

MARK DRISCOLL

MORE WALK

LESS
TALK



AN END TIMES SURVIVAL GUIDE FROM 2 THESSALONIANS

More Walk. Less Talk.

**An End Times Survival Guide
from 2 Thessalonians**

REALFAITH.COM

By Mark Driscoll

More Walk. Less Talk: An End Times Survival Guide from
2 Thessalonians
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REAL GROUPS WITH REALFAITH

Faith that does not result in good deeds is not real faith.
James 2:20, TLB

At RealFaith, we believe that the Word of God isn't just for us to read, it's to be obeyed. And living in community with fellow believers is one of the ways God the Father allows us to learn and grow to become more like His Son Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. We do this through something called Real Groups. Here are a few tips to start your own.

1. Invite

Invite your friends, neighbors, family, coworkers, and enemies, because they all need Jesus whether they know Him or not! Whether it's a group of men, women, families, students, or singles, explain that you'd like to start a weekly sermon-based small group based on Pastor Mark Driscoll's sermons.

2. Listen to the sermon on realfaith.com or on the RealFaith app

You can host a viewing party to watch RealFaith Live and discuss it all at once, or you can watch it separately and gather to discuss it at another time that works for the group.

3. Get into God's Word

In addition to watching the sermon, make sure you and all group members have a study guide from realfaith.com for the current sermon series. There are questions for personal reflection as well as for groups that can guide your devotional times throughout the week. You can also sign up for Daily Devos at realfaith.com.

4. Gather together

Whether at someone's house, a public place, or through something like Zoom, meet weekly to discuss the sermon and what God has taught you through it. The great thing about Real Groups is that you don't all have to be in the same location. You can talk about sermon takeaways, what stood out to you in the study guide, or what God taught you in His Word that week. Focus on personal application as much as possible.

5. Pray

When you gather, feel free to share prayer requests, pray for each other on the spot, and continue praying throughout the week. Prayer is a great unifying force that God gives us to strengthen His family.

6. Share

Send us photos, videos, testimonies, and updates of how your group is doing to hello@realfaith.com. You might even be featured on our RealFaith Live show!

We will be praying for you and your group and look forward to hearing what God does through it.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians

Pastoring a flock is a lot like parenting a family. As a father, there were many times when our five kids were little that my wife and I would call a “family meeting”. Sometimes, the agenda was to make the kids aware of some things that weren’t going well, and we would lovingly encourage them to make progress on these things.

Like all kids, the responses varied. The compliant kids would immediately respond with obedience and make the changes we were asking. The rebellious kids would not respond with obedience and stayed their course. The easily distracted kids would make the requested changes for a while but then forget and fall back into their old habits.

After our first family meeting, we would wait a while to see if all the kids made the requested changes. If they did not, we would then call a second family meeting to review what we had asked in the first family meeting, oftentimes repeating our instructions in hopes that all the kids would comply.

The Thessalonian church was, like every healthy local church, a family. Paul and the other leaders mentioned (e.g., Timothy and Silvanus) are like the fathers. Paul actually uses this very language when he says, “like a father with his children, we exhorted each

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one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory”.^o When they wrote the letters of 1-2 Thessalonians, the church would have gathered for a family meeting to hear the letter read aloud to everyone in the church family. Apparently, the first family meeting at which 1 Thessalonians was read did not result with all the children of God obeying what they were taught, and so there was a second family meeting called at which 2 Thessalonians was read to repeat many of the themes from the first letter and encourage everyone to believe and behave as God was asking.

Paul

Like 1 Thessalonians, the author of the letter is the Apostle Paul along with Silvanus and Timothy, senior leaders on his ministry team. The opening and closing of 2 Thessalonians clearly name Paul as the author:

- 2 Thessalonians 1:1 – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians in God our
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...
- 2 Thessalonians 3:17 – I, Paul, write this greeting
with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness
in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.

Paul was likely born in the same decade as Jesus Christ and is believed to have died between AD 62-64. Known as the “apostle to the Gentiles”, he was largely responsible for Christianity expanding beyond the Jewish people to the nations of the earth and largest and most diverse movement of any kind in world

^o 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

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history. The following are some of the details regarding the life and ministry of Paul:

- Born as Saul in Tarsus (on the southern coast of modern-day Turkey). The exact date of his birth is unknown.
- Schooled as a Pharisee in Jerusalem under the religious leader Gamaliel.
- Became a traveling missionary and preacher for the early church; renamed Paul.
- Worked as an artisan who made tents.
- Was imprisoned multiple times by the Roman authorities for his religious agitation.
- Wrote several theological letters (some of which are included in the New Testament).
- Died sometime between AD 62–64; Paul may have been martyred in Rome.¹

It would be difficult to overestimate what the Holy Spirit has accomplished through Paul. He is one of the most genius minds and towering figures in the history of planet earth. Even Peter, the human leader of the early church following Jesus' resurrection, was clear that Paul wrote Scripture, and was a genius saying, "Our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures."²

The majority of the New Testament falls into one of three categories:

1. Written by Paul. Of the 27 books of the New Testament, Paul wrote at least 13 (the author of

² 2 Peter 3:15-17

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Hebrews is uncertain but may have also been Paul) over the course of 15-plus years. He wrote to at least seven different churches and two individual church leaders.

2. Written about Paul. The history book of the early church, Acts, focuses on the mission work of Paul in chapters 13-28.
3. Written by someone working closely with Paul. The author of Luke and Acts, Luke, was Paul's friend, travelling companion, and doctor.

When ministry funding was lacking, Paul worked as a tentmaker to pay for the needs of his gospel ministry.^o Sadly, a popular myth has emerged that men of God should be soft, not hard; passive, not active; weak, not strong. Nothing could be further from the truth when examining the life and ministry of Paul. He was relentless, endured suffering much like a military prisoner of war, and never waved a white flag of surrender but kept marching forward unflinching. Constantly enduring spiritual warfare against Satan, demons, and enemies of the gospel, Paul made a list of his sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28:

- He was whipped with 39 lashes five times.
- He was beaten three times.
- He was stoned one time.
- He was shipwrecked three times.
- He was arrested three times.
- He was imprisoned two times.
- He was frequently in danger from both Jews and Gentiles.
- He was often hungry, thirsty, cold, and tired.
- He was anxious for all the churches.

^o Acts 18:1-3

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If Paul had a job description, it would be: “afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger”.^a

Paul’s Second Letter to the Thessalonians

The format of both letters to the Thessalonians are in the common format of an ancient letter:

- Greeting between the author and audience^b
- Encouraging thanksgiving^c
- Primary content to communicate^d
- Exhortations and expectations from the leader to the people^e
- A closing farewell^f

The New Christians to whom Paul writes believed that Jesus had come the first time to live without sin, die for their sin, and rise from death to forgive sin and open Heaven. They also believed in the Second Coming of Jesus to raise the dead, lift the curse, judge the unbelieving, and reward the saints with eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Like many new Christians, they became a bit too enamored with the complicated area of Biblical study called “eschatology”.

A Bible dictionary explains this term is, “Derived from the combination of the Greek *eschatos*, meaning “last,” and *logos*, meaning “word” or “significance.” Refers to the biblical doctrine of last things.”²

A dictionary of theological terms further explains that “eschatology...refers to the ultimate climax or end of history wherein Christ returns to earth to establish his eternal kingdom of righteousness and justice among all nations. Eschatology, then, is the theological

^a 2 Corinthians 6:4-5 ^b 2 Thessalonians 1:1 ^c 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4 ^d 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 ^e 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 ^f 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

study that seeks to understand the ultimate direction or purpose of history as it moves toward the future, both from an individual perspective (What happens when a person dies?) and from a corporate perspective (Where is history going, and how will it end?).”³

Once you know Jesus, and believe in life with Him forever, it can become increasingly frustrating to live in our fallen, broken, and painful world. The Thessalonians would have been happy for Jesus to return in their day and were likely expecting Him to do so. A few thousand years later, things have not gotten any better and many, if not most Christians, feel a lot like the Thessalonians did – wondering how much worse it can get and when Jesus will return to make it all better.

A Bible commentary says, “The central message of 2 Thessalonians concerns the tension of living as a believer in the present while anticipating the return of Christ and the Day of the Lord. The three main sections of the letter all relate to this tension, though they may seem disconnected at first glance. In 2 Thessalonians 1:5–12, Paul reminds the Thessalonian believers that Christ’s return will bring judgment against those who persecute them because of their faith. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12, Paul dispels rumors that the Day of the Lord has already arrived. In 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15, he urges the Thessalonian believers to continue to work diligently and not burden their fellow Christians by depending on them for their livelihood. As a whole, 2 Thessalonians calls believers to understand the relationship between their present life on earth and their future eternal life with the Lord; it anticipates the promised return of Christ at the Day of the Lord while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of living faithfully until His return.”⁴

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4 Troubles in Thessalonica

For the Apostle Paul to sit down, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to write a book of the Bible means that a genuine need for the church existed, and that he loved God's people so dearly that he would do most anything to love and lead them. There are three primary reasons why Paul writes his second letter to the church at Thessalonica.

