

The Rapture and the Judgment Seat of Christ (I Thessalonians 4:13-18)

I. Introduction

A. *This Week in Clear Living*

1. The Church Age was for Spreading the Good News (Romans 3:21-26)
2. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:5-15)
3. The End of the Church Age (I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and John 14:1-6)
4. The Symbolic Resurrection of Lot (John 11:38-44)
5. Signs That the End is Near (I Thessalonians 1:1-10 and Jeremiah 30:4-9)
6. The Judgment Seat of Christ (Romans 14:1-13 and II Corinthians 5:9-11)
7. A Great Battle and a New Heaven and Earth (Revelation 19:11-21 and Revelation 21:1-27)

Question: What is the church's mission? How does the Holy Spirit help?

B. The church is an organization.

1. *The church is an assembly of professing believers.*
2. *The unique presence of Jesus Christ dwells in a church.*
3. *A church is under the discipline of the Word of God.*
4. *A church is organized to carry out the Great Commission.*
5. *A church administers the ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper).*
6. *A church reflects the spiritual gifts described in I Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4.*

C. The church is an organism.

1. It is the body of Christ, but it is also a reference to the local church.
2. *The church lives, and its inhabitants are meant to assemble themselves together.* The inhabitants of the church also have a time when they are not assembled together.
3. The word "ecclesia" in Acts 9:31 is plural and refers to multiple assemblies.
4. Acts 9:31 says, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

D. The church should worship the Lord.

1. John 14:26 says, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, ***he shall teach you all things***, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
2. John 15:26 says, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, ***he shall testify of me:***"
3. John 16:13 says, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, ***he will guide you into all truth:*** for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

E. The church should carry out the Great Commission, and the Holy Spirit helps us.

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1. One of a Christian's goals should be to do what the Holy Spirit wants him or her to do.
2. Another should be to say what the Holy Spirit wants him or her to say.
3. I Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore **glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.**"
4. Luke 19:13 says, "And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, **Occupy till I come.**"

Question: Where do living Christians go when the Rapture occurs? What happens to departed saints in the Rapture? How does the resurrection of Lazarus compare to the Rapture?

II. The Bible's teaching on the Rapture.

- A. The word "rapture" does not appear in the Bible.
 1. We should occupy till He comes. **What does it mean to occupy?**
 2. The Bible is clear concerning Jesus' return.
- B. Jesus is coming again (John 14:1-6).
 1. John 14:3 says, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."
 2. Go (**poreuomai**) - to pursue the journey on which one has entered, to continue on one's journey, to depart from life. **Jesus was definitely planning to go.**
 3. Place (**topos**) - any portion or space marked off.
 4. Come (**erchomai**) - to come from one place to another. **He was definitely planning to come back for us.**
 5. John 14:6 says, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
 6. No one will go except through Jesus. What does that mean?
- C. We will go to be with the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).
 1. While in this life, we serve the Lord until our life ends or until He returns for His church in the clouds.
 2. Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica about the Rapture.
 3. Verse 17 - Jesus will come in the clouds and bring living and departed saints to Himself.
 4. Caught up (**harpazo**) - to seize, carry off by force, to claim for one's self eagerly, or to snatch out or away.
 5. The Lord will aggressively come and take us away.
 6. Verse 17 - And we will forever be with Him.
- D. Lazarus came forth as those departed in Christ shall someday do (John 11:38-44).

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1. Jesus summoned Lazarus from the grave, and he came forth.
2. Those in Christ will know His voice.
3. John 10:27-28 says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."
- E. We shall all be changed (I Corinthians 15:51-53).
 1. When we are caught up, our mortal bodies will become immortal.
 2. If we have already passed away, our soul, which will already be with the Lord, will be reunited with our bodies.
 3. II Corinthians 5:8 says, "We are confident, I say, and *willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*"

Question: What was the fundamental problem in the church at Thessalonica? What did Paul tell them about the Rapture and the Antichrist?

