

Essentials

A Bible study course for the essentials of the Christian faith

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Essential #4

Eschatology
A Biblical Study of the World's Destiny

Introduction

In this fourth study in the Essentials series we will take up the doctrine of Eschatology, the biblical study of future things. The word eschatology comes from two Greek words, ἔσχατος = *eschatos* meaning last or final and λόγος = *logos* meaning discourse.¹ When you put the two words together you have the study of the last things, literally the world's destiny is summed up in the biblical doctrine of Eschatology.

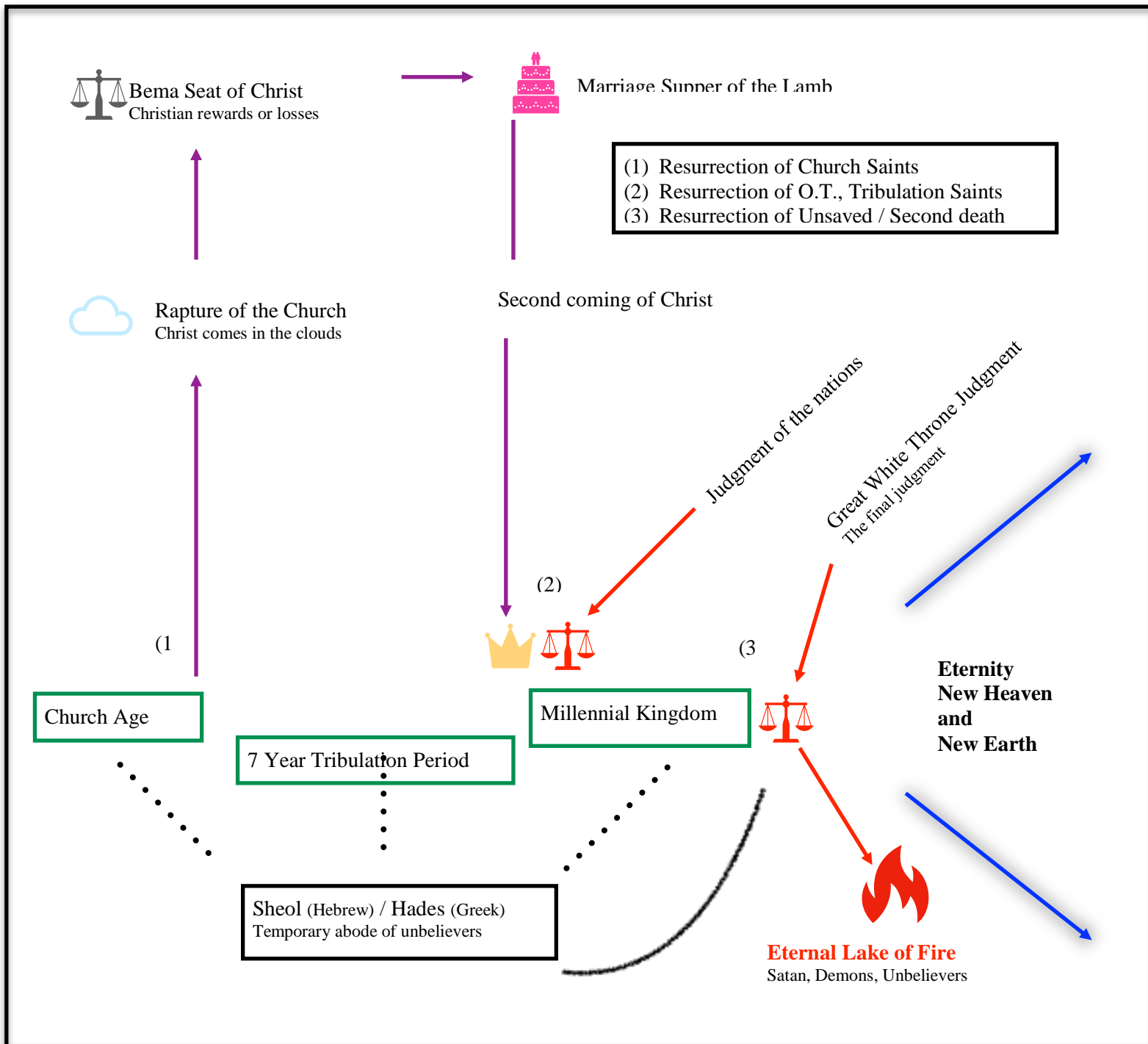
Eschatology brings together all the Bible passages that deal with God's program for the future of mankind. It does this mostly through prophetic passages that have not yet been fulfilled. The Bible is the sole source on earth that reveals with pinpoint accuracy what humanity's future entails. And although this information is available to the world through the Bible, the only people who are able to understand it are those who have been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:6-16). God reveals the future to His people for two express reasons: first, to motivate them to obey God, and second, to stimulate their hope in God (Deut. 29:29; Rom. 15:4; 1 Peter 1:3; John 15:14-15).

Man has always had a strong urge to know what the future holds. This is why men through the ages have turned to false prophets, astrologers, fortune tellers, palm readers, tarot cards, ouija boards, science fiction, etc. In the course of today's events both geopolitically and nationally the question of what the future holds for mankind is on many people's minds. Many people have a great sense of impending doom about mankind's future and sustainability on earth. Christians who are somewhat familiar with Bible prophecy are asking if we are in the last days or leading up to the last days. The point is simply this: we are living in very unstable times and people want to know what the future holds for them. Certainly from the standpoint of Bible prophecy, we are living in one of the most unique periods of human history. This is mostly due to today's technology which is clearly making the possibility of certain prophetic portions of Scripture very real for today. Until recent history the prophetic portions of Scripture dealing with the *end times* were especially difficult to understand. Throughout the centuries theologians sought to make sense of those passages from their point in history, but it was very difficult for them. Some even gave up and said that those portions of Scripture should be avoided. The great Reformer, John Calvin, wrote a commentary on every book of the Bible except the book of Revelation as he didn't know what to do with the fantastic things it contained. But today conditions have changed, and our ability to understand the Bible prophetically has increased just as God had foretold through the prophet Daniel, "*But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase*" (Daniel 12:4). Because of the era that we live in, we (Christians) are privileged to have a better view of the end times than all the previous generations before us. In a sense we have been given a ringside seat to God's future plans, which are described for us in the Bible.

I trust this survey of Bible prophecy will bless your life. As the apostle John was told in the opening of the book of Revelation, "*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near*" (Rev. 1:3). Yes, the time is near as we will learn in our study of Eschatology. And as such, I pray your efforts to understand God's program for the *End Times* will stimulate your obedience to Him and develop an enormous confidence in His future plans for mankind. We have no reason to fear the future and every reason to be ready for it if we know what God has said about it.

¹ The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church (3rd ed. rev., p. 563). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

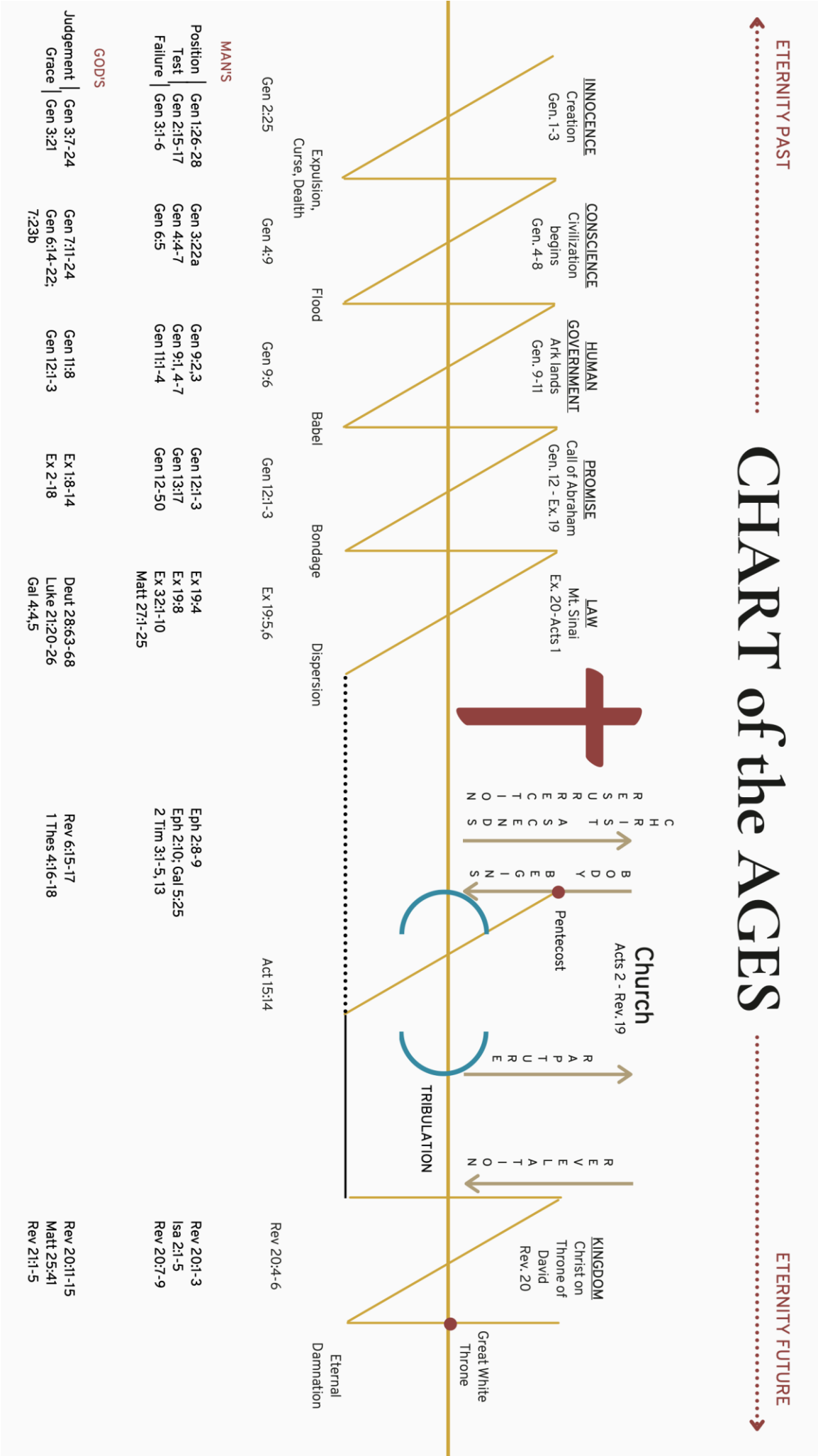
A Prophetic End Times Timeline



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Lesson 1

1. Biblical prophecy is _____ important to God

- a. Adding to or taking away from prophecy will bring the wrath of God (Deut.13:1-5; Rev. 22:18-19).
- b. One of the specific ministries of the Holy Spirit in the Church Age is revealing what the future holds (John 16:12-14).
- c. Jesus' express desire is that His servants would know what's coming and bless them by preparing them (Rev. 1:1-3).

