

# AFTER



# LIFE

PHIL SANDERS

# **SEARCH PROGRAMS**

**April 2012**

*Topics subject to change without notice*

## **APRIL 1 – WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH**

No one lives forever, but what will happen to us when we die? Each of us must face this event in our lives, so knowing what will happen and preparing for the afterlife is vitally important.

## **APRIL 8 – THE SECOND COMING**

The Lord Jesus promised to return to earth someday. Predictions abound, but no one knows when. Every eye will witness His return. In this lesson we'll study what the Lord will do when He comes for His own.

## **APRIL 15 – THE RESURRECTION**

What is the resurrection and when will we be raised? How will the resurrection affect me personally? What kind of body will we have in the resurrection? In this lesson, we'll explore what the Bible says about resurrection.

## **APRIL 22 – THE JUDGMENT**

Since each of us will one day face judgment, we need to know who will judge us, what the basis of that judgment will be, and how we can prepare for the Judgment Day. Will you be ready for that day?

## **APRIL 29 – HEAVEN**

Every faithful Christian longs to live eternally in heaven with God. Heaven is a blessed place free from the pain and the sin found in this world. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life may enter.

## “What Happens at Death?”

The Bible says in Deuteronomy 29:29 that, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.” God doesn’t answer every question we can ask, but God does give us everything we need to know, everything that pertains to life and godliness. If you wish to live with God eternally, you can do nothing more valuable than to study God’s Word. We’re always so delighted when you spend this time with us. We want to be a part of your life each week.

No one likes to talk about death or even think about it, yet death is a topic that we can’t avoid. Hebrews 9, verse 27 says, “...it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.” From our earliest days we’ve heard of judgment, heaven and hell. We know something exists beyond this life, but we don’t always know what. Movies and television stimulate our imagination, but they only provide someone’s guess about what lies beyond. We want to know what God says will happen when we die. And that’s why we go to God’s inspired Word for answers.

Today we’re going to talk about a very sensitive subject, so I want to speak to you personally. And I hope this time will be like two friends having a heart-to-heart conversation. Life is short, and death is certain. And even if you’re young and healthy, you can’t escape reality. Your death will either open the door to the most wonderful experience you’ve ever enjoyed or the worst experience anyone could have. God wants to bless you, and the Bible gives us the information that we need to find that blessing.

Our Scripture reading today comes from the epistle of James chapter 4, verses 13 to 17. “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow, we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.’ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; and all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.” That is from James chapter 4. Let’s pray together. Heavenly Father, we are grateful for the love that You give to us and for the life that we have. Father, help us never to take it for granted, but to serve You and to do the right thing. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen!

The word “death” occurs over 150 times in the Old Testament and 120 times in the New Testament. Death signifies separation. Physical death separates the body from the spirit. Spiritual death separates people from God and His blessing. We grieve when we lose our loved ones, because we know that we can’t be with them ever again in this life. The good news is that while death is a separation, it’s not the end of our existence.

When David and Bathsheba’s first child died, David said in 2 Samuel 12 and verse 23, “I will go to him, but he will not return to me.” We all will one day die. The angels will come for us, and they will take our spirits to another place.

The Bible describes death in James 2 and verse 26, “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” Notice that it says the body is dead, but we’re, we’re something more than body. We are body and spirit. The body dies, but the spirit still exists. Ecclesiastes 12 and verse 7 says, “the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.” Death is that time when our spirits return to God who made us. God is the Father of spirits according to Hebrews 12 and verse 9. Now, your spirit is not physical or material, and it’s not subject to death.

On the cross, you remember, Jesus told the thief, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23 and verse 43). The Lord clearly says we'll survive and be conscious beyond this life. The Lord expected to see the thief in Paradise. Now, there is an inner spirit in us that survives death and is conscious. Life here and now is not all there is.

The Bible says, yes, it's appointed for us to die, and then comes judgment. And so death holds mysteries for us. The unknown, especially speaking of judgment, is frightening. We worry whether our life after this life is over will be one of peace. The Lord Jesus said Matthew 7, verses 13 to 14, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." This passage surprises many people who think nearly everyone will be saved and only a few of the worst will be lost. But that's not what Jesus says.

We must consider the afterlife. We must consider how we live, because, you see, how we live will determine where we spend eternity. What are we saved by? Well, the shed blood of Jesus Christ, of course. What are we saved from? We're saved from the penalty of sin. Jesus warned in Matthew 5, verses 29 to 30 that, "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell."

The Lord Jesus gives us a glimpse of what happens after death in the book of Luke chapter 16, verses 19 to 31. And so, let's hear the story that Jesus tells. "Now there was a rich man, (a certain rich man) and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

"And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.'

"But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'

"And he said, 'Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father's house – for I have five brothers – in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Many think this story is a parable and for that reason shouldn't be taken seriously. But Jesus is never trivial. When Jesus uses a figure of speech like a parable, He does so to emphasize a point, not to trivialize it. If this is a parable, it's certainly different from any other parable that I know about. Most parables talk about a certain man, but this particular story mentions the name Lazarus, and mentions the name Abraham – real people and gives their name. So for that reason I believe it's an illustration story rather than a parable.

But however one takes this story, there are two different destinies awaiting people after they die. One destiny is filled with comfort and the other with agony. Lazarus and the rich man both knew where they were. Both could have conversations and could reason. Both could remember the lives that they lived back on earth.

You know, sometimes the Bible speaks of death as “sleep.” And this is likely because the body after death appears to be sleeping. This, however, does not mean that our spirits are unconscious or in a stupor. You’ll remember that Moses and Elijah, though they had been dead for many centuries, had a conversation with the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration as Matthew records in chapter 17, verses 1 through 5. You see, death happens to the body, but death does not make our spirits unconscious.

