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When the Lights Go Out on Planet Earth

(Part 2)

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**Series: Living the End Times:
Once the King Has Come**



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May the words which we speak and the thoughts that we think, be acceptable in Thy sight, oh Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. May those in our midst who are hurting, find comfort; those in our midst who are searching, find hope; and those among us, Father, who simply need to be encouraged by Your Spirit, sense the hand of the Comforter upon us, even this morning, and go forth from this place filled with joy and expectancy because You live.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

How many of you are glad football season has begun again? Could I see your hands? Okay, mostly Dallas fans didn't hold your hands up, or Texas fans, or almost anybody. No wives held their hands up, I noticed. Well ladies, if you're not glad football season is beginning, you've missed it, because you possibly have missed the "spiritual switch." You see, there are some spiritual truths we can learn even from football; even from losing, I trust, which is what some of us have had the most experience at. Football and the game of life, have several things in common. Number one, they are both really rough. Number two, they're both contests where there are two different groups with two different goals in mind and each of those groups is headed for a different goal. Thirdly, both "games" believe it or not, are being viewed, according to Hebrews 12, from a grandstand filled with onlookers or spectators, who are cheering on those headed for their particular goal.

But there is still another similarity, and that is, you can't predict the outcome until the game is over. Football is full of surprises, but as we will learn this morning, so is the game of life. I remember one game, in particular, between the Washington Redskins and the Dallas Cowboys, and it was a clear-cut example of this fact. We Dallas fans live in the past anyway. But, way back then, when Dallas was winning football games, the first half

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of the game was over, and the scoreboard was overwhelmingly in favor of Washington. And the announcers were making the kind of derogatory statements they occasionally make about “America’s Team.” You would have thought the game was over. It was a landslide, finished. But the problem was that midway through the third quarter something happened. The tide began to turn and the game didn’t turn out anywhere close to the way it looked early on. Now, this isn’t a sports commentary, and we don’t want to get into pigskin politics either, but the truth of the matter is, there is a struggle going on, on planet earth—a contest if you will, between Satan and God. Whether you realize it or not, it is late in the fourth quarter, and it looks from the scoreboard, like the game is over; like the forces of evil have won by a landslide.

What’s more, if you open the Word of God, you will find that very shortly, Satan’s team is expected to rally again and the score will be even *more* lopsided. You would think it’s over; you can prophesy the outcome. And some of the troops are even heading for the gates, if you know what I mean. But beloved, this contest, too, will have a surprise ending. Between now and then, something is going to happen. The skies overhead will get dark. The score is going to become so one-sided that it will appear it’s over. But, it’s about that fourth quarter surge by the enemy, we’re studying this week as we pass the midway mark in our series. And next week, Lord willing, we will see the final touchdown.

“Once The King Has Come.” That’s the title of this series. And I asked you last week to take an imaginary video journey with us by closing your eyes and staying awake—not too easy a thing to do in this class—and watching the screen fill up with visual images of the experience that’s coming known as, “The Tribulation.” This is an incredible production. It was written by the Holy Spirit and produced by His immediate family. And as we reminded you last week, God, because of His great love for us has written to us to encourage us, and then sent back to us, via Scriptural satellite, actual word pictures of this amazing event.

In the last lesson, we looked at the title, the type, and the time. And we determined that by the very names given to this shocking event in human history, we can tell that something incredible is going to happen. As to the type, we know it will be the most gruesome and destructive period in all of human history. All of the great wars, all of the great massacres, all of

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the great natural disasters recorded in history will be simply like afterschool scrimmages compared to this. Joel reminded us, it will be *a day of darkness, a day of gloominess, a day of clouds*. He said that, *there has never been anything like it, and there will never be anything like it again* (Joel 2:2). In other words, it will be the time of Great Tribulation, the pressing together literally, of the wrath of God—the time of eternal separation and eternal preparation. And we learned that in times past, God has only blinked His eye. He is about to move His mighty arm, and when He does, this entire earth will tremble. That's what the Scripture says.