If biblical prophecy is important to God how important should it be to those who belong to God? Many Christians have a "Pan" theology about what the Bible says about the future, "everything will pan-out in the end." If one considers the lengths that God has gone too to give us His Word throughout the ages and knowing the triune God's attitude toward biblical prophecy one would be very foolish to take an "everything will pan-out in the end" attitude toward biblical prophecy. There is no justifiable excuse to say that biblical prophecy is not important.

2. Reasons every Christian should study biblical prophecy

- a. **Prophecy is a part of Scripture and all Scripture is _____ by God** (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Bible prophecy is never guess work: it is the finished work of God yet to be unpacked.

- b. **It is the _____ of the Church to declare the whole counsel of God's Word** (Acts 20:27-32). One quarter of the books in the Bible can be classified as prophetic. This makes Bible prophecy an important theme of Scripture.
- c. **There is going to a _____ departure of sound doctrine in the last days** (1 Tim. 4:1-2).
- d. **The revealing and understanding of things to come is a _____ ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Church Age** (John 16:12-13). We live in a time where we have the ability to understand prophecy better than in any other dispensation.
- e. **Understanding biblical prophecy gives a believers faith _____ in an era of conflicting doctrine about the end times** (Daniel 10:10-20). When you understand rightly biblical prophecy, it gives your faith strength (Dan. 10:19).
- f. **Bible prophecy gives a believer _____ when grieving the death of a Christian loved one** (1 Thess. 4:13-18).
- g. **Bible prophecy builds a _____ faith in God.** Whenever we track the many fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament and see how God perfectly fulfilled them, it should build our faith in God to keep His word regarding the future things.

- h. **Bible prophecy builds a greater _____ to God** (2 Cor. 5:10). When a believer understands he or she is going to give an account for the life they were given in Christ, it ought to motivate them to ready themselves for that day.
- i. **Bible prophecy gives us an accurate _____ for this present dispensation** (2 Cor. 5:8). Our focus should be on eternity. We belong to another nation (1 Peter 2:9). We are citizens of heaven and ambassadors from Christ (Philip. 3:20; 2 Cor. 5:20). We are destined for the throne of God (Eph. 2:6; Rev. 4-5). As Christians, our responsibility is not to make this world a better place to live in, our job is to be a witness of Jesus Christ and make disciples to build His Church (Matt. 26:19-20; 16:18). This world is passing away, so why would a Christian make a huge investment in it when they are headed for eternity (1 John 2:15-17; Matt. 6:19-20, 25, 31-34).
- j. **Studying biblical prophecy will make a Christian a better _____** (2 Cor. 5:10-11). Knowing what the future holds will help clarify the Word of God for unbelievers.
- k. **Studying biblical prophecy gives a Christian _____ knowledge of what is prophetically true.** There is only one true system of biblical prophecy. There is only one true interpretation to a text. There may be multiple applications but there is only one true interpretation of the passage. This being true, it begs a question, “How come we have so many different ideas about the end times?” For instance, there are different views of the rapture of the church: no rapture, pre-rapture, mid-rapture, post-rapture. Who is right? Not everyone can be right, someone has to be wrong. The answer is found in the study of hermeneutics, the science of Bible interpretation. The right hermeneutic will lead you to the right interpretation. A correct method of Bible interpretation will include things like interpreting the Bible normally, historically, grammatically, contextually, and inductively.

We will talk a little bit more about these things in an upcoming study because they are essential to properly interpreting Bible prophecy. But for now this is what I want you to know, there is only one true interpretation of any passage of Scripture. God is not the God of confusion; therefore He would not have given us His word to confuse. We just need to interpret what He said accurately.

3. How do we account for the different _____ about Bible prophecy?

a. The _____ condition of a person will influence their understanding of prophecy.

- i. Many people who are not born-again still have an interest in what the future holds. They may dabble in Bible prophecy to search for answers but they will never be able to understand Bible prophecy (1 Cor. 2:14).
- ii. A carnal Christian is very susceptible to false teaching because they are immature in their faith when they should be mature (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

b. One's _____ of the Bible will influence their understanding of the Bible.

- i. A liberal theologian does not accept the fact that the Bible is inspired by God. From their view point, the Bible is a good moral book but not to be taken literally; thus you can't get specific with it, especially when it comes to prophetic portions of Scripture.
- ii. A conservative theologian sees the Bible as inspired by God; therefore it can be taken at face value.

c. A lack of _____ can influence a person's understanding of **prophecy** (Eph. 1:15-18). Many Christians have never attended churches where eschatology is taught and this has left a large number in the Church who are ignorant of God's future plans. A lack of knowledge will lead to faulty thinking that will lead to misapplication of Scripture in one's life. *Illustration* - When I was a young teenage boy living in Southern CA the sky in the summer time would turn red due to the heavy smog. My best friend's mother, who would take me to church with her sons, told us boys one day that the red sky was a sign of the end times because she had read in the book of Revelation something about a red sky. That was convincing to us young lads because it came from someone we trusted but it was wrong and we were all wrong because of a bad interpretation of the Bible.

d. A person's particular _____ of interpretation will influence their **view of biblical prophecy**. For this class there are essentially two schools of interpreting Bible prophecy.

- i. The *allegorical* method: This method takes a passage's basic meaning and sees it spiritually, esoterically (intended for only a small number of spiritually minded people), or even mystically. *Example*; seeing Adam and Eve not as literal people but as persons who symbolically represent something else. Or, understanding the devil to not be a real person but a symbol of evil in the world. This method of interpretation looks for hidden meaning in the words of prophecy instead of taking them at face value.

The allegorical method leads to several problems:

- It does not interpret the literal sense of a passage. There is an old saying that goes like this, “If the literal sense makes good sense, seek no other sense, lest it result in nonsense.”
- It allows for all kinds of interpretations making it difficult or impossible to know which one is accurate
- It relies on the authority of the one interpreting instead of the Bible
- It is subjective and gives way for perverting the true meaning of Scripture
- It confuses God’s people, leaving them with a sense that cannot understand Bible prophecy.
- It does not have an answer for why so many prophecy have been literally fulfilled.

ii. *The literal method:* This method understands prophecy through a literal, grammatical and historical method. The literal method of interpretation seeks to interpret the words of Scripture in their normal sense as they are found in a text. Using this method of interpretation is key to being able to understand the Bible and especially prophetic portions of Scripture. In this method we allow the words of Scripture to have the exact basic meaning one would have in normal, customary usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking.²

² Pentecost J. Dwight, *Things to Come*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Pub. 1958, p.9

The key question of which method you will use to interpret the Bible comes down to the words in the Bible and what you believe about them. If you do not really believe the Bible is God-breathed, produced, and maintained by the power of the Holy Spirit, you will naturally have to explain the words of Scripture through an allegorical method. But if you do believe the Bible is literally the Word of God, down to every jot and tittle, then you will use the literal method of interpretation. This is the only method of interpretation your pastor uses and it is the only accepted method of the Ukiah Bible Church.

Lesson 2

Important Rules that Govern a Literal Interpretation of the Bible

1. The _____ of Scripture are to be understood in their normal, natural, sense unless there is clear evidence in the context that the words are used some other way.
2. The _____ of a passage must be observed. What comes before and after a passage is of vital importance to accurately understand a passage of Scripture. You work from the immediate context and move out to paragraphs, chapters, book and then how it fits into the context of the whole Bible. An example of understanding a passage in it's immediate context is found in 2 Chronicles 7:12-22.
3. The _____ in which a passage takes place has to be taken into account to properly interpret it. An example of the importance of understanding historical settings can be seen in Jesus' words of comfort to his disciples in John 14:2-3.
4. Understanding _____ in its original language is an important tool to properly interpreting Scripture. The words of the Bible are connected together with grammatical structure that gives it a flow of thought, but the flow of thought is not determined by the structure in

English but by the structure in the original language.³ Thus, the interpreter must ask the following questions of a passage:

- a. What is the _____ of a sentence?
- b. What _____ are present to identify the action or conditions of the subject?
- c. Is the action past, _____, or future (tense)?
- d. Does the verb express a fact of reality, a _____, or a conjecture (mood)?
- e. Does the subject perform the action of the verb or does it _____ the action of the verb (voice)?
- f. Is the action _____ or incomplete (aspect)?

Turning to Romans 12:1-2 will give us an example of paying attention to grammar. “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

- In verse one, the verb “present” in its grammatical form is a simple action that can be completed.
- In verse two, the two verbs “conformed” and “transformed” grammatically convey a different message. They are written in the form of a continuing action. Keep on resisting the pressure to **conform** to the world. Keep on being **transformed** by the renewing of your mind. The transformation Paul is speaking of here is not a one- time experience as in the transformation that happens when you are born again, and we know this because of the Greek

³ McQuilkin Robertson, Understanding and Applying The Bible, Chicago, Moody Press, 1992, p.135

grammar. Also, not being conformed and being transformed are put in the imperative making them commands that we are obligated to obey.

You can see having an understanding of grammar is an important tool to use to get the right interpretation of any passage. Fortunately, we live at a time in history where technology affords us good resources for teachers and students of the Bible. Also, good Bible translations have given Christians extremely dependable Bibles that are translated on a word-for-word basis to the original languages. My top six recommendations in order would be: New American Standard Bible, Amplified Bible, English Standard Version, Revised Version, King James Version, and the New King James Version. Any of these Bibles, especially in a study Bible format, will give you a trusted translation you can depend upon.

5. Understanding the _____ a particular passage is found in, is an important aspect of good Bible interpretation. In the case of Bible prophecy, it is often encased in figurative language. Whenever figurative language is used, the context has got to be used to determine the point. In Bible college, I had one professor who hammered this point into all of us: “If the literal meaning of the word makes good sense in context, take it literally and if the literal meaning does not make good sense in the context, take it figuratively.” Revelation 7:4-8 drives this point home as a good example of what we are talking about.

Lesson 3

Special Rules of Interpreting Prophecy

1. Interpret the prophecy _____.

There are two types of bible prophecy: Prophecy that has been fulfilled and that which has not. To date, 50% of all Bible prophecy has been fulfilled.⁴ When you examine the prophecies that have been fulfilled, you will find they have been fulfilled literally. Examples of this are easily seen in the life of Christ: The virgin birth (Is. 7:14), born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and so on. This leads us to say that, if half of the prophecies of the Bible have been fulfilled literally, then the rest of Bible prophecy will also be fulfilled literally.

2. Interpret the prophecy according to prophetic _____.

In 2 Peter 1:20-21 we read this, “ *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*” What we understand from this is that God, the Holy Spirit, has weaved the prophetic word of God together in harmony to bring about God’s plans. An example of this is seen in prophetic portions of Scripture that only pertain to the nation of Israel and those that pertain only to the Church. In the end, they both accomplish the ultimate plans of God.

