

*The
Second Coming
Of
Jesus Christ*

Syllabus / Study Guide



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CONTENTS

Series Objectives	4
1. Why Are We Sure Jesus is Coming Again?	5
2. When Will Jesus Come for Us?	10
3. How May We be Sure Jesus Will Appear Before the Tribulation?	17
4. Why Will Jesus Appear Before the Tribulation?	24
5. What Happens on Earth After We Are Taken?	32
6. What Happens in Heaven After We Are Taken?	40
7. How Do We Prepare? Be Wise!	48
8. How Do We Prepare? Be Worthy!	57
9. How Do We Prepare? Be Watching!	64
10. How Do We Prepare? Be Ready!	72
Appendix A: The Signs of the Times	78
Appendix B: The Major End-Time Views	85

SERIES OBJECTIVES

THIS SERIES has three simple purposes: to inform, ignite, and transform us.

It will inform us of a plethora of biblical facts regarding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. These facts will confirm some of our End-Time views and correct others.

This information is provided as fuel, which, with the Holy Spirit's witness, will ignite in us an enduring fervent desire to prepare for Jesus' appearing.

The last four lessons lay out the path to preparation—and transformation. If we follow their simple instructions, with the Holy Spirit's powerful help, we will become ready for and like the One for whom we wait.

Then, when He appears, “we will be like him,” living embodiments of the very things He said we should be: *wise, worthy, watching, and ready*, “a people prepared for the Lord”—and a bride who bears the image of her Bridegroom.

So grasp the information, ignite your devotion, and be prepared and transformed. And quickly! The hour is late and the time short.

Lesson One

Why Are We Sure Jesus is Coming Again?

I. An Introduction: Let us review the basic facts about the Second Coming.

A. Jesus Christ is coming again—and soon!

1. Jesus' coming is of utmost importance, superseding all other issues.
2. It is the only thoroughly good news in our times!

B. The Second Coming occurs in two parts:

1. Jesus' Appearing:
 - a. To *rescue* His bride church
 - b. To *begin* the Tribulation period

2. Jesus' Return:
 - a. To *rescue* Israel's hidden remnant
 - b. To *end* the Tribulation period
 - c. To *begin* the Millennium

II. How can we be sure Jesus will come again for His People?

A. He promised it!

1. And His promise is:

Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again*, and *receive you unto myself*, that *where I am* there ye may be also.

—JOHN 14:1-3

2. And He performs all His promises!

B. He prayed it! (Jn. 17:24; cf. 17:15)

1. And the Father will surely answer His prayer!

2. And the Holy Spirit will surely execute His will!

C. He prophesied it!

1. Personally, in the Scriptures (Jn. 14:1-3)
2. Posthumously, in the Scriptures (1Th. 4:13-18; 1Cor.15:50-53)
3. And Scriptural prophecies cannot fail! (Mk. 14:49; Jn. 10:35)

D. He planned it! (Acts 15:18)

1. As our *awakening* (or reviving) hope (Matt. 25:6-7)
2. As our *purifying* hope (1 Jn. 3:2-3)
3. As our *comforting* hope (1Thess. 4:18; 5:11)
4. As our *blessed* hope (Tit. 2:11-13)

5. As our *rescuing* hope (1Thess. 1:9-10; 5:9-10)

6. As our *anchoring* hope (Heb. 6:19)

a. In the ocean an anchor serves two purposes:

i. It prevents ships from drifting due to winds or currents.

ii. It slows and steadies ships in storms.

b. So even when everything else fails or is lost, our anchor holds!

E. This is the only thoroughly good news in our times!

—It is the most important topic of our generation, bar none!

1. Are you sure Jesus is coming?

2. Is your anchor in place?

Lesson One Questions:

1. *In what New Testament text did Jesus personally promise to return?*

2. *Will Jesus rescue the hidden remnant of Israel at His appearing or His return?*

3. *What event is our anchoring hope? In what ways does it “anchor” us?*

4. *Who is charged with executing Jesus’ last will and testament?*

5. *What Greek word did Paul use to describe our “blessed” hope in Titus 2:13 and what does it mean?*

6. *Did Jesus promise His disciples He would “come again” to be with them or to take them to be with Him? In what key text did He make this explicit promise?*

7. *In 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 and 5:9-10, Jesus presented His appearing as our _____ hope?*

Lesson Two

When Will Jesus Come For Us?

I. Let us review what we do and do not know about when Jesus is coming.

A. We do *not* know the year, month, or day in which Jesus will appear. (Matt. 24:36)

B. We *do* know the position of His appearing in the sequence of End-Time events.

1. He will appear at the end of the Church Age.

2. He will appear to begin the Day of the Lord. (1 Thess. 5:1-2, 4)

—The DAY OF THE LORD is: _____

_____.

II. Jesus will appear *before* the Tribulation period—as a “thief” in the “night.”

A. Jesus said He would come as a “thief.” (Matt. 24:42-44)

1. Thieves always come unexpectedly.
2. Thieves usually come at night.
3. So, as a thief, Jesus will come *unexpectedly* and in the (spiritual) *nighttime*.
—SPECIFICALLY, the church’s and world’s “midnight” hour (Matt. 25:5-6)

B. Spiritual nighttime is a “falling away,” or time of apostasy. (2 Thess. 2:3)

1. “Falling away” (Greek, *apostasia*) means “defection, revolt, rebellion.”
 - a. The revolt Paul speaks of in this text is *against God and His truth.*”
—SPECIFICALLY, the “truth” of God’s Word, existence, or authority
 - b. During apostasy, Christians fall *away* from God and His truth *into* worldliness, sin, or error.
2. We are presently in a great “falling away,” or spiritual nighttime.
—THIS PRESENT spiritual nighttime:
 - a. Began with biblical “higher criticism”
 - b. Has produced godless theories, philosophies, and ideologies

- c. Has produced liberal theology
- d. Has in the public mind discredited the Bible as God's infallible Word
- e. Has produced our radically liberal, post-modern secular world
- f. Has aided "Laodiceanism" in the post-Second World War church (USA)

C. Jesus' "thief in the night" teaching parallels first-century Jewish wedding tradition. (Matt. 25:1-13)

—JESUS, OUR BRIDEGROOM, will appear in the night to steal away His bride church!

