

What's the most important thing we need to think about as we wrap up our year-long journey through the Bible?

We started with Paradise lost in Genesis and we will end with Paradise restored in Revelation, so should we focus on end-time prophecy? Figuring out when Jesus will return?

Hi, I'm Yvon Prehn and welcome to Bible 805!

There are many things we could focus on as we wrap up this year, but what I decided to talk about as we look back on what we've read and look forward to God's plans for us is to answer the question taken from a passage in 2nd Peter where in light of Jesus coming, he doesn't focus on the newspaper sensational details of it, but asks:

What manner of people ought we to be?

Teacher: Yvon Prehn

I have a slight change in plans as we finish up this journey through the Bible. I was going to take two weeks on it, one

- to talk the pastoral letters and about the characteristics that should identify followers of Jesus and more specifically those characteristics that relate to leaders.
 - Keeping mind that the GLC says (and I agree) "that we are all leaders" and so how these characteristics apply to all of us
 - And then the second week I was going to talk about the end of the story as the final letters of John and the book of Revelation wrap up our reading of the Bible and the sad tale of Paradise lost in Genesis becomes the joy of Paradise regained in Revelation when God once again walks with his people.
 - But our church schedule changed with us not having a study hour one of the weeks and so I needed to combine the lessons for my Sunday School class.
- As I was praying about it and working on it, I realized **It works out quite well to combine the lessons**

- Because when we look at the end of all things, that should inspire us and give us strength to look backwards and determine how we should live based on that
 - Stephen Covey in his book on the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People said, "Begin with the end in mind"
 - Excellent advice for much of life
- And an appropriate way to end our Chronological study of the Bible in a year.

This also fits in with a consistent lesson taught in the pastoral epistles. Here is a key example of that:

Key passage, 2 Peter 3

The chapter begins with Peter saying that he wrote the letters, "to stimulate you to wholesome thinking" or in the **MSG "to hold your minds in a state of undistracted attention"**

I really like that wording as I think we do less for the Lord often not because of any intentional decision, but more often, purely out of getting distracted. So, holding our minds in **a state of undistracted attention as applies to the things of God is an essential thing to do.**

Peter goes on to talk about how people will make fun of our faith and if we share that we are living with the idea of Jesus coming back to judge the world, we can expect mockery—because thousands of years have gone by and He hasn't come yet.

He goes on to say....

- But the day of the Lord will come** like a thief.
- The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. ¹¹**Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives** ¹²as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.
- ¹⁴**So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. 2 Pet. 3:10-14**

What is important about this passage

- The Lord is coming back
 - The details of timing are not what is important
 - We won't dwell on timing, in part because we can't do anything about it.
 - We will focus on **how we are to respond considering the coming back of JESUS**—also called the Parousia
 - 3 aspects if it from *Christianity 101*
- #### 3 Key Characteristics of Christ's coming
- Regardless of the apocalyptic language used to describe it
 - The Parousia is an **Imminent Event**—it could happen at any time and therefore we should always be ready
 - The Parousia will be an **Absolute Event**—it will be

total in destruction, resurrection, judgment, and rewards

It will be a **Universal Event**—the entire world and cosmos will be aware of what is happening
See Christianity 101 for the details (and closely read the passages to end of the Bible)

Most important for us, for now: *What kind of people should we be?*

How we live matters—for us, for our world

You are writing a gospel

A chapter each day by things that you do

And the things that you say

People read what you write

Distorted or true—

What is the gospel according to you?

We can always choose to rewrite some of our story

It should be one of ever-increasing godliness and he goes on with advice on how to do this:

Peter's progression of growth

- ²Pet. 1:5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;
- ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;
- ⁷and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.
- ⁸For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.
- ¹⁰Therefore, my brothers and sisters ***make every effort*** to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

How we should live considering Jesus coming

- ***Is what I first planned.....***
- ***This is the emphasis of the "Pastoral Letters" We'll do that now, but with additional urgency that this isn't just a series of good suggestions***
- ***But how Christians should live with our end in mind—not for ourselves, but for our coming Savior***
- A sampling of passages and applications, that make up the final readings for you as you end the journey through the Bible

Our identity: Strangers and pilgrims

- *Heb 11 tells us after telling the story of many of the Old Testament followers of Jesus who lived before us: All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them*

from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. Hebrews 11:13

- "Strangers, pilgrims, foreigners, transients—how it is translated in various ways.
- Just talked about Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, will talk about Moses and many others—who were often taken from their earthly home
- That is our identity, we talk and sing about it, but do we really believe it, do we live like it's true?

Some suggestions if we did believe it:

We need to learn to live with a certain detachment because

- We have no rights
- This is not our home
- It is more obvious than we realize if we honestly look at how different the world is than the standards of the Bible
- How at home we are here? What truly is important to us?

