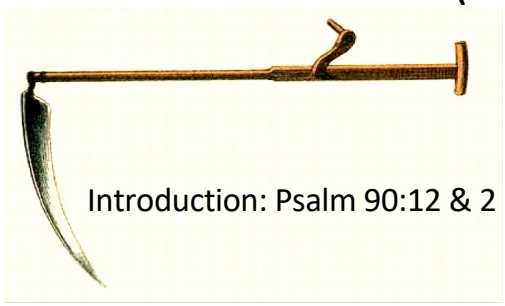
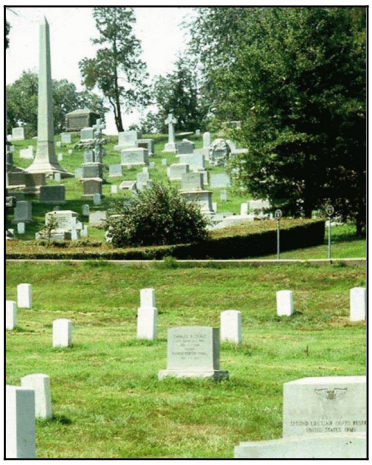
"If this was our Final Year"

(Living for our Priorities in 2021)

Selected Scriptures

12-30-2020





Introduction: Psalm 90:12 & 2 Kings 20:1-2

**** How would you live, if this was the last year of your life?***

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

1. ***T*he <u>ETERNAL</u> before the <u>Temporal</u>**
(Matthew 6:33; compare II Cor.4:18; 5:7; Col.3:2)

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

2. ***T*he <u>BIBLE</u> ahead of our <u>daily food</u>** (Matthew 4:4)

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

3. **<u>EVANGELISM</u> ahead of <u>entertainment</u>** (Matthew 4:19)

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

4. **<u>PEOPLE</u> ahead of <u>things</u>** (Matthew 19:14; compare 19:19)

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

5. **<u>INNER SPIRITUALITY</u> ahead of <u>external appearance</u>**
(Matthew 23:25-28; compare I Peter 3:3-4)

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

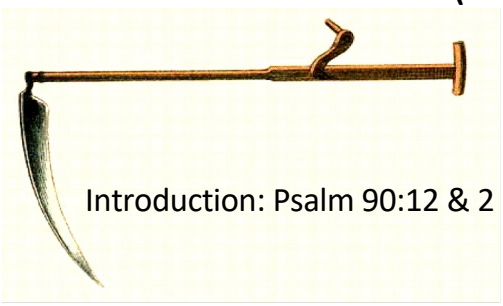
6. **<u>PRAYER</u> ahead of <u>sleep</u>** (Matthew 26:40)

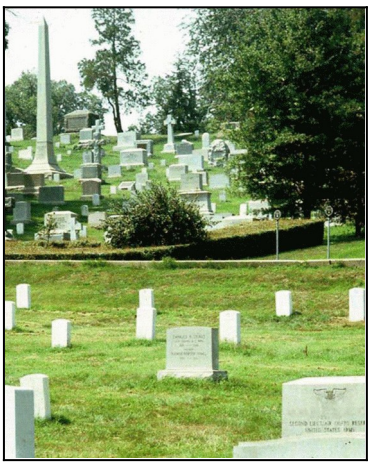
"If this was our Final Year"

(Living for our Priorities in 2021)

Selected Scriptures

12-30-2020





Introduction: Psalm 90:12 & 2 Kings 20:1-2

**** How would you live, if this was the last year of your life?***

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

1. ***T*he _____ before the _____**
(Matthew 6:33; compare II Cor.4:18; 5:7; Col.3:2)

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

2. ***T*he _____ahead of our _____**(Matthew 4:4)

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

3. **_____ ahead of _____**(Matthew 4:19)

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

4. **_____ ahead of _____**(Matthew 19:14; compare 19:19)

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

5. **INNER _____ ahead of external appearance**
(Matthew 23:25-28; compare I Peter 3:3-4)

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

6. **_____ ahead of sleep** (Matthew 26:40)

"If this was our Final Year"

(Living for our Priorities in 2021)

Selected Scriptures

12-30-2020

Introduction: Psalm 90:12

> 2 Kings 20:1-2 - "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD…"

Hezekiah sought the Lord for mercy!

--Hezekiah was one of the good kings of Judah.