D. The New Testament is looking for (expecting) the "Thief in the night."

1. The apostle Paul taught this expectancy. (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 5:1-11)
2. The apostle Peter taught this expectancy. (2 Pet. 3:10)
3. The apostle John taught this expectancy:

- a. At the beginning, middle, and end of Revelation (Rev. 3:3; 16:15; 22:20)
- b. Especially in his epilogue to Revelation:
 - i. Three times Jesus reminded His bride church He is coming “quickly.” (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20)
 - ii. John, speaking for the bride church, responded, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20)
 - iii. These *four references* to Jesus’ appearing are John’s *last words*. (Verse 21 is a standard biblical valediction.)
 - iv. So Revelation, the New Testament, and the entire Bible close *looking for Jesus!*

4. But not all views of the End Times agree with John’s words.

E. Let’s briefly describe and compare the major End-Time views on the Rapture, Tribulation, Millennium, testing of Christians, and trend in the world. (See Appendix B)

1. The Pre-Millennial views:
 - a. Select Pre-Tribulational -
 - b. Pre-Tribulational -

c. Mid-Tribulational -

d. Pre-Wrath -

e. Post-Tribulational -

2. The Post-Millennial views:

a. Post-Millennialism -

b. Amillennialism -

F. Why should we expect Jesus' appearing before the Tribulation?

1. Only those who "look" for Jesus are *guaranteed* escape. (Heb. 9:28b)

—THEREFORE, those *not* looking for Jesus will "not escape." (1Th.5:2-11, ct. "they" and "ye"; cf. Matt. 25:10-13; Heb. 2:3)

2. Therefore, we should prepare earnestly, and immediately! (1Th5:4-8)

a. Revelation is for preparation, *not* curiosity!

b. That is, prophetic revelation is given to inspire practical preparation.

3. It has been wisely said: “If we are caught up with Jesus now, we will be caught up by Jesus when He appears!”

a. Are you “caught up” with Him? Or with other interests?

b. Are you “rapt” with devotion to Him? Or for other things?

Lesson Two Questions:

1. *The last words of the Book of Revelation, the New Testament, and the Bible itself all anticipate the coming of Christ or Antichrist?*
2. *Who is the New Testament “thief in the night” and what or who will he “steal”?*
3. *What event or practice began the downward trend that led to our present state of apostasy?*
4. *Revelation is for _____?*
5. *Which End-Time view teaches that the influence of the gospel will spread throughout the world creating a golden age, or utopian period of righteousness and peace that will usher in Jesus’ return?*
6. *How many times is Jesus’ appearing referred to in Revelation 22?*
7. *What did Jesus specifically say would not be revealed about His appearing?*

Lesson Three

How May We Be Sure Jesus Will Appear Before the Tribulation?

I. We know Jesus will appear before the Tribulation because of the Spirit's twofold mission.

A. Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been on a mission to retrieve Christ's bride. (Gen. 24:1-67; Acts 2:1-4)

1. He cannot return to the heavenly Father without Christ's bride church. (Gen. 24:9)
2. He must fulfill Christ's high-priestly prayer. (Jn. 17:15-26)
3. He must fulfill Paul's inspired portraits of the mature church. (Eph. 2:19-22; 4:11-15, esp. v. 13; 5:25-27)
 - a. So, before taking the church, He must transform the church, because it must be "conformed to the image of his Son." (Rom. 8:29)
 - b. This implies a surprising, powerful, End-Time revival in the church. (Matt. 25:6-7)

—THIS "LAMP TRIMMING" REVIVAL will emphasize spiritual maturity above all else. (Heb. 6:1; Rev. 3:18)

B. The Holy Spirit is on a mission to withhold Antichrist's reign.

1. Antichrist cannot rise to power until the Holy Spirit (His plenary presence in the body of Christ) is removed. (2 Thess. 2:7)

2. The Holy Spirit's power and influence will continue upon selected individuals. (Rev. 7:2-8; 11:3-4)

—THUS, PRE-PENTECOST CONDITIONS will be restored.

C. Summing, we conclude from Scripture:

1. Antichrist cannot rise to power, nor can the Tribulation begin, until the Holy Spirit is removed.

2. The Holy Spirit cannot return to heaven without the church.

3. Thus, the Rapture of the church must occur before the Tribulation.

II. We know Jesus will appear before the Tribulation because of the Son's key signs and Similitudes.**A. Jesus gave us two key signs perfectly describing the End Times:**

1. Conditions will be like the days of Noah. (Luke 17:26-27, 31-36)

2. Conditions will be like the days of Lot. (Luke 17:28-30, 31-36)

B. Jesus gave us two key Similitudes perfectly describing the church.

1. We are the “salt of the earth.” (Matt. 5:13)

2. We are the “light of the world.” (Matt. 5:14-16)
 - a. In the Tribulation, the world will be utterly morally corrupt. (Rev. 9:20-21; 11:8-10)

 - b. In the Tribulation, the world will be filled with utter spiritual darkness. (2 Thess. 2:9-12; Rev. 13:4, 8)

 - c. Such utter corruption cannot coexist when spiritual salt is present!

 - d. Such utterly full darkness cannot coexist when spiritual light is present!

