

July - September 2011

# ARMOR OF GOD

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

# ARE WE IN THE LAST DAYS?

THE LAST DAYS AND DAY OF THE LORD ●

TIME AND DEADLINE ●

ENDURE TO THE END ●

FORGIVE US... AS WE FORGIVE OTHERS... ●

**The Savior as a Prophet**

Since time immemorial the world has never run out of seers; some based their predictions from the Bible and others through historical evidences; some through movements of the heavenly bodies while others by sheer imagination and guesswork. Yet, those who presumably based their "prophetic utterances" from the Bible tend to introduce their personal speculations more comprehensively than what the Bible reveals.

And interestingly enough, sometimes by fluke, some of these predictions do come to pass, while many failed - to the consternation and disappointment of those who faithfully watched for them. As we draw closer to the biblical end time, the crescendo of voices proclaiming the events of tomorrow will continue to abound as Jesus Himself foretold (Mat. 24:24). So, how then can we determine which voices to listen to and which one to play deaf with?

Moses wrote: The Lord your God will raise up a prophet from among you like myself, and you shall listen to Him, Deut. 18:15. Peter and Stephen confirmed that the prophet whom Moses referenced to was none other than Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22; Acts 7:37).

It is noteworthy that all of the events that are about to happen are personally narrated in advance by Jesus Himself. The final chapter of human history will be littered with cataclysmic events never before witnessed by man because He said: It will be a time of great distress; there has never been such a time from the beginning of the world until now, and will never be again. If that time of trouble will not be cut short, no living thing could survive..., Mat. 24:21-22.

Now, even as people wanted to know about the future, they are not very sure why they need to know it. Jesus tells us why: Keep a watch on yourselves; do not let your minds be dulled by dissipation and drunkenness and worldly cares so that the great Day closes upon you suddenly like a trap; for the day will come on all men, wherever they are the whole world over. Be on alert praying at all times for strength to pass safely through these imminent troubles and to stand in the presence of the Son of Man, Luke 21:34-36.

As a prophet, Jesus presented a frightening scenario of what is going to happen, and as our Savior He provided us a way out of it. And that's what matters most to all of us.

**Eleno S. Mellomida**

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# THE LAST DAYS AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

By Winston S. Co

THE "LAST DAYS"  
AND THE  
"DAY OF THE LORD"  
ARE TWO MAJOR EVENTS MENTIONED  
IN THE BIBLE. THESE TWO SIGNIFICANT  
EVENTS ARE OFTENTIMES BEING LIGHTLY  
REGARDED BY SOME BIBLE READERS.

**T**he "Last Days" and the "Day of the Lord" are two major events mentioned in the Bible. These two significant events are oftentimes being lightly regarded by some Bible readers. If and whenever they are given serious consideration, are only viewed as one and the same. What is the truth about these two events? What difference does it make if you know or don't know about it?

Believe it or not, there is a big difference between the two phrases; rightly dividing the distinction between the two events is an important key to understanding the prophetic timeline of the events leading to the end time.

The end time is characterized by scary happenings as the Bible predicted; yet the prophetic events that Jesus mentioned in the gospels are worth looking forward to because He also promised deliverance to those who will continue to live godly lives until He returns. He told His followers in advance to watch and pray always that they may be accounted worthy to escape all the terrifying events that will surely come to pass and to stand before Him [Luke 21:36].

Thus, it is important to understand the biblical terms "the Last Days" and the "Day of the Lord" because a thorough understanding of the two phrases will prevent the possibility of getting frustrated in the "long wait" for Christ's return.

## Key to Understanding Prophecy

There is a vital key that we need to know in understanding Bible prophecy; the Bible talks about the Last Days and the Day of the Lord. The statements posed in the opening triggered this question: "Is the Last Days synonymous to the Day of the Lord?"

Most churches believe that the Last Days is synonymous to the Day of the Lord – that they are one and the same! That is an erroneous understanding. These two (2) events are part of each other yet distinctive of one another. When we talk of the Last Days, we generally think of one momentous event when all these things happen in an instant – short, quick and immediate.

Such assumption is founded on the misunderstanding of the following passages: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" [Isaiah 2:2], and "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see vision" [Joel 2:28].

Thus, many casually conclude that the "Last Days" lies yet in the future, toward the very end of the age – the unveiling of the great tribulation followed by the immediate return of Christ and His millennial reign. A careful study suggests the opposite.

### **When is the Last Days?**

The "Last Days" seems to suggest a long period of time; it started with the first advent of Christ! The writer of Hebrews has this to say: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, Hebrews 1:1-2. This verse is explicitly clear that the Last Days started with the appearance of the logos, the Word, the Spokesman, the One who became The Christ [John 1:1].

Then on the redemptive act of Christ he noted that it is happening in the Last Days. "Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages (in the Last Days) to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26); that sacrifice is being availed of continually up to this very day.

Since it is not satisfactory to establish truth out of one witness only, the testimony of the apostle Peter is necessary. He wrote: "He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake" (Peter 1:20). When did Christ reveal Himself? This clearly indicates that the first advent of Christ was the start of the Last Days.