- III. The Saints at Thessalonica were eagerly waiting for the Lord's return.
- A. Their problem was that they had quit working, and they were literally sitting back waiting for Jesus to come back.
 - B. Paul gave them signs of when Jesus would return (II Thessalonians 2:1-10).
 1. Verse 3 – there will be a falling away.
 2. **What does a falling away mean to you? Has it begun? Does it mean that the church will turn from the Lord?**
 3. The son of perdition will be revealed (the antichrist).
 4. Verse 4 – the antichrist will be opposed to God, but he will also pretend to be God.
 - a. Unsaved people will be fooled by him.
 - b. The first seal judgment - He will come as a man of peace (Revelation 6:2).
 - c. The second seal judgment – He will destroy those that get in his way (Revelation 6:4).
 - d. John was writing about future events, but he had already witnessed those that opposed Christians and anticipated those that would (Nero and Domitian).
 1. Peter and Paul were martyred by Nero.
 2. Domitian became emperor and declared that he would destroy Christianity. Obviously, he failed.
 5. Verse 7 – the Holy Spirit currently has everything under control, but He will be taken out of the way.
 - 6.
 - C. Paul used himself as an example of proper Christian behavior (II Thessalonians 3:8-10).

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1. Paul told the people of Thessalonica that he had set the example of working hard.
2. He did not consider himself privileged or hindered, so he did not take handouts.
3. He taught them that one that would not work should not eat.
4. Christians should be diligent, serious-minded, and hard workers for the Lord and for their families.
5. I Timothy 5:8 says, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

Question: What is the Judgment Seat of Christ and when does it occur?

IV. The Judgment Seat of Christ.

- A. Romans 14:10 says, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."
 1. Paul was writing to Christians in Rome.
 2. The unsaved will not be at the judgment seat of Christ.
 3. At this judgment, Christians will be judged based upon stewardship issues.
- B. How can one be a good steward.
 1. **Do what the Holy Spirit wants you to do.**
 2. **Say what the Holy Spirit wants you to say.**
- C. II Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."
 1. "According to that he hath done" – According to Dr. Murray J. Harris, this judgment concerns one's walk in the faith after salvation, not some kind of legalistic mentality that's associated with earning one's way to heaven.
 2. This verse does not override or eliminate Ephesians 2:8-9.
 3. It will be possible to not do well in this judgment. Christians should bear fruit (of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23).
 4. John 15:5 says, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."
 5. I Corinthians 3:14-15 says, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."
- D. During this judgment, Christians can receive crowns, which they will later cast at Jesus' feet.
 1. The crown of rejoicing is given to those who have been faithful in ministry (I Thessalonians 2:19).

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2. The crown of life will be given to those who have been faithful in temptation (James 1:12).
3. The crown of righteousness will be given to those who love the Lord's second coming (II Timothy 4:8).
4. The crown of glory will be given to those who have been faithful through suffering (I Peter 5:4).
5. The incorruptible crown will be given to those who have been faithful in self-control (I Corinthians 9:25).

Question: What is the White Throne judgment and when does it occur?

V. The White Throne Judgment.

- A. The White Throne judgment will take place in heaven (Revelation 20:11).
- B. God will be the Judge, and it will be after the final resurrection after the Millennium (Revelation 20:5).
- C. Jesus will also be a Judge (John 5:27).
- D. All those who have not already been resurrected will be brought forth to this judgment.
- E. Everyone there will already be condemned.
- F. The Lamb's Book of Life will be the basis for the severity of judgment.

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Next week's lesson: "The Tribulation and the Seven Seal Judgments" (Revelation 6:1-17)

Five Day Recommended Reading:

Monday:	Revelation 1:8-20, Mark 13:1-37, and Zephaniah 1:14-18
Tuesday:	Revelation 6:1-17, Revelation 7:1-17, and Revelation 8:1-5
Wednesday:	Matthew 24:15-22 and Revelation 11:1-13
Thursday:	Revelation 12:1-17, Revelation 14:6-13, and Amos 5:18-27
Friday:	Revelation 15:1-8 and Revelation 19:11-21

Study questions:

1. Why did Jesus come to John on the isle of Patmos?
2. How would you describe the earthly relationship between Jesus and John?
3. What question did John and Peter ask in Mark 13:3-4?
4. How would a normal conservative Christian interpret the Book of Revelation?
What are some of the other ways to interpret the Book?
5. Why are the 144,000 witnesses described with different tribe names than the original twelve?
6. How do the seal judgments relate to other things that are described in the Book?
7. Who are the 144,000 witnesses in Revelation 7:1-17 and Revelation 14:6-13?
8. Who are the two witness in Revelation 11:3-8?
9. Who is the woman in Revelation 12:1-17?
10. How does Jesus return to earth to do battle with the Antichrist?