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# **Eleven Fifty-Nine and Holding**

**# 991-A**

**Series: Let God Be God**

**dtm** DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.  
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# Eleven Fifty-Nine and Holding

## I- ELEVEN FIFTY-NINE AND HOLDING

Wake up! There's an alarm going off! An alarm so loud, even those of us who don't hear very well ought to hear it. That usually means it's time to get up and at least, look at the clock. Look at it. Do you see the time? The clock of history that is literally ringing off the wall says 11:59 and holding!. Do you realize what that means?

It means the timepiece of eternity stands poised on the threshold of the most conclusive, the most cataclysmic event since creation; greater than the flood that engulfed Noah's world; greater than the judgement that rained on Sodom and Gomorrah; greater than the destruction of Jerusalem; greater than all the world wars in the history of man combined.

The God who made it all is about to enter history one final time to judge the nations, to set up His Kingdom, and to begin His rule. The pages of history, already written 2,000 years in advance, are about to become reality.

Clouds of the obvious loom on the horizon of this battered earth, awaiting one final word from the Commander of Heaven, and the warnings He gave us of His imminent return ought to send shockwaves into the hearts of God's people:

Wars and rumors of wars abound at every hand  
Earthquakes and famines in unbelievable places  
False messiahs claiming to be Christ in the flesh again  
A falling away from the integrity of the Word...

God said, "when these things come to pass, look up, your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21:28) And nigh it is.

Meanwhile, as prophesied, our world is sinking into a sea of moral and spiritual quicksand settling so fast it cannot see itself disappearing.

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Immorality is now the norm.  
Perversion is now the acceptable.  
Pornography is no longer even noticed.

Moral standards are collapsing so fast, even the church no longer attempts to rebuild the battered bridges that once led man back to reality.

And just where, pray tell, is God's army in the midst of such a turmoil? Are we poised for the battle? Are we excited about the urgency of the hour? Are we shouting "Onward Christian Soldiers, marching as to war"? Are we singing in the trenches "We're marching to Zion!" Or as the Master warned us, is it business as usual? He said, "As it was in the days of Noah", so shall it be just before the alarm goes off. We will be taken up in eating and drinking and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

Is not that a portrait of our day? Unbelievably, with all its Scriptural warnings, the church of our generation lies huddled in disbelief at the severity of the storm. It is so preoccupied with chasing after shadows, it has all but overlooked the fact that we stand on the threshold of forever, and the clock of eternity is proclaiming loud and clear... "Eleven fifty-nine and holding".

We are approaching the dawning of another new year. In a few days, the miracle of beginning again will be ours once again at the hands of a gracious God. The year behind us will fall helplessly into the history books written in indelible ink, never to be altered, nothing to be added. What lies behind, we cannot change. But the days before us, yea the years before us (should the Lord so tarry), hold for the Church of Jesus Christ the most promising, the most powerful, the most prophetic days in the history of man. And you and I, by God's grace, have been called to be participants. We ought to be excited. And we ought to be in awe.

So it is, then, that we take this one day as we stand on the shoreline of another new beginning, to examine

...who we are

...where we are

...and why we are where we are in history.

Our lesson is entitled: Eleven Fifty-Nine and Holding.

Our outline:

I- Eleven Fifty-Nine and Holding

## Eleven Fifty-Nine and Holding

II- Destined for Destruction

III- Destined for Glory

IV- Destined to Choose

### DESTINED FOR DESTRUCTION

You and I are living on a veritable powder keg. We are living in a world *destined for destruction*. This world order as we know it, is a terminal case. No last-minute prescriptions and no warmed over remedies from generations past will save it. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 102:

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands.

They shall perish, but thou shalt endure:

(Psalm 102:25,26a)

The Holy Spirit described it like this in Isaiah 24:

The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly.

The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.

(Isaiah 24:19,20)

In Matthew 24, Jesus described a coming time in history in great detail.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Heaven and earth shall pass away,

(Matthew 24:29,31,35a)

Peter graphically paints this picture in II Peter 3:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be...

(II Peter 3:10,11)

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Somehow the church has lost that message. It is not a message of doom, it is a message of exhortation. It is not, for the Christian, reason to weep; it is reason to rejoice. But it is reason to think, and in thinking, to reestablish the kinds of priorities Jesus established for His disciples 2,000 years ago. For we are 2,000 years closer to that day...and the signs in the heavens God graciously painted for our admonition are virtually all in place, signalling the beginning of the end, which for the Christian is the beginning of life as it was meant to be.

