

Chapter 4

How to Escape Early

God established powerful incentives for us to take action now! For example, authority is given only after it is earned. Following years of college study, teachers are placed in authority over students. After excelling as a leader, an executive is placed in authority over a corporation.

In the following parable, Jesus promised positions of authority in his kingdom for believers who wisely handle responsibly. Jesus gave this analogy, *Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.* (see Luke 12:42-44)

Jesus also offered an incentive that matters during this Age. Please again read the promise Jesus made to Philadelphia church members: *Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.* (Revelation 3:10) Jesus promised to protect the Philadelphia church *from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world*. The only hour of trial that impacts the *whole world* is the end-times. By making this promise to a narrowly defined group, Jesus is stating that not all believers will escape tribulation—but only those who *endure trials patiently*.

Jesus later explained what life would be like for the believers who miss the early Philadelphia rapture. In the following story, the person left-behind is described as a *servant*—a person with a covenant relationship with the *master*.

The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:50-51)

This is not a depiction of God-rejecting or unbelieving people being left behind. Complacent believers—*servants* of God—will also be left behind, and assigned *a place with the hypocrites*.

Pray

Prayer is the key; believers are instructed to request deliverance. Jesus said concerning the end-times that believers should be *always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen*. (see Luke 21:36)

Pray that you will not face persecution and nuclear holocausts—but instead be safely raptured to heaven.

Keep Watch

To KEEP WATCH—is to LIVE A LIFE OF EXPECTATION! We must expect Jesus to return at any minute—and not focus on the world’s agenda. Jesus bluntly warned us to *keep watch* for his return.

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 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. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

(Matthew 24:42-44)

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

(Matthew 25:13)

Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch.

(Mark 13:33-37)

It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.

(Luke 12:37-38)

Jesus' command to *keep watch* for his return to earth can only benefit believers. It would not benefit a person who rejects Jesus to keep watch for his return. God-rejecting people are not ready for Jesus' return, simply because they do not have a restored relationship with God. Those rejecting Christ could never be raptured—they are incapable of effectively keeping watch. The unsaved are busy with their lives; they are busy with a lifestyle that ignores God, and the salvation that he offers.

Believers are to live with our hearts not weighted down by anxieties or the cares of this world. Jesus advised us to *be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth.* (Luke 21:34-35) Preoccupation with worry is incompatible with the expectant life needed to keep watch.

Astute Living

Jesus taught three parables that tell us how to take advantage of the Philadelphia rapture escape opportunity.

- Christians are to be like the *faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of (other) servants ... to give them their food at the proper time.* (Matthew 24:45) This parable refers to the Christian servant, whom God has placed in a leadership position. The leader is to nurture, and not abuse, the people he manages. Leaders must treat subordinates with respect—and all believers with brotherly love.
- Christians are to be like the five *virgins* (brides) who were ready to greet the *bridegroom*. (Matthew 25:1-2) Of the ten brides, five were ready, but the other five were caught by surprise. It is interesting to note—that Jesus called all ten women *virgins*—which indicates a proper covenant relationship with the *bridegroom*. If five of the women were not in a covenant relationship—and not ultimately belonging to God—then scripture would have used a different word. There could easily have been five virgins and five prostitutes in this story. (see Revelation 17:1-6)
- Christians are to be applying whatever resources God has entrusted to them. When a master gives a servant a talent—his expectation is that servant will apply it. (Matthew 25:14-30) Again, Jesus still refers to the person who failed as a *servant*, —which again indicates a covenant relationship with their master. Lazy servants will suffer consequences. Jesus does not give permission to passively wait, as if stuck in a rocking chair, for his return.

Instruction	Parable
<p>Use your talents for God's kingdom</p> <p>Do you make full use of your abilities and resources?</p> <p>Do you invest time in God's work?</p>	<p><i>Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. ... Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'</i> His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! ...' (Matthew 25:14-26)</p>
<p>Do not beat up fellow servants of God - but instead, care for them.</p> <p>Physical abuse is less common —than to beat up emotionally.</p> <p>How do you treat your spouse, children, and/or siblings?</p> <p>How do you treat co-workers and those you supervise?</p>	<p><i>So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.</i> (Matthew 24:44-51)</p>
<p>Keep oil for your lamps.</p> <p>Oil symbolizes - Holy Spirit - Endurance</p>	<p><i>At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps.</i> (see Matthew 25:1-13)</p>

Stand Firm

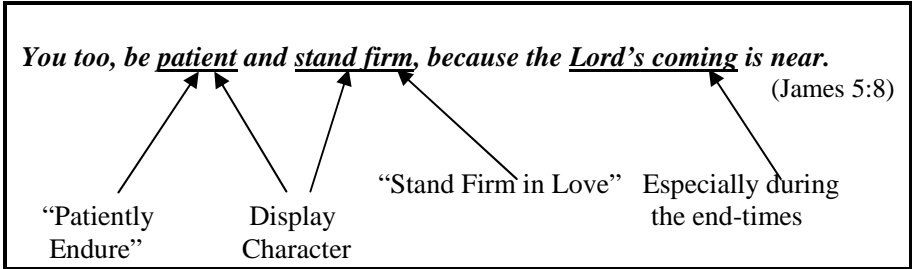
When end-time events begin on earth, panic will take hold. It will be every man, woman, and child for him or herself. As a result, most Christians will show a callous disregard for others. Treating other believers in a callous manner is the complete opposite of what Christ taught. When the pressure was on, Jesus laid down his life. He expects us to follow that example—to demonstrate patience, maturity, and love to the end.

Jesus taught that *most* believers would fail the test of brotherly love (translates: “philadelphia”) by not obeying his *command to endure patiently* the stress encountered. Describing this failure just prior to the early Philadelphia rapture Jesus said, *At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.* (Matthew 24:10-13)

Being severely tested—most believers will panic. This panic comes from being unprepared, from being more concerned with wealth and comfort than spiritual issues. Because of widespread panic—*the love of most believers will grow cold* and self-centered. Only those *who stands firm to the end* in brotherly love *will be saved*. Jesus repeated this concept again and again. *All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved*. (Matthew 10:22; Mark 13:13)

God saves Philadelphia members from end-time discipline—from what is to occur on earth. In these above verses, the salvation referred to by the word “saved” does not so much refer to persons spared from the fires of hell, but spared from remaining on earth to experience nuclear fire. When persecution is worst, anyone who *stands firm to the end will be saved*—from the fires of hell—and from nuclear fires.

Is any of this interpretation unique? No! This was also the understanding of James—the leader of the first century Jerusalem church. James spoke about the second coming—using phrases such as “stand firm.”



God also will also discipline believers who display apathy concerning covenant relationships. The Old Testament concludes with God foretelling that Elijah would prepare the way for the Messiah's coming. The relationship between fathers and children is referenced within the last two verses of the Old Testament.

“See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.” (Malachi 4:5-6)

Eliminate Complacency

Ephesus and Laodicea were complacent churches. Jesus warned the Ephesians, *I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.* (see Revelation 2:4) In a similar manner, Jesus warned Laodicea believers: *You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.* (Revelation 3:17)

Paul warned us to avoid people who claim to be believers—but are complacent in exercising faith. Paul described these people during the *last days ... as having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.* (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

God ended the complacent Ephesus church period with severe persecution—with the Smyrna church period. During the Smyrna persecution, martyrs died by the millions under the Roman Empire. Laodicea church members will undergo a similar consequence for complacency. After missing the early rapture, its members will suffer under Antichrist.