



When the Son of Man Comes

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LESSON 1. DON'T BE DECEIVED

Participants will be able to identify the risks of misunderstanding “the coming of the Lord”, how to overcome those risks, and why it matters.

THE COMING OF THE LORD

A key part of the teaching of Jesus and His Apostles was of the “coming of the Lord”, a day marking the final defeat of sin and death by the resurrection of the dead and the judgment of the world when Christ appears.

There is a lot of confusion and outright deception today about this “coming of the Lord”, but this is nothing new. What were some of the points of confusion the early Christians had, and why did correcting them matter to the Apostles?

I Thessalonians 4:13-15 _____

II Thessalonians 2:1-2 _____

I Corinthians 15:12-19 _____

I John 4:1-6 _____

HOW DID THE APOSTLE JOHN SAY THE SPIRITS COULD BE TESTED?

HOW CAN WE TEST THE SPIRITS?

Let's put this into practice. Using the Bible app on your phone or a concordance, how many times is the word “rapture” used in the Bible?

Translation: _____ **# of times “rapture” was used:** _____

DOES IT MATTER THAT WE DESCRIBE THINGS THE WAY JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES DID IN THE NEW TESTAMENT? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Banks train their employees to identify counterfeit bills by teaching them how to recognize the real thing. That will be our principle in this class.

WHY IT MATTERS

When Jesus and the Apostles taught about His coming, it was not only about ensuring His followers had the right facts but also the right actions. What are some things that a proper understanding of His coming should produce?

I Thessalonians 4:18 _____

II Thessalonians 2:16-17 _____

I Corinthians 15:58 _____

“The coming of the Lord” was much more than a special topic or occasional lesson series with Jesus’ Apostles.

- Every gospel account demonstrates that Jesus is coming again, often warning we won’t know when (Matthew 24:29-25:46, Mark 13:24-37, Luke 21:25-36, John 12:48-50 and 14:1-6).
- When the apostles witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus, their message included that He will “judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:30-31).
- Almost every New Testament writing speaks of the coming judgment or Christ’s appearing (Romans 2:15-16, I Corinthians 15, II Corinthians 4-5, Ephesians 1:13-14, Philippians 3:8-21, Colossians 3:4, I Thessalonians 4:13-5:10, II Thessalonians 1-2, I Timothy 6:13-16, II Timothy 4:1-2, Titus 2:11-14, Hebrews 9:27-28 and 10:36-39, James 5:7-9, I Peter 5:4, II Peter 3:1-13, I John 2:28-3:3, Jude 14-15, Revelation 1:4-8). In fact, only the short, focused letters of Galatians, Philemon, II John, and III John lack any kind of specific reference to “the coming of the Lord”.

Read Luke’s account of Paul’s preaching to Governor Felix in **Acts 24:22-27**.

HOW DID LUKE SUMMARIZE PAUL’S MESSAGE IN VERSE 25?

WHAT CAN A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF “THE COMING JUDGMENT” DO FOR US?

LESSON 2. PROPHECY 101

Participants will be able to describe what makes prophecy unique in the Bible and how to read, interpret, and apply it.

UNDERSTANDING PROPHECY

Prophecy is unique in the Bible. Narratives, letters, and even songs are familiar to us; but we don't have anything quite like prophecy.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE "PROPHECY"?

While prophecy has some element of foretelling the future, it usually was not the distant future. Fee and Stuart estimate only 1% of biblical prophecy is still awaiting fulfillment. Most Biblical predictive prophecies were already fulfilled by ancient Israel and their neighboring nations.

Duvall and Hays state prophecy often includes a *near-view, far-view approach*, where immediate events are followed by end-time events. They compare it to a picture of mountain ranges in the distance, where all of the mountains look close together to us: in reality, they are separated by many miles of valleys in between.



WHAT DOES II PETER 3:8 SAY ABOUT GOD'S PERCEPTION OF TIME?

Of first importance then is understanding what God meant by a statement, followed by what it would have meant to the original audience, and only then do we consider what it means to us. Much false doctrine results from wrongly applying ancient prophecy to present or future occurrences without respect for God's intended meaning or the situation of the original audience.

