

Important Bible Study Commentary by John MacArthur

Matt 7:13-23

The Narrow Way

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

You Will Know Them by Their Fruits

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

I Never Knew You

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ *Matt 7:13-23*

7:13-29 This closing section of the Sermon on the Mount is a gospel application. Here are two gates, two ways, two destinations, and two groups of people (vv. 13,14); two kinds of trees and two kinds of fruit (vv. 17-20); two groups at the judgment (vv. 21-23); and two kinds of builders, building on two kinds of foundations (vv. 24-28). Christ is drawing the line as clearly as possible between the way that leads to destruction and the way which leads to life.

7:13,14 Both the narrow gate and the wide gate are assumed to provide the entrance to God’s kingdom. Two ways are offered to people. The narrow gate is by faith, only through Christ, constricted and precise. It represents true salvation in God’s way that leads to life eternal. The wide gate includes all religions of works and self-righteousness, with no single way (cf. Acts 4:12), but it leads to hell, not heaven.

7:14 difficult is the way. Christ continually emphasized the difficulty of following Him (10:38; 16:24,25; John 15:18,19;16:1-3; cf. Acts 14:22) Salvation is by grace alone, but it is not easy. It calls for knowledge edge of the truth, repentance, submission to Christ as Lord, and a willingness to obey His will and Word. See notes on 19:16-28.

7:15 false prophets. These deceive not by disguising themselves as sheep, but by impersonating true shepherds. They promote the wide gate and the wide way. **sheep’s clothing.** This may refer to the woolen attire that was the characteristic garb of a shepherd.

7:16 You will know them by their fruits. See note on 3:8. False doctrine cannot restrain the flesh, so false prophets manifest wickedness. Cf. 2 Pet. 2:12-22.

7:21 Not everyone who says...but he who does. The barrenness of this sort of faith demonstrates its real character (cf.v. 20)—the faith that says but does not do is really unbelief. Jesus was not suggesting that works are meritorious for salvation, but that true faith will not fail to produce the fruit of good works. This is precisely the point of James 1:22-25; 2:26.

7:22 have we not prophesied... cast out demons... and done many wonders. Note that far from being totally devoid of works of any kind, these people were claiming to have done some remarkable signs and wonders. In fact, their whole confidence was in these works—further proof that these works, spectacular as they might have appeared, could not have been authentic. No one so bereft of genuine faith could possibly produce true good works. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit (v.18).

7:23 lawlessness. All sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4), i.e., rebellion against the law of God (cf. 13:41).

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Matt 24:9-13

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” *Matt 24:9-13*

24:10 many will be offended. Lit. “caused to stumble”—suggesting professing believers who fall away—and even turn against “one another” in shocking acts of spiritual treachery. Those who fall away in such a manner give evidence that they never were true believers at all (*see note on v. 13*).

24:13 endures to the end... be saved. Cf. 10:22. The ones who persevere are the same ones who are saved—not the ones whose love grows cold (v. 12). This does not suggest that our perseverance secures our salvation. Scripture everywhere teaches precisely the opposite. God as part of His saving work, secures our perseverance. True believers “are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation” (1 Pet. 1:5).

The guarantee of our perseverance is built into the New Covenant promise. God says: “I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me” (Jer. 32:40). Those who do fall away from Christ give conclusive proof that they were never truly believers to begin with (1 John 2:19). To say that God secures our perseverance is not to say that we are passive in the process, however. He keeps us “through faith” (1 Pet. 1:5)—our faith. Scripture sometimes calls us to hold fast to our faith” (Heb. 10:23; Rev. 3:11) or warns us against falling away (Heb. 10:26-29). Such admonitions do not negate the many promises that true believers will persevere (John 10:28,29; Rom. 8:38,39; 1 Cor. 1:8,9; Phil. 1:6). Rather, the warnings and pleas are among the means God uses to secure our perseverance in the faith. Notice that the warnings and the promises often appear side by side. For example, when Jude urges believers, “keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 21), he immediately points them to God, “who is able to keep you from stumbling” (Jude 24).

