

Selections from
The Answer



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Find answers to life's most profound mysteries

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Chapter One

Who Are You Listening to?

On the morning of September 11, 2001, the nation watched in terror as a hijacked airplane flew into the first tower of the World Trade Center, taking with it hundreds of lives on impact. Throughout the building, people heard the explosion and felt the building sway. In a state of panic, many began to call the operators below, asking, “What should I do?” Some of the operators on duty told the people to stay put and wait in their offices, while others were telling people to evacuate at once. On that morning, whether you lived or died depended largely on what you were told and who you chose to listen to. Similarly, today life and death still depend on what you are told and who you choose to listen to. Could it be that you have been listening to the wrong source

While some claim that people don’t come with instructions, the truth is, God has given us an instruction book for life. That book is a collection of ancient writings called the Bible. In the Bible, God has given us instructions on how to live the best way possible and how to enter into a relationship with Him so that we can one day live forever.

Still, many people are skeptical about the Bible. They claim that it was a man-made book and cannot be trusted, but the Bible claims that it was

not really authored by men. It says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). While men wrote the words, “they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). The Bible claims that God told them, showed them, and inspired them with the words to write in the same way that if a paralyzed man dictated a book for someone to write, the person who used the pencil would not be the author, but the one who spoke the words. The author is the one the thoughts originated from. That’s how the Bible can be written by men and still be authored by God. While many skeptics still raise arguments against the Bible, it continues to stand up against its critics.

Some have even challenged the historical accuracy of the Bible, but over and over again, the Bible has proven to be historically accurate. For example, some have claimed that certain people and places in the Bible never existed, such as King David, the Hittite nation, or the Moabites. Many have questioned the biblical accounts of the flood and the tower of Babel. Others have said that Israel was never captured by Babylon. Doubts about the Bible stories continued to circulate, but over time, historical artifacts have continually been found to prove that the Bible is true.

The discovery of the Moabite stone revealed that the Moabite nation recorded in the Bible was a real nation. The discovery of the Lachish letters in 1935 revealed communications and conflicts between Babylon and Israel just before Israel was taken into captivity. In 1906, Turkey uncovered

thousands of Hittite documents, proving that the Hittite nation existed and that the Bible was historically true. As recently as 1993, we had no proof of the existence of King David. Skeptics of the Bible used this as evidence that the Bible was not true, but again the skeptics were silenced when archaeologists found proof of King David's existence at a mound called Tel Dan, north of Israel, where reference to the ancient king was inscribed. While the Rosetta Stone and King Tut's tomb give us evidence of the Biblical accounts of ancient Egypt, the Behistun Rock contains accounts of the flood, creation, and the tower of Babel, as described in the Bible.

The evidence of the Bible's accuracy is overwhelming. There is enough archaeological evidence of the Bible's accuracy to write multiple books, and yet this is not the only evidence we have of the Bible's accuracy. Some have claimed that even if the Bible was true, we could not trust its accuracy because it has been rewritten and translated, but the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls destroyed this lie. Between the years 1947 and 1956, approximately 900 different writings and segments were discovered along the coast of the Dead Sea, containing many Bible manuscripts. When these ancient manuscripts were compared with the ones that we already had, they found that they were no errors in the translation significant enough to change the meaning of the actual Bible verses, disproving the claim that the Bible cannot be trusted due to changes in the translation.

More significant is the fact that the Dead Sea Scrolls contain writings from the book of Isaiah that date back to no earlier than 100 B.C. What is so amazing about this is that Isaiah made predictions about the coming Messiah which were not fulfilled until over one hundred years later. In addition, even the most liberal estimation of the book of Daniel puts the writings as late as the second century B.C. This still leaves skeptics with a problem, since the Biblical account of Daniel predicts future events well beyond the fall of the Roman Empire, some six hundred years later.

The fact is, these ancient writings have been discovered, supported, and confirmed as reliable historical documents, and while people continue to question their accuracy, evidence has continued to pour forth from multiple discoveries that reveal their authenticity. While some may question the Bible's authority, those who are looking for enough evidence to accept the Bible as true and accurate have been given more than enough evidence.