Old Testament prophecy pronounced blessings and curses consistent with what God had already said in the Law of Moses (e.g., Deuteronomy 28). The prophets were not making their own determinations but serving as God's spokesmen in applying the Law. Similarly, Revelation in the New Testament does not tell us anything (about Jesus, how to handle suffering, etc.) that the other books do not.

Revelation's power is in the images it evokes and the emotions they stir. Prophecy is often very poetic, making heavy use of figures of speech. Art (like pictures, music, or poems) stirs emotion in ways that plain statements do not. The prophet himself will often define some of the images. It is best to take in the overall portrait rather than over-analyzing the individual brushstrokes.

READ **AMOS 3:8**. DO YOU THINK HE WAS BEING LITERAL AND AN ACTUAL LION ROARED? WHY OR WHY NOT?

TO ILLUSTRATE, LET'S LOOK AT **REVELATION**.

Show of hands, who feels like they have a decent grasp on Revelation?

HOW WOULD YOU SUMMARIZE REVELATION? WHAT ARE THE MAIN IDEAS AND THE MAJOR THEMES IT CONTAINS?

READ **REVELATION 1:1-11**.

WHO IS THE PROPHET? WHO IS HE SPEAKING TO?

Many of the details around Revelation fit the time period around 95AD, when Roman Emperor Domitian was engaging in intense persecution of Christians.

WHY IS THIS CONTEXT RELEVANT TO UNDERSTANDING THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK?

READ **REVELATION 1:12-20**.

WHAT IS THE OVERALL PICTURE? WHAT EMOTIONS DOES IT STIR?

WHAT ARE SOME SYMBOLS JOHN USES? HOW DOES HE HELP US INTERPRET THEM?

There will always be some things we do not fully understand before the coming of the Lord (**II Corinthians 12:1-4**, **I John 3:1-3**, **Revelation 10:1-4**). Yet, applying these principles will help us receive the blessing God intends for us!

REFERENCES

- Duvall, J. Scott, and Hays, J. Daniel. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*.
- Fee, Gordon D. and Stuart, Douglas. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: Fourth Edition*.

LESSON 3. THE SIGN OF HIS COMING, PART I

Participants will be able to interpret Jesus' prophecies of the coming challenges, destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the age.

THE "OLIVET DISCOURSE"

As Jesus approaches His crucifixion, **Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21** all record a prophecy He personally made while on the Mount of Olives. Read **Matthew 23:37-24:3**.

WHAT IS THE CONTEXT? WHO IS JESUS SPEAKING TO AND WHAT QUESTIONS IS HE ANSWERING?

Remember from Lesson 2, most prophecy deals with events in the relative near-term of the original audience. Understanding where Jesus was, who He was speaking to, and what question He was responding to is critically important to understanding what He says next. Read **Matthew 24:3-14**.

OF THE QUESTIONS ASKED BY THE DISCIPLES, WHICH IS JESUS ANSWERING HERE?

In answering this question, what specific events did Jesus state would take place?

24:5 _____

24:6 _____

24:7 _____

24:9 _____

24:10 _____

24:11 _____

24:12 _____

24:14 _____

The book of **Acts** was likely written in the early AD60s, and it covered the first 30 years of the church's history. In it, we see much of what Jesus predicted!

- _____ in the days of Claudius in **Acts 11:27-30**.
- _____ like Bar-Jesus or Elymas the magician misleading people in **Acts 13:4-12**.
- _____ experienced both from the Jews and the Gentiles in **Acts 4:1-22, 5:17-42, 6:8-15, 8:1-3, 9:23-30, 13:50-51, 14:5-7, 14:19-20, 16:19-24, 17:5-9, 17:13, 19:21-41, 21:27-35, and 22-28**.

- _____ like Stephen in **Acts 7:58-60** and the Apostle James in **Acts 12:1-4**.

With the gospel reaching Jews and Gentiles and with Paul proclaiming it in Rome, the empire's capital, by the end of Acts, we even see fulfillment of Jesus' statement that "**this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations**" in **Matthew 24:14**.

Paul even says as much in **Colossians 1:6**, when he wrote of the gospel in the early AD60s that "**in the _____ it is bearing fruit and increasing.**" The New Testament letters written around this time further show Jesus' prophecy being fulfilled, especially in relation to false teachers and some falling away

Jesus' prediction set expectations for what life would be like, including some of the major events that would take place before the end came. Read **Matthew 24:15-28**.