1. **Persecution.** The new Christians in the church were experiencing ongoing and escalating persecution, "we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring".^a Like every age, the suffering came from non-Christians, including both pagans and religious people.^b The persecution was mentioned in the first letter^c but time only made matters worse. Anytime God is doing ministry, you can expect Satan to be doing anti-ministry. In the West, this kind of opposition exists on every front as Christians are fighting to keep their churches open and speech free, are seeing employment at companies becoming increasingly hostile to traditional values, and find themselves constantly berated in mainstream news, social media platforms, and political decisions. Suffering and persecution can be confusing for believers, especially those new to the faith, because they believe that God is powerful and good, yet they must go through hardship without God removing it altogether.

^a 2 Thessalonians 1:4 ^b 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 ^c 1 Thessalonians 1:6,2:14,3:3

2. **False Teaching.** Like most new Christians, these believers were not yet discerning and more susceptible to false teaching, especially if they claimed to be agreeing with Paul, who became their spiritual father by preaching the gospel and planting the church before having to leave town following a riot that threatened his life.^a In the ancient Roman version of fake news, these false teachers wrote a document that was a complete forgery that claimed to be another letter from Paul to be read in the church.^b Paul flatly denounces and rebukes these liars saying in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, “Let no one deceive you in any way.”
3. **Confusion.** The new Christians were confused about Jesus’ Second Coming and, like most young believers, had a lot of questions about the end times.^c Like many new Christians, they wondered what happened to believers who died before the resurrection, when Jesus would return, what the signs of His coming would be, and what Heaven and Hell would be like.
4. **Laziness.** Some people in the church were lazy, refused to work, and expected the other believers to pay their bills and meet their needs.^d Paul addressed this sin in the first letter, but apparently the sluggards had not yet found a job and started paying their own bills.^e One Bible commentator says, “Their profile becomes clearer in chapter 3 than it has been before. These irresponsible ‘busybodies’ were ignoring the teaching Paul had already given, both in person and by letter. So he is obliged now to issue some

^a Acts 17:1-9 ^b 2 Thessalonians 2:2 ^c 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

^d 2 Thessalonians 4:11-12 ^e 2 Thessalonians 4:11-12

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sharp, authoritative instructions, which border on excommunication.”⁵ Sadly, there are some in every age, including our own, who seek to take advantage of the love and generosity of Christians. These moochers burden believers to house them, feed them, pay their bills, and meet their needs simply because they don’t like to work and make others wrongly feel obligated to care for them and guilty if they do not.

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CHAPTER 2

A Basic Introduction to End Times Beliefs

There are two primary ways that history has been perceived by academics. One is a cyclical view of history, whereby there is no clear beginning or end to human history, but rather a series of repeating cycles and events. The other is a linear view of history, which is the storyline of the Bible – that God created history with a beginning, is ruling over history with the purpose of overcoming human sin and returning to His divine design plan in Genesis 1-2, and is bringing history as we know it to an end and ushering in a new beginning for an eternal reset of history with the resurrection of the dead, return of Jesus Christ for judgment, and His rule forever and ever over all.

The most controversial and complex area of Biblical study is the end times, or what theologians refer to as, “Eschatology, from...[Greek]...*eschatos*, ‘last’; the term refers to ‘the doctrine of the last things’.”⁶

A Bible dictionary says, “The Bible’s images of the end are built around a cluster of time images. One of these is the image of ‘latter days’ (Jer 23:20; 30:24; Ezek 38:16; Jas 3:5) or ‘last day(s)’ (Jn 6:39–40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48; 2 Tim 3:1; Jas 5:3; 2 Pet 3:3). Another motif is ‘the end’ (Dan 8:17; 9:26; 10:14; 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9, 13; Mt 10:22; 13:39–40, 49; 24:3, 6, 13–14; 28:20; etc.). Yet another image is a coming Day of the Lord (two

dozen references). While the details of sequence are not always clear in these references, they establish an important aspect of the Bible's view of history, namely, that it is moving in linear fashion to an appointed consummation."⁷

Godly Christians with the Holy Spirit who love Jesus and have studied the Bible intently come to a wide array of very different conclusions. This reality should give us humility and grace. We should be humble with our conclusions and gracious with those who disagree. There are at least four reasons why the study of eschatology is difficult.

One, the prophetic portions of the Bible referring to the last days include a lot of apocalyptic imagery. There is a debate if these images, including periods of time, should be taken figuratively or literally. Sometimes, English translations of the Bible use words such as "like" or "as" to indicate that what is being described is difficult for the person who saw something in the Spirit to explain it with words.

Two, since the end times have not yet happened, it is complicated to anticipate the future in detail. Furthermore, since the events promised by the Bible at the end of time have not happened, we cannot be sure who was right and who was wrong until it actually happens.

Three, the end times are painted in massive epochal imagery that is difficult to fully comprehend because of its' sheer scope. A Bible Dictionary says, "Two main principles underlie the Bible's images of the end. One is their cosmic scope. Prophecies of the end times are not stories of individuals but of natural forces and nations, both political and spiritual. Events at the end are happening on a huge scale, creating an impression of a stampede of masses toward a terrible destruction.

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The second pattern is that the images of the end are predominantly images of terror—a terror made all the more forceful by their power or hugeness (e.g., earthquakes, floods, invading armies, demonic forces) and the suddenness with which they inflict destruction on the earth. The major lessons that these visions of the end teach are the predictable spread of evil, the certainty of God's wrath and judgment against evil, the need for endurance (Rev 13:10) and a stance of preparedness for what is coming (Mt 24:25)."⁸

Four, the last book of the Bible, Revelation, is one of if not the most difficult and complicated books for scholars in the entire Bible. The scenes shift from the seen to unseen realms, the past, present and future, and are the reports of John the disciple, who is trying to explain in words what he saw as a vision in the Spirit.⁹ In the book of Revelation alone there are many numbers (3, 3.5, 4, 7, 10, 12, 23, 42, 666, 1000, 1260, 12,000, 144,000), colors (gold, white red, black, green, purple, blue), things (robes, belts, crowns, stars, swords, eyes, horns, wings, lampstands, stones), places (Babylon, New Jerusalem, New Zion, New Eden, divine counsel room, throne), and creatures (angels, demons, horses, lamb, beastly woman, a beast, harlot, serpent, lion, bear, birds). Determining whether these are all literal or figurative, and how they might relate to other appearances throughout the Bible is incredibly complicated, to say the least.

3 Views on Eschatology

To catalogue all the nuanced and varied beliefs about eschatology would be nearly impossible. In

⁹ Revelation 1

summary, a Bible dictionary says, "In the twentieth century there have been three basic forms of eschatology: thoroughgoing or consistent, realized, and inaugurated.

- *Thoroughgoing eschatology*...is the view that Jesus and his followers proclaimed the imminent end of history. Since the end did not come when they expected, Jesus submitted to death as a way of forcing the full arrival of the kingdom.
- *Realized eschatology*...takes the position that the first coming of Christ represents the full presence of the kingdom of God.
- *Inaugurated eschatology*...views the first coming of Christ as the beginning of the kingdom that will be consummated at his second coming. As a result, believers live between the overlap of the 'already' and the 'not yet'. The last view most adequately represents the evangelical understanding of the biblical material."⁹

Like most evangelical Christians, I hold the inaugurated eschatology view. In our study of 1-2 Thessalonians, I will be teaching from the viewpoint that the Kingdom of God began at Jesus' First Coming, He currently rules over our world and history, is working through His Church by the Holy Spirit, and will return to unveil His Kingdom in fullness forever. With other Bible-believing Christians, despite all the secondary open-handed issues (e.g. the length of millennium, whether or not there will be a rapture and if so when, who the antichrist might be, what the mark of the beast might refer to, etc.), there are many points of closed-handed agreement that are well-summarized in an old worship hymn, "Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again."

