

God's Eternal Plan

Lesson 6: The End

As we continue exploring the story of the Bible and God's eternal plan, we want to overview how the story will end. The Bible speaks of a time when the end will come (1 Corinthians 15:24). Although God had created this world as a paradise that was free from suffering and death, all that changed whenever sin entered the world and God's eternal plan for saving mankind was activated. As there is significant sacrifice involved in God's eternal plan (from both God and those who obey Him), we should recognize how all this sacrifice will end.

1) Jesus's coming. Jesus foretold His future coming during the time He was walking this earth (John 14:1-3). For example, Matthew 24-25 talks extensively about His coming. Although the early section of Matthew 24 (vv. 1-35) applies to the destruction of Jerusalem that would take place in A.D. 70, the rest of these chapters does apply to Jesus's second coming (24:36-25:46). In them, we see that no one knows when this Day will come besides the Father (24:36), His coming will be like a thief in the night (24:42-44), and pictures of the Judgment Day scene are given (24:45-25:46). Jesus's coming was also foretold whenever Jesus ascended back to Heaven (Acts 1:9-11), as He will come in the clouds and everyone will see and hear Him (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 1:7). When Jesus comes, this world that is passing away (1 John 2:17; Matthew 6:19-21) will pass away, being destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:7, 10-13)! Since Jesus's coming is often compared to a thief coming in the night (Matthew 24:42-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10), He instructs that we must be ready by living in a way that pleases God so that we are not caught unprepared for His coming (Matthew 24:44; 25:13)!

2) The resurrection. Ever since death entered the world, death has been one of the great enemies of mankind we are hopeless to overcome by ourselves. But, Jesus demonstrated power over death

(John 11:25, 43-44)! The ultimate way God assures us of deliverance from death is through Jesus's own resurrection from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Our resurrection, then, will happen when Jesus comes (John 5:28-29). Those who have died and are now in Hades (the realm of the dead, Luke 16:19-31) will be raised when Jesus comes (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; 1 Corinthians 15:23). This resurrection will mark the day the last enemy is conquered (1 Corinthians 15:24-28), as Jesus has defeated sin through His death on the cross and will defeat death through the resurrection! Jesus will reign until this time when everything is subjected to God and then hand the kingdom over to God. Then, at this resurrection, God will provide a different kind of body for what comes next (a spiritual body, 1 Corinthians 15:35-58). This will be a triumphant day of victory for those who are citizens of Jesus's kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)!

3) The judgment. The final judgment of all mankind will happen when Jesus comes (Matthew 25:14-30, 31-46). At this time, Satan (the great deceiver of humanity and enemy of God and what is good) will also be eternally defeated by being condemned to Hell (Revelation 20:1-10; Matthew 25:41)! Every person who has lived on earth will also stand before Jesus's judgment throne on this day (Matthew 25:31-33). Every person will be judged for how he/she had lived while on earth (2 Corinthians 5:10), bow before and praise God (Romans 14:10-12), and nothing will be hidden from God (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Hebrews 4:13). This scene is pictured in Revelation 20:11-15. Specifically, each person will be judged according to his/her earthly works by what was written in God's word (the Bible, John 12:48).

4) Eternity. No one will escape the coming of Christ and the judgment! The eternity that each person will experience will be directly related to how he/she lived on this earth (John 5:28-29; Galatians

6:7-8). Appreciate that it is only because of God's eternal plan that anyone who has sinned can have the hope to experience anything good in eternity! And, you must recognize that eternity is much too long (never ending) to spend in the wrong place. For, even if you experience the best this life has to offer, your life will have been wasted if you miss out on what God has prepared for those who love Him (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Matthew 16:24-27)!

There are only two options as to where you will spend your eternity. First, the wicked will be sentenced to eternity in Hell (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:15; Revelation 21:8; Romans 1:18-32; 2:6-11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21). This is a place depicted as terrible punishment, darkness, fire, weeping, gnashing of teeth, etc. Second, the righteous will be welcomed into eternity in Heaven (Matthew 25:34; Revelation 21:1-22:5). This is a place God has prepared for the righteous before the beginning of the world, a beautiful place where there will be no death, grief, crying, pain, or evil and we can forever live with God!

Everything about the story of the Bible and God's eternal plan is intended to prepare people to hear Jesus welcome them into the wonderful and eternal paradise of Heaven for all eternity, while the wicked will go away into eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46)! God's eternal plan provides the opportunity of salvation from sin through Jesus to everyone. Now, He has given you (and every person) the opportunity to choose to be part of His eternal kingdom, by submitting to Jesus (the Messiah) as King and obeying what the gospel requires of you. But, you must choose now – as the end of this world will be the beginning of eternity!

Thought Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What did you learn from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God's service?