Peter then warned us how some skeptics would react regarding the second coming of Christ: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their

own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4). It would serve us well to ask the question; since when did people start scoffing and dismissing the truth about the second coming of Christ? It started during the apostolic times and is still ongoing to this very day. In his first sermon delivered on the Day of Pentecost, Peter referred to Joel's prophecy, thus:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God; I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy [Acts 2:1-40; Joel 2:17-18]. "Peter testified that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the Day of Pentecost [31 AD] was the fulfillment of the Last Days prophecy spoken of by the Prophet Joel. Therefore, they were living in the Last Days and the Last Days has then begun.

The clear indication of the testimonies of the two writers with regard to the Last Days is irrefutable; it refers to and started with the first advent of Christ. Hence, we are NOW living in the Last Days!

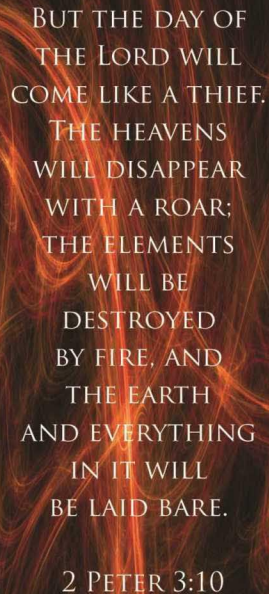
### **Day of the Lord**

Now, the Day of the Lord is a separate and distinct event from the Last Days. The same procedure applies - we need a minimum of two witnesses to give credence to the fact.

"Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them

suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3). The apostle Paul specifically related the Day of the Lord to the second coming of Christ. It has not happened yet. We are still looking forward to its fulfillment.

Paul further gave additional hint: "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4).



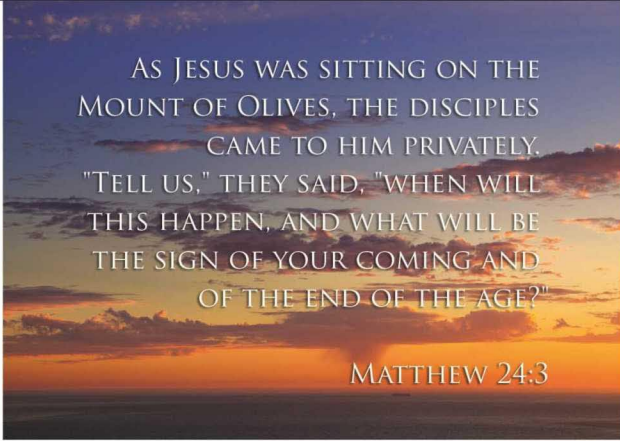
BUT THE DAY OF  
THE LORD WILL  
COME LIKE A THIEF.  
THE HEAVENS  
WILL DISAPPEAR  
WITH A ROAR;  
THE ELEMENTS  
WILL BE  
DESTROYED  
BY FIRE, AND  
THE EARTH  
AND EVERYTHING  
IN IT WILL  
BE LAID BARE.  
2 PETER 3:10

Has the "man of lawlessness" already been revealed? No! Not yet! And none dares to claim as the one so far. The apostle Paul confirmed that the Day of the Lord is still yet in the future; the Day of the Lord references to the second advent of Christ.

Let us hear what Peter has to say on the matter: "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up [2 Peter 3:7-10]. The Day of the Lord is not an ordinary incident that can be easily ignored by the entire living population of the earth; it is exceedingly frightening, and the above cited events are clearly reserved for the terrifying "Day of the Lord".

Evidently, the Last Days refers to the time of the first coming of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice, and until He returns as King of kings and Lord of lords: The Day of the Lord refers to the actual singular time of Christ's return. The distinction is very clear and we hope that you can readily identify by now where we are in God's prophetic timeline. The key in understanding prophecy is to understand the events, and watch them as they unfold and intensify as the Day of the Lord gets closer. This is precisely the reason why the Book of Revelation was written.

Notice Revelation 1:3: Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. The Book of Revelation is a detailed account of the events of the



AS JESUS WAS SITTING ON THE  
MOUNT OF OLIVES, THE DISCIPLES  
CAME TO HIM PRIVATELY.  
"TELL US," THEY SAID, "WHEN WILL  
THIS HAPPEN, AND WHAT WILL BE  
THE SIGN OF YOUR COMING AND  
OF THE END OF THE AGE?"

MATTHEW 24:3

Last Days culminating to the Day of The Lord!

#### Prophetic Timeline

Now, consider Jesus' Olivet Prophecy recorded in Matthew 24:1-35. Here, Jesus responded to the questions of the disciples; a closer look at the verses will tell us that there are three items being asked, take notice: And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? [Matthew 24:3].

The first question pertains to the timing of the destruction of the temple. History tells us that the temple was destroyed by the Roman army in 70 AD and still lies in ruins to this day. This question was answered by Christ and was fulfilled in the days of the apostles.

The second question deals with the signs of the end and refers to the timing and events related to the Last Days.

