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Somewhere, behind the noise of everyday life, the human race can hear the sound of a great cosmic clock that – with every tick – sounds the warning that yet another moment has come and gone forever. And the passage of time might be completely meaningless except for the fact that we have this collective sense that history is headed somewhere - and one day, it's all going to come to an end.

Check the records of human civilization, and you'll see what I mean. Almost with-

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out exception, the civilizations of yesterday had this uneasy feeling that the world was going to end. The ancient Zoroastrians, for example, predicted the end of the world – a time when the planet would be cleansed by fire and the human race would face a day of judgment.

The Norsemen, with their colourful and awe-inspiring mythology, predicted a time when three harsh winters, with no summers between, would start a battle of the gods known as Ragnarok – and at that time, violent earthquakes would shake the planet, and the sun, moon and stars would disappear. The earth is plunged into bitter darkness, followed by a resurrection from the dead and everlasting paradise.

Then you have the stories of the Hindus, who have predicted the end of something

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they call Kali Yuga, which is the last of four ages for planet earth. When time runs out, they tell us, the final avatar of Vishnu will appear, carrying a flaming sword and riding a white horse.

Moving to South America, the Mayans also had an end-of-the-world prediction, although not in the traditional sense. Their prediction isn't exactly a product of mythology, but more the product of their early science. You see, the Mayans had a remarkably accurate calendar that continues to amaze modern timekeepers with a precision that defies its antiquity. Somehow, without the benefit of modern calculus and physics, the Mayans managed to keep track of astronomical events with mind-numbing accuracy, including things like planetary eclipses.

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What kind of spooked a lot of people, however, is the fact that the Mayan calendar comes to an abrupt end in December of the year 2012. It's almost like they didn't expect the planet to go on past that date.

So, let's ask an important question: why is it that the whole human race has this not-so-funny feeling that it's not going to last forever? Today, it's not the mythology of ancient people that continues the tradition; it's the cries of radical environmentalists and anti-globalization advocates – but the message is still the same. Somehow, some time, the world is going to end.

During the tensions of the Cold War, our theatres were full of movies that predicted a nuclear Armageddon, from message-laden comedies like *Dr. Strangelove* to dozens of other films that predicted nuclear melt-

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downs or maniacal world leaders actually foolish enough to push the big red button. And then, when the Berlin Wall came down, and the Cold War came to an end, our focus shifted from the missile silos of the developed world to an impending crisis in the environment that threatens to wipe out life as we know it. No matter how you view it, it looks as if we just can't shake this feeling that there really is a finish line to human history.

And maybe we have cause to feel that way, because even though the apocalyptic visions of human thinkers have almost always proven to be wrong, there is one source of information that has never proven to be wrong, and it says the world, as we know it, is definitely going to end. And that source is the Bible.

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This book has been so remarkably accurate - so many times - that skeptics choose to think a lot of it was actually written after the events have come to pass. “How could Daniel get so much right?” they ask. “He could not possibly be the author of this book, because only someone who lived after the fact could possibly get it right.”

The problem with the skeptics is that they completely discount the existence of a God who intervenes in the history of this world. They refuse to believe that Someone – out there – can actually see the end from the beginning. But that’s exactly how Daniel did it. We know that the book of Daniel was written well before the events it describes, because God’s people have had it in their possession throughout the fulfillment of all those events.

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If there's one thing that is clear in the hundreds, actually thousands, of prophecies, all through the Bible, the world as we know it, is not going to last forever. Take, for example, this stunning passage found in the writings of Peter:

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in

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which righteousness dwells.” 2 Peter 3:10-13

Now, somebody might argue that this is just doom and gloom, or that Peter is simply reflecting the apocalyptic tone that a lot of writers had under Roman occupation, but the fact that out of thousands of predictions, the Bible has never yet been wrong, makes me want to take this seriously.

And then the fact that the subject of the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world is one of the most talked-about subjects in the Bible – well, that makes me think that God is trying to tell us something. Maybe it's true that this planet really doesn't last forever.