OF THE QUESTIONS ASKED BY THE DISCIPLES, WHICH IS JESUS ANSWERING HERE?

For confirmation, see the companion passage in **Luke 21:20-24**.

WHAT ADDITIONAL DETAILS DOES LUKE INCLUDE?

HOW DO THESE DETAILS HELP US INTERPRET THE "ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION"?

Jesus' prediction was fulfilled with amazing accuracy by the Jewish-Roman War (66-73 AD) and its destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. This conflict was so devastating, it would have seemed like "the end of the world" to Jews living at that time. By predicting it the way He did, Jesus showed that was not the case. In fact, ancient church historian Eusebius writing in the 300ADs would state that no Christians were in Jerusalem when it fell because of this prophecy.

WHILE THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM HAS LONG SINCE PAST, DO WE STILL EXPERIENCE THE OTHER THINGS HE PREDICTED?

HOMEWORK

In preparation for **Lesson 5**, read **Revelation 1-3**. Are there things John symbolically describes that fit what Jesus told His disciples on the Mount of Olives in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21?

LESSON 4. THE SIGN OF HIS COMING, PART II

Participants will be able to interpret Jesus' prophecies of the coming challenges, destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the age.

THEN THE END WILL COME

Recall from Lesson 2 the *near view-far view* approach of Biblical prophecy. Much like a picture of mountains in the distance, end-time events are often presented in immediate proximity to nearer-term prophecy.



WHO WAS JESUS TALKING TO AND WHAT WAS HE TALKING ABOUT IN MATTHEW 23:37-24:28?

Consider then what Jesus says next in **Matthew 24:29-31**.

OF THE QUESTIONS ASKED BY THE DISCIPLES, WHICH IS JESUS ANSWERING HERE?

GIVEN THE EARLIER REFERENCE TO JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION, HOW SHOULD "IMMEDIATELY" BE UNDERSTOOD HERE?

IF THIS PASSAGE IS DEALING WITH THE COMING OF THE LORD, WILL THE WORLD KNOW IT HAS HAPPENED?

This becomes part of how we "test the spirits". If someone presents the coming of the Lord as an event where people on earth don't know what is going on, it should feel like a "counterfeit" compared to the "real thing" taught by Jesus. As we will see in future lessons, the apostles also taught about the "coming of the Lord" as something you couldn't miss.

WHEN WILL THESE THINGS BE?

One of the disciples' questions was, "**When will these things be?**" So, Jesus transitions to a series of warnings to be ready. Read **Matthew 24:32-51**.

DOES IT FIT THE CONTEXT TO APPLY THIS TO A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF CHRISTIANS? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Jesus' wording here does present some challenges: it might be one of the most challenging passages in Scripture. As such, we should approach it prayerfully, humbly, and desiring above all else to come away with what Jesus meant for us to understand.

If "**Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place**" means that the people presently alive were going to see everything He predicted take place, it might lead us to conclude that Jesus' description of "**the Son of Man coming**" was figurative rather than being a literal description of the end, perhaps representing the fall of the political powers and the rise of Christianity following Jerusalem's fall. We know "the coming of the Lord" hasn't yet happened, but no one alive during the first century is still alive today.

Another possibility is that Jesus' use of "**generation**" was figurative and encompassed people from that time until the time He comes again. You might think of other possibilities, too.

NO MATTER HOW WE INTERPRET IT, WHAT WERE JESUS' MAIN POINTS TO US?

What attitudes did Jesus say His followers should have in each of these passages?

- **24:32-35** _____
- **24:36-44** _____
- **24:45-51** _____

BASED ON WHAT JESUS SAID AT THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, WHAT SIGN ARE WE STILL WAITING TO BE FULFILLED BEFORE THE COMING OF THE LORD?

HOMEWORK

In preparation for **Lesson 5**, read **Revelation 4-11**. Are there things John symbolically describes that fit what Jesus told His disciples on the Mount of Olives in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21?

LESSON 5. THE SIGN OF HIS COMING (IN 3D)

Participants will be able to interpret Revelation 1-11 as a symbolic picture of what Jesus and His Apostles stated elsewhere in the New Testament.