The third question relates to the signs of Christ's second coming; this is distinct from the second since this one specifically refers to the Day of the Lord. The response Jesus gave to each question was precise and

accurate. He responded to question about the Last Days in Mat. 24:4-14: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" [Matthew 24:4-14].

Then in Matthew 24:15-31, He responded to the question about the

Day of the Lord: "Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains; Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day:

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory [Matthew 24:15-31].

Now, further consider Matthew 24:34: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." The end of the age or the last days has started,

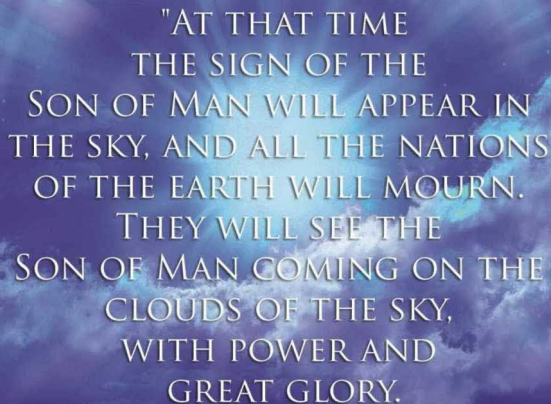
but the finale that will bring about the conclusion or the end is not yet – it is just the beginning of birth pains (Matthew 24:8). And the actual, final appearance of Christ - the Day of the coming of the Lord - will be a visible event that the whole earth will be able to witness from the east to the west (Matthew 24:30).

Jesus Christ was plainly talking about two (2) distinct and separate events: the Last Days or end of the age which started at His first advent, and the Day of the Lord to the day of His return. "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away". Yes, the Last Days did start to happen in the generation of Jesus Christ and will culminate with the Day of the Lord upon His return! Otherwise, you will have a difficult time explaining this verse. The fact is, all these things relating to the Last Days started to happen from that generation onward.


#### Prophecy Timeline

Make no mistake! The Last Days includes the Day of the Lord. The

Day of the Lord is the end part of the Last Days. That's why these two (2) days or events are part of each other yet distinct of itself. The Last Days commences with the birth of Christ, and runs towards the millennial reign of Christ; while the Day of the Lord refers specifically to the Day of God's wrath - the second advent of Christ. That is why the Last Days is in plural form: "Days" and the Day of the Lord is singular – as in "Day." The Last Days is a long period of time while the Day of the Lord will be significantly shorter in duration. It is so inspiring to look at the Bible Prophecy and to be able to identify where we are now in the timeline. It is so great a knowledge that God has revealed to His people and to His church. This information cannot be acquired anywhere except from the word of God and through those whom He has given the keys to understand it. By understanding the distinction between the Last Days and the Day of the Lord, you can be assured that God's promises, especially the second coming of Christ, are intact and as certain as the rising and the setting of tomorrow's sun. **AG**



"AT THAT TIME  
THE SIGN OF THE  
SON OF MAN WILL APPEAR IN  
THE SKY, AND ALL THE NATIONS  
OF THE EARTH WILL MOURN.  
THEY WILL SEE THE  
SON OF MAN COMING ON THE  
CLOUDS OF THE SKY,  
WITH POWER AND  
GREAT GLORY.



# TIME AND DEADLINE

By Eleno S. Mellomida

**E**veryone should be familiar with the following expressions: Time is gold. Time is of the essence. We don't have the luxury of time. We are running out of time.

And, sometimes those who are in a hurry to achieve what they want are often advised to "take your time". But the desperate, who felt they have reached the "end of the rope" think that their time is finished. And from an aggrieved party, it's menacing to hear them say "your time will come". "Time will tell" as people often say, even as we know time can't speak. And finally, those whose lovers ran away, the famous song suggested it's "time to cry". These are just few statements dealing with time. Time is the most common "commodity" easily understood and spent knowingly or unknowingly by everyone.

We hear all the above expressions used in business, politics, sports and in almost all activities of man, from all walks of life - in a friendly, advisory or even in adversarial manner. For as long as time allows people to live, they either use time productively and gainfully, or waste it in ease and idleness. Some people are in a hurry to catch up with time, while others

simply keep relaxing all the time. And either way, time has been spent all the way. Now, what has time got to do with Christianity?

## Assets & Time

Money can be found, produced, earned, borrowed, loaned, hoarded, swindled, stolen, invested, and above all, printed. Time has none of these physical qualities. You may be "stealing time" at the workplace, but you can't bring it home to hoard and allocate it for some other time. Time is some kind of an "abstract commodity" [for lack of a better word to describe it]; it's not subject to physical constraints. Time can't be killed either, as players try to do it to ensure their victory as the clock keeps ticking while the ballgame goes on. Time therefore is not within man's absolute control. You can only manage your time wisely, or squander it regularly, but you cannot get hold of it permanently.

If we lose it, we lose it; it is not subject to recovery. We can lose all our assets - money, house, spouses, boyfriend, girlfriend, career, and all other things of value, but we can always recover them while we are still alive. And if you suffer from a bad

decision made at a certain point in time, and you want to rectify it to obtain a favorable result, all you can do is simply wish that you could have done it better at that particular time!