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Matthew 25:37-46

“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to *You*?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’

“Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to *You*?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” *Matt 25:37-46*

25:46 everlasting punishment... eternal life. The same Gr word is used in both instances. The punishment of the wicked is as never-ending as the bliss of the righteous. The wicked are not given a second chance, nor are they annihilated. The punishment of the wicked dead is described throughout Scripture as “everlasting fire” (v.41); “unquenchable fire” (3:12); “shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2); a place where “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44-49); a place of “torments” and “flame” (Luke 16:23,24); “everlasting destruction” (2 Thess. 1:9); a place of torment with “fire and brimstone” where “the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever” (Rev. 14:10,11); and a “lake of fire and brimstone” where the wicked are “tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). Here Jesus indicates that the punishment itself is everlasting—not merely the smoke and flames. The wicked are forever subject to the fury and the wrath of God. They consciously suffer shame and contempt and the assaults of an accusing conscience—along with the fiery wrath of an offended deity—for all of eternity. Even hell will acknowledge the perfect justice of God (Ps. 76:10); those who are there will know that their punishment is just and that they alone are to blame (cf. Deut. 32:3-5).

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Romans 1:18-3:20

1:18-3:20 After introducing the righteousness which comes from God (1:17), a theme he develops at length (3:21-5:21), Paul presents the overwhelming evidence of man's sinfulness, underscoring how desperately he needs this righteousness that only God can provide. He presents God's case against the irreligious, immoral pagan (1:18-32; the Gentiles) the religious, outwardly moral person (2:1-3:8; the Jews); and concludes by showing that all men alike deserve God's judgment (3:9-20).

1:18 wrath of God. This is not an impulsive outburst of anger aimed capriciously at people whom God does not like. It is the settled, determined response of a righteous God against sin (cf. Pss. 2:5, 12; Rom. 9:22; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:5,6). **is revealed.** More accurately, "is constantly revealed." The word essentially means "to uncover, make visible, or make known." God reveals His wrath in two ways: 1) indirectly, through the natural consequences of violating His universal moral law, and 2) directly through His personal intervention (the OT record— from the sentence passed on Adam and Eve to the worldwide flood, from the fire and brimstone that leveled Sodom to the Babylonian captivity— clearly displays this kind of intervention). The most graphic revelation of God's holy wrath and hatred against sin was when He poured out divine judgment on His Son on the cross. God has various kinds of wrath: 1) eternal wrath, which is hell; 2) eschatological wrath, which is the final Day of the Lord; 3) cataclysmic wrath like the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; 4) consequential wrath, which is the principle of sowing and reaping; and 5) the wrath of abandonment, which is removing restraint and letting people go to their sins (for examples of this wrath, see Ps. 81:11,12; Prov. 1:23-31; see note on Hos. 4:17). Here, it is that fifth form, God's abandoning the wicked continually through history to pursue their sin and its consequences (vv. 24-32). **ungodliness.** This indicates a lack of reverence for, devotion to, and worship of the true God— a defective relationship with Him (cf. Jude 14,15). **unrighteousness.** This refers to the result of ungodliness: a lack of conformity in thought, word, and deed to the character and law of God (see note on 1:17). **suppress the truth.** Although, the evidence from conscience (1:19-2:14), creation (1:20), and God's Word is irrefutable, men choose to resist and oppose God's truth by holding fast to their sin (cf. Ps. 14:1; John 3:19,20).

1:19 is manifest in them. God has sovereignty planted evidence of His existence in the very nature of man by reason and moral law (1:20,21,28,32;2:15).

1:20 invisible attributes. This refers specifically to the two mentioned in this verse. **by the things that are made.** The creation delivers a clear, unmistakable message about God's person (cf. Pss. 19:1-8; 94:9; Acts 14:15-17; 17:23-28). **His eternal power.** The Creator, who made all that we see around us and constantly sustains it, must be a being of awesome power. **Godhead.** That is, His divine nature, particularly His faithfulness (Gen. 8:21,22), kindness, and graciousness (Acts 14:17). **they are without excuse.** God holds all men responsible for their refusal to acknowledge what He has shown them of Himself in His creation. Even those who have never had an opportunity to hear the gospel have received a clear witness about the existence and character of God— and have suppressed it. If a person will respond to the revelation he has, even if it is solely natural revelation, God will provide some means for that person to hear the gospel (cf. Acts 8:26-39; 10:1-48; 17:27).