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A rather recent system of belief in Christian history called “dispensationalism”, despite lots of disagreement, has become the most well-known and popular eschatology in recent years, dominating best-selling books and movies on the end times. A Bible encyclopedia says, “The heart of this system is not, as has often been supposed, seven dispensations; it is rather that there are two peoples of God, Israel and the Church, for whom God has different programs and different destinies. This basic premise rests upon a strictly literal interpretation of the OT. The OT promises that Israel will be God’s people forever and the promises that the nation will be restored in Palestine to rule over the Gentiles are taken as the basic program for eschatology; the NT is interpreted in terms of this OT program. Therefore, Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of the heavens was an offer of this earthly nationalistic kingdom to the nation Israel. The Sermon on the Mount is the new law for the earthly kingdom. The Olivet Discourse and the Revelation of John are largely concerned with the eschatology of the Jewish nation, not with the Church; for the Church belongs to the “Great Parenthesis” in God’s program for Israel. In this system the millennium is quite essential, for only in this period can the promises of God to Israel be fulfilled.”¹⁰

Those Bible scholars who disagree with dispensationalism would not see two peoples of God – the age of the Old Testament and the Church age – but instead one people of God. Subsequently, people in the Old and New Testaments were saved the same way – by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, God’s end times prophecies were given to God’s people in general, and not Jewish people in particular. In any case, this is a difficult and deeply debated issue within

theology that greatly shapes how much of the Bible is ready, especially the remaining promises, to be fulfilled in the last days.

8 Major Themes in Eschatology

Under the broad category of eschatology, there are individual themes that appear throughout the Scripture. Each of these themes is critical for God's people to understand the purpose of life, what happens after death, where our deceased loved ones are until the resurrection, when Jesus will return, and what happens after He raises His people from the dead. Here is a brief summary of the major eight themes in eschatology from an encyclopedia of the Bible:

“Death. The Bible teaches that all humans will die (Heb 9:27). The only exceptions will be those who are still alive when Christ returns (1 Thes 4:17). Physical death, or the ‘first death,’ is the separation of the soul from the body...

The Intermediate State. This refers to the condition of the person between the time of death and the resurrection. The traditional orthodox view is that believers experience a state of conscious bliss in the presence of the Lord, while unbelievers are tormented by separation from the presence of God...

The Second Coming. Scripture teaches that at the end of time Christ will return in a personal, bodily form (Acts 1:11). No one knows exactly when this will occur, and it will consequently catch some by surprise, coming as a thief in the night (Lk 12:39, 40). Although the time is not known, the fact that it will occur is very definite.

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Many of Jesus' parables (esp. in Mt 24; 25) refer to this fact and to the appropriateness of alert, faithful, and intensive activity.

The Resurrection. All who have died will come to life. This will be a bodily resurrection, a resumption of bodily existence of each person. For believers this will take place in connection with the second coming of Christ, and will involve the transformation of the body of this present flesh into a new, perfected body (1 Cor 15:35–56). The Bible also indicates a resurrection of unbelievers, unto eternal death (Jn 5:28, 29).

The Judgment. There will be a time of judgment... some will be sent off to everlasting reward and others to eternal punishment...

The Final States. The Bible teaches the existence of heaven, a place of eternal joy, where Christians are in the presence of God, and of hell...

The Millennium. Many Christians believe there will be an earthly reign of God, called the millennium, immediately preceding the final judgment...based on Revelation 20:4–7. Those who hold that Christ will return personally to inaugurate this period are called premillennialists. Others, who teach that the kingdom will be established through the progressive successful preaching of the gospel, are termed postmillennialists. Still others, called amillennialists, do not believe that there will be any earthly reign of Christ at all, interpreting the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 symbolically.

The Great Tribulation. The Bible speaks of a time

of great anguish or tribulation...exceeding anything that has ever occurred before. Some, identifying this with the 70th week of Daniel 9:24–27, believe it will be of seven years duration. Some believe the church will be present to experience this, the Lord not returning until the end of the period. These are termed posttribulationists. Others, known as pretribulationists, believe that the Lord's second coming will be in two stages, or phases—that, in addition to his public second coming, Christ will come for his church, to remove them from the world, or “rapture” them, before the great tribulation. Still others, known as midtribulationists, believe that the church will be present for the first half of the seven years but will be removed before the severe part of the tribulation begins.”¹¹

In closing, eschatology can be a fun area of Bible study to discuss, dialogue, and debate. However, we must not let it become a divisive issue between Christians. The one thing we all agree upon is that we will be together forever with Jesus, and every one of us will learn some things that we were wrong about while we studied the Bible on the earth. Jesus encouraged us to approach the last days with humility saying in Matthew 24:36, “concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.”

Lastly, studying eschatology can and should have some tremendous blessings to believers. Returning to the books of 1-2 Thessalonians, here are some examples of the ways that the growing darkness that leads to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ should comfort, strengthen, and encourage believers:

- Knowing that Jesus is returning to pour out wrath

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on unrepentant sinners motivates us to say no to idolatry, and yes to ministry: "...you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."^a

- Knowing that the world will become more opposed to Christians as the return of Christ nears is a good encouragement for believers to love one another more and more: "Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints."^b
- Knowing that believers who die are safe with Jesus, and that we will see them again in the eternal Kingdom of God allows us to grieve the loss of loved ones with hope and encouragement that the loss is only temporary: "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet

^a 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 ^b 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

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of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”^o

- Knowing what the future holds allows us to be sober in body and mind, devoted to enduring whatever birth pains are necessary to see the Kingdom of God birthed, and building one another up so that God’s family is strong, healthy, and ready to greet Jesus at His return: “Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one

^o 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

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another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”^a

- Knowing that God will get vengeance on our enemies, and reward us for all we have suffered, should give us a long and patient view that keeps us from bitterness as we are being treated as Jesus was when He was on the earth: “This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”^b
- Knowing that the spirit of anti-Christ is at work in our world until Jesus comes to forever defeat it helps us to understand why life is hard even though God is good, and assures us that the end is

^a 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 ^b 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12

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coming, and the new eternity is certain: "...that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."^a

- Knowing that Jesus Christ has secured our eternal life allows us to have the hope and grace we need to remain steadfast throughout this life: "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word."^b

^a 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 ^b 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

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Throughout the Bible, including Paul's letters of 1-2 Thessalonians, the contrast between the eternal fate that awaits believers and unbelievers is put forth in the starkest terms. For God's people, this life is our Hell. This is as close to Hell as we will ever get, and Heaven ruled by our King Jesus awaits us. For the unbeliever, this life is their Heaven. This life is as close to Heaven as they will ever get, and Hell ruled by our King Jesus awaits them. Forever is a long time, and this life for the Christian is the walk through a little Hell on our way to Heaven.

For those who might have some specific common questions about Heaven and Hell, there is a revised 10-year anniversary edition of *Doctrine: It's All About Jesus!*, a detailed systematic theology I wrote.^o In the appendix of this study guide, portions of *Doctrine* will be used to answer some common questions about Heaven and Hell.

^o <https://realfaith.com/store/doctrine-its-all-about-jesus/>

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CHAPTER 3

2 Thessalonians Personal and Group Study Guide

Week 1: More Courage. Less Coward.

Scripture to Read: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 – To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Commentary:

A friend of mine who was in the military once shared a harrowing war story with me. He and his men were deployed in Iraq and on patrol when they walked into an ambush. Enemies had set a trap for them that they unfortunately could not get out of. They were surrounded on all sides, taking heavy enemy fire, low on supplies and ammunition, and had to settle in for a long fire fight. Thankfully, their communications still worked, and they were able to call in for support. Exhausted, beat up, stressed out, and on alert, the soldiers needed to keep fighting to hold their position until reinforcements showed up, put down the enemy,

and got them safely home.

The Bible talks a lot about spiritual warfare, which has a lot in common with actual combat. For the Church, we are surrounded by the Enemy at work in the world seeking to steal, kill, and destroy. In prayer, we have communications access to Jesus Christ who is our King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We know that one day, Jesus Christ is riding into history on a white horse with an army called the angelic host to destroy His enemies and ours. The question is, when will this happen? How long do we need to wait?

This is precisely the mood behind Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians who were experiencing "affliction", "conflict", "distress", "darkness", "evil", "persecutions", "suffering", "rebellion", "lawlessness", "wicked deception", "unrighteousness", ultimately from "wicked and evil men", and "Satan".

Paul opens his letter by telling the believers that he and his senior leadership team with Silvanus and Timothy are for them and there to help. Paul also says that "grace and peace" come from the Father through the Son to teach them that the troubles they are battling are not from God but because God's Enemy and enemies are now theirs as well. In this way, getting attacked and having trouble is a good sign, because it reveals that the church has been loyal to King Jesus, which made them a target for the Kingdom of Darkness. As God often does, the pressure on the church increased the "love" in the church, as they are "steadfast", rock solid, and immovable in their loyalty to the Lord.

