

Make Known God's Manifold Wisdom!



*“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”
(Ephesians 3:10-11)*

Essay 5 – Eschatology: The Urgency of Our Outreach Message

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Introduction

Blessings to all of you. It is a joy to be with you once again participating in this conference and I believe that there will be great blessing for all those who believe, adore and follow Christ. In our heart there is great joy in knowing that our God will come soon; and until Christ comes for his people, for his believers, it is necessary to continue to pray, read his word and participate in his holy sacraments, and take the greatest advantage of the opportunity to bring the word of God to others, to those who have a big empty space in their hearts.

We need to have this precious desire in our hearts to know that our great God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, will come soon and will take us to live with him forever, and this really gives us power to accept our circumstances and see the hand of the Lord in every moment, because the people that serve God experience trials, but we glory in his name, and we rejoice to know that he will come soon for his church, for his people. I know that these last times have been full of struggles and battles for many of us, and as soldiers of Christ we continue to fight the good fight of faith, we mount up as on eagles' wings and we do not flag because his precious Holy Spirit accompanies us, and when we fall he picks us up.

We know that we live a life full of difficulties in a decadent and corrupt world, and that we are surrounded by bad news; the news media show us that there is nowhere on earth, in the whole world, where there are no problems, crime, drugs, sicknesses, hunger, prostitution, wars, etc. We surely live in a dangerous world where there are no longer any values, where evil has become good and good evil. That's why there is urgency to evangelize in these last times. Thus, our desire as those who know Christ is to take the gospel to those who do not yet know it and seek the way to preach, open our lips and tell the

truth, that Christ is coming soon, that he is at the door and that he will return soon. At times fatigue sets in, we feel an urge to give up and go to a far away place, where we are alone, and sometimes we ask if it's all worth it. There are many people who need God, who have a great empty place in their hearts, and for their sake we struggle and strive to bring them the message of salvation.

When Christ comes, all the trials, sufferings, and sadness will end and the peace that surpasses all human understanding will arrive, and we shall be in the city of which we are citizens. There we will live with our Lord forever. There we won't need doctors' visits, medicines, laboratories, psychologists. There will be no depression. All that will end and we shall be in the presence of Christ for all eternity. There will be no more worry, nor envy, nor jealousy, nor murmuring, nor criticism. The dark days will end and fear will remain behind. When Christ comes there will be no more wars or rumors of wars, no more terrorism or threats; all will be peace and happiness.

God's Messengers

God, through his holy word and through the Holy Spirit has worked conversion in our hearts, giving us faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In the end, it's natural that we who know Christ spread the gospel of Christ without tiring. The Lord says in his word: "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Mt. 5:14-16). It is the nature of light to illuminate, to shine; if it doesn't shine, how can we call it light? In the same way, the nature of Christians is to let the gospel shine over the world; as God's chosen messengers we should not grow weary nor be ashamed to speak of our Savior Jesus Christ.

As those who know the word, we cannot but announce the good news to the whole world. The prophet David says: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you" (Psalm 51:12-13). Naturally, when someone comes to know Christ, he will teach others. In the book of Acts, we see a great example of Christians, despite the great persecutions that existed in those times and being scattered, they joyfully and fearlessly kept proclaiming the gospel (Acts 8:4). Peter and John said: "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). So then as a church, as those who know the word of God, who know the urgent need of the gospel, let us preach with boldness of our Savior Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:8-14 says: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: 'Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'" In Jesus Christ there is hope of life; there is light for the world; and this light is available for all of us through the means of grace. We have been converted from darkness to light, and the Lord encourages us to live as new creatures, that we take off the darkness that remains in our lives and walk as children of light. God wants of his children that "you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing" (Phil. 2:15-16).

Now as messengers of the Lord in Peru we continue showing the world the light of the gospel which Christ has placed in our lives, and we shall continue to announce the precious message of salvation despite the adverse circumstances. It's true that we often feel frustrated, that it appears that the light doesn't shine in the midst of the terrible darkness of this world. Perhaps we can feel overwhelmed or

worried that the work is too huge and too hard. Or we might become discouraged by the lack of results of our preaching of the gospel message. Despite all the obstacles which may be there, what motivates us to go on preaching the gospel is the love which God has shown us sinners and the coming hope which will soon be manifested in us. So we preach the word of God because God has given us this commandment. The Lord in his love does not wish anyone to perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. For that reason the Lord has called us, he has chosen us so that we would be messengers of the good news. He has commanded us, saying: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Mt. 28:18-20). "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mk. 16:15). Our attitude toward the commands of God shows us that our Christian nature is to shine as the light of the world. It is the nature of a Christian to bring the good news to others; we cannot let the light that shines in our hearts not shine in the hearts of others. We cannot stop telling that God has done so much for us by sending his Son to die for us, we cannot keep it a secret. We have to announce to the world that we have a God who loves us more than we can imagine. That he has shown his love by giving us the greatest and most valuable gift that could exist in the whole world, the life of his only-begotten Son, and by means of this son he has given us the gift of eternal life.