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

As we discussed in Lesson 2, prophecy uses dramatic, emotion-stirring images to show the application of what God has already said elsewhere. This is especially true of **apocalyptic literature**, like **Revelation**. This type of writing conveys more of a single narrative and makes extensive use of symbolism.

Revelation tells us what it's all about: "**The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants the things that must soon take place**" (1:1). Far from being a source of confusion or fear, John wrote, "**Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near**" (1:3).

THE BEGINNING OF THE BIRTH PAINS

In **Matthew 24:3-14**, Jesus prophesied an experience of false messiahs, wars, natural disasters, persecution, faithlessness, false teachers, and love grown cold while the gospel was proclaimed throughout the whole world.

The "seven churches of Asia" that Christ addresses in **Revelation 2-3** also provide dramatic illustrations of this experience.

- *Ephesus* (2:1-7): "I know...how you cannot bear with those who are evil...But...you have abandoned the love you had at first."
- *Smyrna* (2:8-11): "I know your tribulation and poverty...Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."
- *Pergamum* (2:12-17): "You did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But...you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam"
- *Thyatira* (2:18-29): "You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants"
- *Sardis* (3:1-6): "You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead."
- *Philadelphia* (3:7-13): "You have kept my word...not denied my name."
- *Laodicea* (3:14-22): "So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS WE SEE THE SEVEN CHURCHES EXPERIENCING THAT FIT WHAT JESUS SAID ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES?

In **Revelation 4-5**, we have a dramatic scene of God's throne in heaven. There is drama because there is a **scroll with seven seals** that no one can open until arrival of the conquering Lion/Lamb figure. In **Revelation 6**, He opens the first

four seals, releasing a **conquering** white horse, a **war**-bringing red horse, a **famine**-bringing black horse, and a pale horse ridden by **Death** and followed by the grave who is given authority over a fourth of the earth. When the fifth seal is opened, those who **died as martyrs** cry out for justice. When the sixth seal is opened, there are great **natural disasters**, like **earthquakes**.

WHO IS AFFECTED BY THESE CALAMITIES?

WHAT FROM THESE SEVEN SEALS REMINDS YOU OF WHAT JESUS PROPHESED ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES?

In **Revelation 7**, we see the **sealing of the servants of God**, providing a pause before the opening of the seventh seal. When the seventh seal is open, it sets off the blowing of seven trumpets in **Revelation 8-9**, bringing disasters on “a third of the earth”.

WHO IS AFFECTED BY THESE CALAMITIES, AND WHAT FUNCTION DID THEY SERVE? (SEE REVELATION 9:20-21 FOR HELP.)

Revelation 10-11 has another interlude in which John is given a scroll to eat and then witnesses the testimony, martyrdom, and resurrection of two prophets. With their enemies punished after first witnessing the prophets’ exaltation, the seventh trumpet finally blows to announce God’s eternal reign (**11:15-19**).

WHAT FROM THIS REMINDS YOU OF WHAT JESUS PROPHESED ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES?

WHAT IS THE PICTURE REVELATION IS PAINTING FOR FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANS STRUGGLING THROUGH PERSECUTION?

Rather than simply looking at Revelation as **predictive** of some distant future, it is **explanatory** of why the world is the way it is and Who is really in control.

IN LIGHT OF JESUS’ PROPHECY AND OF REVELATION, HOW SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND CURRENT EVENTS AND THE COMING OF THE LORD?

LESSON 6. ANTICHRISTS

Participants will be able to interpret prophecies dealing with the rise of forces opposing the reign of Christ and know why we can still be confident.

THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS

Just as Jesus predicted the rise of many false prophets in **Matthew 24:9-14**, His apostles and prophets gave similar warnings about false teaching. In AD 49-51, the Apostle Paul described in **II Thessalonians 2:1-17** a “man of lawlessness” who was to come.

WHEN DOES PAUL PLACE THIS “REBELLION” RELATIVE TO JESUS’ COMING? HOW DOES THAT COMPARE TO WHAT JESUS TAUGHT?

Paul had personally taught the Thessalonians on this topic, so he reminds them of what he had previously said in-person (2:5-7). This is unknown to us.

WHAT WAS THE SOURCE OF THE THESSALONIANS’ CONFUSION ON THIS TOPIC? WHY DID IT MATTER?

There are many interpretations as to the identity of “**the man of lawlessness**”.