1:21 knew God. Man is conscious of God's existence, power, and divine nature through general revelation (vv. 19,20). **they did not glorify Him.** Man's chief end is to glorify God (Lev. 10:3; 1 Chr. 16:24-29; Ps. 148; Rom. 15:5,6), and Scripture constantly demands it (Ps. 29:1,2; 1 Cor. 10:31; Rev. 4:11). To glorify Him is to honor Him, to acknowledge His attributes, and to praise Him for His perfections (cf. Ex. 34:5-7). It is to recognize His glory and extol Him for it. Failing to give Him glory is man's greatest affront to his Creator (Acts 12:22,23). **nor were thankful.** They refused to acknowledge that every good thing they enjoyed came from God (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:15-17; 1 Tim. 6:17; James 1:17). futile. Man's search for meaning and

purpose will produce only vain, meaningless conclusions. **hearts were darkened.** When man rejects the truth, the darkness of spiritual falsehood replaces it (cf. John 3:19,20).

1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools. Man rationalizes his sin and proves his utter foolishness by devising and believing his own philosophies about God, the universe, and himself (cf. Pss. 14:1;53:1).

Romans

1:23 changed the glory...into an image. They substitute the worship of idols for the worship of the true God.

1:24-32 This section describes the downward spiral of the wrath of abandonment (see note on v.18) in the life of man when God abandons him. Paul shows the essence (vv. 24,25), the expression (vv. 26,27), and the extent (vv. 28-32) of man's sinfulness.

1:24 God also gave them up. This is a judicial term in Gr., used for handing over a prisoner to his sentence. When men consistently abandon God, He will abandon them (cf. Judg. 10:13; 2 Chr. 15:2; 24:20; Ps. 81:11,12; Hos. 4:17; Matt. 15:14; Act 7:38-42; 14:16). He accomplishes this 1) indirectly and immediately, by removing His restraint and allowing their sin to run its inevitable course, and 2) directly and eventually, by specific acts of divine judgment and punishment. **uncleanness.** A general term often used of decaying matter, like the contents of a grace. It speaks here of sexual immorality (2 Cor. 12:21; cf. Gal. 5:19-23; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:7), which begins in the heart and moves to the shame of the body.

1:25 the lie. A denial of God's existence and His right to be obeyed and glorified (vv. 19-21; Is. 44:20; Jer. 13:25; cf. John 8:44).

1:26 God gave them up. See notes on vv. 18,24. vile passions. Identified in vv. 26,27 as homosexuality, a sin roundly condemned in Scripture (Gen. 19; Lev. 18:22; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; cf. Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5; 1 Tim. 1:9,10; Jude 7). **women.** Rather than the normal Gr. term for women, this is a general word for female. Paul mentions women first to show the extent of debauchery under the wrath of abandonment, because in most cultures women are the last to be affected by moral collapse.

1:27 receiving in themselves the penalty. Here the law of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:7,8) takes effect, as Paul refers to the self-destructive nature of this sin, of which AIDS is one frightening evidence.

1:28 God gave them over. See notes on 1:18,24. **debased.** This translates a Gr. word that means "not passing the test." It was often used to describe useless, worthless metals, discarded because they contained too much impurity. God has tested man's minds and found them worthless and useless (cf. Jer. 6:30).

1:32 knowing. Not ignorance, but blatant rebellion (see note on 2:15).

2:1-16 Having demonstrated the sinfulness of the immoral pagan (1:18-32), Paul presents his case against the religious moralist— Jew or Gentile— by cataloging 6 principles that govern God's judgment: 1) knowledge (v.1); 2) truth (vv. 2,3); 3) guilt (vv. 4,5); 4) deeds (vv.6-10); 5) impartiality (vv. 11-15); and 6) motive (v.16).

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Romans 3:21-26

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. *Romans 3:21-26*

3:22,23 there is no difference... glory of God. A parenthetical comment explaining that God can bestow His righteousness on all who believe, Jew or Gentile, because all men—without distinction—fail miserably to live up to the divine standard.