Still, some have tried to claim that science disproves the Bible, as if science and the Bible were somehow at odds, warring against each other. This is another lie promulgated today, which must be exposed. The truth is that science is just starting to catch up with the Bible. Science used to teach that air was weightless, that light was fixed, and that the earth was flat, but thousands of years ago, the Bible spoke of the round earth, the movement of light, and the weight of the wind. Long before scientists discovered the truth about these things,

the Bible spoke of modern scientific discoveries like the expanding universe, the rain cycle, blood as the source of life, and more. While some scientists thought to prove the Bible was wrong, science actually helped prove the Bible. The fact is, science is constantly changing, but the scientific facts in the Bible have remained accurate all through history, proving that the Bible is the authority in science.

Perhaps the most amazing evidence of the Bible's divine inspiration is its power to change lives. God claims to work through the "word of God, which also effectually works in you who believe" (1 Thess. 2:13). The Bible claims that it has power to change us, give us a new life, and make us holy, and this is evidenced by the countless stories of alcoholics becoming sober, addicts becoming clean, homosexuals becoming straight, and more. The word seems to have a living power within it that changes man into a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). And this power can be yours too, but it is only obtained by faith.

On September 11, as the buildings prepared to fall, one man called the operator for advice. The operator urged him to return to his desk and wait, but he decided not to listen to the operator because he anticipated the seriousness of the situation. As a result, the man lived. The same decision rests before you. You must choose who you are going to listen to. God appeals, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life" (Deut. 30:19).

Chapter Two

Getting Good Enough

Growing up, I was very self-critical. I was my own worst critic. In my mind, I could never measure up to the standard of my Christian upbringing, and I didn't even try. Instead, I spent my weekends getting drunk wherever I could. Drinking was my escape. I guess it helped me escape myself, but not really. Always, in the back of my mind, I was haunted by my inadequacies. I read self-help books but to no avail. I never really had peace. Not until I made my way into a church. At the age of twenty-six, I was still drinking and smoking when I was invited to go to church by my step-father. Longing for something more out of life, I decided to try it. Nothing happened. Not at first. But as I kept going and started reading my Bible and studying this newfound faith, something started changing inside me. It was amazing. The words somehow transformed my life without me even knowing it.

So often, young people think that they have to try harder to become a Christian. They seem to think that they have to measure up or "get good" before they start going to church (as if they could ever get good enough for God). The problem is, no matter how hard you try on your own, the Bible says, "all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). That means even your best is not good

enough. Trying to get good enough for God is like trying to get strong enough to jump the Grand Canyon. It's impossible. It will always be impossible. That's why God has to do it.

Trying to make yourself good enough will never get you closer to God. We cannot change ourselves. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. 13:23). Impossible. You see, Jesus didn't wait until you got good enough to die for your sins. The Bible says, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Did you catch that? God didn't wait for us to get good. While we still hated God, He loved us. While we were still sinners, He died for us.

No matter how bad you have been, the God of the universe loves you. He knows you personally. He says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jer. 1:5). Of God, we are told, "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them" (Ps. 139:16). "You have formed my inward parts; You have covered me in my mother's womb." "You are He who took me out of the womb" (Ps. 139:13; 22:9).

While some feel like, "The Lord has forsaken me," God replies, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely, they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms

of My hands” (Isa. 49:15, 16). On the cross, when the soldiers drove the nails into Jesus’ hands, they were signing your name. Those nails were your signature, and every time Jesus sees the scars, He remembers you.

God has not forgotten you. He has numbered “the very hairs of your head” (Matt. 10:30). He sees the “tears” you cry (Ps. 56:8). He knows the very “street” you live on (Acts 9:11). While some feel that God doesn’t care about them, God says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3). “‘I know the thoughts that I think toward you,’ says the Lord, ‘thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope’” (Jer. 29:11). In spite of the messes that we make of our lives, God does not leave us. In the midst of our messes, He whispers, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you” (Isa. 43:2). No matter what you have done, how far you have fallen, or how deep your pit is, Jesus is there. He will stand with you in the midst of the fire, just as He did with the friends of Daniel so long ago, if you will just invite Him.