- Some consider him to be a **spiritual force** driving apostasy.
- Some consider him to be **Nero and later Roman rulers**, who persecuted Christians, destroyed the Jerusalem temple, and required emperor worship.
- Some consider him to be **the Pope and the Catholic church**, who brought in many false teachings while claiming to be the church’s head and authority.
- Some consider him to be a **single individual still to come in the future**.

How we interpret “the rebellion” and “the lawless one” determines the interpretation given to “**what is restraining him**”, which Paul felt confident the Thessalonians would remember from his in-person teaching.

- Some believe it was restrained by **Paul himself**, who died in AD 64-67.
- Some believe it was restrained during the reign of **Claudius** (emperor at the time Paul wrote) but that Nero’s more wicked reign would cast it off.
- Some believe it was restrained by the presence of the **Roman Empire** but that its collapse would escalate the rise of the **Catholic Church**.
- Some believe it was restrained by **the Holy Spirit and the church**, but that it will be removed once the church is “raptured” from the earth.

Remember, we must consider what a prophecy would have **meant to its original audience** before applying it to ourselves. Is this prediction likely to be only of something happening centuries or millennia later if the mystery of lawlessness was “**already at work**” in their time (2:7)?

THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST

In the decades following when Paul prophesied this to the Thessalonians, we see the Apostles & Prophets predicting that a “falling away” would occur.

- Paul: **I Timothy 4:1-5** and **II Timothy 4:1-5**, likely written in the mid-60s.
- Peter: **II Peter 2:1-16**, likely written in the mid-60s.
- Jude: **Jude 3-4, 17-19**, uncertain date, possibly close to II Peter.
- John: **I John 4:1-6**, likely written in AD 85-95

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE FALSE TEACHING THAT WAS PREDICTED BY THE APOSTLES OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST?

HOW DOES THE PREDICTION BY PAUL AND PETER DIFFER FROM JUDE AND JOHN REGARDING WHEN THIS WOULD OCCUR?

Considering the early date of **II Thessalonians** and the later dates of **Jude** and **I John**, it seems likely that Paul’s man of lawlessness has already been revealed: the “**spirit of antichrist**” who John said “**you heard was coming and now is in the world already.**”

HOW DOES IT CHANGE THINGS FOR CHRISTIANS TO BELIEVE SUCH A FORCE IS ALREADY AT WORK AS OPPOSED TO COMING IN OUR FUTURE?

This is why Paul’s encouragement in **II Thessalonians 2:13-17** is so incredibly relevant for us.

WHY CAN WE HAVE CONFIDENCE?

HOW CAN WE BE ABLE TO STAND FIRM AGAINST FORCES LIKE THAT?

LESSON 7. ANTICHRISTS (IN 3D)

Participants will be able to interpret prophecies dealing with the rise of forces opposing the reign of Christ, with special attention to the powerful images of Revelation.

ANTICHRIST

The term “antichrist” is only used three times in the New Testament: **I John 2:18-27**, **I John 4:1-6**, and **II John 7-11**. Each of these were written by the Apostle John, likely from AD 85-95.

HOW DOES JOHN DESCRIBE “ANTICHRIST”?

IN 3D

Revelation 12-14 paints a picture of the battle waged between these antichristian forces and God’s people, drawing heavily on the **apocalyptic language of Daniel 7**. Such depictions are **highly symbolic**. Interpretation must first be guided by the interpretation given by the **original writer**. How did he interpret:

- **The male child** (12:5, 10-11)? _____
- **The dragon** (12:9)? _____
- **The woman’s offspring** (12:17)? _____

Rather than simply looking at Revelation as **predictive** of some distant future, it is **explanatory** of why the world is the way it is and Who is really in control.

WHAT MIGHT REVELATION 12:10-12 MEANT TO FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANS EXPERIENCING PERSECUTION?

In **Revelation 13**, we see the Dragon being worshiped by and giving authority to **two beasts**. The first was “**allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them**” (13:7). The second had “**two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon**”, and it made “**the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast**” (13:11-12). John thus paints a picture of **antichristian government** and **false religion** waging war against the church, slaying some and making it hard to even earn a living without **the mark of the beast** (13:15-18).

WHO WOULD THIS HAVE REFERRED TO FOR THE FIRST CENTURY READERS?