When our Lord Jesus Christ was only a child, he never doubted the urgency of evangelism. He said: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (NKJV). And through a parable he describes the urgency of evangelism: "Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. ... Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full'" (Lk. 14:21,23). An angel spoke with the same urgency to the women who were amazed at the sight of the empty tomb: "Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead'" (Mt. 28:7). This word, "go," means that we have no excuse for not preaching the word of salvation. What moves me the most to proclaim the urgency of evangelism is that it is the first help that the church can give to each man and to humanity in general in the world: "Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 5:42). Thus we should go and preach the word of God and fulfill this great mission which the Lord has given us.

We all Need the Gospel

The church confronts an inescapable duty: to evangelize, preach the Word of God and administer the holy sacraments. With the proclamation of the work, there is no faith, since faith comes through the hearing of the word, and without faith there is no salvation, since without faith it is impossible to please God. Then, what should the Christian church do? It should be a faithful instrument of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with urgency take the message of salvation to all men. We observe that there are many who are practically ignorant of Christ. Can we remain indifferent and not bring them the knowledge of the Lord Jesus? There is no Christian who is free of the obligation to make Christ known in the entire world. And what is the part of the world which concerns us besides what is around me, what falls to my lot as my field of work, as the field in which I am to sow the gospel? When we look in this way at the church, as an immense field that includes the whole world, but is divided into a multitude of parcels which do not break the unity, but rather all are together in the one and the same church, then we understand this matter of each one of us taking care of his square meter, that is, of the part of the church which is my lot, is around me, and no one will have the bad taste of remaining with his arms crossed while there is so much to do for Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God.

The church should always be involved in this evangelistic work, until the consummation of time, and there will always be an urgency to evangelize, far away or nearby; the person who lives in a remote region or he who exists under our own roof, everyone needs to hear the good news of the gospel. The

gospel is for all and not just for a defined group; therefore we should seek new ways to bring the gospel to all. Each of our families, neighborhoods and cities are the first places that the good news of the gospel should reach, all these living spaces are our true mission fields, in which the dynamism will be more or less visible depending on the free and voluntary response of each one. Our condition as children of God leads us to announce the good news to all our brothers, so that we become preachers of the word; sent to proclaim “what we have seen and heard.” The road that still lies ahead is long, but the assurance that today we are building roads that others will follow later should encourage us. Our effort and commitment will make it possible for many, through the gospel, to come to know Christ and cause others who have departed to return to the church.

Let us preach Christ while we can to as many as we can. What is asked of us is faith, not eloquence. If you have faith, Christ will speak through you. The Psalmist says: “I have believed, therefore I will speak.” I cannot believe and remain silent. The person who does not overflow is ungrateful toward the one who has filled him; each one should overflow in that which has filled him. Therefore, evangelizing and winning souls for Christ is an urgent duty for all. All Christians have imposed on them the glorious task of working so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted everywhere by all men. So then, the church of Christ should preach the gospel to every creature and make disciples among the nations until the end of the world (Mk. 16:16; Mt. 28:20); since through this proclamation of the gospel Jews and Gentiles will be saved (Acts 13:43-49).

Preachers By Example

The children of God, those who really believe in Christ, ought to live in accordance with what the word of God commands. We are children of God not only in word, but in deed and in truth. We need to be coherent with our own faith. A certain preacher said: “It is in vain that people expend effort to propagate the gospel, when they contradict it with their deeds.” A Christian tries to live in the present, knowing that the people that surround him make up the generation that he is to lead to Christ. That is the starting point for the urgency of evangelism; and Christians cannot rest until the end of the world, as long as there are souls to save. There are still many people who need to hear the gospel, men and women who urgently need to be brought to faith, and there are persons who need to be won again after they have departed from the faith. We need to use the means that God has given us for this purpose, and we should act with patience, obeying God’s command and leaving the work in the Lord’s hands. Another important thing is that the life of God’s children must testify that they really believe in Christ. I say this because the Lord himself said: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Mat. 15:8), and in another place he says: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Mt. 7:21-23). So then, to have faith in Christ is not to permit that our actions contradict what our words affirm. We need to make every effort to show with our actions what we confess with our lips.

