

TEXT I Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:1-10

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES John 14:1-3; Revelation 22:20

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that at the Rapture of the Church, Christ will be seen only by those who are ready. They will be caught up to meet Him in the air, to be united with Him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER 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 14:3

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH 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: 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. — I Thessalonians 4:16,17

ANSWER
TITLE:

SEARCH
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Chapter Five
The Rapture

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The Lord’s Second Coming is the main topic of the Epistle to the Thessalonians. Its mention in every chapter implies that Paul must have given it particular emphasis in his preaching at Thessalonica. Though it is commonly spoken of as the Lord’s “Coming” or “Appearing,” it specifically says “second time” in Hebrews 9:28. Jesus’ word “again,” in John 14:3 means a second time. So it is perfectly proper and scriptural to speak of it as the “Second Coming.” Christ’s coming is mentioned or referred to in almost every New Testament book. The chapters in which it is explained most fully are Matthew 24 and 25; Luke 21; I Thessalonians 4 and 5; II Peter 3.

The Thessalonian epistles are commonly regarded as the earliest written New Testament books. Written by Paul the Apostle, the first epistle probably originated in Corinth between 49-54 A.D. They are about the Lord’s coming again. The last of the New Testament books is Revelation, of which the final word is, “I come quickly,” “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Thus the writing of the New Testament begins, and thus it ends.

“Fallen asleep,” is a scriptural expression for the Christian’s death. It is found often in Christian epitaphs in the catacombs.

YOUR OPENER

The Rapture

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KEY VERSE: 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: 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. — I Thessalonians 4:16,17

RESPONSES

1. The definition should bring out the thought of being carried away in body or spirit. By comparing this to the text, it is clear that this is precisely what happens when the Lord comes for those who are ready.
2. The dead in Christ will rise first; then those who are alive in Christ will join them in the air. In discussing this verse, be sure that your students are aware that those who make the Rapture will then be with the Lord forever.
3. The theological definitions for these words bring out that to resurrect is “to bring back to life, or to raise from the dead.” Translate is “to convey to Heaven, without death.” It might be interesting to note with your class that we have accounts of three Biblical characters who were translated and of others who were resurrected. Ask your class if they can name any of these people. II Kings 2:11 (Elijah); Matthew 9:25 (Jairus’ daughter); Luke 7:15 (son of widow of Nain); John 11:43,44 (Lazarus); Acts 1:9 (Jesus); Acts 9:40 (Dorcas); Hebrews 11:5 (Enoch). Wrap up this discussion by bringing out that just as surely as God’s power caused these miracles to occur, He has power to rapture those who are ready.
4. Only the saints will see Him because the meeting will not be on the earth, but in the air.

According to Scripture, the Second Coming of Christ encompasses two separate events: the Rapture of the saints, experienced only by those who are overcomers; and the Revelation of Christ, when Jesus comes with His saints from Heaven to set up His Kingdom. During the intervening time, the raptured saints will meet at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, while the Great Tribulation is taking place here on earth. In this lesson we will be studying the Rapture of the Church.

1. The dictionary gives several definitions for the word rapture. Which definition best fits the event described in our key verse?
2. At the time of the Rapture, who will rise first? What happens next?
3. What is the difference between the words resurrect and translate? Paraphrase our key verse using these two words.
4. We read in Revelation 1:7 that every eye shall see Him. This is speaking of the Revelation of Christ, not the Rapture. Why are we sure that only the saints will see Christ at the Rapture?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. What is the warning implied in our text in I Thessalonians 5, as well as in Matthew 24:27 and I Corinthians 15:52?

6. The Bible teaches that there will be a great separation when Jesus comes for those who are ready. After reading Luke 17:34-36 and Matthew 25:10-12, describe the two groups mentioned in these accounts.

7. What change will take place in our physical bodies at the Rapture (Philippians 3:20,21)? Using the following Scriptures, describe the characteristics of Jesus' glorified body:

Matthew 28:9

Luke 24:31

Luke 24:41-43

John 20:19

Acts 1:9

8. In reading the following Scriptures, what conclusions can we draw as to the timing of the Rapture in regard to the Tribulation and the revealing of the Antichrist? See Isaiah 26:20,21; Matthew 24:37; Luke 21:36; II Thessalonians 2:3-8.

9. What promises do these Scriptures contain for those who look for His coming?

Matthew 24:45-47

John 14:3

Hebrews 9:28

5. Your students should conclude that we must be watchful lest the suddenness and unexpectedness of Christ's return find us unaware. Refer to Hebrews 9:28 as another instruction regarding readiness. Discuss with your class how they can be watchful, referring back to the lesson on being ready, as a reinforcement of some of the things they must do to be prepared for this event.