3. Interpret prophecy from a perspective that carefully understands _____.

Prophetic portions of Scripture can look at time in various ways. For examples:

- Isaiah 9:6 speaks of the future but as if the present was in view.

⁴ Wolvard, John, *Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, Wheaton, IL. Victor Books, SP Publications, 1990, p.14.

- Isaiah 53 speaks of the future as if it were the past.
- Isaiah 61:1-2 speaks of two different times: the first and second comings of Christ (Lk4:17-21).

4. Interpret prophecy _____.

Jesus Christ is the culmination of all prophecy. He is the central theme of all Scripture; therefore, Bible prophecy must be understood through Him.

- Rev. 19:10: Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.
- 1 Peter 1:10-11: The prophets wanted to know the time of the Spirit of Christ within them and predicted the sufferings of Christ.

In his book, *The Best Is Yet To Come*, Tony Evans notes that “Christ is the centerpiece of prophecy, the cause of prophecy, the content of prophecy and the culmination of prophecy.”⁵

5. Interpret prophecy according to the law of double _____.

In this rule, one prophecy can have a near and a far fulfillment. An example of this is found in Daniel 8:21-26. Here we find God warning the nation of Israel that a man would arise who would be devastating to Israel. The reference is to Antiochus Epiphanes, but this man also references the coming antichrist in the Great Tribulation. What makes these kinds of prophecies stand out is that they will not be able to be fulfilled in the first reference but fulfilled in the second.

6. Interpret prophecy _____

The danger one must avoid in this point is not to start interpreting a certain text with a literal method and then switch to an allegorical method. Consistency in one’s method of interpretation is necessary to coming to the right conclusions. The literal method of interpretation is the only method that will keep the interpreter on the right track.

7. Determine if the prophecy is _____ or _____ .

⁵ Evans, Anthony, *The Best Is Yet To Come*, Chicago, IL, Moody Press, 2000, pp.29-41.

The thing to keep in mind here is that if the prophecy is conditional, it is possible it will never be fulfilled; and if the prophecy is unconditional, it is absolutely certain that it will eventually be fulfilled. To mix these up will cause great confusion.

One example of a conditional prophecy is when Jonah went to Nineveh and said God was going to destroy them if they didn't repent. They repented and God held off His judgment. The fulfillment of the prophecy was dependent on human response, but an unconditional prophecy is solely dependent upon God. An example of this would be found in the prophecy Nathan delivered to David regarding the Davidic dynasty (2 Sam. 7:4-17).

8. Take into account the _____ kinds of Bible prophecy
 - a. There are prophecies aimed at specific _____ (Gen. 6:13-14; 19:12-14; Ex. 3:10; Joshua 6:1-5).
 - b. There is a specific prophetic program concerning _____ (Jude 6; Rev. 20:2-3).
 - c. There is a specific prophetic program pertaining to _____ (land, king, kingdom)
 - d. There is a specific prophetic program pertaining to the _____ nations (Matt. 25:32).
 - e. There is a specific prophetic program pertaining to _____. (His first and second advent, His earthly ministry, His coming judgment).
 - f. There is a specific prophetic program pertaining to the _____.

Basic Eschatological Terms

1. **Eschatology:** This word comes from two Greek words (*escheats* - last, and *logos* - word). Eschatology means a word or study about last things, meaning things about the future.
2. **Rapture:** This word is the Latin translation of the phrase “caught up” in 1 Thess. 4:17. It refers to Christ coming in the clouds to take all believers with Him.
3. **Tribulation:** This refers to a time of great suffering which Jesus predicted in Matthew 24:21 (see also Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1). Daniel 9:27 indicates this period will be seven years long (a “week” here means a seven-year cycle). The last half of the Tribulation is called the Great Tribulation and is 3 1/2 years long (see Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14; “time, time, dividing of time;” Rev. 11:2; 13:5; “forty-two months;” Rev. 11:3; 12:6; “1260 days”).
4. **Different views regarding the Rapture:**
 - a. Pre-Tribulation Rapture: The view that believers will not go through the Tribulation but will be raptured before it begins. This view gives us the best interpretation Scripturally.
 - b. Partial Rapture: This view teaches that Christ will remove “spiritual” Christians before the Tribulation but allow others to remain to face the Tribulation.
 - c. Mid-Tribulation Rapture: This view teaches that believers will be on earth for the first 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation but will be raptured before the Great Tribulation (i.e., the last 3 1/2 years).
 - d. Post-Tribulation Rapture: This view teaches that believers must go through the entire seven year Tribulation. Then Christ will come again. With this view there is no difference between the Rapture and Second Coming of Christ. Both would occur at the same time.
5. **Judgment Seat of Christ (Bema Seat):** This judgment pertains only to Christians. It occurs after the Rapture while the Tribulation is on the earth. Christians will be judged on the basis of their works done for Christ and rewarded. Salvation is not the issue at this judgment (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:14-15).

6. **Marriage of the Lamb:** The church is the bride of Christ in the sense of being engaged to Him (2 Cr. 11:2). Revelation 19 places the wedding itself in heaven just before the Revelation, or Second Coming of Christ.
7. **Revelation or Second Coming:** Though the phrase “Second Coming” is used loosely to refer to either Rapture or Revelation, technically the terms Second Coming and Revelation refer to Christ coming to the earth with his saints at the end of the Tribulation. (The Rapture refers to his coming in the clouds for his saints before the tribulation.) There are seven years between the Rapture and the Revelation. At the Revelation, Christ is coming to destroy the antichrist at Armageddon to set up his kingdom on the earth (Jude 14-15).
8. **Judgment of the Nations:** This is the judgment that takes place after the Revelation when the Lord is beginning to set up His rule on earth. The word “nations” comes from the word *ethan* (ethnic) in Matthew 25:32, and it should be understood to mean a judgment of individuals who are of different ethnic groups. Christ will start His kingdom by removing all non-believers to judgment (Matt. 25:46) and permitting those who have been saved in the Tribulation to enter the kingdom (Matt. 25:34).
9. **The Kingdom or Millennium:** After the Revelation of Christ, the Lord will remove all the unbelievers and rule on the throne of David in Jerusalem for 1000 years. The word *mille* is the Latin word for 1000 and it comes from Revelation 20:8.
10. **Different Views of the Kingdom or Millennium:**
 - a. Pre-millennialism: The belief that Christ will come before the 1000 year reign and will be present to rule over the earth from Jerusalem. This is the best view.
 - b. A-millennialism: The position that there will be no earthly rule of Christ over the Jews from Jerusalem. One basic view among a-millennialism is that the Jews rejected their King and, therefore, are not entitled to have the Old Testament promises fulfilled.
 - c. Dominion Theology, Reconstructionism, Neo-Post-millennialism: These are all terms for a movement that teaches the church should and eventually will dominate the world. Those in this movement believe in political involvement with the goal

and expectation that the world will become better and better spiritually.

With post-millennialism, there will be a 1000-year Christian kingdom on earth before the Second Coming.

11. **Great White Throne Judgment:** At the end of the Millennial Kingdom, the unsaved dead will be raised to stand trial and to be formally condemned for not receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior (Revelation 20:11-15).
12. **Eternal State:** At the end of the 1000 years, Christ's earthly kingdom will merge with the Kingdom in Heaven. The Eternal State is the same as Heaven.⁶

⁶ This section on terms was taken mostly from, Steven W. Waterhouse book, *Not By Bread Alone*, Amarillo, TX, Westcliff Press, 2007, pp.376-378.

Lesson 4

The Rapture of the Church

Part 1

Introduction

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 *“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”*

Biblically speaking, the next event on God’s prophetic calendar is the Rapture. When the last soul is brought into the Church by trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation, the Rapture can take place. The doctrine of the Rapture is built upon a prophetic promise made specifically to the Church. God’s promise to the Church is that Jesus Christ will return in the clouds to call to Himself everyone who has trusted in Him to be their Savior. This event will occur just prior to the beginning of the period of history the Bible identifies as the Tribulation.

There are many Bible passages in the New Testament that address the coming Rapture of the Church:

1. _____, Jesus told his disciples He was leaving them, and to comfort them He said, *“I will come again and receive you to myself.”*
2. _____, When Jesus ascended to heaven, the angel told the disciples, *“This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”*
3. _____, Paul noted that the Church in Corinth was *“awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
4. _____, Paul used the word Maranatha in the closing of his letter, which means *“our Lord comes.”*

5. _____, Paul emphasizes the heavenly citizenship of a believer and how “*we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.*”
6. _____, Paul noted how the Church at Thessalonica was anticipating the return of God’s Son, “*waiting for His Son from heaven...*”
7. _____, Paul told the Christians in Thessalonica that they would be his reward when he stood in the “*presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming.*”
8. _____, Paul highlighted how believers were being prepared for the “*coming of our Lord Jesus with all His Saints.*”
9. _____, the apostle Paul said, “*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven...then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up...*”
10. _____, addressing the Day of the Lord, Paul said, “*with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him...*”
11. _____, Paul charged Timothy to fulfill his calling, and he used Christ’s return as a witness, “*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom...*”
12. _____, the Lord will give a crown to “*all who have loved His appearing.*”
13. _____, Paul counseled a young pastor named Titus to be “*looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*”
14. _____, James instructed believers to “*be patient...until the coming of the Lord.*” and “*strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*”
15. _____, Peter told Christians that their present testings would bring “*praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*”

16. _____, there are going to be rewards for the faithfulness of leaders in the Church, “*When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*”
17. _____, the apostle John encourages believers to abide in Christ “*so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.*”
18. _____, John gives his readers some idea of what it will be like when they see Christ, “*...We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.*”
19. _____, John records Jesus’ own words to His Church, “*...I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.*”
20. _____, when Jesus returns for His Church, He is bringing His rewards, “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”
21. _____, the final words of the book of the Revelation highlight the coming of the Lord, “*He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming quickly.’*”

Conclusion

With so many passages predicting the return of the Lord Jesus for his church, it should encourage a believer’s hope for the future return of their Savior. Also when one considers that the purpose for this present dispensation is for Christ to build His Church (Matt. 16:18) by calling out a people for His name (Acts 15:14; 1 Peter 2:9), we can conclude His promises to return for His Church will happen just as the Word of God has prophesied it will.

Lesson 4

The Rapture of the Church

Part 2

Introduction

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 *“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.”*

In our last lesson, we introduced the subject of the Rapture by examining many different passages that speak of this next great event on God’s prophetic time table. I will remind you that when we talk about the Rapture, we are speaking of the prophecy that addresses the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His Church. In our lesson today, we will take into consideration the most significant passage in the Bible pertaining to the Rapture, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Understanding this passage is the foundation that supports a proper perspective on the other prophetic passages that speak of the Rapture of the Church. Such passages (such as 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12) speak of the Rapture but in the sense of its implications to the Church and the world. The truths revealed in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 will help you interpret those other passages in their proper prophetic order.