Paul then reminds us all that Jesus Christ is coming. Jesus Christ came the first time in humility and will come the second time in glory. Jesus Christ came the first time to die for sinners and will come the second

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time to put sinners to death. Jesus Christ came the first time as a Lamb and will come the second time as a Lion.

The promises in this section of Scripture are staggering, intended to put steel in the spine of weary believers:

1. You are suffering for King Jesus and the Kingdom of God!
2. King Jesus will return and “afflict” everyone who has caused you “affliction”!
3. Your affliction will end forever once King Jesus returns!
4. You won’t need to fight, because King Jesus will bring His army of “mighty angels” to the battle with Satan, demons, and evildoers much like the Air Force or Navy Top Gun pilots reigning down fire from the skies!
5. The Bible repeatedly tells us not to seek vengeance, because vengeance is the Lord’s and King Jesus will come as our Avenger greater than the blockbuster movies with “punishment” and “eternal destruction”!
6. You won’t have to deal with demons or evildoers again because they will be sentenced away from God’s “presence” in the Kingdom!
7. King Jesus will make you “glorified” so that you are perfectly healed, whole, resurrected, and restored forever!

We know *Who* is coming, and *how* He is coming, but we do not know *when* He is coming. Faith is holding the line until we see Him face-to-face and that is the exhortation Paul gives the early Church and the Church in every age since.

Dig Deeper.

1. In this section of Scripture, we see our God and Savior Jesus Christ getting vengeance on evildoers. Look up the following Scriptures where we are told to not take vengeance but trust the Lord to take vengeance on our behalf: Deuteronomy 32:35-43; Romans 12:17-21.
2. In his previous letter, Paul also explained the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:4). Read that Scripture along with 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12.
3. Read what Jesus had to say about His Second Coming in Matthew 24:30-31, 25:31-46.
4. For those who want to learn more about Spiritual Warfare, I wrote a book with my wife Grace called *Win Your War* that is available at realfaith.com/store, and there is also a free sermon series by the same name on that website.

Walk it out. Talk it out.

1. Start by having someone in the group read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 aloud.
2. Some Christians lean more toward mercy, while others lean more toward justice. With kindness, go around the group and explain which direction you lean and your initial reaction to the language of Jesus bringing an army to unleash fire, affliction, and vengeance.
3. Christians often talk about being “saved” but don’t often understand that we are saved by God from the wrath of God. Reading what will happen to unbelievers, how does it make you grateful that Jesus came the first time to die and rise for you and save you from His wrath?
4. Who are you praying becomes a Christian and

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gets saved by Jesus so they can avoid the terrifying promise of this section of Scripture? Spend time praying for lost family and friends and committing to intentionally pursue them to share the love and hope of Jesus Christ with them.

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Week 2: More Discernment. Less Deception.

Scripture to Read: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 – The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

Commentary:

Lord Acton writing to Bishop Creighton in 1887 made the now famous statement, “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely”.¹² Throughout human history, there has been a parade of people who seem to be the embodiment of evil proving this very tragic truth.¹³

Khmer Rouge regime leader Pol Pot brought genocide to Cambodia from 1975-1979. It is estimated that anywhere from 1.5-3 million people died in a failed attempt at agrarian socialism based upon the failed communist teachings of Stalinism and Maoism. The ensuing relocation and torture of citizens that included slave labor, along with executions that filled 23,745 discovered mass graves, along with starvation and disease, likely killed an additional 2 million people so that 25% of the nation’s population was murdered in some form or fashion by their government.

One of history’s most brutal women was Ranavalona I of Madagascar who had a 13-year reign of terror (1829-1842). Cutting her nation off from trade, enslaving citizens to pay off burdensome taxation, and committed to never-ending wars of expansion, half the citizens of Madagascar died as the total population fell

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from 5 to 2.5 million citizens across the island.

The Nazi holocaust (1939-1945) took the lives of some 17 million people. Adolf Hitler looked a lot like the Bible's depiction of the antichrist – worshipped like a god with seemingly supernatural power trying to rule the earth with force and evil.

Joseph Stalin's rule (1922-1953) included murder, famine, slavery, and massacres that took the lives of an estimated 15 million people at minimum, with some estimates being much higher.

Lastly, Chinese dictator Mao Zedong (1946-1976) imposed slave labor, killed political dissidents, exterminated entire classes of people, and let 15 million people starve to death with some estimates saying he is responsible for the death of upwards of 70 million people.

Jesus Christ is God who became a man and lived a perfectly righteous life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Satan has always worked through evildoers in every generation to counterfeit Christ with the anti-Christ. To be anti-Christ is to seek to remove Christ as Lord and replace Christ with another Lord. 2 Thessalonians 2:4 says he “exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.” Throughout history, anti-Christ leaders are filled with demonic power to do anti-ministry. 2 John 1:7 says that the parade of anti-Christ throughout history will culminate in the coming of the Anti-Christ at the end of history, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.”

In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, Paul teaches about the “man of lawlessness”. Before Jesus returns, this fully

Satanic possessed world leader will rise up, seeking to rule the earth in place of Christ: “The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”

Combining politics, religion, and celebrity status, people from the nations of the earth will worship him as the hope of the planet and love him because he preaches celebration of sin instead of repentance of sin to those who take “pleasure in unrighteousness.” In every age, the lawless anti-Christ has longed to rule the world, but we are told through Paul that he has been restrained by God, proving that even though Satan rules the earth, Jesus Christ still rules over the Devil.

Where is history going? Paul is clear the progressive myth that people are good, and civilizations improve over time is a lie. The storyline of the Bible is that people are sinners, the world is cursed, Satan and demons are real, and evildoers are everywhere. A Bible commentary says, “To convince the Thessalonians that the Day of the Lord had not yet arrived, in 2 Thess 2:1–12 Paul asserts that two events must first occur: the arrival of the man of lawlessness and ‘the rebellion’ (*hē apostasia*). Typically translated as ‘rebellion’ or ‘apostasy’ in English...”¹⁴

The last days delusion will be so powerful that even some who profess to be Christians but do not possess saving faith will fall away and join the man of lawlessness. Some churches, pulpits, and even entire denominations will get caught up in the frenzy of worshipping a counterfeit Christ. The only hope for everyone and everything is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ at the final moment in history when the

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anti-Christ man of lawlessness rises up: “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.”^a

How incredible is this scene! The most powerful person ruled by Satan in the history of the earth is brought to nothing by one single breath from the mouth of our God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Dig Deeper.

1. To learn more about the “man of lawlessness”, read Daniel 11:29-35.
2. To learn more about Jesus’ Second Coming and battle with the anti-Christ, read Revelation 22:1-7.
3. To learn more about Jesus coming for His people, read Isaiah 43:5-7 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Walk it out. Talk it out.

1. Paul mentions a fake letter that apostate false teachers wrote in his name to confuse and deceive the people (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3a). How is it easier than ever for Christians in our day to get “shaken”, “alarmed”, and “deceive[d]” by fake news, outright lies, and false teaching?
2. What are some anti-Christ movements and leaders in our own day that are against Christ, and seeking to replace Him with ungodliness, that believers should be aware of? How should we respond to them?
3. While this scene is dark, spend some time encouraging one another with the thought of Jesus’ Second Coming including His utter defeat of Satan, the anti-Christ, evildoers, and all that

^a 2 Thessalonians 2:8

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is against God and His people. Spend some time in prayer thanking Jesus that He is coming and do so to encourage one another.

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Week 3: More Rising Up. Less Bowing Down.

Scripture to Read: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

2 Thessalonians 3:3 – ...the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.

Commentary:

In many battles, great sacrifices are made, including lives lost, to secure small areas of land. Once ground has been taken, it must then be secured and kept, or the entire victory is in vain.

One such example from American history is the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775, during the American Revolutionary War. Colonial and British troops grappled for control of the strategically advantageous Bunker Hill in Massachusetts, which helped to safeguard a nearby harbor. Some 1200 Colonial soldiers stood guard to solidify this and other surrounding hills, but the British attacked them and eventually overtook the hill because Colonial soldiers ran out of ammunition. The British, however, could not secure and retain the hill they won in battle, losing around 1,000 soldiers, including 100 officers, and running low on supplies and leadership. Even though the British soldiers outgunned the Colonials largely comprised of farmers by a margin of 2-1, the Colonials retook the hill. The British lost many lives to take ground that they would quickly lose, making their entire effort in vain and demoralizing, a classic example of a Pyrrhic victory.

In this section of his letter to the new Christians in the church at Thessalonica, Paul is encouraging them to “stand firm” with “steadfastness” and not give in

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to all the criticism and temptation (especially sexual) that surrounded them. Their day was just like ours; it was easy to be an unbeliever or an apostate who said they believed in God but did not live for God, and it was difficult and costly to be a true Christian who was unwavering in their beliefs or behavior.

