

Marching Orders(1)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28).

We're going to spend the weekend in and around this passage. Its the last thing Jesus said on earth before ascending, so we must take it very seriously.



What right do we have to evangelise others?

Everyone has to make up their own minds
Some people just aren't religious

You Christians are always forcing Jesus down our throats
If someone worships Krishna or Allah, we shouldn't try to change them, all religions lead to God

It just causes trouble, look at all the wars caused because different religions won't tolerate each other

But all of those comments start from a politically correct human point of view, not from God's.

The things to remember are:

001 Its a command! And not just a command, but one from Jesus, and He said:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

What's more, He says this right at the end of Matthew's Gospel, during which He had demonstrated it to be true. None of the disciples argued with Him or laughed at the preposterousness of it! Just look at some of these demonstrations that "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" which He made through that Gospel:

Coming announced _ Jesus, and only Jesus, was announced by God through prophets long before He was born. He is mentioned throughout the Old Testament, and in Matthew ch. 1 Gabriel reminds Joseph of this:

"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."²² All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the



prophet:²³ *"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"-- which means, "God with us."*

Clearly Jesus was to be Someone special even from birth. That gave Him authority.

Power over Satan Most of us, thankfully, don't have face to face encounters with the devil. Even when we are being tempted, its likely to be by some lesser demon and even then we are unlikely to see it face to face. But Satan recognised Jesus' importance and came at Him himself. Jesus demonstrated His authority by not giving in to the devil. See Matthew ch. 4, and also 12:22-37. What's more, Jesus repeatedly demonstrated His power over Satan's kingdom by casting out many demons. It happens throughout the Gospel, just as in ch. 17:18 *Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.*

Power over sickness Throughout the Gospel Jesus demonstrated that sickness and other disabilities are under His authority. When He spoke, they fled. Matthew, and the other Gospels, are full of accounts like this one in ch. 4:

²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralysed, and he healed them

A centurion saw this authority and was convinced:⁸ *The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed."⁹ For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."(ch. 8).*

Power over nature Further on in ch. 8 we read of Jesus calming the storm, in chapter 14 He makes 5 loaves and 2 fish feed a crowd of 5000+ and then walks on water. His disciples, who knew that lake well having worked on it all their lives, did not need further convincing that Jesus had great authority: ^{8:27} *The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"* In ch. 21 He curses the fig tree and it shrivels up!

Authority over the Ten Commandments Jesus was often criticised for breaking the Law of God, especially the Commandments. In chapter 12 He is accused of breaking the 4th commandment about the Sabbath. He wipes His critics away by showing that He has authority to decide what each commandment means, and performs an amazing miracle in front of their eyes. Then He says: ⁸ *"For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."*

Authority from God Twice Matthew records a voice speaking from heaven



directly to Jesus. God said in 3: 17 *"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."* Then in ch. 17 the three apostles saw Jesus transfigured and a voice from heaven said: *"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"* No wonder the disciples did not quibble when Jesus said "All authority has been given to me!"

Authority over death In ch. 9 Jesus brings Jairus' daughter back to life. In other Gospels we read of Him also raising others, including His friend Lazarus. And of course, Jesus rose Himself. The disciples knew this, had witnessed it and it was now this risen Jesus who was saying to them "All authority is given to me".

There is absolutely no doubt about it, Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth. So when someone says something like "Everyone has to make up their own minds" or that we have no right to preach, the answer has to be that we do have that right. Infact, they have no right to say otherwise, because the One with Authority has commanded us!

002 Its an Emergency! If we could see the state of people from God's viewpoint, and if we really are filled with His love, we will see that there is not much time before they are swept into somewhere awful that they never intended to be.

Hell is grim. Luke 16 records the story Jesus told of two men in different places after they died. A rich man was in the "place of torment". ²³ *In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.* ²⁴ *So he called to him, `Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'* ²⁵ *"But Abraham replied, `Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.* There are several references to the horror of hell in Revelation, where it is described as *the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.....If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* (Rev 20:10,15).

We can argue about it. We can say its not politically correct. But its plain in scripture. Unless someone's name is written in the Lamb's book of Life, it says, they get chucked in the fire, thrown away as useless.¹ We have a duty to wake them up before its too late!

But what if they don't want to know? That's not an excuse for not telling them!

¹ For an *excellent* insight into why there is a hell, why God cannot overlook sin and save even the unrepentant, read HOLY FIRE by John Fergusson. Pub Kingsway at £4.99. ISBN 0-85476-626-X.