The lives that we live here, and whether we’re right with the Lord or not, will determine our future destiny. This illustration story of Lazarus and the rich man opens our eyes to what happens when our spirits leave this world. Now, after we die, the angels will come for us to take us to the place that God has assigned for us. This may be a place of comfort or a place of torment.

Scripture uses the word “Hades” to describe that unseen place where the disembodied spirits of dead people go. Now, “Hades” literally means “unseen.” The word “Hades” should not be confused with the word “Hell.” Hades is a temporary place, where spirits that have no bodies reside until Judgment Day; but hell is eternal, and it’s the place where our resurrected bodies will go, and it’s forever. Now, no one will enter heaven or hell until after the resurrection. Hades is the place where only spirits of dead people reside. In the resurrection, our spirits will return to the earth and be joined to new, imperishable bodies. Death is the separation of the body and spirit. Resurrection takes place when our spirits are reunited with a changed, imperishable body. Now, I’ll have more to say about this in a few weeks.

While Hades usually refers to that place of torment, the word can also be applied to refer to the entire realm, which has both a place of torment and a place of comfort. For instance, in Acts 2 and verse 27 the apostle Peter quotes David’s prophecy in Psalm 16, verse 10 about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter noted that while Jesus’ soul was not abandoned to Hades, that didn’t happen, nor did his flesh suffer decay. Now, when Jesus died his soul, that inner spirit, went to Paradise, as He said in Luke 23:43. And, you remember, that’s what He told the thief on the cross, “Truly I say to you, that you will be with Me in Paradise.” So we know that His soul went there. So He could be in Paradise and that Paradise, of course, is a place of comfort.

Now, the word Paradise is used three times in Scripture, and each time it refers to the heavenly realm where the righteous go after death. Second Corinthians 12, verses 2 to 4, in that passage Paradise is equated with the third heaven, that is the place where God himself dwells. Jesus went to that unseen place of righteous spirits when He went to Paradise, and Paul went there at least for a period of time whether in the body or out of the body he said he didn’t know. In Revelation 2 and verse 7, the Paradise of God is where the tree of life is. Now, if Jesus’ soul was not abandoned to Hades but He went to Paradise, then Hades must contain a place where the righteous souls are comforted as well as the place of torment.

The apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5, verses 6 to 9 also helps us to understand that we will have an existence in spirit form after we die and until the resurrection. He says that when the righteous die they will go to be with the Lord, the Lord Jesus. He said: “Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord – for we walk by faith, not by sight – we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at



home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." When the righteous die, they go to be with the Lord.

Again, Paul said in Philippians 1, verses 21 to 23, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart (that is to die) and to be with Christ, for that is very much better." Paul said he would go and be "with Christ" when he died. This is the Christian hope, to live with our Lord Jesus forever and ever.

Through the years at funerals, funerals of people that I love, I've often thought of the reassurance that I gain from Romans chapter 14, verses 7 to 9. There the Bible says, "For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." Now, we may die physically, but not even death can separate us from the love of our Lord Jesus, according to Romans 8. When Christians die, they go to be with Him that very day. But when evil people die, the angels take them to the place of torment.

And this is why, my friend, we must be prepared spiritually. No one else can do that for you. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 10, "For we must all (you and me and everybody) must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." Now, the saved in Christ goes to judgment with the blood of Jesus and they have their names recorded in the Lamb's book of life. You can face the afterlife with confidence that you have an eternal home with the Lord. But the unbeliever and the impenitent person has no such hope. We must face God on our own.

God doesn't want any person to be lost – He wants everyone to be saved. He wouldn't have sent Jesus to die on a cross, if He were looking to condemn you, anybody else. He wanted to save them. But God is not going to make people do what's right.

God has prepared the way for your salvation in the gift of His beloved Son, Jesus. The Bible says by His grace you are saved. But grace as a gift must be received by faith and obedience. We don't earn our salvation, but God has determined that those who receive His gift are those who meet his conditions.

The Bible says in Hebrews 5, verses 8 and 9, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." Now, your gift is ready for you if you will believe, repent, and you're baptized. Have you prepared for the life that comes after death? Death is something that all of us will face one day, and it may come sooner than you think. Are you prepared? Let's pray together. O Heavenly Father, we are thankful for the blood of Jesus that forgives our sins. And, Father, we pray that You will help us, each of us, to be prepared to be able to go to heaven and be with You when that time comes when we must pass over to the other side. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen!

I purchased life insurance to protect my family and to provide for them after I'm gone. I've known people to buy a plot, choose the casket, and arrange the service long before the time. And I think how foolish it is to be so well prepared for death here but fail to prepare myself spiritually for the hereafter. I don't want to be like the five foolish virgins, who failed to buy the oil needed for their lamps. You remember, they ran to the dealers to buy oil; and while they were gone, the bridegroom came. The door was shut, and they were not allowed in (Matthew chapter 25, verses 1 to 14). We must prepare now before the time is up.

Don't waste your opportunity to get right with God; once life is over, there is no second chance. Why not start a new and different direction for your soul's sake? Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. And if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3 and verse 20).

You can lose your car, your house, your health, or your life and still go to heaven. But if you lose your soul, you've lost everything. Make the most important commitment that you'll ever make, that of giving yourself to the Lord by obeying the gospel. Believe in the Lord Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Repent of every sin. Confess the name of Jesus, and be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And when you're baptized, the Bible says in Acts 22:16 that your sins will be washed away. The Lord will add you to His church, and you'll be a son of God with eternal life.

## “The Second Coming”

God’s Word tells us everything that we need to know about life and godliness. While there are some things God doesn’t tell us, He always gives us the truth that we need. God is a wise and loving Father, who wishes for all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth according to 1Timothy 2 and verse 4. He gives us that needed truth in His Word, His message of truth is for all people in all places for all time. The Word of God is all-sufficient to teach us His will for our lives. We’re always so delighted when you spend this time with us. We want to be a part of your life each week.

