

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Imagine that creation to Jesus' return is like one lap around a HUGE racetrack:

Starting line: Creation

First turn: Fall and promise

Second turn: Worldwide flood

Third turn: OT Messianic reminders

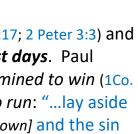
Fourth turn: Jesus'B-L-D-R-A

Home stretch: God's call to repent and believe

Finish line: Jesus' return

We are on the home stretch. Peter (Acts 2:17; 2 Peter 3:3) and James (5:3) called the **home stretch** the last days. Paul viewed his life as a race, and he was determined to win (1Co. 9:24). In **Hebrews 12:1**, we are told *how to run*: "...lay aside every encumbrance [everything weighing us down] and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." Some Biblical advice:

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- Baptize and Teach: Jesus said to His disciples: Matthew 28:19-20 "Go... and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you...."
 - a. Why baptize and teach? The HS works through baptizing and teaching to ▶make and ▶grow disciples!
 - b. How are YOU growing as a disciple? (Learning, Living)
 - c. <u>How are YOU helping others be disciples</u>? (Sharing, Talking, Studying, Calling to Repent)
- 2. Keep Assembling Together: The Bible says:
 - a. Hebrews 10:23 "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful..." // As Bible-believing Christians, we are <u>sure</u> of ₱who Jesus is, ₱what He has done, and ₱the gift of eternal life, so, NO MATTER WHAT, we are holding fast! If YOU are not, I strongly encourage you to REPENT!
- 3. Store Up Heavenly Treasure: James 5:3 "Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! // Since we are on the home stretch, this is NOT the time to

store up earthly treasure. For those who do, that treasure will testify against them – revealing the fact that they chose THIS WORLD over GOD'S KINGDOM!

- 4. Repentance for Forgiveness: Jesus said to His disciples: "'...it is written, that the Christ would <u>suffer</u> and <u>rise again</u> <u>from the dead</u> the third day, and that **repentance for forgiveness of sins** would be proclaimed in His name to all
 - a. Jesus **suffered** (GF) *completing His work*, then He **was** raised (ES) *the victorious champion!*
 - b. Now, on the home stretch, let us tell who He is and what He did; then let us call unbelievers to repent!

5. Don't Shrink Back: SUPER-STRONG WARNINGS:

the nations..." (Luke 24:45-47).

- a. Hebrews 10:26-27 "...if we go on sinning willfully [persistently doing what we know is wrong] after receiving the knowledge of the truth [about who Jesus is and what He has done for our salvation], there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE [ENEMIES OF GOD].
- b. Hebrews 10:28-31 [Do NOT be deceived:] Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy [without hope for pardon] on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God [by rejecting His GREAT sacrifice], and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant [that is, the blood of Jesus] by which he was sanctified [made holy in God's sight], and has insulted the Spirit of grace [by

rejecting His work of conversion]? For we know [God] who said, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.' And again, 'THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.' It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God...." // All who reject WILL experience terror! And many are unaware that they are running toward God's wrath!

C. Hebrews 10:37-39 "...IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, [JESUS] WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE [each one who is repentant] SHALL LIVE BY FAITH [*being sorry, *confessing Christ, *assembling together, and *calling others to repent and believe]; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK [by going his own way], MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM [that is, such people do not meet God's approval]. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul."

Conclusion:

- Truth We are living during the home stretch of history!
- Relevance Everyone will dwell somewhere in eternity!
- Inspiration We all deserved hell, but, through repentance, the way to heaven is open!

Let Us Pray: Dear Jesus, as great evil is now overcoming the world and pulling many souls into hell, enable us to ▶keep confessing You in word and deed, ▶keep assembling together to receive God's gifts, ▶keep growing up in the Bible, and ▶keep calling others to repent – before it is too late!

Website: www.blc7500.com (our short URL); YouTube-watch: Benefit from the Bible Facebook: Bethlehem Lutheran Church Parma; Podcast-listen: Benefit from the Bible

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