- e. Thus, the church cannot be present during the Tribulation.
 - i. Neither the word “church,” nor any reference to the church, is found in John’s description of the Tribulation. (Rev. 6-19)
 - ii. Christ’s bride is mentioned, but only as attending the Marriage supper in heaven and thereafter returning with Christ to earth. (Rev. 19:7-9, 14)

III. We know Jesus will appear before the Tribulation because of the Scriptures’ exhortations and examples.

A. The Scriptures urge us to believe God delivers the righteous *before* executing general judgments. (2 Pet 2:7-9; Rev. 3:10)

B. The Scriptures gives examples of such deliverances:

1. Before the worldwide flood, Noah was warned—and lifted above it! (Gen. 6:13-21; 7:1-24; 2 Pet. 2:5)
2. Before Sodom’s fiery judgment, Lot was warned—and removed! (2 Pet. 2:7; Gen19:12-14, 17-23)

—WE KNOW FROM SCRIPTURE:

- a. Lot was righteous. (2 Pet. 2:7)

- b. But Lot was living a compromised, unworthy life. (Gen. 13:10-13; 19:1; 19:14; 19:16, 18-20; 19:30-38)
- c. Yet God delivered him before judgment fell—because of the intercession of his godly uncle, Abraham! (Gen. 19:27-29)

—THIS IS AN EXAMPLE of Job 22:30:

He delivers even the one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands.

—JOB 22:30, ESV

- d. Surprisingly, even the presence of Lot, who, though positionally “just[ified]” and “righteous,” was spiritually and morally compromised, withheld judgment. (Gen. 19:22, 23-25; 2 Pet. 2:7-8)

3. Before the worldwide flood, Enoch was removed! (Gen.5:22, 24)

—WE KNOW FROM SCRIPTURE:

- a. Enoch “walked [closely] with God.” (Gen. 5:22, 24)
- b. Enoch was a committed God-pleaser. (Heb. 11:5)
 - i. Jesus and Paul were committed God-pleasers. (Jn. 8:29; Gal 1:10)
 - ii. Are we committed God-pleasers? Every day? In every decision?

IV. We know Jesus will appear before the Tribulation because of the three prime types of delivered ones the Scriptures give us.

A. Enoch's removal before judgment provides *assurance* for overcoming Christians who walk closely with God. (Rev. 3:10)

B. Noah's removal before judgment provides *assurance* for overcoming Christians who abide in the true, heavenly Ark, Christ. (Gen. 6:22)

C. Lot's removal before judgment provides *hope* that unworthy Christians for whom we pray may be taken in God's mercy. (Gen. 19:27-29; Job22:30)

Lesson Three Questions:

1. *What Scripture makes us sure the Holy Spirit is withholding Antichrist?*
2. *What two metaphors did Jesus use to describe the Church's influence in this world?*
3. *Will the Holy Spirit's influence cease after the Rapture?*
4. *Was Lot delivered because, as Peter states, he was "righteous"?*
5. *Can the Holy Spirit return to the heavenly Father without the bride church?*
6. *Is there any biblical example that gives us hope that even some Christians who are not worthy may also be taken in the Rapture?*
7. *What was it about Enoch that caused God to translate him before the first worldwide judgment? And how may we emulate Enoch?*

Lesson Four

Why Will Jesus Appear Before The Tribulation?

I. Jesus will appear before the Tribulation to fulfill His promises to His Church.

A. He promised to rescue His bride before the time of wrath.

1. When promising us He would “come again,” Jesus urged us “not” to be troubled. (Jn. 14:1-3)

—BUT THE THOUGHT of enduring the Tribulation *is* troubling! (Rev. 6-19)

2. Through Paul He promised He has called us, His bride, to bliss, not wrath—to “escape” the Tribulation to “live together with Him.” (1 Thess. 5:5:3-4, 9-10)¹

B. He promised overcomers they would not experience the Tribulation.

1. Jesus promised the Philadelphian overcomers—who represent all overcoming Christians—exemption from the Tribulation.

Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also *keep you from* the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

—REVELATION 3:10, NIV

¹ Every chapter in 1 Thessalonians ends with a view to Jesus’ appearing.

- a. To be “kept from” the Tribulation is to have no part of it!
 - b. This language is supported by major modern translations. (ESV, NAS, NLT, NKJV, NCV, Wuest, ISV, YLT)
 - c. Jesus implies He will use the Tribulation to test the *untested* “inhabitants of the [whole] earth.”
 - d. The Philadelphia Christians, who had endured their time of testing, were exempted from further testing.
 - i. This *enduring faith*, that continues trusting and obeying Christ through lengthy, purifying, character-building trials, may well be the standard by which Christ decides who will be taken in the Rapture, and later, in the Mid-Tribulational translation of Israel’s harvest.
 - ii. Enduring faith, and the deep, full knowledge of God it develops, are most likely the priceless “gold tried in the fire” (Rev. 3:18) and the vital “oil” of preparation. (Matt. 25:8-10; cf. Job 13:15; Hab. 3:17-19; Eph. 4:13; 2 Thess. 1:3-4; Rev. 3:10; 7:9-17)
2. Jesus takes all His promises and vows very seriously. (Eccl. 5:4-5)

C. He (implicitly) promised to keep us from the Tribulation by the order of events He inspired John to present in the Book of Revelation.

1. Revelation 2-3 describes Christians living and learning on earth.
2. Revelation 4-5 describes Christians worshiping blissfully in heaven.
3. Revelation 6-19 describes Israel and the nations travailing with desperate troubles in the Tribulation. (cf. Jer. 30:6-7; 1 Thess. 5:3)

II. Jesus will appear before the Tribulation to end the Church's testing.

A. Many believe we need the Tribulation to test us, but this Church Age (Pentecost to Rapture) is our time of testing.

B. Numerous sources confirm our testing comes *now in this time*:

1. Jesus prophesied "tribulation and persecution" come for His Word's sake. (Matt. 13:21)
2. The Book of Acts showcases Christian testing throughout its pages.