People are fascinated by the end times but can easily be deceived. It hasn’t been long since everyone focused on Y2K, and believed a world disaster would happen. Dire predictions that frightened everyone never took place. Now folks are focused on 2012 with predictions of calamities and total destruction. They cite the ancient Mayan calendar, astrologers, psychics, and even some people who think the Bible says 2012 is the year. Just last year a radio preacher said that he was certain that the rapture would take place on May 21<sup>st</sup> and the end of the world on October 21<sup>st</sup>. Well, neither happened, and he proved to be a false prophet. You know false teaching ends up causing doubt in the truth and it hurts the cause of Christ.

What can we know about the second coming of Jesus Christ? While most Christians believe it will happen, there is a lot of error about signs and times that confuse and needlessly frighten people. We’re not interested in religious hoopla. We want to take the time to look into the Scripture for the truth.

Our reading today comes from 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 1 through 6. “Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come, just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pangs upon a woman with child; and they will not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.” Here the Bible encourages us to really think seriously about the coming of the Lord. Let’s pray together. Father, we are grateful for Your Word, for its encouragement. And, Father, help us to be awake and sober with our souls, so that we may be ready and prepared when You come again. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen!

Many people claim to be prophets today, but are they? The Bible gives us the test of a prophet in Deuteronomy 18:21 and 22, “You may say in your heart, (God says) ‘How will we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, this is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; and you shall not be afraid of him.”

Jeremiah spoke of prophets in his day that were always claiming to speak in the name of the Lord. God’s prophet Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 23 and verse 16, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their own imagination, Not from the mouth of the LORD.’ ” Verse 32 in the same chapter says, “ ‘Behold I am against those who have prophesied false dreams,’ declares the Lord, ‘and related them, and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit,’ declares the Lord.”



So-called prophets, who falsely predict when Christ will come and the end of the world, these prophets cause people to doubt anything religious, even the Truth that comes from God's Word. They make people think God's Word is not true because their prophecy turned out to be false. One religious group predicted 1975 would be the end of the world; and I have a book in my library entitled, "88 Reasons Why the Lord Will Come in 1988." But the Lord didn't come then either. Twenty percent of Americans believe the Lord will come in our lifetime, but nobody really knows.

While we cannot believe false predictions, we can be certain that the Lord Jesus is coming, because the Lord promised us that He would. The Lord always keeps His promises. He said in John 14, verses 1 through 3, "Do not let your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; and if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." Jesus never lies. He will come again to take us home with Him in heaven.

The Lord Jesus is coming a second time and He will come to save those who love Him. The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27 to 28, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him." Now, each Lord's Day, Christians partake of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of what Jesus did on the cross and in anticipation of His return. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

There's a great deal of discussion as to when the Lord will come. The Lord Jesus himself discussed this in Matthew 24, verses 35 to 39. He said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But of that day (that is the day when heaven and earth passes away, of that day) and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be."

Last year a man wrongly predicted the rapture on May 21 and the end of the world on October 21, 2011. Well, when those events didn't happen, a devoted follower of his said the Bible is wrong. My friend, God's Word actually proved true, while the human prediction of that false prophet proved false both times. Let's believe the Bible. No one knows when the Lord will come a second time and the world will end. "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Mark 13 and verse 32). God has not revealed something to man today that the Father has not even revealed to the Son. The Lord Jesus told the apostles in Acts 1 and verse 7 in answer to a similar question, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority."

Now, one thing we do know is that God hasn't revealed when the Lord Jesus will return. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 1 to 5, "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Well, just as we don't know when a thief will break into our homes, we don't know when the Lord Jesus will return. To say that we do know shows that the Word of God is not in us.

So... What will happen when he comes again? What's going to happen on those days? Well, the first evidence of His coming will be a shout and a trumpet. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 4 and verse 16, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." A shout and a trumpet will call people's attention to the arrival of the Lord Jesus. Now, no one will doubt what is about to happen.

How will Jesus appear to us? Well, He will come in the clouds in great glory. The Bible tells us of the Lord's ascension into heaven in the book of Acts chapter 1, verses 9 to 11. The Bible says, "And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing (that is angels) stood beside them; and they also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.' " My friend, the Lord Jesus will one day appear in glory with his mighty angels in the clouds.

The Bible says in the book of Revelation chapter 1 and verse 7, "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen." Every person, every person will see the Lord Jesus on that day. Every person will know He is real, that He is in power, that He is the Lord. On that day, on that day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father. Oh, I hope that you're already confessing that.

When the Lord comes again, Jesus Christ will bring back with Him the spirits of those who have died. Now, the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 14 to 16, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 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, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep (that is those who have died). For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ (that is those that He has brought back) shall rise first." The departed spirits of the righteous dead will come back to earth to be resurrected. Now, the raising up of the righteous spirits means they will have new bodies. Now, I'll speak more about the resurrection next week.

But we should not think that only the righteous will be raised on the last day. All the dead will be raised. The Lord Jesus himself said in John chapter 5, verses 28 and 29, "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." Now, the apostle Paul said in Acts 24 and verse 15 that, "there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." One's not going to be in one century and another in another. One's not going to be one year and then seven years later another. It's all going to happen at the same time – the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

Now, those who are alive when the Lord returns are going to be changed. In the resurrection their bodies will be glorified like the bodies of Jesus Christ. They will have imperishable and immortal bodies. Now, at that point the Lord will cause them to be caught up in the air, and the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 4 and verse 17, "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."

The Bible says in Philippians 3, verses 20 to 21, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we, also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform (that is change) the body of our humble state into conformity (that is He is going to make us) like the body of His glory, by

the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” One of these days we’ll have a new, glorified body that is preparing us for a life in heaven.

