



Can Christians Prosper In The 'New Normal'?

By

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Introduction

Christians around the world are looking for answers to the many challenges facing us. A virus that went global locked down cities and closed businesses, schools and churches. People have lost jobs and some of their personal rights. Wearing masks is part of the 'new normal' and may be with us for a long time. Parents and their children are determining how to move forward with attending schools and universities this Fall. Claims of racism are flying in all directions. There is rioting in the streets. Law and order are under attack. People are divided and despondent. What are God's people to do in such a time as this?

Can Christians prosper in the 'new normal?'

The simple answer is, Yes! However, Christian prosperity often includes suffering. Suffering? Really? How can we 'prosper' in the midst of *suffering*?

We learn how from our Master. He both suffered and prospered. How did He do it?

"Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.' But Jesus answered him, saying, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'" LUKE 4:1-4

Jesus was 'tempted' (tested) by Satan for 40 days in the wilderness. Jesus did not eat anything during that time, so that in itself was quite a challenge. Satan used the great hunger Jesus experienced in His human body to test the Lord. How did Jesus face the test? By quoting from God's Word –

“Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers. And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.” DEUTERONOMY 8:1-3

Whether you are facing a testing of 40 days or 40 years, realize that the solution is always the same — “man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.”

Jesus left Satan and the wilderness and headed toward the Cross. Why would He do that? How could the suffering Jesus faced on the Cross bring Him prosperity? The author of Hebrews answers that question for us —

“... looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” HEBREWS 12:2

- Jesus Suffered: The Son of God endured the cross, despised the shame
- Jesus Prospered: The Son of God, filled with great joy and anticipation, rose from the dead, ascended back to Heaven and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God

Jesus knew that the great suffering He would face would bring great joy to Himself and millions of human beings who would spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Jesus lived out the truth exactly as He had answered Satan — “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” Jesus lived out His life on earth according to every Word of God.

Saturate Yourself In God's Word

Think about what you *think about* during your day. How much of it is positive and how much is negative? If you spend a lot of time reading newspapers or watching newscasts, you may find that much of your 'thought' time is negative. Just look at the headlines. Almost every one is written to generate fear and divide people from each other. What Christians need to do is 'saturate' their minds with God's Word rather than the words of people.

The Apostle Paul wrote to a group of Christians who also lived in a world that was negative and scary at times. What did Paul tell them to do?

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and

saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.” PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

Paul wanted Christians in ancient Philippi to focus on several things he knew would help them through tough times. Paul wrote them from a Roman prison, so the Philippians knew that Paul had seen some tough times. They had known Paul for many years and were familiar with his life. That's why Paul wrote – “The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.” Paul could use himself as an example of how a Christian should think.

Our focus should be the same now as then and “meditate on these things” —

1. whatever things are true
2. whatever things *are* noble
3. whatever things *are* just
4. whatever things *are* pure
5. whatever things *are* lovely
6. whatever things *are* of good report

7. if *there is* any virtue
8. if *there is* anything praiseworthy

Compare Paul's list for Christians to what we see and hear from the world every day. How many of these things do you find on your news feeds and televisions today? How much from social media?

1. true?
2. noble?
3. just?
4. pure?
5. lovely?
6. good report?
7. virtue?
8. praiseworthy?

Probably very little, if any. Whether it's news, entertainment or social media, the world's message is devoid of what Paul told Christians to 'think' about and put into their minds. The 'world' does not share our views as Christians. They get almost

everything about the Bible and Christianity wrong. Here's an example:

I recently heard two major cable network 'news' hosts talk about trying to put racial history in its proper context. One of them said this:

“Jesus Christ—if you believe in, if that’s who you believe in, Jesus Christ—admittedly was not perfect when he was here on this earth.” CNN, JULY 6, 2020

Really? Who 'admitted' that? Certainly not Jesus' apostles who knew Him best and were inspired by God's Spirit to write God's truth. Certainly not the Church fathers who knew the apostles and what they believed and taught about Jesus? The other host shook his head in agreement, but neither gave any evidence for such an outlandish and false statement.

The host of a 'news' program made a *truth claim* concerning Jesus Christ that is evidently false and no one on the program or the network challenged him. It's sad to note that the other host had just said something about the importance of reason

and logic before the false claim was made. The world knows very little about reason and logic, which is why we shouldn't spend much time listening to what they say. Jesus is the *Logos*, the true 'logic' of God.

Media bias and continual negativity are two of the reasons I recommend Christians minimize the time they spend watching news programs and reading news feeds or newspapers. What you find there can actually work against the mind, emotions and spirit of a person. It can eventually affect physical health as well.

Television networks, newspapers and magazines are notorious for making false claims about the Son of God just in time for Christmas and Easter each year. They roll out the same lies people have been telling about Jesus since the 1st century. The lies were debunked centuries ago, but the majority of people who hear them wouldn't know that unless someone tells them the truth.

So, what about the *news* host's claim that Jesus was not perfect when He was here on earth? I'll answer the host the same way Jesus answered Satan — “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”

The news host [wrote online](#) that he grew up in a Christian home and attended church as a child, but gained ‘common sense’ when he attended college. He admitted to no longer being a member of any church, but wrote that he does “believe in a higher power.” Unless that ‘higher power’ is the Lord Jesus Christ, it raises serious concerns about the identity of the ‘higher’ power.

