

Sample Lesson

### Basics of Bible Prophecy

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## Oshkosh, WI 54904

#### **Lesson # 6 “Next! The Rapture and Rewards!”** **Key Verse: 1 Thess 4:13-18**

(1 Th 4:13-18) But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. {14} For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. {15} For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. {16} For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: {17} Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. {18} Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The purpose of this lesson is to give the student an overview of the rapture and heavenly rewards from a Biblical perspective. The information in this lesson is taken largely from the book by Paul Benware titled “*Understanding End Time Prophecies.*” Serious students would greatly benefit from a thorough study of that volume.

The rapture is the next exciting event on God’s agenda! No signs have to be fulfilled before Jesus comes! The Bible clearly teaches that His return is imminent, that is to say, it could occur at any moment! True believers in Jesus Christ will suddenly be caught up into the air by the power of Christ and will meet Him in the air. Even though the word “rapture” does not appear in the Bible, it is used by Bible-believers to describe the events referred to in the text of 1 Thessalonians 4 and elsewhere.

1. **The Lord’s return – one event in two parts. (See chart on the top of page 7)**
   1. The Lord’s return will be in two parts: His return in the clouds for the saints (rapture); and His return to this earth to set up His kingdom (Second Advent). There is at least a seven-year interim period between those two events. During this time the tribulation will take place on the earth and the judgement seat of Christ and the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place in heaven. Read 2 Thessalonians 2 in this context.
      1. **(Titus 2:13) Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;**
         1. The “blessed hope” is that Jesus Christ will return for us in the clouds just as He promised. There are no signs that must be fulfilled for this to take place.
         2. The “glorious appearing” is when Jesus Christ is revealed at His Second Advent to the earth. Many signs are listed in the Bible that must be fulfilled before this happens.
   2. This lesson focuses on the rapture event and things connected with it. We will deal with the tribulation times and the return of Jesus Christ to the earth in lesson #7.
   3. There is an overview of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in 2 Thessalonians 2. It is one of the clearest passages
2. **The conditions of the last days.**
   1. The Bible often refers to the “last days” or uses similar terms. Sometimes that is a reference to the entire period of time from the time of Christ until the great white throne judgement (Heb 1:1-2). Sometimes it refers to the tribulation or kingdom period (Isa 2). Other times it refers to the closing of the Church Age. We will not attempt to sort all of that out here. What I want to establish is merely this point: conditions will be such at the time of the rapture that we will be awfully glad to see Him come for us!
      1. **(2 Tim 3:12-13) Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. {13} But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.**
      2. **(1 Tim 4:1) Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;**
      3. **(2 Tim 3:1) This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.**

###### Christians and tribulation

* + 1. Christians in this age are told to expect persecution and trials. God allows these for a variety of reasons including: His Glory; to strengthen our faith; to be an example to others.
       1. **(John 16:33) These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.**
       2. **(1 Pet 4:12-14) Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: {13} But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. {14} If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.**
       3. **(2 Tim 3:11-13) Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. {12} Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. {13} But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.**

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* + 1. Throughout the church age there has always been persecution, especially during the Dark Ages. Thankfully, the last century has been relatively peaceful, especially in America. It is difficult for Christians in America today to envision real persecution, (especially bloodshed and martyrdom), but it currently is happening in small pockets all around the globe. As the Lord’s return draws nearer, and times get more troublesome, this persecution will definitely increase. The day of relative calm will draw to a close. We will need to encourage and support one another in the last days!
       1. **(Heb 10:25) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.**
    2. Because of the Scriptures prophesying persecution upon believers in the last days, some have been convinced that Christians will have to endure some (or all) of the tribulation period (lesson # 7 in this series). This leads them to the conclusion that the rapture will not take place until the middle (mid-tribulation rapture position) or near the end of the tribulation (post-tribulation rapture position). Having studied books and articles presenting both sides of this argument, it is this author’s position that believers during this church age will be taken out before the tribulation begins (the pre-tribulation rapture position).
       1. Among some “mid” and “post” tribulationists there is a mentality that there must surely be a purging of the believers in these last days to make them “fit” for heaven. They reason that since the world (including many apostate believers and churches), have been so carnal in these last days, God will make them endure some of the tribulation before they enter heaven. While we admittedly are altogether too worldly, and while we certainly do NOT DESERVE a free pass to heaven, we ARE safely in Christ and we are assured “where sin abounded, grace abounded more.” Jesus Christ justifies us in the sight of God, and **as His children we have a “blessed hope”- NOT a “constant dread!”** Just as any bride anticipates her wedding day, we look forward to being with our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ! Any theology that diminishes that hope must be viewed with great skepticism!