As for the time, the Scripture is very clear. It will be seven years long, *and except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved* (Matthew 24:22). It will be the sum of two 3½ year segments, side by side, with an interim in between. We found also, as to the timing of it, that those seven years will follow immediately, or very closely after, that momentous event in history when the trumpet blasts, and the Lord shouts, and the church of Jesus Christ is raptured up together to be with the Lord in the air. In heaven, a marriage will take place. There will be a beautiful ceremony at the Bema Seat of Christ. But down here, the thermostat will be stuck wide open and this whole earth will begin to broil with God's divine permission, and Satan will have his day at last.

As to why God is allowing this event, we reviewed in a past lesson, and I will remind you, that there are at least three reasons. First of all, it is to prepare Israel to receive her Messiah at last. Secondly, it is to allow God to finally pour out the vial of judgment on the nations who blasphemed His name. And thirdly, to let the devil have his day before the devil has his due. Satan will be free to prove once and for all, what he can do to demonstrate his claim that the world was created—on second thought, I don't think he would use that phrase—that the world came into being, for him to rule, only he rules by imparting a humanistic code that exalts self and denies absolutes. So, when Satan has his day, this world will explode in a chaotic mass of selfishness and destruction. At that point in time in history, it will be fourth down, ninety-nine yards to go, and only seconds to play in the game of life—but what an ending. Tune in next week for the play by play.

Who are the players in this seven-year period and what are the personalities, the names that will appear vividly on the video

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screen in bold letters, around whom this drama will unfold? Let's let the cameras roll and try carefully to get both their names and the roles they play. Then, we will be ready to view for ourselves what will happen when the lights go out on planet earth.

As we stated in previous lessons, this is a mini-study at best. It is a hop, a skip, and a jump across the peaks and valleys of prophecy. Obviously, we can only hit the high points in this lesson. We cannot really give you the details. Just to study these characters would take four to six weeks at best, but we only have 15 minutes. So, we will name them, and give some of the important ones their place and their role in this dramatic time in history.

The first character, of course, is the Holy Spirit, Himself. He will play the primary role, first by His absence and then by His presence. If that confuses you, wait just a moment and I will explain. The tribulation period will be a time in history, where there really aren't any adjectives to describe what will happen. It will be at "x + infinity" on the Richter scale. The elements will be out of control. The earth will seemingly have lost the adhesive that for these thousands of years, has bound it together and kept it intact, through world wars, political conflict and economic upheavals. Suddenly, there will be an ingredient missing that held it all together; a boundary of restraint will be gone.

So, the first of our cast of characters is a Person! That Person is the Restrainer. His name is the Holy Spirit. Imagine if you will, a father whose children want to play in the river. But dad knows that the river is so deep they could drown. And he knows, as well, he cannot dissuade them from doing so. So, one day when they are not around, he takes the area where they will play, and he stretches a net across it. And he puts foam under that net. So, while they think they are swimming in water forty feet deep, their loving father has built a "restrainer," a prevention net beneath them to keep them from sinking beneath the boundaries they cannot handle.

That is what God has done for this world we live in. He sent His Spirit to indwell each of us and His presence in us has served as a safety net that has kept evil from running rampant in this world. He has kept mankind from literally destroying itself. The church, beloved, is the vessel that holds the Restrainer. But one day very soon, Jesus Christ will call us to be with Himself. In

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a moment, we learned, in the twinkling of an eye, we will be gone, and He will be gone. His very absence will mark a new era in history. Without that safety net, man will sink to depths in which he can no longer swim. The whirlpools of self-destruction that lurk beneath that net, in only seven short years, will all but destroy what the presence of God in man has done all these centuries.

Remember the book of Job? Remember Calvary? Satan *thinks* he is in charge. But, in reality, a sovereign, omnipotent God has only given him liberties, which will ultimately be used by God to accomplish His purposes. Satan is such a deceiver, Scripture teaches. He has deceived himself. He has never been in control, and he never will be. Anytime our King chooses to, all He will have to do is speak a word and the enemy and every demonic private or captain in his army will fall at the feet of God in total submission. Make no mistake about it, the fact that it hasn't happened doesn't mean it won't. It simply means, God is patient. Remember, Satan has no power God does not allow him to have. For centuries now, the enemy has been swearing that this earth is *his*, and if God would just get out of his way, he would do something with it. God is going to get out of his way, and do something with it, he will.

