

BUILD A FRAMEWORK

- A. Introduction: For the past six weeks I have been encouraging you to become a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament so that you get familiar with it. There are many reasons why we need to be familiar with the New Testament. In this series, we've been emphasizing one reason in particular.
1. The return of Jesus is near and He warned His followers that the years leading up to His return will be marked by increasingly chaotic times of trouble along with much religious deception. Matt 24:4-31
 - a. God's Word has a lot to say about conditions in the world when Jesus returns. The Bible indicates that there will be a world government and economy in place with a religious system that opposes Almighty God and embraces the ultimate false christ, a man commonly known as Antichrist. Rev 13
 - b. The chaos and deception that will mark these years comes out of an increasing worldwide rejection of the God of the Bible along with the work of seducing spirits with devilish doctrines. I Tim 4:1-2
 1. As the world abandons God, human behavior becomes increasingly debased and minds become reprobate (or unable to make decisions in its own best interest). Rom 1:18-32; II Tim 3:1-8
 2. Before the Lord returns men and women "will love pleasure more than God. They will act as if they are religious, but reject the power that could make them godly" (II Tim 3:4-5, NLT).
 - c. These conditions are setting up in the world at this moment. We must deal with the effects of rampant ungodliness and deception on society. We need to be able to recognize false christs and false prophets who teach false gospels. The true Lord Jesus is revealed in the Bible.
 2. We could do a series on what the Bible says about world conditions at the Lord's return. But that's not our present purpose. I'm trying to motivate you to read the New Testament. Note this point.
 - a. II Thess 2:1-12—Paul (who was personally taught by Jesus, Gal 1:11-12) wrote that, leading up to the Lord's return, there will be a falling away (rebellion). Men's lusts and the lies of Satan will move them to reject the Truth (Jesus Christ) in favor of Antichrist, the lawless one, the man of sin.
 - b. Paul wrote these words in part to correct false teachings concerning Christ's return which had affected the believers in the city of Thessalonica. In the face of what is coming on the earth, Paul urged them to stand firm and hold to the traditions which he had taught them. II Thess 2:15
 1. Paul used a word that means to transmit in the Greek. By using this word (traditions) Paul made it clear that what he taught did not originate with him. He claimed Divine authority for his teachings (*Vine's Dictionary*). I Cor 11:2; I Cor 11:23; II Tim 3:16
 2. In other words, Paul exhorted these believers to hold fast to the Word of God which he and the other apostles gave through the spoken and the written word: Hold fast the teaching which has been delivered to you, whether by my words or by my letters (II Thess 2:15, Conybeare).
 3. We began this series by pointing out that Jesus said when the tribulation preceding His return begins to come on the earth many will be overcome by panic and fear. But Jesus admonished His followers not to be troubled or terrified by these happenings. Luke 21:9; Luke 21:25-26
 - a. He said that when you see these things begin to come to pass look up, lift up your heads (or as it says in the Greek, be elated in joyous expectation) because redemption draws near. Luke 21:28
 - b. Fearsome days are ahead for this world. But if you understand what is happening and why, you won't panic in fear. The Bible gives us the information we need to be joyful in the face of trouble.
 - c. The Bible was written to reveal God and His plan of redemption or the salvation that He has provided through Jesus. Every book and epistle (letter) adds to or advances the story in some way.
 1. God created men and women to become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ, and He made the earth to be a home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18; Ps 115:16
 2. When the first man (Adam) disobeyed God, sin and death entered the human race and a curse of corruption and death entered the family home. Neither humanity nor the earth is as God intended them to be. Gen 2:17; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19; Rom 8:20; etc.