Now, you might hear the word “rapture” once in a while to speak of this taking up of those in Christ who are resurrected and those who are alive. The word “rapture” comes from the Latin term “rapio” and it’s used to translate the concept of being “caught up” to meet the Lord. Some say the rapture happens much earlier than the general resurrection. They say this because 1 Thessalonians does not address the resurrection of the wicked; but as we have seen the Lord said that the resurrection of the good and the evil will happen on the same day. That’s from John chapter 5, verses 28 and 29.

Now, when Jesus comes again, the earth and its works will be burned up. Second Peter 3 and verse 7 says, “But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” Verses 10 to 11 say, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up (now, some versions here say exposed). But, since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.” Second Thessalonians agrees with this and says that, “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.”

Now, words such as “fire,” “intense heat,” and “destroyed” clearly show that the present heavens and earth will not be our dwelling place throughout eternity. The elements refer to those elementary things of which this natural world is made. These elements will be destroyed by burning. Second Peter 3, verses 12 to 13 remind us to look for “the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat. But according to His promise we’re looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

First John 2 and verse 17 simply says that this world is passing away. It’s foolish to get so wrapped up in this world and to forget that there’s more beyond. The Lord Jesus is coming back one day for His people. I hope He is coming for you. Those whose robes are washed white in the blood of Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life will live with Him forever and ever. My friend, nothing, nothing nothing is more important than being right with the Lord Jesus Christ, and having your robes white in the blood of the Lamb. Are you prepared for His coming again? Let’s pray together. Father, we are grateful for the promise that You have one day to come back for us. Help us to be prepared for that time. And, Father, we are thankful for Your promises. Help us to live in such a way that we may show You our faith, and we are so grateful for Your grace. In Jesus’ name, Amen!

If you saw Jesus coming in the clouds right now, what would you think and how would you react? Could you say, “Come, Lord Jesus,” and welcome Him; or would you dread the day of the Lord? Now, how you answer that question says a lot about where you are spiritually. Many people want the Lord to come someday, but they want to live as they please for the moment and not make the needed changes that they have to make to prepare for the Lord’s coming. They presume they’ll have plenty of time later to get right with the Lord.

Because the Lord will return like a thief in the night and we don’t know when, we have to be ready for His coming all the time. We ought to live every day as if it were the last day before the Lord returns. If it is the last day, what changes do you need to make in your life to prepare for Him? Is your heart right with the Lord? Are you living as you ought to live? Maybe you have loved ones that need to

get right with the Lord. Not knowing when the Lord will return doesn't mean we have plenty of time; it means we must be prepared at all times.

Now, if you're not right with the Lord, today is the best day to respond to the grace of God, to do it in obedience to the gospel. Believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Repent and turn from your sins, and let the Lord rule your life. And upon confession of your faith, be baptized in His name. Now, baptism into Christ means being baptized into His death according to Romans 6 and verse 3. Baptism brings us into contact with His blood; it unites us with Him in His burial and resurrection; and it frees us from sin according to Romans 6, verses 4 through 7. And that's why I say to you, "Don't wait, don't wait, obey the Lord today!"

## “The Resurrection”

The Word of God is the only book that can give us the true answer to the most pressing questions of life, that is: Where did we come from? Why are we here? And what will happen to us after we die? The Scriptures tell us God created us after His own image so that we might serve Him. The Scriptures are such a blessing. And we're so delighted when you spend this time with us. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Job asks an important question, “If a man dies, will he live again?” Now, from our physical senses, we can't answer that question. We don't have any modern record of someone who has died and has been buried coming back to life, so it's only natural for us to ask if there is life after death.

We do, however, have a record of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The apostles and many others were certainly eyewitnesses of the resurrection. They believed so strongly in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they were willing to give their lives and suffer death in order to tell the story throughout the world. The resurrection of Jesus demonstrates God's power to raise the dead.

The Scriptures reveal God's eternal plan to raise us up on the last day and take us home to heaven. That's a message of great hope to Christians. The Lord Jesus said in John 6:39 to 40, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son, and believes in Him, will have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

Our reading today comes from 1 Corinthians 15, verses 12 to 19. “Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.” This is a very sobering reading from God's Holy Word. Let's pray together. Father, we are thankful that Jesus did arise from the dead and that we can have hope in You. And, Father, help us to put ourselves in Your hands and to devote ourselves fully to You each day. In Jesus' name, Amen!

When you ask people about what happens after death, you'll get several answers. Some think death is the end, and a person will cease to exist. Some say the righteous will live on while the unrighteous will cease to exist. Others think that we'll be repeatedly reincarnated in different life forms on earth. Well, the Bible says in Hebrews 9 and verse 27, that we suffer death once, and after this comes judgment. You know, even in the New Testament, the Sadducees and the Pharisees disagreed over whether there would be a resurrection. My friend, the Bible is not just one voice among many; it speaks the truth from God and with authority. We can trust the Bible. The Lord Jesus once had a discussion with the Sadducees about the resurrection. And so let's begin our study of the resurrection with that discussion.

The Bible says in Matthew 22, verses 23 to 32, “On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him, asking, ‘Teacher, Moses said that, ‘If a man dies, having no children, his brother as next of kin shall marry his wife, and raise up children for his brother.’ Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his

wife to his brother; so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. Last of all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her.'

"But Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

This passage helps us understand that life does go on after death. As we've said, the body dies but the spirit of a man continues to exist in conscious form. The Old Testament prophet Daniel believed in the resurrection. He said by inspiration in Daniel 12 and verse 2 that, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these (that is the faithful whose names are in the book of life) to everlasting life, but the others, they will rise to disgrace and everlasting contempt." The Bible presents the resurrection as one event, not two. Both the righteous and the wicked will arise one day.

The Lord Jesus said in John 5, verses 25 to 29, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."

At the end time, when Jesus comes again, He will call all who are in the tombs to come forth. That's everyone from every century in every place. No one will be left out. All will come out of the grave in answer to the call of Jesus Christ. He will then judge all men. And we'll have more to say about that next week. But we know there is but one general resurrection of all people. Paul said at his trial at Caesarea, "there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (Acts 24 and verse 15).

