

MAKING THE
MOST OF THE REST
OF YOUR LIFE

JOHN CHAPMAN

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(St Matthias Press Ltd. ACN 067 558 365)

PO Box 225

Kingsford NSW 2032

Australia

Telephone: (02) 9663 1478; international: +61-2-9663-1478

Facsimile: (02) 9663 3265; international: +61-2-9663-3265

Email: info@matthiasmedia.com.au

Internet: www.matthiasmedia.com.au

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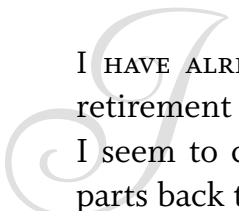
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DEDICATED TO
Margaret Orpwood and the late Michael Orpwood—
Christians, godly, hospitable friends.

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Introduction



I HAVE ALREADY HAD MY 76TH BIRTHDAY, and I live in a retirement village on the outskirts of Sydney. Each year I seem to collect another specialist. They put the ailing parts back together again.

Life in a retirement village has been a new experience for me. The paper man comes every morning at 4.30 am and the ambulance at 9.15 am. Sometimes it brings people home, but not always. Your mortality presses in.

You may think it strange that I am writing about making the most of the rest of our lives. Humanly speaking, I don't have all that much left. The average male in Australia lives for 79 years. That doesn't leave me much time.

On the other hand, if there is life *after* death, if eternity is really eternity and I have the greater bulk of my life to look forward to, then that makes all the difference.

If there is life after death, is it possible to make the most of it? Is it possible to prepare for that life, or is it totally a matter of chance? These are the questions I want to address in this short book.

Jesus once told a story about a man who made detailed preparations for this life but neglected to make plans for the life after this one. God's view of this man is less than favourable.

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:13-21)*

This man had lots of plans for this life but had totally neglected the life after this one. God labelled him a fool.

And he really is foolish. He makes three fundamental mistakes. Firstly, he mistakes himself for God. Did you notice how totally self-centred he is? “I will pull down the barns ... I will say to myself ...”. He is the centre of his life. God is excluded. We know this because he is said to be “not rich toward God”.

Secondly, he mistakes time for eternity. He thinks that he has “ample goods laid up for many years”, but he doesn’t have many years left. In fact, he doesn’t have any years left.

His third mistake is to think that life is about making money and having things. But what good are all his

*In case you are not familiar with Bible references, ‘Luke 12:13-21’ means the book of Luke, chapter 12, verses 13-21.

possessions in the new life for which he is totally ill-equipped?
Not to plan for the inevitable is really foolish.

Planning for a long-term future

There are certain events which we can be sure about. One is death. I know that it is difficult to come to terms with this idea. When I was 21, I thought I was immortal. This idea lingered for quite a while. My observation is that most people continue to think like this, even when all the evidence is to the contrary. But the fact of the matter is that we will all die.

Last year, I went to a reunion of Moore College alumni for the enrolling years of 1956-7. I was shaken by how ‘old’ we had all grown. I made the fatal mistake of asking people how they were. I was treated to ‘organ recital’ after ‘organ recital’. What surprised me was that everyone offered me a cure, even though it was very clear that none of the remedies were working!

The Bible has the view that all people will die, and that all people will survive the grave and live either *with* Christ or *without* him in eternity. I want to try and explore what real evidence we have for such a belief, if it is sustainable and, if so, how to prepare for that eternity.