--He began his reign at 25 and reigned for 29 years in Jerusalem (2 Ki. 18:2)

--READ 2 Ki. 18:3-7 - "And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. . ."

--Military attacks and threats would no doubt take a toll on Hezekiah (perhaps leading to great stress).

To appease Sennacherib, the King of Assyria, Hezekiah stripped from the Temple 11 tons of silver and one ton of gold as tribute money. This did not satisfy Sennacherib, so he sent his Rabshekah (or "commander") to Jerusalem to intimidate the people and threaten the city with destruction.

However, Sennacherib's plans and threats came to nothing, as God answered Hezekiah's prayer (2 Ki. 19:14-19). The Messenger of Yahweh (19:35) destroyed Sennacherib's army, and he himself was killed by his two sons.

Sometime after this, King Hezekiah became ill. The illness manifested itself with an incurable tumor ("boil").

What did Hezekiah do on the news of his impending death? He prayed and made his appeal to God.

Note: The fact that Hezekiah was told (by God) that he would die, yet God chose to lengthen his life says this:

1) God hears the prayer of a desperate heart
2) God can choose to alter His decision in response to repentance and faith

None of us know the time of our departure, but we are just a breath or heart beat from it! "The distance between glorified spirits in heaven and militant saints on earth seems great; but it is not so. We are not far from home—a moment will bring us there."

Why do some get serious at the 11th hour of their life?

1) There's a realization of FINALITY
(This is it! I will not pass this way again)

Hebrews 9:27
And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

There is NO Video Game or PC Game Restart or "Respawn" button to life; Once lived, no second chance; No reincarnation.

2) There's a sense of URGENCY
(Whatever I'm going to do, I'd better do it now!)
Pride & Procrastination are perhaps the two greatest deceivers

3) There's an awareness of PRIORITY
(What matters most, must get done first!)

Ask God to reveal to you what your Priorities should be and then live for what really matters. God/Family/Others

What would you do if you knew that 2021 would be your final year of life on earth?

When you think of Bible people on their death bed, what did they get done? What were their last words? The Patriarchs blessed their children (Ex: Jacob with Joseph)

In preparation for death . . .

--Abraham purchased his burial plot of land for himself and his wife (Gen. 25:10).
--Jacob under Divine leading blessed his sons (Gen. 49:28)
--Joseph encouraged his family to trust God, who would bring Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land (Gen. 50:24).

**** How would you live, if this was the last year of your life?***

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

1. ***T*he <u>ETERNAL</u> before the <u>Temporal</u>**
(Matthew 6:33; compare II Cor.4:18; 5:7; Col.3:2)

Matthew 6:28-31

"Why take ye thought for raiment?" - Why do you worry about clothing?

EX: People who worry about the <u>style</u> and <u>quality</u> of clothing (they are overly concerned about the <u>name brand</u> of their clothes).

EX: People who worry about the "image" they portray by their clothing
- Don't worry about the <u>fads</u>
- Don't worry about the <u>trends</u>
- Don't worry about what <u>your friends are wearing</u>

The lily does not work nor spin yarn to dress and adorn itself. God does this for the lily.

NOTE: It is God who truly makes a woman beautiful. True beauty is not measured by the clothes you wear, ladies, but by the sweetness of your heart (I Pet. 3:3-4 - *"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.")*

"They toil not" - "toil" means to labor with wearisome effort. To work to the point of becoming weary. To strain all of our powers so as to sweat and become fatigued. In the rat race of society, so many weary themselves with more than one job, work overtime every time; run, run, run; seek to out-do the competitor. . . all so as to live on a higher standard of living. And they never enjoy life, never enjoy the fruits of their labor, never see their family, and never serve their Lord.

Solomon (one of the riches kings to ever live), when at his height of glory, when he had the best of clothing, was not dressed with the beauty of one of the lilies.

"To morrow is cast into the oven" - Could refer to 2 ideas:

1) The Sirroco winds (which bring in the heat from the Arabian desert and instantly turns Israel into a dry, dusty land. This transition occurs around May.

2) The coming purging of the earth (II Pet. 3:7, 10, 12)

Just as God feeds the birds (v. 26), and just as God clothes the grass and adorns it with flowers (v. 30), so He will (much more) see to it that His children have adequate food & clothing.

"O ye of little faith" - <u>Worry</u> is always the result of unbelief or little faith.