- A. This turn of events didn't take God by surprise. He already had a plan to undo the damage done by man's rebellion—His plan to save us through redemption. Redemption means a releasing or deliverance on payment of a ransom.
 - B. The word is used for the salvation we have in and through Jesus. Rom 3:24; Rom 8:23; I Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7; Eph 1:14; Eph 4:30; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15
 - d. Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago to pay for sin and open the way for all who put faith in Him and His sacrifice to be transformed from sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God. He will come again and restore the earth to a fit forever home for God and His family.
- B. We can be joyful in the face of impending calamity when we understand that a process is underway, a plan is unfolding and it will end well. Every plan has a beginning, middle, and an end. God's plan is no different.
1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, the family home. He created the first family members, Adam and Eve, giving them dominion (authority in the earth). Gen 1:1; Gen 1:26
 - a. He commissioned them to bring the rest of the family into existence through natural processes and subdue the earth (use its vast resources) to produce a God-glorifying way of life. Gen 1:27-28
 - b. Adam and Eve engaged in meaningful work and had close interaction with each other and Almighty God in their beautiful home—until sin damaged it all. Gen 2-3
 - c. The Lord began to unveil His plan to undo the damage done by man's rebellion through Jesus and redemption (Gen 3:15). He inspired men to keep a written record as he progressively revealed more and more of this plan (Gen 5:1). This record grew into what we know as the Old Testament.
 2. Jesus was born into the people group that God used to compile and preserve His written record, the Jews (Rom 3:2; 9:4; etc.). Jesus' first followers (the apostles) knew from these writings from the prophets, that the Redeemer will restore earth to pre-sin conditions, and God and man will once again be together in the family home (Isa 35:1-7; Isa 51:3; Isa 55:12-13; Isa 65:17; etc.).
 - a. Matt 24:3—A few days before Jesus was crucified His apostles asked Him what signs will indicate that His return and the end of the world is imminent.
 1. The Greek word that is translated world is *aion* or age: What will be the sign of your coming and of the end—that is, the completion, the consummation—of the age (Matt 24:3, Amp).
 2. Since the fall of man we've been in the age in which things are not as God intended them to because of sin. This age will end when Jesus returns. His apostles understand that.
 - b. In His answer Jesus listed some distressing signs, including tribulation like the world has never seen (Matt 24:21-22). His apostles weren't freaked out because they knew from the Old Testament that even though a time of calamity will precede earth's transformation, God's people will make it through (Zech 14:1-3; Joel 2:10-11; Joel 2:28-32; etc.)
 3. The New Testament was written by eyewitnesses (or close associates of eyewitnesses) of Jesus, the Redeemer. These men understood that a plan is unfolding and this viewpoint permeates their writings.
 - a. When we read their epistles we see that they lived with the awareness that the world, as it is, is coming to an end. They were expecting the Lord to return and complete the plan of redemption.
 - b. The apostles instructed those who came to faith in Christ through their efforts to do the same, admonishing them to govern their lives in the light of this reality. Consider these examples.
 1. Paul wrote: I Cor 7:29-31—Now let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short, so husbands should not let marriage be their major concern. Happiness or sadness or wealth should not keep anyone from doing God's work. Those in frequent contact with the things of the world should make good use of them without becoming attached to them (NLT), for this world in its present form is passing away (NIV).
 2. Paul wrote: Rom 13:11-12—Another reason for living right is that you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for the coming of our salvation (final deliverance, AMP) is

nearer now than we first believed...the day of salvation will soon be here (NLT).

3. James wrote: James 5:7—Dear brothers and sisters, you must be patient as you wait for the Lord’s return...and take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near (NLT).
 4. Peter wrote: I Pet 4:7—But the end and culmination of all things has now come near; keep sound minded and self restrained and alert therefore for [the practice of] prayer [Amp].
 5. John wrote: I John 2:18—It is the last time—hour [the end of this age]. And as you have heard that Antichrist [he who will oppose Christ in the guise of Christ] is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen, which confirms our belief that it is the final (the end) time (Amp).
 6. Jude wrote: Jude 14,17,18,20—Look, the Lord is coming with thousands of his holy ones... you... must remember what the apostles of our Lord told you, that in the last times there would be scoffers whose purpose in life is to enjoy themselves in every evil way imaginable...But you...must continue to build your lives on the foundation of your holy faith (NLT).
4. The last days, the end of this age, began when Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago to initiate the plan of redemption by dying for sin. Heb 9:26-28—He came once for all time, at the end of the age, to remove the power of sin forever by his sacrificial death for us...He will come again (NLT)...to bring full salvation to those who are (eagerly, constantly and patiently) waiting for him (Amp).
 - a. Why has there been so much time between Jesus’ first and second coming? Peter addressed this issue: The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for you sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent (II Pet 3:9, NLT).
 - b. Did the apostles have any idea how long it would be? They were aware that Jesus wasn’t coming back immediately since He commissioned them to preach the gospel to the whole world which was at least as big as the Roman Empire. Jesus also told a number of parables about a master who left for a considerable period of time, yet expected his servants to remain faithful. Matt 25:14-30; etc.
 1. Since Adam’s rebellion multitudes have lived and died with the awareness that there’s more to life than just this life and that a day of restoration is coming. Job 19:25; Dan 12:9; Acts 3:21
 2. There’s something very healthy about expecting and anticipating the Lord’s return. It helps you keep your priorities right and have the right perspective on this life.
 - c. Let’s look at what two of these men, Peter and John, wrote about the culmination of God’s plan.
 5. Peter wrote: But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall **pass away** with a great noise, and the **elements shall melt** with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be **burned up**...all these things shall be **dissolved**, and the elements **shall melt** with fervent heat (II Pet 3:10-12, KJV).
 - a. This passage is sometimes misinterpreted to mean that the earth will be destroyed by fire when the Lord returns. But Peter isn’t describing destruction. He’s describing transformation. God will speak and purge the physical elements that make up this world with the fire of His Word. Jer 23:29
 1. **Pass away** is made up of two Greek words that mean to come or go by. It carries the idea of passing from one condition or state to another. It never means cease to exist. **Elements** is a Greek word that means the most basic components of the physical world (atoms, molecules).
 2. **Shall melt** (v10), **dissolve** (v11-12) are the same Greek word and means to loose (John 11:44— loose him and let him go). **Burned up**, in the earliest Greek manuscripts, is a word that means found or shown. The idea is the exposure of corruption for the purpose of removal.
 3. **Shall melt** (v12) is the Greek word *teko*. We get our English word *thaw* from it. Winter releases its grip when the spring thaw sets in. Corruption and death will one day release their grip on this world and the earth will be loosed from bondage to both.
 - b. II Pet 3:13—Peter faced a martyr’s death with the confidence that the heavens and the earth will be made new according to the promise of God. He used the Greek word *kaino* for new. It means new