The Holy Spirit, then, is the first character, and the key character in our drama, first by His removal and then by His presence as He returns, not to indwell the saints, but to appear to individual saints as He did in Old Testament times. He will draw men and women to Christ even during those seven years of horror.

The second character, of course, as we have already mentioned, is Satan himself. He will orchestrate the disaster, although he will be blinded to the fact that the music was really created in heaven. The tune he is calling his song of triumph, is really just God's way of playing, "The King is Coming at Last!"

There's a third character we need to take note of. Much has been written about him, and of late, movies have been made showing his rise to power. He has become popular because of the very essence of his evil. His name, of course, is the Antichrist. He is a very real person with a very real mission.

Too much, I think, has been written in years past about who he is or who he might be. Everybody has a formula. Have you

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noticed that? At first, Adolph Hitler had to be the Antichrist. And then, in recent years, Henry Kissinger was thought to be the Antichrist because you could fool around with the numbers that make up the letters of his name, and come up with the number, “666.” In fact, as far back as 1930, Dr. Harry Ironside delivered a powerful message and he said the Antichrist literally had to be Mussolini. Well, we don’t know for sure who he is. It doesn’t matter. It’s entirely possible, that all this speculation comes from the enemy, himself, just attempting to create a smoke screen of misguided missiles to divert our attention from the real issue, and that is, this man will come. Scripture once again, through the use of names, defines his character.

He’s called in Scripture, the “Little Horn” in Daniel 7. He is the “Willful King” in Daniel 11. He is the “Man of Sin” in II Thessalonians, as well as, the “Son of Perdition,” and the “Wicked One.” Thirty-six times in the book of Revelation, he is referred to as “The Beast.” But I think the most descriptive title of all is in I John 2 and I John 4, where he is simply called the Antichrist.

What will this guy be like? What will he do? Well, you certainly can’t cover it in the few minutes we have, but let’s just read a couple passages of Scripture to illustrate it.

Daniel 7:

He shall speak pompous words against the Most High,
Shall persecute [wear out] the saints of the Most High,
(Daniel 7:25)

Daniel 11:

“Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods,
(Daniel 11:36)

II Thessalonians 2:

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

II Thessalonians 2:3-4)

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

(2 Thessalonians 2:9)

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In Revelation 13, John describes him this way:

The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. (Revelation 13:2)

Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. (Revelation 13:6)

This much we know about him:

- He will blaspheme God.
- He will harass the people of God.
- He will exalt himself to the place of God.
- He will set himself up in the temple of God.
- He will perform some miracles.
- His authority will come straight from Satan.
- His primary goal will be to conquer the world and set up a kingdom on this earth.

One writer in modern terminology, phrased it this way. He said, "In one body, here will be a man with the leadership of Washington and Lincoln, the eloquence of FDR, the charm of Teddy Roosevelt, the charisma of John Kennedy, the popularity of Dwight Eisenhower, the political savvy of Lyndon Johnson and the intellect of Thomas Jefferson all rolled into one. He will be the very best the world has to offer."

His rise to power will happen something like this.

1- He will be empowered by Satan, himself, with the permission of the Holy Spirit (Revelation 13:1-6).

2- He will form a ten-nation alliance, a federation of nations which will come into existence probably during those seven years (Daniel 7:8 and Revelation 12:13).

3- He will be assisted by a false religious system or church body (Revelation 17).

4- His personal charm will be contagious. He will be an intellectual genius, a political genius, a commercial genius, and a military genius (Daniel 8:23 and 11:26, Revelation 6:2, 13:2 and 17:11-12).

5- He will accomplish what appears to be an actual resurrection from the dead. (Revelation 13:2).

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6- He will offer a peace program guaranteed to bring tranquility to the Mideast at long last (Daniel 8:25).

