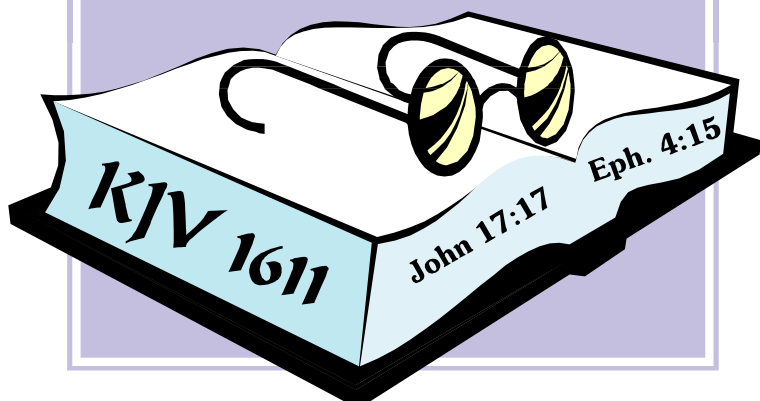


Gloryland's **New Christian Series**

*Doctrinal Studies
for New Believers*



Lesson Eight

The Rapture of the Church

New Christian Series

Doctrinal Studies for New Believers

Lesson Eight

The Rapture of the Church

This Bible course has been prepared and distributed
as a ministry of:

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“A sound and well composed catechism studied well and kept in memory, would be a good measure of knowledge, to ordinary Christians, and make them solid and orderly in their understanding, and in their proceeding to the smaller points, and would prevent a great deal of error and miscarriage, that many by ill teaching are cast upon, to their own and the churches grief! Yea, it were to be wished, that some teachers of late had learnt so much and orderly themselves.” — Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of *The Rapture of the Church, Lesson #8* in the *New Christian Series*. The primary references for this study are I Corinthians 15:51-55; I Thessalonians 4:14-18; Revelation 4:1-4; John 11:25-26; Song of Solomon 2:6-10; and Job 37:1-4.

The *rapture* of the church is a subject of great interest to all true believers earnestly awaiting the coming of “*the blessed and only Potentate,¹ the King of kings, and Lord of lords*” (I Timothy 6:15), who will soon return to take us out of this world. However, there are many who lack even the most basic knowledge of this glorious event. While this study is hardly exhaustive, the author hopes that it will give a clear understanding of this glorious doctrine, *the rapture*.

John the apostle instructs us:

“And now, **little children**, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” — I John 2:28

As His children we should be ready to meet Him with the confidence that everything we have committed unto Him is secure forever (II Timothy 1:12). Furthermore, as His stewards we should be ready to stand before the *Judgment Seat of Christ* to give a good account of those things He has committed unto us (I Peter 4:10; I Corinthians 4:1-2). We do not want to be ashamed of our lives and works when we stand before the Lord face to face, nor do we want Him to be ashamed of us.

¹ “Potentate” means ruler.

Consider this admonition from the Lord:

*“Whosoever therefore shall be **ashamed of me** and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall **the Son of man be ashamed**, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”*

— Mark 8:38

THE BODY OF CHRIST

In *Lesson 7*, we learned about the resurrection body that will clothe every believer at the Lord's return. At that time, the Lord Jesus Christ will change our vile, sinful bodies of flesh into perfect, sinless, glorified bodies like His own. Then we will leave this earth, rise to meet Jesus in the air, and go to Heaven to receive our eternal reward.

However, we are presently living in a period commonly referred to as the *Church Age*. During this *Church Age*, God has been forming a *spiritual body* made up of all born again believers (not to be confused with any so-called *universal ecumenical church* on the earth). When God saves a man, the Holy Spirit makes him a part of this *spiritual body*, and establishes his home in Heaven (John 14:1-3; Ephesians 2:6). In this *spiritual body* there is no respect of persons.

Paul said,

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”
— Galatians 3:28

In contrast, the *physical body of Christ* (the church) upon the earth consists of saved Jews and saved Gentiles. This was a great mystery until it was revealed to Paul (the apostle to the Gentiles). He speaks about it in his letter to the Ephesians.

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

“If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

“Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

*“Which **in other ages was not made known** unto the sons of men, as **it is now revealed** unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;*

“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

“Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.”

— Ephesians 3:1-8

Paul also speaks of the formation of this spiritual body in his letter to the Corinthian church.

Paul writes:

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

*“For **by one Spirit** are we all baptized into **one body**, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

“For the body is not one member, but many.”

— I Corinthians 12:12-14

➡ Of course, this body of Christ is the church.

And Paul tells us that God,

*“[H]ath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to **the church**,*

*“**Which is his body**, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”*

— Ephesians 1:22-23

The *Church Age* began nearly 2000 years ago when the Holy Ghost was sent down by the Lord Jesus Christ on the *Day of Pentecost* (Acts 2:1) in fulfillment of the promise He made in the first chapter of the book of Acts.

Luke wrote in the book of Acts:

“For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be **baptized with the Holy Ghost** not many days hence.”

— Acts 1:5

It was then that the Holy Spirit began baptizing believers into “the church, which is his body” (the **supernatural** body of Christ, now made up of all born again believers in Heaven and on earth).

We read in Acts:

“But **ye shall receive power**, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: **and ye shall be witnesses unto me** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

— Acts 1:8

Believers are to be His “witnesses” to the lost everywhere. When this supernatural body is completed, the Lord Jesus Christ is going to come back and take us out of this world. This event is commonly called *the rapture*.²

The Power Of Death

When believers die, their souls go to Heaven, but their bodies go to the grave, where they rot and turn to dust. In the incarnation, Christ partook of a natural human body so that through death He might take away from Satan the power of death. If Christ had not conquered death at Calvary and taken away the

² The word, “*rapture*,” itself is not found in the Bible. “*Rapture*” means to “to be carried away, or caught up.” *The Random House Webster’s Dictionary* - 1992.

keys to death and Hell, the Devil would still have the power to keep our bodies in the grave. Before Calvary, Satan had power over death, but after Calvary, Satan was stripped of that power.

