

THE LOWER LIGHTS

Alan Jones, Editor
(734) 942-7956



"Brightly beams our Father's mercy
from the lighthouse evermore;
But to us He gives the keeping
of the lights along the shore."

Published monthly by the church of Christ, 35900 Palmer Road, P.O. Box 86-233, Westland, MI 48186

Volume 1

April, 2002

No 10

DEADLINE: APRIL 15TH

I don't have to explain the title of this article. This deadline is all too fresh in everyone's mind. As usual, the main post offices extended their collection hours until midnight for the many tax filers who waited until the last minute to submit their returns. The 11 o'clock news, as they do every year, showed a steady stream of cars at the post office.

Why do you suppose the Internal Revenue Service sets a deadline for tax filing? If they didn't, how many tax returns would still not be filed come April 16th? The IRS understands what we all do, that men are procrastinators. Deadlines have to be set as motivators to action. If deadlines were not set, when would customers pay their bills? When would students prepare their term papers? When would invited guests R.S.V.P.?

God created man, so He knows Him well. He gives man the spiritual motivator of a deadline. Jesus said, "We must work the works of Him that sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work." (Jn 9:4). Yes, death is a certain as taxes. What is will happen then? Judgment. "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes the judgment." (Heb 9:27)

Sam Walton, founder of Walmart, was one of the richest men who ever lived. Yet, he died. Money couldn't stop him from keeping this appointment (cp. Ps 49:6-12). David prayed, "Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the extent of my days, let me know how transient I am" (Ps 39:4). Moses prayed that since life is short (70-80 years), God might teach man to live wisely (Ps 90:10,12).

Those who go through life sometimes denying death, at other times fearing it, live a most miserable and purposeless existence. Those who accept God's deadline and prepare for judgment find what the whole (purpose) of man is, to fear God and keep His commandments. Therefore, they are able to find happiness in a world that is otherwise vain (Eccl 12:13-14; read the whole book!)

God has set another deadline and it is possible that it, rather than death, might end our life on earth. Jesus is coming and when He does "the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" (2 Pet 3:10). When Jesus brings this world to an end, judgment will occur. Those who haven't obeyed His gospel will be eternally separated from Him and His glory. At the same time, His saints will glorify Him, as they begin an eternity of marveling in His presence (2 Thess 1:7-10; Mt 25:31-46).

How can we be so certain of this deadline? The same *word* God spoke to create the world and destroy it with a flood is the *word* which He has spoken concerning the world's destruction by fire and the destruction of the ungodly men (2 Pet 3:1-7). Also, the *resurrection of Jesus*, which is backed by abundant evidence, is God's "guarantee" that His Son will be the world's Judge (Acts 17:31).

You face a deadline as certain as April 15th. Either your death or the coming of Jesus will end your activity on earth and bring you to judgment.

THE DEADLINE IS REAL; THE TIME OF IT IS UNKNOWN

The farmer had it all planned. He had raised a bumper crop. In fact the harvest was so great, his first priority was to build new barns to hold it all. Once the harvest was stored, he would just kick back, relax, and take it easy for many years. So he thought. He never built the barns. He died! Jesus illustrated by this parable, not only the folly of putting great stock in riches, but also the uncertainty of life (Lk 12:16-21). Life is not only limited, but no one knows how much time they have (Eccl 9:12).

Although generally we may expect to live 70-80 years, this may not be true of us individually. Who has not known personally of the death of a child? What are you doing about your relationship with God? Like the rich farmer, this night your soul could be required. Will you be left in the position of the man on a life insurance commercial who said to the angel taking him from the earth, "I always thought I would have more time!"? The uncertainty of life should cause our relationship with God to become a pressing matter, a priority. Who knows

when your deadline might come? Or mine? Surely God has designed it this way to keep us from following our natural tendency to procrastination.

The deadline of Jesus' coming is equally uncertain. What thief sends notice to the property owner of his planned break-in? What woman knows the moment when her labor pains will begin? Suddenly, with surprise, as a thief and as labor pains, Jesus will come to end the world and bring you and all men to judgment (1 Thess 5:1-3). We must live in a constant state of readiness (Mt 25:1-13)

Are you prepared for death? For Jesus' return? If the deadline of April 15th and the possibility of financial penalty is enough to motivate you to file your tax return, shouldn't God's unknown deadline and the penalty of suffering eternally far from His presence in hell cause you to do something **immediately** to prepare your soul for judgment?

We invite you to hear sermons preached by

Larry Curry of West Lafayette, IN

which will help you to prepare for your deadline:

Sunday, April 28th @ 10 AM

Monday- Friday, April 29th – May 3rd @ 7:30 PM

We continue to offer Bible study to you in your home, by mail, or on-line @

www.prchurchofchrist.org