We will divide this lesson into three parts. First we will define the meaning of the word “rapture” to give you a clear understanding of what is being spoken about. Second, we will consider the reasons the prophecy was given to the church at Thessalonica. And finally, we will discover the chronology of the Rapture. So, let’s see what we can discover in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 about the Rapture of the Church.

1. The meaning of the word “rapture”

- a. When we use the word “rapture” in our context, we are considering the _____ ramifications of the word.
- b. The word *rapture* comes from the words translated “_____,” found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.
- c. The Greek word “*harpazo*,” translated as “caught up” in our English Bibles, can also be translated as “seize,” “catch up,” “snatch away,” or “carry off by force.” The following passages are examples for us to consider.
 - i. Matt. 11:12 “take it by force.”
 - ii. Matt. 12:29 “carry off.”
 - iii. Matt 13:19 “snatch away.”
 - iv. John 6:15 “take Him by force.”
 - v. John 10:12, 28-29 “snatches them.”
 - vi. Acts 8:39 “snatched Philip away.”
 - vii. Acts 23:10 “take him away by force.”
 - viii. 2 Corinthians 12:2, 4 “caught up.”
 - ix. 1 Thess. 4:17 “caught up.”
 - x. Jude 23 “snatch them out.”
 - xi. Rev. 12:5 “caught up.”
- e. Our English word “rapture” comes from a _____ translation of the Greek word “*rapture*” which means to seize, or actually remove or carry one away from one spot to another. In reference to 1 Thess. 4:17, it refers to the removal of the Church to *heaven*. And the way the verse is written in Greek, it conveys the absolute *certainty* of a factual event that will happen sometime in the future (it could be a few minutes or hours or days, or months, or years), that only God will perform.

2. The reasons for the prophecy

- a. What precipitated Paul's addressing the subject of the Rapture for the Church at Thessalonica?
- b. What does the general overview of the Rapture look like (v.15)?
- c. What was the prophecy of a Rapture intended to do for the believers at Thessalonica?

3. The chronology of the Prophecy

- a. Jesus, Himself, will _____ for His Church (v.16a).
- b. Jesus will _____ from heaven to receive His Church (v.16b).
- c. Jesus, Himself, will _____ the Church's rapture by a shout (v.16c).

- d. The _____ will come from the voice of an archangel (v.16d).
- e. Jesus will come for His Church with the sound of a _____ of God (v.16e.).
- f. Jesus will _____ His Church from the dead (v.16f).
- g. Jesus will _____ His Church from the earth (v.17a).
- h. Jesus will bring His Church together in the _____ (v.17b).
- i. Jesus will _____ Himself to the raptured Church (v.17c).
- j. Jesus' Church will _____ be with Him (v.17d).

Lesson 4

The Rapture of the Church

Part 3

Introduction

As we continue our study of the Rapture, we'll take into consideration the spiritual mood in the church that will occur just prior to the Lord Jesus coming for His church. There are two main indicators pointing to the approaching rapture of the Church: an intensification of doctrinal apostasy and the movement toward ecumenicalism. We will consider both of these in some detail.

1. Doctrinal apostasy in the Church will intensify.

- a. There will be a _____ to endure doctrine that is sound (2 Tim. 4:3).
- b. There will be a _____ of the doctrine of the Trinity (1 John 2:22-23).
- c. There will be a denial of the doctrine of the _____ of Jesus Christ (1 John 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7). There will be a denial of Jesus as the Messiah, Savior, and God.
- d. There will be a denial of the doctrine of the _____ of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:4).
- e. There will be a lack of _____ lifestyle among those saying they are right with God (2 Tim. 3:1-8). Paul indicates twenty different traits that will characterize the apostasy of the Church:
 - i. Love of self
 - ii. Love of money
 - iii. Boastfulness
 - iv. Arrogance
 - v. Revilers
 - vi. Disobedience to parents
 - vii. Ungratefulness
 - viii. Unholiness
 - ix. Unloving
 - x. Irreconcilable
 - xi. Malicious gossips

- xii. Lack of self control
- xiii. Brutal
- xiv. Haters of those good
- xv. Treacherous
- xvi. Reckless
- xvii. Conceited
- xviii. Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God
- xix. A pretense of worship without any true godly power in one's life
- xx. An opposition to one who teaches the truth

The more one drifts from sound doctrine (2 Tim 4:3), the more these traits will be displayed in one's life. And as the individual slips into these traits, the more the Church will demonstrate these characteristics. All of this will occur with great intensity just prior to the rapture of the Church.

2. Ecumenical unifying of churches regardless of doctrinal differences.

- a. The Bible prophesies that during the Great Tribulation there will be a religious ecumenical movement to unite the world. This is described in Revelation 17, and is called the "*mystery Babylon the great the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth*"(v.5). In chapter 17, this Babylon represents a false religious system that will take place worldwide in those days.
- b. In his book, *Basic Theology*, Charles Ryrie noted that the groundwork for such a system will apparently have to be laid before the Tribulation begins, that is, during the closing years of the church age.
- c. In the last 30 to 40 years, there has been a push to bring all churches under one unifying banner. Some of the ways I have seen this take place in my years of ministry are:
 - i. Local ministerial associations to do the work of God (with every domination represented). I personally know of a pastor who resigned his pastorate due to the pressure he received from a small group of head-strong congregants who insisted he join the local ministerial association. He simply could not join any ministerial group that was made of ministers who subscribed to a false gospel.
 - ii. Local community worship services (holiday services).

- iii. Organizational efforts to unify men of every faith (Promise Keepers and their acceptance of Catholicism).
 - iv. Cults wanting to be viewed as Christians (Mormons).
 - v. Movies portraying all religions as equal (*Oh God*, starring George Burns and John Denver).
 - vi. The elevation of a social gospel over a biblical gospel.
- d. How does one who is in favor of ecumenicalism square their ideas with the apostle Paul's admonishment to the church at Corinth (2 Cor. 6:14-18)? Just because someone or some group of people call themselves Christian does not mean, in fact, that they are. Not everyone can be right. According to Ephesian 4:5, there is only one true faith. Anything outside of that is to be considered doctrines of demons and grounds for eternal damnation (Gal. 1:6-9).
 - e. In the closing days of the Church Age, there will be a greater push by men to bring all people into one religious community, thereby setting up the removal of the true Church so the false church can unify the hearts of mankind.

Lesson 4

The Rapture of the Church

Part 4

Introduction

To this point in our study of the Rapture, we have considered three things: the many passages that address the Lord's return for His Church, the chronology of the event as found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and the prevailing spiritual mood at the time of the Rapture. To conclude lesson four's study of the Lord's return for the church, we will analyze the Scriptures to see when the Rapture will take place.

The Bible does not tell us the exact hour the Rapture will take place; and, therefore, theologians have sought to understand the placement of the Rapture in the sequence of End Time events. This has led to several different views regarding when the Rapture actually takes place, and the question that arises is this: Does the Rapture take place before, in the middle of, or at the end of the Great Tribulation? The answer to this question will depend on one's view of the Tribulation period.

There are basically five prevalent views concerning the time of the rapture: The Pre-Tribulation view, a Partial-Rapture view, a Mid-Tribulation view, the Post-Tribulation view, and the Pre-Wrath view. We will spend the bulk of our time on the Pre-Tribulation rapture view as I believe the preponderance of biblical evidence clearly supports this view.

Let's now consider each of these views to discover when the Rapture takes place on God's prophetic time table.

1. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture View

This view holds to the position that the church, in its entirety, will be raptured before the Tribulation begins. This means the church must be removed from the world before the Tribulation can begin

(Dan.9:26-27) and the Antichrist can be revealed (2 Thess. 2:18). To support this view, the following biblical arguments are given:

- a. The Church is instructed to be on alert for the _____ return of Jesus Christ.

- b. The separation of the sheep from the goats only makes _____ if the Church has been raptured.

- c. The population of the earth during the Millennial Kingdom _____ the Church to be raptured before the second coming of Christ.

- d. Revelation 3:10 promises that the Church will be _____ from the Tribulation.

- e. The Church is not related to anything that _____ to the Tribulation.

- f. The Tribulation is classified as the wrath of the _____ (Rev. 6:16-17), and the Bible specifically states the Church is not _____ to the wrath of God (1 Thess. 5:1, 9).

- g. The ministry of God during the Tribulation is not _____ to the Church.
- h. The salvation of people during the Tribulation does not include the _____.
- i. Revelation 19:7-11; 22:17, implies the Church is in _____ during the Tribulation.
- j. There are great differences between the _____ of the Church and the _____ Coming of Christ.
- k. The Church was given certain exhortations that may only be _____ by a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

Some well known people who take this view are: John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, Charles Swindoll. J. Dwight Pentecost, John Feinberg, Paul Feinberg, Henry C. Thiessen, Leon Wood, Hal Lindsey, Alva

McClain, John A. Sproul, Richard Mayhue, Tim LaHaye, J. Vernon McGee, Chuck Smith, Hal Lindsey, Jack Van Impe, Chuck Missler, Thomas Ice, David Jeremiah, John F. MacArthur, and John Hagee, and Jimmy Swaggart.⁷

2. The Partial-Rapture View

This view contends that only spiritual believers who are ready, watching, and waiting for Christ to come to Rapture His Church will actually be raptured before the Tribulation begins. According to this view, the rest of the Christians (who are not ready but are carnal and fleshly) will be left behind to pass through part or all of the Tribulation as a means of their purification.

- a. Matthew 24:13; This verse has _____ to do with the Rapture or the Church.
- b. Luke 21:36; This verse is dealing with the tribulation period, _____ the rapture.
- c. Philippians 3:20; The context of this verse is addressing the _____ between unbelievers and believers not godly believers and carnal believers.
- d. 2 Timothy 4:8; This verse has to do with winning _____ when Christ returns, not participating in the Rapture when He returns.
- e. Hebrews 9:28; The context of this verse falls within the _____ warning the writer gives to his readers who are falling away from the faith into degeneracy and not maturing as a Christian. The point of this verse is that there will be a judgment that comes when Christ returns (Heb. 9:27-28). For those believers eagerly await the Lord's return, they will have no worry of sin matters at His return, which can cost them lose of rewards. On the other hand, for those believers who do not eagerly await the return of Christ because they have slipped into degeneracy and not matured in their faith, their sin will cost them rewards.

⁷ House, Wayne H. & Price, Randall, Charts of Bible Prophecy, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Pub., 2003, p. 88.