Those who worry much, believe little. Those who worry little, believe much!

ILLUS: One day when he was away from home someone came running up to John Wesley saying: "Your house has burned down! Your house has burned down!" To which Wesley replied, "No, it hasn't, because I don't own a house. The one i have been living in belongs to the Lord, and if it has burned down, that is one less responsibility for me to worry about." (MacArthur, p. 420)

v. 33

This is a conditional promise.

"Seek ye first" -

"Seek" **-**to zealously look after or earnestly live for (in contrast to what the Gentiles "seek" [v. 32], we are to seek something else).

"First" - a word showing priority. Ahead of seeking for what to eat, drink, or wear (v. 31), we are to prioritize God's kingdom. We are to view the eternal as more important than the temporal (v. 19-20), the priorities of God over the priorities of the Gentiles (i.e. the world).

"The kingdom of God" = seek to live for those things which will advance or benefit the cause of Christ

"And His righteousness" - Seek to live up to true, Biblilcal righteousness; seek to be right as God counts rightness, not as the world does.

You can seek His righteousness by:

1) Concerning yourself with knowing His standards of righteousness / Make Bible reading your priority (Job 23:12; Ps. 119:72, 97; Mt. 4:4)
"A Bible which is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't" (C. H. Spurgeon)

2) Concerning yourself with obeying His standards of righteousness / Internal purity (being clean on the inside) must come first in our lives (Mt. 23:26 - *"Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cub and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."*)

The cause of worry is seeking the things of this world. The cure for worry is to seek the things of God!

One who is pre-occupied with God's interests will have his physical needs met.

If you take care of God's business, He will take care of yours!

Live for that which you can take into heaven with you. John 6:27 - *"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."*

"All these things (food, water, and clothing) will be added unto you" -

Note: This promise does not apply to everyone! If it did, no one would ever die of starvation. Rather, this promise is for God's children, for those who have God as their "Father: (v. 26) through faith in Christ.

God feeds His kids - Ps. 37:25 - *"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seek the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."*

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

2. ***T*he BIBLE ahead of our daily food**
(Matthew 4:4)

Note Christ's response to Satan's test:

1) He did not ignore the temptation (took positive action to overcome it).

2) He did not defend Himself. He could have said, "Satan, this feat is no problem for me, but I refuse to obey you."

3) He did not reason with Satan.

Note Christ's Weapon: The Word of God

1) This shows the Bible's authority.

2) This shows the Bible's continuing relevancy.
The verse was originally stated some 1,400 years ago, yet still was useful.

3) This shows the Bible`s varied applicability.
Was originally given to Israel, and now is used against Satan.

4) This shows the Bible's suitability - to handle needs of all occasions.

5) This shows the Bible's inspiration - "God-breathed" (II Tim. 3:16); "every word" (v. 4)
NOTE: Though Christ's words while on earth had equal authority with the written Word--He appealed to the written Word!
How much more should we?

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

3. **<u>EVANGELISM</u> ahead of <u>entertainment</u>**

(Matthew 4:19)

V. 19 - "Follow Me" = lit. "come after Me!" come along behind Me, keep up in step with Me and let Me lead you.

Before anyone can be a Godly fisher of men, they must be a follower of Jesus.

If fishing for men is the result of following Jesus, what does this say about Christians who are not fishing for men? ANSWER: They are not following Jesus.

"I will make you" - how did Jesus "make" them such fishers of men?

1. By His example (Jn. 4; Mt. 9:9-13)
2. By His command (2 by 2; Mk. 16:15; Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8)
3. By His enablement (Jn. 15:7-8, 16)

"Fishers of men" -

1. Our "lake" is the world (Jn. 3:16; Mk. 16:15)
   (SW Florida is our part of the lake)

2. Our "net" is the Gospel (I Cor. 1:17-18, 2:1-5)
   (the simple gospel, not eloquent rhetoric)

3. Our "fish" are lost sinners (Rom. 3:23)

Note: Fishing for men is the only type of fishing where you catch them dead and bring them home alive! (Eph. 2:1ff) (whereas, fishing for fish you catch them alive and bring them home dead).

Why did Jesus refer to evangelism as "fishing"?