The Lord says in his Word: “By their fruits you shall know them”. A good tree will produce good fruits, but a bad tree will produce bad fruits. And again he tells us that we should always walk with integrity. A person has integrity when he lives and acts in accordance with the will of God; as he behaves inside the church, so he behaves outside the church; as he is before the Lord, so he is also before other people. We need to be respectful, kind, merciful, forgiving, friendly, etc. This in some way will help to give evidence that we truly are children of God; and these evidences will help in the field of evangelism. What’s the use of saying: “I believe in God,” if my acts show the opposite? We need to live for Christ and do what Christ tells us in his holy word.

Jesus’ Return

The Holy Scripture clearly teaches that our Lord Jesus Christ, in the time of his choosing (Acts 1:7; Jn 5:28-29), will appear visibly to all men at the same time, and that he will come in glory surrounded by all his holy angels to judge all nations (Mt. 25:31). In the Apostles' Creed we confess: "On the third day, he rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; and from thence he will come to judge the quick and the dead." Jesus rose on the third day, and forty days after he arose he ascended into heaven, and he will soon return to earth. When Jesus rose to heaven with his disciples looking on, two angels assured them: "'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? 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). Ever since Jesus left, the big question has been: when will he return to earth? Some, mistakenly interpreting the prophecies of the Bible, have even fixed exact dates for his return. Nevertheless, the dates have passed and Jesus has not come. It is natural that we should be anxious to know when he will return, but the Bible clearly teaches that no one knows the day of his coming. Jesus Christ said that even he did not know when he would come: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mk 13:32; Mt 24:36; 1 Thes. 5:2-3). Therefore we should not pay attention to those who predict that Jesus will return on a certain date. In his wisdom, God has not revealed when Jesus will return. He wants us to be always ready to receive him. If we knew that Jesus would not return until a definite date, we would not prepare ourselves spiritually but would wait until the last moment, because we would think: "There is still time." Since he has not informed us when Jesus will return, God motivates us to be prepared for his coming every day.

There have always been people who have not believed that Jesus will return and mock this divine promise. Maybe you know someone who laughs at the idea that Jesus will return to earth. The apostle Peter advises us not to be deceived by the arguments of the unbelievers: "First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.' But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:3-4,8-9). The fact that the world continues on its way as it always has deceives many people. They can't imagine the changes that will take place when Christ comes, and so they reject the idea of the second coming because it has never happened before. The sad thing is that this is exactly as Jesus said things would be when he returns: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man" (Mt. 24:37-39). In Noah's time, no one could imagine a universal flood. They were too busy with their daily activities to pay attention to Noah's warnings. The same thing happens today. Those who do not believe in the second coming will be amazed by what happens when Christ returns. Let us note here that Jesus did not emphasize that the people would be especially wicked, but that they would be indifferent and would not have time for the things of God.

In this world we are living a series of events where human beings observe destructions and catastrophes; wars, epidemics, hunger, tidal waves, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. But men do not seem to be able to recognize that the coming of Christ is closer than we can imagine. Men and women submerged in their own pleasures, nations waging war for power, children who die of hunger. The corruption and evil in the world are greater every day and God will bring his judgment on the earth. Why did God send a flood over the world? Because the evil and corruption of the people had come to dominate, and this corruption had to be eliminated by means of the flood. Why do you think that now there are wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, tidal waves, fires, floods, etc.? Because the judgments of God are upon the

earth, and all these happenings are preliminary events to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word says: "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Lk. 21:28). Every day we are bombarded with news that remind us that we are living in a world full of pain and tragedy, which grows worse every day. Violence increases daily, human misery can be seen everywhere, injustice prevails over the truth, natural disasters that increase every day not only in quantity but also in intensity; we can see destruction, misery and pain everywhere. Nevertheless, all this will end when Jesus returns to the world. Everything that happens here that keeps many people swinging on the pendulum of despair are signs that announce the imminent return of Jesus Christ. Therefore, this is a warning so that we would be prepared and so that God doesn't surprise us on the road of unbelief. The Scripture says: "Be prepared, for the kingdom of heaven is near". So the word warns us of the second coming of Christ and the destruction that will come upon this world. Those who pay attention to these warnings, as Noah, will be saved. Every year that passes, every month that passes, every week, every day, every hour, every minute, every second that passes brings us closer to the final judgment. "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here" (Rom. 13:12) when we will be judged by God. Now is the time when the children of God should prove themselves faithful and persevere in Christ's doctrine. Although the word of God may be despised, although it may be adulterated or replaced by the words and traditions of men, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ we should remain standing, firm to defend the truth. We will continue to believe, confess and teach that Jesus Christ alone is our true Savior; there is no one else in the world in whom we may be saved. So that Christ alone is the one and only road to the Father. We are already living in the final scenes of this world; the prophecies are rapidly being fulfilled, the time of grace is passing rapidly. Therefore, there is no time to lose, we need to be prepared because Christ is coming.

