

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**
Chapter 21- Luke 21:7-8

316- When Therefore Will These Things Happen?-
Part 2- See To it That No One Misleads You- Part 2

June 19, 2016

Luke 21:7-8

⁷ They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what *will be* the sign when these things are about to take place?"

⁸ And He said, "**See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them.**

To the Glory of God

What is the single greatest issue in the universe? What is the one thing that makes everything else pale by comparison? What is it that, when it occurs, will overshadow everything else?

The meaning of human life, the meaning of all existence, the meaning of the universe is, at its core, this:

All things are to be used to show how magnificent God is

... and that means that this universe, and everything in it, is about God. And that means that the existence of everything in the universe serves a primary Purpose to display the Glory of God, and that single Purpose *overshadows* the existence of the thing *itself*.

Now skeptics and atheists shake their heads at the notion that Christians could believe that on this infinitesimal planet where there is a self-conscious being called "Man" that we could believe that God created the universe about Man, because, as far as we know, the universe is so unbelievably vast and so unbelievably empty.

And my response to the skeptic and the atheist is: *"You have it completely upside-down."* The universe is not about Man at all. If it were, I would agree with them. But the vastness of the universe was created by God to show the people of this tiny little speck of a planet something amazing about *Himself*. So the universe does not show the greatness or the importance of *Man*, it displays the vastness and the unsearchable magnificence of *God*. So the *enormity* of the universe does not bring attention to this small speck of a planet that we all live on. The universe is God's effort to proclaim: *"This is how big I am! This is how strong I am! This is how glorious and magnificent I am!"*

So, the hundreds of billions of galaxies are all about God, not Man. And I suggest to you that there is nothing unusual about *that* at all.

The disproportion between the unimaginable vastness of the universe in all of its amazing glory and infinitesimal little Man is *perfectly* rational, if you are God-centered. Because, if God is all, if God is the fundamental Reality in the universe, and Man is his little, amazing, worshiping group, then all that is in the universe is in the universe to make God look great.

So, to God, the single most important commodity in all the universe is what everything that has been made points to:

The Glory of God

... which is why King David said:

Psalms 19:1

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

... and why he said:

Psalms 8:3-4

3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;

4 What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?

And so, the “displaying” or the “showing” or the “revealing” the Glory of God is *why* everything in the universe was made. And so, the universe is vast on purpose, not to show any glory in Man, but to *humble* him and to *cast him down* to his knees because that same Glory of God is why we exist.

So, God created galaxies and sub-atomic particles and trees and grass and laughter and hope and water and dirt so that we would behold the Glory of God and marvel at God, so that we would be amazed at God, so that we would exclaim about God, so that we would be enthralled over God, so that we would talk about God with wonder-filled words, so that we would love God, and so that we would worship God, and so that we would enjoy God forever.

But, we have *exchanged* that glory of God, that radiance of God, for things that were “made” and things that are “passing away”. We have made a “swap” and set our affections on *created* things rather than the Creator. We now take pleasure in base things rather than the high and lofty One. We enjoy fiddling with things made from the dirt rather than worship the One Who spoke dirt into existence. We love another, and we go about to build our lives with no thought and no concern on where we stand and why we breathe. And then we look at all that we have done and we so admire it, that we worship *ourselves*.

And the Bible calls that “swap”, that “exchange”, that rude and offensive “transfer” of our affections *away* from God and onto other things- “sin”. So sin is beholding the magnificence of the Glory of a perfect God and trampling it under our feet in disgust. And the Apostle Paul had this in mind when he was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to write **Romans 3:23** down that says:

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Now no one should ever think that “**falling short**” of God’s Glory, as Paul says it here, means that we *almost* reached the line but fell just short of it. No, “falling short” means that we see the Glory of God in ten thousand different ways all the time, and yet we so despise God and His Glory, that we *trample that Glory under our feet in total disgust*.

