

LESSON TEN

THE CHURCH'S FUTURE: What God has Waiting for His People

*"Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come..."
(Heb 9:11).*

DAY 1: READ & SUMMARIZE

The following verses encapsulate the lesson to follow. Read them carefully, meditating on their message. Express the key concept of each passage as it applies to the glorious future of the Church.

A) 1 Corinthians 1:7 –

B) Ephesians 6:18 –

C) 2 Timothy 2:15 –

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF EVENTS AHEAD FOR THE CHURCH

1. READYING: The Church is presently preparing herself as a bride for her heavenly Bridegroom. We are to be waiting (1 Cor 1:7) watching (Eph 6:18) and working (2 Tim 2:15). Who are these overcomers that triumph in every period of church history? One thing is certain: These victors have not overcome in their own strength: every true believer is in this number, for they overcome by *“the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.”* The Christian’s victory is found in Christ Himself, the true Victor (see 2 Cor 2:14; 1 Jn 5:4). The Lord still looks for the overcomers in the ruins of Christendom, calling out words of encouragement to them in what often seems to be a discouraging scene. But Christ is not discouraged, and He shall not fail (see Isa 42:4). Now see what He offers those who trust in Him:

a. *EPHESUS*: to eat of the tree of life (Rev 2:7). This speaks of eternal GROWTH and BLESSING, forbidden in Eden, now we are bidden to enjoy this life eternal to the full because our Savior *“has brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel”* (2 Tim 1:10).

b. *SMYRNA*: not hurt of the second death (Rev 2:11). This speaks of our eternal SECURITY and TRIUMPH over the Last Enemy because our Lord Jesus *“taste[d] death for every one”* (Heb 2:9).

c. *PERGAMOS*: to eat of the hidden manna and to be given a white stone and a new name (Rev 2:17). This speaks of eternal ENJOYMENT and an INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP with our Eternal Lover.

d. *THYATIRA*: given power over the nations and the morning star (2:26, 28). This speaks of eternal VICTORY and the END OF THE LONG NIGHT OF PERSECUTION for the people of God.

e. *SARDIS*: to be clothed in white raiment and have one's name confessed in heaven (3:5). This speaks of eternal RIGHTEOUSNESS and the fact that Jehovah will NOT BE ASHAMED to be called our God (Heb 11:16).

f. *PHILADELPHIA*: to be made a pillar in the temple and identified with Christ (Rev 3:12). Speaks of eternal SERVICE and RECOGNITION at last. Many no-name saints down here will wear new names up there.

g. *LAODICEA*: to sit with Him on the throne (3:21). What more could we hope for? This speaks of eternal RULE and, better still, BEING WITH HIM, beholding the King in His beauty (Isa 33:17).

2. RESURRECTION: The blessed hope of the Church includes the final defeat of death. And then we shall truly sing: *"O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to*

God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:55-57).

This resurrection involves first, for those who "sleep in Jesus," the reconstitution of the believer's body, soul and spirit (to be immortal) and the change of the bodies of those still living (1 Cor 15:51, 57). The Lord put this two-part process in these words: *"I am the resurrection, and the life: he who believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"*—that is resurrection for those whose bodies that have been "sown" (see 1 Cor 15:42-44). Then He speaks about those on the earth at the time of His return to the air: *"And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"* (Jn 11:25-26). We do indeed!

3. RAPTURE: What a glorious long-expected day! The word "rapture" is certainly a biblical idea, for it is simply Latin for the words "caught up" (1 Thess 4:17). There we read of two very differ-

ent but exceedingly joyful reunions: *"We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* It has been called "the only ecumenical movement that will ever work," a coming together of all who have accepted God's way to heaven. This earth will finally lose its hold on us and we will rise with that eternal attraction to our Savior and Friend. This event is accompanied by a shout, the voice of the archangel, and a trumpet blast (1 Thess 4:16, 18). Yet, we might ask: *"Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?"* (2 Sam 19:10).

