

1 JOHN 3:1-3

CERTAINTIES: WHEN HE APPEARS

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”¹

There are truths concerning the return of our Lord that have never been revealed; we must wait until they are fulfilled to know the meaning of some things. As one example, recall that Jesus taught His disciples, “In those days, after that tribulation [frightful judgements on the whole earth], the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore, stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake” [MARK 13:24-37].

We do not know precisely how we will be changed, though we are certain that we who have believed, we who are twice-born and who have the Spirit, will be changed. We are taught, “Our citizenship is in heaven—and we also await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform these humble bodies of ours into the likeness of his glorious body by means of that power by which he is able to subject all things to himself” [PHILIPPIANS 3:20, 21 NET BIBLE].

The Apostle Paul has written elsewhere, “Listen, I am telling you a mystery: We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed” [1 CORINTHIANS 15:51, 52 CHRISTIAN STANDARD BIBLE].

It is this truth, this divine promise of transformation into Christ’s likeness, that becomes the focus of our study this day. God has graciously revealed to His servants what they shall be at the return of the Master. The writings of the Apostle of Love will occupy our attention for these moments as we prepare ourselves for honourable service until that glorious day when the Master at last returns to take His redeemed people to Himself. Serving Him, we will prepare ourselves for the transformation that is coming, fulfilling the service to which He has assigned us.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

WHAT WE ONCE WERE — Any study that seeks to understand what God has planned for His own people must begin with what we were when He called us. Our first parents were created to walk with God, living forever in sweet communion with Him. We are not told how long Adam and Eve lived in the Garden that God had created; we are not told how much time passed between the creation and the dark day when sin was introduced into the world. Nevertheless, sin did enter the world. We are taught, “Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” [ROMANS 5:12]. The passage refers us back to Adam and his rebellion against the Holy One in the Garden of Eden.

Our first parents sinned—our first mother, Eve, was deceived, but our first father, Adam, chose to rebel against the Lord God, his Creator. As result of their wilful rebellion, the whole of creation was plunged into ruin. This is evident from what has been recorded in the Letter to Roman Saints: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” [ROMANS 8:22, 23]. The consequences of their sin included death for all mankind.

We don’t like to think about death. The reason for our reluctance to think of our own death is that know we were created to live forever; nevertheless, we do die. Concerning this business of death, the issue for each one of us is not “if,” it is “when.” This is presented throughout the Word of God like a throbbing drumbeat announcing the condition of all mankind. When David had sinned egregiously against the Lord, he confessed,

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

[PSALM 51:5]

This confession was nothing less than anticipation of the words Solomon would write. He wrote, “There is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins” [ECCLESIASTES 7:20].

We Christians must not allow ourselves to become proud; we must never begin to think that we are somehow better than our fellow citizens who are lost. What they are, we once were. But for the grace of God we would still be under condemnation. From time-to-time, I find it beneficial to read Paul’s words written in the Ephesian Encyclical; these words remind me of what I was before God’s mercy to me. Listen again to the Apostle’s words. “You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” [EPHESIANS 2:1-3].

Admonishing readers not to revert to the life they once lived, Paul exposes the life in which each of us once live. Listen as he exposes the life of lost people, the life which each of us once lived. “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires” [EPHESIANS 4:17-22].

1 JOHN 3:1-3

CERTAINTIES: WHEN HE APPEARS!

Let me speak candidly, especially addressing any who now listen, who are outside this holy Faith . Many lost people are nice—they may even be quite moral; however, niceness or morality will never suffice to make one acceptable before the Living God. The Lord God demands perfection. Perhaps at some point you have heard the admonition delivered by Peter: “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” [1 PETER 1:14-16]. God expects His people to be holy, perfect, absolutely separated from sin.

But how can a mere mortal be holy? How can a person be found pure in the sight of the Living God? People, even Christian people who have a loving relationship with the LORD God, are sinful in His sight. Even when we imagine we are making the effort to be good, He finds us sinful! Long years past, the suffering saint, Job, asked, “How can a man be in the right before God” [JOB 9:2b]? Indeed! How can any individual be right before God?

The question was echoed soon after by Bildad, who challenged Job,

“How then can man be in the right before God?
How can he who is born of woman be pure?
Behold, even the moon is not bright,
and the stars are not pure in his eyes;
how much less man, who is a maggot,
and the son of man, who is a worm!”