In Ezekiel ch. 3 God warns the prophet:¹⁸ *When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood.*¹⁹ *But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself.*

If focussing on the horror of hell disturbs you, think instead of what those whose names *are* written in the Lamb's Book of Life can expect: heaven. Heaven is *not* a place where we sit around for hour after hour on a cloud playing a harp. Its exciting. The Bible describes it as:

a party. In Matthew 25 Jesus talks about Heaven being like a wedding feast.....the Bible often refers to this feast of the wedding between the Lamb (Jesus) and His Bride (the Church, ie believers/Christians). The first miracle Jesus ever did, in John 2, was to make the wedding feast in Cana last *longer!*

paradise. The Garden of Eden is a picture of heaven, how God intended humans to live. We see it again in Revelation 22. Flowing waters, no sickness, and God with us (Emmanuel).

These ideas of heaven are truly Good News to those whose names are in the Book of Life, so we need to do all that we can to get other people added to the Book!

003 Only One Road. The other argument is that there are many roads to God, that God reveals Himself in different ways to different peoples, that all religions are equally valid.

But that is nonsense.

For a start, as we have seen, it is *Jesus* that has all the authority. No-one else in history can claim to have demonstrated that authority or power or lived a life that no-one else can find fault with. Jesus is true historically.....there are more reports from the first century that we have found about Him than about Julius Caesar, for instance, and no-one doubts that Julius existed! *Some* other religions were founded by historical people, but the founders of some are just myths. Even those who really existed, like Mohammed, cannot claim to have the credentials of Jesus. They were not prophesied beforehand, they did not exercise authority over sickness, or nature, or demons, or Satan, or death as Jesus did.

Even ignoring all that, and just using human logic for a moment, it is impossible



for all religions to be right. God cannot say to one group “you will live many times. If you are good you will re-incarnate as something better, if not something worse” and at the same time to another “ you only get one chance. If your good works overcome your bad ones you will go to heaven, if not hell. You’d better hope.....” and to still another “You’ll never be good enough, so I will die for you then you can have eternal life”. Just those three statements alone contradict each other. They could all be *wrong*, but logically no more than one can be right.

Jesus is unique in the ways outlined above in 001, and the Christian faith is unique in that it is about God reaching out for us, not the other way round as in all other religions. Jesus is unique because “*Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*” (Acts 4:12).

Marching Orders (2)

1⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 1⁹ **Therefore go** and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 2⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28).



Go Where?

Jesus doesn't say at this point, and that is important. Later on, in Acts 1, He does say and so we will look at that verse as well. But to begin with, He just says “Go!”.

001 Actually, its **therefore** go.

You've probably heard that whenever you see the word therefore in the Bible you should look to see what its there for.

In this case its there to remind us of all that Jesus has just said. *He* has all the authority and when He sends us out He sends us out with His authority.


When a police officer goes to arrest someone they go with all the authority of the Crown behind them, because they go in the name of the Queen, the Government and the Country. They have authority because it has been delegated to them by the person who really has authority.



So when Jesus tells us to go we go with all His authority too. Mark gives a fuller version of this command than Matthew does, and he records that Jesus illustrated what it would mean to go in His authority:¹⁵ *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.* ¹⁶ *Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*

¹⁷*And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues;*¹⁸ *they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."* (ch. 16). Since Jesus did these things, so too will those who go in His Name and who rely on His authority.

These things happen still today, through the people that truly have learnt to rely on Jesus and act in His authority. You can read about such things² but there is no reason why we should not begin to see such things, if we ourselves learn to rely on Jesus and act in accordance with His authority. He said in John 14:12 *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."*

So the first thing, the 'therefore', is to begin to act in His Name. There's more on this in the next  section.

002 Go? Go *where*? People get very hung up about Guidance. "God hasn't told me where to go or what to do, so I'll keep waiting".

They use that as an excuse for watching tv rather than working with the homeless ('I'm not sure I'm called to do that') or going to a rave on a Saturday night rather than teaching Sunday School on a Sunday morning ('If God meant me to be a Sunday School teacher He would have made me able to get up in the mornings!').

But notice that that misses the point totally.

You were certainly *not* called by God to spend your whole life watching television. You were certainly *not* called by God to have no commitments to anything.

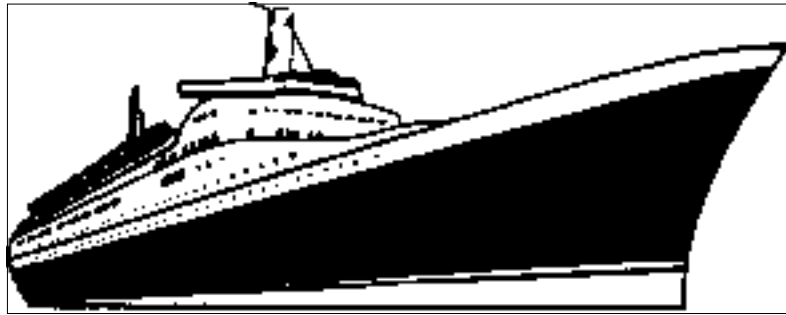
Jesus said "GO!". That's not about geography (go where?) but about attitude. Are you prepared to go, to go to people who need help, who need the Gospel. He's not bothered so much as to whether that's to people in Africa or Asia or whether its on an O.M. ship or a Love Europe campaign or whether its to old Mrs

² Books such as Jackie Pullinger's *Chasing the Dragon*, Brother Andrew's *God's Smuggler*, several books by *Benny Hinn*, or biographies of *Smith Wigglesworth* to name but a few!