Since believers get so much criticism and discouragement, Paul's example of praising and encouraging is important. He says, "we...thank God for you...beloved by the Lord..."^a He goes on to encourage them that they were undergoing "sanctification by the Spirit".^b What this means is that God was using the worst hardships of their life to shape the best parts of their character. Because of their steadfastness, they were becoming more like Jesus, which explains why the world hated them more and more. The same is true for you if you are a Christian. To be sure, sometimes we sin and make a mess of our own life. Other times, we are suffering not because of anything we'd done wrong, but precisely for doing what is right. When we are in these tough seasons, Paul's words bring much encouragement, hope, and resolve: "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word."^c When you are for God, you can be sure that God is for you! When you are standing for Christ, you can be sure that Christ is standing with you! The Holy Spirit says through Paul, "But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love

^a 2 Thessalonians 2:13 ^b 2 Thessalonians 2:13 ^c 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

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of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.”^a

Lastly, as their most senior human leader, Paul asks, “pray for us”.^b A ministry leader spends their life pouring out and needs God to pour in to replenish them. Paul’s main concern is for the Word of God: “...that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men.”^c When the Bible says that the Bible is a sword^d, it means that it’s an offensive weapon of war to dethrone lies and darkness for King Jesus. A Bible teaching ministry that is advancing to reach more people will face attacks from those doing anti-ministry. Anymore, you have to wonder if a preacher who never gets in trouble or endures slander and controversy is actually faithful to the Word of God. Preaching and teaching the Word of God is an act of spiritual war, and anytime a faithful believer picks up the Bible you can expect Satan, demons, and their minions of evildoers to declare war and bring the fight. For the Christian, this fact should bring clarity and encouragement. This is a normal part of the faithful Christian’s life, and is nothing that should shock or discourage us.

Dig Deeper.

1. To learn more about perseverance, which is the theme of this section, read the following Scriptures: Matthew 24:13; Romans 5:3-5, 8:35-39; James 1:23; Jude 1:17-21.
2. Those who persevere are called overcomers. Look up what the Bible says about these people who follow in Jesus’ victory: John 16:33; Romans 12:21; 1 John 1:4-5, 2:13-14; 4:4, 5:4-5.

^a 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5 ^b 2 Thessalonians 3:1 ^c 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

^d Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17

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Walk it out. Talk it out.

1. What are the beliefs that God is calling you to “stand firm” in and not waver?
2. What are the behaviors that God is calling you to “stand firm” in and not compromise?
3. How can you be praying for each other? Spend time doing that by starting with encouragement for one another on things that are noble as Paul mentions to the Thessalonians.
4. As Paul asked for prayer for himself and the other ministry leaders, spend some time praying for the leaders in your church or ministry.

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Week 4: More Working. Less Whining.

Scripture to Read: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

2 Thessalonians 3:13 – As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.

Commentary:

We tend to think of Jesus' life on earth largely in terms of His ministry – preaching sermons, casting out demons, performing miracles, and getting pestered by religious neatniks. Scholars believe that Jesus lived roughly 33 years on the earth and spent around three years doing ministry. That means about 90% of Jesus' earthly life was spent NOT doing vocational ministry. What then was He doing? Working a job to pay his bills.

Our God works. The opening pages of Genesis reveal God working in six days and taking a day off to Sabbath. When Genesis says that God “created”, it is the same Hebrew word used elsewhere in the Old Testament for people working their jobs. God's people have always followed this pattern, as commanded throughout the Scriptures.

Since Christ worked, you simply cannot be like Christ if you won't work. To be sure, our work can be paid like a dad who goes to his job or unpaid like his wife who stays home to raise the kids – but work is worship for the Christian. Colossians 3:23–25 says, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men...from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”

Because our God rules and reigns over all, there is no such thing as sacred and secular, as is common in many other religions. In the Bible, a long list of

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honorable professions are named among God's people – carpentry, tent making, fishing, medicine, teaching, farming, politics, metal work, music, investing, labor, construction, law, consulting, cooking, architecture, athletics, entertainment, banking, military, real estate, clothing, mothering, sales, etc. are all affirmed as God-honoring labors in the Scriptures.

Historically, Protestants have worked, and the noted German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) famously said the “Protestant work ethic” was the primary force responsible for American prosperity as people chased the American dream through hard work. To prepare their children to work, Protestant parents gave their children chores to teach them how to work unto the Lord.

There is a myth that once we are raised from the dead and living in the Kingdom of God, that there will be no more work. That is untrue. In the opening pages of Genesis, before sin entered the world, we are told that, “The Lord God took the man & put him in the garden of Eden to work...”^a To be sure, Genesis 3 says that work is now cursed and far more difficult but work itself is a grace and not a curse. God's eternal plan is to return to His original divine design of Genesis 1-2 because His plan was right and, though we got it wrong, He's not changing His plan. This means, in the Kingdom, we will have meaningful work to do, we will explore the vast corners of God's creation, build cities, cook amazing meals, hear incredible bands, enjoy jaw dropping art, play sports, throw parties, and do what God planned for us before our sin crushed us.

In Paul's day, and our own, there is a group of Christians who don't want to work, expect the church or the government to provide for them from womb to

^a Genesis 2:15

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tomb, are lazy, entitled, and make people feel guilty for not giving more and more to them. The rising affluence along with a sense of socialistic entitlement in the West has made this worse than ever. This cultural entitlement explains why one of the most controversial Scriptures is 1 Timothy 5:8: “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” I have gone viral to millions of young men on social media by triggering them through simply reading this verse without comment. The Bible has nothing good to say about able-bodied believers who will not work, or are lazy, and the rebuke is strongest for men who claim Christ but don’t work.

In our day, when it seems everyone wants to be a victim so they can be compensated and not have to work, or politicians promise to take money from people who go to work to give it to people who do not, the words of Paul are incredibly timely:

“Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now

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such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”^a

Today, there is a record number of young people, especially young men, who are able-bodied but not working or looking for work. They are referred to as NILF – Not in Labor Force. These young men are living with their mother, mooching off her hard work, and, if Paul is to be believed, these young men need to either get a job or get kicked out of their mother’s house. Eventually, their hunger will motivate them to go look for work.

There is something dignified and honorable about working hard, being a responsible adult, and not being dependent upon others to provide for your needs. The less people work, the less people there are to mooch off in church and tax through the government which leads to the kind of unprecedented national and personal debt that is crushing the United States and other foolish nations. God’s people are supposed to think and act differently, as the Lordship of Jesus Christ extends all the way to the mechanic turning a wrench to the glory of God.

Dig Deeper.

1. To learn more about what the Bible says about work, look up the following Scriptures: Proverbs 22:9; Ecclesiastes 2:24; John 5:17,36; Ephesians

^a 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

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2:8-10.

2. If you would like to learn more about what kinds of work, and other things, you will be doing in Heaven, there is a free sermon series at realfaith.com.^o

Walk it out. Talk it out.

1. How has God used working to disciple you, teach you vital lessons, grow your character, and disciple you?
2. What motivates some people to not work, or work halfheartedly? Have you ever fallen into this yourself or wrongly enabled and hindered someone who struggled with this?
3. What current work has God given you to do in this season of your life?
4. How can we pray for you?

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^o <https://realfaith.com/sermon-series/good-news/>

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APPENDIX

Answers to Common Questions About Heaven and Hell

Many years after the death of my Grandpa George, history repeated itself when my wife Grace got a call shortly after Christmas that her dad was dying. We were out of state on vacation at the time and hurried to the hospital to say our goodbyes.

Our five children had a lot of questions about the death of their grandpa Gib, most of them the same ones I had with my Grandpa George. In the days surrounding his death, we had some amazing and hopeful conversations.

Grandpa Gib was a pastor who loved Jesus and spent most of his life ministering to hurting people. So, we gave them the hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. First, we told them that, after dying, Grandpa Gib had everything not only get better but become perfect because “to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”^a Second, we told them that Grandpa Gib was hanging out with Jesus Christ, his favorite Person because to be “away from the body” is to be “at home with the Lord.”^b Third, we told them that my Grandpa George and their Grandpa Gib were probably hanging out as friends having fun. Fourth, we told them that one day there would be a huge family reunion when Jesus returns to give us perfect health in a resurrected body to live

^a Philippians 1:21 ^b 2 Corinthians 5:8

forever in a world filled with peace, joy, and sunshine together since “in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”^a

The Bible says that believers should grieve, but not like unbelievers who have no hope because our hope is in the risen Christ Jesus!^b So, we grieved as a family, thanked God for the memories with our grandpas, and had fun imagining what eternity will be like at the family reunion. One of the kids asked if they could play whiffle ball with the grandpas. Another asked if the grandpas could take them swimming and buy them ice cream. Since none was a sin, I told them that sounded like a good thing to look forward to. We explained that, after resurrection, we would all be happy living in a Kingdom made up by brothers and sisters from across the nations enjoying sunshine every day.