In other words, we take the single most important thing to God, we take the most brilliant and important and delightful and glorious thing in the entire Universe, we take the very Purpose for *why*

everything in the universe was created, God and His Glory, and our response to it is to be utterly disgusted with it and to crush it under our feet with disdain. That is what sin is. That is what the Puritan, Ralph Venning, called:

“The exceeding sinfulness of sin”

So sin is not merely the murders and the rapes and the injustices and the wars that go on all the time by “bad” people. Sin is when nice and thoughtful people live in a world, that God made, and breathe air, only at God’s allowance, and have the audacity to want to be happy and contented and satisfied and fulfilled *without* God and *without* loving and serving Him.

Sin is when people who work hard to pay their bills reject God and His Glory. Sin is when nice women devalue God and His Glory. Sin is when nice men ignore God and His Glory. Sin is casting God and His Glory aside and embracing something else.

So, we need to see everything in our lives, like cars and work and houses and money and power and sex and entertainment, as being like planets in a solar system. And they are designed to be held by the massive beauty and the blazing gravitational pull of a sovereign and all-satisfying God at the center of our lives. And when He is there and He is “all” to us and “all-satisfying” to us, then the planets are moving perfectly in their beautiful, God-glorifying, soul-satisfying orbits. And *everything* in our lives are all circling the sun just the way they were designed. But nobody has God at the center like that until they are born of God.

And so, the whole universe is out of order because we replace the Sun with little moons and little asteroids and little crazy things at the center of the solar system of our lives. And the planets are flying all out of order and we are hating each other and ignoring each other and murdering each other and destroying each other, and we are manipulating and controlling and exploiting each other with money and sex and power. And then people look around and wonder, “*What is wrong? Where is God?*”

But, if you treat God like He is nothing, don’t expect *anything* to work, because God didn’t create all things to be that way. He made the universe and our souls for Him to be at the blazing center.

And so, God is correct to judge Man for his ongoing and relentless rebellion. We must remember, dear friends, that the Punishment must always fit the crime. And the only correct, the only fitting Punishment for taking the most valuable Commodity in the Universe and ignoring it or devaluing it or rejecting it or casting it aside or trampling it under foot is the eternal damnation of whoever does that in a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

If God did not damn unrepentant sinners, then God would be *agreeing* with those sinners that the trampling of His Glory is not worth defending. And God will never agree with that. And so, God is correct to throw arrogant and unbroken human beings, who have willfully and repeatedly trampled His Glory under their feet in disgust, into hell. And there they will stay, in horrific suffering and agony, because they judged the magnificence of God and His Glory to be something they could take or leave.

So, the greatest heresy, the greatest outrage of the universe is that people prefer other things to God. They see God and they see His Glory all around them, and their deepest response to that is to trade it all away for something else. Mankind looks God full in the Face and says, *"No, thank you, I prefer something else"*. So they embrace their death and call it their "glory". And that is the tragedy and the outrage of history.

And God would have been perfectly Just to leave it just like that and just damn the entire human race. But, in His great Mercy, God chose to *intervene* in this broken world and to sovereignly do something for and to Man that would so radically change him so that Man would end his willful and repeated rebellion against God. So, at great cost to Himself, the death of His Own Son, God determined to insert Himself into His Creation to *forcefully stop* the madness of fallen humans and supernaturally alter their minds and hearts and natures to such an extent that they would once again value God and see Him as the Treasure of their lives.

And that sovereign Intervention is called "Redemption". And the time from before the foundation of the world when God chose to set His Love upon some of the rebellious humans who didn't deserve it to the finality of all time when God sits in His Throne surrounded by all of the redeemed who stand there for no other reason other than God chose to forgive and save them is called "Redemptive History". It is the Story of

Salvation that began *before* the world was and will end as we sing praises throughout all eternity. And the “study of” or the “science of” the *ending* of all Redemptive History is called “Eschatology”

And here, in **Luke 21**, Jesus begins to tell us just how all of Redemptive History will wind down. Jesus is telling His disciples and us how the Story of Salvation will end. And Jesus says it will end with two things being true:

- ✓ Jesus Christ will come in Fury to vanquish every single man, woman, and child who lives their lives in rebellion to Him
- ✓ Jesus will come in Mercy to gather all who have been radically altered by His Grace and who unconditionally surrendered to Him

And those who lived their lives in rebellion to King Jesus will spend all of eternity screaming in everlasting torment as God magnifies the Glory of His Justice upon these unrepentant sinners. And those unworthy sinners who were radically altered by His Grace and surrendered unconditionally to Him will spend all of eternity in the fullness of Joy as God magnifies the Glory of His Grace through their worship.