1) Because evangelism like "fishing" requires patience

2) Because evangelism like "fishing" demands work and discipline
   (NOTE: their type of fishing was not like sitting out on a lawn chair on a lake with a rod and a can of soda on a Saturday afternoon. It was rigorous work to pull in the nets, sort the fish, mend their nets, row their boat, battle the elements and stay up late at night [most fishing was done at night, since their nets were visible cotton, not synthetic line]).

3) Because evangelism like "fishing" requires perseverance
   (Going from place to place, many times covering the same area over and over again)

4) Because evangelism like "fishing" requires dependance upon God
   (only those which God directs into your net, do you catch!)

The greatest long-term, remaining, enduring benefit that we can be to humanity is to fish for them and bring them to Jesus.

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

4. **PEOPLE ahead of things**
(Matthew 19:14; compare 19:19)

Jesus loves little children (v.13-15)

- Jesus is not too busy so as to ignore children (v.13) *He has time for them!*
- Jesus invites little children to Himself (v.14a) *He welcomes them!*
- Little children can obtain God's kingdom (v.14b) *He saves them!*

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

5. **INNER SPIRITUALITY ahead of external appearance**
(Matthew 23:25-28; compare I Peter 3:3-4)

V. 25
For practical purposes, what matters more - the cleanliness of the outside of the cup or dish, or the inside?

"Extortion" - greed and robbery (stealing)
"Excess" - no self-control; self-indulgence; no power to control one's appetites and desires

When we allow God to clean our insides (our filthy hearts), the outside will take care of itself.

--People are transformed from the inside out.
--Our preaching at VBC is not a legalistic blasting of external failures and faulty dress and hair standards, but by God's grace we deal with the heart of the problem.

V. 26
D.L. Moody: "If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of itself" (cited by Wiersbe, p. 85).

V. 27
"Whited sepulchres" - Graves or burial tombs that have been white-washed.

Many focus on sanitizing the extremities of our lives (that which people can see), but fail to deal with the rotten bones and impurities hidden deep in our lives.

We need to clean out the inner caverns of our lives; we need to do some house-cleaning (not dusting off the surface, but ridding ourselves of the garbage and clutter).

V. 28
Things are not always what they "seem" to be.
Don't major on appearance.
Spend more time being what you should be than hiding what you are!

If we knew that this was our Last Year on Earth we would prioritize:

6. **<u>PRAYER</u> ahead of <u>sleep</u>**

(Matthew 26:40)

V. 40

"Asleep" - Due to the intense pressures of the hour, the disciples gave in to the suggestion of the devil to sleep their problems away rather than pray their problems away.

V. 41

"Watch and pray" - stay awake and alert so as to pray.

"That ye enter not into temptation" - daily prayer is the only secret to overcoming the strong solicitations to evil that will come our way.

"Deliver us from evil" needs to be our daily prayer (Mt. 6:13).

Note: Proud self-confidence will always result in prayerlessness.

There is a time for sleep and there is a time for prayer. This was no time for sleep. The biggest trial Peter would ever face was minutes away!

"The spirit" - a believer's inner regenerated spirit, which is the aspect of man (which separates him from the animal realm) which alone is eager ("willing") to commune with God.

"The flesh is weak" - Our bodies and old nature succumb and seek to gratify the impulses of the carnal body.

This war of "spirit versus flesh" is a real one (Gal. 5:17) which can only be won by the spirit if you daily feed the spirit and allow the Holy Spirit to control you.

Whenever the Spirit prods you to do something, do it. This is the secret to the Spirit-filled life.

At the end of life's race, I want to be able to say with Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" - 2 Timothy 4:7

God does not inform us as to when we are going to die, so that we might live by faith and yield to Him without any ulterior motives.

The tragedy of a wasted life:
John Greenleaf Whittier wrote the well-known lines, "For all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: It might have been!" (MacArthur, Matthew p. 96)

Whatever you need to BE, BECOME it NOW!
Philippians 3:13-14
Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Whatever you need to DO, ACCOMPLISH it NOW!
Ephesians 5:15-16
See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Whoever you need to REACH for Christ, TELL them NOW!
1Co 9:16 - For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

"Brethren, see poor sinners round you slumbering on the brink of woe;
Death is coming, hell is moving, can you bear to let them go?
See our fathers and our mothers, and our children sinking down;
Brethren, pray and holy manna will be showered all around."
Brethren, We Have Met To Worship (Holy Manna)
Words: George Atkins, 1819.