Our guidebook: The Bible is THE Basis for all our behavior

- *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17*
- God's Word ESSENTIAL for all life and service that is pleasing to God
- Application:
- Finish your reading through the Bible this year and with excitement—start again next year
- Try a different translation or a different study Bible or this year LISTEN to the Bible—You Version, Bible ap
- What are some of the things these letters/God word tells us?

Specific advice for leaders (for all)

- Various lists of leader characteristics:
- ⁷Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. Titus 1:7-9
- **WE MUST HAVE BOTH Orthopraxy AND Orthodoxy**
- **Proper beliefs AND actions**
- For his people:

Characteristics of God's people-Titus 3

· *Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good,² to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.*

· ³*At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us. . . . those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. . . .*

· ⁹¹⁰*Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. ¹¹You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.*

· Been thinking a lot....why so important, not to slander or argue (so easy for me to do)
· NOT how people identify the people of God
· If we do this, if we are touchy and fight—we aren't looking at Jesus, our priorities, our focus, what we have faith in is all messed up

**ALSO, to slander is to judge and that is putting ourselves in God's place which is so wrong

Examples of what it means to do well:

2 Timothy 2 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.· ³Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

· *No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.*

· ⁵*Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules.*

· ⁶*The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.*

We see single-minded dedication to the task we are called to do

Not all workers are the same in God's eyes and in large measure we are what we choose to be

· *2 Timothy 2: 20 In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. ²¹Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*

· ²²*Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure*

heart. ²³Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. ²⁴And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,

· **We have choice, we can be cleansed and kind—**
· **Not easy—much easier to be harsh, nasty, reactive**
· **Kindness takes self-control and proactive action**
Jesus isn't asking us to do anything He and many before us, didn't do

· *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:1-2*

· We need a clear focus—Jesus— and his example of JOY

Joy that came from, in part, “throwing off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles”

· **Then we may need to edit some things from our lives**

· Throw off what hinders.... the more we progress, the tougher it can be—the more fine-tuning our challenges become. Done with BIG sins.... but....little things that can distract or keep us from doing what is best...

· E.g. fixation with news.... whatever

If we mess up—we can trust God to discipline us

· Undisciplined kids are a terror and sadness to all around them; we don't want to be like that,
· The Lord cares too much about us to let us go our own way, so we can trust Him when we mess up:

· *“My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶because the Lord disciplines the one he loves and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”*

· ⁷*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ⁸If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹Moreover, we have all*

had human fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! ¹⁰ They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Heb. 12: 5-11

Passage goes on.... because we can get discouraged

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. Heb. 12:14-15

Our sin can affect many

It takes EFFORT to be at peace with people and to not get bitter

But all the effort is so worth it

Back to our initial verse and why we should make the effort to live as the Lord wants us to

Here is how the Message puts it:

² *Pet. 3: ¹⁰ But when the Day of God's Judgment does come, it will be unannounced, like a thief. The sky will collapse with a thunderous bang, everything disintegrating in a huge conflagration, earth and all its works exposed to the scrutiny of Judgment.*

¹¹⁻¹³ *Since everything here today might well be gone tomorrow, do you see how essential it is to live a holy life? Daily expect the Day of God, eager for its arrival. The galaxies will burn up and the elements melt down that day—but we'll hardly notice. We'll be looking the other way, ready for the promised new heavens and the promised new earth, all landscaped with righteousness.*

¹⁴⁻¹⁶ *So, my dear friends, since this is what you have to look forward to, do your very best to be found living at your best, in purity and peace.*

Think about what you have to look forward to and live with that in mind!

- *That's all for now,*
- *Please check out the notes from this lesson, they are in Downloadable PDF format and other materials at www.bible805.com*

While you are there, sign up for the newsletter to keep informed of what's coming up with the podcast. For now, my plan is to do topical studies in the coming year—but I'm still praying and planning. Preparing, teaching, and doing the lessons and this podcast for

the last year has been exhausting, but a joy and I may need a little rest.

Regardless of the podcast topics, be sure to continue with your Bible reading. Every year I read through the Bible in Chronological order and it has been the core spiritual discipline of my life and I've grown spiritually so much from it—I can't recommend enough that you do it also. So, download a schedule and begin again for next year. Schedules and more are at: www.Bible805.com.

- *Until next time, I'm Yvon Prehn, your fellow pilgrim, writer and teacher for Jesus.*
- *I'd like to close with this benediction:*
- *May you know the invitation of God, to move
-from confusion to clarity
-from wandering to rest
-from loneliness to knowing you are loved
-from turmoil to peace
From wherever you are on your spiritual journey to a growing knowledge of God's Word and in your personal relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit . Amen*