

A SALVATION READY TO BE REVEALED

- A. Introduction: We're in the midst of a short series about the importance of reading the Bible as part of a larger series we're going to do on our inheritance in Christ. Eph 1:18; Acts 20:32
1. We're emphasizing the importance of becoming a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament. Regular means: Setting aside at least ten to twenty minutes every day to read (or as close to that as possible). Systematic means: Reading each book from start to finish without jumping around, stopping to look up words or consult a commentary. You can do all of that at another time.
 - a. Christians struggle with reading the Bible because they don't understand it. But this type of reading makes you familiar with the New Testament. Understanding comes with familiarity.
 - b. This type of reading will produce changes in you. The Bible is a supernatural book that works in us. If you commit to regular, systematic reading you'll be a different person a year from now.
 1. When you first start, you won't understand what you're reading. It won't be exciting. It may be a while before it seems to be of any real value to you. It takes time and effort to develop a taste for and a habit of reading the Bible. But it's well worth it.
 2. I think we'd all agree that last month flew by. If you had begun reading three chapters a day from the Gospels on the first day of last month you'd have finished all of them by now.
 - A. There are 89 chapters in the Gospels. At three a day, that's thirty days of reading. You could be almost half way done with your second read through right now. This month will also fly by. Why not put the time to good use and read the Gospels?
 - B. Once you've read the Gospels through a few times, move on to the epistles. There're 121 chapters in the epistles. If you read four chapters a day you can finish them in a month.
 3. When I began to read the New Testament regularly, I set up this system for myself. I learned that the epistles were written to tell Christians what we believe and how we live. So, I'd read one Gospel and all the epistles. Then I'd read another Gospel and all the epistles until I'd read each Gospel once and all the epistles four times. Then I'd read Acts. I skipped Revelation until I had more understanding of the rest of the New Testament.
 - c. In these lessons I'm trying to motivate you to become a regular, systematic reader by giving you reasons why you need to read and what reading the Bible will do for you.
 2. An extremely important reason for reading is to help you deal with the times in which we live. Jesus is coming soon and, according to the Bible, this period will be marked by deception and lawlessness. God's Word offers protection against deception. And it helps us understand what's happening and why so we don't get freaked out by the events around us.
 - a. A plan is unfolding. In eternity past Almighty God purposed to have a family with whom He can dwell. He created earth to be home for Himself and His family. The plan got off track when Adam and man in Adam sinned. But God immediately enacted His plan to undo the damage done through Jesus. The plan is known as redemption. Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18; Rev 13:8
 1. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay the price for sin so it can be removed from all who acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord. They can then be transformed from sinners into sons.
 2. Jesus will come again to cleanse the family home of sin, corruption, and death and establish the visible kingdom of God on earth. God and man will be together forever in a world free from all that hurts and harms—life as it was always meant to be.
 - b. Jesus compared the distressing events that will precede He returns to labor pains. A woman can make it through the hardship of labor because she understands that a process with a good end is underway. Matt 24:8--With all these things the birth pangs of the new age begin (NEB)
- B. Just a few days before Jesus was crucified His disciples asked Him what signs will indicate that His return is near. He gave them much information (Matt 24; Luke 21). Note one point. He said events will take place that terrify people. Luke 21:26--Men's courage will completely fail. (Phillips)

