

FULL SALVATION

- A. Introduction: Jesus' first message to His followers when He left this world two thousand years ago was: I'll be back (Acts 1:9-11). His return to this planet draws closer with each passing day.
1. The Bible makes it clear that the years leading up to His return will be filled with increasing turmoil and trouble. We are witnessing the beginnings of the chaos. Matt 24:6-8; 21-22; II Tim 3:1-5; etc.
 - a. Heb 10:25—Last week we looked at the fact that God's Word instructs believers to exhort one another as we see the day or time of the Lord's return approaching. When you exhort someone you urge or strongly appeal to them with words of advice, encouragement, or warning.
 - b. To encourage, advise, or warn someone in a meaningful way you must have something substantive to say. So we are taking time to look at why Jesus is coming back and what His return will mean for the world so that we ourselves can be encouraged and then encourage others.
 1. Jesus said that fearsome things will take place before He returns: Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world (Luke 21:26, NIV). But He told believers: When you see these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your head (Luke 21:28).
 2. Look up, when used figuratively, means to be elated. Lift up means to raise up either literally or figuratively. The idea in the original Greek language is be elated in joyous expectation. You respond this way because you know that your redemption is near. Redemption means deliverance, full release, salvation.
 2. To be elated in joyous expectation and have peace of mind in the months and years ahead, we must understand the big picture or the overall plan of God. As we've done in each lesson thus far, we begin tonight's lesson by restating the big picture or the overall plan of God.
 - a. Before time began God desired a family. He created human beings to become His sons and daughters through faith in Him and designed the earth to be a home for His family. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; etc.
 1. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for our sin and open the way for all who believe on Him and His sacrifice to be transformed from sinners into sons and daughters of God.
 2. He will come again to restore the family home by cleansing the earth of all sin, corruption, and death. He will restore it to a fit forever home for Himself and His family.
 - b. The world the way that it is (both humanity and the planet) is not the way it is supposed to be due to sin. And, it's not going to go on forever the way it is—For this world in its present form is passing away (I Cor 7:31, NLT).
 1. The end of the plan began two thousand years ago with the first coming of Jesus. Through His death on the Cross He activated God's plan to restore all things. The plan will culminate when He returns. Acts 2:17; Heb 1:1-2; I John 2:18
 2. Heb 9:26-28—He (Jesus) 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 but not to deal with our sins again (NLT)...but to bring full salvation to those who are eagerly...expecting him (Amp).
 - A. We live in the age (time period) when things are not as God intended. The Greek word that is translated end doesn't mean termination as in end of existence. It means bringing to completion with events coming together at an appointed end.
 - B. Full salvation will include the earth renewed and resurrection of the dead. Earth will be restored and we will be reunited with our bodies raised from the grave so we can live on earth again. Life on this planet will finally be what God created it to be. Rev 21:1-4
 3. Jesus is coming back to complete God's plan for a family. Like all plans, this plan has a beginning, middle, and an end. We are living at the time of the end of the plan and this means some unique challenges for us.