You see, finding God isn’t about getting good. So many people think that they first have to get good enough for God, but that will never work. The problem is, no matter how many bad fruits we cut off the tree of our lives, they continue to grow back, because the fruit is a result of the root. You can try to stop outward sins, but it is useless, because your heart still loves sin. The Bible says, “the heart is deceitful” (Jer. 17:9). We have a bad heart.

I have a cousin who had a heart transplant. All his efforts to fix his heart were not enough to save him. His only solution was to get a new heart. That's God's appeal to us. He says, "get yourselves a new heart" (Ezek. 18:31). Tragically, this is not something we can do. In this area, we are helpless. All our good works cannot change our heart. It's bad. It must be replaced. Fortunately, God offers to do this for us. He says, "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 11:19).

Wouldn't you like a new start? You can have it. God will give you a new heart with new desires. You cannot change yourself. You cannot make yourself stop loving sin, but God can. Don't wait until you stop doing bad things or until you get good enough. Just come as you are with all your sins and all the baggage of your past and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and change you. Start reading your Bible. Start going to Bible study and church. Start talking to God, asking Him to reveal Himself to you, asking Him to make the changes that you cannot make by yourself, and just watch and see what He does!

It's true. I'm living proof that God is real. That God is alive. That God loves sinners. That God has power to change sinful people. Before we accept Christ, we are so weighed down by all the things we have to do to get good enough for God, but once Jesus changes us, we love to obey. God says, "I will put My laws in their mind and write

them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Heb. 8:10). All we have to do is accept Christ into our heart by faith to receive this change. It’s called surrender. You must give up trying to save yourself and invite Jesus to take control of your life. You must fall on your knees and confess your sins, inviting Christ in. Many have spent their lives trying to get good enough to gain God’s favor when God is the only One who can make us good. When we come to Christ, He will give us the power to be good, but we must first come as we are and let Him change us on the inside.

By the time I was twenty-six, I was tired of trying to find peace my way. I tried to be good. I tried to stop doing bad things. I tried self-help books and even meditation, but while some of my attempts gained moments of ease, my sins still haunted me. I knew that I couldn’t give them up. I wasn’t strong enough to make the changes, but when I surrendered my life to Christ, I found peace and power, and you can too. Is there some sin in your life that you can’t seem to break free from? Are you plagued by guilt? Do you long for peace and purpose in life? Whatever your situation is, Jesus can help. Just surrender your life to Christ. God has promised to change you. He has promised to take responsibility for your salvation. You simply have to get on your knees and cry out, “I surrender,” inviting Jesus into your heart. What are you waiting for? Isn’t it time?

Chapter Three

The Mystery of Lawlessness

On February 10, 2018, tragedy struck when two Westerville police officers arrived at the home in response to a 9-1-1 hang-up call. Shortly after their arrival, another 9-1-1 call came in with the report, “my husband shot the police officers.” Candace survived the confrontation with her husband, but the two officers did not. One died instantly. The other died shortly after at a nearby hospital.

As I read the news of this event on the internet, I continued to read past the news to the comments people were making below. Outside of an occasional RIP were a multitude of comments calling the police “domestic terrorists” and “pigs,” stating “I hate the police” and “I hope they watched each other die.” Only a day after the event, while the families of these two longstanding officers were still grieving, Westerville Police Chief, Joe Morbitzer, reported that people had been calling the police department with threats and obscene comments, likely similar to those posted. As I read these things, the hatred towards these men and the law they protected was astounding to me, but it wasn’t entirely surprising. You see, the root of this hatred goes much deeper.