[JOB 25:4-6]

The question had been voiced by Eliphaz as he recalled a frightful spectre that had appeared in a night vision. That shadowy apparition asked,

“Can mortal man be in the right before God?
Can a man be pure before his Maker?
Even in his servants he puts no trust,
and his angels he charges with error;
how much more those who dwell in houses of clay,
whose foundation is in the dust,
who are crushed like the moth.”

[JOB 4:17-19]

Nor was this the only time Eliphaz had posed the challenge in conversation with Job. Returning to this theme of contrasting man’s “goodness” with God’s holiness, this man identified as a miserable comforter, asked,

“What is man, that he can be pure?
Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?
Behold, God puts no trust in his holy ones,
and the heavens are not pure in his sight;
how much less one who is abominable and corrupt,
a man who drinks injustice like water!”

[JOB 15:14-16]

1 JOHN 3:1-3

CERTAINTIES: WHEN HE APPEARS!

The questions Eliphaz asked anticipated the confession of David, who wrote in a Psalm, “No one living is righteous before You” [PSALM 143:2b]. The Psalmist was addressing the LORD God. He was pleading for mercy, acknowledging that divine judgement would only condemn him. Like us, David needed mercy, not justice.

David’s confession mirrors the words recorded in one of the Songs of Ascents.

“If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?”

[PSALM 130:3]

Again, this question anticipates the condemnation that is voiced in the Apostle’s dark words, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” [ROMANS 3:23].

The import of all these dark statements serves to warn any who are outside of Christ—lost people need to know their situation. They cannot be good! The assuredly cannot be “good” in the sight of God. These sobering statements also serve to warn those who profess to trust the Lord God not to put faith in their own actions. No individual can ever be pure, can ever be holy, can ever be righteous through their own effort. If I will be righteous in the sight of God, it will be through righteousness supplied from outside of my own self.

A moment ago, I cited one of the Songs of Ascents. I quoted one verse alone. Listen as I quote that verse again, citing the verse that follows.

“If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness,
that you may be feared.”

[PSALM 130:3, 4]

“With You there is forgiveness.” I need mercy, I need forgiveness; and forgiveness for my broken, fallen condition is supplied through Christ the Lord. What we were outside of Christ, we Christians no longer are—we have been transformed by His grace.

WHAT WE NOW ARE — “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are... Beloved, we are God’s children now” [1 JOHN 3:1a, 2a]. Outsiders are under condemnation; those who have believed in Christ the Lord are set at liberty. We are taught in the Word, and the promise is verified by each Christian who does believe, “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” [JOHN 3:18]. Again, notice the contrast between the condition of the lost and the redeemed when we read in Scripture, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” [JOHN 3:36].

Lost people are condemned—it is immaterial how “nice” they may be. Lost people “shall not see life” no matter how good we judge them to be. Lost people are those who “have not believed in the Name of the Only Son of God.” Their condition stands in stark contrast to the condition of those who are saved. We must get past this idea that because someone goes to church, or because they are nice, that God must accept them.

1 JOHN 3:1-3

CERTAINTIES: WHEN HE APPEARS!

Accordingly, when I turn my attention to the subject of “What We Now Are,” I am speaking of the condition of the redeemed. I am speaking of the situation that prevails for the individual who is born from above. The fate of the unsaved is fixed through their own neglect to receive the grace of God offered in Christ as Master over life. It will be to our benefit to recall the account provided recounting the conversation when a member of the Jewish Council came to Jesus by night. The account is provided in **JOHN 3:1-15**.

“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again.” The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’

“Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can these things be?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.’”

This is a fascinating exchange that is freighted with valuable information for Christians and for individuals who are interested in what is required to become a Christian. In the first place, John informs readers that Nicodemus was a “ruler of the Jews.” He was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Council. This accounts for why he chose to come to Jesus by night. Nicodemus was concerned about the negative reaction he would experience if it became generally known that he had explored Jesus’ legitimacy. This was obviously a legitimate concern as witnessed by the reaction Nicodemus encountered at a later date when he sought fairness during the Sanhedrin’s examination of Jesus.