3. The apostle Paul's life showcases testing. (Acts 14:19-22; 2 Tim. 3:12)

4. The apostle Paul praised and made an example of the Thessalonians for enduring many "persecutions and tribulations." (2 Thess. 1:3-4)

5. The apostle John was "in tribulation" when he wrote Revelation. (Rev. 1:9)

6. Revelation's original readers were experiencing "tribulation" in AD 95. (Smyrna, Philadelphia)

7. The early church (Pentecost to 325 AD) experienced tribulation periodically from first Jewish and then Roman sources.

8. Church history is *filled* with the "tribulation or persecution" of faithful Christians.

—IN FACT, every divinely sent reformation or revival has encountered "tribulation" of one kind or another in this age.

9. The life of every "godly" Christian confirms this! (2 Tim. 3:12)

III. Jesus will appear before the Tribulation—so it may begin!

A. He will remove His bride—so He can begin releasing His “wrath” (Rev. 6:16-17)

B. He will remove the “Withholder”—so the “man of sin” may be released (2 Thess. 2:7-8; Rev. 6:1-8)

C. He will remove the earth’s “salt”—so moral corruption may increase and fill the world (Matt. 5:13; 24:12; Rev. 9:20-21)

D. He will remove the world’s “light”—so spiritual darkness may cover the world with “strong delusion” (Matt. 5:14-16; 2 Thess. 2:11)

IV. Jesus will appear before the Tribulation to begin Israel’s final test.

A. He will resume His work in Israel after the church is removed. (Rom. 11:25-26)

1. It is vital we understand: the Tribulation is divinely designed and predetermined for *Israel*, not the church. (Dan. 9:24; 12:1-4; cf. Jer. 30:6-7)

2. It is vital we understand: the Tribulation account contains numerous references to Jewish symbols, language, people, and places, *not* Christian things. (Rev. 7, 11, 12, 13, 14)

B. He will execute His twofold plan for Israel during the Tribulation.

1. During the first half of the Tribulation He will:
 - a. Save “all Israel” through 144,000 Jewish male ministers (Rom. 11:25-26; Rev. 7:1-8; Zech. 12:10 – 13:1)
 - b. Save many Gentiles through Israel’s believing remnant (Rev. 7:9-17; Zech. 8:20-23)
 - c. Catch up Israel’s believing remnant and its Gentile harvest to heaven at the mid-point (Rev. 7:9-17)
 - d. Catch up the 144,000 Jewish ministers to heaven at an undisclosed time at or just after the mid-point (Rev. 14:1-5)
2. During the second half, or “Great Tribulation,” He will:
 - a. Severely test Israel’s surviving remnant (Matt. 24:15-25; Rev. 12:13-17)

- b. Fulfill Zechariah's prophecy of a fiery End-Time trial:
 - i. Two-thirds of the Jewish remnant will be martyred. (Zech. 13:8)
 - ii. One-third of the Jewish remnant will be refined and proven in their fiery trial and emerge established in a very close walk with God. (Zech. 13:8-9)
3. The *four women* of Revelation confirm Jesus will appear before the Tribulation and the Church, Christ's bride, has no part in it:
 - a. "JEZEBEL" represents oft-reproved, impenitent, carnal Christians, who will be *left behind* to experience the Tribulation. (Rev. 2:20-22)
 - b. "THE WOMAN" who births the male child and is afterward persecuted by the dragon represents Israel severely tested by Satan's wrath *in the Great Tribulation*. (Rev. 12:13-17; 15:1-3; 20:4)
 - c. "THE HARLOT" riding the beast is the unfaithful church which, *left behind*, chooses to aid Antichrist during the Tribulation, for which she will be fearfully judged. (Rev. 17:1-18, esp. vv. 16-17)
 - d. CHRIST'S BRIDE, the only of these women depicted *in heaven*, is already tested, purified, "ready," and blissfully banqueting with Christ—prior to His return to earth. (Rev. 19:7-9; 19:11-21)

Lesson Four Questions:

1. *Does the account of the Tribulation in Revelation 6-19 describe people, places, events, and symbols that are distinctly Jewish or Christian?*
2. *The Tribulation period is divinely designed to test Israel. True or false? And why?*
3. *What may well be the standard by which Jesus will decide who will be taken in the Rapture and who will be left behind?*
4. *Of the four women presented in Revelation, which, if any, is described as being in heaven?*
5. *Every divinely sent _____ or _____ has encountered tribulation in this age.*
6. *In Jesus' parables and exhortations, what two spiritually valuable things did He say we must "buy" to be (spiritually rich and) taken in the Rapture?*
7. *Is it true, as many believe, that Christians need to be tested in the Tribulation?*

Lesson Five

***What Happens on Earth After
We Are Taken?*****I. The Lamb will open holy books and seals in heaven releasing hellish people and events on earth. (Rev. 6:1-8)****A. The tribulator appears—the monstrous man who makes the mayhem!**

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were, the noise of thunder, one of the four living creatures saying, Come.