We read in the Bible:

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;” — Hebrews 2:14

“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” — Revelation 1:18

One day Christ will return and take our bodies out of the grave by His power, as we are *caught up* together with Him and *carried away* to Heaven. Perhaps the scene will be similar to that recorded by Jude.

“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.” — Jude 9

When Moses died (Deuteronomy 32:5-6) it was the Lord Himself who buried Moses. From Jude, we learn that the Lord later resurrected Moses' body. In fact, we see Moses appearing with Christ and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17:1-5. The Lord resurrected the body of Moses for this appearance. When He did this, Michael the Archangel had to contend with the devil about bringing his body up, because he was being resurrected before Jesus Christ's death on the cross. Since the devil still held *the power of death* at that time, he contended that he had the right to keep Moses' body. (The Lord had not yet died on the cross to pay the price of the redemption of that body.) Of course, the Lord simply rebuked the devil and brought up Moses' body anyway. Since Christ paid the price for

our redemption with His own blood, He can now raise the bodies of ALL believers from the grave without contention. Therefore, at His command, they will literally come out of the grave by the power of His word. That resurrection body will be a new, glorified body like His own.

Because the word “*rapture*” isn’t actually found in the Bible, some object to its frequent use in referring to this event. However, their objections are foolish because other commonly used words like “*Millennium*” and “*Trinity*” are not in the Bible either. Nonetheless, we continue to use them because they describe these doctrines so well.³

³ The *Millennium* is a time, following the rapture and the tribulation, when the Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth to reign in His earthly kingdom for 1,000 years. It is so named because the Latin word “*Mill*” means 1,000 and “*annum*” means years. This event is described in Revelation 20:1-6.

“*Trinity*” is an expression commonly used to describe the unity of God in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

OUR IMMORTAL BODIES

The previous lesson on *The Resurrection Body* is very closely related to this lesson on *The Rapture*. At the moment the believer's body is caught up from the grave, it will be changed. In that new resurrection body, we will be taken up to the third Heaven to stand before the *Judgment Seat of Christ* (cf. I Corinthians 15:42-52).

The Mystery Revealed to Paul

One of the seven *mysteries* mentioned in the New Testament is the formation of the body of Christ (in the Church Age). It was never before understood until revealed to the apostle Paul (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:1-7).

Another “*mystery*” revealed to Paul is the *rapture* of the saints, in which “*this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*” (I Corinthians 15:53).

In I Corinthians, Paul says:

“Behold, I shew you a **mystery**; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,” — I Corinthians 15:51

As we have already seen in our lesson on *The Resurrection Body*, the Bible indicates that our new body will have no blood. Can you imagine what it will be like for an unsaved man to be in a church service when the rapture takes place? At one moment, he is in a room filled with people— then the trumpet sounds. Suddenly, “*in the twinkling of an eye*” (I Corinthians 15:52), all the saved people disappear before his very eyes. Left behind will be nothing but their clothing, and hundreds of gallons of blood all over the floor! Why, the man would probably lose his mind! It will be a terrible time for the lost, but a glorious occasion for believers

caught up to be with the Lord. Only then will life for us truly begin, for troubles and trials will be no more.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Old Testament prophets wrote about this marvelous event, but none understood it until God revealed it to Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. (That they did not understand the things they themselves wrote confirms the divine inspiration of scripture.) The Bible says “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God*” (II Timothy 3:16), and that “*holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” (II Peter 1:21). Peter verifies that these Old Testament prophets often wrote about things they didn't understand themselves.

“Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

“Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”

— I Peter 1:11-12

The Old Testament prophets knew nothing about the Church Age and the rapture of the church because it was not revealed to them.

Therefore, Paul instructs us:

*“Behold, **I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep**, but we shall all be changed,”— I Corinthians 15:51*

Paul means *we shall not all die*. That is what he means by the word “*sleep*” in verse 51. This can be seen more clearly in John 11:11-14, where Jesus told the mourners, “*Our friend Lazarus **sleepeth**.*” They did not understand what He was talking about, so He told them plainly that he was dead. In writing to the Corinthians about the believers' future resurrection, Paul

instructed them, “*We shall not **all** sleep.*” All the saints will not have died when Jesus Christ comes back. If our blessed Lord returned in our lifetime, we would be among those covered in the last part of this verse: “*but we shall **all** be changed.*” When the rapture takes place, *some* believers will be raised from the dead and *some* will be caught up alive, but *all* will be changed. Our mortal bodies will become immortal, glorified bodies just like Christ’s body (cf. I John 3:1-3 and Philippians 3:20-21). All these things will take place faster than the blink of an eye.

“*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.*”

— I Corinthians 15:52

“*The **twinkling** of an eye*” is not the actual *blink* of an eye. Rather, it is the motion of an eye when it’s just *starting* to blink. Because it is so fast, its speed can only be estimated (about 1/1000 of a second). We cannot imagine how fast that is, but that is how quickly the rapture will take place. Just think, if some unsaved person were sitting across the table from you and the trumpet sounded they would not even see you go if they blinked their eyes.

The Trump of God

The word *trump* in verse 52 seems to be a difficulty for many Bible teachers. Rather than discover the meaning of the word by examining the context, they follow the new *Bible perversions* and *change* the word to *trumpet*— but that is incorrect. The King James Bible is God’s word, and the words in the King James Bible are the *inspired words* of God. “*The last trump*” is correct. The “*trump*” is simply the *sounding* of the trumpet. Now, there are some who teach that the church will go through the tribulation. They say that the trumpet mentioned in I Corinthians 15:52 is the ‘*last trumpet*’ sounded in Revelation 11:15, which blows *after* the tribulation is over. But the King James Bible is careful to

say last *trump*, distinguishing it from the last *trumpet*. Paul does not say this is the *sound* of the last *trumpet*, but rather the last *trump* (or *sound*) of this particular trumpet that will sound at the time of the rapture. Because all the new perversions of the Bible say *last trumpet* here, they are contributing to the heretical teaching that *the church* will go through the terrible time of the future *Great Tribulation*. However, the scriptures clearly teach that *the church* will not go through that time of tribulation.