And that is why Jesus’s Return to this earth is called:

The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord

Jesus returning to this earth will be indescribably terrible for those who refuse to repent, and it will be indescribably glorious for those who have been graced by God to repent and trust in Him. So, I beg everyone here today to make your Calling and Election “sure” by examining yourselves to see if you are in the Faith.

Now, as I told you two weeks ago, the context of verses 7-38 of Chapter 21 is the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the *end* of the Jewish way of life and worship. God is bringing to an end the First Covenant, and through the Birth, Life, Ministry, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ God is bringing in the infinitely *superior* New Covenant. And the *time frame* of doing that in this Passage is clear as revealed by Jesus Himself in verse 32:

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.

So, Jesus was telling the people who were standing around hearing His Voice on that day that their generation would not die until the things He was talking about here in this Passage would take place. And, according to history, within just forty years from this moment, God raised up the pagan Roman army to descend upon Jerusalem and destroy the Temple, the Levitical Priesthood, the sacrificing of animals, and the Jewish records and way of life.

Now, how all that I just said fits in with other verses remains to be seen. But that is the context of **Luke 21:7-38**.

Now there is something that I want to stress to you again this morning that I have mentioned many times before. Since it is true that we are saved by what we “believe” and what we “confess” and what we “trust in”, and not by what we do, then what we “believe” and “confess” and “trust in” matters. And because what we believe matters, what we are being taught matters. And so, here in verses 7-8, Jesus is again emphasizing the great importance of hearing and knowing and understanding the Word of God correctly, and of not being led astray by false teachers.

For example, we are told this in **Romans 10:9**:

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

So, we see that we are to verbally *confess* something and we are to *believe* something in order to be saved. We are to confess: Jesus as Lord, and we are to believe: that God raised Jesus from the dead. And the Apostle Paul teaches here that this is a requirement for Salvation.

And, yet today, it is very popular for people to say that lost people must “give their hearts to Jesus”, or that lost people must “accept Jesus into their hearts”, but neither one of those concepts are biblical. And neither one of those concepts give the same meaning and emphasis that **Romans 10:9** does. And because that is true, we must ask further questions to make sure that people who talk like this are truly saved. Dear friends, these popular concepts about Salvation are nothing more nor less than man-made teachings that were *invented* by Charles

Finney during the mid- to late 19th Century, and made popular by Billy Graham in the 20th Century. But we must understand that these terms are *not* in the Bible and they have *never* been in the Bible.

And look, I'm not merely being *semantical* here. I'm not just "hung up" on the terms that people use. I want people to be saved. But we live in a day when there are more people "giving their hearts to Jesus" than ever before, and yet there is no measurable increase in Biblical Holiness among the people of the visible Church, no perceivable increase in hungering and thirsting after God, no noticeable increase in people panting after God as the deer pants after the water brooks. And we have to explain that.

The modern Church is filled with politics and with entertainment, but it is not filled with God. Covetousness and materialism are being promoted today as though these were fruit of the Spirit instead of the horrific sins the Bible says they are, and loving money today is considered to be a virtue and not an insult to God.

I have been saved for over 44 years, and I have been in thousands of Church services and prayer meetings, and beside the people of this Church, I have never heard anyone repent for loving money. I have never heard the first person ask for prayer about wanting to escape from the trap of worldliness.

The modern Church is more sensual, more worldly, less spiritual and less Biblical than at any time since they were endued with Power from on High in the Upper Room.

So, it is my contention that not only are they not in the Bible, but these terms actually *hinder* true Evangelism and they get in the way of true "soul winning" because they put forth a completely different concept of Salvation from what the Holy Scriptures teach.