The need to prepare ourselves for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is extremely important, since the difference between salvation and condemnation depends on it. The Lord said: "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Mt. 24:44). Just as those who were not prepared for the day of the flood, who laughed and mocked and despised the word of God, despite the warning that Noah had given to them, this despising cost them their life. The unbelieving people drowned, died and were eternally condemned by God. In the same way all those will be condemned eternally in hell who have despised the word of God and the holy sacraments. Let us be awake and watch, prepared to receive our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who will come with all his power and glory to take us to heaven to enjoy full and eternal life. Let us await with joy the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Final Judgment

Immediately after the coming of Christ will come the final judgment (Mt. 25:31-32), and all without exception will be judged by the Lord. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). This does not mean that man is justified before God by his good works. I say this because there are religious leaders who have invented their own religion, their own doctrines and teachings. They teach that for a person to be saved or go to heaven he has to make every effort to keep the commandments and do good works. The word of God, however, clearly says that man is justified freely through faith in Christ Jesus. Salvation is a gift that God has given us, so that salvation comes from God and not from our efforts. In the death and resurrection of Christ, God in his merciful love has emitted his eschatological sentence in favor of sinners, absolving us for the sake of Christ, offering them in Christ that righteousness that they could never achieve. Thus the man who has faith in Christ is free of all condemnation (Jn 5:24; Rom. 8:33ff). The final criterion in the judgment, therefore, is the relationship of the person with Christ (Mt. 10:32ff.).

Now, "when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory" (Mt. 25:31). Here our Lord Jesus Christ was prophesying the things that would

happen when he returned to this world. He was making clear that the end is Christ returning on his throne of glory judging all nations. The Scripture says: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory." He did not come in glory when he was born in Bethlehem, when he was crucified; but in the end he will come in all his glory, in all his splendor, and in addition the word says he will not come alone; rather, all his holy angels will come with him, and they will be the Lord's servants to separate his chosen ones from the unbelievers. "The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 13:41-42). The word says: "All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Mt. 25:32). It says that all nations, all peoples, every person from the whole world, from the first man named Adam until the last man who will exist in this world, absolutely everyone of us will be before the Lord to be judged; no one will escape. We are all going to be in the presence of God. "And he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." On that final day Christ will make a great division. Now in this world we are all together, believers and unbelievers, but on that day the Lord will separate the sheep and the goats, the believers and the unbelievers. He will place the believers on his right hand and the unbelievers on his left hand. He will say to those on his right: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" (Mt. 24:34). Here it speaks of inheriting; it tells us of an inheritance, and an inheritance is something that one receives freely. So then, we do not receive salvation because of what we do, because of our works, but rather freely from the Lord. And the word says that it was prepared "since the creation of the world," that is, before we were born; so then, salvation has nothing to do with our will, with our works; salvation is purely by grace, by God's mercy.

Now then, what happens if you are not a child of God, if you are not one of Christ's sheep? The word says: "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Mt. 25:41). The judge declares his sentence immediately; and those on his left, the unbelievers, will be unable to advance any argument; they will have no lawyer, and how horrible will the sentence of the judge be: "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire." How sad and painful it will be to live apart from God forever, far away, separated from God, and how horrible is this word "cursed." For they are under the wrath and condemnation of God. When the word says that the fire is eternal and life is eternal, that means that the punishment of God will endure just as long as the life. All of eternity.

Condemnation and Salvation (Heaven and Hell)

Eternal condemnation (Hell): In the final judgment there will occur a complete and eternal separation between the ungodly and the righteous (Mt. 25:46): "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." The fact that there will be an eternal judgment is real. The Holy Scripture teaches so clearly about eternal condemnation that only those who reject the divine authority of the word of God can deny it. "Everyone who dares to deny eternal punishment also has to deny eternal life," since in Scripture both are taught together (Mt. 25:46). According to the Holy Scripture, eternal condemnation consists in those condemned being excluded forever from divine grace and communion with God; that is, they will forever be separated from God's love and mercy (Mt. 25:41; 8:12; 2 Thes. 1:7-9). To be separated from God means to suffer the greatest of torments, both physically and spiritually. At the same time, the Scriptures describe the unspeakable torments that the condemned will experience: trouble, distress (Rom. 2:9), torment (Lk. 16:23), weeping, sighing, their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched (Mk 9:43-44), weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:12). The Scriptures employ very strong terms to demonstrate that the physical and spiritual suffering of the condemned is greater than can be imagined.

