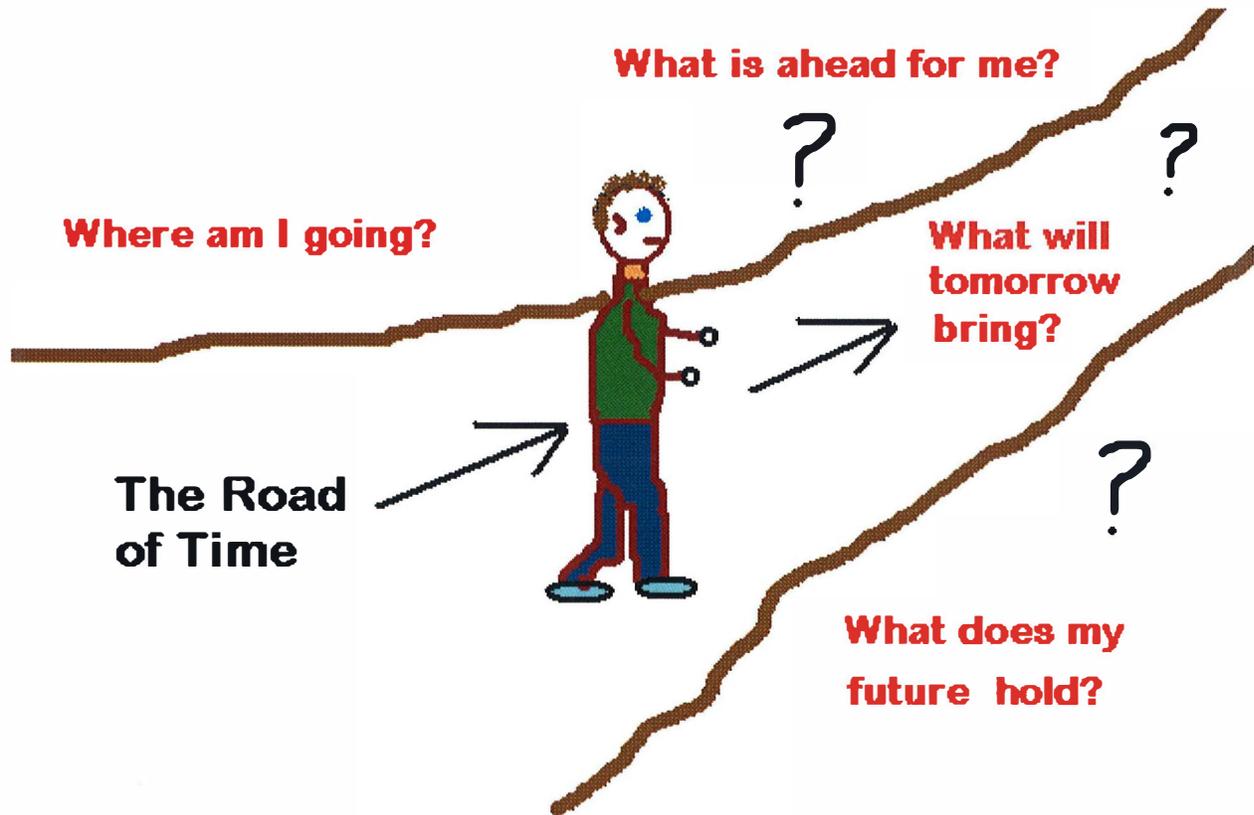


CHAPTER 11

THE PROBLEM OF THE FUTURE



As I walk down the road of time, what lies ahead? What will the coming days bring? Will the future be bright or are there stormy clouds ahead? What will tomorrow bring? What will next week bring? What will next month bring? What will next year bring? What does my future hold? Who holds my future? Should I fear the future? Should I be worried?

What is Ahead for Me and for My World?

School – What schools will I go to? Who will my teachers be? Will the work be difficult? Will my teachers give me much homework? Will I get good report cards? Will I go to college some day? Will I go on to postgraduate studies?

Job – People may ask me, "What are you going to do when you grow up?" How old will I be twenty years from now? _____ What job will I have then?

Marriage – Will I ever get married? Who will my wife/husband be? If I get married will I have children? How many?

Friends – In the future will I still have my friends? Will I lose some of my friends? Will some of my friends move away? Will I make new friends? Will some of my friends die?

Family – In the future what will happen to my Mother and Father and brothers and sisters? What will the future of my family be? What will happen to each of my family members?

My family's future may have dark clouds ahead. There could be problems between my Mother and Father. Many parents are getting divorced today. There could be problems with my brothers and sisters.