There is very little mentioned today of what lost people are supposed to verbally confess, and there is very little discussed about the requirement of what to believe. But, there is almost a complete silence about the lost soul repenting of sin, which the Bible says is *also* a requirement of Salvation.

I suggest to you that somebody "giving their heart to Jesus" or "accepting Jesus into their hearts" is a far cry from repenting of sin and confessing the full Deity of Jesus and believing in the Resurrection and trusting only in the finished Work of Jesus Christ, and not in some prayer they prayed or some other work they performed.

This verse says that in order for a lost person to be saved, he must verbally confess something out of his mouth:

Jesus as [is] Lord [God]

... and he must believe in his heart (truthfully)

that God raised Jesus from the dead.

Now, what is interesting is that both the Deity of Jesus Christ and the Resurrection are recorded for us in Scripture. And so what is *assumed* in this verse is that in order for any lost person to be so *empowered* by God to confess the unbelievable claim that Jesus is God Almighty in human flesh, and in order for any lost person to be so supernaturally *enabled* to truly believe the preposterous notion that God raised Jesus from the dead requires that he has a working knowledge of Scripture, and that he has been taught and believes that the many fantastic claims that Scripture makes about Jesus are true.

Dear friends, we have to make sure that we have been truly born from above and not fooled by slick marketing campaigns and clever humanly engineered techniques that tickle the ear but do not save the soul. I contend that the miracle of the New Birth produces bought-and-paid-for "bond-slaves" of the Lord Christ who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, and who do not love their lives to the death, and who are eagerly awaiting His Return. Jesus told us in **Luke 21:8**:

See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them.

Now, two weeks ago we learned a lesson from the 2nd Century heresy of Montanism, which was the forerunner to the modern day Pentecostal Movement, that whatever excites the flesh and overcharges the five senses, whatever appeals to the carnal desires of fleshly people, *especially* about things that are hard to verifiably prove, like "End Time Events", should *always* be governed by what we can prove, like the infallible Words of the Holy Bible. So, part of correctly interpreting the Bible are two things to always keep in mind:

- A. The unclear verses and passages are to be defined by the clear ones
- B. The single verse does not define the many- the many defines the single

So, just how can we guard against falling into traps like Montanism? How can we guard ourselves so that we will not be led astray by those who seem to have great insight into End Time Events? A Loving Church. Please turn with me to **2 John**. There, the Apostle says this:

2 John

1 The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth,

2 for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

3 Grace, mercy *and* peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

4 I was very glad to find *some* of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment *to do* from the Father.

5 Now I ask you, lady, not as though *I were* writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting;

11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

12 Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to *do so* with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full.

13 The children of your chosen sister greet you.

Now the issue before us here is just how we live our lives in eager anticipation of the Lord's Return and avoid making the same mistakes of the past, *especially* since we are 2,000 years *closer* to the Return of the Lord than John was when he wrote this, and we are 2,000 years closer than Jesus was when He spoke to us from **Luke 21**? In other words, just how can we be obedient to Jesus when He warned us in **Luke 21:8** and said:

See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am *He*,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them.

And I think a great lesson can be learned here from the Apostle John as he teaches here that a truly loving Church will help guard each of the members from falling into false teaching, *especially* about the "End Times", and help us continue to focus our attention on the Glory of God and *not* the many activities that we are engaged in. Now please allow me to show you how I make this connection.

Here in verses 5 and 6- John is telling the Christians to love one another. And the last phrase of verse 5 says:

... that we love one another.

And the last phrase of verse 6 says:

... that you should walk in it.

So, this is the Commandment, to love one another. But then verse 7 gives them the reason *why* they should love like this:

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh.

So John is not simply telling us to love one another here. He is saying that our love for each other is a vital component in keeping us faithful to God, precisely because of the great deception that is in the world.

Now keep in mind that the word “**for**” here means: *because*. So John is saying:

Love one another... BECAUSE many deceivers have gone out into the world.

And that means that this kind of love is a great protection against the very kind of deception that Jesus warned us about in **Luke 21:8**. Or, if it would help the point stick in your mind, you could even say:

Mutual Christian affection for one another is a powerful protection against deception.