The hatred towards the law and its defenders originated with the “mystery of lawlessness” (2

Thess. 2:7). According to the Bible, this hatred started with Satan. Satan is the instigator of sin, and 1 John 3:4 says that “sin is lawlessness.” John 8:44 confirms that the devil “was a murderer from the beginning... he is a liar and the father of it.” According to the Bible, those who hate the law are following in the footsteps of the father of lies, the devil himself. Those who applauded the death of the police officers have murder in their hearts, and according to Jesus, “shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matt. 5:22).

Still, what is more disturbing is that this animosity against the law has entered into the Christian Church. The Bible predicted this long ago. Paul warned of a coming apostasy “in the temple of God,” which was led by “the lawless one,” adding, “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan” (2 Thess. 2:4, 8, 9).

While most Christians don't outright say it, there is a growing enmity against any talk of obedience to the law of God, the Ten Commandments, even within the church! Today, many pastors have begun to tell their church members that keeping the law is not an actual requirement of getting into heaven or that it is legalistic, but it is hard to escape the haunting words of Christ: “if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:17).

Today, some pastors go so far as to suggest that people in the Old Testament were saved in a different way than we are saved under the New

Covenant. Of course, common sense tells us that would make God unfair. Certainly, there is a difference between the covenants, but the difference was not on God's part. It was on our part. We are still commanded to keep the same law that Israel was commanded to keep. The only difference is that the Israelites tried to keep the law by their own effort, but we keep it through the power of Christ working in us. When Christ comes inside us, He promises, "I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts" (Heb. 8:10). When we put our faith in Christ, He gives us power to obey the law. That means we are expected to keep the law once we are saved. While we give the glory to God, Christians are required to obey the law through His power.

Like those hateful comments responding to the law enforcers who died, similarly, when anyone speaks of obedience to the law as a requirement to enter heaven, even some Christians start to get angry and attack them as "legalists." Still, it's difficult to avoid some of the clear Bible verses which state plainly that those who break the law and refuse to give up their sins, like drunkenness, fornication, hatred, adultery, and such, "will not inherit the kingdom of heaven" (Gal. 5:21). The necessity of obeying God's law is carried all the way down to the very last chapter of the Bible, where we are told, "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). In spite of what even some

pastors today are saying, obedience to the law is still a requirement for getting into heaven.

What confuses many Christians is the fact that we are not saved by keeping the law. They conclude that if we are not saved by keeping the law, then we cannot be lost by breaking it, but this is tragically faulty reasoning. It's true we cannot get saved by keeping the law. That's because we have no power to keep the law before we ask Jesus to come into our hearts. Jesus said, "without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Our best works are not good enough without Jesus. But once we ask Jesus into our hearts, He puts the law inside us (Heb. 8:10), giving us the power to obey it (2 Cor. 12:9). Jesus comes inside our hearts and helps us so "that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom. 8:4). After we accept Christ, we must "work" and obey the law, but we do not take any credit because "it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13).

Ironically, Satan tells those who have not accepted Jesus that they must make themselves good in order to be saved (as if they could keep God's law without the power of Jesus). Tragically, once we accept Jesus and have the power of God working in us, which enables us to overcome sin, the devil then flips the tables and tells us that it is impossible to keep the law and that we don't have to. In this way, the devil has both believers and non-believers tripped up in a dangerous deception that may lead to ruin.

While many flatter themselves that they are already saved and that they do not have to focus on obedience to the law as much as their relationship to Christ, Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). John then adds, “by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 John 2:3). Consistently keeping all the commandments is the evidence that we have Christ living in us and that we are walking by faith.

Certainly, there will be times when we slip and fall, but there is a big difference between slipping into a mud puddle and purposely jumping in the mud. Those who slip into sin will repent of their sin, then get back up and determine to overcome that sin. They will keep working through the power of Christ until they get the victory over their sin, whatever that sin may be. Those who do not strive to overcome, but say, “I’m just a sinner and God will have to accept me the way I am,” cannot make it to heaven. The requirement for getting into heaven is what it has always been—obedience to the Ten Commandments. Those who refuse to overcome their sins will one day approach Christ with the words, “Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name...?” only to hear the tragic response, “depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness;” you who continued to break the law, the Ten Commandments (Matt.7:22, 23), while those who strive to obey the law, although they slip at times, will finally hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matt. 25:23).