Officers had been sent to arrest Jesus, but they returned to the religious leaders empty-handed. This following exchange is recorded in John’s Gospel. “The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, ‘Why did you not bring him?’ The officers answered, ‘No one ever spoke like this man!’ The Pharisees answered them, ‘Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.’ Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, ‘Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?’ They replied, ‘Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee’” [**JOHN 7:45-52**]. Talk about an extreme reaction!

Jesus confronted Nicodemus, driving immediately to the point. Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” [**JOHN 3:3**]. Nicodemus was baffled at this response, but his question of how this was possible brought a gentle rebuke. “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’” [**JOHN 3:5-7**].

1 JOHN 3:1-3

CERTAINTIES: WHEN HE APPEARS!

As is the case for lost sinners, Nicodemus' thinking could not rise above the level of the flesh; Jesus was speaking of the spiritual dynamic that must occur before one can be born again. Sinners hear the words, but they are incapable of understanding spiritual concepts. The Master challenged Nicodemus to think, and then He provided an example that would perhaps help the blind scholar understand what was being said. "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" [JOHN 3:12-15].

This exchange provided the spiritual platform for the great statement concerning God's love and His provision of salvation for all who will receive that life. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" [JOHN 3:16, 17].

This statement of grace and mercy lays for foundation for the division observed in life. "Whoever believes in [God's Only Son] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God" [JOHN 3:18-21].

There is a distinction to be drawn between the saved and the unsaved. This is not a distinction that is always visible in how one dresses or in how one acts, though decided differences should be apparent. We have already invested considerable time in reviewing the condition of the lost before the Lord God; it is time for us to consider the situation that prevails for the redeemed. What is the condition of the Christian? Paul urges believers to live holy lives because such godliness reveals the work of the Living God in the life of the child of God. What is exciting about this admonition is that we see that God's child has the power to live a holy life residing within in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, in **EPHESIANS 5:8-21** we read Paul's instructions: "Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says,

'Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.'

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

1 JOHN 3:1-3

CERTAINTIES: WHEN HE APPEARS!

Because the Christian is empowered by the Holy Spirit living within each Christian, the redeemed person is enabled to live a holy life. If this were not so, then the admonition delivered through Peter would be futile at best! We have previously noted Peter's admonition to followers of the Christ when he wrote, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" [1 PETER 1:14-21]. The call to holiness is rendered meaningless if we haven't the power to be holy—and we can never be holy in our own strength! Therefore, we are dependent upon the Spirit of God who lives in each Christian.

We Christians are God's children now! This means that living within each Christian is the Spirit of the Living God directing our steps, empowering us to live godly lives that reflect the grace and glory of the Lord our God, enabling us to overcome the world. The glory of God is not always evident as it should be among the people of God, but from time-to-time His glory breaks through the obscuring fascia of flesh, revealing our true identity. An example of this is provided when Paul writes, "If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you" [1 CORINTHIANS 14:23-25].

Jesus told His disciples that the Spirit of God was given specifically to bring to mind the things of God, to guide believers into all truth and to work through them to convict the lost. Gathered in a spirit of unity, a congregation of the redeemed is a powerful entity. No wonder lost people avoid services provided by a New Testament church! If our services consist of entertainment, there is no particular reason for outsiders to come to the services of the faithful. The world does entertainment better than a church can ever provide. We appeal to spiritual needs; we can never appeal to the prurient interest of the lost through entertainment. What we can do, and what we do well, is honouring the Master by serving Him. Doing this, outsiders are convicted; and as the Spirit of God quickens their souls they cry out to God for mercy. Then, having been made aware of their condition, we are enabled to point them to Christ the Lord.

I want you to take note of the opening words of the encyclical we know as Ephesians. Take special note of the past tense and present tense verbs that Paul has employed. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before [God]. In love [God] predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In [Jesus Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which [God] set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

"In [Christ] we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In [Christ] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" [EPHESIANS 1:3-14].

1 JOHN 3:1-3

CERTAINTIES: WHEN HE APPEARS!

We who have believed in Christ the Lord are *now* “blessed ... with every spiritual blessing.” As surely as God chose us, and as surely as He “predestined us for adoption,” we *now* “have redemption through His blood.” We *now* enjoy “the forgiveness of our trespasses,” enjoying *now* the knowledge of “the mystery of His will.” Already we have obtained an inheritance. This inheritance is guaranteed with the seal of the Holy Spirit. This is the Christian; this is the child of God. We are now the most enviable people imaginable.