Furthermore, in I Thessalonians we read that:

*“[T]he 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.”*

— I Thessalonians 4:16

The Lord will not descend when the last trumpet sounds, but upon the last trump of this particular trumpet.

*“[F]or the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we **shall be changed.**”*

— I Corinthians 15:52

Since He says “*the **last trump**,*” it would seem that the trumpet is sounded more than once. It appears that there is one blast that signals the dead in Christ to rise, and then a second blast that signals the living to be changed and go up.

This Mortal Must Put On Immortality

“[A]nd the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (I Corinthians 15:52). There are two classes of people mentioned in this text— the dead saints and the living saints. This agrees with Jesus’ conversation with Martha about Lazarus.

“Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”

— *John 11:24-26*

- ☞ *The first class of believers who “shall be changed” when Jesus Christ returns are those who “were dead, yet shall... live.”*
- ☞ *The second class of believers— those who “shall never die,” are those who will still be alive when the Lord returns.*

Notice in I Corinthians 15:52, that Paul is careful to say, “*WE shall be changed,*” including himself. (Paul earnestly expected the rapture to take place in his lifetime.) Every believer should live in earnest expectation and hope that the Lord will return to take us to Heaven before we see death. Paul’s deep longing for the Lord’s return earned him a crown of righteousness,⁴ which we can win also.

Paul continues in I Corinthians 15:

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” — I Corinthians 15:53

Again, we see two classes of people that will be raptured. *The first class, “this corruptible,”* refers to those believers who are now deceased— those whose bodies are in the grave. But when Christ returns, these will put on “*incorruption.*” The new body that comes out of the grave won’t be the same corruptible body that went into the grave, but a new incorruptible body that will never again get old, never sorrow, never suffer, and never die.

⁴ See lesson #5—*Judgment of the Believer*. The “*crown of righteousness*” is rewarded to those who lovingly anticipate Christ’s appearance (II Timothy 4:8).

The rest of the verse (“*And this mortal must put on immortality*”) refers to *the second class*— living Christians. The word “*mortal*” means “*subject to death*” (pertaining to our fleshly bodies).⁵ We are *all* mere mortals temporarily dwelling in bodies that are subject to death. But if Christ returns in our lifetime, we will be changed and will “*put on immortality*.” Our new bodies will not be subject to death. Jesus said, “*Neither can they die any more*” (Luke 20:36).

“*So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, [THE DEAD IN CHRIST] and this mortal shall have put on immortality, [THOSE STILL ALIVE AT HIS COMING] then shall be brought to pass **the saying**⁶ that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*”
— I Corinthians 15:54

When the Lord returns, death *will* be swallowed up in victory, and we *will* be able to sing the song *Victory in Jesus* in a way we have never sung it before. Jesus won the *victory* over death, and that *victory* is ours in *Him*.

“*O victory in Jesus,
My Saviour, forever,
He sought me and bought me
with His redeeming blood;

He loved me ere I knew Him,
And all my love is due Him,
He plunged me to victory,
Beneath the cleansing flood.*”

⁵ The words *mortality* and *mortuary* come from this word.

⁶ The “*saying*” Paul refers to is found in Isaiah 25:8. “*He will swallow up death in victory.*”

So Paul writes with confidence:

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

— I Corinthians 15:55-57

There will be no *sting of death* for believers who are still alive at Christ’s return, because they will not have to die. Furthermore, the *grave* will have no *victory* over those already dead *in Christ*, because the grave will not be able to hold them. He will raise their bodies up out of the grave by the power of His word.

We know that *“the strength of sin is the law,”* and that *“sin is the transgression of the law”* (I John 3:4). The *Law* was given so we would know what sin is, and that all are guilty of sin. (Also see Romans 4:15; 5:13 and 7:7.)

At the rapture, we will get our new bodies. Our victory will be complete then— we will have victory over the flesh forever. As a reminder of this, every believer should memorize the following verse.

*“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as **ye know that your labour is not in vain** in the Lord.”*

— I Corinthians 15:58

The Blessed Hope

We turn now to I Thessalonians 4, where we find more about this marvelous and wonderful event, the *rapture* of the Church.

*“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**.*

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep⁷ in Jesus will God bring with him.

*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**⁸ them which are asleep. 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.

Wherefore comfort⁹ one another with these words."

— *I Thessalonians 4:13-18*

Paul admonishes believers to "sorrow not," for there is no need to grieve over saved loved ones who have departed to be with the Lord. We need not fear if we know they are gone on to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. They are far happier over there, with their blessed Saviour in glory, than they ever were in this life. It is a great tragedy then, when the lost die and leave *their* loved ones brokenhearted and grief-stricken. They do not have the comfort the believer has, for without God, they have no hope.

Speaking about the lost, Paul also says:

*"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, **having no hope, and without God in the world.**"*

— *Ephesians 2:12*

- ☞ Without hope and without God, the unsaved have nothing to look forward to but eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire.

⁷ "Sleep" means "death" (cf. John 11:11-14).

⁸ "Prevent," means "to precede" or "to come before."

⁹ The word "comfort," means "to exhort" or "to encourage."

How different is the hope in the heart of the Christian! At death, he goes to Heaven where there is prepared for him indescribable riches in glory. He has that *sure hope* and *certain expectation*, in Christ.

☞ According to *Webster's Dictionary*¹⁰ *hope* can mean, “To feel that something desired **may** happen as in: ‘We hope for an early spring.’”

But *hope*, as used in the Bible (regarding our eternal destiny) *never* means simply a *possibility* that a certain thing may occur. The *Bible* definition of the word “*hope*,” is found in the *Webster's Thesaurus*,¹¹ “*confidence, assurance, or expectation.*”

We have far more than the mere *desire* that our salvation *might* be in Christ, or that Jesus *may* come again. We *know* that we are saved *now*, and look forward to His coming with confidence and anticipation because of its certainty. The so-called *Church of Christ, Roman Catholic Church, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses*, and other false religions teach that salvation is by faith and works. They take the word *hope* to mean “*maybe*” or “*possibly*” we are going to Heaven. But the Bible *never* uses this word in that sense. The Bible-believing Christian can *know* he is saved (I John 5:12-13). The basis of his confidence is nothing less than God's Holy Word.