## Time & Deadline

Now, the most common reason for being conscious with time is deadline. Deadline is what makes everyone cautious against wasting time. In business, especially in the servicing industry, deadlines are stipulated in every contract; when deadlines are not met, an appeal [on the part of the supplier] to be granted with extended time becomes necessary to solicit understanding, and be given an opportunity for another transaction in some other time.

Deadline keeps running after time. And, from time to time, people are running around like "headless chicken" when pressed for deadlines. But, do you know that the busiest executive and the aimless, purposeless and hopeless wandering "grease man" have the same deadline? When their "line" to life expires, both have the same ending; both become useless, and both are no longer governed by time.

Our cellphones, whether it's an iPhone or a Blackberry, or even a "tightwadly" acquired unit from the sidewalk - when it runs out of load, or cut off from the network - which is its only source of life - "dies" anytime. You now have a useless gadget - a unit with a dead line. Humans are no different. Surely all of us will run out of load [life] at the appointed time! Notice: Put no faith in princes, in any man, who has no power to save. He breathes his last breath, he returns to the dust; and on that same hour his thinking ends, Psalms 146:4, [NEB].

In Ephesians 5:16, Paul said: Redeem the time because the days are evil. Now, Titus 3:3 reminded us that for quite some time our direction in life is opposite to how God wants us to live; thus, it will have to be changed and replaced with the attributes God wants His people to develop. Peter tells us why: "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rests of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have enough of our lifetime in doing the will of the gentiles - when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries", 1 Peter 4:1-3.

Bear in mind that more than half of our life has been spent in absorbing the world's ways. Switching our tuner to the wavelength of God requires enormous effort. Paul tells us his experience about the process in Romans the 7th chapter. Yet, it can be done. In which areas shall we redeem the time then?

#### **Redeem the Time on Overcoming**

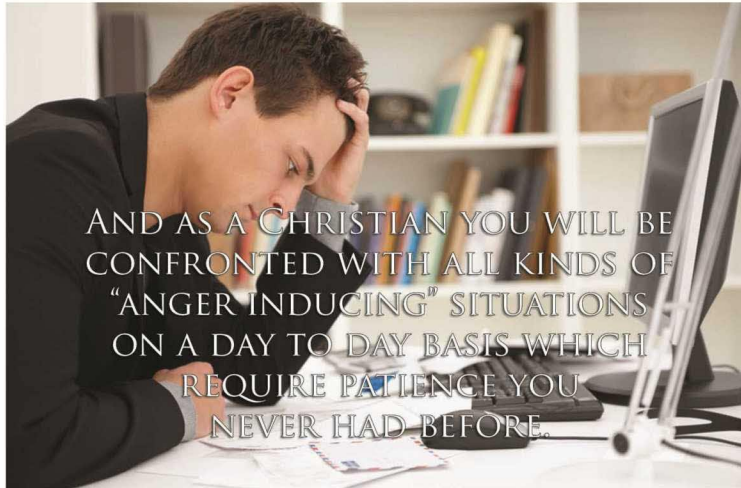
Paul said the last days are fraught with dangers because the moral values of people are deteriorating [2 Tim. 3:1-2]. If we are observant with

what's happening around us, it is easily noticeable how the behavioral pattern of mankind is becoming less principled and more inclined to wickedness than righteousness. And the malady is everywhere; in politics, business and entertainment - and sadly we have become used to it. Jesus Himself predicted that because iniquity would abound, the love of many would grow cold; that love has to do with one's dedication to the true teachings of God in the Bible. And Christians have every reason to be alarmed because lawlessness has the tendency to "immunize" one's conscience - and makes one gets swayed by it.

There are just too many things to get mad at these days: bad drivers, for example help you develop a "wrathful attitude". And as a Christian you will be confronted with all kinds of "anger-inducing" situations on a day to day basis which require patience you never had before. Thus, the conversion process is a tedious, meticulous and emotionally charging experience; to do away with these ungodly attributes require time. We need to

catch up with the losses so to speak. As mentioned earlier, Paul has to struggle on this even after more than a decade in the ministry. And he is in the best position to tell us to "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" [Phil. 2:12]. Work out means to sweat it out. It requires effort and spiritual stamina to engage in the business of wanting to be saved. Much as God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for our salvation, there is an individual responsibility attached to it: obedience to God's commands, and resisting the pulls of our own nature by replacing it with godly traits - these require determination and hard work.

Paul advised us on how he did it in the same letter: "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected, but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the price of





the upward call of God in Christ Jesus [ch.3:12-14]". Buying back time means replenishing the bad times with the godly ones in our day to day affairs with such sense of urgency.

### **Redeem the Time on our Assignment**

Jesus said, "While daylight lasts, we must carry on the work of Him who sent Me; night comes, when no one can work" [John 9:4]. And He commissioned His followers to do the same [Mark 16:15]. Today we are blessed with the necessary tools to do it. The first Christians had none of the instruments which are available at our disposal these days; they had no phones, television, radio, print, social networking sites, and a vast repository of information available in the internet. What did they have? They had enthusiasm, excitement, courage, and the decision to less prioritize worldly pursuits; they were driven with just one single purpose. That's all they had – the fortitude and the gumption to fulfill a mission [Acts 1:6-8].