4. REWARDS: The scriptural view of rewards bears out the fact that they are for the eternal glory of the Giver, not the recipient! We are to be rewarded for FRUITFULNESS and FAITHFULNESS, but He shall bear the glory. See Matthew 25:21. There shall be recompense for whatever His servants have covered at their own expense: "I will repay," says the

true "Good Samaritan" who is no man's debtor. There will be responsibilities given in the kingdom. Faithful with a coin? He will give you a city! And O what rejoicing when the stories are completed and "the sowers and the reapers rejoice together." Here is an overview of some verses having to do with the generous heart of our God in that day:

a. The Servant's Reward: *"Behold, I come quickly: hold fast what you have, so no one takes your crown"* (Rev 3:11). This verse indicates that all the work will get done and someone will get that crown. God won't fail because I may. "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Rev 22:12).

b. The Shepherd's Reward: *"The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers,*

not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” (1 Pet 5:1-4). Yes, embattled elder, it will be worth it all when we see Him!

c. The Soldier’s Reward: *“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim 4:5-8).*

d. The Sufferer’s Reward: *“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some*

of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10). “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (Jas 1:12; see also Heb 11:25-26).

e. The Soul-Winner’s Reward: *“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” (1 Thess 2:19; see also 1 Cor. 3:8). “Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved” (Phil 4:1). Anne Ross Cousin, taking the words from the letters of Samuel Rutherford, wrote of his years of service for the Lord in the Scottish town of Anwoth:*

*Oh, if one soul from Anwoth
Meets me at God’s right hand,
My heaven will be two heavens
In Emmanuel’s land.*

f. The Steward's Reward: *"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord'" (Mt 25:23). "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Lk 16:10). "If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" (Lk 16:11-12). "Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor 4:2; see also Mt 6:4; 10:41-42).*

g. The Student's Reward: *"The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also... Study to show yourself approved to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth...And the ser-*

vant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle to all men, able to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves..." (2 Tim 2:2, 15, 24-25).

NOTE: We will not revert to law at the Judgment Seat of Christ! The fire that is there is for our good—anything done for self-glory, we will be glad to see it burn! God is looking for ways to give rewards: *"He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward" (Mt 10:41-42).*

5. REJOICING: Who can imagine the joy of the marriage day! All the Hallelujahs in the New Testament are reserved for that blessed occasion (Rev 19). Not one seat empty, not one heart

sad, not one desire left unfulfilled. He shall be satisfied (Jude 24) and so will we (Ps 17:15).

6. RETURN: Because the Lord is just, He must set this world in order. When He returns, it will be with ten thousands of His saints to judge the world and Satan, and to bring both His earthly and heavenly people into their sphere of eternal blessing. He will provide a new, curse-free heaven and earth and we shall see Him in His rightful place at last. It would seem that while the marriage occurs in heaven, the reception will be on earth, when our Lord is vindicated for having “done all things well.” And in the scene of His rejection He shall reign with the bride who, Rebekah-like, journeyed to meet Him across the desert landscape. “Whom having not seen, we love[d].”

7. REIGNING: At that time the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isa 11:9). We shall share His throne as His bride and

His servants shall serve Him (Rev 22:3). *“Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this”* (Isa 9:7). That is such good news! *“Even so, come [quickly], Lord Jesus!”*

THE END OF THE CHURCH'S ENEMIES, THE TRIUMVIRATE OF EVIL

1. The FLESH: when we are extracted from the presence of sin at the Rapture. Never another blush or tear of regret. Never to bring Him shame or fail in the cause of Christ. All new, not a vestige left of the old life.

2. The WORLD: defeated at Armageddon at the beginning of the millennial reign. But not destroyed until the end of the thousand years at which time the lost are judged at the Great White Throne (see Rev 20:11-15). This

judgment is preceded by a short uprising which again proves the heart to be deceitful and desperately wicked.