My family's future may be bright. No family problem is too big for God to solve. There might be problems in my family right now. The problems that I now face in my home may get better in the future. There may be some real changes for the good. I need to remember that I am part of my family and my family's future depends in part upon me. I need to be the son/daughter and brother/sister that God wants me to be. I need to do my part? What is my part (Ephesians 6:1-3)? God will do His part.

Health – In the future, will I be well or sick? Will I have good eyesight? good hearing? How many cavities will I have in my teeth? Will I ever break an arm or leg? Will I suffer some other kind of injury? Will I ever be in a car accident? Will I ever be operated on in the hospital?

World – What will the future world be like? Is the world today different than it was 50 or 100 years ago? How? How do you think the future world will be different? Will the cars look different? Will robots and computers do more things?

The Unknown Future

Some people boast about tomorrow as if they know just what is going to happen. They might say, "I'm going to do this" or "I'm going to do that." Do we really know what is going to happen tomorrow (Proverbs 27:1)? _____

People say and predict what they think will happen or what they want to happen **as if it will happen**. People usually do not want to admit that they are not sure about the future. Why? The future is unknown. Only God knows for sure what lies ahead for our world and for each person in it. One thing we do know is that every person will someday stand before God who is the judge of all men. We are all accountable and answerable to Him.

People speak **as if they knew the future for sure** and they usually leave God out of their plans. God's plan and purpose, His goodness and grace to all (Rom. 2:4; John 1:17; 1 Cor. 15:10) are usually not given any place in the thinking of people. Can you give an example of people leaving God out of their plans? Do most people pray about what they are going to do? Do most people ask God to guide them down the road of time? Or, do most people leave God out of their plans?

What do you plan to do tomorrow? Could you think of something that could happen to change those plans? For example, you may plan to go to school tomorrow. Can you think of something that might happen to keep you from going to school?

We do not even know what will happen tomorrow. Do we know what will happen next week? next month? next year? Ten years from now? We know some things (we know the sun will rise and that summer will follow spring--Gen. 8:22), but the details of our tomorrows are unknown and uncertain.

The Known Future

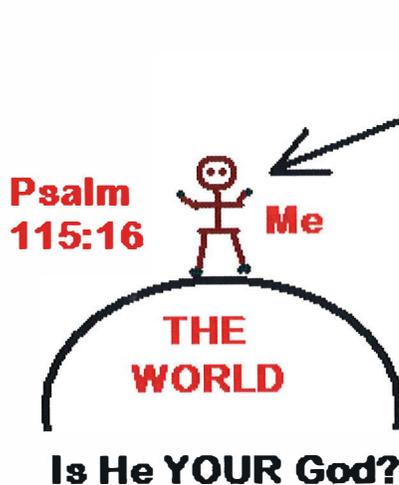
The future is unknown to us, but not to God. God knows *everything* about the future. God knows everything that will happen. God knows all about tomorrow and next week and next year. The future is known to God.

In Isaiah 46:9-10 we learn about God's perfect knowledge of the future: "I am God...declaring the _____ from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." God declares the end from the beginning. For example, we do not know the final score of a baseball game until the game is over. But God knows all about that baseball game even before it starts. Even before the first pitch is thrown, God knows exactly who will win and what the final score will be.

The same thing is true with your life. Even before you were born God knew all about you and your future. God knew your name, how many brothers and sisters you would have, how many times you would get sick, who you would marry, how many children you would have, when you would die and how you would die. From the very beginning God knows how our life will end up!

God also knows all about things that are not yet done (Isaiah 46:10). Here is one example. In the days of David (about 1000 B.C.) God said that people would divide up Christ's garments and cast lots for His robe (Psalm 22:18). About one thousand years later this actually happened (see Matthew 27:35). How did God know that this would happen? God knows everything that will happen. God could tell us today exactly what will happen 1000 years from now! The future is known to God, even all of the little details about the future!

Yes, the future belongs to God. God is already there! God is in every tomorrow! He will take care of me and He will take care of this world:



GOD

He will take care of the future! He will do what pleases Him! He is in control and He is in charge!

"Our God is in the _____; He hath done whatsoever He hath _____" (Psalm 115:3)

If the God of the heavens is **your God**, then what kind of a future does He have for you (see Romans 8:28-30; John 14:1-3; John 17:24 and 1 Peter 1:4)? Is it a bright future?

Do Not Try to Work Out Your Future Without God

It is wrong to leave God out of our future and out of our plans. If we do this we will make many

mistakes. James 4:13 describes those people who make all kinds of plans about the future but they leave God out of their plans. Do these people really know what will happen tomorrow (James 4:14)? _____ Is God able to change their plans? _____ It is good to make plans wisely and carefully, but we must make sure that we include God in our plans. This is what James 4:15 is talking about: "if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." We must give our plans to God and let Him change them if He wants to and wills to. Are God's plans better than our plans? Why?