The only advantage they had, if we consider it as such, was they spoke with Jesus face to face. What if they were only informed through the printed word? Would they still believe Him? What if they have not heard Him say, "I will be 3 days and 3 nights in the grave then I will live again"? For some of them it was not necessary. Many did not witness the resurrection of Christ, and yet remained faithful to the end. Hebrews 11 is a living testimony of that fact. Today, they are still in their graves waiting for God's promise to be fulfilled; the same promises modern day Christians are encouraged to hold on to with fervency [Heb. 11:13-14].

Literary evidences, archeological discoveries and testimonies of experts in the science of probability, confirmed the authenticity of the

Bible and the divinity of Christ. They are easily available to us today. What more do we need to believe then? The writer of Hebrews has an eye-opening introduction: When in former times God spoke to our forefathers, He spoke in fragmentary and varied fashion through the prophets, but in this final age He has spoken to us in His Son whom He made heir to the whole universe, Hebrews 1:1-2. The present generation of Christians are fortunate to hear the words of the Son in the New Testament, as well as the messages God delivered through the prophets in the Old Testament. Both sources are recorded in the same book.

In other words, we have enough evidence to believe, and more tools to enable us do what Christ commissioned us to do; and we have to do it while we still have the time; while the deadline has not overtaken us yet. The deadline is unknown. Jesus simply said the time will come that no one can work. Night represents darkness. Darkness could mean suspension of freedom to deliver the messages from the word of God [Amos 8:11-12]. It could also mean individually closing our eyes permanently - in death [Eccl. 9:10].

This may sound morbid, but a discussion involving time and deadline in the biblical perspective cannot be presented pleasantly. Those are definite deadlines that will propel us to revitalize our commitment to overcome our natural tendencies to go where the world goes; then focus instead our interest in the commission of the church.

For those who want to follow Jesus in this life, it is about time to make the most out of the time you have in your hands now. Paul's final admonition is: "In all this, remember how critical the moment is. It is time for you to wake out of sleep, for deliverance is

LET US BEHAVE  
DECENTLY, AS  
IN THE DAYTIME,  
NOT IN  
ORGIES AND  
DRUNKENNESS,  
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IMMORALITY AND  
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IN DISSENSION  
AND JEALOUSY,  
RATHER, CLOTHE  
YOURSELVES WITH THE  
LORD JESUS CHRIST,  
AND DO NOT  
THINK ABOUT  
HOW TO GRATIFY THE  
DESIRES OF THE  
SINFUL NATURE.  
ROMANS 13:13-14

nearer to us now than it was when we first believed. It is far on in the night; day is near. Let us therefore throw off the deeds of darkness and put on our armor as soldiers of the light. Let us behave with decency as befits the day; no reveling or drunkenness, no debauchery or vice, no quarrels or jealousies. Let Christ Jesus be the armor that you wear; give no more thought to satisfying the bodily appetites [Romans 13:11-14].

Time and deadline are two of the best motivators for Christians. Remaining true to our calling, while time is still on our side, is the only choice we have. **AG**



# ENDURE TO THE END

By Ferdie Padilla

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BUT HE WHO STANDS FIRM TO THE END WILL BE SAVED.  
MATTHEW 24 : 13

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**H**ave you ever watched a marathon in the Olympic Games? It is fascinating watching the athletes pace themselves as the distance they cover gets longer, running several laps round and round the Olympic oval. There is actually a lesson we can pick up from them and note a quality or characteristic we should possess in living a Christian life. Those who run them have something which we Christians need to have too.

They have endurance. Long distance runners are not known for their speed. They start slow, but steadily as the distance they have to cover nears its end, they would gather all their strength and run faster to get first to the finish line. But to get to this point, they first have to endure several grueling, tiresome laps.

## The Bible on Endurance

The Bible is also full of admonitions on enduring. Let us visit one of them: Matthew 24:9 - 13 (NIV) "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be

hated by all nations because of me. 10At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." Verse 13 is rendered in the King James Version as (Mat 24:13) "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

Let us examine that a little further. On the surface, it is obvious that it is calling for the saints to endure all kinds of hardship and persecution as evident in verse 9. There is also a warning that people will actually fall away and betray and hate one another as verse 10 says. Many deceivers will arise as verse 11 says but we are called to be faithful to God's true teachings. We are supposed to endure and stand firm in the true faith which we now have. And verse 12 says because of ever increasing wickedness, many will grow callous and eventually let go of love in their hearts. It is a terrifying thought. People would no longer

care for each other. People will become very selfish and couldn't care less what happens to others. But against this backdrop, the Bible says those who endure to the end shall be saved.

These verses are pointing us towards the end of the age. We are near that time and it behooves us true Christians to endure until the very end.