HAVE WE SEEN THIS DYNAMIC HAPPEN SINCE? DO WE SEE IT TODAY?

In contrast to these, **Revelation 14** shows the **144,000** with the Lamb and the Father's name **written on their foreheads**. They are **redeemed from mankind** while those who worship the beast are punished. **"Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus"** (14:12).

GIVEN THE EXTENSIVE USE OF SYMBOLISM, HOW SHOULD WE INTERPRET REVELATION? WHAT IS "THE BIG PICTURE"?

LESSON 8. DEATH

Participants will be able to explain why we die and how Christians should respond to it.

FEAR OF DEATH

Death was not originally part of God's plan. Read **Romans 5:12-14** and **Hebrews 2:14-15**.

WHY DO WE DIE?

WHO HAS THE POWER OF DEATH?

HOW DOES FEAR OF DEATH SUBJECT US TO "LIFELONG SLAVERY"?
HOW DOES JESUS END THAT?

During His earthly ministry, Jesus came face-to-face with death often. Read **Mark 5:35-43** and **John 11:1-16**.

HOW DID JESUS DESCRIBE THOSE WHO DIED?

As Jesus joined Mary by Lazarus' tomb, we can see His emotional response to death's effect on us. Read **John 11:28-37**.

HOW DID JESUS REACT TO DEATH?

The Apostle Paul described death similarly to Jesus in **I Thessalonians 4:13**.

WHY DO WE SOMETIMES DESPAIR AT DEATH?

HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT THAN THE PERSPECTIVE OF JESUS AND PAUL?

IN 3D

As the first century church faced intense persecution, **Revelation** shows a great deal of concern with demonstrating that those who die in Christ would be okay.

- When the fifth seal is opened, the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God cry out for justice, and **“they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer” (Revelation 6:11).**
- The great multitude worshipping God before the seventh seal is opened **“are the ones coming out of the great tribulation” (Revelation 7:13-17).**
- **Revelation 14:12-13** says, **“Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Blessed indeed’, says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them.’”**
- As the seven bowls of God’s wrath are poured out on all the earth in **Revelation 15-18**, John sees a vision of a great prostitute **“Babylon the great”** who was **“drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:5-6).**

WHAT SHOULD THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD DEATH BE?

LESSON 9. PARADISE

Participants will be able to explain what happens to us after we die.

DEAD AND BURIED

In response to the ridicule of the Pharisees (**Luke 16:14**), Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus. His principle point was, “**If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.**” Yet through this story, He reveals a great deal to us about the afterlife. Read **Luke 16:19-31**.

ACCORDING TO JESUS, ARE THE DEAD AWARE OF WHO THEY WERE BEFORE?

WHAT ARE THE DEAD CONCERNED ABOUT?

IS THERE AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE OUR SITUATION AFTER WE DIE?

DO WE IMMEDIATELY GO TO HEAVEN WHEN WE DIE?

Jesus makes this point again when speaking to the thief on the cross who believed in Him in **Luke 23:39-43**.

WHERE DOES JESUS TELL HIM, “TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME”?

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

The reason the dead are “asleep” is because they **are waiting for the resurrection**. Read **John 5:18-29**.

WHO DOES JESUS SAY WILL BE RESURRECTED AND WHEN?

In responding to a test by the Sadducees, Jesus revealed that we will be different in the resurrection. **“The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection”** (Luke 20:34-36). Jesus gives us a glimpse of what it will be like in His own resurrection. Read **Luke 24:13-49**.

WHAT WAS SIMILAR ABOUT JESUS FROM BEFORE HIS RESURRECTION? WHAT WAS DIFFERENT?

In **I Corinthians 15:51-52**, Paul writes, **“Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”** In our next lesson, we will consider what Scripture teaches happens **when Christ appears**, beginning with how He will **raise the dead!**

LESSON 10. CHRIST APPEARS TO RAISE THE DEAD

Participants will be able to describe the relationship between Jesus' resurrection and the resurrection of the dead when He comes again.

WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES

Jesus foretold “**the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory**” in **Matthew 24:29-31**, and Paul painted a similar picture in **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**.

HOW DID PAUL DESCRIBE “THE COMING OF THE LORD”?

WHAT DOES THAT COMING MEAN FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED?