Suppose you were really looking forward to going on a trip with your family and something happened so that the trip had to be delayed or canceled. Perhaps the car broke down or your father got sick. Should you get upset because plans were changed? For some reason God did not allow this trip to take place. Did God know what He was doing? Perhaps God knew that if you had gone on this trip you would have had a car accident. Perhaps God had other reasons for delaying or canceling the trip. God knows what He is doing, and He wants the very best for each one of us. As we make our plans we need to learn to say a silent "Lord willing."

The Wrong Way to Find Out About the Future

Most people are interested in finding out about the future. But many people try to find out about the future in the wrong way. They might go to a fortuneteller (someone who pretends to be able to tell the future) or to someone who has a crystal ball. Others try to find out the future by looking at the stars. This is called astrology. Some people listen to false religions and cults to try to find out what the future will bring. Can you think of other ways that people try to find out the future? Some of these ways of finding out the future are mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:9-12. Should God's people do these things?

We have already learned that only God knows the future. Therefore if a person wants to find out about the future he should come to God. **In the Bible** God has told us everything we need to know about the future. God has not told us everything about the future in the Bible, but He has told us everything that we need to know. There is only one way to really learn about the future. Circle the correct answer:

- Go out at night and gaze up at the stars.
- Go to a Chinese restaurant and read what is in the fortune cookies.
- Read and study the Bible and try to understand what God has said about the future.
- Go find a lady with a crystal ball and pay her money so that she can tell you what will happen to you in the future.

The Future of the World

There are many people who are saying, "We will make the world better and better." These people hope that science will come up with new discoveries that will change the world and make it a better place to live. But the real problem is a **people problem**. People have sinful hearts (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Do you think there will ever be a scientific discovery that will change men's hearts? _____ Who is the only One who can change men's hearts (Ezekiel 36:25-28)? _____ Because of man's sinfulness, the world is getting worse and worse, not better and better (see 2 Timothy 3:1,13).

What is ahead for this world? God has told us what to expect. There are dark clouds up ahead for this world but after the dark clouds there is bright sunshine!

Dark Clouds

The Lord Jesus told us that there would be a time of Great T_____ (Matthew 24:21) or great trouble on planet earth. Will this be the greatest time of trouble the world has ever known (Matthew 24:21; Daniel 12:1; Jeremiah 30:7)? _____ (**Note:** If you believe on Christ, God has promised to keep you from this time of trouble. See Revelation 3:10. Christ will come for you before this time of trouble begins. See John 14:3.)

Bright Sunshine

The greatest time of trouble the world has ever known will be followed by the greatest time of blessing the world has ever known. The Bible tells us that great darkness must come before the light (Isaiah 60:1-3). The dark time of tribulation will be followed by the bright time of the Kingdom--the time when Christ will rule on the earth. You can read about this kingdom in Isaiah 11:1-9 and Micah 4:1-3 and in many other passages. When unbelieving man is on the throne ruling there is trouble! When God is on the throne ruling there is great blessing! The same thing is true when we let God rule in our own hearts!

THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD	
<p style="color: blue; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">THE DARK FUTURE</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0 0 20px;">THE TRIBULATION MAN RULES</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0 0 20px;">(THE MAN OF SIN)</p>	<p style="color: red; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">THE BRIGHT FUTURE</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0 0 20px;">THE KINGDOM GOD RULES</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0 0 20px;">(CHRIST IS KING)</p>

My Eternal Future

There are only two places where you can spend forever. They both start with the letter "H":

- 1) H _____
- 2) H _____

Which shall it be for you (John 3:16-18)? What choice will you make or which choice have you made? The time to decide about your eternal future is **now**. Don't wait until tomorrow (2 Corinthians 6:2). Remember, tomorrow is a day that never arrives because tomorrow is always the next day. Today is the only day you have to believe on Christ (Acts 16:31). Don't delay; trust in the Lord Jesus Christ today.

Today's Decisions and Tomorrow's Habits

Every day we make many decisions. We decide, "I will do this and I will not do that." When I decide something again and again it becomes a habit. A habit is something that you do without even thinking about it. Tying a shoe or opening a door are habits. You do not have to decide how to open the door, you just do it almost without even thinking about it. Good decisions made over

and over again lead to good habits. Wrong decisions made over and over again lead to bad habits. Present decisions lead to future habits and my future habits determine what kind of a person I will be. How did a person become a drunkard (an alcoholic)? There was a time in his life when he decided to have a drink. He then made this decision again and again. Soon drinking became a habit and this bad habit made this person a drunkard. What we decide today determines what we will be like tomorrow and what kind of a person we will be.