And I saw and, behold, a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

—REVELATION 6:1-2

1. This rider is the ultimate imposter. (ct. Rev. 19:11-16; Matt. 24:23-25)
2. This rider is the ultimate troublemaker. (Eccl. 9:18)
3. This rider is the last in the long line of Israel's deadly persecutors. (Pharaoh, Haman, Antiochus IV, Hitler)

B. The Tribulation ensues—worldwide war, famine, pandemic disease, death. (Rev. 6:3-8)

1. During the first half of the Tribulation, Antichrist is rising in power. (Dan. 7:8, 20, 24; Rev. 13:3-4)

—ANTICHRIST’S AGGRESSION will cause wars, famines, and pandemic diseases that kill *one-fourth* of the world’s population! (Rev. 6:3-8)

2. During the second half, or Great Tribulation, Antichrist has worldwide authority. (Rev. 13:5, 7).

—THE MILITARY CAMPAIGN of a massive Eastern power will kill *one-third* of the surviving world population! (Rev. 9:13-18 and 16:12)

C. Meanwhile the Church is absent, already in heaven—translated, rewarded, worshiping, and preparing to return! (Rev. 4-5)

1. John represents the translated, overcoming church—safely in heaven *before* the Lamb opens the Tribulation’s first seal. (Rev. 1:9-10; 4:1-2; 6:1-2)

After this, I looked and behold, a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard was, as it were, of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up here, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

And immediately I was in the Spirit and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

—REVELATION 4:1-2

2. The enthroned elders also represent the translated, overcoming Church—safely in heaven, rewarded and worshiping, *before* the Lamb opens the Tribulation’s first seal. (Rev. 4:4, 9-11; 5:8-10, 14; 6:1-2)

- a. So why look for Antichrist?

- b. Why not look, and prepare, for Christ? (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20)

II. Daniel's 70th week of years will be fulfilled. (Dan. 9:24-27)

A. God's predestined times and plans for Israel will be completed.

A PERIOD OF SEVENTY SETS OF SEVEN has been decreed for your people and your holy city to finish their rebellion, to put an end to their sin, to atone for their guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to confirm the prophetic vision, and to anoint the Most Holy Place [*or One*].

Now listen and understand! Seven sets of seven plus sixty-two sets of seven will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until a ruler—the Anointed One—comes. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and strong defenses, despite the perilous times.

After this period of sixty-two sets of seven, the Anointed One will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing, and a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple. The end will come with a flood, and war and its miseries are decreed from that time to the very end.

The ruler will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. And as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration [Heb. *an abomination of desolation*], until the fate decreed for this defiler is finally poured out on him.

—DANIEL 9:24-27, NLT

1. The Church Age falls between Israel's 69th and 70th weeks of years.

- a. Daniel's prophecy of Israel's 70th week of years includes *only* the Jews, Jerusalem, and the Jewish temple: "Your people...your holy city...the Temple."
- b. Daniel's prophecies do *not* include the Church, which was a "mystery" revealed to the apostle Paul over six centuries later.

2. Thus, the Church has no part or mention in Daniel's End-Time prophecies.

B. God's plan for Israel's finest hour (to date, before the Millennium) will unfold in the Tribulation.

1. God's ancient purposes and prophecies for Israel will be realized.
 - a. His ancient purpose (Ezk. 36:23b)
 - b. His promises and prophecies for Israel's exaltation (Deut. 28:1-14, esp. vv. 1, 9-10, 13; Zech. 8:20-23; 12:10 – 13:1; cf. Isa. 2:1-3; Mic. 4:1-2)
2. God's ancient purpose for the church is at core very similar. (Jn. 17:21-23)

C. Israel's final test will run its course in the Great Tribulation. (Rev. 12:1-6, 13-17; Zech. 13:8-9; cf. Dan. 3:1-30)

D. Israel's final triumph will occur at Armageddon. (Isa. 34:1-8; Zech. 12:1-9; 14:3-7, 12-15; Rev. 16:13-14, 16; 19:11-21)

III. Israel's major prophets will be confirmed by these fulfillments. (cf. 1 Sam. 3:19; 9:6)

A. Jeremiah's predictions of "the time of Jacob's trouble" will be fulfilled. (Jer. 30:6-7)

B. Daniel's warning of a "time of trouble, such as never was" will be fulfilled. (Dan. 12:1)

—THIS "TIME OF TROUBLE" WILL BE:

1. One occurring when "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4)

2. One in which the "wise" will "shine" and "turn many to righteousness" (Dan. 12:3)

a. Many Jews (and Gentiles) will "turn" to the righteous One, Christ, as the Tribulation begins (Zech. 8:20-23; Rom 11:26; Rev. 7:1-8, 9-10; cf. Gen. 45:1-8; Matt. 23:39)

- b. Many more Jews (and Gentiles) will “turn” to the righteous One, Christ, after the mid-point of the Tribulation (Zech. 8:20-23).

—THEY WILL BE *convinced and converted* by:

- i. The Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:15-18)
 - ii. The “Jesus revival” in Israel (Rev. 7:1-8; cf. Isa. 60:1-5; Zech. 8:20-23; 12:10 – 13:6)
 - iii. The catching-up of Israel’s harvest (Rev. 7:9-10; Zech. 8:20-23)
 - iv. Antichrist’s shocking betrayal of Israel (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 13:7)
 - v. The self-deification of Antichrist (Dan. 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:14-18)
 - vi. Antichrist’s cruel persecution of Jews (Rev. 12:13-17; Matt. 25:31-40)
3. One which Jesus confirmed in His End-Time prophecies (Matt. 24:15-25, esp. vv. 15, 21, 24)

C. Isaiah’s prediction of Israel’s sudden national rebirth “in one day” will be fulfilled. (Isa. 66:7-9; cf. Hos. 6:1-3; Rev. 12:5)

D. Isaiah’s, Jeremiah’s, and Ezekiel’s End-Time prophecies will be fulfilled.

—ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, AND EZEKIEL predict the following events in this order:

1. Israel’s *physical regathering* to the Promised Land (modern State of Israel) (Jer. 30:1-3; Ezk. 36:1-38)
2. Israel’s *spiritual restoration* during the first half of the Tribulation (Isa. 26:1-15; 27:1-6; 60:1-6; Jer. 31:31-34; 33:6-9; Ezk. 37:1-28)
3. Israel’s *severe testing* by Antichrist’s persecution and by God’s wrathful judgments visiting the earth during the Great Tribulation (Isa. 24:14-16; 26:20-21; Jer. 30:6-7; Ezk. 38:1-17; cf. Dan. 12:1)
4. Israel’s *rescue* from Antichrist by God’s judgment on his idolatrous empire (Isa. 24:1-13, 17-23; 34:1-8; Jer. 30:23-24; Ezk. 38:18 – 39:7)
5. Israel’s *kingdom* and its many joyful blessings received on this earth (Isa. 35:1-10; Jer. 31:1-14; Ezk. 40-48)

Lesson Five Questions:

1. *Jesus specifically confirmed the prediction of what Old Testament prophet concerning the Great Tribulation? And in what New Testament reference?*
2. *Which of Israel's prophets described the Tribulation as an unprecedented time, specifically, a "time of trouble, such as never was"? And in what biblical reference?*
3. *God's purpose for the church is at core similar to His purpose for Israel. True or false?*
4. *God's plans for Israel's seventieth week of years as prophesied by Daniel include the church. True or false?*
5. *Which of the following describes Israel's finest hour (prior to the Millennium): the times of David, Solomon, Moses, Josiah, the Maccabees, or the remnant of the first half of the Tribulation? (choose one answer)*
6. *Which of Israel's prophets described the Tribulation as the "time of Jacob's trouble"? And in what biblical reference?*
7. *Many Jews will turn to Christ as the Tribulation begins and many others will do so after the mid-point. True or false?*

Lesson Six

What Happens in Heaven After We Are Taken?

I. In heaven the bride church will experience seven years of celebration and orientation—the Marriage of the Lamb!

A. Like ancient Jewish weddings, which often lasted seven days, this wedding will also (very likely) last *seven years*. (cf. Jud. 14:12, 15, 17, 18)

B. This seven years occurs during the turbulent last “week” of years in Israel’s predetermined history. (Dan. 9:24, 27)

—THUS, as newly converted Jews enter their greatest test, thoroughly proven Christians will enter their greatest rest. (cf. Jer. 30:6-7; Rev. 3:10; Heb. 4:9)

II. Our heavenly bliss begins when we arrive before God’s throne, as John did, rapt with ecstatic joy! (Rev. 4:1-2; cf. 1 Thess. 4:16-18; Ps. 126)

A. The Holy Spirit will initially present us, the bride church, to Christ.

1. This preliminary presentation ends the Holy Spirit’s mission to retrieve a bride for Christ. (cf. Gen. 24:61-67)

2. This preliminary presentation also begins our 7-year “week” of joyful festivities and activities.

—DURING THIS “WEEK” OF YEARS, we will:

- a. BE EXAMINED AND REWARDED at the “Judgment Seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 25:14-30; Lk. 19:12-27; Rom. 14:10-12; cf. Rev. 4:4)

- b. WORSHIP GOD around the throne, with the elders, four living beings, and angels (Rev. 4-5)

- c. FELLOWSHIP with other believers at joyous meals and in other unrevealed activities (Matt. 8:11; Lk. 13:29; 1 Cor. 2:9-10; 13:9)

- d. RECEIVE NEW REVELATION, the unimaginable experience of God’s glory, His throne, the spiritual world, New Jerusalem, and many other previously undisclosed wonders (cf. Deut. 29:29; 1 Cor. 13:10, 12)

- e. OBSERVE with awe the 7-year Tribulation drama unfolding on earth (Heb. 12:1; cf. Rev. 6:9-10)

- f. RECEIVE other groups of overcomers entering heaven—martyrs, Israel’s 144,000, their Gentile harvest, the two witnesses (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 11:12; 14:1-6; 15:2; cf. Ps. 45:14)

—OUR FELLOWSHIP will be *perfect*, with the widest possible diversity and the deepest possible unity. (Jn. 17:21, 23; Gal. 3:28)

- g. PREPARE for the Kingdom by receiving new gifts, duties, and offices with which to serve and honor the King (Matt. 25:21, 23; Lk. 19:17-19; Rev. 2:26-27; 20:4)

—OUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT will be the great honor of accompanying Christ at the battle of Armageddon! (Zech. 14:5c; Rev. 17:14; 19:14)

- h. EXPERIENCE the “week’s” great, final feast, the heavenly “marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:7-9)
- i. Following ancient Jewish custom, Jesus will be the “King” and His bride church the “Queen” of this heavenly banquet. (Ps. 45:1-9a; 45:9b-17)
 - ii. This great banquet ends our 7-year “week” of joyous festivities and activities.

B. The bride church will then be ready for official “presentation.”

III. At the seven years’ end the bride church will be officially presented—before the Father and the entire kingdom of God in heaven and earth!²

² The precise time of the bride’s presentation is not stated in Revelation. The context in which it is described, however, strongly suggests it occurs at the great “marriage supper of the Lamb” at the end of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 19:1-6), just before the bride returns with Christ to earth in glory (Rev. 19:14; cf. 17:14; Zech. 14:5).

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”

It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Then he said unto me, Write, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

—REVELATION 19:7-9, NAS

A. Ancient Jewish weddings closed their week’s festivities with a large feast, at which the new husband and wife, beautifully attired, were officially presented as the banquet’s “King” and “Queen.”