## What Endurance Demands

What does it take to endure? It will take a lot of our willpower, if not all of it. It will use up a lot of our mental, emotional and yes spiritual strength. It takes up all the resources we can muster to endure. Endurance is not passive. It takes a lot of conscious effort to endure. Simply put, to endure will demand a lot from us. And when we say that, perhaps it would be noteworthy to mention that those who endure are also the ones who display the characteristics of true Christianity. You will not endure persecution due to your beliefs if you are not sure of it, would you? You endure persecution because you believe that what you know today is

true. You are assured of something you don't see. That is faith, isn't it? Let us read Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Because we are so certain of the promises of God, we endure all kinds of hardships because we know these are nothing compared to what was promised. What about love? You will not endure something for someone you don't love. Christ did that for us. He endured the shame of the cross for us because He loves us. Consider what is written in Hebrews 12:2 (NIV) "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." If you recall the crucifixion account, you would understand what scorning the shame of the cross means. It means he endured the insults of ungodly men, being spat on, treated inhumanely, beaten, bruised, ridiculed, laughed at, sneered upon, betrayed by his closest friends. It was an unimaginable suffering he endured. The Father too endured the pain of seeing His beloved Son suffering so much and not doing anything purposely. Why? What for? Because of Their great love for us. Christ did not have to endure these things if He did not love us. And the Father would not have to endure pain as much, if He did not love us. You also would not endure if you don't have hope. If you believe you have nothing to look forward to, what's the purpose of enduring? Nothing. You would only be wasting your effort. But because we have hope, a very real promise from God, we endure all kinds of hardships.

The message should come across clearly to all of us: the virtues of Christianity, the character traits that God expects from us will be further enhanced, strengthened, if we endure. They all go hand in hand.

### How to Endure

How do we endure? Well, verse 3 of Hebrews 12 says: "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." To endure, we must look to Christ. We have to follow His example. Remember, in everything, we can always look to Him on how to properly conduct ourselves. He is the greatest source of endurance. We can always draw from that wellspring of endurance through Bible study and prayer (as always pointed out).

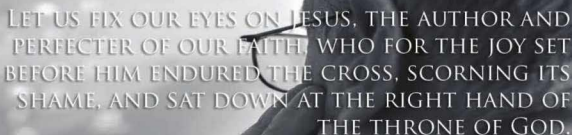
We can also draw inspiration from the experiences of our fellow Christians. Many among us have gone through a lot of trying times. The lessons and the wisdom of other Christians' collective experiences can help us endure similar circumstances. Or if not similar circumstances, we can always relate our experiences with them and be surprised that ours maybe easier to endure. Listen to the stories they share with you. They will be of great help. There is great comfort in what our brothers and sisters in Christ can share with us. More often than not, they affirm what we already know and give us more "fuel" to endure.

### Why Endure

Now the next question we should ask is: Why should we endure? Why do we have to continue in obeying God and follow all His laws? Are we being cruel to ourselves? Of course not. There is a wonderful passage in 2 Timothy 2:10-13 which gives us a very good reason why we should endure. 2 Timothy 2:10 - 13 (NIV)

"Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. [Here we see that Paul is also enduring much] Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; 13 if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself." Verse 12 says it all. If we endure, we will reign with Him! We must endure to attain the full human potential! We must endure to be saved as we have read earlier in Matthew 24:13. To be saved is a good enough reason to endure, isn't it? But 2 Tim 2:12 says, more than being saved, we will be given the privilege of being co-rulers with Christ as consistently promised in the Bible (from the Old to the New Testament) if we endure. Should not this motivate you to endure to the end? This wonderful promise is for us to take hold of. But the thing is, we have to endure, to go on walking the Christian walk towards the Kingdom of God.

We should not waste this opportunity given to us today. We must diligently apply all the things we learn from the Bible in our daily lives and sustain it daily. We must not grow tired or weary even though it happens that sometimes (if not many times) we do feel tired or weary. Let us just focus on the promises of God. They are sure. They are real. Remember, we are not enduring for nothing. **AG**



LET US FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH, WHO FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS, SCORNING ITS SHAME, AND SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD.

HEBREWS 12:2



# FORGIVE US AS WE FORGIVE OTHERS

By Rene D. Corpuz

In the 6th Chapter of Matthew, in verse 12, we read: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (KJV). Memorized, oft-spoken, discussed, preached, but is it as much practiced?

The Lord's Prayer, as we call it, is a model prayer. It is not supposed to be a "memorized and repeated" prayer, rather, it is an outline of what our prayers should contain when we get on our knees before our Father. Jesus did not intend for us to mindlessly repeat the prayer; He intended for us to put our own thoughts, feelings and experiences into it by using it as a pattern, and present it to our Father.

The instruction concerning the way we request for forgiveness as we forgive others is something we should be taking more seriously than simply "repeat" as it is. The lesson and importance of forgiveness is very much expressed in the parable given by Jesus in Matthew 18:23-35. If we refuse to forgive others for their sins or debts against us, our own sins which God had already forgiven or released will once again be charged and required

of us. Forgiving a person or releasing the debts of those who owed us may not be easy for the majority of us, but it is necessary. We have seen how trying to collect debts when ours had been released can have very serious repercussions as Jesus warned.