I don't write these things to disparage the news host or any of today's well-known media members. I was once an atheist host of a radio program and journalist in a major city, so I feel deeply for their spiritual need. My wish is for them to discover the same love and joy I've experienced in the amazing Grace of a merciful and forgiving God.

If Jesus was not perfect while He was on earth, then those of us who have placed our hope of salvation in Him are doomed to die in our sins. God demanded a perfect sacrifice and that's exactly what Jesus did — He gave Himself, perfect as He was, is and will forever be, to redeem people from sin and death —

*“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2
CORINTHIANS 5:21*

“And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who

raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” 1 PETER 1:17-21

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” 1 PETER 2:21-25

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace,

that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” HEBREWS 4:14-16

“And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: ‘The Lord has sworn And will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek’), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the

oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.” HEBREWS 7:20-28

Saturate yourself in God’s Word this week even as you spend less time listening to the world. Remember the precious words of Jesus —

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.” MARK 12:30

That commandment includes what we watch with our eyes, hear with our ears and think with our mind. Let us love God with our whole being every day of the week.

Put On Your 'Christian Hat'

What we see and hear from the world are **not** the same things we see and hear in God's Word. That was the primary point of the first part of this series. Christians must hear from God rather than from the world. The messages are often in direct opposition to each other.

The world cannot begin to give us the wisdom we receive in God's Word. Why? The so-called wisdom of this world is *foolishness* compared to God's wisdom.

"Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, 'He catches the wise in their own craftiness'; and again, 'The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.'" 1 CORINTHIANS

3:18-20

The apostles made it clear that Christians should have nothing to do with the philosophy (e.g. ideas, thoughts, beliefs, plans, direction) of this world. Why? Because the thinking of this world is *futile* (μάταιος – useless, vain, empty, aimless, without purpose).

Why should Christians waste even a minute worrying about something the world says when it directly contradicts what God says? The Apostle Paul warned us about that happening –

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” COLOSSIANS 2:8-10

Putting on our *Christian Hat* is another way of saying we're going to think God's thoughts and not the world's thoughts. Watch a newscast. Read a newspaper. Watch worldly movies or TV shows. That's when we begin filling our minds, our

thoughts, our ideas, our beliefs with the world's beliefs. It happens every day to a massive number of God's people living on earth. And, may I add, it is not something that just started recently. The world's anti-God position and propaganda is as old as Satan's first lie.

If it wasn't possible for a Christian to be cheated by the world's philosophy, the Apostle Paul wouldn't have warned Christians about it. Don't be deceived by the world's philosophy. Don't conform to the world's ideas and ways of thinking. Be transformed!

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." ROMANS 12:1-2

We need to 'think' like Jesus thinks. How do we do that?

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

“He humbled Himself and became obedient ...” That’s certainly not how the world thinks, is it? To ‘think’ like Jesus means we DON’T think the way the world thinks. Why?

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” ROMANS 8:5-8

We need to ‘set’ our minds on things ‘above’ (God’s thoughts) not on things ‘on the earth’ (worldly thoughts).

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” COLOSSIANS 3:1-3

Why?

“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” PHILIPPIANS 3:18-21

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.” TITUS 2:11-15

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.”

EPHESIANS 5:6-7

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” 1 JOHN 2:15-17

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” 1 JOHN 4:4-6

Jesus made it clear that what He wants from His followers—

“When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.’” MARK 8:34-38

Jesus’ message to His Church is to OVERCOME the world — not conform to it.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” REVELATION 2:7

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” REVELATION 2:17

“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.” REVELATION 2:26

“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.” REVELATION 3:12

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” REVELATION 3:21

“And He said to me, It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” REVELATION 21:6-8

So, how do we *overcome* in the world we live now with all its craziness? How do we live our lives in a way that we can accomplish the goals Paul gave us to focus on the right things? Put on your *Christian Hat*. Get into the Word and stay there. Saturate yourself in God’s Word. Read it, meditate on it, memorize it, hide it in your heart.

Why? Because it is alive and powerful!

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

HEBREWS 4:12

Listen to Jesus' prayer to His Father for His disciples —

“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.” JOHN 17:14-19

Paul wrote the Philippians that they should think on “whatever things are true.” Jesus prayed that God the Father would “sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”

“But,” you say, “I don’t have time to be God’s Word every day.” Really? Is it is that hard to read God’s Word, hear God’s Word, on a daily basis? Be honest. Do you really think that excuse is valid? I think if we are honest with ourselves, we know that excuse won’t float. We make time for so many other things we think of as ‘important’ during each day. Why not some time for Gods Word?

Here are some ideas that might help —

- Read several verses of Scripture every day and think about them throughout the day
- Listen to the Bible in your car or on a phone app at home or during a break at work
- Read several Bible verses to your children at the dinner table or as you put them to bed at night (maybe an entire chapter)
- We schedule time to watch our favorite television programs every day. Also, schedule time to be in God’s Word every day. Don’t let days pass without being in God’s Word.