“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

— I John 5:12-13

¹⁰ Random House Webster's Electronic Dictionary and Thesaurus, College Edition Version 1.0— Copyright 1992, Reference Software.

¹¹ *ibid.*

The Christian's hope is Christ Himself. Because He *lives*, we *know* that one day He will return to give us our new, sinless, glorified bodies like that of the Lord Jesus. Then we will be rid of the our old sinful, worn out, temporal bodies in which we now dwell. Believers still strive daily against temptation, and seek after holiness. They all have a longing for that new, sinless, perfect body that will no longer be subject to sin. Then they can serve the Lord perfectly. That is our hope: knowing that one day He *will* come back and give us that body. It is a *sure thing*. There is no doubt about it— He *will* do it.

Some other examples of this use of the word “*hope*” are found in the following scriptures. While some use these verses to teach salvation by works, we will see that they *do not* teach a *hope-so* salvation. Rather, they teach us to have confidence and expectation in a future event.

See what Paul says in Romans:

*“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of **our body**.”*

*“**For we are saved by hope:** but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”*

— Romans 8:23-24

Some use the phrase “*saved by **hope***” to try to prove that we can only *hope* we are saved (not yet knowing). But reading verses 23 and 24 together, we see the truth. While believers' souls are saved *right now*, we are still “*waiting for the redemption of our **body**.”* The redemption of our bodies will not take place until the *rapture* when the Lord Jesus Christ will give us glorified bodies like His own. So when Paul says, “*we are saved by **hope**,*” he is talking about our future resurrection body.

Just as the apostle John when he says:

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

*“Beloved, **now** are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, **we shall be like him**; for we shall see him as he is.*

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

— I John 3:1-3

Verse 2 tells of our new glorified body. When Jesus comes back, we are going to be made like him. That is our hope; confidence and assurance in a future event with the certain expectation of obtaining it.

We read in the book of Titus:

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world:

*“Looking for that **blessed hope**, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

— Titus 2:11-13

That “*blessed hope*” we are looking for is the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ when we will receive our new bodies.

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;

*“In **hope** of eternal life, **which God**, that cannot lie, **promised** before the world began;”*

— Titus 1:1-2

The “**hope** of eternal life” is the “blessed hope” we are looking for— when we will receive our new resurrection bodies that will never die. Our souls have eternal life *right now* (**present tense**), but our bodies do not. Our hope of eternal life lies in the Lord’s promise to return and give us a body that will never die. That *will* happen, because He “promised,” and “he is faithful that promised” (Hebrews 10:23).

So Peter says:

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;” — 1 Peter 1:13

What are we hoping for—“Maybe we will make it and maybe we won’t?” No! We “**hope to the end** for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” That “grace” includes the new bodies we’re hoping to the end for.

So Paul says:

“We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

“Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;”

— Colossians 1:3-5

That *hope* we are looking for is already laid up for us in Heaven, but the only way we will ever get it is for the Lord Jesus Christ to return and bring it to us. We are not in a “maybe we will make it and maybe we won’t” situation— *our hope* is laid up for us in Heaven *now*, just waiting for us. The question is not, “**Will** we get it?” but “**When** will we get it?” In I Corinthians, Paul speculates about the way things would have been if the Lord Jesus Christ had *not* risen from the dead. In that case, we would

have no hope, and we would all be heading for Hell. We would be going nowhere but to a grave if He had not risen. But He did come up, so we do have that *blessed hope*.

“But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

“Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

“For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

“Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ [THE ONES THAT HAVE DIED] are perished.

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

— I Corinthians 15:13-20

Thank God, **Christ is risen!** Paul is only speculating about what the consequences *would* have been if Christ had *not* risen. If Jesus Christ had not risen from the grave, Christians now departed would have no hope: they would have “*perished*” (verse 18). And because our only hope would be based on an event that never took place, we would have no hope either, and would be more miserable than anyone. Surely we must give praise to God that the Lord Jesus Christ has risen from the grave (verse 20)!

Our Parting and Reunion

Although the believer’s soul is saved *now*, his body is still waiting to be saved at the *rapture*.

*“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so **them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.**”*
— I Thessalonians 4:14

The *gospel*, as set forth by Paul in I Corinthians 15:1-4, is that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. Surely Paul had the *gospel* in mind when writing to the Thessalonians. Paul says, “*them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*” This refers to believers whose souls the Lord will bring back with Him upon His return— bringing back all *believers* who have ever died.

*“To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the **coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ **with all his saints.**”*

— I Thessalonians 3:13

When a believer dies, his soul leaves his body. Stepping out into the spirit world, that soul goes up to the third Heaven to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. It will remain there until Christ returns and clothes it with a new resurrection body.

Now let's look at Genesis 35 for another example of the soul departing from the body at death.

*“And it came to pass, as **her soul was in departing,** (for she died)...”*
— Genesis 35:18

And again from Paul's epistles:

*“For to me to live is Christ, and **to die is gain.**”*

“But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

“Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”

— Philipians 1:21-24

Paul would not have said, “to die is **gain**” if his only expectation was to go to the grave. No, Paul means that at death he would gain his eternal home where he would be with Christ forever. These verses teach that when a Christian dies, *he* goes to be with Christ, but *his corruptible body* does *not* go to be with Christ. That dead body goes to the grave, but the soul and spirit leave that body and go to be with Christ.

“Therefore we are always confident knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord;

“(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

— II Corinthians 5:6-8

When we die, our souls will leave our bodies, and will immediately be present with the Lord. This means that those who teach that Hell is the grave, and that the soul remains in an unconscious state until Christ’s return, are teaching a lie (i.e. Charles Russell’s cult, the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Herbert Armstrong’s cult, the Worldwide Church of God [with its magazine *The Plain Truth*]). In reference to the fate of the believer’s soul at the time of death, two things are very clear:

1. At death, the Christian’s soul goes to be *with Christ*
— NOT to Hell.
2. Hell is NOT the grave.

*“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.***

*“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:**”*

— I Thessalonians 4:15-16

Paul said, "**we** which are alive," because he was expecting the Lord to return in his lifetime. He says, "[**W**]e... shall not prevent them which are asleep." The old English word "prevent" means "to go before" (*pre*— before, *vent*— to go out). So Christians still alive at His coming shall not go up before the dead, for "the dead in Christ" will rise first.