1. Yet He tells His followers not to be afraid. Luke 21:9--And when you hear of wars and insurrections—disturbances, disorder and confusion—do not become alarmed and panic-stricken and terrified. (Amp)
 - a. Then He instructs believers: v28--But you (my people) when these things begin to happen “stand upright” (NEB) and “look forward cheerfully” (Beck). Stand upright or lift up (in the KJV) means to raise up. People cower when they are afraid. Look up comes from a word meaning to be elated. *Vine’s Dictionary of New Testament Words* says it means to elated in joyous expectation.
 1. Jesus said we can do this because we know redemption draws near. There’s a lot in this statement but consider one thought: The completion of the plan of redemption is at hand.
 2. Luke 21:29-31 makes this clear. When the trees produce buds and leaves you know summer is very near. When you see these events you know that the kingdom of God is at hand.
 - b. Both groups of people (those terrified and those elated) see the same thing. However, it’s not what you see, but how you see what you see. You have to know how to look at what you see and how to look past it to what is really going on. God’s Word, the Bible, helps us do this.
2. Before we proceed, let’s address this issue: Why all the chaos in the final years of this age? We’ve discussed the removal of societal restraints and its effects in other lessons. Consider another point.
 - a. There’s a counterfeit kingdom in place in this world. It was established when Adam sinned and gave his God-given authority in the earth over to Satan. He has opposed the coming kingdom of God since the beginning and is trying to hold on to earth. II Cor 4:4; Rev 12:12; Luke 4:6; etc.
 - b. He will offer the world a counterfeit of Jesus. This anti (or in place of) christ will preside over a worldwide government, economy, and religion. Through this man and this system Satan will attempt to stop the rightful King, the Lord Jesus Christ, from returning to earth. Rev 13; Rev 19:19
 1. Two world views are clashing (not just in America but in other parts of the world). There are those who want globalization and those who want to retain national sovereignty. These views are clashing and will do so increasingly with all the accompanying effects on society.
 2. I’m not saying that someone who supports globalization is of the devil. Sincere people hold various points of view based on their life experiences, knowledge, personalities. The devil is an opportunist who works through people. He can advance his agenda through an honest belief in the benefits of globalization.
 3. Whatever your opinion about former President Obama, Hillary Clinton, and President Trump, the root of the turmoil in our country is this issue. President Obama took the U.S far down the road to globalization and Clinton planned to continue. President Trump wants to reverse this movement. Unseen forces at work behind the unrest and lawlessness we’re experiencing and it will continue until America is fully back on board with globalization.
 - c. For many of us, our picture of what the “end times” looks like comes from *Zombie Apocalypse* movies and prophecy charts with red dragons who have seven heads and ten horns. But it won’t be freaky. It’ll be the natural result of the progression of society. It looks like what we’re seeing play out on the nightly news: ethnos against ethnos, deception and lawlessness. Matt 24:7,11,12
 1. I do believe Christians will be removed from the earth before all hell breaks loose. But I don’t know how bad it will get before we leave. As the world moves toward a global government, economy, and religion those who oppose it will be increasingly marginalized.
 2. As deception increases, people who unable to discern good from bad and truth from error will become predominate. They will increasingly become haters of those who are good. When we leave, they’ll be glad we’re gone.
3. Paul echoed Jesus’ words about these times. II Tim 3:1--But understand this, that in the last days there will set in perilous times of great stress and trouble—hard to deal with and hard to bear. (Amp)
 - a. In the context of these perilous times Paul instructed Timothy to continue in the Scriptures because they make us wise unto salvation. II Tim 3:13-15
 - b. Both the Hebrew and Greek words for salvation have the idea of rescue, deliverance, help, healing, safety, preservation, and so forth. The Bible has numerous examples of people who experienced

“salvation” in this life. They’re a foretaste of the ultimate deliverance, when there’s no more need for deliverance from hurt and harm because the root problem has been removed from this world.

1. Salvation is more than not going to Hell, more than getting help to make it through this life. It’s about transformation of man and the earth by God’s power to restore His original plan.

2. If you don’t learn to look at life from the perspective that there’s more to life than just this life you won’t walk in the peace and joy available to us despite what’s going on around us.

c. Our answer is not in a politician or a world leader. It’s in the One Who can deal with and remove the root problem: the sin, corruption and death that infused creation when man fell.

C. Regular reading of the New Testament will help you see that there’s more going on than what we’re dealing with in the moment. We’re part of something bigger than ourselves, bigger than this life. If you limit your picture of salvation to what it will do for you in this life only, you’ll struggle in the days ahead.

1. Billions of people have been born into this world since Adam and Eve were created. All had hopes and dreams and pondered the meaning of life. All were and are known to and loved by God. All lived their lives and died but none of them ceased to exist. All are somewhere now, either Heaven or Hell.

a. Those who responded to the light of God’s grace and salvation through Jesus given in their generation are part of the plan and they await its consummation and a return to earth.

b. Consider one example. The first time the word salvation appears in the Bible is Gen 49:18. Jacob spoke it out as he blessed and prophesied to his twelve sons just before his death.