Now what kind of deception will this love keep us from? The deception of the antichrist. Look again at verse 7:

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Now as soon as the word “antichrist” is used, we are all thinking the end of the age. And with good reason. Because in **1 John 2:18**, the Apostle says:

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

So John has an “elastic view” of what he called “**the last hour**”. He says:

... you heard that antichrist is coming ...

So there is such a “being” coming at the very end. John says, “*You’ve been taught that — you have heard that.*” Antichrist will come in the last hour. But then John also says:

... even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

So the believers of this small Church that John refers to as "the elect lady and her children" know that this is the final hour.

Now John explains a bit more in **1 John 4:1-6:**

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

5 They are from the world; therefore they speak *as* from the world, and the world listens to them.

6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Now specifically, John is referring here to the Gnostic mystics that tried to infiltrate the Church during its early years. And as I told you before, the Gnostics had no problem with Christ's Deity, they rejected His full Humanity. And so John gives a test here to uncover people who had been deceived by Gnosticism:

... every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God ...

So we are to take heed to not only believe in Christ's full Deity, but also believe that, in addition to being fully God, Jesus was a human being who was born of the virgin Mary. But then look at what else John said:

... this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

Now, literally, the Greek in this Passage reads:

... this one is of antichrist, this one belongs to antichrist

So, 2,000 years ago, the spirit of the antichrist or the one who belonged to the antichrist was alive and on the earth. Now that doesn't mean that Jesus came back 2,000 years ago. But what it *does* mean is that false teaching about Jesus is part and parcel to the spirit or the characteristic or the nature of the antichrist. So, technically, *anyone* who teaches wrongly about Jesus is "anti-Jesus" or "antichrist".

So John is teaching here that there is an antichrist that is coming, and the present experience of the false prophets and the deceivers listed in **2 John 7**, that was a *foretaste* of what is coming at some point in the future. So the false teachers of John's day was the "already" of the "not yet" of the antichrist.

And so John gives a remedy that will prevent deception by these false teachers:

Love each other. Love each other. Love each other.

That's the point of what John writes here: Live together in love, because love is the single greatest protection against the deceptions of the spirit of antichrist, which is already in the world.

I truthfully believe that guarding against false teaching is the single way to prepare for the Coming of the Lord. And the single best way to guard against false teaching is for the people of the Church to love one another.

44 years ago when I was saved, it would have been unthinkable to suggest that anyone would seriously propose defining Marriage as between two men or two women. It would have been even *more* unthinkable that in a mere 4-1/2 decades America would have lost its soul so profoundly that most of the people of this nation now approve of a definition of Marriage that no society in the history of the world has ever embraced. The fall has been breathtakingly fast.

And it would have been unthinkable that instead of categorically *rejecting* the unreality and the destructiveness of so-called "same-sex

marriage”, the American culture would begin to *criminalize* the naming of same-sex intercourse as “sin”, which it is.

And along with this tragic loss of our moral compass has come the increasing loss of freedoms and the increasing compulsion from Government to seek to *force* us to conform to unbiblical views. So we are living in perilous times. The Apostle Paul described this in **Philippians 3:18-19**:

18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,

19 whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

Using biblical language to describe sin is now deemed to be “hateful”, and already in some places it is being prosecuted as *criminal*. Freedom of worship is disappearing as metropolitan commissions and councils take the prerogative to *prohibit* worship spaces and activities. And along with the loss of freedoms to act in biblical ways comes the governmental compulsion to act in *unbiblical* ways, to fund the killing of unborn children, to endorse the legitimacy of sinful behavior, and soon to participate in it (for example, if you are a military chaplain), and the compulsory normalizing of sin in public institutions that will probably *force* most biblical Christians out of the public schools altogether.

Many of us see all this as the culmination of a rebellion in a Garden about 6,000 years ago. And we collectively refer to the time we are living in as “The Last Days” or “The End Times” or “The End of the Age”. But what do we mean by these terms? There is so much speculation about so-called “end time events”, and everyone is trying to figure out when this will happen and when that will happen.