Next, we read that "the Lord **himself** shall descend from Heaven." This is the personal, physical appearance of the Lord to the believer at the literal, physical, bodily resurrection from the grave. When this rapture and resurrection take place, the graves will literally burst open. We know this is true, because we read in Matthew 27 of a previous resurrection that took place when Jesus Christ rose from the dead.¹²

See the record in Matthew:

*"And **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

As fantastic as it seems, the rapture will take place at the end of the Church Age in the same way, and the bodies of the *dead in Christ* will come out of their graves. That resurrection will be initiated "with a shout" (I Thessalonians 4:16), and we will doubtless hear the Lord say, "Come up hither," just as John the apostle (a type of the believer in Christ) heard when he was caught up to Heaven (Revelation 4).

Notice what John says here:

*"After this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of **a trumpet**, talking with me, which said, **Come up hither**, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter."*
— Revelation 4:1

¹² At that time many Old Testament saints also came up with Him.

That is the trumpet sounded to signal the rapture of the Church (the body of Christ). Notice that in Revelation 11, a second rapture takes place. Again a voice from heaven shouts the command, “*Come up hither,*” and the *two witnesses* (Moses and Elijah) are caught up to Heaven.

*“And they heard **a great voice** from heaven saying unto them, **Come up hither.** And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.”*

— *Revelation 11:12*

I believe that when the Church is caught up to be with the Lord, we too will hear a voice calling, “*Come up hither.*” The living saints will follow after the saints who resurrected from their graves, and together we will rise to meet our Saviour in the air. What a time it will be when the *grave* will no longer be able to hold back the dead, and overcoming the natural law of gravity, we will all fly away to our home in Heaven! Furthermore, because of what the Lord says in the gospel of John, I believe that at the moment He says, “*Come up hither,*” the Lord will also call the name of each believer.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

“But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

*“To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and **he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.**”*

— *John 10:1-3*

Certainly, these “*sheep*” picture believers, and the *leading out* of the *sheep* is the rapture. So, it seems reasonable that we will also hear His voice call our name. How precious the thought, that “*he calleth his own sheep by name.*” Just imagine, on the day the Lord returns, John Smith will hear a voice calling, “*John Smith,*

come up hither,” and up he will go. At that moment, “*we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.*” After receiving our glorified bodies we will be caught up into Heaven to be with the Lord forever. I do not believe the unsaved will understand the words He speaks in the same way believers will understand them. The lost will probably think that they heard thunder, like those in John 12:

“Father, glorify thy name. Then came there **a voice** from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

“The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that **it thundered**: others said, An angel spake to him.”

— John 12:28-29

It appears that those who actually *heard* the voice were saved people, while those who only *heard a noise like thunder* were lost people. If this is true, then that’s probably what will happen when the Lord says, “*Come up hither.*” The unsaved will simply think that it thundered, not actually hearing the words, “*Come up hither.*” If they did hear Him call, they would probably go up too, because when the Lord speaks, what He says comes to pass (Genesis 1:3; Psalm 33:9).

I Thessalonians 4:16 tells us that He will descend “*with the voice of the archangel.*” In the Bible, *Michael* is the only archangel we know about. We read about him in Jude 9, where he contended with the devil over the body of Moses. The Bible doesn’t tell us what the archangel will say when the Lord descends. It may be that the devil will try to interfere with our future resurrection just as he did with the resurrection of Moses. If so, *Michael* will likely say, “*The Lord rebuke thee,*” just as he did in Jude 9.

Our Adversary, the Devil

See what Jesus taught His disciples in Matthew 12

“And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

“And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?”

“And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.

“But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

*“Or else how can one enter into **a strong man’s house**, and spoil **his goods**, except he first bind **the strong man**? and then he will spoil his house.”*

— Matthew 12:25-29

Examining these verses in their context, we see that those Pharisees were accusing Jesus Christ of having a *devil* or *unclean spirit*. The Pharisees had just seen Jesus cast a devil out of a blind and dumb man (verse 22), but they attributed the miracle to the power of the devil, accusing Jesus of doing this miracle “by *Beelzebub the prince of the devils*.”¹³

Here, “the *strong man*” is *Satan*, and his “house” is the world. In II Corinthians 4, Paul says that Satan is “the god of this world.” It appears therefore, that “the *strong man’s goods*” are people.

*“In whom **the god of this world** hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”*

— II Corinthians 4:4

¹³ “*Beelzebub*” is another name for Satan.

Peter says of him:

“[Y]our adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour;”

— I Peter 5:8

Paul also speaks of those caught in “*the snare of the devil*” (II Timothy 2:26). These verses indicate the power Satan has over men, but praise God, Christ has overcome the devil! Now, all who trust in the finished work of Christ are set free from the law of sin and death by the power of His blood (cf. John 12:31 and John 16:1).

*“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might **destroy** him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;”* — Hebrews 2:14

*“And having **spoiled** principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”*

— Colossians 2:15

The Lord Jesus Christ conquered Satan at Calvary, and He will *literally* bind him when He returns to establish His kingdom on earth.

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

*“And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and **bound him** a thousand years,*

“And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

— Revelation 20:1-3

Now, however, we are not talking about the establishment of His kingdom, but about the rapture of His church when He will come as “*a thief in the night.*”

“*For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*” — *I Thessalonians 5:2*

Jesus was crucified between two thieves, and when the soldiers came to take Him away in the garden, He spoke these words:

“*Are ye come out, as against a **thief**, with swords and with staves to take me?*” — *Mark 14:48b*

So when He returns to rapture the church (which is His body), He will come upon the lost unexpectedly, as a thief who slips in and steals the best things in the house at the most unexpected moment. The Lord will come back as a body-snatcher or a grave robber, and though the devil may once again try to interfere (as in Jude 9), he will be unable to keep the Lord Jesus Christ from completing His holy mission.