- a. The Bible has a lot of information about what world conditions will be like just prior to the Lord's return. II Thess 2:3-4; Dan 7:9-28; Dan 8:23-27; Rev 13:1-18; Matt 24:21-22; etc.
 1. There will be a worldwide system of government, economy, and religion presided over by a Satan inspired and empowered man. The world will embrace and worship this man.
 2. He will lead the world to the worst war humanity has ever seen—a nuclear, chemical, and biological holocaust. If Jesus didn't intervene, every human being on earth would die.
 - b. The circumstances that will produce this scenario are setting up now and are and will continue to produce increasing chaos in our lives (lessons for another time). The point for now is this:
 1. America is the world's biggest roadblock to globalism. Some type of change must happen that will bring us to the point of surrendering national sovereignty to the global community.
 2. For those of us who love America, it's hard to watch us move in that direction. But when you understand the big picture, it helps you keep all this in perspective.
 - c. Jesus compared the some of the signs that will indicate His return is near to labor pains—they increase in intensity and frequency as the birth nears. Matt 24:6-8
 1. The process isn't pleasant, but no one tries to stop the birth pains because they know the end result. Instead, they focus their prayers on a safe and speedy birth process.
 2. The Bible instructs us to encourage ourselves with the fact that the Lord is coming and that the end result, the culmination of God's plan will be wonderful for all who are part of God's family.
4. Keep in mind that we are not the only people interested in what is happening in the world right now. We aren't the only ones who will be impacted by the second coming of Jesus. Job 19:25-26
- a. Every human being going back to Adam and Eve will be impacted by the Lord's return to complete God's plan of redemption. All who put faith in the revelation of God's grace through Jesus given to their generation will, along with us, receive their full salvation: a return to earth to live here forever.
 - b. All of the New Testament verses that I've been citing in these lessons were written by men who walked and talked with Jesus when He was here the first time. They saw Him die on the Cross and rise from the dead. They watched Him return to Heaven, with the promise that He would return.
 1. Their focus was not on trying to fix up society or stop the birth pangs. They understood that this world is not the way it is supposed to be and that the Lord will ultimately make things right. And, they knew that He would take care of them through whatever is ahead.
 2. Their focus was on sharing the good news of salvation from sin through Jesus Christ so that as many people as possible can become part of God's family and receive this full salvation.
- B. Our opening verse in this lesson about encouraging ourselves and each other as we see the day of the Lord's return approaching was written by Paul the Apostle. Paul became a believer when the resurrected Lord Jesus appeared to him as he was traveling to Damascus, Syria (Acts 9:1-6).
1. Heb 10:25 (our opening verse) is not the only place where Paul urged Christians to encourage each other with information about the Lord's return and the end of this age.
 - a. Paul wrote I Corinthians, a letter to believers in Jesus who lived in the Greek city of Corinth about AD 56, a few years after he preached the gospel there and many people believed on Jesus.
 - b. Paul wrote the epistle to address some problems that had developed in this community of believers. One of the issues was misunderstandings connected with resurrection of the dead. Resurrection of the dead is the reuniting of the inward and outward parts of our being that separate when we die.
 - c. Paul said a number of things which we aren't going to deal with now, but note one point that he made in the context of resurrection of the dead (resurrection will occur when Christ returns).
 1. I Cor 15:23-24—But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised first; then when Christ comes back, all his people will be raised. After that the end will come, when he will turn the kingdom over to God the Father having put down all enemies of every kind (NLT).

2. Paul understood that a definite end is coming. The Greek word translated end is a form of the same word used in Heb 9:26. It has the idea of outcome or result. There's been an end in sight since the beginning—the restoration of all things that have been damaged by sin.
2. Notice that resurrection of the dead will Jesus' final demonstration of the fact that He has conquered death, when the bodies of all believers come up out of the grave and are made incorruptible and immortal—no longer subject to the corruption of sickness, old age, and death.
 - a. Resurrection of the dead was not new information for 1st century men and women. Old Testament believers knew that the dead will be raised. Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2; etc.
 1. However, Paul revealed a previously unknown part of God's plan (a mystery). Not all believers will die. But we will all be changed—our bodies made incorruptible and immortal. I Cor 15:51-52
 2. Paul connected this event to the coming of the Lord and revealed that Jesus will make our bodies like His own resurrected body—And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take these weak mortal bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same mighty power that he will use to conquer everything everywhere (Phil 3:20-21, NLT).
 - b. I Thess 4:13-18—Paul gives even more details about what will happen when Jesus returns. He will bring with Him all those believers who have died. They have not ceased to exist. They have been with the Lord in Heaven since they left this earth.
 1. First, their bodies will be raised and changed (made incorruptible and immortal), and they will be reunited with them. Then those who are still live at that time will be changed and all of us will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, to be with Him forever.
 2. The people that Paul wrote to were experiencing serious persecution on account of their faith in Christ. He wrote to encourage them to stay faithful to Christ. Notice, that he exhorted them to encourage each other with the end of the plan.
3. We need to clarify several points before we move on. We could (but aren't going to) do entire lessons on each point. But some explanation will be helpful.
 - a. There are two phases to the second coming of Jesus separated by seven years. Jesus will first come in the clouds (but not all the way to earth).
 1. Only His followers will see Him. At that time He will take all believers in Him off of the earth. This is what Paul was referring to in I Thess 4:13-18.
 - A. When believers are taken off the earth, the ministry of the Holy Spirit will change. He has exercised a restraint on evil in the world through godly men and women. That will be removed and the wickedness of men apart from God, along with the wickedness of Satan, will be displayed as never before. II Thess 2:6-7
 - B. Consequently, there will be chaos and tribulation on this earth unlike anything humanity has ever seen. The Book of Revelation gives an account of much of the action. We'll discuss this more fully next week, but God will take a great harvest of souls during this final period.
 2. Seven years later Jesus will come with believers all the way to earth, bring an end to the final world system and its leader, and begin the process of restoring and renewing the earth. Jude 14-15
 - b. I Thess 4:17—This catching away is referred to by many as the rapture of the church. The New Testament was originally written in Greek. When it was eventually translated into Latin the word Latin *raptus* was used for the Greek word translated catching away (*harpazo*).
4. The term second coming is like an umbrella. There are a lot of events and people that come under the umbrella. Sincere people have a tendency to get fixated on individual events and people and miss the