When these verses are viewed through a proper exegesis, it is clear they do not support a Partial-Rapture viewpoint. There are many objections to this view which force us to completely reject it:

- It conditions participation in the Rapture and the glorification of the body on our _____, which is totally contrary to the whole scheme of New Testament salvation, which is purely by grace alone (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 11:6; 13:11).
- It rejects the sufficiency of the _____ work of Jesus Christ who delivers the believer from any form of judicial condemnation (Rom. 8:30-34).
- It violates the concept of church _____ for which Christ prayed (John 17:21-22).
- It misinterprets passages of scripture to _____ its position.
- It neglects to deal with 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, which plainly says “_____” shall be changed.
- It neglects to deal with 1 Corinthians 12:13, which says “_____” were baptized into one body.
- It fails to explain why there is not one passage in regard to the Rapture, such as found in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 that makes it a _____ for godly living.
- It fails to explain rewards and _____ of rewards for the Christian.

- It fails to explain why the church is never mentioned as being _____ or _____ during the Tribulation.

Some people who have taken the Partial Rapture view are: Joseph Seis, G. H. Lang, Robert Grovett, G. H. Pember, Ira E. David, D. H. Panton, Watchman Nee, and G. Campbell Morgan.⁸

3. The Mid-Tribulation View

This view holds to the position that the church will be raptured in the middle of the Tribulation, before the final 3 1/2 years of wrath. Thus, the church is not exposed to God's wrath due to His wrath not starting until the bowl judgments, which occur 3 1/2 years into the Tribulation (Rev. 16:1).

The main objection to this view is that the entire seven-year Tribulation is classified as being "the wrath of God." For example, in Revelation 15:1, we are specifically told that the remaining things will "finish" or "complete" the wrath of God, indicating that all previous things were also the wrath of God. This is also established early in the book of Revelation (Rev. 6:17). Therefore, the entire Tribulation may be classified as a time of wrath, and the church is not destined or appointed to wrath (1 Thess. 5:9).

Mid-tribulationist teachers include: Gleason L. Archer, Norman Harrison, J. Oliver Buswell, Merrill C. Tenney, G. H. Lang, Harold Ockenga, James O. Buswell (a reformed, Calvinistic Presbyterian), and Norman Harrison.⁹

4. The Post-Tribulation View

This is the view that the Lord will return and remove his church from the earth at the end of the Tribulation, just before or as part of His Second Coming.

Those who hold to a Post-Tribulation view have three different inconsistent perspectives of the Tribulation:

- Some believe the Tribulation has passed and the Rapture may occur at any moment.

⁸ Ibid. p.89.

⁹ Erickson, Millard J. (1977). *Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House. p. 164

- Some believe the church is in the Tribulation right now and the Rapture will occur in the future.
- Some believe that the Tribulation is still in the future, the church will go through it, and then the Rapture will occur at the end of it.

Those who hold to the Post-Tribulation rapture view do so based on the following arguments:

1. The word “_____” in Matt. 24:27 is the same word used in 1 Thess. 4:15, and therefore they must be the same single event.

These words are describing two separate events in two separate contexts, one for Israel and one for the church. The use of the same word proves nothing other than Christ will come in both instances. They do not prove one event.

2. The church is not said to be in _____, but on earth during the Tribulation.

As we examine the facts of the book of Revelation, we see that the word “church” occurs 19 times between Rev. 1-3, and then it disappears throughout Rev. 4-19, which deals with the Tribulation period. It is not until Rev. 22:16 that the Church is brought back into view.

Secondly, the Post-Tribulationists says the word “saint” found in Revelation 13:7, 10; 17:6) is referring to the church. In each of these uses, John uses the article “the” before the noun “saints” indicating he wants them specifically identified. Furthermore, the word “saints” is not the word “church.” There were “saints” in the Old Testament who are a part of the Church (Ps.85:8). There will be saints in the Tribulation who are not part of the Church. Church-age saints are entirely separate from Tribulation saints.

3. Post-Tribulationism takes the position that the Pre-Tribulation view is a _____ teaching and that the vast majority of ancient and modern scholarship were Post-Tribulationists.

Dr. Steven Waterhouse helps answer this objection, “What is ignored is that an age of a position is not the final indication of its truth. Do we want to assert that truths maintained before the Reformation are superior to those taught after the Reformation? Actually, it is only a half-truth to teach that Pre-Tribulationism is relatively recent. Early church writings

indicate that the Church believed in the imminent return of Christ. It also tended not to have any definite views about the Tribulation. Thus, the church after the apostolic age was neither Pre-Tribulational nor Post-Tribulational.”¹⁰

4. The parable of the Wheat and the Tares found in Matt. 13:24-30 establishes a Post-Tribulation Rapture at the _____ of the Tribulation.

In this case what is ignored is the possibility of another interpretation of this text. This passage is not a church age passage; it is a text aimed at Israel. The passage is clearly about the kingdom and teaches that there will be a false religious group who will look almost identical to those who are true, who will be uncovered at the end of the Tribulation. This parable in no way proves a Post-Tribulation rapture.

Some of those who support the Post-Tribulational view include Pat Robertson, Walter R. Martin, John Piper, George E. Ladd, Robert H. Gundry, and Douglas Moo, J. Sidlow Baxter. Robert H. Gundry, Dave MacPherson.¹¹

5. The Pre-Wrath View

This view is very close to the Mid-Tribulation view but is a little more specific in saying that the Rapture occurs sometime between the sixth and seventh seal judgments in Revelation 6:12-8:1. Pre-wrath proponents maintain a difference between "the Day of the Lord" and "the Great Tribulation." The argument is that there is no wrath of God during the Tribulation time and there is no Tribulation during the wrath time.

The fact is, the entire time period of the Tribulation is classified as a time of wrath and the Church is not appointed to the time of wrath (Rev. 6:15-16).

Those who purport this view are: Marvin Rosenthal, Robert Van Kampen¹²

Conclusion

¹⁰ Waterhouse, Steven W., Not By Bread Alone, Amarillo, TX, Westcliff Press, 2007, 394.

¹¹ House, Wayne H. & Price, Randall, Charts of Bible Prophecy, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Pub., 2003, p. 92.

¹² Ibid. p.90

After a brief examination of the above views, the position of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture is the only one that gives sufficient evidence as to when the Rapture will take place. The Rapture of the Church is the next prophetic event to take place; and after that, the Tribulation will begin.

Lesson 5

The Bema Seat (The Believer's Judgment)

Part 1

Introduction

The next phase of our End Times study will cover the Bema Seat or the Believers Judgment. This great event is second in importance to a Christian's life, the first being the day they received the Lord Jesus as their Savior and were born again as a child of God. Meeting Jesus face-to-face will be the second most extraordinary day of a believer's life; and for some that day will reap inexpressible joy and for others a profound poverty. For on that day, Jesus will call before Himself each person who belonged to the Church, and one by one they will present their life's work as His servant. He will either reward them for their service or remove potential rewards for their lack of service unto Him.

Understanding the Bema Seat, with its ramifications of gaining eternal rewards or the loss of rewards, is one of the most important biblical doctrines for a believer to be absolutely clear on. Many Christians are completely unaware of this judgment seat before which they will have to appear. They are asleep in the light or blinded by ignorance believing they have salvation and that's all they need to be concerned with; or, as one man said to me: "I have my ticket to heaven, I have trusted in Christ as my Savior." What that man expressed is the attitude a lot of Christians have about their salvation. But what he and many others fail to realize is that when Christ became their Savior, He also became their Master. And as their Master, He will one day call all of His servants into account for the service they rendered unto Him. On that day, He will use His divine nature and authority to examine every thought and action of one's life to pronounce His judgment of loss or reward, for which there will be no appeal but will reap eternal results. That day will take place at the Bema Seat, the judgement seat of Christ.

Now, with that as our introduction to the subject, we shall open our Bibles and discover what this important event in our future holds for us.

1. What is the issue of the judgment about?

2. What New Testament words describe the Bema Seat judgment?

- a. *Criterion*

b. *Bema*

3. When does the Bema Seat judgment take place?

4. Where does the Bema Seat take place?

5. Who will take part in the Bema Seat judgment?

a.

b.

6. What are some passages that address the Bema Seat judgment?

a. Romans 14:10

b. 1 Cor. 3:10-15

c. 1 Cor. 4:1-5

d. 1 Cor. 9:24-27

e. 2 Cor. 5:10

f. 1 Thess. 2:19

g. 2 Tim. 4:8

h. Heb. 13:17

i. James 1:12

j. 1 Peter 5:4

k. 2 Peter 1:10-11

l. 2 John 8

7. Why is this judgment necessary?

a.

b.

c.

8. What will be judged at the Bema Seat?

a. A believer's _____

b. A believer's _____

c. A believer's _____

d. A believer's _____

e. A believer's _____

f. A believer's _____

g. A believer's _____

h. A believer's _____

i. A believer's _____

j. A believer's _____

9. What will be the results of the Bema Seat judgment?

a. Rewards will be _____.

b. Rewards will be _____.

10. What are some differences between salvation that is offered to an unbeliever and rewards offered to a believer?

a. An unbeliever is offered _____ life (John 3:16; 4:14); a believer is offered eternal rewards (1 Cor. 4:5).

b. Salvation is offered because of God's _____ and will (Eph. 1:4; James 1:18); rewards are given because of a believer's _____ and _____ (1 Cor. 9:26-27).

c. Salvation is a gift of God apart from any works (Rom. 4:5; Eph. 2:8-9); rewards are gifts of God solely based on _____ (1 Cor. 3:13-15).

d. Salvation presupposes all unbelievers deserve wrath (Rom. 2:5); rewards presuppose all believers may be deserving of _____.

e. Salvation offers a state of _____ for all heavenly citizenship; rewards offer a condition of _____ that will honor some and shame others.

f. Salvation is given to every unbeliever who will _____ in Christ; rewards are given to every believer who _____ fruit for Christ.

g. Salvation is a present _____ to everyone who believes; rewards are future _____ to honor faithful service unto Christ.

Lesson 5

The Bema Seat (The Believer's Judgment)

Part 2

Introduction

In part two of lesson five, we will take into consideration the crowns a believer can receive for their faithful service to the Lord Jesus Christ. After this, we will take up a few closing questions to end this section of study on the Believer's Judgment.

In part two, we are taking up the subject of the wreath-crowns a believer can win for their loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ, for particular areas of service to Him. These are special crowns that might be best thought of like receiving a gold medal in the Olympic games for competing in individual competitions. For example, if you compete in gymnastics you can win individual gold metals for each event: pommel horse, balance beam, floor exercises, uneven-parallel-bars, etc. Along with the gymnastic team competing for the gold, individual team members who excel in particular events can win medals for those events. This is a similar idea when thinking of the wreath-crowns that will be received by some at the Bema Seat.