Higginbotham across the road or those awful foul mouthed kids in the church youth group or the drug addicts that hang around in the park or.....

Instead, its about saying "You said go, Lord. Here is a need, I'm going".



Imagine the captain of a ship being told to leave port, and that he will be radioed again in 6 hours. Its no good him saying: "We can't start moving yet because we don't know where we're going". He has to start the engines, get the ropes untied, move forwards (because you can't turn a ship unless its actually moving) and head for the harbour mouth. Its a lot quicker to turn a ship that's doing 30 knots than it is to turn one that's not moving....it has to be set off, get up to speed and then turn.

So God looks to see if we're moving, then He starts to tell us where to go. The only command He's going to be issuing to the Christian who spends hours in front of the television is "Go". But when we're up and active, that's when He starts to give further instructions. Most of the time, however, its the things that we choose to get involved with that are the things He wants us to do. You see, He made us after all, and knows what our interests are.

So if you want to get involved with the homeless, that's where God wants you! If you want to be helping others to worship Him through music or teaching, go for it! If you have a deep yearning for the lost, get to them with the Good News! As we go so we will hear Him calling.

003 To all the World. Jesus said in Acts "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*" (1:8). This is Luke's record of the command we are studying. And in this one Jesus says where we are to go.....everywhere!

You see, it is deliberately unspecific. Wherever we are, wherever we look, wherever we hear about, *that* is somewhere where there are people God wants us to go to. You cannot do it all, nor can I. Nor can Billy Graham. But each one of us can go where we are drawn by the stirring of our hearts by His Spirit.



Marching Orders (3)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and **make disciples of all nations**, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28).



The Job Description

Our mission is to make disciples of all nations. To do that we need to be clear about what it means to be a disciple, and what all nations means as well!

001 What is a Disciple? Well, there are a lot more than 12 of them for a start! The dictionary says that a disciple is a learner or pupil. You could also say a copy of the original.

The word *Christian* literally means 'little Christs', so a Christian is a little version of Jesus.....or should be! *Disciples* then are people who seek to live like Jesus.

It is perhaps obvious then that not all those who call themselves *Christian* today are *Disciples*, in the true sense of that word. It is not being a disciple to attend church once on a Sunday and live like those who don't the rest of the week. It is not being a disciple to pray like the Pharisee in Luke 18 who said: *'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'* It is not being a disciple to live your life in a way that is exactly the same as non-Christians. It is not being a disciple to try to get away with as little as you can for God. Yet all of those things describe many people who call themselves Christians today. Jesus said, ominously, *"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."* (Matt 7:21).

If we are going to take the Gospel, the Good News, to the nations, then we must be Disciples ourselves. You can't make disciples unless you are one yourself! In their album *Jesus Freak* the band DC Talk say that one of the main reasons



evangelism fails today is that the world looks at Christians who proclaim Jesus with their mouths and then deny Him with their lifestyles.

We need to be more concerned about *His* favour than that of others. Nowhere does the Bible say we should be able to preserve our dignity.....infact its just the opposite, dignity counts little with God. He didn't preserve His when He was hung with criminals naked on a cross. Paul didn't consider his dignity worth keeping when, after being stoned, beaten, left for dead he went back to those who did that to him and carried on loving them. Disciples are people who don't seek to preserve their own honour, only God's.

⁹ ¶ Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
(1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

So if we've been washed we must aim to stay clean!

002 Cultural Attaches or *Ambassadors* are the government's equivalents to the missionaries of the church. An Ambassador goes to another country to represent his/her own one. Its their job to make sure that the home country gets a good name in the land they are sent to. A cultural attache will be there to make sure that there are no misunderstandings because of differences of culture.

A missionary should do the same.....we are ambassadors for the Kingdom of Heaven, we have to represent it on earth, showing what life is like there, making sure people know about it and that it has a good name. To stick up for our country (Heaven) and its King (Jesus) at all times. Paul said it this way in 2 Corinthians:

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.



You get a good picture of what a disciple should be like in the letter to Titus.....which we studied a few years ago in our weekend *Stay Tuned.....There's More to Come*. (Tapes of that weekend and the book are available for purchase).

003 The Nations are, basically, all people everywhere. There is no difference between us. To the first disciples it would have meant not just the Jews but also everyone else (the Gentiles). To us it means that there is no-one who is outside of the mission field. All need to be told!