And I understand the curiosity. But we need to look to Scripture to determine what was meant by these terms and seek to *avoid* human speculation. Consider two passages from the book of **Hebrews** and one from **1 Corinthians**:

Hebrews 1:1-2

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Hebrews 9:26

Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

1 Corinthians 10:11

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

The understanding of the term "End of the Age" in the New Testament is that it arrived with the incarnation of Jesus as the Messiah. Ever since God took on human flesh and was made Man, we have been in "the Last Days".

But the "End of the Age" refers to the end of the first, inferior Covenant that had to do with the blood of bulls and goats, and the worship in the Temple, and the Levitical Priesthood that was based on fleshly performance, and the bringing in of the superior and final Covenant that was based on infinitely superior Promises brought about by an infinitely superior High Priest (Jesus Christ) Who offered and infinitely superior Sacrifice (Himself).

The "End of the Age" refers to the end of God dealing exclusively with one ethnic group and one nation, and saving people out of every tribe and nation and language, and bringing them into His Church. So, we have been in the "Last Days" now for two thousand years.

And if that seems strange, two thousand years of a "last day", don't forget how Peter responded to that very question in **2 Peter 3**, someone asked, scoffing:

2 Peter 3:4

Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.

... and Peter responded:

2 Peter 3:8-9

8 But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Which means, profoundly, that we are actually just two “days” into the “last days” from God’s vantage point. And it also means that God intends to save all that He chose from before the foundation of the world, and He allows the world to go on so that all of His elect will be born and saved before God’s closes out Redemptive history.

So from that standpoint, we are *always* living in the “last days”. We are *always* living in the “end times”. We are *always* living in the “end of the age”. But we need to know that the “end” will have an end.

So just how will these “last days” end? Turn with me to **2 Thessalonians**. Here Paul gives probably the clearest and most detailed description of his understanding of how the “last days” will end. These Thessalonian believers were suffering great affliction and persecution and Paul gives them this hope:

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

5 *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

6 For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

7 and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed.

Notice what Paul said in verse 10:

... He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed...

So, if your view of the Return of Jesus to this earth is about a rescue Plan from evil, then you are missing the entire Purpose. If you think that Jesus is coming back to this earth to merely deliver His people out of a sin cursed world gone mad, then you don't understand the entire Purpose of *why* God saved sinners in the first place. And this is *why* I began this Sermon with an exposition on the Glory of God.

The Salvation of unworthy sinners is the magnification of the Glory of the Grace of God. So, Salvation is all about the Glory of God, in this case, His Grace. Hell, then, is the magnification of the Glory of God's Justice against unrepentant sinners. So, God is glorified either way. His perfect Justice is magnified through the damning of *unrepentant* rebels, and God's merciful Grace is magnified through the saving of *unworthy* rebels. So, Salvation is all about the Glory of God.

And God is extending Redemptive History long enough until all of those He chose can be saved. And He is so changing these people that when He comes back, we will do two things:

- ✓ We will glorify Him
- ✓ We will marvel at Him

So, the way these "last days" will end is with the Coming of the Lord Jesus with mighty angels in flaming fire to give relief to His persecuted Church, and to dole out Vengeance to those who do not know God or who do not obey the gospel.

At the end of the end, as always, there is conflict between Christ's people and unbelievers, and that conflict and persecution will be finally resolved by the Coming of Jesus to give rest to oppressed Christians and to give eternal Judgment to their oppressors. That's the way the end of this age ends.

Now I have no idea how many years will elapse between now and those final events. But I know enough, and you know enough, that we can avoid four serious errors.

Error #1: The final events are so far off we need not concern ourselves with the warnings or preparations.

We don't know how far off they are, and the mystery of lawlessness and the many antichrists are meant to deceive us so that we won't know them when they come, or recognize the deceivers who come before them.

Error #2: The final events are so close we need not concern ourselves with this world or with tomorrow.

These events have *always* been close from our human perspective, and they *ought* to be. But, our job description never changes: *Go into all the world and teach all nations and baptize them and teach them to observe all that Jesus commanded*, which is the entirety of the Gospel. And we are to be faithful to that Great Commission, regardless of what the unbelievers are doing.