We have seen in I Thessalonians 4:16-17 that “*the dead in Christ shall rise first.*” That passage of scripture seems to imply that **the trumpet will sound once**. At that time, the graves of all “*the dead in Christ*” will burst open, and the remains of their old bodies will be reintegrated as new glorified bodies, that will then fly up to the clouds where the Lord is waiting. **Then the trumpet will sound again** (“*the last trump,*” as in I Corinthians 15:52), as the bodies of all the living saints will be changed into new glorified bodies “*in the twinkling of an eye.*”

Caught Up Together

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

*“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with **them**¹⁴ in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”*

— I Thessalonians 4:17

Verse 16 contains one of the greatest promises found anywhere in the word of God. It speaks of the time of our spiritual family reunion in the sky. Because we know this will be the final day of separation from our unsaved loved ones, we should strive to lead them to Christ. After all, a family reunion would not be complete if the mother, father, brother, sister, aunt, or uncle was missing. We should labor in prayer and tears over our family members so that they each can have a place with the rest of us all in this glorious family reunion in the sky. Remember, we need not sorrow over those loved ones “*asleep in Jesus*” (I Thessalonians 4:13-14).

In verse 17, Paul says, “*so shall we ever be with the Lord.*” He means every Christian will return to this earth with the Lord when He comes back to set up His kingdom. We know from our study of *The Christian's Inheritance* that not all believers will reign with Christ. Our reign is a reward we must earn (II Timothy 2:10-13; Colossians 3:23-25; Romans 8:16-18). Eternal life is the gift of God to all who believe, but the privilege to reign with Him depends upon our works.

Because I Thessalonians 4:17 says we will “*meet the Lord in the air,*” we know the Lord will not set foot upon the earth when He comes back **for** His church. He will stop somewhere in the clouds, and we will go to meet Him *in the air*. It will be at least seven years later before He returns **with** His saints. At that time, He *will* set foot upon the Mount of Olives, and He will then establish His glorious kingdom upon earth. This completely separate

¹⁴ The word “*them*” refers to the dead saints that went up immediately before in verse 16.

event is called the *Second Advent* or the *Day of the Lord*. As we will see in another study, the second coming of Christ (or *Second Advent*) will be in two parts.

- The first part is His coming **for** His saints— the rapture.
- The second part is His coming **with** His saints to establish His millennial kingdom upon the Earth.

(Some other references to the time the Lord actually sets foot upon the earth are: Zechariah 14:1-4; Revelation 11:15; 19:11-16.)

Words of Comfort

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

— *I Thessalonians 4:18*

“[T]hese words” (the words he just wrote) are a source of great comfort for any believer who has lost a saved loved one. “These words” can comfort a Christian having a difficult time in this old world. “These words” can comfort saved people who are suffering and dying. Dwelling on these words will cause the believer to long for the return of the *Redeemer*, which in turn can earn him a crown (the crown of righteousness, II Timothy 4:8).

The Bible is the only book in the world that brings *real* comfort to believers when death comes. There is absolutely no comfort for us in *The Book of Mormon*. The *Talmud* (used by the Jews) can offer no consolation, nor is the Muslim *Koran* reassuring to us. All those books teach salvation by works, so that one could never know whether he was going to Heaven or not. A Catholic has no comfort, because he thinks he must still go through *Purgatory*.¹⁵ The Jehovah’s Witness has no comfort,

¹⁵ “*Purgatory*”— a Roman Catholic invention not found in the Bible. It is supposedly a place or state following death in which penitent souls are purified of sins after a period of punishment and thereby are made ready for heaven.

because he thinks that Hell is the grave and that when he dies he will go to the grave and lie there in an unconscious state until Jesus Christ returns— that is certainly no comfort! An atheist *certainly* has no comfort, for in his view, his whole life will end in nothing.

The Rapture As Seen In The Old Testament

Now we will look at two passages of scripture in the Old Testament that talk about the rapture. The first is found in the Song of Solomon. The Old Testament prophets who wrote about these things had no idea what they were writing about, because the church was a mystery until it was revealed to the apostle Paul hundreds of years later. The Song of Solomon is a love story typifying Christ's relationship to His bride, the church.

“The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

“My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.

“My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

“For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

“The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;”

— Song of Solomon 2:8-12

“The VOICE of my beloved!” (verse 8) pictures the Lord Jesus Christ descending from Heaven with a shout (I Thessalonians 4:16).

“Behold, he cometh” (verse 8) pictures Jesus Christ coming for his bride.

“The windows” (verse 9) are a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ looking down upon us through the windows of Heaven (Genesis 7:11). *“The lattice”* is the crossbars of a window. The

indication is that we may be able to look up and see the Lord Jesus Christ coming for us just before the rapture takes place. “*Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away*” (verse 10) typifies the *catching up* of the bride (I Thessalonians 4:17).

Verses 11 and 12 indicate that the rapture will take place in the springtime or the summer. The *Church Age* began at the time of Pentecost in Acts 2, and will probably end during the same season: the months of April and May. “*The rain is over*” (verse 11) refers to the “*former rain*” we read about in other Old Testament passages. These passages of scripture refer to the rainfall in April and May. Now, I am not trying to date the rapture of the church, because the Bible says “*ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh*” (Matthew 25:13). However, it does say that we can know “*the times and the seasons*” (I Thessalonians 5:1-2). I believe these verses in the Song of Solomon do indicate *the times and the seasons* when the bride (the body of Christ) can expect her groom to come for her.

“At this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place.

“Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth.

“He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lighting unto the ends of the earth.

“After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; [HERE’S THE RAPTURE] and he will not stay them when his voice is heard.”

— Job 37:1-4

“*Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth*” certainly sounds like Christ calling His saints up (as in I Thessalonians 4:16).

Where he says, “*He directeth it*” (Job 37:3), the word “*it,*” refers to the sound of His voice, while “*under the whole heaven*” refers to the sound of His voice aimed at the people on earth.

“[A]nd his lightning unto the ends of the earth” (Job 37:3). From this passage of scripture in Job, we gather that the rapture will be accompanied by a flash of light (perhaps like lightning) that will be seen around the world.