Marching Orders (4)

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, **baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28).



Getting in the Water

(Splashing or Swimming!)

Now we know what a disciple is, the next question is *how do you make one?* Jesus tells us (of course!): by baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But what, exactly, does that mean?

001 Dictionary Time. Being baptised in water is a symbol of what should be happening to us in spirit. Being water-baptised does *not* make someone a Christian. Some people treat it as an insurance policy, "just in case God's there" and then go on with the rest of their lives without any difference, as though it had never happened. So obviously Jesus did not mean that that was all there is to making disciples.

We'll come back to water baptism in a minute, but lets look first at what Jesus was really getting at.

To baptise means the same thing as *to immerse* and even *to dunk*. (Next time you're told off for dunking your biscuit, just say that you are baptising it!). So



what Jesus was saying was that, to make disciples, we need to *immerse* people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But how do you do that?

002 What's in a Name? When a policeman says "Stop in the name of the law!" he isn't speaking with his own authority but that of the 'name of the law'. The name carries the force of all the law of the land that has ever been written from the Magna Carta in 1066 right down to the last White Paper the Queen signed. Once Her signature is on the document it is part of the law. Before that, the contents of the Paper will have been discussed in Parliament: 3 readings in the Commons and 3 in the Lords, plus Committee time. A lot of people will have worked on it, but it isn't yet law. When it passes its final reading (debate) and gets voted for, it is typed up and sent to the Palace. It doesn't become the law of the country until the Queen adds her name to it. Her name gives it authority.

So, when someone is immersed (baptised) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit it means, if you like, that God's signature is added to their lives. In Revelation it says that God actually writes *their* name in His Book of Life (see Revelation 20, quoted earlier on page 4).

In the Bible a name is also tied up with the personality or characteristic of the person. Old Testament characters are given names which reflect what they are like in later life. If they change and start to follow God, they often are given new names by Him to reflect this. In the New Testament Jesus said to Simon: ¹⁷ "*Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.*" ¹⁸ *And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.* (Matthew 16). Jesus gave him the name which would reflect his mission and calling in later life.

So if we are brought into the Name of God, that also means we are brought into the character of God as well. The character of the *Father*, the character of the *Son* and the character of the *Holy Spirit*.

The Father is the Creator, the Almighty; the Son is the Redeemer, the Saviour; and the Spirit is the Presence, the Comforter. We could spend much more than a weekend looking at the characteristics of God!

Infact, we could, and must, spend a whole lifetime doing it. Because to be immersed in the character of God means to be always there, spending time with him, getting to know Him. We do this through reading His letter to us (the Bible) and by reflecting on it and the One who wrote it. Being baptised in the name of



the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit means to become so immersed in Him that we know how He will react, what He wants us to do, and that we know *Him* too. More of that in the next “Marching Order” section!

003 How much Water? Christians spend far too long arguing over trivia and avoiding the main issues! Some say its wrong to baptise babies and only use a trickle of water, others say its ok. Some say its wrong to baptise an adult who comes to faith if they have already been baptised as a baby, others say its ok. But we must not forget that the water is just the *symbol*, it is not that important itself. However, it perhaps illustrates one more point:

It is possible to be baptised as an adult and fully soaked in the water and yet never go further as a Christian in getting to know God than a very baby-like understanding. In other words, we may have been immersed in water, but only get a sprinkling of God’s Name and character in our lives. On the other hand, someone who only gets a baby-sized trickle of water at 6 months might go on and grow in God so much that they spend most of their lives completely immersed in His Presence! That is much more important than the amount of water they were dunked in!

So try not to get sidetracked into arguments that miss the central point of what it is to be a disciple.

Marching Orders (5)

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.** And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28).



Get your Hair Cut!

That’s about the first thing that is said (or, at least, was said) to a new recruit after they join the army. And they do not have any choice in the matter. They have signed up and so *signed away* their right to be their own boss. From now on they have to do what they are told, even in matters as personal and trivial as the length of their hair. Its not just the army, either, many civilian jobs will dictate things like standards of dress,



presentation, hours of free-time etc.

Being a member of the army, or of a company, is a *commitment* which involves all or some of a person's freedom being signed away.

It is the same for a disciple. If you are a disciple then you have signed away your personal control of your life to a new King, Jesus. And He makes demands of you, things that show you are committed to Him.

001 New Age v God The teaching of the "New Age" which dominates thinking in our culture these days is that we are all independent beings, gods of our own destinies. What we want is what counts. "*No-one* has the right to tell me what to do", is the general belief. And so authority has begun to break down, respect for established lines of "command" from Queen to Parliament to Police or Teacher or Boss or Other-People's-Property or whatever....it all is slowly eroding.