1. Primarily, the Lamb will be honored for His work of grace: “Let us...give the glory to Him.” (Rev. 19:7, NAS)

2. Secondly, the bride will be honored for her obedience in grace:
 - a. By a proclamation: “And His bride has made herself ready.” (Rev. 19:7, NAS)

 - b. By a decoration: “It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean.” (Rev. 19:8, NAS)

B. This presentation will showcase the amazingly thorough work of sanctification wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, and our ministers, in this life. (Jn. 17:17; Eph. 4:11-15; Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess. 2:19-20; 5:23-24)

—EVERY BELIEVER IN THE BRIDE CHURCH will be:

1. SPIRITUALLY MATURE – “We preach...that we may PRESENT every man *perfect in Christ Jesus.*” (Col. 1:28)

2. BLAMELESS – “to PRESENT you...*unblamable* and unreproachable in his sight” (Col. 1:22)

3. RAISED (OR RAPTURED) IN IMMORTAL BODIES – “He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall *raise up* us also...and shall PRESENT us.” (2 Cor. 4:14; cf. 1 Cor. 15:50-53)

4. FAITHFUL AND PURE – “I have espoused you ...that I may PRESENT you as a *chaste virgin* to Christ.” (2 Cor. 11:2)

5. WASHED AND SANCTIFIED BY THE WORD – “That he [Jesus] might *sanctify and cleanse* it with the washing of water by the word; [and] ... PRESENT it to himself.” (Eph. 5:26-27)

6. HOLY – “That he might PRESENT it to himself ... not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ... *holy and without blemish.*” (Eph. 5:27)

7. WORTHY OF TRANSLATION – “Watch...and pray always, that ye may be accounted *worthy to escape*...and to STAND BEFORE [OR BE PRESENTED TO] the Son of man.” (Lk. 21:36)

 8. VALUABLE TO GOD - “Watch...and pray always, that ye may be accounted *worthy* ... to STAND BEFORE [or be presented to] the Son of man [for His use].” (Lk. 21:36)

 9. READY – “His wife hath made herself *ready* [to be PRESENTED, and used or sent however He pleases].” (Rev. 19:7)

 10. GLORIOUS! – “That he might PRESENT it to himself a *glorious* church.” (Eph. 5:27)

 11. EACH VERSE ABOVE refers or alludes to the bride church (or Christian) being “presented.”
- C. The presentation presents us with a challenge: do we, will we, dare we believe God can do this in us? In this generation?**

—AS UNLIKELY, even impossible, as this deep transformation of Christians in this life seems, it will occur! (Matt. 3:9b; Lk. 18:27; Jude 24)

IV. The Scriptures give additional information concerning the presentation of the bride church.

A. The presentation was Paul's personal goal in ministry. (Col. 1:28)

—HE “PRESSED” toward it in all his labors. (Phil. 3:14-15)

B. The presentation was Jesus' heart's desire as He suffered. (Eph. 5:25-27)

—AND HE SPECIFICALLY petitioned His Father for the presentation. (Jn. 17:24)

C. The presentation—like Jesus' appearing—should be our hope and joy. (1 Thess. 2:19-20)

1. Is the presentation your focus? Hope? Goal? Joy?

2. Are you busy getting “presentable”? (cf. Rev. 19:7)

Lesson Six Questions:

1. *While in heaven during the Tribulation, we Christians will prepare for our new lives and responsibilities in _____?*
2. *The Holy Spirit's mission during this Church Age will end when He presents the bride church to Christ in heaven. True or false?*
3. *If we believe the presentation of the church was Paul's personal goal in ministry and Jesus' heart's desire as He suffered, and should also be our personal hope and joy, what should we be doing?*
4. *Whose amazingly thorough work will be showcased when the church is presented to Christ?*
5. *Name some of the groups of overcomers we will receive into fellowship in heaven during the Tribulation period?*
6. *What biblical text best describes the Marriage of the Lamb?*
7. *Although in heaven our fellowship will be perfect, having the widest possible diversity and the deepest possible unity, such unity is simply not possible while we are in this world. True or false?*

Lesson Seven

How Do We Prepare? Be Wise!

I. Wise Christians heed their Savior.

—TO “HEED” (Greek, *prosechō*) is “to consider carefully; continue to believe; continue to give oneself to carefully; devote; apply oneself.”³

A. Our Savior challenged us to be “wise” bridesmaids awaiting His return:

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

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

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no [extra] oil with them; but the *wise* took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

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

Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.

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

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

And while they went to buy the bridegroom came, and they that were ready [the *wise*] went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.

Afterward came also the other virgins saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

Watch, therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man cometh.

—MATTHEW 25:1-13

³ Swanson, J., *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), s. v. “prosechō.

B. These “wise” bridesmaids represent Christians who, fearing God and obeying biblical wisdom, take Jesus’ Second Coming seriously and prepare for it thoroughly.

1. That only *five* of the ten bridesmaids were wise—and taken—implies many Christians will be unprepared and left behind. Perhaps half!

2. This inspired prophetic parable is meant to disturb and awaken us to give our full attention to living wisely and preparing for Jesus’ Appearing.

II. Wise Christians heed Enoch’s example.

A. Enoch’s simple yet wise way of preparing for the first worldwide judgment (flood) shows us how to prepare for the second (Tribulation).

—ENOCH’S SIMPLE METHOD:

And Enoch walked with God...

And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him.

—GENESIS 5:22, 24

1. We are told, not once but *twice*, Enoch walked “with” God, implying:
 - a. Closeness (see NLT) -

 - b. (Complete) conformity -

- c. Constancy -

 - d. Correction -

 - e. Control -

 - f. Contemplation -

 - g. BY CONTRAST – in His mercy God walked “with” Jacob during the years of his self-centered spiritual immaturity. (Gen. 28:20-21)
2. Enoch was a man of *faith* – believing God would accomplish his approaching translation by faith, not reason. (Heb. 11:5)

 3. Enoch was a *God-pleasing* man – free from the fear of trying to please everyone. (Heb. 11:5; cf. Prov. 14:26; 29:25; Jn. 8:29; Gal. 1:10)

 4. Enoch was a *fruitful* man – fathering Methuselah and other sons and daughters. (Gen. 5:21-22)

5. Enoch was a *prophetic* man – accurately hearing, heeding, and heralding God’s messages. (Jude 14-15)

6. Enoch was a *taken* (chosen) man – like Noah, selected from among his peers for deliverance from the coming general judgment (Gen. 5:23-24, NLT; 6:8-9)

—ENOCH WAS *not* left behind to face the worldwide judgment! (cf. Matt. 24:40, 41; 25:11-12)

B. If we live Enoch’s way—“walking in close fellowship with God” (NLT)—we will escape the second worldwide judgment (Tribulation)!