It may be like a thunderstorm, during which positive and negative electrical charges on the ground are raised to a point under the clouds to create a natural phenomenon we call *lightning*. Electrodes stream down making a tunnel of ionized particles capable of conducting electricity. Before the lightning comes down, *something goes up* through this tunnel that is formed by the ions. One day, the Lord is going to come down into the earth's atmosphere to gather His people unto Himself. The Bible says of God, “[H]e thundereth with the voice of his excellency” (Job 37:4). When God speaks, His voice may sound like thunder to those who are not saved.

As in the gospel of John:

“Father, glorify thy name. Then came there **a voice from heaven**, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

“The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that **it thundered**: others said, An angel spake to him.”

—John 12:28-29

When the Lord says, “Come up hither,” there will probably be a tremendous noise like thunder. The sound of His voice may set off an explosion like a cobalt bomb, with a bolt of lightning coming down with a flash so bright it will be seen around the world! We will then go up through a tunnel all the way to the third Heaven.

“[A]nd he will not stay them [BELIEVERS] when his voice is heard.” (Job 37:4). Here, the word “stay” means, “to restrain, or keep back.” When the Lord Jesus calls His saints, *nothing* will keep them from flying heavenward to meet Him. His saints will not stay on earth— they will obey His voice— they will go up to meet Him in the clouds.

Louis Talbot writes,

“The world will know that some significant event has taken place when all true Christians are gone, but there is no intimation in Scripture of any physical phenomenon. There will doubtless be a great stir for a time. Families will be separated from loved ones. Unsaved husbands will wonder where their Christian wives have gone. Unsaved wives will wonder about their Christian husbands. Parents will miss their Christian boys and girls; and all children who have not reached the age of accountability will be taken to be ‘with the Lord.’ ‘As a thief in the night,’ He will come; and only the ears of the redeemed will be tuned to hear ‘the voice of the archangel’ and ‘the trump of God.’ Let me ask you, my friend: Is your whole family ready for the coming of the Lord for His saints? Are your loved ones waiting for ‘that blessed hope?’ Are you?

As ‘the bright and morning star’ Christ will come for His church; and the morning star shines in the darkest hour of the night, just before the rising of the sun. The world is now in the darkness of sin and chaos and lawlessness and rumors of wars. At any moment the Morning Star may appear! Are you eagerly looking for His ‘appearing’? When He comes as the ‘Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings’ (Malachi 4:2), then ‘every eye shall see him.’ But when He comes for His saints, He will call them away, to meet Him ‘in the air.’ Do you want to be ready for His coming? You may, by letting Him into your heart as the only Saviour from sin, by faith in His shed blood on Calvary’s cross.

Are you looking for ‘the bright and morning star,’ my brother? If so, what joy fills your soul! Let us examine briefly some Scripture that tells of His appearing for the saints. In I Thessalonians 4:13-18 we find comfort and hope concerning our loved ones who ‘sleep in Jesus.’ And beginning with verse 16, we read that ‘the Lord himself shall descend.’ He will not send Michael or Gabriel or

some of the angels to take us home to heaven. He Himself will come for us! He 'shall descend' in His glorious, resurrection body. He shall descend from heaven 'with a shout.' With what word? With the invitation, 'Come!' 'Come up hither!' (Revelation 4:1). His very first word to us was, 'Come unto me.' And He will call to us again 'with a shout'— the shout of victory over death and the grave. 'Come up hither, My redeemed children,' the Lord Jesus will say when He comes for His saints.

At His word 'the dead in Christ shall rise first.' In every part of the habitable globe 'the dead in Christ shall rise.' It is estimated that more than three million Christians were buried in the catacombs of Rome. Think of the countless numbers in the sea, in lonely graves, in unmarked tombs! But the Lord knows where the bodies of His saints sleep! 'The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up.' Like Enoch and Elijah, all the saints living when Jesus comes will be changed, translated, not to pass through death. Would you not like to be among that number, my friend— never to die? 'Together with them'— together with our loved ones now with Christ— 'in clouds'; i.e., 'in clouds of saints' (not 'in the clouds')— together with them in clouds we shall 'meet the Lord in the air'! We shall meet the One who died for us, the One 'altogether lovely.'

Is it any wonder the Apostle Paul added this statement: 'Wherefore comfort one another with these words'? Is it any wonder he wrote again in I Corinthians 15:55: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' (Read carefully all of I Corinthians 15 in this connection.) 'Behold I shew you a mystery' (something not hitherto revealed), Paul wrote as he was guided by the Holy Spirit. 'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye' (I Corinthians 15:51-52). I am so glad we are going to have new bodies in that day, free from weariness and pain and suffering and

sorrow. 'We shall all be changed' from weakness to power, from mortality to immortality, from humiliation to glory, from our natural bodies, to be 'fashioned like unto his glorious body' (Philippians 3:21). One moment we shall be treading the soiled streets of this earth; the next, walking the streets of the New Jerusalem. Therefore, let us deny 'ungodliness and worldly lusts... live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.'"¹⁶

¹⁶ God's Plan of the Ages by Louis T. Talbot, Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Company. Copyright 1936.

CONCLUSION

I pray that the thought of the imminent¹⁷ return of the Lord Jesus Christ will be firmly established in your heart and mind so that you will be like Paul— expecting Him to come in your lifetime. Try to live a clean life for the Lord Jesus Christ. Live every day as if He were coming back *today* and you *will* earn a crown of righteousness.

Just remember, as a Christian and a child of God:

- ➔ We are not looking for **the undertaker**,
We are looking for **the uppertaker**.
- ➔ We are not looking for **the clods** (dirt),
We are looking for **the clouds**.
- ➔ We are not looking for **a sign** (like the Charismatics),
We are listening for **a sound**.

The next event following the rapture of the church, will be *The Judgment Seat of Christ*. We should prepare now to face that judgment. The One sitting upon that throne will be the One who died for us: our Saviour and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is Next?