Don't give God any excuses now that you wouldn't give Him face to Face when you see Him in Heaven. God doesn't want our excuses. He wants our obedience. He wants our minds and hearts. He wants us to live for Him in a world that desperately needs to hear His Truth .. not the nonsense of this world.

God loves us dearly and knows that our minds need daily renewing. If we're not being transformed by the renewing of our mind, we have a great chance of conforming to this world (Romans 12:2). One of the best ways to renew our minds in the middle of a culture that conforms to the will of Satan is to do what Jesus said – “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”

Don't Worry

Here's another of Paul's recommendations to Christians –

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

The Spirit of God knows that Christians get anxious about things, so He gave us something we can do about it. We can pray with specificity, purpose and power. That's important for us to note as we face so many difficulties in our world.

Notice the process the Holy Spirit gives us:

- Be anxious for nothing
- *but* in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God

- *and* the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus

God knows things in life can make us anxious. People worry and are sometimes afraid. The words “fear not” and “do not fear” are found scores of times in the Bible. Jesus said those words to His disciples many times –

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” MATTHEW 10:28

“Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” MATTHEW 10:31

“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” LUKE 12:32

“Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: ‘Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey’s colt.’” JOHN 12:14-15

Jesus addressed the issue of worry in the middle of His Sermon on the Mount (from John 6:25-34) –

- “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing
- Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing?
- Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
- But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

- Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.”
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Excellent advice then and now.

Antidotes To Worry

One of the best places to go to learn about antidotes for worry, fear and anxiety is what the Bible teaches us through the life of King David. You'll find the details of his life in the Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, but David's prayers and praises are memorialized for us in the Psalms. David was honest about his emotions –

“The pangs of death surrounded me, And the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me.”

PSALM 18:4-5

King David was also honest about how he learned to trust God in tough situations –

“I sought the Lord, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears.” PSALM 34:4

Prayer. Seeking God with our whole heart, mind and soul. Trusting God even when things look darkest.

Does God answer every prayer, every time, right away? We might think He doesn't based on experience, even the experience of King David. However, if our concept of prayer is getting what we want every time, right away, we are sorely misinformed about the process of prayer.

How To Pray Specifically

Look back at what Paul wrote the Philippians –

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

The first step is *to be anxious for nothing*. Some other ways of saying that are –

- “do not be anxious about anything” ESV
- “Don’t worry about anything” CSB
- “Be careful for nothing” KJV
- “Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything” AMPC

Anxiety, worry and fear is part of what happened to humans with the fall into sin –

“Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” GENESIS 3:9-10

The fact is that you and I will be anxious and worry about things, so why would Paul tell us not to worry? It's because God wants us to develop a deeper relationship with Him through trust and thanksgiving. God wants to show us how much He loves and cares for us. That leads us to the second step –

“but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God”

Let's look carefully at four words: *prayer, supplication, thanksgiving, requests*. They are at the heart of communicating our heart and mind with the Almighty God.

Prayer – προσευχ .. exchange of wishes .. used in a general sense of prayer toward God

Supplication – δέησις .. felt need, entreaty .. used in a specific sense of communicating need

Thanksgiving – εὐχαριστία .. giving of thanks, thankfulness

Requests – αἴτημα .. make a petition, ask

What Paul recommended to the Philippians was a fairly straightforward process —

- take your anxiety, fear and worries to God
- petition Him in a spirit of thankfulness
- petition God with your requests

Then what?

The Surpassing Peace of God

If we think *getting things* from God is the point of what Paul told the Philippians, we've missed the point. The point is *relationship* with God. He's our Heavenly Father.

“and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Peace with God! It is a peace that *surpasses all understanding*. The word *surpasses* is ὑπερέχω and means 'to excel, be superior, go beyond.' *Understanding* is νοῦς and means 'mind, reason, intellect, understanding.'

The peace of God we experience from taking our worries to God in prayer will lead to a peace that actually goes beyond our understanding of how such a thing could happen. God can take the things that drive people to deep despair and give His children a peace that cannot be understood by human reasoning.

Jesus made the same promise to His disciples many years earlier, the night before He went to the Cross –

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” JOHN 14:27

Jesus gives us *His peace* and it's not the like anything on this planet. The peace of God will do things in our hearts and minds that no other peace in this world can give us. God's peace literally goes far beyond anything we could possibly understand based on our earthly experience.

Paul promised that the peace of God will “will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

The word *guard* is fascinating in this context. It is the Greek word φρουρέω and means ‘mount a military guard, set a garrison around, protect with a sentinel.’ The peace of God that surpasses all understanding sets up a ‘guard’ around our hearts (καρδία) and minds (νόημα). Our hearts (physical heart along with the Greek understanding of καρδία being the seat

of emotions and will) and our minds (e.g. thoughts, beliefs, ideas, understanding) will find a supernatural peace with God as we employ these simple steps –

- don't be anxious about anything
- instead of being anxious, pray
- pray both general and specific prayers
- pray in an attitude of thanksgiving for all God has done for us
- present specific requests to our Heavenly Father
- watch and wait to see how God gives us His gift of peace to surround our hearts and minds and protect us from anxiety, fear and worry

It is when we take those steps that we can experience the next part of God's gift: the ability to meditate on God's thoughts –

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with YOU.” PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

God knows us better than we know ourselves. He has equipped His children with the supernatural ability to get through anything this world system can throw at us.