Chapter Four

Unplugged

What would you do if you had to spend one day without television, cell phones, music devices or the internet? Perhaps the image of the cartoon character Linus, without his blanket, comes to mind. Your hands start to shake. Anxiety sets in. A cold sweat creeps over you as you wander about in a dazed condition, zombie-like, from one point to the next. While this may be a slight exaggeration, internet addiction is actually a real thing. In a recent study taken from twelve different campuses across the globe, researchers discovered that students who were asked to give up their digital media for twenty-four hours exhibited physical and mental distress ranging from anxiety to depression, while many students failed to last the full day, admitting that they were addicted to modern technology.

In response to this epidemic, Reboot, a non-profit organization promoting Jewish values, has initiated the National Day of Unplugging, starting from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. During this time, they call people to fast from their electronic devices for one complete twenty-four-hour cycle. They plastered their website with people holding up signs that said, "I unplug to," and the person holding the sign filled in their own answer, such as "rock climb," "swim," "write

music,” “cook,” “ski,” “travel the world,” and so on. While this idea to unplug for a twenty-four-hour period may sound foreign to us, it’s really not a new idea at all. In fact, it is as ancient as time itself. The Bible calls it the Sabbath.

In the beginning, God created everything in six days, and then He did something interesting. “He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested” (Gen. 2:2, 3). God did not rest because He was tired, but as an example to humanity. God knows that we need rest one day a week. While physical rest is needed, this is not the primary rest that God is calling us to. More importantly, God is calling us to spiritual rest. We need spiritual rest to stay connected, or plugged in, to our Creator. You see, God is calling us to unplug from the world and plug into His power. Because time is perhaps the most important element in maintaining our relationships, God is asking us to give Him one day each week to spend time with Him, so we can receive a special blessing.

So many of us live our lives anxious, stressed, and depressed, bombarded with guilt and all kinds of dangerous emotions. We get so caught up in the “cares, riches, and pleasures of life” that we forget to spend time on the things that are really important in life, like faith, family, and friends (Luke 8:14). God tells us to reconsider our priorities for one day each week and focus on what really matters in life. If we listen to Him and try

things His way, we will receive His special blessing. His promise is, if you turn away “from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth” (Isa. 58:13, 14). God wants us to live the good life, but He has given us a prescription. It’s called the Sabbath.

God knows that if we do not set aside the Sabbath, we will eventually burn out. Our lives will accumulate stress, anxiety, depression, and other problems. That’s why God does not merely *suggest* that we set aside the Sabbath, but He *commands* us to. In the Ten Commandments, God says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work” (Ex. 20:8-10). God does not command us to set aside the Sabbath because He is a killjoy, but to benefit us. Obeying God’s laws are ultimately “for our good” (Deut. 6:24). In the same way that our digital media sometimes loses its connection, we at times get so caught up in our lives that we get spiritually disconnected from God, and just as our cars need an occasional tune-up, our lives need a weekly spiritual tune-up. That is why the Sabbath is so important. God has commanded us to set aside a day of rest to spend with Him and focus on the important things in life.

Of course, in spite of popular opinion, God's blessing is not offered on any day, but on the day He set aside. According to the Bible, God set aside "the seventh day," or Saturday, as a memorial of creation (Gen. 2:2). While some Christians claim that the Sabbath ended at the cross (Col. 2:14-16), this isn't true. Laws regarding Jewish feast days, which were also called Sabbaths (Lev. 23:24, 32; 25:4), and revolved around new moon cycles, consisting of food and drink offerings (Ezek. 45:17; Neh. 10:33), ended at the cross. That is why we don't keep Jewish feasts or kill lambs anymore, but the Sabbath is still in effect.

