

LESSON TWO

The Joy of End Times

Reaching home after a long vacation is always filled with mixed feelings. People experience sadness in facing the end of a good thing, yet experience the joy of being back home in comfortable surroundings.

Life on earth can be like vacation. We are on a journey which embraces many experiences, but we are not home. For believers, our home is heaven. At the end of the vacation we go home, and at the end of our lives we go to our heavenly home. Let's look at the joys that go along with the journey that is leading us home.

Prayer

Dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we thank You for winning salvation for us. Your sacrifice means we can spend eternity in heaven. We praise Your name for such a wonderful gift. Help us to see the joy of the end times and rejoice in the blessings that You have prepared for us. Amen.

Open His Word Hebrews 9:24-28

This time of year can be very exciting, yet very difficult, for young children. They realize that Christmas is approaching, but the time seems to pass so slowly. Every day seems to last forever, and too many days pass before Christmas finally arrives.

Each one of us can understand the enthusiasm of the children. The time might be long, but the reward at Christmas makes the wait all worth it.

For Christians, the end times can be like Christmas. The wait seems unending at times, but we have the sure promise of God that the reward is going to be worth it!

Read verse 24

- 1) After Jesus went to heaven, before whom did He appear?

Read verses 25-26

In the Old Testament, the High Priest was required to offer a special sacrifice every year on the Day of Atonement. The sacrifice was effective, but temporary. Each year the Israelites were accustomed to their High Priest making that annual offering. In addition, each family made regular sacrifices for their daily sins.

- 1) Why would it be hard for those Israelites to accept a Savior who would sacrifice only once?
- 2) After studying all three verses, we know that Christ did not go to heaven to continue making sacrifices. What is He doing in heaven?

Read verses 27-28

- 1) Have you ever noticed the desire of some unbelievers to find immortality? From this section, how do we know that all people are going to face death?
- 2) God makes it very clear that He controls life and death. Since that is true, how should we respond when people debate physician-assisted suicide?
- 3) Jesus appeared twice. The first time was to make the sacrifice, once and for all. What is the purpose of His second appearance?

Apply His Word

This section states very clearly that Christ won salvation for us. That means we don't have to do anything else for eternity in heaven. In fact, we can't do anything more than what Christ already did. We also see that Jesus is in heaven, waiting to welcome us home. What a reason to rejoice!

This truth also means that we have work to do here on earth. For the believers, we need to support and encourage them with God's Word to remain faithful. It doesn't mean we should try to improve their situation by ending their life prematurely. For the unbelievers, we need to share our faith and joy in ways that reach their hearts. It doesn't mean we celebrate the fact that without repentance and faith they will suffer eternal damnation.

Conclusions from His Word

The end – many emotions can be raised by the thought of something coming to an end. Even though we are considering the end times, we should also remember that the end of life on earth means the beginning of eternal life. For Christians, there is no greater joy that can be imagined.

When working with a loved one who is facing end-of-life issues, be reminded that great joy is prepared for them. It doesn't mean that we can decide for God when that time will come. Paul said that he would prefer going to heaven which would be better by far, but that he would stay and carry out God's will for Him on earth. Regardless of a person's quality of life, the goal is always to serve the Lord and glorify His name. Let God decide the time when He brings a loved one home. Until then, use every opportunity to serve Him.