3:23 all have sinned. Paul has already made this case (1:18-3:20).

3:24 justified. This verb, and related words from the same Gr. root (e.g., justification), occur some 30 times in Romans and are concentrated in 2:13-5:1. This legal or forensic term comes from the Gr. word for “righteous” and means “to declare righteous.” This verdict includes: pardon from the guilt and penalty of sin, and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer’s account, which provides for the positive righteousness man needs to be accepted by God. God declares a sinner righteous solely on the basis of the merits of Christ’s righteousness. God imputed a believer’s sin to Christ’s account in His sacrificial death (Is. 53:4,5; 1 Pet. 2:24), and He imputes Christ’s perfect obedience to God’s law to Christians (cf. 5:19; 1 Cor. 1:30; *see notes on 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9*). The sinner receives this gift of God’s grace by faith alone (3:22,25; *see notes on 4:1-25*). Sanctification, the work of God by which He makes righteous those whom He has already justified, is distinct from justification but without exception, always follows it (8:30). **freely by His grace.** Justification is a gracious gift God extends to the repentant, believing sinner, wholly apart from human merit of work (*see note on 1:5*). **redemption.** The imagery behind this Gr. word comes from the ancient slave market. It meant paying the necessary ransom to obtain the prisoner or slave’s release. The only adequate payment to redeem sinners from sin’s slavery and its deserved punishment [**Hell**] was “in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:6; 1 Pet 1:18,19), and was paid to God to satisfy His justice.

3:25 whom God set forth. This great sacrifice was not accomplished in secret, but God publicly displayed His Son on Calvary for all to see. **propitiation.** Crucial to the significance of Christ’s sacrifice, this word carries the idea of appeasement or satisfaction—in this case Christ’s violent death satisfied the offended holiness and wrath of God against those for whom Christ died (Is. 53:11; Col. 2:11-14). The Heb. equivalent of this word was used to describe the mercy seat—the cover to the ark of the covenant—where the High-Priest sprinkled the blood of the slaughtered animal on the Day of Atonement to make atonement for the sins of the people. In pagan religions, it is the worshiper not the god who is responsible to appease the wrath of the offended deity. But in reality, man is incapable of satisfying God’s justice apart from Christ, except by spending eternity in hell. Cf. 1 John 2:2.

3:26 to demonstrate... His righteousness. Through the incarnation, sinless life, and substitutionary death of Christ. **just and the justifier.** The wisdom of God’s plan allowed Him to punish Jesus in the place of sinners and thereby justify those who are guilty without compromising His justice.

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1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

6:9,10 This catalog of sins, though not exhaustive, represents the major types of moral sin that characterize the unsaved.

6:9 not inherit the kingdom. The kingdom is the spiritual sphere of salvation where God rules over all who belong to Him by faith (*see notes on Matt. 5:3,10*). All believers are in that spiritual kingdom, yet are waiting to enter into the full inheritance of it in the age to come. People who are characterized by these iniquities are not saved (v.10). *See notes on 1 John 3:9,10*. While believers can and do commit these sins, they do not characterize them as an unbroken life pattern. When they do, it demonstrates that the person is not in God's kingdom. True believers who do sin, resent that sin and seek to gain the victory over it (cf. Rom. 7:14-25). **fornicators.** All who indulge in sexual immorality, but particularly unmarried persons. **idolaters.** Those who worship any false god or follow any false religious system. **adulterers.** Married persons who indulge in sexual acts outside their marriage. **homosexuals...sodomites.** These terms refer to those who exchange and corrupt normal male-female sexual roles and relations. Transvestism, sex changes, and other gender perversions are included (cf. Gen. 1:27; Deut. 22:5). Sodomites are so-called because the sin of male-male sex dominated the city of Sodom (Gen. 18:20; 19:4,5). This sinful perversion is condemned always, in any form, by Scripture (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26,27; 1 Tim. 1:10).

6:10 thieves...covetous. Both are guilty of the same basic sin of greed. Those who are covetous desire what belongs to others; thieves actually take it. **revilers.** People who try to destroy others with words. **extortioners.** Swindlers and embezzlers who steal indirectly, taking unfair advantage of others for their own financial gain.