This may seem like a strange message with which to begin a new year. But, Beloved, *this may be the year*. You and I may well be on our way to work one day, when suddenly in the distance, the sound of a trumpet rings through the eastern sky. There is thunder in the heavens like the voice of God. A great light envelops us; a rushing sound surrounds us; and in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, we are gathered up into the arms of Jesus. Beloved, that's what I Thessalonians 4:13-18 says will happen. Beloved, that's what I Corinthians 15:50-58 describes. And either this Book is true, or you and I are playing make-believe, coming to church and quoting this Book as the Word of God. If it is true, every syllable is true; and if every syllable is true, then you and I are on the brink of the greatest day in history; and the grains of sand in the hourglass of eternity are so few in number, even the most spiritually-discerning eye cannot count them.

What it literally means is that you and I have only one reason to live and only one thing to live for. That reason is eternity, and that one thing is to do the will of God. All else is make-believe. All else is a mirage. We must labor diligently at our jobs. We were commanded to. We must care tenderly for our families. We were instructed to. We must go about our day-to-day lives with diligence, wisdom, and faithfulness. It is our calling. We have not been called to go sit on a hill somewhere and wait for the trumpet. We have been called to labor in the valleys and the vineyards and the marketplace until He comes. So this is not a message of retreat. We are to labor as unto the Lord, wherever we are. But our *motives* for laboring, and our priorities in laboring ought to all be decided by one fact. *It's eleven fifty-nine and holding, and this world as we know it is destined for destruction...and soon.* Therefore, if we are laboring to lay up treasures here, we are fools. Therefore, if our thoughts are focused on acceptance here, we are fools. Therefore, regardless of what we say with our lips, if

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our lives demonstrate that our priorities are set on what we can achieve or receive or accumulate on this earth, we are fools. And using this criteria, the Body of Christ in the world today includes a lot of us fools.

We sit on the “amen” rows of the Christian community like cheerleaders at a football game when we’re in church; but then we leave the stadium and go back into the highways of day-to-day existence and what we have heard we dismiss as not totally practical, and we little by little let the impact of what real discipleship is, fade into the recesses of our minds until it’s time to go back for another pep rally. But it’s not supposed to be a pep rally, and it’s not a game. It’s eleven fifty-nine and holding, and this earth as we know it is destined for destruction.

### DESTINED FOR GLORY

That’s exciting; it’s awesome. But there’s something more exciting and even more awesome. It’s the fact that not only is this world destined for destruction, we saints, we who name the Name of Jesus, are indestructible. We’re destined for Glory. That is what we’re living for! And yet, somehow, you can attend the average church in our generation month after month, year after year, and not hear enough about heaven to whet your appetite, let alone to stir your heart to realms of splendor. We talk a lot about being “relevant”, a lot about being “progressive”, a lot about being “edified”; but we don’t talk a lot about being “glorified”! And, Beloved, that’s our hope! That’s our joy! That’s our expectation! The writers of the Gospels and the Epistles were relevant; they were concerned about the real world, and they were vitally concerned with spiritual growth. But beneath it all, there beat hearts that beat to the cadence of glory; eyes that ever envisioned eternity; lips that sang again and again the praises of that coming day when pain and suffering and sin and sorrow would vanish into an ocean of love at the feet of the Living Holy God. My friend, that’s what the Gospel is all about.

Today’s Gospel seems to be a “this world theology”...get more; be more; do more here...and if there is a heaven (we seem to be saying), it ought to be even better. That’s not the Gospel Jesus preached. That’s not the Gospel Paul wrote about. Ours is a Gospel that clearly defines two worlds. The world in which we live, a world affected by the curse, infected by sin, and reflecting at every turn the character of the adversary, who uses its system

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to defy God and deny God's authority. The result is, that when a man or woman dons the uniform of the King, he accepts the fact that there's a war on, and that the rest of his or her life will be lived on this earth in the heat of the battle. But two things make it a joyful battle. 1) The King is inhabiting our spirits, so even through the storms we simply become, by letting Him be Himself, more and more like Him, more and more prepared to meet Him. And 2) The day is coming, yea, it is coming soon, when you and I will lay down our shields and our swords and celebrate the greatest victory celebration ever recorded. We are invited to a banquet feast inside the gates of heaven so grand, no words in the human language can describe it. We're going to sit down beside Moses and Abraham and Paul and Joseph and Mary and Martha and Rebekah and Ruth, and if you think Christian fellowship is exciting down here...you "ain't seen nuthin'" yet! Yes, there are conflicts down here. Yes, there are misunderstandings and hurts down here. Families in conflict, friendships in conflict, even churches in conflict. But the day is coming when conflict will be over because the source of all conflict will have been banished; and King Jesus will reign and sin will be gone. Don't you get just a little excited? You are destined for Glory! Any day now, you may be caught up together with the Master in the air and never leave His side again. Or any day now, death, a vicious enemy to the world, but a silent friend of the Christian, may steal into your life and take you from this world.