Hilariously, one of the kids said, “So heaven is basically like California!” We chuckled, thought about it for a moment, and said yes but only it’s better because it has similar weather but none of the taxes or politics.

The new Christians Paul writes 1-2 Thessalonians to had a lot of questions about Heaven and Hell. For those who have the same kind of questions, the book *Doctrine: It’s All About Jesus!* I co-wrote with Dr. Gerry Breshears has a special 10-year greatly revised version that is a comprehensive, yet readable, series of answers to big Bible questions.^c In this appendix, there are some summaries from *Doctrine* to answer common questions about Heaven and Hell.

^a 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 ^b 1 Thessalonians 4:13 ^c <https://realfaith.com/store/doctrine-its-all-about-jesus/>

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?

Bible-believing Christians grieve the loss of someone they love, but with the reassurance of eternal life, resurrection of the dead, and reunion of God’s entire Forever Family. This is grieving God’s heart, “Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.”^a

Upon death, a believer’s spirit immediately goes to Heaven to be with God.^b One picture is John’s vision of the souls of the martyrs crying out with a loud voice, “How long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”^c Paul’s confidence that death will be “far better” than fruitful work here on earth also serves to give hope to the believer.^d

Jesus gives us a picture in Luke 16:19–31 of existence after death. Lazarus, the godly beggar, goes to be with Abraham, while the self-indulgent rich man is in a place of torment. His deeds show that he does not love God.^e The rich man, self-absorbed in life and now in death, sees Lazarus only as an instrument of his comfort. His sinning continues in the afterlife. There is neither repentance for his injustice nor the expectation that he can get out of torment now that he is dead.

Jesus, who has come back from death and is thus the expert on what awaits us on the other side, was emphatically clear that a day of judgment is coming when everyone will rise from their graves and stand before Him for eternal sentencing to either worship in His Kingdom or suffer in His Hell.^f

At the final judgment, all—even you—will stand

^a 1 Thessalonians 4:13 (NIV) ^b 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; Philippians 1:23

^c Revelation 6:10 ^d Philippians 1:23 ^e 1 John 3:10, 4:8-21 ^f John 5:21-30

before Jesus. Jesus' followers, whose names are written in the Book of Life, will be with him forever. The Bible could not be clearer: "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."^a

WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' RESURRECTION?

The biblical evidence for Jesus' resurrection is compelling and can be briefly summarized in 10 points. Each of these points is consistent, and together they reveal that the Bible is emphatically and repeatedly clear on the fact of Jesus' resurrection.

1. Jesus' resurrection was prophesied in advance. Roughly 700 years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah promised that Jesus would be born into humble circumstances to live a simple life, die a brutal death, and then rise to take away our sin.^b
2. Jesus predicted His resurrection. On numerous occasions, Jesus plainly promised that He would die and rise three days later.^c
3. Jesus died. Before Jesus died, He underwent a sleepless night of trials and beatings that left Him exhausted. He was then scourged—a punishment so horrendous that many men died from it before even making it to their crucifixion. Jesus was crucified, and a professional executioner declared Him dead. To ensure Jesus was dead, a spear was thrust through His side and a mixture of blood and water poured

^a Revelation 20:15 ^b Isaiah 53:8-12 ^c Matthew 12:38-40; Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34; John 2:18-22

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out of His side because the spear burst His heart sac.^a Jesus' dead body was wrapped in upwards of 100 pounds of linens and spices, which, even if He was able to somehow survive the beatings, floggings, crucifixion, and a pierced heart, would have killed Him by asphyxiation. Even if through all of this Jesus somehow survived (which would in itself be a miracle), He could not have endured three days without food, water, or medical attention in a cold tomb carved out of rock. In summary, Jesus died.

4. Jesus was buried in a tomb that was easy to find. Some 700 years before Jesus was even born, God promised through Isaiah that Jesus would be assigned a grave "with a rich man in his death."^b This was incredibly unlikely, because Jesus was a very poor man who could not have afforded an expensive burial plot. Following Jesus' death, though, a wealthy and well-known man named Joseph of Arimathea gifted his expensive tomb for the burial of Jesus.^c As a result, the place of Jesus' burial was easy to confirm. Joseph, who owned the tomb, governmental leaders and their soldiers who were assigned to guard the tomb, and the disciples and women who visited the tomb and found it empty all knew exactly where Jesus' dead body was laid to rest. Had Jesus truly not risen from death, it would have been very easy to prove it by opening the tomb and presenting Jesus' dead body as evidence.
5. Jesus appeared physically, not just spiritually, alive three days after His death. Following Jesus'

^a John 19:34-35 ^b Isaiah 53:9 ^c Matthew 27:57-60

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resurrection, many people touched His physical body: His disciples clung to his feet^a, Mary clung to Him^b, and Thomas the doubter put his hand into the open spear hole in Jesus' side.^c Jesus also appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, but they were uncertain if He had truly physically risen from death. Still, Jesus was emphatic about His bodily resurrection and went out of His way to prove it:

“As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you!’ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.”^d

Furthermore, Jesus appeared physically alive over the course of 40 days^e to crowds as large as 500 people at a time.^f It is also significant to note that no credible historical evidence from that period exists to validate any alternative explanation for Jesus' resurrection other than His literal bodily resurrection.¹⁵

6. Jesus' resurrected body was the same as His pre-resurrection body. His disciples recognized Him as the same person who had been crucified^g

^a Matthew 28:9 ^b John 20:17 ^c John 20:20-28 ^d Luke 24:36-43 ^e Acts 1:3
^f 1 Corinthians 15:6 ^g Luke 24:31; cf. John 21:7, 12

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and Mary Magdalene recognized Him by the sound of His voice.^a While Jesus' resurrection body was the same, it was transformed. This explains why Jesus was not always immediately recognized after His resurrection^b and seemed to appear and reappear mysteriously.^c As James Orr noted, "[In] the narratives...it is implied that there was something strange – something unfamiliar or mysterious – in His aspect, which prevented His immediate recognition...which held them in awe."¹⁶ Paul explains this phenomenon in the lengthiest treatment of the nature of a resurrection body in all of Scripture^d: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body."^e This "spiritual body" refers to a resurrected body that has been perfected to its glorious state by the power of the Holy Spirit.

7. Jesus' resurrection was recorded as Scripture shortly after it occurred. Mark's Gospel account of the days leading up to Jesus' crucifixion mentions the high priest without naming Him.^f It can logically be inferred that Mark did not mention the high priest by name because he expected his readers to know who he was speaking of. Since Caiaphas was high priest from AD 18–37, the latest possible date for the tradition is AD 37.¹⁷ This date is so close to the death of Jesus that there would not have been sufficient time for a "legend" of His resurrection to have developed. This proves that the biblical record of Jesus' resurrection

^a John 20:16 ^b John 20:14,15; 21:4; Luke 24:15-16 ^c John 20:19; Luke 24:31,36 ^d 1 Corinthians 15 ^e 1 Corinthians 15:44 ^f Mark 14:53, 54, 60, 61, 63

was penned while the eyewitnesses were still alive to verify the facts. Thus, His resurrection is not a mythical legend that developed long after the time of Jesus. In fact, John Rodgers, former dean of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, says, “This is the sort of data that historians of antiquity drool over.”¹⁸

8. Jesus’ resurrection was celebrated in the earliest church creeds. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Paul says, “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” This statement is widely accepted as the earliest church creed, which began circulating as early as AD 30-36, shortly after Jesus’ resurrection. Considering the early age of this creed, there was not sufficient time between the crucifixion and the creed for any legend about Jesus’ resurrection to accrue. In addition, the witnesses mentioned were still alive and available to be questioned about the facts surrounding the resurrection. The early date of this creed also proves that the church did not corrupt the truth about Jesus with fables and folklores. Rather, the early church simply clung to the plain and incontrovertible facts of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection.
9. Jesus’ resurrection convinced His family to worship him as God. James, Jesus’ half-brother, was originally opposed to the claims of deity by his brother.^a A transformation occurred in James, though, after he saw his brother resurrected from death.^b James went on to

^a John 7:5 ^b 1 Corinthians 15:7

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pastor the church in Jerusalem and authored the New Testament epistle bearing his name.^a He was also actively involved in shaping the early Church, which suffered and died to proclaim to everyone that Jesus is the one true God.^b Also, Jesus' mother Mary was part of the early church that prayed to and worshiped her son as God^c, as was Jesus' other brother Jude, who wrote a book of the New Testament bearing his name.^d While it is not impossible to imagine Jesus convincing some people that He was God if He were not, it is impossible to conceive of Jesus convincing His own mother and brothers to suffer persecution in this life and risk the torments of Hell in eternal life for worshiping Him as the one true God unless He truly was.