- in quality or form as opposed to new in time (same word is used for a new creature in II Cor 5:17).
6. When the apostle John was an old man he was given a vision of the completion of the plan of redemption which he recorded in the Book of Revelation. He saw the new heavens and the new earth: I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away (Rev 21:1, KJV).
 - a. John used the same Greek word for new as Peter did. And in Rev 21:5 John wrote that he heard the Lord declare: Behold, I make all things new (KJV). Note, God didn't say that He makes all new things. He said that He makes what already exists new in quality and superior in character.
 1. When John called our present world the first heavens and earth he used the Greek word *protos* which means first in time or place. The English word prototype (or pattern) comes from this word. This present world is the pattern for the one to come.
 2. Passed away is the same Greek word Peter used. It has the idea of passing from one condition to another. Paul used the same word when he wrote of new creatures in Christ that old things pass away (II Cor 5:17). They don't cease to exist—their spiritual condition changes.
 - b. John witnessed the culmination of the plan of redemption when the capital city of Heaven descend out the invisible realm to this earth (made new). John heard a voice proclaim:
 1. (God's home) is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain...the old world and its evil are gone forever. Rev 21:3-4, NLT
 2. The Bible begins with God on earth with His man Adam and it concludes with God on earth with His family of redeemed sons and daughters, the plan of redemption completed. Rev 21-22
- C. Conclusion: Regular, systematic reading of the New Testament will build a framework in your mind that will help you navigate through the days and years ahead. By framework I mean a viewpoint, a perspective that is in line with the way things really are—according to God.
1. A framework for a house sets boundaries and limits with doors and windows that control what comes in and goes out. Regular reading will give you a picture of what it looks like to live as a Christian in this world and help you recognize teachings that aren't in the New Testament or contradict it.
 - a. You'll be able to confidently say: There's nothing like what this person said in the New Testament. He has taken verses out of context and misapplied them. Therefore, I reject his statement.
 - b. Eph 4:14—Then we (you) will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth. (NLT)
 2. Regular reading of the New Testament will help you deal with the emotions that may be generated in you because of the increasing chaos and reprobate behavior all around us. Note these two points.
 - a. II Pet 2:7-8—God rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a good man who was sick of all the immorality and wickedness around him. Yes, he was a righteous man who was distressed by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day (NLT). God got Lot through until He got him out.
 - b. Neh 8:10—The joy of the Lord is your strength. When we read this verse in context we find that joy comes from hearing God's Word and understanding it (v12). These people had God's Word explained to them by others who were more familiar with it (Levites). We haven't said much about this, but along with reading the New Testament, it is vitally important that you get good teaching.
 3. Regular reading of the New Testament helps you set priorities. What matters most is that people come to saving knowledge of Jesus. We need to shine the light of Christ in our little corner of the world.
 4. Regular systematic reading of the New Testament helps you keep this life in perspective. Eternal things matter most. There's a good end ahead and whatever we have to do to stay faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ—it's worth it!