Christians face tough times just like everyone else in life, but we have great **Source** from which we can draw on during tough times. We have an *Advocate* with the Father in Heaven, our Lord Jesus Christ. We have an *Advocate* who has taken up residence in our bodies, the Holy Spirit. We are protected on earth and in Heaven.

New Normal? We can not only survive, but **thrive** as we follow Paul’s simple process to extraordinary peace.

The Return of Jesus Christ

The 'new normal' people are talking about falls within God's eternal plan – not outside of it, but *within* it. What is God doing today?

- God the Father is ruling over the universe
- God the Son is building His Church and Advocating for His followers
- God the Holy Spirit is convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and calling, cleansing, gifting and empowering people who respond to His gracious call by faith

Nothing has changed since January 2020. We are not all *doomed*. Nothing is out of kilter from God's perspective. Covid-19 didn't *interfere* with God's eternal plan. In fact, the virus fits *into* His plan. What could that be, we ask?

Jesus told His disciples almost 2,000 years ago that He would return for them after He prepared a very special place for them to live in Heaven.

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” JOHN 14:1-3

Jesus returned to Heaven after finishing the work His Father had sent Him to earth to accomplish: die for our sins and rise from the dead.

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now

been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” ROMANS 5:6-11

We are reconciled to God! We have peace with God Almighty! Our future is salvation from God's *wrath* through Jesus Christ. We are saved by grace through faith on earth and will be raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, “that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:6-9)

It's just a matter of time before all of the saved will stand together physically before God in Heaven. So, what's a virus got to do with that? It's much bigger than a virus.

Jesus Christ is returning to the earth soon and He will execute extreme judgment on our planet and the people living on it.

The Hebrew prophets looked forward to the day –

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” JEREMIAH 23:5-6

Jesus Christ is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS! His disciples knew it and asked Jesus when He would set up the prophesied earthly Kingdom. They asked Jesus before He died on the Cross and after He rose from the dead.

Jesus gave them several warnings in Matthew 24:

- “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.
- And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.
- And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.
- Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.
- And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.
- Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.
- And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.
- But he who endures to the end shall be saved.
- And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Jesus then quoted from Daniel's prophecy and referred to the *Great Tribulation*. Jesus said the Great Tribulation would be "such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." He said that unless the days of the Great Tribulation were shortened, "no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."

Jesus continued to warn His disciples and said that many *false christs* and *false prophets* would rise and "show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." Then Jesus spoke about what His coming from Heaven to earth would look like –

"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

Jesus will return to earth to complete what He started 2,000 years ago –

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.” MARK 13:24-27

What we read in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 is consistent with what we read in *The Revelation* Jesus gave to His disciple John at the end of the 1st century. It also fits with other descriptions of His coming revealed by the apostles.

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” 2 PETER 3:10-13

“... since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.” 1 THESSALONIANS 1:6-10

So, what about the disciples' original question: “Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will* be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” Are you ready for the answer?

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only ... Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

That's how Jesus answered the disciples' question before He died on the Cross. What about after He died and rose from the dead? Did His answer change?

“Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ACTS 1:6-8

No change. It was not for the disciples to know the exact hour and day of Christ's return then and it's not for His disciples to know now. We have much work to do to preach the Gospel throughout the world.

However ...

We do have some strong clues about what to watch for leading up to Christ's Return and we'll look at them closely in the next part of our special study. Might we be getting very close to Christ's return to establish His Kingdom on earth? We'll see.

The New Normal and Return of Jesus Christ

Does the *new normal* we are experiencing include the possibility that Jesus Christ may return from Heaven to earth soon? Of course it does.

Jesus and His apostles promised almost 2,000 years ago that He would return for those who follow Him at a time most people would not expect.

Here are just some of the many promises we find in the New Testament about the Lord's return –

“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.” JOHN 14:2-4

And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” REVELATION 22:12-13

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. 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 THESSALONIANS 4:16-17

Do we know the day and hour when Jesus will return? No, but as we mentioned in the last part of this special series [\[LINK\]](#) we do have some strong clues about what to watch for leading up to Christ's Return from Heaven to earth.

Jesus made it clear to His disciples before after His death and resurrection that no one will know the day or the hour of His return. However, Jesus told the disciples to “be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” (Matthew 24:44)

Jesus also made this interesting comment in the same context:

“But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” MATTHEW 24:43-44

Whenever we see the word “therefore” used in Scripture, we should ask this question – “what’s the *therefore* there for?” We look back in the context of Matthew 24 and see that if someone knows when a thief was going to break into their house, they would have watched and not allowed the thief to get inside. Makes sense, right?

There's another *therefore* we should ask about just one verse earlier because it contains important clues about the return of Christ from Heaven to earth –

“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.” MATTHEW 24:42

Okay, what's that *therefore* there for? We answer that question by looking at the preceding verses for context and clues –

“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.” MATTHEW 24:37-41

The Days of Noah

Jesus just gave His disciples, and us, a big clue about when He will return – “But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

Our first question upon hearing this clue is probably to ask what the “days of Noah” were like. That’s easy enough to do. Look up Genesis 6:1-12. Here are some of the ‘low-lights’ from those days –

- the Lord saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth
- every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually
- The earth was corrupt before God
- the earth was filled with violence
- all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth

We know what God with all the corruption, evil and violence by people in Noah's day. He showed grace toward one man and his family (Noah) and killed everyone else in a global flood.