Others say we can worship on any day because Paul said, "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5). Of course, this verse says nothing about the Sabbath. Instead, the context makes it clear that it is talking about observing fasting days and not compelling people to "eat" (Rom. 14:6).

While some try and twist the scriptures to justify Sunday observance, all through the New Testament we repeatedly see Paul and the apostles keeping the original Sabbath. We are told that they "reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 18:4; also see Acts 13:42-44; 16:13; 17:2). In spite of this, many pastors today make light of the law and the Sabbath, as if they were merely suggestions, even claiming that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday in honor of the resurrection. Still, this illusive

change is found nowhere in Scripture. Think about it. If Jesus was going to change one of the very Ten Commandments, wouldn't He make it clear? And yet many nice, loving, well-meaning pastors today twist a few obscure verses to claim we don't have to observe the commandment that has the greatest impact on our connection with Christ. As a result, many are being unplugged from their source of power! When we choose to worship God on our own day, it's like trying to plug into an outlet that has no power. As a result, we are spiritually drained. This Sabbath disconnect has resulted in a loss of spiritual power among God's people across the globe.

Aren't you tired of being tired? Don't you want to experience a revival in your life? The good news is, you can! If you ever feel tired or drained by life, if you ever feel void of peace, or lacking spiritual power to defeat the demons in your life, stop worshiping your way on your day and try doing things God's way. God promises that if you turn away "from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord... I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth" (Isa. 58:13, 14). So this Sabbath, why don't you unplug from the world and try tapping into God's power, from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Turn off your computer and television, find a church with Christian fellowship, and spend time with your heavenly Father. You'll be amazed at the power this simple change will bring into your life.

Chapter Five

Missing the Signs

I was driving down a local road when a man going in the other direction gave me a funny look, waving his arms at me. Turning to my friend, I muttered, “What was that about?” He replied, “I think you’re going the wrong way.” While I quickly resolved the issue without any disastrous consequences, Jessica Mahn wasn’t so lucky. On Monday, September 22, 2014, at 4:30 in the morning, the 25-year-old was killed going the wrong way on Interstate-75.

As we know, missed signs can be deadly. Of course, the dangers of missed signs go beyond driving. People die each year because they miss early signs of cancer or other health-related issues. Sometimes we suffer because national security misses signs of terrorist activity. This takes place on a spiritual level also. Jesus said, “You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times” (Matt. 16:3). The Bible has given us a number of signs pointing to the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus, but many have missed the signs.

Among the signs that the world is coming to an end is that of natural disasters. Long before any talk of global warming, Christians have been saying that one of the signs of Jesus’ return would be changing weather patterns. When asked about

signs of the end, Jesus said there would be “great earthquakes in various places, and famines, and pestilences...the sea and the waves roaring” (Luke 21:11, 25). In my lifetime, I have seen the fulfillment of these words. With record numbers of tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, drought, and more, many are wondering what is happening to the weather. In a desperate attempt to explain the changing weather patterns, scientists have come up with the theory of global warming, or climate change. But isn't it strange that everyone conveniently ignores the fact that Christians have long been warning of coming violent weather as a sign of the end? While climate change may be a more convenient truth, the fact is, changing weather patterns were predicted long ago as a sign that the world is coming to an end, and Jesus is about to return.

Another sign Jesus mentioned in reference to the last days was related to wars, warning, “you will hear of wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:6). To some, this comment might seem strange. After all, we have always had wars, but the fact that Jesus mentioned wars as a sign of the end is significant. The point is, wars will increase in intensity as we near the end of the world, and that is exactly what is happening. All through history, wars have been fought on horses with swords and eventually guns. When Jesus spoke these words, no one could have imagined there would be wars in the sky, nuclear war, or the rise of global terrorism in which people mass murder in the name of God, but this extreme

radicalism was long ago predicted by Jesus. Jesus said, “the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service” (John 16:2). Ironically, many of the terrorist groups who violently kill masses of people today claim to be killing for God, just as Jesus predicted two thousand years ago.