All believers receive "eternal rewards" when they trust in, cling to, and rely on Jesus Christ for their salvation. These eternal rewards include: inheriting an eternal home in heaven, glorified bodies, and an eternal relationship with God that allows them to enter freely into the throne room of God. All believers enjoy the blessing of living forever in the new heavens and the new earth, and all believers inherit the blessing of being with their believing loved ones in eternity.¹³ These are some of the general rewards that every Christian receives, but beyond these the Bible reveals there are other rewards available to believers and encourages every effort to go after specific rewards known as crowns.

Early in our study we noted the difference between *stephanos* and *diadem* crowns. A *diadem* is a royal-crown, which is what the Lord Jesus wears (Rev. 19:12), and a *stephanos* is a wreath-crown that faithful believers receive from Jesus at the Bema Seat. The Bible speaks of seven different crowns that will be

¹³ Wall, Joe L., *Going For The Gold*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1991, p.81

given to believers in this present dispensations of the Church Age for specific works they accomplish. We will now consider each one of these crowns.

1. **The _____ / _____ Crown** (1 Cor. 9:25) - This crown is for those Christians who live self-controlled and disciplined lives (gaining victory over sin) and obeying the Lord's commands.
2. **The Crown of _____** (1 Thess. 2:2, 13-14, 19) - This is the soul-winner's crown. It is given to all those who have any part in the salvation of a soul.
3. **The Crown of _____** (2 Tim. 4:8) - This crown is given to all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ's appearing. It is not about wanting Him to come back to escape trials or adversity, or wanting to be taken out of this world to go to heaven for some personal relief. This crown is the reward for a heart that simply, lovingly desires to see Jesus face-to-face.
4. **The Crown of _____** (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10) - This crown is given to those who endure temptation and trials and for those who went through persecution for Jesus' sake.
5. **The Crown of _____** (1 Peter 5:4) - This is the Shepherd's Crown given to faithful leaders who oversaw the local church of God, such as pastors, elders, deacons, and deaconesses.
6. **The Crown of _____** (Phil. 4:1) - This crown is given to those who had an effect on the character, development, and behavior of believers.

7. **The Crown of _____** (Rev. 3:11) - This crown is given to the one who, under pressure of capitulation, guarded The Word of God and refused to deny the name of Christ.
8. Should going after rewards be the motivation for Christian service?
- a. Jesus was motivated to go to the cross by the future reward that awaited Him (Heb. 12:2).
 - b. The apostles were motivated by the potential of future rewards:
 - i. Paul (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:7-14).
 - ii. Peter (1 Peter 1:6-7; 2 Peter 1:5-11).
 - iii. John (1 John 2:28; 2 John 8).
9. How ought a Christian, who has not invested their life to this point in winning crowns, view their future potential of receiving these types of rewards? The apostle Paul gave some good advice to the church at Philippi that helps us to answer this question: “*forget what lies behind and reach for what lies ahead and press on for **the prize***” (Phil. 3:13-14). You can’t change what you did in the past; but as long as you have life, you can change what will happen to you in the future. In other words, it is never too late to go after the “gold medal,” to win a crown (or more than one) at the Bema Seat of Christ Jesus.

Lesson 6

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Introduction

In this lesson we are going to spend our time looking at one of the most important aspects of a believer's relationship with Christ, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Sadly, it is one of the most misunderstood and under-appreciated aspects of a believer's connection to their Savior. Properly understanding what is involved in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb should have several effects on a believer's life. First, it will help a believer cherish the love that Jesus has for them. Secondly, a proper grasp of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb should swell the heart of a believer in anticipation of their Beloved's coming for them. Thirdly, it should cause a deep desire to be personally ready for the union that will take place at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. With this short introduction, let's see what we can discover about this great supper we will be attending.

1. Different views of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

- a. View #1 _____ is the _____

The problem with this view is that in the Old Testament, Israel is portrayed as the faithless wife of Jehovah, not a pure bride.

- b. View #2 - _____ and the _____ are the bride

The problem with this view is that the redeemed of Israel do not rise until after the Great Tribulation, so they cannot possibly be mixed in with the events pertaining to the bride. These occur before the Second Coming of Christ.

- c. View # 3 - The _____ is the bride

This view fits perfectly with what we know of the Church and how she is identified as the Bride of Christ, a pure, clean, spotless, virgin (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-32).

2. How does the New Testament characterize the relationship between Jesus and the Church?

- a. John 3:29

- b. Romans 7:4
- c. 2 Corinthians 11:2
- d. Ephesians 5:23-25
- e. Revelation 19:7-8; 21:1-22:7 (vv. 2, 9)

3. What is the purpose of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb?

- a. The purpose is to recognize all that was _____ to the Church. It will emphasize the _____ between Jesus and all believers in the Church Age.
- b. It emphasizes how _____ the Church is to Jesus as He purchased her with His own blood (Eph. 1:7).
- c. It is the unveiling of the Church's _____ (Eph. 5:27).
- d. It is the event that establishes the _____ of the relationship (John 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:17).

4. When does the Marriage Supper of the Lamb take place?

It occurs between the _____ of the Church and the _____ Coming of Christ.

5. Where does the Marriage Supper of the Lamb take place?

This celebration is presented in Revelation 19:7-9, which puts the event in _____, not on _____, and prior to Jesus' return as seen in vv. 11-16.

6. Who will be present at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb?

_____ and all _____ of the Church Age. The resurrection of both the Old Testament saints and believers who died during the tribulation will take place at the Second Advent of Christ (Is. 26:19-21; Dan. 12:1-3; Rev. 20:4-6).

7. What is the difference between the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and the wedding feast mentioned in Matthew 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Luke 14:16-24?

- a. The first distinction is that the Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place in heaven, and the wedding feast takes place on earth.
- b. Secondly, in these passages Jesus used parabolic teaching to address Israel's future in the Millennial Kingdom as well as the gentiles who will survive the tribulation.
- c. Thirdly, the Lord's teaching on this matter emphasizes the mood of the entire millennial kingdom. It will be like a wedding celebration that goes on for days after the wedding occurred.
- d. Dr. Dwight Pentecost notes that during the time of the wedding feast "the bridegroom is honored through the display of the bride to all His friends who are assembled there [resurrected O.T. saints and believers who survived the tribulation]. The Church, which was God's program for the present age, is now seen to have been translated, resurrected, presented to the Son by the Father, and has become the object through which the eternal glory of God is forever manifested. The present age will thus witness the inception, development, and completion of God's purpose in '*taking out... a people for His name*' (Acts 15:14).¹⁴

8. Considering the process of marriage from a biblical perspective can be helpful to understand the importance of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Normally, there would be a five-step procedure to getting married:

¹⁴ Pentecost, J. Dwight, *Things to Come*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Pub., 1958, p.228

- a. The _____

Weddings in Bible times were events that were normally initiated by the father of a prospective bridegroom (Gen. 24:1-9). He would arrange a marriage by paying a price for the bride (Gen. 24:10; 34:12; Ex. 22:16; 1 Sam. 28:25). This step on the fathers part would contractually bind the future husband and wife in a legal relationship that could only be broken by a divorce (Matt. 1:18-20).

- b. The _____

Once the arrangement was made, the couple entered into a betrothal period, normally lasting one year. During the year before the wedding, the couple would prepare themselves for their future lives together. The bridegroom would spend the year preparing a home for his bride. And he would also send his future bride gifts throughout the year with the anticipation of the day he would come get her. She would be preparing herself by keeping herself pure for her future husband.

- c. The _____

When the day of the marriage finally arrived, the bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, would go to the home of the bride, normally at midnight. The groom's friends would follow him with torches in a parade through the town's streets. Once at the bride's home, the groom would lead her to his father's home, where the parents of the bride gave their blessing (Matt. 25:6, 10).

- d. The _____

Once the blessing of the ceremony was completed, the family and friends of the groom and bride were invited to a wedding feast (Gen. 29:21-22; John 2:1-11). At the feast the guests were expected to wear the appropriate clothing (Matt. 22:11) and were seated according to their relationship to the couple (Luke 14:8-9). Finally, the marriage feast would last for a week or more.

- e. The _____

At an appropriate time, after the marriage feast had begun, the bride and groom would go to their new home to consummate their marriage. Thus, at this time they would physically join themselves together as husband and wife.

When one considers the process of being married from a biblical point of view, one cannot help but see how it corresponds to Jesus (the bridegroom) and the Church (the bride). Consider the following:

- The Betrothal - God the Father has chosen and purchased a bride for His Son (1 Peter 1:2, John 6:37, 39; 10:29; 17:2, 9, 24; Acts 20:28; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 5:9).
- The Preparation - God the Son has gone to His Father's home to build a place for His bride (John 14:2). And at the same time, the Church (bride) is being prepared for her Bridegroom by keeping herself pure (Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-8). At present the Bridegroom (Jesus) is giving His bride (the Church) many different gifts in anticipation of His coming for her and His love for her (Eph. 4:7, 11-12; 1 Cor. 12:4-11).
- The Procession - One day very soon Jesus is coming back for His bride: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."*
- The Marriage Feast - At the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Church will celebrate the union she will then have with her Groom (Rev. 19:7-8). It would also appear that one's position at the supper may be determined by one's righteous acts for which they were rewarded at the Bema Seat.
- The Consummation - During the Church Age, Jesus had entered into a legally binding agreement with all those who are born again. This is the New Covenantal agreement we celebrate at the Communion Table. Thus, we are betrothed to Him. But when the Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place we will permanently be united with Jesus,

spiritually, emotionally, and physically in an eternal oneness, thus finally consummating the relationship.

Lesson 7

The Great Tribulation

Introduction

In this section of our study of eschatology, we will consider the events that will take place in the future known as the Great Tribulation. This is a period of time that fits between the rapture of the church and the second coming of Jesus Christ. In some ways it could be compared to the final half mile of a long race. It is the last few minutes of the race that is the most exciting. Human history is a long race that began thousands of years ago in the Garden of Eden and ushered in the sinfulness of mankind. The Great Tribulation represents the final seven years of man's horrific rule over the earth. This period of time is filled with exciting events, and it will take a good amount of time to unpack all the major events and personalities associated with the Great Tribulation. This will not be an exhaustive study of this period of time, but it will give us a good overview to help us understand God's purposes and plans for the final years of sinful humanity's reign over the earth.

Some of the events we will take into consideration will be the unrest, violence, and wickedness which will occur, especially during the last three-and-a-half years of the Great Tribulation. The intensity of God's judgments during this time will be especially impactful for the unsaved. Also, Israel will suffer under great persecution and Gentile believers will face martyrdom. There will be a rise of a new federation that comes out of the old Roman Empire. There will be a world war that trumps all previous wars as the kings of the earth try to erase the Israelites from human history.