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Some in Corinth believed there was no resurrection. Paul responded with the rich teaching of **I Corinthians 15:1-58** and **II Corinthians 4:1-5:10**.

WHY DOES JESUS' RESURRECTION MATTER?

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT ABOUT US?

WHY DOES BELIEF IN OUR BODILY RESURRECTION MATTER?

When “**those who belong to Christ**” rise from the dead at His coming, Paul says, “**Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom of God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power**” (I Corinthians 15:23-24).

WHEN DOES PAUL SAY JESUS IS REIGNING (I CORINTHIANS 15:25)?

IN 3D

Revelation 20:1-10 paints a picture of “**the first resurrection**” when “**the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus**” come to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years. After this, the devil is permanently defeated by Christ’s appearing and “**the rest of the dead...come to life.**”

HOW SHOULD WE INTERPRET THE “THOUSAND YEAR REIGN” ASSOCIATED WITH THIS “FIRST RESURRECTION”?

Revelation paints a beautiful picture of the faithful dead being with Christ until His return to judge the world! This judgment will be the topic of our next lesson.

LESSON 11. CHRIST APPEARS TO RIGHT THE WRONGS

Participants will be able to describe how Jesus' sudden appearance will bring much needed judgment to the world.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

After describing on the Mount of Olives the coming of the Son of Man, Jesus gives a series of teachings that demonstrate how “**that day and hour no one knows**”. Summarize how Jesus makes this point in each passage:

Matthew 24:36-44

Matthew 24:45-51

Matthew 25:1-13

Matthew 25:14-30

Matthew 25:31-46

WHAT IS THE OVERALL PICTURE JESUS PRESENTS ABOUT HIS COMING IN THESE PASSAGES?

WHO IS REWARDED AND WHO IS PUNISHED WHEN HE COMES?

LIKE A THIEF

Jesus' apostles would echo this theme of His sudden appearing throughout their letters. After describing Jesus' coming to raise the dead, Paul also wrote about that day's unexpected nature. Read **I Thessalonians 5:1-11**.

HOW DOES PAUL DESCRIBE JESUS' COMING AND WHAT DOES HE SAY IT MEANS FOR HOW WE LIVE?

In his follow up letter, Paul elaborated on what Jesus' sudden coming meant for those against God. Read **II Thessalonians 1:1-12**.

HOW IS GOD'S JUDGMENT DIFFERENT FOR THE SAINTS THAN FOR THOSE AFFLICHTING THEM?

The Apostle Peter would draw on many similar themes – even the example of Noah's ark – as what he had heard Jesus teach. He also referenced what Paul wrote. Read **II Peter 3:1-18**.

WHAT DOES PETER SAY WILL HAPPEN TO THE WORLD WHEN JESUS COMES?

IN 3D

Jesus references His sudden coming “like a thief” in **Revelation 3:3 and 16:15**. Then in **Revelation 20:11-15**, a picture is painted of final judgment before God's “great white throne.” Here the dead are judged by whether their name is in the “book of life” or by their deeds. The “lake of fire” is the destination of anyone whose name is not found in the book of life.

WHAT DOES REVELATION'S SYMBOLIC DEPICTION OF JUDGMENT HAVE IN COMMON WITH WHAT JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES TAUGHT?

Once Christ has come raising the dead and righting the wrongs, the picture shifts to our final eternal destiny in the “new heavens and new earth”! This will be the topic of our next lesson.

LESSON 12. NEW HEAVENS & NEW EARTH

Participants will be able to describe what Scripture teaches about our eternal home.

REVEALED FROM HEAVEN

Variations of the word “heaven” appear nearly 700 times in the English Standard Version. Depending on the context, it can refer to the sky, space, or the spiritual realm. It can be a noun (“heaven(s)” describing a place) or an adjective (“heavenly”, describing otherworldly or spiritual qualities). In **II Corinthians 12:1-4**, Paul would humbly relate a vision in which he was “**caught up to the third heaven**” – not the sky or space, but God’s heavenly dwelling – where “**he heard things that cannot be told**”.

In **Acts 1:6-11**, Luke describes Christ’s ascension. **Hebrews 9:23-24** describes what He is doing now, as does **I Corinthians 15:20-28**, which also describes what will happen when He comes.

WHERE DID JESUS GO? WHAT IS HE DOING? HOW WILL HE COME AGAIN?