That is not the Christian view of things. We have to realise that God is the ultimate authority, and respect for Him and obedience to Him is the way it was always meant to be (and under Him, respect for the systems of law and order in the country too!)

In Matthew 16 we read: ²⁴ ¶ *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."* It is vital we understand what Jesus is saying here if we want our Christian lives to be of value to Him and His Kingdom. He says three things : deny, take up and follow. Let's examine them in closer detail:

Deny yourself Immediately we begin to get a bit worried, because these two words are so against the grain of modern culture as to be frightening. Even when dieting people try to find ways of avoiding *really* going without the foods they like.

The first thing to remember is that God created all the good things on the planet. "Deny yourself" does not mean lead a boring life with no pleasure. But it *does* mean turn from all sin. Deny yourself the right to do sinful things. Decide you are not going to do them. Avoid them. Aim to please God.

Essentially it means "deny yourself the throne of your life, and give it to Jesus". Just as if you joined the army, when you would deny yourself the right to run your life. Any minute you could be ordered to do something and you would *have* to do it.



So it means that we have to get in regular contact with Jesus to find out what the orders are....we need to spend time with Him and the Bible each day

Take up your cross There was only one thing this meant to the original disciples. They would have watched many criminals taking up their crosses and walking out of town and up a hill, and they would soon be watching Jesus do exactly the same at Jerusalem. It was a walk to death. It was a walk with no chance to turn off it.

When Jesus tells us to take up our cross it means that we are *forever* giving up the right to run our lives our way. We're not just denying ourselves for three years and then getting a discharge. We're signing up for life, or for the death of our sinful selves.

Follow Jesus He gave up everything and denied Himself all the way to death, to fulfil the Plan and to obey the Father. Paul tells us about this in Philippians 2:

⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Notice that the good news is that He did this because He could see beyond the grave, and saw the great things that were ahead. He knew something better was coming.

And the great thing about becoming a disciple is that there are far better things for us when we do, than we can ever get out of the world following our selves. The best things in life are from God, when we follow Him!

The last part of the warning Jesus gave in Matthew 16 was *For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.* The more we try to cling on to our old ways of life, the more certain that we will lose Life itself. But if we lose that life, by making Jesus our Lord (Boss, Ruler, King, Sergeant), then we find Life itself, life *in all its abundance and fullness* as Jesus said in John 10:10.



002 Cut out for the Job In the Old Testament, God gives us a picture of what it means to be one of His followers. All Israeli men were marked for life when they were 8 days old, by being circumcised. It is an irreversible operation. You can never go back on it and say “I don’t want to be circumcised anymore” and so they were always marked out as God’s people. That’s why He dealt harshly with them if they rebelled.

That’s why its important too that we don’t jump in too lightly making a commitment to God. He takes us at our word and if we then don’t deliver He starts to work on us to bring us round to keeping our promises. Sometimes this can be painful....far better to be ‘circumcised’ when you choose than have God bring you to the operating table by some harsher route. Of course, we are not physically circumcised but it is as if our hearts/desires/wills are (Romans 2:29) when we commit ourselves to God. Once we do it, there is no turning back; unless we are prepared for the consequences of ‘falling into the hands of the Living God’ (Hebrews 10:31. see also Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

003 Counting the Cost The Bible tells us clearly some things that are definitely *out* for Disciples, things that we must not do or get involved with. There may also be something that God says you mustn’t do, even if others can. (For Samson it was having his hair cut, for instance!). Here’s just one checklist, from Galatians 5:

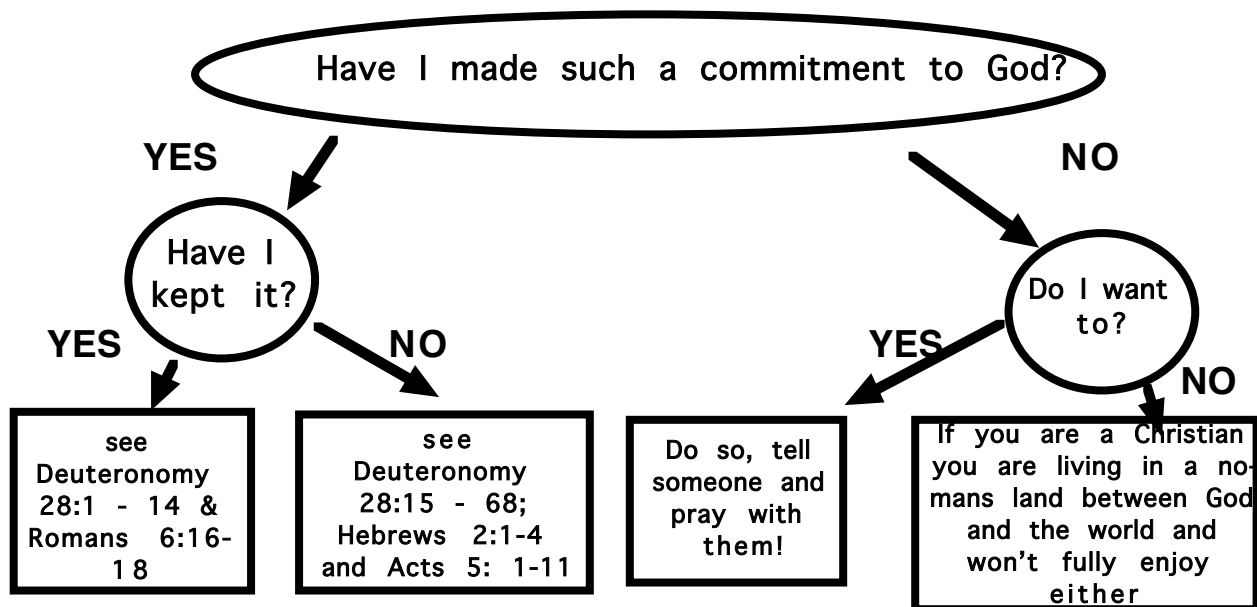
¹⁹ *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality³ , impurity and debauchery;*

²⁰ *idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

We have to make choices and decisions. We may not like the implications of all this, but we cannot avoid them. The questions then that we all need to consider are printed on the next page:

³ fuller teaching on this one is available on the tape of the TFG Weekend “Joseph and the Amazing Spiritual Lifestyle”, see order form at back





Marching Orders (6)

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. **And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**" (Matthew 28).



Famous Chinese Man!

I was told years ago about this guy, his name was Nogo Nolo. In those days most people still used the Authorised Version of the Bible, and in that the Marching Orders passage reads:

¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

It was pointed out to me that the promise in verse 20 only comes into force if we obey the command of verse 19. In other words, if we don't "go ye therefore" we can't expect Him to say "Lo, I am with you always". Get it? No go, no lo.



But if we *do* go then what a promise we have!

Jesus promised that if we obey Him and fulfil this command (known as the Great Commission), then *He* is with us always. He underlined this in John 14:16&17:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever-- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

What He is saying here is that when He ascends, He will send the Holy Spirit back down to be with us forever, never to leave us or go away but always to be there with us. But then see how He describes the Holy Spirit.....they *already* know Him because He already lives with them. Who was that? Jesus!

The Holy Spirit is the Presence of Jesus, of God, with us today. Where? *In* us, if we are believers.

So everything Jesus did, we can do too, because He is with us and in us. "*I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*" (John 14:12) That's a mind-boggling promise. Notice the condition though:*anyone who has faith in me.*

The original disciples proved this statement, by having faith in Jesus and going on to do greater things than He had done. If Peter's shadow so much as fell on a sick person, they were healed. Philip was supernaturally moved from one place to another. Peter was led out of a jail past guards who seemed not to be able to see him. Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake and nothing happened (just as Jesus promised in Mark 16:18). The book of Acts is full of these amazing proofs that Jesus' promise was true for those who obeyed Him and had faith in Him, and similar things have been happening right down through the last 2000 years in the lives of those who have taken Him at His word, and become His true disciples.

Marching Orders (7)

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, **to the very end of the age.**" (Matthew 28).



Long time Coming!

Imagine the scene. You are given a top secret



MISSION IMPOSSIBLE?

special assignment. You are to go to a foreign country and live among its people. Your Chief promises that, when the time is right, he will come to help you.

But now you've been there three years.....five...ten. What should you do? Carry on with the work? Fly home to find out what has happened? Forget all about your home country and just become a normal citizen of the new one? An agent who was really committed would just keep on doing what they were ordered to do. Amazingly, even as late as the 1970s, Japanese soldiers were being found on remote Pacific islands who were there waiting to kill the Americans or British when they invaded. For those soldiers, World War 2 had lasted thirty years! They had received no further instructions so they kept on waiting. And they took some convincing that it was all over and we were friendly nations when they were eventually discovered!

Jesus seems to us to have taken a long time coming back, and Christians have been tempted to fall into several traps:

001 He's not coming! So we fall back into a lifestyle that matches that of the people we live with. The urgency of the Gospel message is lost, and we become fixed on the things of the world, not the things of the Kingdom. Peter wrote this:

³ ¶ First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴ 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." ⁵ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. ⁶ By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. ⁷ By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

⁸ ¶ 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.