**(Heb 6:18-19) That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: {19} Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;**

**(Heb 10:34-37) For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. {35} Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. {36} For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. {37} For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.**

1. **The return of the Lord is promised to those who look for Him.**
   1. When the disciple’s hearts were troubled when Jesus told them He was leaving, he comforted them with the promise that He would return for them. This is the first clear mention of His return.
      1. **(John 14:1-3) Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. {2} In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. {3} And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also**.
         1. Jesus left physically and He would return physically

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* + - 1. He would come Himself, and not send an angel
         1. **(Acts 1:9,11) And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight…(11) Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.**
      2. He would come for His followers, not for everyone in general
         1. **(Heb 9:28) So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.**

1. **The believer’s great hope is the rapture.**
   1. True believers in Jesus Christ have much to be thankful for! Among the blessings we have is the confidence that the present conditions are only temporary! This age will eventually end, Jesus Christ will return, our bodies will be changed, we will have victory over sin, we will be rewarded for service, and we will enjoy the eternal presence of the Lord! This sure hope is meant to strengthen us as we pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. We are to be LOOKING for and WAITING for His return.
      1. **(Phil 3:20) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ**:

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* + 1. **(1 Cor 1:7) So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:**
    2. **(Rev 22:20) He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**

1. **The rapture will be announced.**
   1. There will be three sounds and all have significance: a shout, a voice, and a trump.
      1. **(1 Th 4:16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:**
2. **The participants in the rapture** 
   1. According to 1 Corinthians 15:51, all believers from Pentecost to the end of this age will be included. This includes the living and the dead. This reinforces what Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4.
      1. **(1 Cor 15:51-52) Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, {52} In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.**
      2. **(1 Th 4:16-17) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: {17} Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.**
3. **The results of the rapture.**
   1. The church age will be completed; once again demonstrating that God is working out His eternal purposes.
   2. The Holy Spirit, who indwells believers, will be taken out of the world. That restraining force against sin will be gone.
   3. Jesus’ promise that He would return for His own will be fulfilled.
      1. **(John 14:3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.**
   4. Our salvation will be complete. Until then, we still groan inside corruptible bodies.
      1. **(Rom 8:23) And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.**
   5. We will be re-united with those believers who have preceded us in death.
   6. We will be given new, glorified bodies, not subject to sin. (AMEN!!)
      1. **(Philippians 3:21) Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.**
      2. **(1 John 3:2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.**
      3. **(1 Cor 15:52-53) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. {53} For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.**
   7. We will know, even as we are known. We will have spiritual understanding!
      1. **(1 Cor 13:12) For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.**