7- He will be a man of total deceit. There won't be an honest bone in his body. In fact, of the ninety-one times in the New Testament words meaning "to deceive" or "go astray" are used, twenty-two of them refer to this man during these seven years (Matthew 24:24, II Thessalonians 2:9, and Revelation 13:14).

8- He will begin by controlling a power bloc of nations, and then make a seven-year covenant with Israel, which he will break in 3 ½ years (Revelation 17:12, Daniel 9:27).

9- He will gain absolute control over the Mideast (Ezekiel 38 and 39).

10- He will attempt to destroy all of Israel (Revelation 12).

11- He will then destroy the very religious system he brought into existence so he can rule unhindered (Revelation 17:16-17).

12- Then, he will set himself up as God (Daniel 11:36 and 27:2, II Thessalonians 2:4 and 11, and Revelation 13:5).

13- For a very short time, he will rule the entire whole world (Psalm 2, Daniel 11:36, and Revelation 13:16).

14- He will have no regard for human life (Daniel 7:7,19).

15- He will even attempt to overhaul the legal systems of the world and the customs and the seasons of the world (Revelation 7:5).

16- In the final days of the tribulation, he will march into some country, perhaps Egypt, take control of the land, and after an incredible battle with warriors from the east, he will set himself up with his world headquarters, believe it or not, on Mt. Zion (Daniel 11:42-44).

17- After his defeat at the hands of the King of kings, he will be the first creature to be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 19).

So, there you have a brief picture of the Antichrist. As I said, it would take weeks and weeks to really study, but that's an overview. Remember one thing, Satan is not an originator; he never had an original thought in his whole life. Satan is an imitator. So, whatever he does is only an attempt on earth, to mimic what God does in the Spirit realm. He is a satanic imitation

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in the physical realm of what Jesus is in the spiritual realm. The Antichrist was meant to be the second person in his unholy trinity. Let me give you just a few things you can use to clarify that issue. These are similarities of what Christ is in the spirit realm and what the Antichrist will be in the physical realm.

Christ	Antichrist
Descended from heaven (John 6:38)	Will ascend from the pit (Revelation 17:8)
Came in His Father's name (John 5:43)	Will come in his own name (John 5:43)
Humbled Himself (Philippians 2:8)	Will exalt himself (II Thessalonians 2:4)
Was despised (Isaiah 53:3; Luke 23:18)	Will be admired (Revelation 13:3-4)
Was exalted (Philippians 2:9)	Will be cast into hell (Isaiah 14; Revelation 19:20)
Came to do His Father's will (John 6:38)	Comes to do his own will (Daniel 11:36)
Came to save (Luke 19:10)	Comes to destroy (Daniel 11:36)
Is the Good Shepherd (John 10:4-15)	Will be the evil shepherd (Zechariah 11:16)
The True Vine (John 15:1)	The vine of the earth (Revelation 14:18)
The Truth (John 14:6)	The lie (II Thessalonians 2:11)
The Holy One (Mark 1:24)	The lawless one (II Thessalonians 2:8)
The "Man of Sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3)	The man of sin (II Thessalonians 2:3)
The Son of God (John 1:34)	The son of perdition (II Thessalonians 2:3)
"The Mystery of Godliness" (II Thessalonians 2:7)	"The mystery of iniquity" (I Timothy 3:16)
Came in the image of God (Colossians 1:15)	Will come in image of Satan (II Thessalonians 2:9)
The sacrificial Lamb (Revelation 5:6-9)	The savage beast (Revelation 13)

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Christ	Antichrist
Ministry of 3½ yrs	Ministry of 3½ yrs
Successful as Prophet, Priest and King	Tries unsuccessfully to fill those offices
Glorifies the Church, His Bride (Revelation 21)	Will kill his wife, the harlot (Revelation 17:16)
Symbolic number is 7 (Revelation 21:1-2)	Symbolic number is 6 (Revelation 17:16)

So, the temporary hero of the tribulation will be a puppet of the enemy. He'll mimic, in a worldly sense, the attributes of Jesus, and for a few brief years, will appear to have done what the disciples wanted Jesus to do—set-up a kingdom on earth.