⁹ ¶ 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. ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ ¶ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home



of righteousness. ¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

(2Peter 3)

Sadly, the state of many Christians is just like that.....our eyes are off God and we have forgotten that He says clearly (in the passage above and elsewhere) that He *is* coming back. So we become like all those around us, and dull to the things of God. We don't expect Him to return. Jesus said that would be very typical of many people when He does return: ⁴³ *But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.* ⁴⁴ *So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*(Matthew 24). Paul said the same too:

¹ ¶ *Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, "Peace and safety", destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.*

⁶ ¶ *So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.*

⁷ *For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.*

(1 Thessalonians 4)

Its important that we check ourselves to see whether our life consists of the "things of the night" like those in the world around us, or the "things of the day", as Jesus expects us to live.

002 He's not Coming Yet! Since 2000 years have already passed and He hasn't shown up, He's not going to in our lifetimes either. But the way we *should* live is in complete expectancy. Jesus told many parables about this. Of the ten virgins waiting for the Bridegroom at the Wedding Feast, only 5 were prepared right up until He came....those were the ones who made it into 'heaven' (the wedding feast), the ones who gave up waiting and fell asleep did not (See Matthew 25) . "Falling asleep" in this parable represents those who stop focussing on the task God has given us.

This probably affects more Christians than 001 because it doesn't require us



denying the Bible. To say “He’s not coming” means that we are saying the Bible is wrong. To say “He’s not coming yet” means we can still say we believe the Bible, but that the warnings about being ready for the second coming do not apply to us.

But actually we are disbelieving the Bible, because the Bible says He is coming *soon* and we must be ready for it. *Soon* means the same and *imminently*, its all like waiting for a bus really! One Good Friday I was doing just that, and although the timetable was very detailed for normal daily services, at the bottom it just said “On Good Friday and Bank Holidays, buses run every half hour”.

What I did not know was *at what time every half hour*. So I waited. Behind me was a shop. My mind thought of chocolate. But if I went in the shop to get chocolate, the bus might come and I’d miss it. Twenty minutes passed, it must be soon now! Twenty-five....I would have had tons of time to buy chocolate, but I did not know that earlier. It could have come at any point, even though looking back it hadn’t come for twenty-five minutes. Because it had taken so long I began to doubt it would ever come. Instead of becoming *more* expectant because the half hour was nearly up, I got less expectant because it hadn’t come yet.

Then something happened to make me believe it was coming again.....one went the other way. So buses *were* running today! And then it came.....

Christians have become complacent because Jesus hasn’t come back yet, so we think He won’t in the near future (at least) either. But there have been signs recently to show He is coming. We’ll look at some later.

003 He’s not Coming...physically!

Some say its all a spiritual thing. He’s already come back as the Holy Spirit (true), and that’s all He meant anyway. There’s not going to be an “End of the World”, and forget the Day of Judgment...everyone is going to get to heaven.

Well, that clearly is not what Jesus said. In Matthew 24 and 25 we read Him talking of people working in a field, some taken and others left, when He returns. In the passage quoted before from 2 Peter 3 we read that the world will be destroyed by fire with a great roar. That’s not just a spiritual thing, its real.

004 Signs that He is Coming..... In all of history only one Man has been prophesied in complete detail for hundreds and thousands of years before He came. The Old Testament points towards God’s coming Messiah, the Anointed



One. It tells of many things that would happen to Him as a suffering servant, including describing accurately the details of His birth (Isaiah 7:14, 11:1 for instance). Also that He would be born and grow up in three different places: Bethlehem - Micah 5:2, Galilee - Isaiah 9: 1-6, and Egypt - Hosea 11:1. All of this was true for Jesus.

Details of Jesus' life were also clearly prophesied, and especially His death (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 and many other references....whole books have been written just detailing the prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament!

But the Bible's prophecies about Jesus and Israel stopped being fulfilled in 70AD, when the Romans completely destroyed Jerusalem, as Jesus Himself had prophesied would happen in Matthew 24 and 25, and Daniel had been told in Daniel 9:26. After 70 AD there were no more fulfilments of prophecy, despite the fact that there was a lot left to be fulfilled!

No more, that is, until the 20th century. Now the Jews are back in Israel, 2500 years after first being exiled and 1900 years after the last ones were forced to leave. (1917 Britain declared it would set up a Jewish homeland after it expelled Turkey from Palestine. 1948 the state of Israel was 'born in a day', 15th May.. *Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? Yet no sooner is Zion in labour than she gives birth to her children..(Isaiah 66:8).* 1967 Israel captures Jerusalem). Reading prophecies today can be just like reading the newspaper. Its all happening now!

Just as the bus coming the other way convinced me my bus *would* come, so the prophecies about Israel being fulfilled should convince us that Jesus is coming. Infact, that He is coming very soon indeed. For He said Himself:

³² ¶ "Now learn this lesson from the fig-tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁴ I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

The 'fig-tree' was a picture used often in the Old Testament to represent Israel. Jesus is saying that when we see Israel budding again, we know that His coming is near. There are many people in God's family today who expect to hear the Trumpet blast announcing His coming very soon indeed! The letters to read to help you prepare for this are 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 2 Peter.