## The Year of Release

This portion of the prayer is closely associated with the principle of the year of release. When we come before God to forgive us or release us from our sins, we are supposed to plead with Him and ask Him to deal with us in the same way that we forgave or released the sins or debts of others. This is quite significant in a number of ways.

There are many examples in the Old Testament Scriptures of how God forgives or releases sins, and we should be learning on what the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church (I Corinthians 10:11). In Psalms 51, King David, under inspiration from the Holy Spirit, expressed how he wanted God to forgive him for his sins in several ways; to wash, cleanse, purge, hide,

blot out; these are but a few of the ways by which the act of forgiveness is carried out.

There is a perfect example of "forgiveness" in the Old Testament. And God made sure the lesson is learned by instituting it as an unconditional law in Ancient Israel. Deuteronomy 15:1-9 "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the LORD's release. Of a foreigner you may require it; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother, except when there may be no poor among you; for the LORD will greatly bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance—only if you carefully obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today. For the LORD your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not

borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you. "If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, "The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand," and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you.

This is a very interesting institution established by God in Ancient Israel. It is a time when God commands the release of all debts. Take note that God specifically used the term "release" in this particular instance, which basically means to let go, to cut the strings, to let loose the bonds. The use of the term is quite significant, and more so, because it is not voluntary.

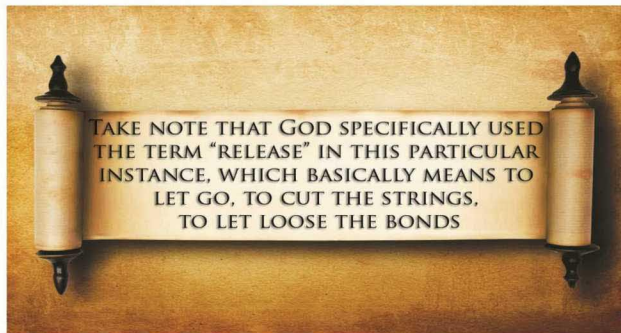
To have a better perspective of how the Year of Release kicks in, we need to understand a few ancient Israelite traditions. Ancient Israel follows a calendar that cycles every 50 years; it is composed of a succession of seven years times seven, and the fiftieth year is celebrated as the year of Jubilee, which is the return and release of all mortgaged lands to its original owners or clans. The seven-year cycle is also the basis of what is known as a "rest" period called the land Sabbath (Exodus 23:10-11). The same seven-year cycle is also the basis for what is referred to as the tithes on the 3rd year which is loosely referred to as the 'third tithe' or tithe on the 3rd year (Deuteronomy 14:28-29, or every three years, depending on which school of interpretation one comes across with). This "tithe on the

third year" is assigned by God to serve the poor, the orphans, the Levites and the widows of the Israelite community on the third, and some believe, on the sixth year of a seven-year cycle.

The year of release is a fixed period of time in a 50-year cycle. There are seven years of releases within that same 50-year period. Interestingly, God calls it the "Lord's release". The instruction is that whatever is loaned to a fellow Israelite is to be released, and one is commanded to "give up your claim" to what is owed. Simply, one had to stop the claim on the loan, to release it with the attitude of letting it go, as if it's gone, and no longer retrievable. God then cautions the people of Israel that if they see the year of release approaching, it should not discourage them from helping their brethren in the form of extending loans (Exodus 21:2-3, Exodus 22:1-15, Leviticus 25).

crimes are dealt with through a retribution system. That is, each crime, depending on the gravity or seriousness of the offense, is meted with a corresponding "payment" system. Stealing, causing injury or damage to property, are paid for by the offender. If he cannot or do not have the capability to pay, he is sold into "slave labor" to pay for what he owes (Exodus 22:2-3). There are at least three means by which one who has been sold to slave labor for stealing, causing serious injury, or unable to pay loans or debts can be freed: by redemption, by completing the period of slave labor, or when the "year of release" catches up with him or her, as the case may be.

Imposing the year of release has positive effects on the general attitude and character of the Israelites. Or at least it should have, if the lessons it was intended to teach them were learned. It teaches them not to be greedy of their hard-earned



The next thing we need to understand is that in ancient Israel, there is no prison system. What they have are temporary places of refuge or sanctuaries where when one who has or may have accidentally killed someone can take shelter until he stands trial and is proven innocent or guilty (Numbers 35). Heinous crimes are dealt with immediately and severely (death in most instances) in those days, and the less serious

material wealth, and it teaches them not to get too attached to any acquired possession, whether it be person, or property, knowing that they will not be allowed by God's law to retain them indefinitely.

When we have a decent understanding of the concept and principle of the year of release, it becomes easier to understand the prayer Jesus taught His disciples.