big picture and the encouragement that comes from viewing life from the perspective of God's plan.

- a. For example, any mention of the rapture and the tribulation often leads to frenzied discussions of when the rapture takes place in relation to the tribulation (before, during, or after). People have their arguments and miss the point—Jesus is coming back for us.
 - b. People focus on who is and isn't going in the rapture and then scare themselves because they think that they've found a verse that leaves them out of it. No New Testament writer talks like that. If you are a believer in Jesus—you're going. (lots of lessons for another day).
 - c. Paul mentioned a trumpet in I Thess 4 and in I Cor 15. People get fixated on what the last trump (I Cor 15:52) means and miss the point—our bodies are going to be made incorruptible and immortal.
5. I have not mentioned this in a while, but I think that now is a good time to do so. One of the best things you can do for yourself is to become a regular reader of the New Testament.
- a. By this I mean: Start at the beginning and read it over and over until you get familiar with it. When you read, don't stop to look up words that you don't understand. Don't consult commentaries or Bible dictionaries. Just read. Don't worry about what you don't understand. Understanding comes with familiarity. You are reading to become familiar with it.
 - b. The New Testament was written (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) by real people to other real people about real issues. It was written to communicate pertinent information. What did the last trump mean to them? What did the catching away mean to them? If you were familiar with the New Testament you could answer both of those questions.
- C. Conclusion: We have much more to say next week, but consider these thoughts as we close this lesson.
1. God's purpose is not to fix up this world and make this life the highlight of our existence. This world is not as He intends it to be because of sin. There is no natural fix for what ails humanity and the planet.
 - a. Supernatural transformation is necessary. Through His plan of redemption, Almighty God has provided what is needed to restore His family and the family home through Jesus. His plan is unfolding and is about to come to a conclusion.
 - b. Yes, there are difficult times ahead. How much tribulation will we see before we are taken off the earth? The circumstances that will be in full bloom in the final years of this age will not come out of a vacuum. They are setting up now and affecting our lives more and more.
 - c. We will be removed before the worst of it (more on this next week). But the main take away from this lesson is that we must keep our focus on the end result—full salvation.
 2. One of the most famous verses in the Bible is Jer 29:11—For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope (NLT).
 - a. We use that verse to proclaim that God is going to give us that job we want or fix our family or give us the career or ministry we long for. But, are you aware of the context of this verse?
 - b. Due to persistent, rampant idol worship, Israel was about to be taken away as captives for seventy years in a foreign land and their own country destroyed. Even the godly remnant of people in Israel would be affected by the consequences of reprobate decisions on the part of their fellow countrymen.
 - c. Yet God assured them that He had a plan for them that would give them a future and a hope (lots of lessons for another day). Consider these points.
 1. None of these people would live to see their nation restore to its position of glory in their lifetime. Most of them died in captivity. Was God messing with them? Was He being cruel by promising something that didn't happen?
 2. No. He knew and knows that there is a future and a hope for them and for all who put faith in Him—in the life to come, when the plan of redemption is completed and full salvation is accomplished. Those people will join us for forever life in the restored family home!!