6:11 some of you. Though not all Christians have been guilty of all those particular sins, every Christian is equally an ex-sinner, since Christ came to save sinners (cf. Matt. 9:13; Rom. 5:20). Some who used to have those patterns of sinful life were falling into those old sins again, and needed reminding that if they went all the way back to live as they used to, they were not going to inherit eternal salvation, because it would indicate that they never were saved (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). **washed.** Refers to new life, through spiritual cleansing and regeneration (cf. John 3:3-8; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph 2:10; Titus 3:5). **sanctified.** This results in new behavior, which a transformed life always produces. Sin's total domination is broken and replaced by a new pattern of obedience and holiness. Through not perfection, this is a new direction (see Rom. 6:17, 18,22). **justified.** This refers to a new standing before God, in which the Christian is clothed in Christ's righteousness. In His death, the believer's sins were put to His account and He suffered for them, so that His righteousness might be put to an account, so that we might be blessed for it (Rom. 3:26, 4:22-25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8,9; 1 Pet. 3:18). **by the Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is the agent of salvation's transformation (cf. John 3:3-5).

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2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

5:17 in Christ. These two words comprise a brief but most profound statement of the inexhaustible significance of the believer's redemption, which includes the following: 1) the believer's security in Christ, who bore in His body God's judgment against sin; 2) the believer's acceptance in Him with whom God alone is well pleased; 3) the believer's future assurance in Him who is the resurrection to eternal life and the sole guarantor of the believer's inheritance in heaven; and 4) the believer's participation in the divine nature of Christ, the everlasting Word (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4). **new creation.** This describes something that is created at a qualitatively new level of excellence. It refers to regeneration or the new birth (cf. John 3:3; Eph. 2:1-3; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 5:4). This expression encompasses the Christian's forgiveness of sins paid for in Christ's substitutionary death (cf. Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:24). **old things have passed away.** After a person is regenerate, old value systems, priorities, beliefs, loves, and plans are gone. Evil and sin are still present, but the believer sees them in a new perspective (*see note on v. 16*), and they no longer control him. **all things...new.** The Gr. grammar indicates that this newness is a continuing condition of fact. The believer's new spiritual perception of everything is a constant reality for him, and he now lives for eternity, not temporal things. James identifies this transformation as the faith that produces works (*see notes on Eph. 2:10; James 2:14-26*).

The Death Penalty

Crime	Scripture Reference
1. Premeditated Murder	Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21:12-14,22,23
2. Kidnapping	Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7
3. Striking or Cursing Parents	Exodus 21:15; Lev 20:9; Proverbs 20:20; Matt 15:4; Mark 7:10
4. Magic and Divination	Exodus 22:18
5. Bestiality	Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 20:15,16
6. Sacrificing to False Gods	Exodus 22:20
7. Profaning the Sabbath	Exodus 35:2; Numbers 15:32-36
8. Offering Human Sacrifice	Leviticus 20:2
9. Adultery	Exodus 20:10-21; Deuteronomy 22:22
10. Incest	Leviticus 24:11-14,16,23
11. Homosexuality	Leviticus 13:1-10
12. Blasphemy	Leviticus 24:11-14,16,23
13. False Prophecy	Deuteronomy 13:1-10
14. Incurable Rebelliousness	Deuteronomy 17:12; 21:18-21
15. Fornication	Deuteronomy 22:20,21
16. Rape of Betrothed Virgin	Deuteronomy 22:23-27

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1 Thessalonians 4:14-18

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. *1 Thess. 4:14-18*

4:17 caught up. After the dead come forth, their spirits, already with the Lord (2 Cor. 5-8; Phil. 1:23), are now being joined to resurrected new bodies (*see notes on 1 Cor. 15:35-50*); the living Christians will be raptured, lit. snatched away (cf. John 10:28; Acts 8:39). This passage along with John 14:1-3 and 1 Cor. 15:51,52, forms the biblical basis for "the Rapture" of the church. The time of the Rapture cannot be conclusively determined from this passage alone. However, when other texts such as Rev. 3:10 and John 14:3 are consulted and compared to the texts about Christ's coming in judgment (Matt. 13:34-50; 24:29-44; Rev. 19:11-21) at the end of a 7 year tribulation, it has to be noted that there is a clear difference between the character of the "Rapture" in that there is no mention of any judgment, while the other texts feature judgment. So then, it is best to understand that the Rapture occurs at a time different from the coming of Christ in judgment. Thus, the Rapture has been described as pretribulational (before the wrath of God unfolded in the judgments of Rev. 6-19). This event includes complete transformation (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20,21) and union with the Lord Jesus Christ that never ends.