Jesus told His disciples that His coming back to earth would be during days just like Noah's.

“For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” MATTHEW 24:38-39

What does that mean? It means people were living their lives with no thought about God or His Word. Noah warned them about God's coming judgment (2 Peter 2:5), but they just kept living as if nothing was going to happen to them. Sound familiar? They didn't realize that what Noah had told them was true “until the flood came and took them all away.” That's how most people will realize the preaching of the Gospel is

true – Jesus will return in all His glory and power to judge the nations of the world.

The Great Tribulation

Look at how Jesus amplified the idea for His disciples and us a little earlier in the same context –

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.” MATTHEW 24:21-22

So, what do we have? A *great tribulation* “such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time” and days that will be like the days of Noah when God flooded the earth. If Jesus did not return, “no flesh would be saved.” However, Jesus will shorten that terrible time of tribulation “for the elect’s sake.” Thank you, Jesus!

“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.” MATTHEW 25:13

Deception

Jesus and His apostles made it clear in the New Testament that we have an enemy who doesn't want us to know what's happening in the physical or spiritual worlds. That enemy is Satan, "who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). Jesus said that Satan "is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

Someone has said that Satan is a 'one-trick pony,' meaning he does the same thing over and over again. What is that trick? Lying and deceiving. Look at Genesis 3 and Matthew 4. Satan lied to Eve and deceived her (1 Timothy 2:14). Satan tried the same trick on Jesus, but it didn't work. Jesus called the devil on it every time by quoting from God's Word. That's what we must do. As Paul wrote – "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). That armor includes "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17b).

Notice the types of deception Satan will use leading up to the Return of Christ. Jesus and His apostles warned Christians about it so we can “stand against the wiles of the devil.”

- “And Jesus answered and said to them: Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.” Matthew 24:4-5
- “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.” Matthew 24:11
- “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here *is* the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe *it*. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.” Matthew 24:23-25
- “And Jesus, answering them, began to say: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He*,’ and will deceive many.” Mark 13:5-6
- “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” Mark 13:22

- “Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He*,’ and, ‘The time has drawn near.’ Therefore do not go after them.” Luke 21:8
- “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.” Romans 16:17-19
- “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God

in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” 2

Thessalonians 2:1-4

With all of the warnings we have from Jesus and His apostles about what the world will be like just before He returns and how Satan will lie and deceive people, how could anyone not see that the return of Jesus is close as hand?

Delusion

We come now to what God does. He sends *delusion*. The Greek word is πλάνη and means “wandering.” It comes from the word πλάνος, an adjective which means “one who leads astray, one who deceives.”

What!? Why would God be involved in leading anyone astray? Is God's *delusion* just as bad as Satan's *deception*? The answer is **no** and here's why.

The delusion God sends is because of **truth**. The deception Satan sends is because of **lies**.

Big difference.

God tells the truth and people don't believe it. Satan tells lies and people believe it.

The Greek word in Matthew 24:4 is the same as in 2 Thessalonians 2:11.

*"Take heed that no one deceives you." JESUS IN
MATTHEW 24:4*

*"And for this reason God will send them strong
delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all
may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had
pleasure in unrighteousness." PAUL IN 2 THESSALONIANS
2:112*

Paul had just told them a few verses earlier (verse 3) that he did not want them to be deceived. Why? Because people were deceiving them.

You might remember that Paul had written an earlier letter to the Thessalonians because they were confused and upset about whether fellow Christians who died before Christ's return would be included in the resurrection of the saints.

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-14

Paul did address Christ's return at the end of 1 Thessalonians (chapter 5), but he went over it again in his second letter because of the deception of the enemy. Thankfully, we have both of Paul's letters. They are helpful to us in the times we are facing in our world right now.

Here's the entire context of what Paul wrote in his second letter to the Thessalonians concerning Satan's *deception* and God's *delusion*.

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be

saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

Paul addressed the process of deception concerning the Lord's return head on –

- we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled
- either by spirit
- or by word or by letter, as if from us
- as though the day of Christ had come
- Let no one deceive you by any means
- And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time
- For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work
- only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way
- And then the lawless one will be revealed
- whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

You can read the Revelation 19 and 20 for more details about how Jesus will consume the *lawless one* with the breath of His mouth and the brightness of His coming.

We find three important events in 2 Thessalonians: the *restrainer* being taken out to the way, the *coming* of the lawless one and the *return* of Christ.

Paul also mentioned that “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.” The apostle wrote those words to the Thessalonians almost 2,000 years ago. So, why hasn't the lawless one been revealed yet? Because someone or something is restraining the work of Satan. Paul wrote that the lawless one will be revealed when “He who now restrains” is “taken out of the way.” Who is that someone and when He be taken out of the way?

The Greek words are τό κατέχω and mean “that which holds back, detain, restrain.” Something or someone is holding back the coming of the *lawless one*. Could it be the preaching of the Gospel to every nation? Christ's building of His Church? The Holy Spirit? Whatever or Whoever it is will be “taken out

of the way” at some point and the *lawless one* will be revealed.