For those who love God and serve Him faithfully, belief in the resurrection is a great promise and a great comfort. As a minister I've spent many, many hours at funeral homes and cemeteries. I've watched families grieve as they lowered the casket of a dearly loved one into the ground or placed it in a mausoleum. Nothing could bring back that loved one, but knowing that there is a resurrection helped comfort them. We can be confident of the resurrection because we know the Lord never lies. And we can trust every word from His mouth.

In John 11, Jesus went to Bethany to meet with the sisters of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. They were grieving over the death of Lazarus. In John 11:23 the Lord Jesus told Martha, "'Your brother will rise again.' And Martha said to Him, 'Well, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' But Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; and he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?'" That is John 11:23 to 26.

Later we read about the Lord Jesus, how He wept with the two sisters and how He called Lazarus back to life. Now, in spite of the fact that he had been in the tomb for four days (that is, Lazarus had been) and that there would be a stench, Lazarus did come back to life. They moved that stone; they took the linen wrappings off of him; and they gave him back alive to his sisters. Now, everyone who was there saw the miracle and believed it had happened. Even the enemies of Jesus believed in His power to raise the dead. The enemies of Jesus said in John 11, verses 47 to 48, "What

are we doing? For this man (speaking of Jesus) is performing many signs. And if we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him." My friend, if Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead, He can raise you.

The Bible reveals that in the resurrection our bodies will change. We die with flesh and blood, but we won't live throughout eternity in a body like we have now. Our bodies will be changed from this natural body to a spiritual body that is glorified and immortal. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:50 to 57, "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will 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 imperishable, and we will all be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This fleshly body is subject to death, but the body that we'll have in the resurrection is imperishable and immortal. It cannot die. First Corinthians 15, verses 42 to 44 says, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, but it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. And if there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." The body that we put into the ground will not be like the body that we'll have once God has raised us up and changed us. This body today is weak and subject to illness and death. That body will not have the weaknesses this body has.

First Corinthians 15, verses 47 to 49 says, "The first man (Adam) is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly." Now in the resurrection, our bodies will be glorified like the body of the Lord Jesus. We won't suffer from a deteriorating body.

I love God's promise found in 1 John 3 and verse 2, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. But we know that when He appears, that we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." Our bodies will be spiritual and immortal. We'll be able to see the greatness and the grandeur of our God, because we'll be changed. And this will enable us to see and to hear things in the spiritual and heavenly realm that we'll never be able to see in this life.

It's easy for us to get so caught up in this life, that we forget that we have our permanent home in heaven. Now, in baptism we die with Christ and we're raised up with Him to walk in newness of life as children of God. One day Christ is coming back for us to take us home The Bible says in Colossians 3, verses 1 to 4, "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

When we're baptized into Christ, we become united with Him in His burial and His resurrection. At baptism we become children of God and have newness of life. At baptism, our names are recorded in the book of life. And this prepares us for the last day when Jesus comes again and our bodies will be



raised imperishable and we receive immortality. God grants us citizenship in heaven in this life, but we will not enter that home that He has prepared for us until the resurrection of the body.

The apostle Paul helped the Philippians to understand about their home in heaven. Philippi was filled with retired Roman soldiers who were very proud of their Roman citizenship. Our citizenship, however, is in heaven; and the resurrection prepares our body to live in eternity. Paul said in Philippians 3, verses 20 to 21, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

The Lord Jesus described how we will live in heaven in Luke 20, verses 34 to 36. He explained that, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." Many things will change in the resurrection. We will be like the angels, praising and serving God forever and ever.

And so that means that we must so live that God may consider us worthy to attain to the resurrection. We are saved by grace through faith. Yes, the blood of Jesus opens for us this great opportunity. In Philippians 3, Paul longed to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. He wrote these words to the church in Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 23, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." My friend, I hope the same for you. I hope that you can be raised with Christ in this life when you're baptized so that when that last day comes you can live with Him forever, and ever, and ever in heaven. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we are grateful for the promise of the resurrection. We are thankful that one day our bodies will be raised and that we will be changed to have eternal bodies that we might live with you in heaven. Father, help us to so live that we may be worthy to attain the resurrection. In Jesus' name, Amen!

A great gospel preacher, Perry Cotham, said, "Death is no respecter of persons. It comes every day to someone and someday to everyone." Since you're going to face death and judgment someday, shouldn't you think about your relationship with God? The Bible gives us a promise of a resurrection. The Bible says in Romans 8 and verse 11, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

Now, since the resurrection will lead either to life or to judgment, we should seek life and blessing. The Lord will come again; He will raise us up from the grave, and give us new bodies. The Bible says in 1 John 3, verses 2 to 3, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, that we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." Where is your hope? Are you pure and right with God? Are your sins forgiven? First Peter 1 and verse 22 tells us that as we purify our souls through our obedience to the truth that we become right with God. My friend, have you obeyed the gospel? Have you remained faithful to the Lord?

We obey the gospel through faith and repentance. And upon the confession of our faith, we're baptized into Jesus Christ and His death. Now, at that time His blood cleanses us from sin and causes us to be born again to newness of life according to Romans 6, verses 3 to 7. My friend, will you put on Christ and obey the gospel today?

## “The Judgment”

Of all the books that you might study, none is more crucial to your soul than the Bible. It alone has the Lord's words of eternal life. It contains the spiritual criteria by which your soul will one day be judged. My friend, you cannot afford not to know what God's Word actually says. Beyond this, no book is more filled with love; no book has more wise counsel; and no book will give you greater hope than the Bible. This is why we take the time to explore God's Word each week. And we're so delighted you spend this time with us. We want to be a part of your life each week.