3. The DEVIL: The deceiver will be bound for a thousand years (Rev 20:2) after the seven years' Tribulation in which he has virtually had his way on earth. Upon his release, he captivates the hearts of those not redeemed. But at this point he will be cast out into the lake of fire for eternal judgment (Rev 20:10). Then will begin the great eternal era that will never know a sunset.

IN THE TIME LEFT, WHAT CAN DISCIPLES DO TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE?

"In all things showing yourself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness" (Titus 2:7).

Much needs to be done; exploratory surgery is insightful but does not cure the problem. After Nehemiah became aware of the

condition in Jerusalem, he wept. But he did not only weep. The work that needed doing (encouraging God's people; opposing God's enemies; building God's habitation on earth) would require deep-cutting sacrifice on the cup-bearer's part. And if we will see New Testament assemblies flourish in our day, it will not be by accident. You cannot have a New Testament assembly as a hobby. If you look carefully, you will see in the foundation of every healthy assembly today, the blood of elders who gave their lives for God and His work. It will cost the same for us.

Here are some suggestions regarding our part in the work:

1. GET INTO THE WORD OF GOD REGULARLY: Go through the Bible methodically. This, in itself, will be a blessing. Accuracy is the prime rule when studying doctrine. Keep careful notes so you consolidate your gains. Don't be discouraged at a slow start. It is the same with anything until the basic principles are mastered.

2. DISCUSS THE SCRIPTURES

WITH OTHERS: It has been said that if you merely hold on to what you have learned, you will lose it. But if you give it away to others, you will get to keep it. Such sharing of the Word accomplishes at least four things. Already mentioned is remembering. Then, it solidifies your own thinking and forces you to be articulate. Third, it is a safeguard from error. Your "multitude of counselors" will keep you from false conclusions (if you encourage their response). It also passes the blessing on. God's riches are meant to be shared.

3. BUILD A LIBRARY & BUY GOOD BOOKS FOR OTHERS:

Be selective in the books you read. Ask Bible students whom you appreciate for their suggestions. Look in used book stores. Building a library takes a lifetime, but a good, basic library is within reach of most.

4. MEMORIZE & MEDITATE THE BIBLE INTO YOUR LIFE:

Redeem

the bits of time during the day—waiting for a traffic light, or a phone call. Use commuting time or a coffee break. But don't just memorize; meditate. Run the verse back and forth through your mind, squeezing the good out of it. Meditation is becoming a lost art.

5. LOOK FOR PRACTICAL WAYS TO LIVE OUT WHAT YOU HAVE

LEARNED: Nothing is more odious than know-it-alls who don't live the truth. Ask the Lord daily for opportunities to practice what you have discovered in His Word. Convictions are doctrines that have been plugged into life. The two key phrases in the Pastoral Epistles are "sound doctrine" and "good works."

6. IF YOU HAVE SOME WRITING OR SPEAKING ABILITY, USE IT:

You don't have to begin by being published in a major magazine. Write to missionaries, shut-ins, letters of encouragement to your elders, parents, or to college students away from home. Write out

your testimony for witnessing purposes. Try a little poetry to praise the Lord. Keep writing; be ruthless with yourself; read good writers and watch how they use technique—and sometimes purposely break the rules. Speak to children, at retirement homes, etc. Use what talents you have for your Savior.

7. AS MUCH AS IN YOU IS—BE

AN ENCOURAGER: The “ministry” of discouragement can be very effective—like the spies that discouraged two million with one sentence. We all have influenza (Italian for “influence”). Speak positive. Talk Christ. Live on the sunny side. Keep looking for the Day. Tell the saints you love them—and mean it. Keep short accounts. Don’t hold grudges. Live with no regrets. And people will thank God you ever came their way.

As Amy Carmichael wrote: *“We have forever to celebrate our victories, but only a few short years to win them.”*

QUESTIONS

FOR DISCUSSION...