But, ah, Beloved, what it will be taking you to! Out of darkness, into light. Out of suffering, into joy. Out of trial, into triumph. Out of separation, into reunion. Out of death, into life. You will be leaving that which is contaminated, spoiled, decaying, polluted, and filled with strife and hostility, trading it for that which is totally pure, perfectly secure, the essence of absolute holiness and peace. If Jesus Christ is in your heart, all of the riches of the Kingdom await you the moment you leave this earth and enter eternity. You are destined for Glory! And if the signs of the times are what they appear to be, the time of waiting may not be long; it may not be long at all.

Now be honest. Do you get as excited about heaven as you do about a new house? Does the thought of spending eternity with Jesus captivate your heart morning, noon, and night? Or has it been months since you've even given heaven a second thought? Do you awaken every morning listening for the trumpet's sound?

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Does the thought of being caught up together with Jesus in the clouds send chills through your whole being? Are you as confident that Christ is coming again, as you are that He came the first time? Or in your heart of hearts have you relegated Christianity to a “here and now” kind of band-aid that makes living on planet earth more palatable until that which is inevitable comes? That kind of mentality is permeating the Christian world. So seldom do you hear songs about heaven, sermons about heaven, rejoicing about heaven. It’s time we awakened to the reality of eternity and got excited—really excited about the life to come. It’s eleven fifty-nine on God’s eternal clock, and you and I are destined for Glory. What a promise! What a future! What a God!

### DESTINED TO CHOOSE

So here we are at the threshold of a new year. None of us knows what it will hold. It is certain that, for some, deep sorrow waits in the wings. It is certain that for some, the curtain of January will open only to find onstage a trilogy of trials, testings, and temptations. For still others, new joys, new victories, and new blessings await. One thing is for certain. All of us stand at the door of a new beginning destined to choose, destined to choose whether or not our hearts will beat to the melody of heaven or to the off-key strains of the orchestra of the world. God has delightfully designed a series of new beginnings to keep us from getting lost in the endlessness of time. We now face another of those beginnings. We are destined to choose at the start of each year whether or not that year will see our perspective broaden, and our walk with God deepen, or not. We can choose to ignore the calendar and the clock, but the act of ignoring it is a decision in itself. God help us not to overlook the intensity of the hour.

So I am going to place the assignment in the body of this lesson, rather than placing it separately on the back page. In fact, the assignment is the lesson.

In simple terms, our assignment is as follows:

1- Stop before New Year’s Eve and look at the clock. Not the clock that registers hours and minutes. The clock of history. Do a study from the Scriptures and make a list of the things that God foretold *must happen* before midnight; before Jesus comes again. Then take a collection of news magazines, or go to the library, and study for yourself *strictly from an objective perspective*, just how accurately these prophecies are being fulfilled. Look at Israel.



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Look carefully. Look at the natural disasters that have shaken our world. Look carefully. Look at the international economic signs. Look carefully. Look at the alignment of the nations. Look carefully. Look at the moral climate of the free world. Look carefully. Look at the clock of eternity from the vantage point of the Word, and from the vantage point of the world, and see for yourself if God's timepiece in the heavens isn't about to sound its alarm. I know, "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years". It may not happen immediately. But we are told to observe "when these things shall come to pass" ...so observe.

2- Assuming you agree that the hour could be near, purpose to live this coming year as though you had a telegram from God telling you this is the year. That's right. Pretend you got a telegram or a phone call or a newspaper, "The Eternal Express," from God, and the headline read, "RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS TO TAKE PLACE THIS YEAR; NEW DAY DAWNING FOR THE CHURCH". Now this is serious business. Imagine that God has personally contacted you and guaranteed you that the year that stands in front of you will be your last. Either God is coming for the church, or God is taking you home; but in either case, this will be the last New Year you will celebrate on planet earth. Now, just how will that certain knowledge affect the way we live? Here are at least *three ways it ought to affect us.*

1) It ought to affect the holiness of our lives. Somehow we feel that there is always time to repent. Somehow we feel that this matter of grace means that we are free to sin and enjoy it, so long as we clean up our act in time for the great finale. Some of us have held on to besetting sins for so long we'll be-setting there enjoying them when Jesus comes and will never have experienced the sheer joy of the victorious life He died to give us. Just as "He who called us is holy, so he has called us to be holy, in everything we do" (I Peter 1:15,16). We are to be "set apart ones", with purified hearts and lives that reflect that purity. And if it's eleven fifty-nine and holding, it just doesn't make sense for us not to "lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets us, and run with patience, the race that is set before us." The things in our lives that always cause our minds to stumble must be set aside, no matter the personal cost. Jesus is coming soon, and we are going to spend eternity surrounded by His Holiness. Some of us won't know how to act, because we never acted to clean up our act. If this is to be the year of His return, there is no

more time to lose.