Well, there are, of course, some other characters in the drama, which we will see unfold in our next lesson in its fullness. The fourth is called the “False Prophet.” Many believe him to be some kind of religious leader of an organization that will flourish after the church has been raptured. He seems to be the third person of this unholy trinity. Just as the Antichrist imitates the works of Christ, this False Prophet imitates the works of the Holy Spirit.

For instance, according to Revelation 13, the Holy Spirit leads men into all truth; the False Prophet leads men into error. The Holy Spirit's mission is to glorify Christ, the False Prophet's, to glorify the Antichrist. The Holy Spirit brought down fire from heaven; the False Prophet will do the same. The Holy Spirit brings life; the False Prophet will bring death. The Holy Spirit seals those who belong to God; the False Prophet will put his mark upon those who worship Satan. So, whoever he is and whatever his organization is, his one objective will be to cause men to worship the Antichrist.

The fifth in the cast of characters is the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, whom God has appointed to proclaim his message during these seven years. Ray Stedman, in his little book, What on Earth is Going to Happen (it's a good little book to read), gives a simple illustration. He says, “They will be Jewish believers converted after the church is gone, but before the last 3 years of the great tribulation.” He explains their ministry by referring to Revelation 7 and 14. He likens them to “one born out of time” like the Apostle Paul. Using Revelation 14 as his text, he states that he believes Jesus will make appearances on earth during those

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seven years. His first appearance will be to these 144,000, where He will once again place the mantle of His ministry on the nation of Israel, at last. You see, God is not going to cast off His people forever.

Just as He allowed them to be scattered and He gave the mantle of salvation to the church, even so, they are already being drawn back together and are in the land supernaturally. Once again, they will be called to a state of national blessing.

There are some others. The two witnesses, the demonic warriors, the evil spirits, the persecuted woman, the vile harlot, and the arrogant queen. Obviously, we cannot go into all of those. But the cast of characters does not make up the drama. Listen now, to the story line of the first half of this period, a composite of Scriptural, prophetic history given to us by some of the world's leading evangelical scholars. It will go something like this.

If you will, let the lights darken again, and the film begin to roll. There is Israel. They are back in their land, the focus of fury of nearly every nation in the world. Upholding God's concepts of war and peace, but unaware of the source of their power, they are suddenly surrounded by nothing but enemies, and that has already come to pass. Then we read from Isaiah 28 and Daniel 9, that when it appears Israel has no place to turn, a mighty ruler, maybe from the west, will suddenly propose a special seven-year peace treaty which will guarantee the Jews peace at least. The Scripture says the Israelis swallow it, "hook, line and sinker." They fall for it. This ruler, however, will turn out to be none other than the Antichrist, himself.

But that covenant will not last. Treaties with godless nations never do. We read in Daniel 9, paraphrased, these words:

This king will make a seven-year treaty with Israel, but after half of that time, he will break his treaty and stop the Jews from their worship and as a climax, he will utterly defile the sanctuary of God. (Daniel 9:27 Paraphrased)

Now what that means, among other things, is that the temple apparently will have been rebuilt. The Jews will be honoring the sacrifices and offerings, at least in part, of the Old Testament again. The Antichrist, who by now will have Israel in his hip pocket, will ignore his treaty, defy Israel politically, and defile it spiritually. The Jewish nation, which for generations had been striking bargains with the world instead of returning to God, will

have struck the worst bargain in its history.

Then comes the pouring out of the judgments of God. Once again, we will only take the first few and we will only do them briefly.

1- The subduing of the ten nations by the Antichrist, as mentioned in Revelation 6.

2- His false promises of peace, peace, peace to the world in Revelation 6, as well.

3- Then in verse 5 of Revelation 6, we read that a great famine will come on the world. It says this:

When he had broken the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.

And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."
(Revelation 6:5-6)

We could spend the rest of the day on that passage. Dr. Ryrie writes about that passage that this third judgment brings famine to the world. The black horse indicates death and the balances speaks of rationing of food. Normally, a penny or a denarius, would be a day's wages in Jesus' day. It would have bought about eight measures of wheat or twenty-four measures of barley. So, the implication is, that on that day, one-eighth of the supply of food that's needed will be present in the world—one eighth! Even now, as the doors of history are beginning to creak open and we are beginning to see some of the things that are about to take place, we can begin to see that already, there are places on this earth where there is not enough food to eat. The hand of the tribulation will make its first mark on the masses by taking from them the one thing they have to have, food.