1. How do the future events of the Church relate to the beginning purpose that was laid out for the Church?
2. What goals can we have to be more active in these last days? How are those goals related to the Lord, other believers, the world, and myself?

Review:

1. Those who are overcomers are offered many wonderful rewards (see Revelation 2, and 3). Which is/are most meaningful to you today?

2. More rewards are listed, showing "the generous heart of our God." Which ones were unfamiliar to you? Next to each reward, write names of people you know or have read about that come to mind relative to each.

3. Reflect on the suggestions given as to how you can help to advance the cause. Record your thoughts below.

DAY 3: WATCH & ANSWER

Fill in the blanks as you watch the video. TIP: It's helpful to pre-read the questions before watching. You can check the answers in the Answer Key (Appendix 10).

A Brief Summary:

1. There are two problems with a vine:

- a) - unprincipled growth that does not follow the Word of God, and
- b) - branches that no longer bear fruit.

2. Tradition provides , a happy way to do things.

3. The Church has many but no . God has no alternate plan. His plan is right on schedule. Says Peter, He is only...

" " because He's not willing that any should perish.

4. **Resurrection:** Everyone of us will be uniquely like Christ. We will be given a name that will exactly reflect and match our personality - a new term of .

5. **Rapture:** Each one will reveal a particular of Christ, a 3-D, audio-visual presentation of the .

6. **Recompense:** We will be so filled with the riches and blessings of heaven that we will realize what a God He is.

7. **Responsibilities:** God is not . He has big plans. There will be opportunities. "Happy are thy men. Happy are thy servants."

8. God's world is being constructed of . His real work is building a for Himself where He'll be at home in the midst of His people.

9. **Rewards:** The purpose of the rewards is that we might have something to

to Him for the glory and honor of the Lord Jesus.

10. **Rejoicing:** The best that we have enjoyed of Christ now will be far surpassed

then, or "".

11. **Return:** In that day He will not be of us. The lowliest servant will appear with Him in glory as the , the ruling class of heaven.

In the Time Left:

1. These are times, the times, but the times we have.

2. "Most middle-class citizens tend to their work, work at their , and play at their ." (Gordon Dahl)

3. Romans 13:11. It is time to wake up – to incorporate our into our lifestyle, to hold things that have no eternal significance.

4. It is time to get serious about the gospel. It is OK to try and . "It is not the who counts. The credit belongs to the man in the arena." (W. Churchill)

5. We can't afford to have passion for the gospel without . The thing they will hear most of all is the compassion, graciousness, love of God.

6. We need to learn to weep over the lost, to be as well.

7. Hebrews 10:24-25 – We need to "" one another *daily*: to think of ways to enhance their life, to brighten their day, to encourage them.

(Turn page for one more section)

What is the way forward?

- i. The church is we have.
- ii. Note and appreciate the things...and be thankful.
- iii. to your local church with love and loyalty.
- iv. see every problem, need and difficulty as an to serve the Lord.
- v. Our goals:
 - long-term:* "that they may be .
 - short term:* to be more and more like the book of , a true New Testament gathering.
- vi. Learn how to communicate the gospel in language
- vii. To pursue the from my life for the Lord Jesus.

General Notes for the Video Lesson

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

DAY 4: WRITE & REMEMBER

1. Record three significant statements from this chapter. Why are they significant to you?

A) **Statement One:** _____

B) **Statement Two:** _____

C) **Statement Three:** _____

2. Memorize **Isaiah 9:7**.

DAY 5: REFLECT & PRAY

Respond in prayer: Having looked carefully at what God has waiting for the Church, reflect on your own life in the following ways:

Praise: _____

Repent: _____

Ask: _____

Yield: _____

PRAISE: What specific blessing have you discovered in this lesson? Thank the Lord for it! **REPENT:** Is there something in your life that is hindering you from experiencing what you have just learned? **ASK:** What specific way would you like the Lord to help you live out these truths? **YIELD:** Is there a particular area in your life that needs to come under the Lord's rule?