from God will come out of heaven and “devour” them. When you think of “devour,” you think of something being destroyed—it is being taken out of existence. In fact, the Greek verb used really means just that: “eat up,” “consume,” “destroy.”

What do these texts tell us about the ultimate fate of the lost?

Malachi 4:1, 3—“For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. ... You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be _____ under the _____ of your feet.”

John 3:16, KJV—“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not _____, but have everlasting life.”

The contrast is between “eternal life” and what? Those who “perish”—those who are destroyed. Contrary to the common notion, the dead are not tortured in hell forever, for billions and billions of years. The *destruction* is forever, the *result* is forever—not the *process* itself. God says that the wicked will “... be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (**2 Thessalonians 1:9**). The destruction lasts forever. While the saved are enjoying the bliss of eternity, the lost are gone for all

eternity.

Soon, the terrible scene is over. All the lost will finally understand that their rebellion, their refusal to accept Jesus and to amend their ways, has made them unfit for the holy atmosphere of heaven. Even Satan has admitted God’s justice and fairness. The fire from God once and for all eradicates all sin and sinners from the universe.

This fate—not some out-of-control black hole chain reaction from an atom smasher—will be how this world ends. This is why it is so vitally important to realize that there are only two sides to choose between in this whole incredible drama—being among those *inside* the city, or those *outside*.

How important, then, that you choose, right now, which side you want to be on. Which side of the New Jerusalem’s wall do you want to be on?

Notes:



SEVEN

The New Earth

Millie was 79 years old. She'd had two hip replacements, a knee replacement, and a corneal replacement. She joked that, at this rate, if they kept replacing parts of her body, before long she wouldn't even be Millie anymore. They'd have to call her some new name, because so much of her old self would no longer be there.

In a sense, Millie stands as a symbol for our world. It's old; it's beaten up; it's damaged. Six thousand years of human sin, six thousand years of a great controversy between good and evil, have made the earth a scarred and tattered battlefield. That's why we are promised that one day God is going to re-create this world. He's not going to paint it over, not going to fix the cracks, not going to hammer in a few new nails here, or apply a little superglue there. He's not going to renovate, not going to repair, and not going to re-adjust.

Like a wrecked car that the insurance agent has declared "totaled," this earth of ours has been declared by God the same: "Totaled!"

What incredible scene is presented to John in vision?

1. *Revelation 21:1*—"Now I saw a new _____ and a new _____, for the first heaven and the first earth had _____ away."

A new heaven (in this context, "heaven" means the sky—the atmosphere) and a new earth. The text makes clear, too, that the old ones were "passed away." Gone. Vanished. And never to come back.

When does all this happen?

We left off in the last study with the incredible image of fire coming down from

God out of heaven and punishing those who had spurned His love and offer of salvation with the final fruit of their deeds. After admitting the justice and fairness of God's sentence, the lost are then destroyed in the fire from God, leading to their total annihilation. This isn't what God wanted for any of them, but this is the inevitable result of their own rejection of God's grace.

What promise is found in the following text?

2. *2 Peter 3:9*—“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should _____ but that _____ should come to repentance.”

God wants everyone to be saved. Jesus' death left no one out. It was for all humanity. That someone might choose to starve himself in a marketplace filled with lots of delicious food doesn't take away from the richness and fullness of the food that was there for them all along. It's the same with the plan of salvation. More than ample provision has been made for every soul to have an abundant entrance into heaven. Sadly, people reject that generous provision.

Whose sins did Christ bear?

3. *Isaiah 53:6, KJV*—“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity _____ .”

The Bible teaches that all human beings have sinned—that all have fallen under the curse of sin that came into this world through Adam. (See [Romans 5:12](#).) Yet it also teaches that Jesus carried on Himself the iniquity of all of us. The Hebrew language, in this famous text in Isaiah, helps us understand this important truth better. In the phrase “all we like sheep have gone astray,” the words “all we” come from the same exact Hebrew phrase that is translated “all of us” in the same text.

The good news, then, is that though “all we” like sheep have sinned, all our iniquity has fallen on Jesus. He paid the penalty for it all. Thus, through Him and what He did for us, we can all have eternal life in this new heavens and new earth that God will soon create!

