



An undenominational publication
devoted to the teachings of Jesus
and His apostles, and dedicated to
those who seek the truth.

Volume 8, Number 2
March & April 2012

Theme: *What You Need To Know About the Future*

Jesus Is Coming Again!

These are the words of the angels the day Jesus left earth and returned to His heavenly Father: "Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). He is coming back in the "same way" as He ascended to heaven. His second coming will be as visible as when He ascended to heaven.



Jesus' return will be unmistakable — both visible and audible. "For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with *a loud command*, with *the voice of the archangel* and with *the trumpet call of God*" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

There will be no warning. It will just happen, just like when a thief breaks in. "For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:2,3). Those that are not ready will not escape His wrath.

The apostle Paul says this about believers: "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Paul affirms: "We shall be saved from God's wrath through Him!" (Romans 5:9).

Knowing this about the return of Jesus, tells us to be prepared. Today may be the only day we have to make up our minds. There will not be another chance after Jesus returns. If we procrastinate until that day, it will be too late. Are you ready for the coming of Jesus? The choice is yours. You owe it to yourself to be ready.

— Leo Woodman, Minister, *Church of Christ*, Kittery, Maine

When Books Are Opened

On the morning of the resurrection every human being from every period of history will stand before Jesus to receive the final sentence of judgment. The Scriptures say: “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). On the great Judgment Day books will be opened.



“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened” (Revelation 5:12). What books will be opened at Judgment?

The Book of Deeds. This book has been referred to as “*Our Book in Our Hands*” because we determine the content of that awesome book by the choices we make in life. “The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done” (Revelation 20:12-13). The Book of Deeds will contain accounts of the good and evil deeds of everyone who has ever lived on earth. The Book of Deeds will reveal our story.

The Book of Life. This is *Our Book in God’s Hands*, for it contains the names of all who will enter Heaven. Just as God adds the saved to His church (Acts 2:47) so only God Himself determines whose name appears in the Book of Life. Those who respond in faith to His commands to “repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins” can rejoice that their names are written in heaven (Acts 2:38; Luke 10:20).

The Holy Bible. *God’s Book in Our Hands* will be opened on the Day of Judgment. Jesus promised: “There is a judge for the one who rejects Me and does not accept My words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day” (John 12:48). The Scripture was “given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3.16). God guided the writer’s through the Holy Spirit of promise. When you read it, you are not reading the imperfect writings of men, but the very words of the eternal God. “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21). There is no knowledge more important to a person’s salvation than the knowledge of things found in the Bible.

Through the *Book of God* He gives an opportunity for our names to be in the *Book of Life*, when we produce good fruit, and God is pleased to record those in the *Book of Deeds*. Will your name be in the *Book of Life*?

— Thomas Holmes, Minister, *Whitney Avenue Church of Christ*, North Haven, Connecticut

Is Heaven Real?



The Bible uses the term *heaven* in several different senses. The easiest to grasp would be equivalent to “sky,” such as “dew of heaven” (Gen. 27:28), or cities “fortified to heaven” (Deuteronomy 1:28). A second usage adds the cosmos, such as we would look at the night “sky”: “the stars of heaven and their constellations” (Isaiah 13:10). The most important sense is when the Bible uses the word heaven as *the place where God dwells and where His throne is* (Deuteronomy 26:15, Psalm 11:4, Matthew 5:34). At the ascension of Jesus, “He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19).

So heaven is as real as God. But a spiritual God does not need a physical location, and that’s a bit difficult to grasp for those of us who presently have a body and need a place to put it. Solomon almost mocked his own efforts in building a temple for God by saying, “Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27). God Himself validates Solomon’s recognition when He later reveals, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest?’” (Isaiah 66:1). God seems to be saying that an infinite being occupies infinite space.

God’s people have learned in this life that *where* is not important compared to *Who* when it comes to spiritual joy. In the book of Revelation God gives us some description of heaven in categories that we can relate to now, where dimensions and materials mean something to us. But even there, the primary glory is that the Lamb is there, the Son of God who made it possible for us to be there.

In the resurrection we shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51-52), and receive “a spiritual body” (verse 44). One of the great things about a spiritual body is that it is not bound by physical space. God invites all of us to be with Him and He has the room.

The apostle Peter reminds us that our hope is not to live on the earth but to go to heaven. He writes: “He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — *kept in heaven* for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4). In Revelation 19:1 there is a heartwarming preview: “After these things I heard, as it were, a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.” I hope you and I will be doing that together!

— Norman Seiders, Minister, *Church of Christ*, Warwick, Rhode Island

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End of the World as We Know It



As scary a thought as the end of the world may be, there are some who “wait in eager expectation” for it.

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration ... in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God ... Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:18-23).