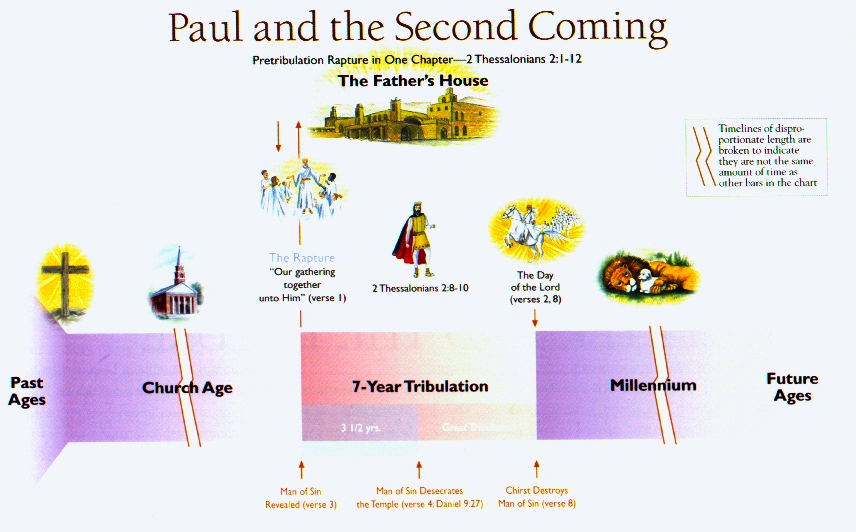
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1. **Rewards after the rapture**
   1. All born-again Christians of the church age will be taken to heaven to be with the Lord “where He is.” This is a wonderful reward in itself!
      1. **(John 14:3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.**
      2. **(1 Th 4:17) Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.**
   2. When believers are taken to heaven, they will face the judgement seat of Christ. Their eternal destiny is already assured, but they will be judged, according to their works, to determine their rewards. They will be rewarded, or suffer loss, according to what they did in this life.
      1. **(2 Cor 5:10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.**
      2. **(1 Cor 3:11-15) For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. {12} Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; {13} Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. {14} If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. {15} If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.**
   3. God promises some rewards to all that believe and serve Him. It is not wrong to work for eternal rewards – indeed, we are exhorted to do so!
      1. **(Mat 6:20) But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:**
   4. Many things are promised to all believers (overcomers). Some are listed here:
      1. **(1 John 5:4-5) For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. {5} Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?**
         1. **(Rev 2:7b) … To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.**
         2. **(Rev 2:17b… To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.**
         3. **(Rev 3:21) To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.**
   5. We will inherit all things as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ
      1. **(Col 3:24) Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.**
      2. **(Rom 8:16-17) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: {17} And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.**
      3. **(Titus 3:7) That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**
2. **The crowns we can earn**

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* 1. A Christian can earn crowns for a variety of things. Ultimately, it will be our joy to cast those crowns at the feet of Jesus Christ because He is worthy, just as the twenty four elders do in Revelation 4: See the chart on the bottom of page 7 in this lesson.
     1. **(Rev 4:10-11) The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, {11} Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.**
     2. The crowns referred to that a Christian can earn:
        1. The Incorruptible Crown – The Victor’s Crown 1 Cor 9:25
        2. The Crown of Life – Martyr’s Crown Revelation 2:10
        3. Crown of Glory – Elder’s Crown 1 Peter 5:2-4
        4. Crown of Righteousness – Those who love His appearing 2 Timothy 4:8
        5. Crown of Rejoicing – Soul Winner’s Crown 1 Thessalonians 2;19-20
           1. **(Dan 12:3) And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.**

1. **The marriage supper of the Lamb**
   1. Another important event that will take place in Heaven is the marriage supper of the Lamb. This wonderful event is spoken of in Revelation 19:7-9. It is the last event immediately preceding the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth at the Second Advent. . We will be wonderfully blessed to become Christ’s bride!!
      1. **(Rev 19:7-9) Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. {8} And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. {9} And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.**
   2. At this present time, the Bride of Christ is “espoused” or promised to Christ, as a chaste virgin. This is a wonderful truth concerning believers in this age.
      1. **(2 Cor 11:2) For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.**
   3. The Lord wants a pure bride, and we will not be fit to marry Him until after we have been purged at the Judgement Seat of Christ. That is why the marriage supper takes place AFTER that judgement.
      1. **(Eph 5:27) That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish**.
2. **Conclusions**
   1. The apostle Paul made taught plainly on the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We love Him and anxiously await His return! Come quickly Lord Jesus!
      1. **(1 Th 1:9-10) For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; {10} And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.**
      2. **(Titus 1:2) In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;**

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Charts on this page by Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice in “***Charting the End Times”***

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