

**Acts 1:1-11**

**Feb. 5, 2023**

**Revelation 21:1-8**

**Alpha and Omega**

**Lord of the Future**

***“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End,”***  
**Revelation 22:13.** For several weeks, now, we have been focusing on these words and their meaning. What does this all that mean for us?

**Just this: We are proclaiming that God – Creator of all that is - has the whole world in His hands from beginning to end – from Genesis (“the beginning”) – the first book of the Bible that tells of His creating the earth and humans - all the way to Revelation – the last book of the Bible that tells how He will complete His creation. God sent His only Son, our Savior - fully God and yet man – to lead us into the completion of God’s plan. This Jesus was at the beginning of time and will be there to the very end. Jesus, Lord of all times, from beginning to end, and everything in between has your life in His hands from birth to death and beyond. Our past, our present, and our future belongs to God.**

**Our past colors our choices in the present – in how we view the world, God, people. Our present sets the course for our future - our ultimate destination? Where are you headed? Where are you going in life? What choices are you making for your future?**

### **Hope For Tomorrow**

**Most people in the English-speaking world have heard of the playwright William Shakespeare. Though he lived over 400 years ago, his plays are still performed thousands of times every year. In his last will and testament, revised one month before his death, Shakespeare wrote this: “In the name of God ... I William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon ... in perfect health and memory, God be praised, do make and ordain that my last will and testament in manner and form following – that is to say, first I commend my soul into the hands of God my Creator, hoping and assuredly believing, through the merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting.”<sup>ii</sup>**

**I never met the great playwright, of course, but I believe he existed. His work has remained for this age, but his remains, by his own admission, are in the grave, awaiting the next great and monumental event of all time, the return of Jesus Christ. Jesus, not Shakespeare, is the One who is “not of an age, but for all time.”<sup>ii</sup>**

**What’s your ultimate destination? My friend Maxie Dunnam writes: “Not long ago I visited a woman who fought a raging battle with cancer. I’d seen her gritted-teeth stubbornness, had watched her refuse to be emotionally beaten down by this energy-sucking attack on her body, had witnessed a beautiful woman refusing to be humiliated by this force that ravaged her physical appearance. Today there was something different about her; subtle, but distinctly different.**

**“How are you?” I asked.**

**Immediately she responded, “I’m praying, and I want you to pray that Jesus will come soon and deliver me.” We did that together.**

**It wasn’t a surrender to despair; it was a yielding to certain hope. It was her ultimate commitment. For more than a year she had fought a courageous battle and lived in the strength of her faith. Now she had moved to another level of commitment.**

She prayed confidently and in hope.”<sup>iii</sup> Jesus steers us toward our ultimate destination – through the unknown territory we call “the future.”

### Hope For Today

*... now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,* 1 John 3:2. For those who trust in Jesus there is a destination: an eternal home with our Father and Creator. Additionally, our destiny is to become more than we are today so that we will be ready for that home. Through Jesus our very nature is today being regenerated, so that we become less and less like the sinful nature of humanity, and more and more like the pure nature of Christ. Because of who He is, we are enabled to become who God has intended each of us to be. *... when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

When you are younger this kind of talk seems far off, not something that needs attention today. But I warn you, if you do not include the building blocks of eternal living - the faith, morals, and values of Christ – in your life and family today, your future will be the poorer for it. Start making the deposits of faith now – through all the Christian disciplines we talk about – and you will have a treasure of wisdom and fortitude to carry you through all the events of your life. God has already made a deposit on your life – in Christ Jesus who paid the price of your sin.

Somewhere recently I read this statement: “Most of the 500 wealthiest Americans got their money the old-fashioned way: they inherited it!” We may inherit money, but we do not inherit faith. Someone once said: “God has no grand-children.” Faith must be first-hand, personal, appropriated by each person. You can’t live on borrowed faith. The 500 wealthiest Americans may have gotten their wealth the old-fashioned way – by inheriting it – but we don’t get character and faith that way. They’re not inherited – they’re personally claimed and cultivated.<sup>iv</sup> The Bible tells us how we reach our inheritance in Christ.