Another sign the Bible warned of in the last days was a coming economic crisis. While many try to ignore it or imagine that we can somehow escape the inevitable, the national debt is billions of dollars beyond repair. We are too far under to recover, and leading economists recognize that there is a terrible crisis just ahead of us. Of course, this economic crisis should be no surprise to us. Long ago, the Bible warned of an economic crisis that would occur in the days just before Jesus returned. In the context of the second coming and the end of time, James 5:2, 3 and 8 reference a time when “Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you... for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” Revelation also references this economic crisis both spiritually and literally, warning, “the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore” (Rev. 18:11). The growing national debt is simply another sign that the end is rapidly approaching.

In addition, the rise of the information age was predicted long ago as a sign of the end. In a vision referring to “the time of the end,” Daniel

predicted, “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase” (Dan. 12:4). Think of how long the earth has been here. Yet, within only the past few hundred years, there has been a phenomenal rise in technology, giving birth to such inventions as computers, cameras, telephones, electricity, x-rays, television, and plastic! Today we can hardly keep up with the latest electronic device before it is outdated, as technology continues to skyrocket out of control. As prophesied, information has increased just before the end. And not only has knowledge increased, but people running “to and fro” is a reference to travel. Within the past three hundred years, we have gone from horseback to rockets that fly to the moon! This increase in technology and travel is just another sign that we are near the end of the world.

Finally, one of the most obvious signs of the end is the decline in morality. The Bible predicted that in the end, “evil men and imposters would grow worse and worse” (2 Tim. 3:13). While it is true that things like rape, drugs, and crime existed in the past, it was not even close to the level they occur today. When I was growing up, we never heard of school shootings. Now high schools have metal detectors and daycares. In the past, men and women were not even allowed to be seen in the same bed on television. Now children are exposed to sex and violence all over the movies and the internet. Perhaps the reason many cannot see the decline in morality is because they have a new standard of morality. Of course, this was also

predicted in the Bible. The Bible says that “in the last days” people will have “a form of godliness, but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:1, 5). That means people will have their own idea of goodness, or morality, apart from God’s standard of what is good. They will continue to do things the Bible refers to as sin, like getting drunk, getting divorced, looking at pornography, having sex outside marriage, telling little lies, gambling, and more, all while thinking they are moral and good. The Bible predicted this would be the condition of the world just before Jesus returned.

While these things have occurred all through history, the Bible says that as the end draws near, they will occur more often and with more intensity. The Bible compares the end times with “labor pains upon a pregnant woman” (1 Thess. 5:3). Just as contractions get more intense and closer together before a baby comes, the violent outbreaks in the world have become more intense and closer together as time has progressed. Sure, these things have always existed, but science has determined that there are more earthquakes and natural disasters today than at any other time in history. We are now living in a time when terrible atrocities, wars, terrorism, natural disasters, pandemics, plagues, famines, school shootings, and more are occurring closer together with greater ferocity than ever before. The Bible says that this increase is a sign that the end is near and we should be prepared. Please don’t ignore the signs, like Jessica Mahn. Isn’t it time you get right with Jesus?

Chapter Six

Mystery of Death Solved

I was recently talking to a young man in China. As we started talking about the subject of death, he said, “But nobody can know for sure what happens after a person dies.” To his surprise, I replied, “I know for sure.” Less than two weeks after our conversation, my oldest brother suddenly died in his mid-fifties. He started having headaches and went to the hospital, where he was diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia, resulting in blood clots. Within a matter of two days, he was dead, and my family was heartbroken—but we were heartbroken with hope, and you can be too.

Many of us have lost loved ones who were very close to us, and yet most people are confused by the mystery of what happens after a person dies. That is because they don’t know how life began. The key to understanding the mystery of death is first to find out how life began. Once we know this, then we may know for certain what happens after this life. Fortunately, the Bible gives the answer to this mystery. The Bible tells us that life began when “God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). In the Bible, the words ‘breath’ and ‘spirit’ both often originate from the same word, and are used interchangeably. That’s why the Bible tells us that

“the body without the spirit [or breath] is dead,” adding, “You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust” (Jas. 2:26, Ps. 104:29). The point is, when our breath leaves us, we die and return to dust. “All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust” (Eccl. 3:20).