Why?



Being a disciple is obviously a major commitment, so why should anyone want to do it? Here are three reasons, and we ought to remember them at all times:

001 Wounding the One Who Loves Us. It is not putting it too strongly to say that it breaks God's heart when His children neglect Him.

The thing God wants from us more than anything else at all is for us to spend time in His arms, knowing Him and loving Him. ¹*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble....*¹⁰ *"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."* (Psalm 46). If we say that we love God and open our lives to Him, then He longs and yearns for us to become lovers, not just occasional friends. This was the theme of TFG's Senior Weekend in 1996: *All you Need is Love!*⁴, and is the most important lesson to learn for any disciple.

Quite simply, when we fail to be His lovers, when we disobey Him, when we choose to be anything other than His disciples, we are breaking His heart. Imagine what it will be like to get to heaven and realise that Jesus has been weeping over you throughout your life, simply because you have treated Him as an option when you feel like it, rather than the most important thing in your life!

002 Playing with fire. Hell is described as fire. The things that lead to hell, sins, are described in detail in many places of the Bible. Some of the passages have been reprinted in this book. If we have read them, and have heard God say through them what things are sinful and what things we must not do but yet carry on and ignore the warnings, we are in dire straights!

Jesus said that the unforgivable sin is to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:29). Essentially what that means is to deny the Holy Spirit in our lives. Non-Christians are guilty of this, because they live their lives rejecting Him. But so too surely are Christians who hear God warn them again and again about certain sins and yet go on doing them *deliberately* saying "God will forgive me later". What kind of relationship is that, where we expect all the time God to go on forgiving us but we rarely make moves towards Him to do the things He asks of us?

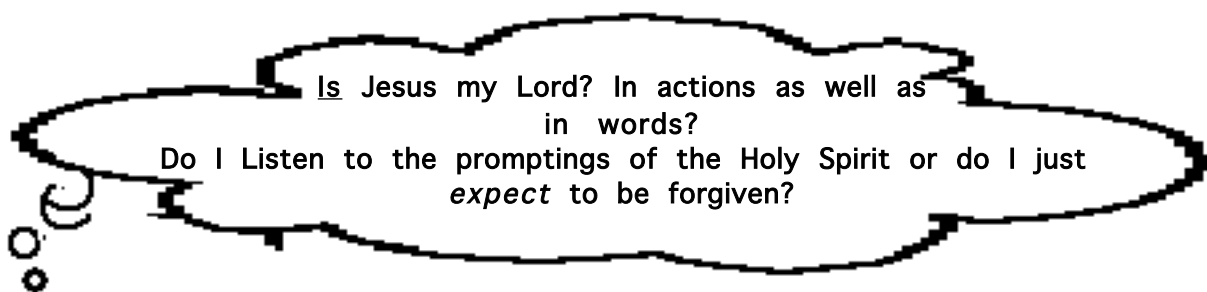
⁴ Booklet and tapes from this still available, see order form at back of this booklet.



Jesus also said that *“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.”* (Matthew 7:21, my underlining). That can only mean that there are believers who simply will end up rejected by God because, though they say He is their Lord, boss, king, ruler they don’t listen to Him or obey Him.

If you are in the army and you ignore all the commands you are given, you end up in terrible trouble. Its no different for Christians in God’s army!

“But no-one’s perfect, we all sin” you say. And that is true. But God calls us to turn from our sin, to stop doing it deliberately, and to bring before Him in prayer and confession those things that we cannot break free from and to seek His power and help. That is very different from saying, for instance, “I like getting drunk, I know God says its wrong but tough”.



003 Rescuing your friends *Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:16).Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.(John 3:18) “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24)all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.(2 Thessalonians 2:12) ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20).*

But that is all to concentrate on the negative. There is also the positive.....

¹ ¶ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first



earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband⁵ . ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." ⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practise magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."

⁹ ¶ One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal..... ²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

¹ ¶ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

⁶ ¶ The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the

⁵ The Bride of Christ is the Church, Christians. Heaven is described as being a wedding feast....and Jesus makes them last longer, like He did at Cana in John 2.



things that must soon take place." ⁷ "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book." (Revelation chapters 21 and 22).

Don't you want to go there? Don't you want to take others with you? That's why its vital we start to live like disciples now!

Jesus did not want to go to the cross. But He went because He looked beyond it and seized hold of the prize that would be His afterwards. Paul writes that we must be like athletes in training for the Olympics, who train hard despite it being unpleasant to do so in order to win the crown (medal) at the end (1 Corinthians 9:25). That's the attitude we need!

³ Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No-one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer. ⁵ Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. ⁷ Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.
(2 Timothy 2)