The personalities that will come forward during this time reads like a cast of characters in an epic movie. You have the 144,000 Jews who are God's witnesses in the beginning of the Tribulation. In the second half of the Tribulation, we are introduced to two witnesses who will be killed and three days later resurrected. Satan, the antichrist, the false prophet and demons will all be highly active during this time. And the closing of this period of time will be marked by the greatest personality of all, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Lord Jesus Christ who will bring an end to the world's chaos and establish His reign over the earth.

As you can see, the final days are going to be very exciting. I will attempt to be your tour guide as we make our way through what the Bible has to say about this fantastic time in human history known as the Great Tribulation.

1. God's purpose for the Great Tribulation

- a. To announce the gospel of the _____ (Matt. 24:14).
- b. To bring Israel to _____ and _____ for their Messiah-Jesus (Deut. 4:27-30; Hosea 5:14-6:3; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 7:1-4).
- c. To convince Israel of their need for a _____ to produce a national regeneration (Dan. 12:5-7; Jer. 31:31-34; Eze.20:34-38; 36:25-27; 37:1-14; Zec. 12:9-13:2; Isa. 59:20-21).
- d. To create a desire for _____ to return to the land of Israel (Zec.8:7-8; Eze. 36:24; 37:21).
- e. To end The Times of the _____ and their domination of the Jewish people (Isa. 24:21-23; 59:16-20; Matt. 24:29-31; Rom. 11:25).
- f. To exercise the _____ of God's judgment upon wicked, unbelieving men and nations for their sinfulness (Isa. 13:9-11; 24:19-23; 26:21; Zeph. 1:1-14-18; Rev. 6:15-17).
- g. To serve as a _____ to the Messiah's kingdom (Eze. 20:33-38; 37:23; Zec. 13:2, 14:9; Matt. 25:31-46).

2. The duration and extent of the Great Tribulation

- a. The Tribulation will begin when the Church is raptured; it will last seven years and come to an end when the Lord Jesus returns to set up His messianic kingdom. We should note that the Bible does not give an exact date that the Tribulation begins; therefore we cannot say that it starts the exact moment the church is raptured. But, the Bible does tell us of two important events that signify the Great Tribulation is under way. One is on earth and the other is in heaven:
 - i. The signing of a _____ between the leader of the confederacy of European states and Israel (Dan. 9:27).
 - ii. The breaking of the first _____ by Jesus Christ in heaven (Rev. 6:1).

- b. What makes this period of time the Great Tribulation is how the _____ world, all of humanity, will be involved.
- c. It is the Great Tribulation because it will be known as God's direct _____ and a time as the world has never seen (Rev.6:15-17; Matt. 24:21).

3. Biblical names that refer to the Great Tribulation

- a. The _____ Day or The Day of the _____ (Isa. 2:12; 13:6,9). The word "day" can refer to one day or to the entire time frame of the Tribulation. We might better understand this if we consider how we might say that someone had their day in court. The day could refer to one day in court or the whole court case. Thus, The LORD's Day can refer to the day Jesus returns or the whole Tribulation period. The context of the passage where the title is used will help to determine the meaning.
- b. The Day of _____ or Trouble (Deut.4:30; Zeph. 1:15). The Prophet Zephaniah uses many different descriptive words to emphasize the distress during the Tribulation.
- c. The Time of Jacob's _____ or Distress (Jer. 30:7). This title helps us see how the Great Tribulation has an important bearing on Israel.
- d. The Time of _____ Labor and Birth Pains (Isa. 21:3; 26:17-18; Jer. 4:31). The correlation here is with a woman who goes into labor with early signs of contractions. The longer the labor goes on the more frequent and severe the pain of the contractions are until the baby is born.
- e. The Day of _____ (Deut. 32:35; Obadiah 12-14). Like the prophet Zephaniah, Obadiah uses a series of descriptive words to describe the days of the Great Tribulation.
- f. The Day of _____ (Isa. 26:20; Dan. 11:36). This title describes the anger and wrath of God that will be poured out on the world in the Tribulation.

- g. The Lord's _____ and _____ work (Isa. 28:21). This is referring to God's chastisement of Israel through His righteous justice (v.17), and it will be terrifying (v.19) in those days.
- h. The Lord's Day of _____ (Isa. 34:8; 35:4), 61:2; 63:4).
- i. The Day of _____ and Thick _____ (Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15).
- j. The Day of the Lord's Burning _____ (Zeph. 2:2-3). The word "anger" in Hebrew means God is so angry that His nostrils are flaring as He pours out His wrath.
- k. The Day of _____ from Almighty God (Joel 1:15).

4. The ministries of God during the Great Tribulation

- a. The ministry of the 144,000 Jews.
 - i. They will be God's _____ evangelists during the first half of the Tribulation (Rev. 7:4-8).
 - ii. They are described as "_____ " and "the first fruits unto God," referring to the fact that they are the first to be saved during the Tribulation (Rev. 14:4; cf Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15).
 - iii. They will be _____ in character (Rev. 14:4) and virgins.
 - iv. These Jews will lead a worldwide _____ as witness of Jesus (Rev. 12:17).
 - v. Their message will be the _____ of the Kingdom (Matt. 24:14). Their gospel message will be the same as it has been in every age, faith in the promised Messiah but with an emphasis on preparing one's self for the soon coming Kingdom of Christ.
 - vi. It appears their evangelistic efforts will be _____ by many people during the Tribulation, if you consider the closeness of context between Rev.

7:1-8 and 7:9-17. Most of these people will be martyred in the second half of the Tribulation (Rev. 6:10-11; 12:10-11; 13:7, 15; 20:4).

vii. They will be the first to be _____ at the hands of the Beast out of the sea (Rev. 12:17; 13:7; 14:1-3).

b. The ministry of the two witnesses.

i. In the second half of the Tribulation, the _____ will seek to destroy any ministry of the gospel, but God will not be without a witness on the earth even during the darkest times of the Great Tribulation.

ii. The _____ of the two witnesses is presented in Scripture as “olive trees” and “lamp stands” (Rev. 11:3-4). In Zechariah 4:1-6, these two metaphors represent the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The olive tree provides the oil for the lamps to burn, and the source of the power is stated in v.4, “...*standing by the Lord of the whole earth.*” The Holy Spirit is the person of the trinity that is most often associated with the exercise of God’s power.

iii. They will be _____ beings as they will die (Rev. 11:7).

iv. They are never _____ by name. Some have speculated they could be Enoch and Elijah due to the fact that they never died but were raptured (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11).

v. Their purpose is to be God’s _____ and _____ (Rev. 11:3). They will never stop testifying of God’s existence and man’s responsibility to honor Him. Much like Moses did with Pharaoh.

vi. At the time of their ministry, the Beast will seek to remove all _____ of God’s existence on earth (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5-6).

vii. As God’s prophets, the voice of these men will be _____ God’s voice speaking to the world as the Beast will outlaw the Bible (Dan. 7:25).

- viii. They will possess unique _____ by the Holy Spirit to preserve their lives from personal attack (Rev. 11:5). They are also given power to control the natural world (Rev. 11:6).
- ix. Their ministry will be received by the world as those who “_____” them (Rev. 11:10).
- x. When they have completed the work God has set out for them, they will be _____ by the Beast (Rev. 11:7).
- xi. Their _____ will be left in the street for the world to see (Rev. 11:8) and a worldwide festival will celebrate their death (Rev. 11:9-10). After three-and-a-half days, their bodies will be resuscitated and raptured (Rev. 11:11-12).
- xii. Their departure from earth will _____ a great earthquake and close the second of three “woes” (Rev. 8:13) found in the book of Revelation (9:12; 11:14; 12:12). The word “woe,” in the Greek language means horror or dreadful.
- xiii. The _____ of their ministry will last for three-and-a-half years (Rev. 11:3) and will take place during the apex Satanic power and authority on the earth (Rev. 13:5).

5. The power of the gospel to save in the Great Tribulation

- a. Many people will come to know Christ as their _____ during the Tribulation (Rev. 7:9-14).

- b. They will experience the _____ of the Holy Spirit (Gal.3:27), which is the ministry of the Holy Spirit that regenerates believers to place them in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). They are not placed into the Church (Bride of Christ) but are partakers of Christ's righteousness and thus, sanctified and redeemed (1 Cor. 1:30).
- c. They are identified as "the _____" (Matt. 25:37), "_____ " (Rev. 13:7), and those who "*have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*" (Rev.7:14). In other words, they are redeemed by the blood of Christ at the Cross of Calvary.
- d. They will remain _____ to their Savior unto death (Rev. 12:11).
- e. They will depend upon the _____ as their source of authority in their worldview (Rev. 12:17).
- f. Their faith in Christ as their Savior will be manifested by their _____ works and doing God's will (Matt. 25:34-40; James 2:18, 26).

6. The judgments of human beings associated with the Great Tribulation

- a. *The judgment of the _____ believers (Dan. 12:1-3).* This judgment occurs at the end of the tribulation, at the second coming of Jesus Christ. All believers in Old Testament times will be resurrected at the end of the Tribulation to enjoy the promised reward of entering the Millennial Kingdom.
- b. *The judgment of _____ believers (Rev. 20:4-6).* This judgment will occur at the end of the Tribulation, at the second coming of Jesus Christ. This judgment will be based on those who came to faith in Christ and were faithful to Christ during the Tribulation. Their reward will be to reign with Jesus during the Millennium.
- c. *The judgment of _____ who survive the Tribulation (Ezek. 20:33-38).* This judgment will occur at the end of the Tribulation, at the second coming of Jesus Christ. This judgment will be for those Jews who survived the Tribulation. The purpose of this judgment will be to determine which Jews really did have faith in Jesus Christ and which Jews were

rebels who need to be purged from Israel. The result of the judgment is that believing Jews will enter the Millennial Kingdom, and the unbelieving Jews will be removed to wait for the final judgment. This judgment will take place in a private wilderness area.

- d. *The judgment of _____ who survive the Tribulation* (Joel 3:1-2; Matt. 25:31-46). This judgment will occur at the end of the Tribulation, at the second coming of Jesus Christ. This judgment will take place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and will be a judgment of Gentiles who survived the Tribulation. The primary issue at this judgment will be the manner in which the Gentiles treated the Jews. Those who are believers who helped and cared for the Jews during the Tribulation (because of excessive persecution by Satan) will be rewarded by being allowed to enter the Kingdom. Those who did not help the Jews will be cast into the lake of fire.
- e. *The judgment of _____ and the fallen angels* (Matt. 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 20:10). This judgment will occur at the end of the Millennium. Satan and all of the fallen angels will be judged and cast into the lake of fire.
- f. *The judgment of _____* (Rev. 20:11-15). This judgment will occur at the end of the Millennium at what is called the Great White Throne Judgment. All unbelievers of all time will be forced to face Jesus Christ one final time. They will then all be sentenced and condemned to the lake of fire.