The world that fell into death and corruption at the Fall of man has been anxiously awaiting the day when the curse would be reversed -- the end of the world as we know it, the day of our “adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” Along with the change of our mortal bodies (1 Corinthians 15:52) even the world around us will be changed: “They will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment....like a garment they will be changed” (Hebrews 1:11-12).

This change involves a destruction of what we know. The Scriptures tell us: “The first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea” (Revelation 21:1). “The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:7). “That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat” (2 Peter 3:12). Jesus said: “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matthew 24:36).

Some religious groups teach that the present heaven and earth will remain. They cite Psalm 78:69 and Ecclesiastes 1:4, which use the Hebrew word “olam”, often translated “for ever” or “lasting”. But “olam” doesn’t always mean without end. Sometimes it means “continual” until God’s purpose has been fulfilled — as Aaron’s priesthood (Exodus 29:9) or the “lasting ordinance” of the Passover (Exodus 12:14). The New Testament clearly declares heaven and earth will “pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

The destroyed heavens and earth will be replaced by a “new heaven and a new earth” (1 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1). The Greek word translated “new” means a *new kind* of heaven and earth. The old earth and sky must flee from the presence of God (Revelation 20:11), but the new heaven and earth, like our resurrected bodies, will be filled with the glory of God.

Continued on the next page ...

Is Hell Real?

True understanding of God requires understanding what the Bible says about Hell. The wisdom of our modern age cannot yield a true understanding. Unfortunately there are religious groups that have distorted the biblical teaching about Hell. Some teach that there really is no punishment for sinners. Is Hell real? What does the Bible say?

First, physical death is not the end of our existence. Just as we all anticipate death so we all should expect to be judged after we die. The Scriptures say: “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

Second, in Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus taught that the sheep and goats will be separated, representing those who will go to eternal life and those who will go to eternal punishment. Eternal punishment is described as “eternal fire” (verse 41, 46).

Third, Jesus said it is better to have a hand or foot cut off, or an eye gouged out, than to be thrown into Hell with the whole body (Mark 9:43-47).

Fourth, consider what Jesus taught in Luke 16:19-31. Lazarus was comforted at Abraham’s side, while the rich man was tormented in a place of punishment (verse 22-23). The rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus to cool his tongue with water (verse 24). This could not happen as there was a complete separation between them (verse 25). After death, Lazarus would know only comfort and the rich man would never know anything but agony. Some have tried to dismiss Jesus’ teaching as “merely a parable”. We should remember that all of Jesus’ parables were about things that *really exist*, things that *really take place*. He did not make up stories about things that were imaginary or unreal!

Fifth, the book of Revelation refers to the “lake of fire” into which are thrown all whose names are not written in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:14-15). This is the final judgment. All the unrighteous (those unforgiven by the blood of Jesus) will be in the lake of fire, but all the righteous (those forgiven by Jesus’ blood) will be with the Lord forever. Yes, friend, Hell is for real.



— Arthur Barry, Minister, Finger Lakes Church of Christ, Dryden, New York

End of the World as We Know It

(Continued from previous page)

We will not inherit this earth. Nothing here, not even your dearest possession, will last. So let us “fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18).

— Park Linscomb, Minister, Church of Christ, Manchester, New Hampshire

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What Happens When You Die?

In the Old Testament the Hebrew term *Sheol* (grave) refer to a realm of the dead (2 Samuel 22:6; Psalm 16:10). *Sheol* is described as a pit of sorrow and a sepulcher of decay and rot. However, in Psalm 16:10, there is a hopeful outcome to the grave: “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because You will not abandon me to the grave (*Sheol*), nor will You let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.”

In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus tells about the death of the rich man and Lazarus. After death, Lazarus existed at “Abraham’s side” while the rich man lived in “torment.” These two domains appear to be part of the *Hadean* world, where the spirit goes after death and awaits the final judgment. Jesus would later declare to the thief, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in *paradise*” (Luke 23:43). *Abraham’s side* and *paradise* may refer to the intermediary place for spirits who are destined for heaven. On the converse, Peter refers to a place called *tartarus*: “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell (Greek: *tartarus*), putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment...” (2 Peter 2:4).

Jesus revealed that neither death nor Hades would be the final end. He taught that the “gates of Hades” would not prevent God’s eternal plan from being accomplished (Matthew 16:18). He declared: “I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades” (Revelation 1:18). Although Jesus would die, His body would not be “abandoned to the realm of the dead” but instead would be brought back to life (Acts 2:24-34). His resurrection makes possible our resurrection from the dead when our bodies will be glorified with immortality. The spiritual transformation will be God’s final triumph over death and Hades (1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 50-54).

Scripture reveals that the spirit continues to live despite the death of the body. Solomon declared: “the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Those who trust in Jesus will be resurrected to eternal life in the presence of God; while those who reject Jesus will be subject to unending existence away from the presence of God (John 5:24-29).

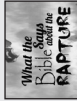
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