To some people, that might seem a little frightening, but let's stop and think about

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it carefully. If you read what the Bible actually says, you quickly discover that God isn't destroying this world as some sort of a vendetta against the human race; He's actually doing it for our own good. Pay attention carefully to the words that we just read a moment ago, and you'll see what I mean. Let me read part of it again:

“...looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” 2 Peter 3:12,13

Did you see it? The end objective is not a ruined planet; it's a brand new place to live! Peter effectively says, “Listen, there's going

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to be a bit of a bump along the way, but God is building us a place where we don't have to live with the sort of pain and suffering we live with now."

So, does that mean the destruction of this planet is for our good? Absolutely! Listen to the words of the Old Testament prophet in Nahum chapter 1:

"What do you conspire against the LORD? He will make an utter end of it. Affliction will not rise up a second time." Nahum 1:9 I don't know about you, but that little passage kind of makes me do a 'double flip'! Is it possible that from time to time, I've had the wrong thoughts about God? I mean, when things go wrong, and life gets tough, am I tempted to think that God just doesn't care? When this world throws its absolute worst at me, am I guilty of failing to no-

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tice that God is actually allowing and using those moments to help me grow?

Sometimes we can be really narrow-minded, especially when it comes to our evaluation of God as our Heavenly Father. We're tempted to think that because tough times come, God has somehow shirked His duty – or that He doesn't care – or worse yet, that He's making mistakes. But what if the things that God allows are actually for our good? Don't forget what it says in Hebrews chapter 12:

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God

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deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?”
Hebrews 12:5-7

Now, I want to be careful before someone gets the wrong idea. Just because someone is having a tough go it doesn't necessarily mean that God is punishing them – and the story of Jesus curing the blind man should forever put that idea to rest. If you remember it, the disciples asked Him, “Lord whose sin is this guy paying for?” And without batting an eye, Jesus said, “This has nothing to do with his sins or his parents' sins. My Father allowed this so that this man gets the chance to see God at work in his life!”

The same thing's true for you. The Bible says that if God is your Father, and your Father loves you, He's going to correct

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you once in a while. He's going to do what it takes to shape your character so you're ready for the world to come. For the blind man, it took the healing of his eyes to get his attention. For you, it might be something else. But every bit of it only goes as far as it needs to in order to mould your character and help you grow.

So, the fact that tough times lie ahead shouldn't discourage us one bit. All that stuff in the book of Revelation, that Hollywood producers love to make horror movies out of, isn't there just to scare you out of your wits. The prophet Nahum reminds us that God has a purpose in mind. In the language of the Old King James version of the Bible, he says, "What do you imagine against the Lord?" Why do you automatically believe the worst about God when tough times come?" And then he reminds

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us that God has a plan: “He will make an utter end of it. Affliction will not rise up the second time.”

That is one of the most important concepts you’ll find anywhere in the Bible. We’re not simply headed for catastrophe; God has a plan. The end of time isn’t just about burning up the world; it’s about building a new one. And instead of shaking in fear or imagining the worst, we should be excited: we actually have a God who cares enough to set things right. He’s not happy to watch us suffer forever. He can’t stand the thought of us merely eking out an existence on a planet spoiled by sin.

There’s this passage, in the book of Revelation, that directly ties to the final moments of this world’s history – and in particular, it speaks to the people who are living as the

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final crisis begins to break. Even though I've read it on other programs, let me share it with you once again, because I want you to see something really important:

“After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.’ And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins,

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and lest you receive of her plagues.” Revelation 18:1-4

It's a final message to planet earth. It's bold, it's strong, and it's universal. And when you slow down long enough to read it very carefully, something begins to surface that you might have never noticed before: this is not just a matter of God serving the human race an eviction notice, He's actually calling us out – like a worried father calling for his children to come outside of a house that's on fire.

Do you know what this passage tells me? It tells me that when God looks down on our world today, He's not at all happy with what He sees. The further this planet sinks into the sewer of sin and suffering, the more the heart of God becomes restless for something better.

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As God watches natural disaster mount on top of natural disaster, from the tsunami of Asia to the hurricane that wiped out New Orleans and Buloxi, Mississippi, God knows there's nothing at all natural about a natural disaster. That's not the way He made this planet. "Come out of her," He says. "You don't want to stay in that place forever!"