God, though, never forces anyone to obey Him. If He did do that, He could have forced Lucifer to obey Him in heaven. Then the rebellion would never have

started. But God’s government works by love—and love cannot be forced.

Why is it that real love must be freely given? Can you even imagine a love that is forced?

Love is the foundation of God’s government. He wants us to serve Him willingly from love, not force, intimidation, or lies. Satan uses lies and deception to coerce people to follow him, but not God. It’s against His very nature and character.

Right after the verse in which Peter talks about God’s desire for all humans to be saved, what does Peter write next?

4. *2 Peter 3:10, 12, KJV—“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the _____ shall pass away with a great noise, and the _____ shall melt with fervent heat, the _____ also and the _____ that are therein shall be burned up. ... Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be _____, and the elements shall _____ with fervent heat.”*

What a powerful picture! It’s as if every atomic weapon ever created all detonated at once! Only worse. The atmosphere above will ignite; the elements will melt; the earth and the works in it will liquefy with heat. This is the complete destruction of all that came before.

Remember the text in the previous lesson: *“And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them” (Revelation 20:9)*. The fire that does this is the same fire that will completely wipe out the old earth. All the works of this sinful world—all the deeds, all the scars, every trace—will be forever gone.

How does the book of Daniel depict this scene? After addressing the great kingdoms of the world, the prophet talks about what will happen at the end of the world.

5. *Daniel 2:35, KJV —“Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that _____ was found for them.”*

The original language says that “no trace of them was found.” Nothing is going

to be left of this world of sin, of suffering, of sadness, of death, and of pain. Everything about this terrible world will be forever gone.

What hope can you find in this promise that one day the world, as we know it, will be gone, and “no trace” of it will be found?

Some scientists speculate that one day our sun will explode and this earth will be destroyed. But there’s one big difference. They maintain that the end of this world means the end of all human life, forever.

The Bible teaches the opposite: God destroys this world, yes, but not as an end in itself ... but as a means to an end—and that end is to create a brand-new world out of the ashes of the old one! (See Jeremiah 4:27.)

What does Peter say next after talking about the fire that burns up the old world?

6. *2 Peter 3:12, 13, KJV—“Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new _____ and a new _____, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”*

Yes, God burns away all that remains of this fallen world—for the express purpose of creating a new one. This is the consummation of the great gospel promise made to us: eternal life, not in the sin-sick world we now see, but a perfect new world.

What wonderful future hope do these verses present to us about the future of the earth?

7. *Isaiah 65:17—“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the _____ shall not be remembered or come to mind.”*

Isaiah 66:22, 23—“ ‘For as the new heavens and the new earth Which I will make shall _____ before Me,’ says the Lord, ‘So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass That from one New Moon to another, and from one _____ to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,’ says the Lord.”

Here we come to the ultimate hope of all of God’s faithful people through the ages: a perfect paradise, a new heavens, a new earth, all bad things forgotten,

and all people coming together to worship their Lord and Creator!

It is so hard for our fallen minds to grasp what will be awaiting us. After the earth is purified by fire, the Lord then commences His wondrous work of re-creation. At the power of His word, with all the redeemed watching from a front-row seat, the earth is restored to its former Edenic beauty. He speaks—and a carpet of rich, lush vegetation covers the planet. At His command, land and water again teem with vibrant life. Countless complex and magnificent creatures of every kind peacefully explore the new paradise. The invigorating atmosphere is pure and sweet. The earth becomes one grand showcase of creative brilliance. A world will unfold before our eyes that we can't even begin to imagine!

While the Bible promises God's children a home in "heaven" (**1 Peter 1:4**), it also promises that the meek shall inherit "the earth" (**Matthew 5:5**). At first sight, this seems like a contradiction, but it is not. At the end of the millennium, after the cleansing fires have done their work, heaven is actually going to come down to this earth! This planet, recreated to its original faultless beauty, will become God's dwelling-place and the eternal home of the saved (**Revelation 21:3, 5**).

In your own imagination, try to picture what it will be like in a world without sin, without suffering, without any of the things that make this present life so hard. Why is this such a precious promise to us? How much do you want to be there?