There are many references in the New Testament to things “in heaven” now that we are waiting to be revealed:

- **I Thessalonians 1:9-10** _____
- **Philippians 3:20-21** _____
- **Colossians 1:3-5** _____
- **I Peter 1:3-5** _____

Much as Paul describes the transformation of our lowly bodies in **Philippians 3**, He discusses the nature of our “**heavenly dwelling**” in **II Corinthians 4:16-5:5**. Paul would say in **Romans 8:18-25** that it’s not just humanity desiring this: all of “**creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.**”

WHAT IS THE “HEAVENLY DWELLING” AND WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT IT? WHY IS EVERYONE SO EAGER FOR IT TO BE REVEALED?

A PREPARED PLACE

In **John 14:1-6**, Jesus gave His disciples an assurance that He was preparing a place for them by laying down His life. **Hebrews 11:13-16** says people of faith throughout the Bible have been desiring such a place.

HOW DO JESUS AND THE HEBREWS WRITER DESCRIBE THIS PREPARED PLACE?

In describing the burning, dissolving, and exposing of the present world when Jesus comes, Peter challenges us to prioritize our lives so that we are waiting “**according to His promise**”. Read **II Peter 3:11-13**.

ACROSS THESE PASSAGES, WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR ETERNAL DWELLING?

WHAT DO WE COMMONLY THINK OF ABOUT HEAVEN THAT HAS NOT BEEN MENTIONED? WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF HEAVEN?

IN 3D

Much of the imagery we associate with heaven comes from prophecy, which is largely symbolic. Peter, as well as John in **Revelation**, use imagery of “**new heavens and a new earth**” first used 700 years earlier in **Isaiah 65:17-25**. John’s use of this in **Revelation 21:1-22:7** provides a symbolic picture following Christ’s defeat of death at the end of this present world.

IN JOHN’S VISION, WHAT MAKES THE “NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH” DIFFERENT? WHO AND WHAT IS THERE? WHAT IS NOT?

AS PRESENTED BY JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES, WHY DO WE WANT TO BE IN HEAVEN?

Despite the frequent use of forms of the word “heaven” in Scripture and our focus on it, there is not a great deal said about the place itself. Scripture’s primary focus is on **who is there** and **what is not**. Extensive teaching otherwise is coming from something beyond what is plainly stated in Scripture. That being said, what is stated in Scripture is more than enough. It provides tremendous motivation for us to spend our lives getting as close to God as possible so, when Christ comes, He can bring that process to completion.

LESSON 13. THE END

Participants will be able to identify and apply key Scriptures in response to questions about the coming of the Lord.

WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES

A significant amount of the teaching by Jesus and His Apostles and Prophets was related to things surrounding “the coming of the Lord.”

To not be deceived and to live as people with hope, we need to **know what Jesus and His Apostles said** and to **truly listen to the inspired writers**. This sort of listening is done by studying to **understand what they meant** and not just jumping straight to applying it to ourselves.

What Bible passages might you want to study to understand and to help others understand each of the following topics?

- Signs of the “end times” _____
- False prophets and the antichrist _____
- What happens when we die _____
- “The Rapture” _____
- The reign of Jesus _____
- The coming of the Lord _____
- The resurrection of the dead _____
- The coming judgment _____
- Heaven & hell _____

Revelation is a blessing from God that shows us stunning symbolic pictures of what is going on in the world and how Christ will ultimately triumph, consistent with the message of the rest of the New Testament.

WHAT ARE SOME TIPS THAT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED WHEN STUDYING REVELATION SPECIFICALLY OR PROPHECY GENERALLY?

IN 3D

In **Revelation 22:8-21**, John closes out his vision with words of warning and encouragement that we would do well to hear today.

WHAT IS THIS MESSAGE MEANT TO CAUSE US TO DO?

WHAT ARE WAYS WE MIGHT BE GUILTY OF “SEALING UP THE WORDS OF THE PROPHECY OF THIS BOOK”?

WHAT ARE WAYS WE MIGHT BE GUILTY OF “ADDING TO OR TAKING AWAY FROM THE WORDS OF THE BOOK OF THIS PROPHECY”?

WHAT DOES GOD GIVE US BY ENDING THE BIBLE THIS WAY?

WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR MOST IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS STUDY?