When we die, we simply die. We don’t think or feel. We don’t wander around the earth as spirits or haunt the living, like ghosts. We don’t fly around in heaven or suffer in hell. The Bible says “the dead know nothing,” and even their memory “is forgotten” (Eccl. 9:5). We are told that “there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going” (Eccl. 9:10). When people die, they are simply dead. That’s why the Bible refers to being “dead” as “taking rest in sleep” (John 11:14, 13). Death is simply like sleep without dreams. You don’t see, hear, or feel anything until you wake up.

Some people think that after the body dies, a part of you keeps living. That’s why some people talk to dead loved ones, and others in pagan countries burn incense on the graves of those who have died, but the Bible says that when a man dies, “His sons come to honor, and he does not know it” (Job 14:21). Our spirits do not float around after we die. They do not go to heaven, hell, nirvana, or some place of suffering. We are told that David, one of the most righteous men in the Bible, is “both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day... For David did not ascend into the heavens” yet (Acts 2:29, 34). According to the Bible, we

don't go straight to heaven or hell. Death is simply like a sweet sleep without dreams.

Of course, if this was the end, that would be very depressing. There would be no hope in death if we simply fell asleep forever, but the good news is that death will not last forever. Everyone will come back to life in what the Bible calls the resurrection—"those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:29). This hope of rising from the dead is the hope we have through Jesus. Jesus confirmed this when He "raised" the dead and was "raised from the dead" Himself (Matt. 11:5; Acts 3:15).

Through many miracles, Jesus proved that the dead will live again. This is the hope of the Christian. While death is still sad, it is not as bad because we know that one day we will see our loved ones again, and we can have the hope of living with them forever in heaven. That is an amazing hope. That means, even in the face of death, we can have hope. Even in the midst of that horrible empty pain and anguish of losing someone so dear to us, we can have hope that we may see them again. The Bible offers us hope even in the face of death, promising us that those who give their life to God and accept Jesus Christ will "have everlasting life" (John 3:16). They will live again!

Beyond this, the Bible not only offers hope that we can see our dead loved ones again, but it also allows us to face death without fear. I remember talking to one young lady who told me

that her husband had a secret fear of death. While we often don't like to admit our insecurities, if we are honest, most will admit that they have a certain fear of death. The good news is that since death has been defeated, we no longer have to fear death. This is the amazing hope that Jesus gave us when He rose from the grave and raised others from the dead. All His life, Jesus confirmed that death was defeated.

While many look at death as the final defeat, Christians know that death is actually the final victory. Since Christ has turned the defeat of death into victory through His death and resurrection, we can say with Christ, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54)! Jesus came to defeat death, "that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14, 15). We no longer need to fear death because Jesus destroyed death through His death and resurrection.

You see, the path from this life to heaven is like a train ride. If you are standing on the train tracks with a train coming, you should be afraid, but if you are on the side of the tracks when the train comes, you can be happy that the train is going to take you to your destination. In the same way, if we have not accepted Jesus, there will be fear of death, but when we invite Jesus into our lives, we no longer need to fear death. In fact, when we accept Jesus, death may at times even be a

welcome release, because it is the invitation to a better life!

The good news is that we do not have to “sorrow as others who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). One day soon, Jesus will come back from heaven and “the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). Then death and pain will be forever gone. In that day, “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

Like me, maybe you, too, have had someone close to you die. Maybe the painful grip of death has reached too close to you, snatching away some of your dear loved ones, and you have been uncertain about what lies beyond the grave. The good news is that there is hope. Not only do we have the hope of seeing our dead loved ones again, but we no longer have to fear death. The enemy, death, was defeated when Jesus rose again! Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live,” and “he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 11:25, 5:24).

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