WHAT WE SHALL BE — “What we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” [1 JOHN 3:2b]. We know that we shall be like Him. We know this because He who promised cannot lie and because He has put His Spirit in us. Just as the Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance, so He is the assurance of what God is about to do for His own beloved people.

Project forward with your mind. Perhaps the time will be measured in hours, or perhaps it will be measured in years—no one knows except the Father. Nevertheless, our inheritance is sure; and our future is secure in Christ the Lord. Peter testified concerning the people of God, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls” [1 PETER 1:3-9].

We Christians may be assured that we are destined to see God. Our Lord Jesus Christ shall soon call us to Himself. Some who hear my voice today will be called to pass through the dark waters we call death. You will experience something of what our Master experienced for our sake. We need not fear death; our Saviour has pulled the sting from death. Death has been transformed from a frightening spectre into a means by which God transports His own into His presence. This is the promise provided by an unknown writer who encouraged God’ holy people by writing, “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” [HEBREWS 2:14, 15].

We who believe can rest secure in the promise of the Living God. The Apostle knew that some Christians would be fearful because we would be approaching a dark unknown. He wrote, “We know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

“So, we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord” [2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-8].

1 JOHN 3:1-3

CERTAINTIES: WHEN HE APPEARS!

One day you'll read that Mike Stark has died; don't you believe it! You've perhaps heard a number of lies about me, and that'll be another lie! I will be more alive than I've ever been. I am convinced, according to God's Word, that it is far better to depart and be with Christ. Yet, so long as He directs my steps and gives me breath, I will remain, serving Him according to His divine will. However, when that day comes that I must set aside this flesh, I will go to Him. The angels of God will escort me into His presence, and I shall see Him.

All of us shall see God if we are born from above. John saw the assembly of the redeemed gathered around the throne of God. They look on Him and worship. We will see the cherubs attending God on His emerald-circled throne. They will worship Him, saying,

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!”

[REVELATION 4:8]

Each time cherubs begin to praise Him, we will fall down before Him and worship, casting our crowns before the throne. We will joyfully testify,

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.”

[REVELATION 4:11]

When will this take place? We don't know; but we do know, that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’
‘O death, where is your victory?’
O death, where is your sting?’”

[1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-55]

When will this take place? No mortal dares predict when this will be, lest he be shown as the fool he is through his lack of understanding. Nevertheless, we know something of that day. We read in Scripture, “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 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” [1 THESSALONIANS 4:14-18].

1 JOHN 3:1-3

CERTAINTIES: WHEN HE APPEARS!

God will call out His redeemed people, gathering them “to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant” [HEBREWS 12:22-24]. We will be called to “the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.” This is the event known as the Rapture—that day when all the saints will be transformed, changed into His likeness. At that time, we shall see Him as He is, for we shall be like him.

But *what of those who are left behind?* What happens to the great majority of mankind who has refused God’s grace, thinking they know a better way of pleasing the Living God? Jesus taught us, “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few” [MATTHEW 7:13, 14].

It grieves me to know that those who are left behind will enter into awesome, unprecedented, horrific judgements as Holy God pours out His wrath on unbelieving people. Surely, I take no pleasure in warning unbelievers that they face unimaginable judgement. Seven long years are prescribed as the earth is devastated under the judgements of the Lord God. The Revelator has warned, “Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen” [REVELATION 1:7]. These words are but a confirmation of Jesus’ words to His disciples. “As the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day” [LUKE 17:24].

Jesus paints a frightful picture of what is coming on those who do not know Him when He says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” [MATTHEW 24:29, 30].

Knowing that these things shall shortly take place, I am compelled to urge all who hear my voice to determine not to be left to face the wrath of God. The Saviour’s gracious offer is extended to all who will receive it today. He invites you, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” [MATTHEW 11:28-30].

As I do in almost every message I deliver, I draw the message to a conclusion with a plea. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’” [ROMANS 10:9-13].

May sinners now find refuge in Christ the Saviour. May the lost be set free from guilt. May the redeemed of God be strengthened through His Word. May the Lamb Who gave His life as a sacrifice for sinners be honoured. Amen.