10. Jesus' resurrection was confirmed by his most bitter enemies, such as Paul. Paul was a devout Jewish Pharisee who routinely persecuted and killed Christians.^e After an encounter with the risen Christ, Paul was converted and became the most dynamic defender and expander of the Church.^f Had Jesus not truly risen from death, it is absurd to assume that Paul would ever have worshiped Him as God, particularly when Paul rightly believed that worshiping a false God would send one into the eternal flames of Hell. Simply, Paul hated Jesus and would never have changed his religious practice unless Jesus had risen from death to prove him wrong. Furthermore, Paul insisted that Jesus had risen in almost all of his letters that are saved for us in the New Testament.

^a James 1:1 ^b Acts 12:17, 15:21-21, 21:18; Galatians 2:9 ^c Acts 1:14 ^d Acts 1:14; Jude 1 ^e Philipians 3:4-6; Acts 7:54-60 ^f Acts 9

WHAT HAS THE RESURRECTION ACCOMPLISHED FOR CHRISTIANS?

Those who come into God's family will be joined to Jesus in His death and resurrection life.^a This is what John calls being born again^b and Peter calls new birth.^c

Now that the risen Christ has been installed as our Messiah King, we can rest assured that, one day, Jesus will return to establish His throne on the earth and rule over His Kingdom, which extends to all of creation. Practically, Jesus' resurrection gives us confidence in His other promises that we are waiting to see fulfilled, such as His returning one day to judge sinners^d and reward saints.^e The Bible often speaks of our being united with Christ by His resurrection^f, being raised with Christ^g, and enjoying the same powerful Holy Spirit that raised Christ.^h In so doing, the Bible is stressing the innumerable blessings and benefits conferred on believers because of Jesus' resurrection.

Regarding our future, Jesus' resurrection is the precedent and pattern of our own: "Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."ⁱ As His body was resurrected in complete health, so too will we rise and never experience pain, injury, or death ever again. Because Jesus rose from death physically, we learn that God, through Christ, intends to reclaim and restore all that he made in creation and saw corrupted through the Fall. Our eternity will be spent in a world much like the one enjoyed by our first parents in Eden, because the earth has been reclaimed and restored by God through

^a Romans 6:3-5 ^b John 3:1-16 ^c 1 Peter 1:3, 23 ^d John 3:16, 18, 36; 5:25-29 ^e John 14:3 ^f Romans 6:5 ^g Colossians 2:12, 3:1 ^h 1 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 5:15 ⁱ 1 Corinthians 15:20

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Jesus' resurrection.

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

At its simplest, the Kingdom of God is about God ruling as King over everyone and everything forever, bringing His rule and reign to bear on every inch of creation for all eternity. This is the result of God's mission to rescue and renew His sin-marred creation. Jesus not only saves our souls; He's King over all kings and Lord over all lords, establishing His rule and reign over all, defeating the human and divine evil powers, bringing perfect order to all, enacting justice, and being worshiped as Lord.

God does not want us to be naïve, as if the Kingdom is fully here. And God does not want us to be hopeless, as if the Kingdom has not yet begun. The Kingdom has come with Jesus and is coming again with Jesus' Second Coming. God will work His rescue, not by obliterating the physical earth but by recreating it. He will use humans, who are part of the problem but become, by grace, part of the solution, to bless, redeem, and restore. In all this, we are not observers of a divine drama but participants helping with the redemption, each playing the role God has assigned for us to play in making the invisible Kingdom visible.

Jesus' resurrection prefigures our resurrection.^a In Jesus' death and resurrection, not only is the price of our sin paid, and our life after death secured, but the eternal life of God has truly come to this cursed earth with the coming of the King, God's Kingdom has come into this world.^b Because of King Jesus, there will be physical life again after a period of physical death.^c

^a 1 Corinthians 15:12-57 ^b John 3:16, 5:24, 6:40; 2 Corinthians 4:10-11

^c 1 Corinthians 15:44-46; 2 Corinthians 5:1-8

WHAT JUDGMENT AWAITS CHRISTIANS AT THE END OF THIS LIFE?

Christians will not be judged at the end of this life in the same way that non-Christians will be. The Bible teaches this truth clearly and repeatedly. Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”^a Paul says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”^b Simply stated, in Christ, all sin is forgiven having been judged at Jesus’ cross.^c Subsequently, Christians are members of the family of God now and forever.

Nonetheless, Christians will be judged at the end of this life in a way that is different from the judgment of non-Christians. This life, and what we do and do not do with it, matters greatly. The Holy Spirit has given every Christian time, talent, and treasure that they are to steward well for the Kingdom. The Christian’s judgment is a day of assessment when “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”^d

This theme of accountability and reward runs all through Scripture as a continual reminder not to waste our life but rather steward it in light of eternity.^e

Negatively, some Christians will be grieved by the lack of reward given to them. Paul says, “If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”^f The Bible is clear that there are eternal consequences for believers

^a John 5:24 ^b Romans 8:1 ^c Colossians 2:13; 1 John 2:12 ^d 2 Corinthians 5:10 ^e Matt. 24:45–47; 25:14–30; Luke 12:42–48; 16:1–13; 17:7–10; 19:12–27; Rom. 2:16; 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:8–15; 4:5; 9:17–27; Col. 3:23–25; 1 Tim. 2:3–6; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:7; 5:4; Rev. 4:4, 10; 22:12 ^f 1 Corinthians 3:15

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doing both good and evil.^a

We are children of God with the full right of inheritance. Participation in the Kingdom is already ours, not because of what we have done for God, but because of what God has done for us. We should respond by being trustworthy. Bit by bit, we learn and grow in faithfulness with the small kingdom works He has entrusted to us. We know that God is a Father whose love for and devotion to His children is purely by grace and will never change. Still, as a good Father, He also gives chores and responsibilities to each of His children to help them mature and grow so that He can entrust to them increasingly important things; in the Kingdom, He rewards the children who are faithful in this life in ways that He does not reward the children who are unfaithful in this life.^b

WHAT JUDGMENT AWAITS NON-CHRISTIANS AT THE END OF THIS LIFE?

When a great injustice has occurred, there is cheering when justice is served. This explains why joy rises when a dangerous criminal is captured, or a demonic dictator is toppled. Because God made us in His image with a conscience, we long for righteousness where wrongs are made right.

Romans 2 is one chapter of the Bible that deals in depth with the blessings and benefits for God's judgment. Human judgment and justice are usually imperfect because they're generally only known in part and have biases. Making matters worse, to some degree, we are all guilty of the very things we judge others for doing, "Therefore you have no excuse, O

^a 2 Corinthians 5:10 ^b Luke 16:10-12, 19:17-19

man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.”^a We tend to see the sin of others much more clearly than our own. Thankfully, there is a day coming when God will perfectly judge everyone, “on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.”^b

The reason God has not yet had the final judgment is not because He is indifferent, but rather He is patient, giving sinners ample opportunity to trust in the Savior, “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.”^c

Just as Jesus said that believers store up treasures for themselves in Heaven by their works in the Spirit, so Paul says that unbelievers similarly store up wrath for themselves in Hell by their works of the flesh. Paul even uses the same Greek word as Jesus to contrast the judgment of believers and unbelievers.^d Paul concludes by saying of God, “He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury...For God shows no partiality.”^e

A day is coming when God will judge the living and the dead^f through the Son.^g When the Son of Man’s throne arrives on the earth, all will stand before Him

^a Romans 2:1 ^b Romans 2:5 ^c Romans 2:4-5 ^d Matthew 6:19; Romans 2:5
^e Romans 2:6-8, 11 ^f Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5 ^g Psalm 2:12; Mark 14:62; John 5:22; Acts 17:31

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for judgment.^a From the beginning of creation^b to the end^c, the Bible makes it clear that the basis of God's judgment is our deeds.^d

There are degrees of punishment in Hell like there are degrees of reward in Heaven. Jesus told the people of Capernaum that it would be worse for them in the judgment than for Sodom.^e The one who sins knowingly and willfully will receive a more severe beating than the one who did not know.^f Both in life and in Hell, some sins receive more severe punishment, because that is just.^g This fits the scriptural teaching that some sins are qualitatively worse than others in that the depth of their evil and the damage that ensues is greater. Jesus illustrated this when he told Pilate, "He who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."^h

WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE TEACH ABOUT HEAVEN?