6. After receiving the students' descriptions, lead the class into a discussion of the requirements for being ready to make the Rapture, using our text in I Thessalonians 5:6-9.

7. We will have a glorified body. Discuss the features of Jesus' glorified body: He was recognized (Matthew 28:9). He vanished from their sight (Luke 24:31). He ate (Luke 24:41-43). He entered rooms when the doors were shut (John 20:19). He was not subject to gravity (Acts 1:9).

8. Many in our day teach that the Christian will have to go through the Tribulation. Isaiah 26:20,21 shows God's desire to hide His people from the indignation when He comes to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. Matthew 24:37 shows that we have a type in Noah's day as to how it will be at the coming of Christ. God's judgment was poured out upon the sinner and they perished in the Flood. Those who were righteous were in the ark, which was typical of God's protection, and escaped God's judgment. Luke 21:36 shows Jesus' desire that we be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass on the earth. II Thessalonians 2:3-8 shows that the man of sin (the Antichrist) will not be revealed until the Holy Spirit (He who now letteth, or hinders), living in His saints, is taken out of the way. This indicates the saints also will be taken out of the way, as the Holy Spirit will not leave them.

9. Matthew 24:45-47 — He shall bless them and give them authority.
John 14:3 — He will receive them unto Himself.
Hebrews 9:28 — His appearance shall be without sin unto salvation.
Use these Scriptures as a springboard for your lesson wrap-up, stressing again the importance of being ready so that the Rapture will not find us unprepared.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

Some teach against a literal return of Christ, saying He is already here in the hearts of believers. What text can we use to prove the Second Coming?

Many false religions teach that Christ has already come, and proclaim some guru or holy man as Christ, saying there are many christs—representatives of God—appearing at different times in history. How can we answer this?

What is meant by the term Rapture? Discuss that although the actual word is not mentioned in the Scriptures, the meaning of it is clearly seen in many instances such as I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

What takes place at the Rapture? Who will take part in it?

What was Nick's reaction, in our ANSWER story, when he realized what had happened?

THINGS TO DO

Opener: Bring a helium balloon to class to introduce the lesson. Demonstrate how someday those of us who are ready for the Rapture will be weightless, defying gravity, and will rise up to meet the Lord. This will also include those who are asleep in Christ.

As you start your class this morning, instead of talking, use flash cards to communicate with the students. Continue this for a few minutes. The object of this is to have the students attentively watching every card. On the last card put "Shhhh . . . Listen . . . Do you hear a trumpet?" For a few moments you will have the students listening intently. At this point explain to them that when Jesus comes back to take us in the Rapture, a trumpet will sound and only those who are watching and waiting will be able to hear it.

Have children pass a magnet over a paper plate which contains different objects. Some of the objects should contain pure metal that can be attracted to the magnet. Others should contain no metal, using only aluminum foil, plastic, or some other substance that will not be at-


tracted to the magnet. Point out why each non-attracted item won't cling to the magnet, then draw a parallel with our lives and what things in our hearts can keep us from hearing the Trumpet call and from going to be with the Lord at His Second Coming.

Make up a time chart showing the chronological order of Biblical events, including the prophesied events such as the Rapture, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and the Tribulation. Fill in the names of each event as we study them in the coming weeks. This will definitely help the students to visualize the time order of these events in their minds. A good chart is found on page five of this Teacher's Guide.

Answers for ANSWER

I'm Going Up!

The Rapture! I want to be sure I'm ready. Read I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and fill in the missing words in the verses on the cloud. Put the circled letters on the proper numbered lines at the bottom of the page. What is your answer to the question?



For the Lord himself shall D¹ S² C³ E⁴ N⁵ D⁶ from

H⁷ E⁸ A⁹ V¹⁰ E¹¹ N¹² with a S¹³ H¹⁴ O¹⁵ T¹⁶ . . .

we W¹⁷ H¹⁸ I¹⁹ C²⁰ H²¹ are A²² L²³ I²⁴ V²⁵ E²⁶ and

R²⁷ E²⁸ M²⁹ A³⁰ N³¹ shall be C³² A³³ U³⁴ G³⁵ H³⁶ T³⁷

U³⁸ P³⁹ together with them in the

C⁴⁰ L⁴¹ O⁴² U⁴³ D⁴⁴ S⁴⁵, to meet the Lord in

the air: so S⁴⁶ H⁴⁷ A⁴⁸ L⁴⁹ L⁵⁰ we

E⁵¹ V⁵² E⁵³ R⁵⁴ be with the Lord.

W⁶ I¹⁰ L¹⁶ L¹⁵ Y¹³ O⁴ M⁹ A³ K¹⁷ T¹¹ H² E¹⁸ R¹⁹ A⁷ P¹² T⁵ U¹⁴ R⁸ E¹?