Our next lesson will be *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*. It is a vital step toward understanding the Bible as a whole, with the proper interpretation and application of doctrine. God gave us His written word, and preserved it without any contradictions

¹⁷ "Imminent" means "likely to occur at any moment; impending: as 'Her death is imminent.'"

whatsoever in the King James 1611 Authorized Version of the Bible.

The rapture of the church is not the end; this world is going to go on, and another event is coming, the period of the Great Tribulation. We will also look at other time periods still to come: the *Millennium*, the *Judgment of the Nations*, the *Second Advent*, the *Marriage of the Lamb*, the *Great White Throne Judgment*, and then *Eternity*.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;”

— *Ephesians 4:11-14*

Paul is saying that Christians should *grow up* and become rooted and grounded in the word of God. The devil has his disciples who spread false doctrine and heresy to deceive new believers. The purpose of this Bible study series is to help believers who are hungering and thirsting for the word of God to get established in the scriptures. With the instruction given herein, they will know the truth and need not fall prey to some cult or false teacher.

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

— *Ephesians 4:15*

LET'S REVIEW

The Body of Christ (pp. 3-7)

1. During today's Church Age, God has been forming a _____ body made up of all born again believers.
2. The _____ body of Christ upon the earth consists of saved Jews and Gentiles.
3. *"For by one Spirit are we all _____ into one body."* — I Corinthians 12:13
4. The Church is the _____ of Christ.
5. Jesus sent the Holy Ghost on the day of _____ .
6. The _____ takes place when the Lord Jesus comes back to take believers out of the world.
7. The Devil no longer has the power to keep our _____ in the grave.

Our Immortal Bodies (pp. 11-36)

The Mystery Revealed to Paul (pp. 9-11)

1. The formation of the body of Christ is one of the seven _____ .
2. The _____ of the saints is one of the mysteries mentioned in I Corinthians 15.
3. The Church Age and the rapture were not revealed to the _____ prophets.
4. In I Corinthians 15:51 “sleep” means _____ .
5. When we are “changed” our mortal physical bodies will become immortal _____ bodies.

The Trump of God (page 11)

6. The “trump” is the _____ of a trumpet.
7. By changing the word “trump” to “trumpet” Bible perversions are contributing to the heretical teaching that the church will go through the _____ .
8. At the rapture it seems that the trumpet is sounded _____ .
9. The first trump signals the rise of the _____ in Christ while the _____ trump signals the moment that the living will be changed and go up.

This Mortal Must Put on Immortality (pp. 12-15)

10. There are two groups of saints mentioned in I Corinthians 15:52; the _____ saints and the _____ saints.
11. At the rapture, the first group of saints shall be _____ while the second group shall never _____.
12. In I Corinthians 15:52 "*this corruptible*" refers to believers who are now _____.
13. "*This mortal*" refers to _____ Christians.
14. _____ will have no victory over living Christians, and the _____ will have no victory over dead Christians.
15. At the rapture every believer will have victory over his _____ forever.

The Blessed Hope (pp. 15-21)

16. For the Christian, heaven is a _____ hope and a _____ expectation.
17. The Bible never uses the word _____ as meaning "*maybe*" or "*possibly*."
18. The Christian's hope is _____, Himself.
19. We know that He _____ come back to give us new, sinless and perfect bodies.

Choose the correct reference and put it in the blank. Some references may be used more than once.

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Ephesians 2:12

I Corinthians 15:13-20

I John 5:12-13

Romans 8:23-24

Titus 2:11-13

Titus 1:1-2

John 3:1-3

I Peter 1:13

1. _____ If Christ did not rise from the dead, then dead Christians have perished forever.
2. _____ The glorious appearing of Christ is our blessed hope.
3. _____ Christians are to fortify their minds waiting for Christ's return.
4. _____ Christians are not to sorrow over the death of loved ones.
5. _____ Words were written that a Christian may KNOW that he has eternal life.
6. _____ Christians should await the sure hope of the redemption of their bodies.
7. _____ We are to comfort one another with the thought of the rapture.
8. _____ Lost people have no hope.
9. _____ We are the sons of God now, but at the rapture we will be like Christ.

10. _____ God promised us eternal life with new bodies.
11. _____ Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection.
12. _____ We should deny worldly lusts and live righteously while waiting for the rapture.

Our Parting and Reunion (pp. 21-26)

13. When a believer dies, his _____ leaves his body and goes up to the _____ heaven to be with the Lord Jesus Christ.
14. Paul said “to die is _____” and to be absent from the body is “to be _____ with the Lord.”
15. The believer’s soul does/does not _____ remain in an unconscious state until the return of the Lord.
16. The rapture is a literal, personal, _____ resurrection from the grave.
17. Twice in Revelation the Lord uses the phrase _____ to catch the saints away.
18. John 10 says that the shepherd calls his sheep by _____ and leadeth them out.
19. At the rapture, born again believers will probably hear their own _____, while lost people will hear a noise like _____.

Our Adversary, the Devil (pp. 26-29)

20. What two names are given to Satan in Matthew 12:25-29?
 _____ and _____
21. What did the Pharisees accuse Jesus of having?
 _____ .
22. What is the "house"? _____
23. What are the "goods"? _____
24. I Peter 5:8 calls the devil our _____
25. Where did Jesus conquer the devil? _____
26. What happens to Satan before Jesus establishes his earthly kingdom? _____
27. At the rapture of the Church the Lord will come as a _____ in the night.

Caught Up Together — Words of Comfort — Rapture Seen in the Old Testament (pp. 29-31)

If the statement is correct, write "**true**" in the blank. If it is incorrect, cross out the bold italicized word(s) and write the correct word in the blank. (Questions 28-31 only)

28. _____ Christians refer to the events of I Thessalonians 4:13-18 as the **Second Advent**.
29. _____ Those "*asleep in Jesus*" are those who have **died saved**.
30. _____ When Jesus comes back for his Church he will meet them at **the Mount of Olives**.

31. _____ The **first** part of his coming is to establish his earthly kingdom.
32. In what three ways can a knowledge of the rapture comfort believers?
- a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
33. What two passages of Old Testament Scripture refer to the rapture of the Church?
- a. _____
 - b. _____

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