According to the Bible, there is one reality ruled by God over two realms. One realm is the spirit world where God, divine beings (including angels), and departed saints live right now. The other realm is the physical world where human beings live right now.

Originally, these two realms were connected. The Garden of Eden in Genesis was literally Heaven on earth where the unseen realm and seen realm connected. This explains why Adam and Eve met with God there, were not shocked when a divine being showed up (Satan), and saw an angel keep them from the Tree of Life once they sinned. Once we sinned, the realms were disconnected. So, upon death, the two

^a Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11-15 ^b Genesis 2:15-17 ^c Revelation 20:12-13 ^d Jeremiah 17:10, 32:19; Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:6; Galatians 6:7-8; Revelation 2:23, 22:12 ^e Matthew 11:21-24 ^f Luke 12:47-48

^g Numbers 15:22-30; Leviticus 4:1-35, 5:15-19; Matthew 18:6; 1 Timothy 5:8; James 3:1; 1 John 5:16-18 ^h John 19:11

parts of our being are also disconnected. Our body goes into the ground awaiting resurrection. Our soul goes to be with God.

The apostle Paul says this is “far better” than our current life on earth and all we have is “gain” to look forward to being “at home with the Lord”.^o So, if someone loves Jesus and dies today, they are with Jesus in the spiritual Heaven. That, however, is not their final destination. When Jesus returns to earth, He brings Heaven to earth with Him to restore things to how they were before sin entered the world. Those who love Jesus will be joined to their resurrection bodies to live forever on the New Earth. Far too many people think of Heaven only in terms of the intermediate spiritual state, and not the earthy physical reality that God has planned for all eternity.

Right now, Heaven exists in the unseen realm and is just as real as the world we occupy in the seen realm. Much like a Zoom call, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John all got to communicate with Heaven and see what was happening there. For example, Revelation 6:9-11 says, “I saw...the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer...”

Right now, there is a place called Heaven that exists in the unseen realm. Living there are God, divine beings including angels, and departed saints who loved Jesus in their life on earth. When you die, you go there to be with them if you love Jesus. Theologians call this the “intermediate heaven”.

^o 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philipians 1:21-23

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One day, maybe in hours or centuries, Jesus Christ will return to this sin-cursed, tear-soaked world with Heaven as the King and everyone and everything in His Kingdom make the big move to New Earth. Just as Jesus brought Heaven and earth together at His first coming, He will bring the New Heaven and New Earth together at His Second Coming.^a

For the Christian, dying is really just moving. Like any move, it's important to do some research so you can prepare yourself for your new home, get directions (which is basically following Jesus, who is the way home) and pushing through the hassles of this life to move to your Forever Home in Heaven. One of my favorite pictures of Heaven in the Bible is a party. At our church, we like to throw parties and have fun as practice for Heaven.

WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE TEACH ABOUT HELL?

Jesus talks about Hell more than anyone else in all of Scripture. Jesus' words come in the context of the rest of Scripture, which says that God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."^b Furthermore, He "is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."^c

The Bible does not give us a detailed exposition of Hell, but there are many descriptions of the fate of its inhabitants in that place of eternal punishment. They include (1) fire^d; (2) darkness^e; (3) punishment^f; (4) exclusion from God's presence^g; (5) restlessness^h;

^a Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-3 ^b 1 Timothy 2:4 ^c 2 Peter 3:9 ^d Matthew 13:42, 50; 18:8,9; Revelation 19:20; 20:14-15 ^e Matthew 25:30; Jude 13 ^f Revelation 14:10-11 ^g Matthew 7:23; 25:41; Luke 16:19ff; 2 Thessalonians 1:9 ^h Revelation 14:11

(6) second death^a; and (7) weeping and gnashing of teeth.^b

Hell is not a fun place where sinners get to live out their sinful pleasures, as if Satan rules over Hell and sin can be pursued without inhibition. Satan will not reign there. Hell is a place of punishment that God prepared for the devil and his angels.^c It is where the beast and the false prophet and those who worship them will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of His anger, and they will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night.^d

At the end of the age, the devil will be "thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."^e Hell will be ruled by Jesus, and human and demon alike, including Satan, will be tormented there continually.

Hell is real and terrible. It is eternal. There is no possibility of amnesty or reprieve. Daniel says that some of the dead will be resurrected "to shame and everlasting contempt."^f Jesus says, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...And these will go away into eternal punishment."^g

Paul tells us, "God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not

^a Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8 ^b Matthew 13:42, 50; 22:12-13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28 ^c Matthew 25:41 ^d Revelation 14:10-11 ^e Revelation 20:10 ^f Daniel 12:2 ^g Matthew 25:41, 46

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know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”^a

Perhaps the clearest and most gripping depiction of Hell in all of Scripture is the frequent mention of Hell as “Gehenna.” The name refers to an area outside of the city of Jerusalem where idolatry and horrendous sin, including child sacrifice, were practiced.^b Gehenna was a place so despised and cursed by God’s people that they turned it into the city dump where feces, refuse, and the dead bodies of criminals were stacked. Jesus spoke of Gehenna as the hellish final home of the wicked.^c Since Gehenna is described as a fiery abyss^d, clearly it is also the lake of fire^e to which all the Godless will ultimately be eternally sentenced^f, together with Satan, demons, and unrepentant sinners.^g So, when the Bible speaks of Hell as a place where the fire is not quenched and the worm does not die, the original hearers would easily have remembered Gehenna, where this reality was ever present outside of their city.^h

AM I GOING TO HELL?

After explaining Heaven and Hell, the closing verses of the Bible say, “Come!” as an invitation for all who desire to receive God’s saving grace as a gift. The Gospel says that Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. Jesus died and rose and is exalted in Heaven. If you repent of sin, change your mind about who or what

^a 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 ^b 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 19:56; 32:35 ^c Matthew 5:22, 10:28, 18:9 ^d Mark 9:43 ^e Matthew 13:42, 50 ^f Matthew 23:15, 33 ^g Matthew 25:41; Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15 ^h Isaiah 66:24; Mark 9:47-48

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is Lord of your life, and believe, trusting that you can stake your life and eternity on the truth of what God says, then you will receive full forgiveness of all sin, new life in and by the Holy Spirit, membership in the church of Jesus Christ, a meaningful part in His rescue mission in the world, and citizenship in His Kingdom. You will be with Jesus and His people now and forever.

I want this for you, and we would be unloving if I didn't seek to ensure that you are a Christian.

Have you confessed your sins to Jesus Christ, seeking forgiveness and salvation? If not, asking Jesus to forgive your sin as your Savior, and leading you through life as your Lord is what you should do in prayer right now!

Lord Jesus, I confess that you are God

*I am a sinner who has broken your laws and rebelled
against you*

I invite you to forgive me of my sin, and be my Savior

*Thank you for loving me enough to come to earth and
die for my sin*

*Thank you that you have conquered death and opened
Heaven for me*

Amen!

ENDNOTES

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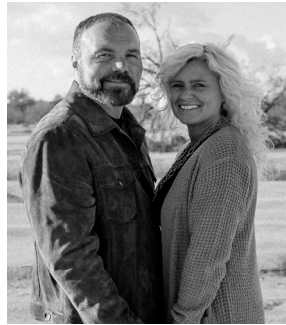
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ABOUT MARK DRISCOLL & REALFAITH

With Pastor Mark, it's all about Jesus! He is a spiritual leader, prolific author, and compelling speaker, but at his core, he is a family man. Mark and his wife Grace have been married and doing vocational ministry together since 1993 and, along with their five kids, planted Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona as a family ministry.

Pastor Mark, Grace, and their oldest daughter, Ashley, also started RealFaith Ministries, which contains a mountain of Bible teaching for men, women, couples, parents, pastors, leaders, Spanish speakers, and more, which you can access by visiting **RealFaith.com** or downloading the **RealFaith app**.



With a master's degree in exegetical theology from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, he has spent the better part of his life teaching verse-by-verse through books of the Bible, contextualizing its timeless truths and never shying away from challenging, convicting passages that speak to the heart of current cultural dilemmas.

Together, Mark and Grace have co-authored *Win Your War*, *Real Marriage*, and *Real Romance: Sex in the Song of Songs* and he co-authored a father-daughter project called *Pray Like Jesus* with his daughter, Ashley. Pastor Mark has also written numerous other books including

Spirit-Filled Jesus, Who Do You Think You Are?, Vintage Jesus, and Doctrine.

If you have any prayer requests for us, questions for future Ask Pastor Mark or Dear Grace videos, or a testimony regarding how God has used this and other resources to help you learn God's Word, we would love to hear from you at **hello@realfaith.com**.

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