Notice next the “coming of the *lawless one*” and how God uses ‘delusion’ to assist in the deception of those who do not believe in Christ –

- for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first
- the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.
- according to the working of Satan
- with all power, signs, and lying wonders
- with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved
- And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie
- that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness

The lawless one is described as –

- the man of sin (ἀνομία – lawlessness, iniquity, sin)
- the son of perdition (ἀπώλεια – destruction, loss, ruin, perishing, destruction)
- who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped
- so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God

The Apostle John also wrote in some detail about the man of sin in his letters and in the Book of Revelation. I recommend you to his writings.

As for the *strong delusion* to believe the deception of the *lawless one*, why would God send that? Remember that the deception of the lawless one “is “according to the working of Satan” and will be “among those who perish”, and here’s the key part, “because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” That’s the “reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that

they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

God's sending a *strong delusion* will add to the strong desire people will have to believe *the lie* that the *lawless one* will tell. Remember, this is according to the working of Satan and among those who perish.

I'm reminded of what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans about a similar situation; possibly the same situation in Noah's day and the days just before Jesus returns.

“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves ... For this reason God gave them up to vile passions ... And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting ... who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that

those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” ROMANS 1:18 – 32

Sounds like today, doesn't it? As we saw in our study of [this portion of Romans 1](#), God's actions of giving people up to uncleanness and vile passions and giving them over to a debased mind was judicial on His part. What God did in Noah's day was the decision of the Judge. What Jesus will do when He returns will be the actions of the Judge.

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the

lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” REVELATION 20:11-15

God sending a *great delusion* to people who want to believe lies is simply part of His being the Judge of the universe.

Opportunity

Christians face an amazing opportunity during a time many on earth are calling the *new normal*.

My prayer is that the first five parts of this special series have been helpful to you and your family in considering both the greatness of God and His Sovereignty over all things in the universe.

What I'd like to do in this sixth part of the series is share some observations that may help us see what may be going on *behind the scenes* in the spiritual world.

We see what we see, but there's more to this world than what we can see physically. Jesus, the prophets and apostles all pointed us to an *unseen world* that impacts the seen world in ways more powerful than most people know.

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” EPHESIANS 6:11-12

It's easy for Christians to get caught up in the world of flesh and blood and forget that our battle is with spiritual powers *behind* the flesh and blood. A virus is something that affects flesh and blood, but what's behind it? Rioting in the streets is something that impacts flesh and blood, but what's behind it? Racial unrest is something that affects flesh and blood, but what's behind it? If we believe what Paul taught, what's behind our battles in this life are intense spiritual powers.

Observations

So, with that introduction I'll share some observations from a journalistic perspective. Hopefully, some of what I've been seeing will be helpful.

I became a Christian in 1971 after spending several years as an atheist. I found studying the Bible fascinating and had the opportunity to attend Bible College for several years. It was during one of the classes that we studied the dates of Jesus' birth, the beginning of His earthly ministry, and His death, resurrection and ascension. Scholars didn't always agree on the exact dates, but I learned that the timeframe was basically this –

- 6-4 BC — Jesus' birth (based on biblical and historical data)
- 26-27 AD — Jesus' ministry began (based on biblical and historical data)
- 30-33 AD – Jesus died, rose again and ascended to Heaven (based on biblical and historical data)

Knowing the approximate dates, I realized I might live to see the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus' time on earth. With that in mind, I looked at 2030 as a possible year for the anniversary of Jesus' death and resurrection. I wondered in the 1970s what life would be like in 2030 and how Christians might celebrate the anniversary. Now, in 2020, the next decade is looking clearer – especially as we deal with a global pandemic.

Why 2030?

That date, 2030, was somewhere in the back of my mind when I heard these words on a newscast in January of 2019 —

“Millennials and people, you know, Gen Z and all these folks that will come after us are looking up and we're like: The world is going to end in 12 years if we don't address climate change and your biggest issue is how are we gonna pay for it?” Ocasio-Cortez told Coates. “This is the war —

this is our World War II.” REP. ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ (D-NY), WOMEN’S UNITY RALLY, NEW YORK CITY, JANUARY 19, 2019

I did some quick math and realized that the congresswoman was talking about the world coming to an end between 2030 and 2031 “if” we didn’t address climate change immediately. United States Senator Bernie Sanders mentioned the year 2030 multiple times during his campaign for President when he talked about the [Green New Deal](#). Sanders and Rep. Ocasio-Cortez announced [The Green New Deal for public housing](#) together in November 2019.

[Climate change](#) has been addressed for many years, but people elected to national office in a position to address the country through legislation and the news media talking about the year 2030 caught my attention.

I remember reporting about climate change in the late 1960s and 70s when some research showed the world was experiencing a cooling trend while other research showed a warming trend. Some scientists believed we might be headed toward another ice age, while other scientists believed the

world would get warmer. I was a journalist, not a scientist, so my job was to report the findings and talk with scientists on both sides of the story.

Discussions of a warming planet increased among scientists during the 1980s and Congress passed and President George H.W. Bush signed into law the [Global Change Research Act](#) of 1990. It mandated that the US Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) report to Congress and the President no less than every four years. One of their stated purposes is to analyze “current trends in global change, both human-induced and natural, and projects major trends for the subsequent 25 to 100 years.”