4- Then the fourth judgment, written of in Revelation 6, verses 7 and 8:

And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see."

So, I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of

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the earth.

(Revelation 6:7-8)

It's been written that in World War II, one out of every forty persons lost their lives, but in this one judgment alone, one out of every *four* persons alive, will die. They will die from hunger, war and plagues; plagues that perhaps rodents or insects carrying deadly diseases will multiply and destroy people and the food that they eat.

5- The fifth judgment is religious persecution on those who remain, who have come to Christ, such as never has been experienced in the world before. God's people who are still here, will taste of the cup of the wrath of man as they await deliverance from this hell on earth.

6- The sixth judgment is the greatest earthquake in the history of man—a cosmic disturbance of unknown boundaries, something like a nuclear holocaust, or it could just be God's intervention. But we read such phrases as, *the sun became black* and *mountains and islands were moved* (Revelation 6:12). And we read that, at that time, there will be the greatest prayer meeting in history, but they will be praying for the wrong thing. The Scripture says, they will be praying to the rocks and the mountains begging them to fall on them lest they have to stand before the wrath of God (Revelation 6:16). They want relief; they want out.

Now, it's about this time, in this horrible period, that God says "Time out." It's intermission time, and it would be a good time for us to take a time out as well.

So, we looked in this lesson, at the cast of characters and the list of events during the first 3½ years. Deceit followed by war, famine, plagues and earthquakes and people begging to die rather than face the wrath of a Holy God. And yet, the Bible says, that though they have tasted of His anger and they know of His holiness, they do not turn to Him in great numbers. You say, "How can that be? How could men and women live in times like that? How could they see mankind dying everywhere? How could they see world leaders promising everything, delivering nothing, and knowing they are experiencing a Satanic onslaught, which is nothing more than the release of the wrath of a patient God at last. How could men live then and not turn to God?"

You may even be here this morning, and you may be saying to yourself, "I'm not a Christian. I have never trusted Christ. But, if

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I were there then, I would.” Would you? Jesus says you wouldn’t. In Luke 16:19, He tells us a story. It’s the story about a certain rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. And it reads like this, starting in verse 22.

So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

“Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’

But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, or can those from there pass to us.’

“Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house,

for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’

Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; [they had the word of God, that’s enough] let them hear them.’

And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’

But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’” (Luke 16:22-31)

Now the truths in this passage would take weeks to cover, so we won’t try, but the first issue is obviously the Jewish nation’s rejection of the Messiah. Even His resurrection from the dead did not change their unbelief! But there is more being said than that, and in closing, I hope you will listen with me.

First of all, he is dealing with the reality of hell. He is saying that hell is a real place. Secondly, he is saying there is only one of two options open to man. Thirdly, he is saying it is a literal, continual place of physical suffering and anguish, so painful,

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that the sufferer would do anything just for the touch of a drop of water on his tongue for relief. Next, he reminds us that a great gulf exists between heaven and hell; that those who live in one will never again have contact with those who live in the other. Never.

Lastly, he deals with the issue of signs versus the Word of God. He says, the tormented man in hell pleaded with Abraham just to send someone back from the dead to warn his brothers. If they just saw someone resurrected, they would believe. “No,” said Jesus, “They have the Word. If they won’t listen to the Word, even a miracle such as a resurrection will not stir their hearts.”

So, this morning as we close, once again I feel constrained to address my closing remarks, at least in part, to those of you who have postponed, because of pride, apathy or just unbelief, a decision to trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior—or, to address those of us who have friends who have made that choice, who need to be warned, yet again. Please hear me out.