Error #3: There will be so much lawlessness and unbelief at the end of the end it would be futile to pray or work toward revival in the churches or a great awakening in the city or the nation.

We don't know that. Nothing in Paul or John's view of the end says that we, or this church, or this city, must be a part of the final rebellion and lawlessness. For all I know, God could decree that Gulfport will be white-hot with passion for Jesus when He comes. And I will continue to labor unendingly to that end. Now it is true that the end will be bleak, but nothing says any given family or church or city has to also be bleak.

Error #4: The lawlessness and unbelief and immorality of the last days is a sign of the church's failure.

That is not a biblical statement. I am not saying that at any given time the church might not have more impact on culture if she were more holy and more full of the power of the Holy Spirit. What I *am* saying is that there are always other factors involved in the corruption of culture so that it is never so simple as to say the failure of the church is the reason the culture is corrupt.

It is wrong to say, as so many do, *"The condition of society is the report card of the church."* This is especially wrong to say at the end of the age. The apostasy, the rebellion, the lawlessness, the explosion of antichrist at the end of the end is God's mysterious Plan, *not* the church's failure. Jesus will not say to His suffering Church, as He rescues her from her oppressors, *"You know, there would have been no man of lawlessness and great rebellion if you have been a faithful church."* In fact, it is only a strong and pure church that will survive these days, not a failing church.

Which brings us back now to **2 John**. How shall we respond to the darkening of these days in America? Books should be written to answer this. And I give just a few minutes to underline why love for each other is John's answer.

Remember the connection between **2 John 6-7**. Verse 6 ends with:

This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

So what was the Commandment that John says here that they had heard from the beginning? To love one another.

And then verse 7 gives the reason *why* this is so important:

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

So how shall we live, as deceivers increase and the spirit of antichrist abounds in America? We should love each other all the more. Because life together in love is a great protection against deception. Now why is that true?

Christian love is not mushy; it is solid affection for those who look and share the Truth of Christ. And so, since love among Christians is based on the Truth they share, it becomes a powerful protection against deception. Look again at **2 John: 1-2**:

1 The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth,

2 for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

The Truth of Christ, the Truth of the Gospel, the Truth of the Word of God is the air in which our love lives and flourishes ("whom I love *in* the truth," verse 1). It's the granite Rock Foundation on which our love rests (verse 2: whom I love "*because* of the truth"). It's the knitting together of souls with deep, solid affection because week after week, and month after month, and year after year we have shared precious Truth. And this is so true that if you do *not* grow in your love toward one another, you are proving that you are already deceived and that you do not have the Truth. Gospel Truth always, and in all cases, and with all people produces deep and abiding love, not just for God, but for all those who are truly born again.

If you love Christ with all your heart, and you love His Word with your very soul, and if I preach Christ and His Word with heartfelt faithfulness over years with you, what else can happen but love?

And so it will be with all those around you who love the Truth. Christian love is not mushy, it is solid affection for those who love and share the Truth of Christ.

And a people who love each other like this will not be easily deceived at the end of the age. We must remember that the Apostles didn't just preach sermons and discuss theology. They were known throughout the world as the most loving of all people. And that was because Jesus had warned them:

Luke 21:8

"See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them.

Deception only works because it makes shame look glorious. It makes ugly look pretty, it makes foolishness look wise, it makes suicidal ways look life-giving, and sadness look like gladness. Deception works because it makes sin look attractive. Deception works because we think we'll be happier if we turn away from Christ and embrace sin. But look at verse 4:

I was very glad to find *some* of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment *to do* from the Father.

John rejoiced over what he experienced in the lives of other Christians. In other words, living together in love, even if surrounded by antichrists, is a happy way to live. Loving and being loved in the truth of the gospel is deeply satisfying life. Such a happy community will not be easily deceived by the thin pleasures of sin.

So, even though these are darkening days in America, don't let the world, don't let the spirit of antichrist, or the mystery of lawlessness, rob you of your love for each other or the happiness of your life together.

Amen. Let's pray

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.