The year of release, and the

parable in Matthew 18 as narrated by the Lord tell us that forgiveness, or the “release of debts” is something we MUST do. The Year of Release is not optional, it supersedes our being “free moral agents”; if we want to please God and receive our ultimate reward. What we would find interesting in this exercise is that God actually ‘forces’ us to forgive, in the same way that the Israelites of old are ‘forced’ to release and cancel debts, and they are expected to do it on a regular basis, even if it is 7 years apart. God is teaching Israel a lesson, which serves as our example, and whether they learned it or not should make us think and consider because we are in the same relationship with God. While there is no record of what happens to an Israelite who refuses to release or cancel a fellow Israelite’s debt, we do have Jesus’ testimony in the parable of Matthew 18:32-35 as to what happens when a servant refuses to cancel a fellow servant’s debt.

To come before God and ask for forgiveness means we acknowledge our sins, at the same time we acknowledge that we honor the laws He has set in motion; and we fully understand that we are to live by them. It also means we acknowledge that God is sovereign and rules over us.

To request God to forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us also means that we are prepared to go out of our way to forgive other people’s sins which they committed against us - to let it go.

We need to realize that all sins end in eternal death, and to ask the Father to forgive our sins is the same as asking Him to cancel that death sentence.

Whenever we go on our knees, and whisper to God, “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” we must remember that this is not just some prayer we mindlessly repeat

over and over. We need to think more deeply about the fact that whenever we violate any of the laws of God—the Ten Commandments, the Tithing Law, the Food Laws, the Sabbath—the death penalty hangs over us. And the only way to have that penalty removed and for us to have another chance at life, is for God to cancel that debt - that sin, and not hold it against us.

We also need to realize that the biblical laws are a reflection of God’s will. By forcing the Israelites to do this every 7th year, and by the parable that Jesus narrated, the Father is telling us He does not want us to pay that debt; after all, paying that debt means we forfeit our lives. He wants us to go to Him and ask Him to release us from that debt—to cancel it, so that we may live. Tonight, when you go on your knees again, do not forget to ask God to give you another chance at life, to cancel your sins. Forgiveness is the only way we can enter the Kingdom of God, and we all want to be there, don’t we? **AG**

WHENEVER WE GO ON OUR KNEES, AND WHISPER TO GOD,  
“FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS,”  
WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THIS IS NOT JUST SOME PRAYER WE  
MINDLESSLY REPEAT OVER AND OVER.



# BIBLE STUDY SCHEDULE

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE RAPTURE?

DESPITE THE PROLIFERATION OF CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS, NONE SO FAR HAS SATISFACTORILY ANSWERED THIS QUESTION, LET ALONE PREACH THE TRUTH ABOUT IT. YET THE BIBLE PLAINLY AND AMPLY TALKS ABOUT IT ELOQUENTLY. COME AND BE INSPIRED TO KNOW WHAT GOD HAS PLANNED AFTER THE SAINTS ARE RESURRECTED.

*Topics scheduled for discussion on the dates provided for are as follows:*

Manila  
Iloilo  
Naga

September 3, 2011 : What will happen with those "LEFT BEHIND"?  
October 1, 2011 : What will happen to the Saints?  
November 5, 2011 : The New Jerusalem – the final Abode of the Righteous  
December 3, 2011 : What does Eternity Hold for Us?

**EDSA SHANGRILA' HOTEL,**  
MANDALUYONG CITY  
TIME : 2:00 -5:00PM

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
CONTACT 02 995 02 94

**ILOILO MIDTOWN HOTEL,**  
YULO STREET, ILOILO CITY  
TIME : 2:00 -5:00PM

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
CONTACT 033 337 5882

**VILLA CACERES HOTEL,**  
NAGA CITY  
TIME : 1:00 -4:00PM

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
CONTACT 0920 3012493

Cebu

September 10, 2011 : What will happen with those "LEFT BEHIND"?  
November 12, 2011 : What will happen to the Saints?  
December 10, 2011 : The New Jerusalem – the final Abode of the Righteous  
January 14, 2012 : What does Eternity Hold for Us?

**CEBU BUSINESS HOTEL,**  
PEARL ROOM, COLON COR. JUNQUERA ST.  
TIME : 2:00 - 5:00PM

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
CONTACT 0915 908 2940

Malolos

September 17, 2011 : What will happen with those "LEFT BEHIND"?  
November 19, 2011 : What will happen to the Saints?  
December 17, 2011 : The New Jerusalem – the final Abode of the Righteous  
January 21, 2011 : What does Eternity Hold for Us?

**HIYAS NG BULACAN CONVENTION CENTER**  
GOVERNANCE BUILDING  
TIME : 2:00 - 5:00PM

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
CONTACT 0918 8072954



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MEETING PLACES

**Manila**

6th Floor, Peaksun Building, Princeton St.  
Mandaluyong City, Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.

**Naga**

Villa Caceres Hotel, Naga City  
Saturdays 10:00 a.m.

**Alabang**

Metropolis Star Mall, Alabang  
Muntinlupa City, Saturdays, 2:00 p.m.

**Malolos**

Hiyas Convention Center - Governance Bldg.  
Malolos City, Saturdays, 2:00 p.m.

**Mindanao**

Alson's Palace  
Maranding, Lala  
Lanao del Norte, Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.

**Cebu City**

Cebu Business Hotel  
Colon cor. Junquera St. 2:00 p.m.

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