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1 Thess. 5:2-5:3

5:2 day of the Lord. There are 19 indisputable uses of “the Day of the Lord” in the OT and 4 in the NT (cf. Acts 2:20; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). The OT prophets used “Day of the Lord” to describe near historical judgments (see Is. 13:6-22; Ezek. 30:2-19; Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph. 1:14-18) or far eschatological divine judgments (see Joel 2:30-32; 3:14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:1,5). Six times it is referred to as the “day of doom” and 4 times “day of vengeance.” The NT calls it a day of “wrath,” day of “visitation,” and the “great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14). These are terrifying judgments from God (cf. Joel 2:30,31; 2 Thess. 1:7-10) for the overwhelming sinfulness of the world. The future “Day of the Lord” which unleashes God’s wrath, falls into two parts: 1) the end of the 7 year tribulation period (cf. Rev. 19:11-21), and 2) the end of the Millennium. These two are actually 1,000 years apart and Peter refers to the end of 1,000 year period in connection with the final “day of the Lord” (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 20:7-15). Here, Paul refers to that aspect of the “Day of the Lord” which concludes the tribulation period. **a thief in the night.** This phrase is never used to refer to the rapture of the church. It is used of Christ’s coming in judgment on the Day of the Lord at the end of the 7 year tribulation which is distinct from the rapture of the church (see *note on 4:15*) and it is used of the judgment which concludes the Millennium (2 Pet. 3:10). As a thief comes unexpectedly and without warning, so will the Day of the Lord come in both its final phases.

5:3 “Peace and safety!” Just a false prophets of old fraudulently forecast a bright future, in spite of the imminence of God’s judgment (Jer. 6:14; 8:11; 14:13,14; Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 13:10,16; Mic. 3:5), so they will again in future days just before the final Day of the Lord destruction. **labor pains.** The Lord used this same illustration in the Olivet Discourse (see *note on Matt. 24:8*). It portrays the inevitability, suddenness, inescapable nature, and painfulness of the Day of the Lord.

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1 Peter 1:4-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. *1 Peter 1:3-5*

1:5 Kept by the power of God. Supreme power, omniscience, omnipotence and sovereignty, not only keep the inheritance (v. 4) but also keep the believer secure. No one can steal the Christian's treasure, and no one can disqualify him from receiving it. (*see notes on Rom. 8:31-39*). **through faith.** The Christian's response to God's election and the Spirit's conviction is faith, but even faith is empowered by God. (*See note on Eph. 2:8*). Moreover, the Christians continued faith in God is the evidence of God's keeping power. At the time of salvation, God energizes faith, and continues to preserve it. Saving faith is permanent; it never dies. (*See notes on Matt. 24:13, Heb. 3:14*).

Important Bible Study Commentary by John MacArthur

2 Peter 2:20-22

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." *2 Pet. 2:20-22*

2:20 escaped the pollutions of the world. "Pollutions" has the idea of putrid or poisonous vapors. Morally, the world gives off a deadly influence. Peter notes that at some point in time, these false teachers and their followers wanted to escape the moral contamination of the world system and sought religion, even Jesus Christ (on their terms, not His). But these false teachers had never genuinely been converted to Christ. They heard the true gospel and moved toward it, but then rejected the Christ of that gospel. That is apostasy, like the people of Heb. 10:26-27. Their last end is far worse than the first.

2:21 to turn from the holy commandment. Lit., "to turn back." This verse describes the perversion and defection of the false teachers. They professed the Christian experience (the way of righteousness; cf. Matt 21:32) and even had access to the true teachings of Scripture. But by their lives they demonstrated that they ultimately had chosen to reject Christ (cf. Heb. 10:26-31). Such false teachers as Peter was describing were not made outside Christianity. They are always bred in the church, half in and half out; but eventually they reject the truth and try to seduce others in their attempt to fulfill their self-gratification.