### Making A Better Future

1. We make a better future through commitment to stay on course to our ultimate destination in Christ. *You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised,* Hebrews 10:36.

2. We make a better future by repeating and retelling the mighty works of God. *We have heard with our ears, O God; Our fathers have told us what you did in their days, in days long ago.... It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory. It was your right hand, your arm and the light of your face, for you loved them,* Psalm 44:1-3.

We ought to review God’s action in the past for the benefit of our own generation – to encourage us to keep going and for future generations to give them hope.

3. We make a better future by keeping the best of the past while adapting to meet the needs of the future. No need to change Jesus: *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever,* Hebrews 13:8. Service times, service styles, locations or buildings, small groups, can all change but the content of what we teach should not change.

**Believers before us brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. We owe it to the future not to stop here or with our generation. We owe it to the future to press forward with as much vigor and determination as they did in the past. These are not days for timidity. These are days to go all out for the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**You see him on TV these days as one of the commentators for NFL games. A number of years ago he was inducted into the Hall of Fame. Terry Bradshaw was the great quarterback of the Pittsburgh Steelers during their Super Bowl years. At the induction he gave a little talk without notes, and it was very emotional. He was just Terry Bradshaw, the country boy from Louisiana, talking.**

**Since childhood he had dreamed of playing in the NFL. He played in high school, but barely got into a small college after flunking his ACT's. When he graduated from college they said, 'This kid's never going to play pro ball.' But the Pittsburgh Steelers took a chance on him. The first year they went 1-14. But four years later they were Super Bowl champions. Terry led the Steelers to four Super Bowl championships.**

**When he got the call telling him he was being inducted into the pro football hall of fame he said, "I went nuts. I went crazy, which I already am anyway.... then I stopped and I said, what does it mean? It means that yeah, you're one of the best that ever played. I said, no. Wait just a second. What it means is that in football you never get anything that you don't share it with people. You don't get elected into the Hall of Fame by yourself." And then he went on to name 14 other players who made his success possible.**

**Terry then said, "But folks, when it's all said and done, ... and the crowd finally goes home, and we're left with our thoughts, we sit back and we say...it's people. ...awards aren't worth ... a hill of beans, if I don't have people that love me to share it with."**

**Do you remember watching Terry Bradshaw play? Whenever the Steelers intercepted a pass, on the very first play after an interception he'd call the play that sent his two favorite wide receivers down the field. Then he'd throw the ball 60 yards downfield. Terry Bradshaw said, "My nature was 'attack'. Throw it deep. Anybody can throw wide, let's go deep!"**

**What a lesson for the future. We owe it to the future to throw the ball way down the field for Jesus Christ. As we look to the days ahead, we owe it to the future to be bold, to be zealous, and to reach out and to bring people to the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Our best future is in throwing the long ball. Anybody can throw it short.**

### **One Who Is To Come**

**Jesus spoke about His return. In Matthew chapter 24 He says, *But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father*, Mat. 24:36.**

**Though we do not know when, we proclaim His return every time we have Holy Communion. We say, or sing, "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again." Scripture reminds us *...this same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven*, Acts 1:11. "This same Jesus." Not someone like Jesus. Not a group of Jesus scholars. But Jesus Himself is coming again. I'll speak more of this next week.**

**He is why we can face the future unafraid, with expectations of great things. Jesus is already ahead of us. There may be some things that take us by surprise, but there is nothing that will take Him by surprise. He has promised to return to our time and complete God's plan for a new heaven and a new earth. That's news every bit as good as when He first came at Christmas. The best is yet to come. No wonder the Bible ends with these words:**

***He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen, Revelation 22:20-21.***

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<sup>i</sup>Michael J. Cummings, Shakespearstudyguide.com, 2012.

<sup>ii</sup>Billy Graham, *The Reason For My Hope*, (W Publishing Group, Nashville, TN), 81.

<sup>iii</sup>Maxie Dunnam, *Perceptions* "Faith In Death" 15.

<sup>iv</sup>Ibid, *Perceptions*, "Borrowed Faith Has No Power," 56.