1 Corinthians 2:9—“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the _____ of man The things which God has prepared for those who _____ Him.’ ”

The Bible doesn't give us all the details about what our future eternal home will be like. We can, though, catch some glimpses now simply by looking at the beauty of nature, even in a fallen world. That is, despite the ravages of sin, we can still see examples of what the earth must have looked like somewhat when it was first created. Only now, we are promised something so much better.

Why is the following text so important to our understanding of what life will be like in our new existence?

8. *Revelation 21:4—“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more _____ , nor _____ , nor _____ . There shall be no*

more _____ , for the former things have passed away.”

That’s so hard to imagine, living as we do in a world like ours, which is now so full of crying, sorrow, and death. Notice that this verse calls them the “former things.” However much a part of life they might be here and now, in this new heavens and the new earth these are the “former things”—the things that have “passed away” and are gone. In fact, the same Greek verb here for “passed away” in regard to things like death, sorrow, and crying is the same Greek verb used in [Revelation 21:1](#), which says that the first heaven and the first earth have “passed away.”

Yes, this is the wonderful hope that awaits us—a hope that can be ours, not because of anything good in us, not because of anything that we can accomplish, but because of Jesus and the promises of eternal life that we can have in Him. We don’t *deserve* a place there. We can’t *earn* a place there. No, we are *given* a place there through the grace of Jesus, which He freely offers to all who will claim it for themselves.

What will the New Jerusalem be like?

Size: The city is perfectly square. Its perimeter is 12,000 furlongs, or 1,500 miles (a furlong is 1/8 mile). It is 375 miles long on each side ([Revelation 21:16](#)).

Walls: A wall 144 cubits, or 216 feet, high (a cubit is 18 inches) surrounds the city. The wall is made of solid jasper, with radiance and beauty beyond description. Think of it! Nearly 20 stories high—and solid jasper! ([Revelation 21:17, 18](#)).

Gates: The city has 12 gates—three on each side—each made of a single pearl ([Revelation 21:12, 13, 21](#)).

Foundations: The city has 12 full, complete foundations—each made of precious stone. Every color of the rainbow will be represented, so at a distance the city will no doubt appear to be resting upon a rainbow ([Revelation 21:14–20](#)).

Streets: The city streets will be pure gold—reflecting heaven’s glories as a mirror ([Revelation 21:21](#)).

Appearance: The city, with all of its precious stones, gold, and shimmering beauty, will be lighted with the glory of God. In its breathtaking majesty and

purity, it is compared to “a bride adorned for her husband” (**Revelation 21:2, 11**).

One can only imagine what it must look like inside. And we can each have a place there!

Who will be dwelling with us in this new world?

9. *Revelation 21:3—“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.’”*

As wonderful as all this will be, the most wonderful part will be the presence of Jesus, our Lord, in our midst.

What hint does the Bible give us about the only remaining trace in heaven that sin ever existed?

Zechariah 13:6, KJV—“And one shall say unto him, ‘What are these _____ in thine hands?’ Then he shall answer, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’”

What this text suggests is that a reminder of sin will remain throughout the ages of eternity: Our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded head, upon His side, upon His hands and His feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought. And the tokens of His humiliation are His highest honor—through the eternal ages the wounds of Calvary will show forth His praise, declare His power, and guarantee that rebellion will never rise up again.

Yes, the Bible presents each of us with two eternities. One is eternal destruction—the final death that sin brings, a death that will last as long as eternity itself. This is not the eternal fate that the Lord wants for any of us.

And there’s the other eternity—the eternal life we can all have in Jesus Christ. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (**John 3:16**).

That’s *everlasting* life, eternal life, a life that will never end. And that life will be in a world with no sin, no suffering, no sickness, no death, because “these former things have passed away.” The time is coming when Jesus will give you, if you claim it, not a knee replacement, not a corneal replacement, not a hip

replacement—but a whole new body, in a whole new life, in a whole new heavens and earth.

One of these eternities awaits you. Only you can choose which one will be yours. Why risk waiting for another time to make that choice? Why wait until some other day? Which eternity do you choose? Just pray and ask Him now.

Notes:



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