I grew up watching Perry Mason on television. As a defense attorney Mason nearly always demonstrated there was a reasonable doubt about his client's guilt. Usually the judge dismissed the case because someone else was exposed as guilty, or the jury had such doubt they found the defendant not guilty. Oh, it was exciting drama, and it was all over in one hour.

The Bible, however, describes the Judgment Day very differently. The Lord knows all things. He already knows those who love Him and have their names written in the book of life. He also knows those who have refused Him and followed their own path. And he'll separate the saved on His right from the lost on His left.

The Judgment Day is not so much a day of trial as it is a day of sentencing or rewarding. Some will enter their reward in the heavenly city, while others are taken away from God forever. I'm talking about these matters today, because we all need to consider them. We don't want such an important day as the Day of Judgment to arrive and catch us unprepared.

Our reading today comes from the book of Revelation chapter 20, verses 11 to 15. “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” That's from God's Holy Word. Let's pray together. Father, we are grateful for the promise that we have through Jesus Christ. And we pray that we may dedicate our lives to serving Him and to serving You, our Father. In Jesus' name, Amen!

We need to pay close attention to Revelation 20:11 to 15, because it describes what will happen to you and me on Judgment Day. No matter who you are, where you've lived, when you have lived, what language you spoke, or how important you are, you'll be present before the great white throne. The Lord will judge you on that day.

The great and the small will all be accountable to God. Those who died and were resurrected at the second coming will be there, both the righteous and the unrighteous. The sea will deliver up its dead. Death and Hades will deliver up their dead. Those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life and those whose names are not found in the book of life will be there.

Some present will try to flee out of fear, but there's no place for them to go. You cannot escape your appointment with the Lord Jesus on Judgment Day. Second Corinthians 5 and verse 10 says, “For we must (yes, we must) all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” Now,

how you've lived your life here on this earth will determine how the Lord will recompense you for eternity.

On the last day, the Day of Judgment, we will be judged by the words of Jesus. We will be judged by those things written in the open books; and we'll be judged according to our deeds. The Lord Jesus said in John 12 and verse 48 that, "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day." Now, the Day of Judgment is also called the last day, because there will be no other days after it. It's the end of this age and the beginning of the age to come.

We will not be judged by councils or creeds. Popular culture will not decide what is moral or what pleases God. The Lord Jesus will not take any opinion polls or ask any talk show hosts or experts what to do. What Jesus said and what's recorded in His books will be the final and only basis of authority to determine our eternal destiny.

The Lord Jesus will sit on that great white throne as our judge on that day. Paul said in Acts 17, verses 30 to 31, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, (why?) because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." Just as surely as Jesus arose from the dead, so we can be sure there will be a second coming and a Day of Judgment.

Now, I'm thankful the Lord Jesus will judge us. The Bible says He is a righteous judge in 2 Timothy 4 and verse 8. He loved us enough to die upon the cross for our sins. He has been our mediator with the Father according to 1 Timothy 2 and verse 5; and He has been our advocate (1 John 2 and verse 1). The Lord Jesus is full of mercy and He will exercise that mercy to the full extent that it's consistent with His perfect justice and truth. And since He lived on earth as a man, He has perfect sympathy and understanding of our weaknesses and frailties as human beings. He will do what is right on that day. You can trust that!

On the Day of Judgment the Lord will judge us individually. Romans 14 and verse 12 says that, "each one of us will give an account of himself to God." My friend, no one can believe for you, or repent for you, or obey the gospel for you. God will hold you personally responsible for the sins that you committed and for the good things that you failed to do. The Scripture says in Matthew 16 and verse 27 that God will "repay each person according to what he has done." That's from the English Standard Version.

We often judge other people for their sins and ignore our own. Sometimes people suppose God will condemn others for their sins but they forget all about their own sins. Paul said in Romans 2, verses 1 and 2, "Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things." Sin, my friend, is still sin, no matter who commits it; and God will apply the same standard to every individual.

On that day the Lord will judge each one, and He will do it impartially. He won't play favorites. Romans 2, verses 6 to 11 says that God "will render to each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, (to them he will give) eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who

does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God." God will judge us on the basis of faith, not out of prejudice.

The Lord will judge us honestly and righteously. There won't be anything hidden from His sight. The Bible says in Hebrews 4, verses 12 and 13, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and the intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." When you stand before the Lord Jesus and His Word is opened, He will judge you fairly and openly. You might be able to hide things in this life, but all will be laid bare to the eyes of God in the next life.

First, we need to know that the Lord will judge us by our thoughts and motives. Now, our hearts can be so deceptive. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 15 and verse 19, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders." You know, what we think in our hearts often leads to actions in our lives. And this is why willfully thinking sin is just as bad as acting on it. You remember, the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5, verses 27 to 28 that, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery;' but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Jesus knows what's in your heart and mine. John 2 and verse 24 and 5 says, "But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because of this He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man." Romans 2 and verse 16 reminds us that on that day, "God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus." My friend, if you are contemplating something evil in your heart, remember that God knows your heart.

Proverbs 21 and verse 2 says that, "Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts." The Lord knows the real reasons that you do what you do, whether you're sincere. And each of us needs to be like David who said to God in Psalm 139, verses 23 to 24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way." If God looked into your heart, what would He see there? Would He see good in you or would He see evil in you?

Second, the Lord will judge us by how we speak. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 12, verses 34 to 37, "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an account for it in the Day of Judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." A careless word is a worthless or idle comment made by an unthinking person. And people don't realize how hurtful their words can be.

Idle words may be gossip or lies; they may be endless grumbling and complaining. These careless words may be unfair criticisms, or name calling, or slander. They may be words of hatefulness and anger. They may be filthy talk. Ephesians 4 and verse 29 says, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear." My friend, you will have to give an account to God one day for how you speak. Proverbs 18 and verse 21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

Third, we'll be judged by our actions. Proverbs 15, verse 3 says that, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good." God sees everything we do, even if no one else sees it. Second Corinthians 5 and verse 10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so

that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." The Lord Jesus said in Revelation 2 and verse 23, "I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds."