So, when did 2030 become the “end of the world” scenario for congressional leaders if Congress wanted reporting to continue through at least 2090? Did some new scientific information become available later that would pinpoint the exact year of the earth’s extinction? Good question.

One way to find out is to read through the National Climate Change Assessments mandated by the USGCRP.

- [First National Climate Assessment](#)
- [Second National Climate Assessment](#)
- [Third National Climate Assessment](#)
- [Fourth National Climate Assessment](#)

One interesting note from the Fourth National Climate Assessment (2017) is this –

“Annual average temperature over the contiguous United States has increased by 1.8°F (1.0°C) for the period 1901–2016; over the next few decades (2021–2050), annual average temperatures are expected to rise by about 2.5°F for the United States, relative to the recent past (average from 1976–2005), under all plausible future climate scenarios.” WUEBBLES, D.J., D.W. FAHEY, K.A. HIBBARD, B. DEANGELO, S. DOHERTY, K. HAYHOE, R. HORTON, J.P. KOSSIN, P.C. TAYLOR, A.M. WAPLE, AND C.P. WEAVER, 2017: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY. IN: CLIMATE SCIENCE SPECIAL REPORT: FOURTH NATIONAL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT, VOLUME I [WUEBBLES, D.J., D.W. FAHEY, K.A. HIBBARD, D.J. DOKKEN, B.C. STEWART, AND T.K. MAYCOCK (EDS.)].

U.S. GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH PROGRAM, WASHINGTON, DC, USA, PP. 12-34, DOI: [10.7930/J0DJ5CTG](https://doi.org/10.7930/J0DJ5CTG).

Notice that scientists in 2017 were predicting what might happen from 2021-2050. Scientific charts [included in the reports](#) went as far into the future as 2101 with warnings about projected global temperatures. That's 81 years from now.

While the climate assessments from the national reports contain serious concerns from scientists, none of them warned that the world would *end* in 2030. So, why would Rep. Ocasio-Cortez present that as a truth-claim on camera for the media to report?

Interestingly, the [CIA has a report](#) in its online library, copyrighted in 2003, about 2030 being the year of *global catastrophe*. The report (really a book) is titled *The 2030 Spike: Countdown To Global Catastrophe* (Colin Mason, Earthscan, 2003).

“The decade from 2030 will see a remarkable and dangerous confluence of world events and trends – a spike on the graph paper of life that will influence humanity for good or ill as never before. Combating the worst effects of this will require urgent action, informed by the clearest possible understanding of where we are now and where we might go.” Chapter 1, The Drivers

What did the author of the book see in 2003 that would make the world such a “remarkable and dangerous” place? Some of the drivers mentioned are –

- Running Out of Fuel
- Population and Poverty
- Climate
- Famines
- Working Online
- Information Overload
- The Dilemma of the Cities
- One World

Does any of that sound familiar?

Here's what Colin Mason wrote in the chapter about *One World* –

“Nevertheless, the steady advance of the 2030 drivers will sharpen the alternatives for the big powers – to become self sufficient, heavily armed fortresses, or to undertake serious engagement with the problems of the planet as a whole. The point then arises that if the drivers proceed unchecked, no ‘fortress’ nation, no matter how wealthy and well armed, will be able to protect itself against the consequences of say, extreme global warming or major contamination and a ‘winter’ resulting from large scale nuclear conflict or extensive air pollution. Readjustment of their policies at that point would surely prove expensive, painful and perhaps unsuccessful. A general worldview is needed now ... If a comprehensive world authority could be achieved – even approached – before 2030, the trauma of the transitional stage could be greatly reduced. Such an authority might coordinate global standards for working conditions, wages, ecology, productive capacity and the use of energy; evolve a world law, running a world police to enforce that law and to control war, ‘rogue’ states and

terrorism; and, not least, provide a check on the unfettered and less than responsible economic power of the multinationals. Perhaps we might give it a name, a little more specific and pointed than the United Nations – Oneworld.” CHAPTER 6, PP 53-54

Interesting. A “one-world” government that would have the authority to –

- coordinate global standards for working conditions, wages, ecology, productive capacity and the use of energy
- evolve a world law, running a world police to enforce that law and to control war, ‘rogue’ states and terrorism
- provide a check on the unfettered and less than responsible economic power of the multinationals

Imagine for a moment what kinds of changes would have to take place on earth for any government to have that kind of absolute power to rule the world – a “comprehensive world authority.”

The Washington Post published an opinion column titled *“Ocasio-Cortez says the world will end in 12 years. She is absolutely right.”* Many scientists have cited 2030 as “the year when climate changes become irreversible.” ([Union of Concerned Scientists](#), April 9, 2020) Thus, the perceived need to do something now so that doesn’t happen. Some point to the 2018 global warming report [from the IPCC](#) as to why 2030 is viewed as being a pivotal year.