2) It simply must affect our evangelism. If you are like I am, every time you attend a funeral, you go home convicted that life really is an eternal issue, and that heaven and hell really are a reality. “So,” you surmise, “I can no longer walk by, work by, and worship by, men and women or boys and girls without being sure that they at least understand the difference between being saved and lost”. There will be no gray area in heaven. No compartments for “almost-saved” Christians. No hotels for the “nearly-born again ones”. There will be no rooming houses on the edge of town for those who lived exemplary lives without Christ. Every soul who has ever lived will either be “in Christ”, and thus in heaven, or “outside of Christ”, and thus will spend eternity in hell.

Now I know this is not a pleasant thought for many, and it is repugnant to the natural mind. But it is a Biblical absolute. Either it is true, or God is not true. Therefore, everyone you meet, everyone you work with, everyone in your family is either regenerated or not, depending on whether or not they have put their trust in Jesus Christ. Somehow, we think there will always be time to tell them. Oh, Beloved, they must be told in love, but they must be told. If the trumpet blows, the Holy Spirit warns us in Ezekiel, and they won’t listen, their blood is on their own hands. But if we see the enemy coming and blow not the trumpet, their blood is on our hands. “This may be the dawning of a brand new day”, as the songwriter so aptly put it, for Christians; but for the unbeliever, this may be the dawning of an eternity in hell. So if it’s eleven fifty-nine and holding, then you and I had better fall to our knees and ask God for the grace and the wisdom to do the work of an evangelist as the clock runs its course and the seconds tick away. It also means that we ought to give what we have until we have nothing to give to support those who are taking or sending the message of redemption to the four corners of the world. In this nation, you almost have to be blind, deaf, and quarantined to miss the Gospel. Not so in Eastern Europe. Not so in parts of South America. Not so in much of Africa. Not all of us can go, but all of us can give; therefore, all of us can send.

3) If the curtain of eternity is certain to rise on the final act of history this year, it ought to affect the time we spend with God in His Word and in prayer. You and I are going to spend eternity worshipping. You and I are going to spend eternity at the feet of our Savior, and some of us are going to feel painfully out of

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place. We're not going to know how to act, because we are going to be a bride married to a groom we've been too busy to be with. Since the day of our betrothal, He has made Himself available to us for fellowship 24 hours of every day, 365 days of every year. Never has He been unavailable. Never. The question is: how much of that time have we been available to be with Him? I know, there's so much to do. But, Beloved, when the dawn arises on the age of eternity, all those things we just had to do will seem so insignificant. Our minds won't be able to even grasp how a supposedly mature child of God could place them above learning to spend time with the One who was devoting that same period of time to arranging a wedding feast to celebrate with the saints of the ages, the finalization of their marriage. Can you imagine being engaged to someone and not having time to talk to them? Not having time to get to know them? If you are like I am, the shallowness of the excuses we have for not spending more time in God's Word and more time in God's presence, make them unacceptable to us, let alone to God. I know, I know, we're going to change all that...someday! Beloved, *someday is here*. This is the dawning of tomorrow. This is the beginning of forever. Now is the acceptable time. Today is the day of salvation. It's eleven fifty-nine and holding! The second hand on the clock of forever is sweeping away our excuses, one tick at a time.

A new year beckons. A new dawning. A new beginning. For the sake of maximizing that year from a spiritual perspective, let's assume that this is the year. Let's assume that before the pages of the calendars we are just unwrapping have been depleted, calendars will become obsolete. Let's assume that before the clock that is holding at eleven fifty-nine strikes its final sound, clocks will serve no purpose. Let's assume that there are not twelve more months before the harvest. It's not an unreasonable assumption. It is an exciting possibility, because...

It's eleven fifty-nine and holding  
The seconds are ticking away  
At any moment, a joyous shout  
May usher in that day.

At any moment, a trumpet's blast  
This world's import will sever  
And in the twinkling of an eye  
Will usher in forever!

Eleven Fifty-Nine and Holding

It's eleven fifty-nine and holding  
Any second, our Lord may appear  
It's eleven fifty-nine and holding,  
And *this might be the year.*

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