

THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS

BIBLE TEXT : I Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:1-24.

LESSON 412 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep" (I Thessalonians 4:15).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

¹⁷ Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-24

¹ But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

² For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

⁴ But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Comfort Concerning the Dead

1. The dead in Christ shall rise first, I Thessalonians 4:13-16;

1 Corinthians 15:23

²³ But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

2. The living saints shall be caught up with them, I Thessalonians 4:17;

1 Corinthians 15:51

⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

1 Corinthians 15:52

⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

3. The Scriptures are given for our comfort, I Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11;

2 Corinthians 1:3

³ Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

2 Corinthians 1:4

⁴ Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

II Alert to His Coming

1. He comes as a thief in the night, I Thessalonians 5:1-4;

Matthew 24:42-51

⁴² Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

⁴³ But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

⁴⁴ Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

⁴⁵ Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

⁴⁷ Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

⁴⁸ But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

⁴⁹ And shall begin to smite *his* fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

⁵⁰ The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

⁵¹ And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

2. The Christian must watch, I Thessalonians 5:5-10;

Matthew 25:1-13

¹ Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

² And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.

³ They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*.

16 Rejoice evermore.

17 Pray without ceasing.

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

19 Quench not the Spirit.

20 Despise not prophesyings.

21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

22 Abstain from all appearance of

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

9 But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

III Exhortations to Christians

1. Respect your leaders, I Thessalonians 5:12-15;

Hebrews 13:17

17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

2. Pray and give thanks, I Thessalonians 5:16-20;

Philippians 4:6

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

3. Shun evil and hold fast that which is good, I Thessalonians 5:21-24;

Psalms 34:14

14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

Romans 12:9

9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

NOTES:

The Two Great Events

The general term, the "second coming of Christ," refers to two great events. The first is the Rapture of the Church, at which time, Christ is seen only by those who are ready; they are caught up to meet Him in the air. The second event is the Revelation of Christ, when He comes back with His saints to set up His kingdom on earth -- the Millennium. Between the Rapture of the Church and the Revelation of Jesus Christ occurs the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in Heaven and the Great Tribulation on the earth.

The Rapture of the Church is the catching away of the Bride of Christ -- those who have made themselves ready -- from this earth to the place that Jesus has prepared for them, to be united with Him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3).

We shall Rise

Cemeteries have been left unkempt; records of the dead have been destroyed; those gone on before have been forgotten; men may have been burned, blown to bits, or buried at sea; but nothing shall prevent the dead in Christ from coming forth at the

evil.

²³ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁴ Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*.

sound of the Trump of God. Science tells us that matter cannot be destroyed without leaving a trace. Though these bodies of the saints go back to dust, yet, out of the dust shall come forth each child of God in a glorified, resurrected body when the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the Trump of God. Jesus said, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28, 29).

Job was very emphatic when he cried out, "Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:23-27).

The First Resurrection

All the dead from Adam down to the end of time are going to be resurrected, "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (I Corinthians 15:23). The resurrection of the righteous dead, known as the "first resurrection" is in several stages; that is, Christ, as the firstfruits, came forth first as a token of the harvest that was to follow. We are told also that when Jesus died, "the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27:52, 53). Our hope of the resurrection is not founded on faith alone, but is well substantiated in the fact that Jesus arose from the grave, and not He alone, but many of the saints with Him. Thus with the firstfruits gathered in, we are well assured of the harvest that is to follow.

At His coming, we are told that the dead in Christ shall rise first. "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Corinthians 15:52). The bugle has long been used to arouse sleeping soldiers, but what a day that will be when the trumpet of God shall arouse from the dust of the earth the bodies of all sleeping dead who have died in Christ. The souls of Christians who die go immediately to Heaven. When Christ returns in the Rapture, these souls are clothed upon with immortality, with the bodies that are raised from the dead, each one receiving from the earth the substance that was laid aside in death. This resurrected body will "be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21).

The living, overcoming saints shall also "be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" and "shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." Thus the Rapture of the Church, which is the great harvest of the First Resurrection, includes the living, overcoming saints and the dead in Christ.

Warnings

"Let us watch and be sober." The careless and indifferent, though they may call themselves Christians, are in grave danger of being left behind when the Trumpet sounds. Jesus gave us the parable of the ten virgins as a warning to those who fail to make adequate preparations for His coming. What a bitter disappointment for those who intended to take part to find themselves shut outside the door! Who can picture the anguish of soul of the foolish virgins whose darkened lamps give witness to their failure to obtain the oil of the Spirit in the day when God

was pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh? Have you been baptised with the Holy Ghost?

Imagine the fear of the unprofitable servant as he stood before his Maker. His own excuse condemned him, and his unused talent lay on the table in mute evidence of his neglect. Can you feature his despair as he was cast into outer darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth because of neglected opportunities? Is your talent being used in the service of the King?

"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (I Thessalonians 5:5). The Word of God gives us light, but it is up to us to walk in it. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). The warnings in the Bible are numerous, especially those that express the necessity of watching for the coming of the Lord. We watch by measuring our lives to the Word of God. Are you measuring up, or making excuse?

The Armour

"Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." The true child of God is not, and must not be, content just to obtain forgiveness of sins and then settle down to go to sleep. We must be diligent to grow in grace, and to go deeper in the Lord through faithfulness in prayer and study of the Word of God. Salvation must be augmented by sanctification, a second, definite experience with the Lord. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Thessalonians 5:23). In addition to sanctification, he must seek until he receives the baptism of the Holy Ghost as promised by Jesus and experienced by the disciples as recorded in Acts 2, to be a member of the Bride of Christ.

We are "to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" those who "are over you in the Lord." We are exhorted to obey our spiritual leaders: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls" (Hebrews 13:17). Humility and submissiveness are qualities of the Bride of Christ. When we are corrected let us remember we are called to "abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thessalonians 5:22). Let us keep as far away as we possibly can from the danger line, and as close as we can to God that we might "be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:23).

QUESTIONS

1. What two events are included in the second coming of Christ?
2. Describe the Rapture.
3. Who will have part in the Rapture?
4. Name the order of the resurrection of the dead.
5. Where are the souls of the dead now? Are they con-scious?
6. Compare the resurrection with the harvest.
7. What preparation is necessary in order to meet the Lord in the air?
8. Describe the condition of the Church for which Christ died.
9. Name some of the signs of the coming of the Lord.
10. With what is the coming of the Lord compared?