My friend, our morals matter! Romans 8 and verses 12 to 13 says, "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." If we allow our sinful passions to control us, we'll lose our souls. We must cease from sinful behavior and live godly lives. The Bible says in Galatians 6, verses 7 to 8, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

How we treat others matters. If we wish to be forgiven, we must forgive others. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6, verses 14 to 15, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." The Bible teaches in 1 John 4 and verse 20 that you can't claim to love God if you hate your brother. Loving God means learning to love and to forgive others. Don't let your anger come between you and your God.

Being kind to others matters. In Matthew 25, verses 31 to 46 the Lord Jesus separated the sheep from the goats on the basis of their kindness. The sheep fed and clothed the needy; they visited the sick and those in prison. But the goats ignored their needs. The Lord said in verse 46 that, "These (that is the goats) will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

When the Lord Jesus passes judgment on our souls, we too will either enter into eternal life or be taken away into eternal punishment. Now, no event has greater consequences than this one. Eternity has no end. Once judgment is passed, there is no second chance and no change. Whether we live in the grace of God in this life will determine our eternal destiny. If the Judgment Day, if the Judgment Day came today, my friend, would you be right with God according to the Scriptures? The Lord Jesus died on the cross for you, but has His blood washed you free from sin? Let's pray together. Father, we pray that we may prepare our hearts and souls so that one day we may meet with You and be able to enter into that home in heaven. Father, help us to take seriously the Judgment Day. This we pray in Jesus' name, Amen!

Someone says, "Well, surely God is too good to punish anyone in the lake of fire." But think a little with me. You know, if God let sinful people go unpunished, He would certainly be an unholy and an unjust God. Habakkuk 1 and verse 13 says of God that, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor."

The apostle Peter in 2 Peter 2, verses 4 to 9 says that if God condemned angels when they sinned, if He did not spare the ancient world when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly, and He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their ungodliness, "then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment."

Peter also says that God does not wish "any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3 and verse 9). It breaks God's heart to see the wicked lost. God said in Ezekiel 18, verse 23, "Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord GOD, "rather than that they should turn from their evil ways and live?" God doesn't want to condemn you, but for you to repent. You must be prepared for the judgment day.

To become a Christian, believe Jesus is the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess Jesus as Lord and Christ, and be baptized into Christ. Baptism is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). And when you're baptized, your sins will be washed away; the Lord will add you to His church (Acts 2:47 and Acts 22:16). And once you become a Christian; oh, my friend, stay faithful! Love God and serve Him for the rest of your life.

## “Heaven”

God gives us real answers in His Word, the Bible. He doesn't tease us with empty promises or give us false hope. God tells us what we most need to know to live the best life on earth and to receive an inheritance in heaven. The life that we have in Christ here on earth is indeed an abundant life, and nothing could be sweeter than spending an eternity in heaven with God our Father. We're in the business of helping people to find the truth, to be saved, and to go to heaven. We're honored and delighted when we spend this time with you. We want to be a part of your life each week.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:3 to 5 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” We're born again in this life to a living hope. Our hope is our inheritance in heaven, an inheritance that will never perish, never be defiled, and never fade away.

Our inheritance in heaven is reserved especially for us by the power of God. God will reveal that inheritance to us at the last day when the Lord Jesus returns to take us home with Him. Heaven is eternal, blessed, pure, and filled with joy and love. God will welcome us to that home that He prepared for us in the most lavish and wonderful way. Heaven! What a hope!

Our reading today comes from Hebrews chapter 11, verses 13 to 16. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.” That is a reading from God's Holy Word. Let's pray together. Father, we are grateful for the promise of heaven. Father, help us to love You with all of our hearts. Father, we know that You have prepared a place for us and by Your grace have forgiven our sins. Help us to so live and to love You that we may be with You forever. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Jesus is eagerly waiting for the day that He brings us home! God, our Father, longs for His children to come home and live with Him forever. Glorious and marvelous describe the day when God's children come home to heaven. The Lord Jesus said shortly before His death in John 14, verses 1 to 3, “Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places. And if it were not so, I would have told you. But I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

Jesus is now preparing your place. It's greater and grander than anything you've known in this life. The Bible says in Ephesians 2, verses 4 to 7, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.”

We can't envision how great, how glorious, how majestic, and how wonderful our home in heaven will be. The apostles got excited about miracles; but Jesus in Luke 10, verses 19 and 20 said, “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the



enemy, and nothing will injure you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but you rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." No blessing, no event can compare with the joy we'll have in heaven!

Heaven is a grand place, but the joy of heaven isn't the physical place. It's God and His people! Heaven is where the redeemed go. Heaven is precious because of who is there! All of God's people will be in heaven, all of the righteous, and everyone whose name is written in the Lamb's book of life.

I want to go to heaven just to see God my Father, who created me and blessed me every day of my life. Just to be in His presence will be a great blessing. I get to meet the One who rules the universe and the One who hears my every prayer. I want to see Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. I want to tell Him face to face, "Thank You for bearing the cross to atone for my sins. Thank you for investing your blood to redeem my soul." I want to see the Holy Spirit. You know, my body has been the temple of the Holy Spirit, and I want to know more about Him. I want to see the myriads of myriads of angels, the cherubim and the seraphim.

I want to visit with those I've studied about in the Bible: people like Enoch and Noah, Abraham and Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or Peter and Andrew, James and John, Stephen, Paul, Timothy, Esther, Ruth, Mary, Mary Magdalene, Dorcas, and so many others. I want to see my Christian loved ones, my family, my teachers, and my friends. I want to meet the innocent who died as infants and small children. Heaven is going to be full of glory. The Bible says in Revelation 21 and verse 24, "By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it."