7. The pouring out of God's wrath during the Great Tribulation

During the Great Tribulation, God will execute His divine judgment upon the earth and its inhabitants in an unprecedented way. This will take place through a series of judgments that begin at the start of the Tribulation and progressively become more severe by the end of that period of time.

God will carry out these judgments on mankind for several reasons: man's egregious sins, his defiant attitude toward God, and his persecution of Israel and believers (Isa. 13:11-13; 26:20-21; Rev. 19:2). The result of these judgments will bring about extraordinary suffering for a God-rejecting world.

There are five major judgments during the Tribulation. The first three are unpacked chronologically in sets of sevens: the seven seal judgments, the seven trumpet judgments, and the seven bowl judgements. The last two judgments will be unleashed on the religious and commercial harlot, Babylon the Great.

One other characteristic of these judgments is that God's angels will be active in the execution of them. As they do the work of God in executing the judgments, we will come to see the incredible power, authority and intelligence these angels possess.

With this as a brief introduction we will now look at each of these judgments in more detail.

a. The seven seal judgements (Rev. 6:1-17; 8:1)

i. *The first seal (6:1-2): The rider on a white horse - _____*

The opening of the first seal signals the start of the Great Tribulation by releasing a counterfeit Christ who will be allowed to conquer the world (Rev. 1-2).

To discover the counterfeit, all we have to do is look at the original and compare them. In this case we are comparing the antichrist to Jesus Christ. When we compare Revelation 6:1-2 to Revelation 19:11-16, it is easy to see that the person coming on a white horse in chapter six is not the same person as in chapter nineteen, although there are some similarities.

Secondly, the person on the white horse in chapter six is coming forward at the command of one of the four living creatures, an angel. Jesus is never commanded by anyone to do anything. He is His own sovereign and takes commands from no one.

What we have in chapter six is a person pretending to look like Christ but isn't Him. This person is a false christ and is doing just what Jesus warned His disciples about in Matthew 24:4-5, 23-27: "*Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.*"

Most likely, the person coming forward in Revelation six is the Antichrist at the beginning of the Tribulation. There are a few things we should notice in verse two about this person that gives us reasons to believe this:

- *First, he has a bow but no _____.* A bow is normally associated with a warrior. The absence of arrows indicates that he will not do his conquering by the force of a weaponized army but by peaceful means, most likely through political maneuvering, which will bring about worldwide peace. This worldwide peace is indicated by the opening of the second seal judgement, which removes the peace the antichrist has brought about (Rev. 6:4).
- *Second, he has a crown, but it is not a _____crown.* The person on the white horse has one crown, a (Gk.) "*stephanos*," a wreath-crown, not a (Gk) "*diadem*," which is a royal crown. The wreath-crown is a crown of victory indicating that He will indeed be a victorious conqueror but he is not of royal standing, such as Jesus.
- *Third, he has been given the authority to conquer by _____ decree, not by his own authority.* This indicates this person has divine boundaries and limits to what he can and cannot do.

If these things point to the Antichrist (and it seems highly likely they do), it points out the incredible persuasiveness and influence he will have over the entire world when he appears. It is important to know that he will not expose himself like the creature in the movie *Predator*, a freakish-looking beast that takes pleasure in hunting down and killing humans. The Antichrist will be more like a rock star that the world falls in love with—something along the lines of Michael Jackson's worldwide popularity. With today's technology, this kind of fame can come to a

person almost instantaneously. In any case, it is not hard to imagine how the Antichrist, empowered by Satan, could conquer the world at just the right moment in human history by presenting a man that looks like a savior. It has happened before with men like Hitler, Mussolini, Fidel Castro and others who came on the stage of human history at just the right moment to present themselves as a savior but end up being an evil tyrant. The breaking of the first seal judgment will expose the world to the most evil man in human history. He will pretend to be like Jesus but will actually be possessed by Satan and motivated to destroy Christ and His followers.

ii. *The second seal (6:3-4): The rider on a red horse - _____*

In this judgment, God removes the peace that the first seal brought into play through the antichrist. The red horse represents the blood that will be spilled during this time of war on the earth. According to Matthew 24:6-7, these wars will take place between nations and kingdoms, meaning that no group of people will be exempt from war or the threat of war during this time.

iii. *The third seal (6:5-6): The rider on a black horse - _____*

This seal speaks to the worldwide famine that will be the result of the aftermath of wars due to the opening of the second seal. Jesus prophesied there would be famines during the tribulation (Matt. 24:7; Luke 21:11). In Lamentation 4:8-9, starvation is pictured as blacker than soot, thus the black horses' connection to starvation. The scales mentioned in these verses speak to the rationing of food. Also, the cost of food during this time will be highly inflated due to the law of supply and demand. A quart of wheat or three quarts of barley is enough for one day's ration. The cost of wheat and barley will be a "denarius," the equivalent to one day's labor. Thus, most people will have a day-to-day existence.

iv. *The fourth seal (6:7-8): The rider on an ashen horse - _____ comes to 1/4 of the earth*

The color of the horse that delivers this fourth judgment is ashen, which pictures what a dead body looks like. This seal represents the hideously profound results of the wars, famines, disease, and the animal kingdom that will kill mankind. One quarter of the earth's population will die when the fourth seal is opened.

v. ***The fifth seal (6:9-11): The early martyrs - calling for God's***

This seal reveals the cost many believers will have to pay for their faith in Christ. Jesus spoke directly to this issue in Matt. 24:9-10, “*Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10 “At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.*” During this period of time, people will live in tremendous fear of the state.

The social atmosphere at this time will be something like that of Russia during the 1917 revolution, or the communist takeover of China in the 1940's, and the Nazi takeover of Germany (1930-1940). One of the main ways these regimes were able to take control of an entire nation was by pitting one group against another by using propaganda that demonized those that were a perceived threat to the state. Then using extreme physical force, the new regime would make examples of anyone that would dare stand against them. By that time people would be in fear for their own lives or they would believe the lies of the new regime, and in either case they became informants that turned in their family and friends who resisted the new regime.

When the fifth seal is opened, the undesirables at that time will be the nation of Israel (Jews) and all those who placed their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. The martyrs mentioned in this passage represent the people who come to faith in Christ in the early part of the Tribulation. There are some interesting facts about these martyrs we can extract from vv.9-11:

- They were in _____ - their faith in Christ saved them from the second death.
- They had a _____ of what had happened to them - their past was not wiped out.
- They wanted their deaths judged and _____ - they possessed a sense of justice after death.

- They were given white _____ - the white robes symbolize being washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:9, 13-14).
- They were told to “*rest*” until other _____ were martyred - their rest came from knowing that God had a plan and was executing it in His time. God is in control of one’s life both on earth and in heaven.

vi. *The sixth seal (6:12-17): The natural world - planetary _____ and*

The breaking of this seal brings the most prolific natural disasters in human history. In vv.12-17 we find six specific disasters that arise out of the natural world:

- **There will be “*great earthquakes*”** - the Greek word for “great” is “*megas*” from which we get our English word “mega.” These earthquakes will be on a scale the world has never seen before. The world is going to be violently rocked back-and-forth by God.
- **The sun will become black** - it is described as “*sackcloth made of hair*.” This kind of sackcloth was used to make sacks and strainers. Biblically, sackcloth was a symbol of mourning. So the point is this: when the sun goes dark the whole world will go into a dark mourning. In Exodus 10:21, the ninth plague that God brought upon Egypt was darkness. God described this darkness as something so dark it could be “*felt*.”
- **The moon will be like blood** - the darkened sun will have a bearing on the moon. At that time it will take on a color that will resemble the dark redness of blood.
- **Stars will fall to the earth** - this is not referring to literal stars as we know them, like the sun is a star. These are meteors that will shower the earth at a scale that has never been seen before. John describes them “...*as a fig tree casts unripe figs when shaken by a great wind*” (v.13). You will notice, “*unripe figs*” are spoken of. Ripe fruit is soft and easily plucked from the tree. It is when the fruit is unripened that it is the hardest to pull from the

tree. Also, when the fruit is unripened it tends to be the hardest; therefore, when the meteors fall, it is going to be a savagely dangerous experience.

When I think of this what comes to my mind is when the tractors go into the almond orchards for harvest. The tractors grab a hold of the tree trunk and shake it with great power causing the almonds to fall to the ground like rain drops falling in a great storm.

- **The sky will split apart like a scroll** - the picture here is of one long piece of paper with two ends that roll to the middle. When the scroll is opened, the ends are pushed away from each other to expose what is written on the inside of the scroll. With the aftermath of mega earthquakes, the sun darkened, the moon looking like blood, and meteors falling from the sky, it doesn't take much of an imagination to realize the earth's atmosphere will be profoundly impacted. When people look up to see the sky unfold in a supernatural way, it will frighten them to the bone. The nearest thing that I can picture this to is the skies in Nebraska in the spring time and early summer, tornado season. There would be times when the atmosphere would change so rapidly from a sunny day to dark threatening clouds that fill the sky full of wind, rain and hail. When a tornado was threatening, you could see the clouds move in sync with one another as they began to form the twister. It is a very foreboding and fearful thing to see the sky act like this.
- **The mountains and islands will be moved from their present location** - the word "*moved*" comes from a Greek word from which we get our English word "*kinetic*," such as in kinetic energy. This speaks of the energy of motion. The earth is going to be put into motion with such extreme energy, it will displace "*every*" mountain and island on the planet. One can only wonder what will happen to places like the Hawaiian islands or Mount Everest. The necessary power that is going to be unleashed to do this damage is going to be so tremendous we that we cannot even imagine it today. It will take an exertion of God's power to do this sort of thing.

The net result of these disasters is that every class of humanity will be affected. People will be absolutely terrified when these things come upon them. Their only

perceived hope of surviving will be to hide themselves under the earth because it is not safe to be on the earth (v.15). Also, there will be an acute awareness at that time that these natural disasters are evidence of God's presence and are the direct result of His Son's wrath, which causes men to hide from Them (vv.16-17).

It is amazing that men can be so aware of God's presence and anger and have no desire to repent of their sins and run to Him as a shelter. It goes to show the stubborn callousness of man's heart toward God and how he is so unable to save himself from the wrath of God.

vii. The seventh seal (8:1): The silence in heaven - the _____ of the storm

This is the calm while in the storm. **When we think of a great hurricane viewed from a satellite, we can see what is called the eye of the storm. There, in the middle of terrific upheaval there is a place of calm and eerie silence as the storm is all around.**

This sort of thing is what is being described for us when the seventh seal is opened in Rev.8:1. The silence is a pause of reverence for the bitter judgments that are to follow, which are the trumpet and bowl judgments.

The seventh seal judgment is an interesting one from this standpoint: within it contains both the trumpet and bowl judgments. So, the seventh seal judgment is two more series of judgements; thus you can see why there was a silence in heaven when it was opened. As we will see, these next two series of judgments will be some of the most terrifying things that will take place during the Great Tribulation.