

**LIVING THE WORD—Week 16 (Sun., May 10 – Sat., May 16)**

***The God of the Mighty Acts: the Great Story of God's Relentless Love***

**The Coming (Part 2)—Jesus Will Reward Those Who Are Ready**

Matthew 25; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-24; 2 Timothy 4:6-8; 2 Peter 3:8-14

*Key Verse:* “For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.”  
(1 Thessalonians 5:2)

As our study of the God of the Mighty Acts comes to a close, we are spending two weeks on the last remaining might act. Last week we looked at what Scripture says will happen at the last day—Jesus will return, the dead in Christ will rise, Jesus will judge the living and dead, and people will face an eternal destiny in heaven or hell. This week we ask the vital question, “How should we live now knowing what will happen in the future?”

Biblical prophecy rarely ever focuses on knowing the details of future events. The purpose of prophecy is not to provide a schedule of things to come. The emphasis is not on knowledge of the future, but right living in the present. The focus of almost all biblical prophecy is to call people to some kind of response here and now.

When the New Testament speaks of Jesus' return or the coming judgment, the purpose is to encourage believers to remain steadfast in their hope and to call sinners to repent. In Jesus' final sermon to his followers in Matthew 24-25, he tells them to always live ready because they don't know when he will return. Knowing he may return at any time, we need to be doing his will.

When the Bible calls us to watch and wait for the Lord's return, it does not mean that we should stop doing other things and just watch the sky. Quite the opposite! It means that we must be constantly focused on doing the things God has called us to do. We must be “watchful”—that is, we must watch out for anything that would pull us away from Jesus and live in a way that keeps an eye on our eternal destiny. We are disciples on God's mission, citizens of heaven, people of hope, believers who possess eternal life and will live forever with God. That must shape our thoughts, our values, our conduct, our priorities, our choices—everything!

We don't know *when* he is coming, but we know *who* is coming! Let's be ready!

**Next Week: The God of the Mighty Acts--Review** (Psalm 78; 136; Acts 13:16-33)

**Memory Verse** (for Weeks 13-16): Ephesians 4:4-6

**On the Mountain** (“*Love God*”—set aside 30 minutes this week for quiet time with God)

1. Find a time when you can sit alone and uninterrupted. Spend a few moments preparing your heart to meditate on your relationship with God.
2. Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8 several times. Is there a phrase you are drawn to? What may God be saying to you in the phrase?
3. How are you doing right now in the “race” or “fight”? If the time of your departure was near, could you say what Paul said?
4. Do you “love his appearing” (do you long for Jesus' return)? Pray that you may long more deeply for Jesus' coming and that you may live a life that is faithful to the Lord.

**In the Gathering** (“*Love Each Other*”—discuss with your home church or small group)

1. What is the main point of each one of the final parables of Jesus in Matthew 25 (the 10 Bridesmaids, Talents, and Sheep and Goats)? What does each main point call us to do?
2. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 quotes Old Testament prophecies (Isaiah 47:9,11; Jeremiah 6:14; Ezekiel 13:10) to say that when people think all is well, suddenly God’s judgment will come. Why would God’s judgment be a surprise?
3. If I am confident I am going to heaven by God’s grace, why does judgment day matter?
4. Why is one way of living associated with nighttime and living for Jesus associated with daytime (1 Thessalonians 5:4-11)?
5. When Peter writes about the things that will happen at the end of time (2 Peter 3:8-10), what does he say about the lives we should live? Why does the future he describes call for the kind of life he describes?
6. Do you have anything to share from your time with God, your family, or in the world?
7. If there is time, discuss the “In the World” section below.
8. Pray for the Lord to come and that we will be ready.

**Around the Table** (“*Love Your Family*”—sit at home and talk together as a family)

1. What do you do if you know you have a big test or a big game coming up? What do you do differently than you do on other days?
2. With young children, ask how do you feel when someone special is coming to visit?
3. What are some things we can do to prepare for the day that Jesus comes?
4. What is something we could do this week to help us live like people waiting for Jesus?

**Into the World** (“*Love the World*”—prayerfully consider God’s mission for us in his world)

1. Read Matthew 25:31-46. What is the difference between those who go to eternal life and those who go to eternal punishment? How is this different than the criteria many churches use to determine who will go to heaven or hell?
2. Do you think the way we live our lives and the way we do church looks like we take this passage seriously? What things might we do differently, as churches or individuals, if we took this parable more seriously?
3. What is something you could do this week in response to what Jesus said?