We'll be surprised at who's in heaven, for God's grace is wondrous. But we'll also be surprised at who is not there, for people have secret sins. But whoever is there, I want to love them. The Bible says that the leaves on the tree of life are for the "healing" of the nations (Revelation 22 and verse 2). You know, we all need healing. Whatever pain or hurt or bitterness that we have known in this life will be past in the next life. God will remove all the things that cause us anguish or frustration.

The Bible says in Revelation 21, verses 4 to 5 that God, "will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." God is giving us a true paradise, a place where every need is met and every sorrow erased. It will be a place devoted to utter joy and devotion to God. I want a home like that!

Since Jackie and I married, we've lived in seven houses. Now, each place was special and had lots of love. Jackie and I speak of "home," and sometimes we mean one place and sometimes we mean another. But one day we expect to inherit a permanent home "with the Lord" in His Father's house. We expect to live there forever.

Peter said in 1 Peter 1 and verse 4 that we'll receive an inheritance "that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading." Houses may burn or be destroyed by a disaster here, but our home in heaven is indestructible. We have to constantly clean and repair our houses here, but that dwelling place will never have a defect or a flaw. It will never be unclean. Things fade and wither here on earth, but they will be forever new in heaven.

Heaven will be a place of refuge, a sanctuary. Revelation 22, verses 1 through 5 says, "Then an angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street in the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their

foreheads. And night will be no more. There will not be any need for light or lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”

This life is full of trouble, but heaven will have no trouble. Here we have crime, war, disease, death, immorality, and lies. But we'll be free from that in heaven. Here we can expect pain and suffering. We're imperfect people living in an imperfect world, but heaven is different.

People who are selfish, or cruel, or dishonest, or immoral won't trouble us in heaven. Revelation 21 and verse 8 says, “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (or sulfur), which is the second death.” Now, we'll remain free from crime and sin and temptation.

The Bible says in Revelation 21, verses 2 to 4, “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, or crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’ ” Heaven doesn't need a hospital or a funeral home. We won't need police or a fire department. We won't have to worry about tornadoes or earthquakes.

Well, what do we do? Well, we'll worship in heaven, singing and praising God eternally. Being able to sing with myriads of myriads of angels about the greatness of our God will be a great joy. Heaven will be a place also of service. Revelation 22 and verse 3 says that, “The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him.” Now, I don't know what the Lord will have us do in heaven, but we'll serve Him like priests did in the temple, doing multiple tasks that glorify God. This word “serve” is associated with worship, but it also reflects the daily devotion of obedience and love that we show God.

While we'll serve God; in spite of all of that, we'll also find heaven is a place of rest. Serving God won't tire us in heaven; it will bless us. Revelation 14 and verse 13 says, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!’ ”

The hope of heaven ought to encourage us. No matter what we're going through in this life, heaven will surely be worth it all. Paul said in Romans 8 and verse 18, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Our heartaches here make us long for heaven where there are no heartaches.

As Christians we're strangers and foreigners here on earth. Peter, you remember, said in 1 Peter 2 and verse 11, “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” We sing that old hymn, “This world is not my home; I'm just a passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me from heaven's open door, And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.” This world is not our home; our hearts long for what God has prepared for us.

God called Abraham to leave his home. And by faith Abraham obeyed. “He went out, not knowing where he was going.” And Hebrews 11 and verse 10 says that Abraham “was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” Now, you won't find a city here on earth like that. Hebrews 13 and verse 14 says, “For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.” That city is not here on earth but in heaven.

Peter said in 2 Peter 3 and verse 13, "But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." Some think that this new heavens and new earth is this earth after it's been purified with fire. They say the righteous will live eternally on a reconstituted earth. But the Bible teaches in 2 Peter 3 and verse 12 that "the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!" Now, this word "elements" refers to the basic components that make up this world: earth and air and fire and water. This world, as we know it, will be completely destroyed.

In 1 John 2 and verse 17 the Bible says, "The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." Revelation 21 and verse 1 says, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea." Speaking about heaven, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 50, "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." The Lord began preparing a place for us in the Father's house when He ascended to heaven according to John 14 and verse 2. Heaven is not this earth. God is preparing something better for us up in heaven.

Heaven will be better than anything here. Revelation 21 and verse 23 says, "And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb." The earth needs a sun and moon, but the new heavens and new earth have God Himself. It will be a new and different kind of place to live, physically and spiritually. I don't want to live even one hour without the hope of heaven. Are you right with the living God? Will heaven be your home? Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we are thankful for the hope and the promise of heaven beyond this life. And, Father, help us to be prepared to live with You just as You have prepared for us. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, our Lord and our Savior. Amen!

If I miss a ball game or a movie, I haven't missed much. If I miss an important appointment, I'm disappointed and may even suffer loss; yet life will go on. But if I miss heaven, I've lost everything. You see, nothing else matters.

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. And unfortunately, not everyone has a heart for God or wants to be with God. Their hearts are somewhere else, and they don't long for the heaven described in the Bible. They haven't prepared themselves for heaven. Now, to enjoy heaven, the Bible presupposes that people long to be close to God and to love Him. The Lord said in Matthew 5 and verse 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Now, to be pure in heart means God and His will are dominant in our thinking and our behavior. People claim they want to go to heaven, but not everyone is willing to change their hearts or to change their lives to prepare for heaven. Now, if you love sin more than you love God, you'll probably feel out of place in heaven. If you don't know God or enjoy worship here, you're probably not ready in heart for heaven. Don't miss heaven. Don't lose your opportunity to live with God forever.

Become a Christian by placing your trust in the Lord with all your heart. Believe and confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Repent of your sins and turn your heart and life toward the Lord. Live everyday for Him! Be baptized, that is immersed in water; and do it in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be washed away. Then get involved in church and stay faithful every day of your life, stay faithful to the Lord. My friend, are you ready for heaven? Are you right with God?