The word says that hell is a place of punishment, of total pain and anguish (Rom. 2:9). It is a place of suffering. It is not a place like a jail, a place where one is simply confined; hell is a place to suffer, it is a place of divine punishment. It is a place where the fire is eternal (Mk. 9:43-44). Let us remember that the rich man begged for a drop of water, just one drop of water. This tells us that in hell there is incredible thirst; there is suffering, pain, anguish, torment, weeping, despair, and all this will last for eternity. Hell really is a place where there will be torment and the punishment of eternal fire (Rev. 14:10). It is a place of gloom and darkness (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). Hell is a place of eternal death; eternal separation from the presence of God (2 Thes. 1:9). The apostle John describes eternal hell as the second death (Rev. 20:14), that means the separation of body and soul from God, to be completely without God forever, without comfort and hope. In that day the worst thing for the unbeliever will not be the pain, the anguish, the darkness; the worst thing will be to be without God forever and without any hope. And what is it that condemns a man? It is unbelief (Jn. 3:16-18,36; Mk 16:16). Christ through his vicarious atonement reconciled the entire world (2 Cor. 5:19-21), so the sinner is punished eternally only if he refuses to accept through faith in Christ the merciful forgiveness that God offers him. So then, as messengers of God, let us preach and teach of the danger that exists when we reject the gospel (Mk. 16:16), and let us seek ways to motivate and lead people to seek the salvation that is offered in the means of grace.

Eternal salvation (Heaven): Eternal salvation is the opposite of eternal condemnation; heaven is the opposite of hell. According to the Scripture, if you go on the broad and spacious road you are going toward hell and if you walk on the narrow road, you are heading toward heaven. Heaven and hell are the only two alternatives for man: arrive and be thrown into hell or arrive and be received in heaven. Really, only the person who trusts in Jesus Christ can have eternal life (Jn. 3:16; 11:23-27). Just as hell, heaven is a real place, something that exists; heaven is a place of happiness and blessedness; a place where there is no death, nor pain nor tears; there is no kind of suffering there. The apostle in one of his letters says: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21), and then says: "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Phil. 1:23). We may note that Paul does not say: I desire to depart and be in heaven; rather he says that he desires to be with Christ, so we can say that heaven is being with Christ. Now Jesus describes heaven or eternal life as a house: "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14:2); it is also described as a city (Heb. 11:10) and is also called Paradise: Jesus said to one of the criminals who was crucified with him: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk. 23:43). So then, heaven is a place of delight, of joy, of gladness (Ps. 16:11). The Christian who dies and goes to heaven, on the last day when he rises and opens his eyes, will shout with joy and gladness when he sees that heaven does exist, and no one will take away that joy. There will be no sin, no temptations, no sadness, no pain or suffering; the surroundings will be pure and perfect.

In heaven we will all be in harmony; there will be no divisions there, denominations, Baptists, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Adventists, etc. We will all live in love and harmony; and in eternal communion with Christ. In heaven there will be no more evil, nor selfishness, nor envy, nor debts. There will no longer be even one sinner (Ps. 24:3; 1 Cor. 6:9; Rev. 21:8). In heaven everyone will be holy. The weeds will be burned, the devil and his angels will be thrown into eternal hellfire; there will be no more temptation or evil thoughts, everything will be perfect. In heaven we will never tire of adoring and praising the Lord with all our strength and emotions (Rev. 4:8). Thus, what we need to do is take the message of salvation to all who do not know Christ so that they can come to repentance, believe in Christ and be saved. For all those who do not believe in Christ while they are alive have the opportunity to repent of their sins, ask for forgiveness, and place all their confidence in Christ Jesus, our Lord. We need to invest our time in our children, friends, neighbors, relatives, evangelizing them. What will be my crown or my reward? You will be my crown and my reward in heaven, you who listened to and believed in the gospel through me. That will be our great recompense: "Here am I, and the children God has given

me” (Heb. 2:13). What a joy and reward it will be to see our children, wife, friends, relatives to whom we have given testimony concerning Christ! Thus we need to invest our time in evangelism, for judgment day is very near.

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Questions for Discussion

What will be the reward which we will receive in heaven?
In what sense are we judged on our works?