The Bible teaches that heaven is a real place. People are willing to accept that. The Bible teaches that the Bema Seat of Christ is real; that the Marriage of the Lamb is real; that one day we will be with Christ forever. Heaven is real! Even unbelievers will accept that. But though people don’t talk about it anymore, beloved, hell, according to the Bible, is just as real. The words I read to you from Luke 16 were Jesus’ words, not mine. And what Jesus said was, “Hell is real. Hell is torment. Hell is eternal. It never ends.”

And Jesus said, “A great gulf exists between heaven and hell that no man can ever cross. Those who spend eternity in hell will never stand in the presence of God. Instead, they will be in torment and anguish and pain and agony for all eternity.” Jesus, Himself said, “*There will be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth*” (Matthew 13:42). But they will never again see their loved ones who “in Christ” are spending eternity in the presence of God. That’s what it says.

You say, “You’re trying to scare me.” No, no more than God does. I just believe all of us need to understand and be reminded that the Gospel has not changed in 2,000 years. Every man or woman who ever lived, or will live, will still spend eternity somewhere, and nowhere does God give a third alternative. Heaven or hell. That’s it. You say, “Well, if I were just experiencing

When the Lights Go Out on Planet Earth (Part 2)

the traumas of that tribulation, I would believe.” Negative. Either you believe based on the clear Word of God, or no miracle in the world, even a resurrection, would make you believe.

The decision you need to make is a matter of choice, not a matter of emotion. It’s a decision to return control of your life to God by asking His Son, Jesus Christ, to forgive your sins. Sin is the issue. We don’t talk about that much anymore either. *Sin is the issue*. God hates it. But God loves you, so He paid this incredible price to buy you back so you could have fellowship with Him, be translated into His presence, and not only escape the lesser fires of the tribulation, but the greater fires of hell itself.

Beloved, one of these days the lights *will* go out on planet earth. God calls it “The Tribulation.” One of these days the Light of the world will disappear forever from those who reject God’s gift of salvation. God calls that *hell*.

Every time you hear the gospel, you make a choice. When you choose not to choose, you’ve made a choice. When you postpone deciding, you are saying, you have rejected for now, God’s free gift. “Maybe another chance will come,” you say, but maybe not. So in the name of Jesus, I invite you once again, to say, “Yes.” I invite you to let God fill your heart with heaven while He prepares heaven for you. All you need do is confess your need of God. Tell Him *you are a sinner*. Acknowledge that Christ died for your sins, and accept His gift of salvation, and ask Him to come into your life and live there forever. And He, who is the Light of the World, will fill you with Himself.

Darkness will flee. Light will flood your soul. Never again will you need ever to walk in darkness. And even as these dark shadows etch their way across the horizons of this world, you never need to fear. You need not even fear what will happen when the lights go out on planet earth because you will be eternally secure in the everlasting arms of your God. In the words of Apostle Paul,

“We pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God”
(II Corinthians 5:20b).

JESUS BECKONS

“Oh, Beloved,” Jesus beckons,
“Come to me. I will give you
Life eternal, life abundant,
I will yet make *all* things new.”

In your heart of hearts, I ask you,
Simply pray this simple prayer:
Jesus, I am lost without You,
Yet I know that You are there.

Waiting, longing, to transform me,
Wanting to forgive my sin;
Waiting for an invitation,
Wanting me to ask You in.

Dear Lord Jesus, now I do that,
Now I open my heart’s door.
Cleanse me, fill me with Your Spirit,
Make me Yours forever more.

Thank You Jesus! How I praise You!
You have done just what You said.
All I did was ask, and Jesus
You have raised me from the dead!

Life is mine, life everlasting,
Living water floods my soul.
Send me forth in joy proclaiming,
“Jesus Christ has made me whole!”

Let’s pray.

Our loving God, may any person here who is struggling with the reality of eternity, the devastation of sin, and the need for a Savior, sense the calm, quiet calling of Your Holy Spirit upon their life, even this moment. And in this moment of decision, in this time of choice, we pray that they will say, “Yes,” and ask Christ into their lives.

May those of us who are believers, become increasingly aware as the days go by, that the hour is close at hand when the lights will go out on planet earth. But, oh, the glory that will follow. May our hearts be excited. May our hearts be prepared.

*In Jesus’ name,
Amen.*

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