1. Joseph received word that his father was fading and took his sons to receive a blessing. Note Jacob’s assessment of his life. v15,16--God shepherded (guided, provided, protected) me and delivered me from evil all my life. God was an ever-present help for him.

2. Yet he died looking for the salvation of God or the ultimate restoration of God’s original plan.

c. Consider another example. Shortly after Jesus was born, in accordance with the Law of Moses, He was taken to Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord. Luke 2:21-24

1. At the Temple the family encountered a man named Simeon, a righteous, devout man who waited for the coming Redeemer. The Holy Ghost had told him he wouldn’t die until he saw the Christ. He was led to the Temple that day, and when he saw the Lord he proclaimed: I can leave this world in peace because I’ve seen your salvation. Luke 2:25-30

2. He spent his whole life waiting for one moment and then he dies? And he’s thrilled about it?

That makes no sense unless you know that a plan is unfolding, you have a part in it and you’ve seen a key part of the plan.

2. Heb 11 lists numerous Old Testament people and commends their faith as it enumerates the exploits they did through faith. Yet we’re told that their perspective was: This life is not all there is. We’re pilgrims passing through this life as it is. Heb 11:33,34; 13

a. Even though they had God’s help and provision during their lifetimes, they knew there’s more to come. That knowledge enabled them to face hardships and death.

1. v35--But others trusted God and were tortured, preferring to die rather than turn from God and be free. They placed their hope in a resurrection to a better life. (NLT)

2. v39,40--All of these people we have mentioned received God’s approval because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. For God had far better things in mind for us that would also benefit them, for they can’t receive the prize at the end of the race until we finish the race (NLT). (The generation to whom those words were written saw the Redeemer pay for sin.)

b. These Old Testament men and women watch us as we run our race. They are eager to return to earth when the plan of redemption is completed at the Second Coming. Heb 12:1

3. Consider something Peter wrote to people over whom he had charge. They were experiencing increasing persecution in the form of verbal slander and social pressures. General dislike of Christians was about to become active, violent persecution under the Roman Emperor Nero in 64 AD.

a He opened with a statement about their hope: I Pet 1:3,4--By His great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (RSV)

1. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus made it possible for us to be transformed from sinners into sons and daughters and has provided us with an indestructible inheritance, a salvation that will be revealed when Jesus returns.

A. v6-9--Peter encouraged his readers not be moved by the persecutions they faced. Then he defined what he means by salvation revealed at the end of this age (v10-12).

B. It's the salvation God has been promising since man sinned in the Garden and the curse of corruption and death entered all of creation. God promised the Redeemer (Jesus) who will undo the damage done and make things right (Gen 3:15).

2. This inheritance is kept for us in Heaven. Don't think clouds and harps. Heaven is God's unseen kingdom. It's in another dimension. The power of this unseen dimension transformed you from sinner to son and supplies you with provision, power, and protection in this life. It will ultimately raise your dead body so you can live on earth again once the world is transformed and restored to a fit forever home for God and His family. Job 19:25,26

b. I Pet 1:5--As part of his statement Peter wrote about God's power keeping us through faith until the plan is completed. God works in our lives by His grace through our faith. But most of us are in fear, the opposite of faith. Our "faith" is fear masquerading as faith: If I say it enough times. If I don't say anything negative. If I give enough money. If I keep all the doors closed to the devil.

1. The remedy for fear is seeing reality as it truly is: Nothing can come against us that's bigger than God. All that we face is temporary and subject to change by God's power either in this life or the life to come. God's plan for a family on the earth made new will be completed and you'll have a part in it.

2. This is the perspective you get from becoming a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament. This perspective makes you fearless in the face of life's challenges and lifts you up above in the midst of life's hardships.

3. The Greek word translated faith means persuasion. Regular reading of the New Testament will persuade you of the reality of the unseen kingdom (its power and provision) as well as your place in God's kingdom and plan. Rom 10:17

c. Not only does faith come from God's Word so does familiarity with His voice. We need to be able to accurately perceive His guidance and direction more now than ever. (more on that later)

D. Conclusion: It's not what you see. It's how you see what you see. Life in this world will become increasingly challenging and frightening. We must learn to look past it and see the plan of God unfolding. Regular, systematic reading of the New Testament will help us do so. More next week!!