Important Bible Study Commentary by Pastor Jim

Hebrews 10:26-31

10:26-31 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

10:38-39 Now the just shall live by faith:
But if anyone draws back,
My soul has no pleasure in him."
But we are not of those who draw back to perdition [sin], but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

If we sin willfully

Two possibilities exist with this passage:

- 1) Some theologians believe this statement refers to saved person who falls into sin and loses salvation
- 2) Some theologians believe this statement refers to person who thinks they are saved, but in fact, are not saved and then falls into sin. (I personally believe in this 2nd category).

Note: The result is the same whether you believe category 1 or 2 exists. If we sin willfully (fall into sin intentionally and presumptuously without repentance) we are not saved and → Hell.

It actually does not matter whether you believe category 1 or 2 is real. What matters is the Bible simply says what it says.

If we sin willfully: we → Hell. That's all you have to know.

If we sin willfully

- after we have received the knowledge of the truth
- certain fearful expectation of judgment
- fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries
- worse punishment
- trampled, the Son of God underfoot
- counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing
- insulted the Spirit of Grace
- Vengeance is Mine, I will repay
- The LORD will judge His people, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God
- if anyone draws back
My soul has no pleasure in him
draws back to perdition

Knowing the truth and obedience are two different things. You can know right from wrong and still choose to do wrong (sin). Knowing the truth about Jesus and knowing who Jesus is does not make you a believer and follower of the Christ. Even Satan and his demons know the truth and who Jesus is, but they have decided not to follow Jesus. They do not receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

If you sin willfully after you have received knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. Jesus only paid for the sins of a believer. He did not pay for the nonbeliever's sins. To say another way: There is no sacrifice for the nonbeliever's sins.

that through this Man [Jesus] is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things [all sins].
Acts 13:38-39

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission [forgiveness] of sins. *Matt 26:27-28*

Remission of sins for many but not all.

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one [believer] who has faith in Jesus. *Romans 3:21-26*

Redemption = The substitution atonement for sin by Jesus on the Cross. The believer's sins are paid for and forgiven by God. There is reconciliation with God and the believer is redeemed and he goes to heaven. The nonbeliever's sins are not paid for and are not forgiven by God. There is no reconciliation with God and the nonbeliever is not redeemed and he goes to Hell. In fact, the nonbeliever is punished in Hell and the Lake of Fire eternally for his sins and the nonbeliever pays for his sin (each and every sin) eternally with eternal torment.

The sacrifice of Jesus for sins does not apply to the person who sins willfully because this person is a nonbeliever.

Believer is forgiven of sin and → Heaven.
Nonbeliever is not forgiven of sin and → Hell.

If we sin willfully... certain fearful expectation of judgment [Great White Throne Judgment], and fiery indignation [Hell and Lake of Fire] which will devour the adversaries [God enemies].

Sin willfully → Certain judgment and fiery indignation. i.e. Sin willfully → Person going to Hell.

Sin willfully = Nonbeliever → Hell = Sins not paid for = No sacrifice for nonbeliever's sins. To reemphasize, the person who sins willfully is a nonbeliever by definition because he goes to Hell in the Hebrews 10:26-31 passage. Also, please note the obvious as the passage continues, only a nonbeliever would:

- 1) Trample the Son of God underfoot
- 2) Count the blood of the covenant, a common thing (i.e. view the blood of Jesus on the Cross as "no big deal")
- 3) Insult the Holy Spirit of Grace
- 4) Fall into judgment and vengeance by the living God.

Law	Jesus	Sin
↑ law follower (legalist) e.g. Pharisee	↑ Jesus follower Believer follows Jesus Jesus rules Christian <u>Believer repents from sin</u> Sanctification Believer sins less over time See change in believer's lifestyle Repentance Forgiven Goes to Heaven	↑ Sin follower Nonbeliever follows sin Sin rules Nonbeliever <u>Nonbeliever sins willfully</u> No sanctification Nonbeliever sins as much or more over time No change in nonbeliever's lifestyle No repentance Not forgiven Goes to Hell