Here is another example. As a young person you must decide what kind of language you will use. If you decide again and again to use bad language, then it will become a bad habit. You will not even have to think about using bad language; it will just flow out of your mouth. Because of this habit you have become a person with a filthy mouth (Ephesians 4:29). To change this bad habit you must do the very same thing. You must decide to replace those bad words with good words. If you keep doing this then you will be in the habit of using good words instead of bad words. Even when habits are difficult to change, God can help us do what is right.

The same thing is true about your relationship with your parents. You must decide every day whether you will obey your parents. If you choose to disobey them again and again, then this will become a habit, and you will end up being a rebellious young person. Today's decisions lead to tomorrow's habits and these habits determine what kind of a person you will be.

"Watch your thoughts, for they become words,
 Watch your words, for they become actions,
 Watch your actions, for they become habits,
 Watch your habits, for they become character,
 Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny."

Don't Worry About Tomorrow

Many people fear the future. They worry about tomorrow and what may or may not happen. Some even worry about something that never really happens! Have you ever done this? "All my brothers and sisters are sick, and tomorrow I'll probably be sick too!" Tomorrow comes and you are not sick!

In Matthew 6:34 Jesus said, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow." This means, "Don't worry and don't be anxious about tomorrow." Jesus wants us to concentrate on today. He wants us to tackle today's troubles and let tomorrow take care of itself. If we concentrate on doing what is right today we will not have time to worry about tomorrow. If your teacher gives you 30 pages to read in a book and only gives you five days to do this reading, what should you do? Should you worry about whether you will ever get it done? Or, should you grab the book on the first day and start reading? Worry will not get the pages read! But if you work at it today, and read seven pages, then you have made a good start on the assignment. On the second day you will only have 23 pages to read! The mountain of work is to be getting smaller! If you read seven more pages on the second day, then on the third day, how many pages will you have left to read? _____ If you keep reading seven pages each day, then on the fifth and final day, you will only need to read two pages (because you already read 28 pages). Suppose you just worried about your assignment for the first four days and did not read any pages. Then on the fifth day you would have 30 pages to read. Did worrying about it help you?

Even in the spiritual realm it is important to concentrate on **today**. A young person might say, "I'll get right with the Lord some other day, but not today." If he won't get right with the Lord today, how do we know he will do this in the future? If he says "No" to God today, why will he say "Yes" to God tomorrow? What happens if saying "No" to God becomes a habit? **Today** is the best time and the only time to obey God! We do not even know whether God will give us tomorrow.

Where Does God Fit In?

God is in my tomorrows. Before I ever get there, God is already there. Before Noah and his family ever came into the ark, God was already there inviting them to come in: "Come thou and all thy house into the _____" (Genesis 7:1). Noah and his family could have worried about the future: "How will we survive this great flood? How will we take care of all the animals? Will there be enough food?" etc. But God was already in the ark taking care of everything.

In the same way, God is already in the future taking care of everything. He invites us to come into the future! We can step into each new day that God gives us and know that God is right there to take care of us and meet every need that we have. In John 10:4 we learn that the Shepherd goes before His sheep. Who is this Shepherd (John 10:11; Psalm 23:1)?

_____ God goes before me! As I step into each new day I know that God has already been there and I also know that "the steps of a _____ man are ordered by the _____" (Psalm 37:23). Wherever I step, God will be right there (see Psalm 139:7-12)!

God does not tell me everything that will happen in the future. He tells me everything that I need to know in His Word. But the Bible does not tell me what job I should get or who I should marry or where I should live or how old I will be when I die. God's Word (its principles, promises and precepts) guides me in these and in all decisions. As I follow God's Word I will better know how to discover God's will concerning a job and concerning marriage and other future decisions.

God wants His children to walk "by _____, not by _____" (2 Corinthians 5:7). I must trust God for the days ahead. Think of walking along a dark path at night with a flashlight. The flashlight does not light up the whole path; it just lights up the place right in front of your feet. As you take a step the light will then show you where to take the next step. This is how we should walk down the path of time. We should not worry about the 100th step (the step that we will need to take next week or next month) but we should concentrate on **the next step** that we need to take right now! God will help us to walk one step at a time! It is the steps that we take today that we need to be concerned about. If we take the wrong steps today then we will be on the wrong path in the future (the path of bad habits, etc.). May God help us to step rightly today:

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my

and a _____ unto my

"
(Psalm 119:105)

REGARDLESS OF THE OUTSIDE