Then when God sees new diseases like SARS, Zika virus or the Bird Flu incubating in some of the poorest regions on earth, He knows what kind of fear that's going to strike in the human heart. And He knows that you and I were not created for fear. In fact, God still remembers the first time Adam had to hide in the bushes because of his sins, his heart thumping wildly with fear, and that must have broken His own heart, because that's not how He made us.

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When a child is abducted in New South Wales, or drugs are being sold in the playgrounds of Australia, and modern entertainment threatens to rob our kids of the innocence and childhood they were supposed to have, it must bring tears to the eyes of God. He must feel sick to His stomach – because that’s not what children were meant for. They’re not supposed to be a source of pain; they were given to us as a source of joy.

And so, in the book of Revelation, as God looks down on a war-riddled, crime-infested, pollution-choked, and disease-threatened planet sinking deeper and deeper in the swamp of sin, He suddenly stands up and makes us a promise. Another angel comes down from heaven, having great power, and the whole earth is lightened with the brightness of His glory.

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So, what exactly does that mean? In the final moments before Jesus comes, there's going to be a final push – a final movement – that takes the name of Jesus to every last corner of the planet. There's going to be a powerful world-wide movement that calls the world back out of its misery, and the heart of God will not rest until everyone has heard.

And with the loudest voice in the history of the Christian church, God's people are going to call the world out of a sinking ship – out of a place that the Bible calls spiritual Babylon.

Let me ask you a critical question: How many people do you suppose God would like to have in the kingdom of heaven? How many people is He hoping to rescue from the sinking ship called planet earth?

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The answer is found in that same passage from Peter:

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”² Peter 3:9

What Peter is saying almost leaves you gasping for breath as you try to contemplate just how much God loves you. He’s actually willing to wait – to postpone the Second Coming – if it means just one more person might make it off the sinking ship. How many people would God like to have in the kingdom of heaven? Absolutely everybody.

When I see where everything’s headed, and I balance the parts of the Bible that talk

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about tough times coming with the parts that speak about the love of God, I say, “Bring it on.” If that’s what it takes to get rid of suffering forever, sign me up! If that’s what it takes to end up in the presence of God Himself, then let’s get on with it!

The good news of the Bible is that God is not going to allow us to suffer forever. At some point, He’s going to pull the plug and start all over, and quite frankly, that’s what I’d want Him to do. It’s just that at this point, He’s still waiting to see what you’re going to do – because the thought of a new world without you is something less than heaven for Him.

A. M. Hunter, the New Testament scholar, tells the story of a dying man who paid a visit to the doctor. He knew his time was short and that it was just a matter of months

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until he lost his life.

“Listen, doctor,” he suddenly said. “I haven’t got much time until I’m headed for the grave. Now tell me something about what happens after that.”

The doctor, even though he was a Christian, fumbled around for something to say. And that’s when he heard a scratching at the door. “Did you hear that? That’s my dog scratching at the basement door. I left him downstairs, but he’s not happy down there, because he knows I’m up here. And so, he came to the top of the stairs just to listen for my voice. And to tell the truth, that dog has no idea what’s on the other side of the door – all he knows is that this is where I am. And if you look in your heart, you’ll find exactly the same thing.”

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“You don’t really know what to expect, but you know your Master is waiting.”

And you know something? That’s exactly what it’s like with last day events. The Bible gives us amazing details, but we’re not really going to know exactly what to expect until it happens. Even Jesus said that prophecy is not so much about predicting the future as it is about knowing that God is in charge when we see it happening.

And so, if you remember nothing else about last-day events at this moment, you should remember this:

Listen carefully to your heart. There’s a nail-scarred hand that knocks on the door, asking you if you’re ready to let Him in. “Listen,” He says. “I’ve already gone through the worst crisis you can imagine, and now I’m standing on the other side –

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and if you'll only trust Me, you're going to find that you have nothing to worry about." You know, there is one more passage of scripture I want to leave you with today, because it's one of my favourites. The reason I love it is because it shows us exactly what God has in mind:

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more

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death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful.'" Revelation 21:1-5

Let me ask you one more time: Are you willing to take that step of faith that says, "All right Lord: sometimes the horizon looks dark, but I'm going to trust that You know what You're doing – and I'm going to believe that You're bringing me home."