The bottom line of the concerns is this –

“To keep warming under 1.5°C, countries will have to cut global CO2 emissions 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net zero by around 2050, the report found, re-affirming previous conclusions about the need to end fossil fuel burning.” [INSIDE CLIMATE NEWS, OCTOBER 8, 2018](#)

“What we know is that unabated climate change will really transform our world into something that is unrecognizable,” Kelly Levin, a senior associate at the World Resources Institute’s climate program, told Business Insider. *That transformation has already begun. The last few years saw*

record-breaking temperatures, catastrophic and bizarre storms, and unprecedented ice melt. That's all likely to get worse by 2030." *WHAT CLIMATE CHANGE WILL LOOK LIKE OVER THE NEXT DECADE, BUSINESS INSIDER, NOVEMBER 22, 2019*

[Planet has only until 2030 to stem catastrophic climate change, experts warn – CNN, October 8, 2018](#)

"Why 2030? The world's top climate scientists have told us we have a ten-year window to make rapid reductions in the carbon pollution causing global warming in order to hold the warming to the low end of under 3 degrees F. If we don't, we will severely destabilize the global climate, leading to extreme weather, droughts, floods and sea-level rise that will be increasingly hard for humans to manage."
SOLVECLIMATEBY2030.ORG

I could share many more governmental, scientific and media reports to demonstrate that 2030 is a year of special significance. However, I hope these are enough to convince you that world leaders view 2030 in a very special way.

Jesus and 2030

No human being knows when Jesus will return from Heaven to earth. He will return when His current Work is complete. Jesus is building His Church and when He's finished with that He will return to earth to deliver Israel and judge the world –

“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’” ROMANS 11:25-27

“Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” REVELATION 19:15

As we've pointed out in previous parts of this series, Jesus and His apostles have given us many clues to what the world would be like just prior to His return. This one speaks powerfully to me about that time –

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” MATTHEW 24:36-39

Jesus also told His disciples about something He called the *great tribulation* that would occur prior to His return. That's another clue –

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's

sake those days will be shortened ... 'Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.' MATTHEW 24:21-22, 29-31

As we look at the many clues Jesus and His apostles gave us, we know the time is getting shorter. Even the leaders of this world know things are not looking good, but are they turning to God for answers to their problems? No. They are looking to their own physical and mental abilities and strengths. The world has left God out of the conversation. Just like the days of Noah.

The New Normal

So, here we are – living in the *new normal*. What will the next ten years bring our way? Things have changed so much in our world that we can't be sure about the next ten months .. or even the next ten weeks. However, we don't need to know. Why? Because God knows. God knows the future. He knows your future and my future. He knows what tomorrow will bring. That's why Jesus told His disciples not to worry about tomorrow. Today has enough challenges of its own. God will take care of our tomorrow.

Please know that I am not suggesting or even hinting that Jesus may return around the time of the 2,000th anniversary of His death, resurrection and ascension. What I am suggesting is that we are nearing the end of the age.

The disciples asked Jesus – “when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” It's a legitimate question, but Jesus wanted them to focus on the work He had for them to do before His return –

“It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ACTS 1:7-8

I leave you with some wise advice about what we should be doing as members of the Church our Lord is building. May we heed these words and do the Lord's work while we can.

“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night

is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” ROMANS 13:8-14

“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’ Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” 1 PETER 4:7-11

Resources

Bible

- Daniel 9
- Matthew 16 & 24 – 25
- Mark 13
- Luke 21
- John 14
- Acts 1
- Romans 11
- 1 Thessalonians 4 – 5
- 2 Thessalonians 1 – 2
- Titus 2
- James 5
- 1 Peter 4
- 2 Peter 3
- Jude 1
- Revelation 1 – 22

eBooks

- Can Christians Prosper In The 'New Normal'? (free download)
- [God's Judgment: How It Works](#) (free download)
- [One Judge: God On His Throne](#) (free download)
- [The Great Reveal: Our Epic Journey Through Time, Space & Eternity, Part One](#) (free download)
- [The Great Reveal: Our Epic Journey Through Time, Space & Eternity, Part Two](#) (free download)
- [The Great Reveal: Our Epic Journey Through Time, Space & Eternity, Part Three](#) (free download)
- [The Victory Is Ours!](#) (free download)
- [The Fear of the Lord – The Key to Everything](#) (free download)
- [The Gathering – In the Dispensation of the Fullness of the Times](#) (free download)

Articles

- [Could the Coronavirus be setting the stage for the Rise of the Antichrist?](#) by Dr. Edward Hindson
- [Coronavirus and the Second Coming of Christ](#) by Dr. John Piper
- [Is the Coronavirus in Bible Prophecy? Six lessons to learn from the pandemic](#) by Dr. David Jeremiah
- [Coronavirus – Mother Nature's Revenge?](#) by Mark McGee

Books

- *The Return of Christ: Reflections from the Acts 1:11 Conference* (Edited by David Allen and Steve Lemke, B&H Publishing Group, 2012)
- *The Second Coming: Signs of Christ's Return and the End of the Age* (Dr. John McArthur, Crossway Books, 1999)
- *The Book of Signs: 31 Undeniable Prophecies of the Apocalypse* (Dr. David Jeremiah, Thomas Nelson, 2019)
- *15 Future Events That Will Shake the World* (Dr. Edward Hindson, Harvest House Publishers, 2014)
- *Be Ready: Living in Light of Christ's Return* (NT Commentary: 1 & 2 Thessalonians) (Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe, David C Cook; New edition, 2010)

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