III. Wise Christians heed their entanglements.

A. The wise identify and eliminate spiritual hindrances—anything that “entangles” (snares, impedes) them with the affairs or cares of this life.

No soldier in active service *entangles* himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

—2 TIMOTHY 2:4

Be taking heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts are *weighed down* with drunken nausea and intoxication and the anxieties pertaining to the affairs of this life, and that day bursts in upon you unexpectedly... as a snare.

—LUKE 21:34, Wuest

1. These hindrances may be things we (a) consider to be good, or (b) recognize to be bad.

—FOR EXAMPLE:

- Good causes – if they hold us back from the best cause (His call)

 - God’s blessings – if we forget the Blessor (Deut. 8:10-20)

 - Growing interests – “other things entering in” (Mark 4:19) that increasingly demand more of our time, energy, money or thoughts, leaving less for God’s will and interests.

 - Areas of indulgence or excess –

 - Any preoccupation or obsession –

 - Ongoing sin of any kind (Gal. 5:1; 2 Pet. 2:20) –

 - Doctrinal errors or foolish fads sweeping through the churches –
2. The wise realize we may be *involved* (in good pursuits) yet not *entangled*.

 3. The foolish need to realize *excessive* involvement leads to *entanglement*!

A. When God judged Sodom, Lot and his family were deeply “entangled” in the ways of Sodom.

1. Thus, when destruction was imminent, they *longed* for and *lingered* in the “things of Sodom.” (Gen. 19:15-26; cf. 1 Jn. 2:15-17)
2. Thus, though delivered by God’s mercy, Lot still paid a high price for his former entanglement. (Gen. 19:14, 26; 19:30-38)

IV. Wise Christians heed their tests.

A. They recognize God planned the Tribulation as a final test—for the untested!

1. They realize the thoroughly tested Philadelphians were the only church to whom Jesus *guaranteed* exemption “from” the Tribulation. (Rev. 3:10)
2. They interpret this to mean only thoroughly tested Christians are *assured* of being taken when Jesus appears.

B. Therefore, they seek *rapture assurance* by devoting themselves to passing their tests of faith and patience now so they may be kept “from” that time. (Rev. 3:10)

1. Wisely, they are “buying” eternal wealth: “gold tried in the fire!” (Rev. 3:18)
 - a. This “gold” is priceless faith in God’s faithfulness, God-confidence that has been refined, proven, and permanentized in fiery trials. (Eph. 4:13)
 - b. This “gold” is the priceless, wide, deep, personal experiential knowledge of God gained in fiery trials. (Eph. 4:13)
2. Wisely, they are “buying” the “oil” of preparation! (Matt. 25:3-4, 8-9)
 - a. In this context, “oil” is not merely the Holy Spirit, since He *can* be given but *cannot* be bought. (Matt. 25:8-10; Acts 2:38; 8:18-20)
 - b. Rather, this “oil” is the *thorough spiritual preparation* the Spirit accomplishes in us—if we “buy” it by steadily surrendering our wills and trusting and obeying Him every time He tests or corrects us.
3. Wisely, they live in the *attitude of acceptance*.
 - a. This attitude accepts “everything” that touches our lives as coming from the loving hand of our all-controlling heavenly Father for some good purpose. (1 Thess. 5:18)

- To bless us (Rom. 8:28)
 - To correct us (Heb. 12:5-11)
 - To challenge us to develop our faith, endurance, love (Jas. 1:2-4)
 - To conform us to Christ's character image (Rom. 8:29)
- b. Our heavenly Father carefully controls these circumstances so they are never more than we can bear as we abide in Him (1 Cor. 10:13).
4. Wisely, they maintain the *focus of the faithful*.
- a. In every situation faithful Christians ask, "What does God's Word tell *me* to believe"—and they believe it!
- b. In every situation faithful Christians ask, "What does God's Word (or guidance) tell *me* to do"—and they do it!

A. These practices prepare the wise and give them *rapture assurance!*

—And make them *presentable!*

Lesson Seven Questions:

1. *In what Scripture reference did the apostle Paul urge Christians to avoid worldly entanglements?*
2. *In the context of Matthew 25:1-13, “oil” represents the Holy Spirit. True or false? And why?*
3. *Name of the attitude that accepts everything touching our lives as coming from the loving hand of our all-controlling heavenly Father for some good purpose?*
4. *What is the focus of the faithful?*
5. *To consider carefully, continue to believe, continue to give oneself to carefully, or devote and apply oneself is to _____?*
6. *Once we have Rapture awareness, how do we gain Rapture assurance?*
7. *In the context of the parable of the Ten Bridesmaids, what does “wise” mean?*

Lesson Eight

How Do We Prepare? Be Worthy!

I. Worthy Christians heed their Savior.

—TO “HEED” (Greek, *prosechō*) is “to consider carefully; continue to believe; continue to give oneself to carefully; devote; apply oneself.”

A. Our Savior urged all believers to live spiritually “worthy” lives:

And *take heed* to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged [overcome] with surfeiting [feasting], and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

For like a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch ye, therefore, and pray always that ye may be accounted *worthy* to *escape all* these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

—LUKE 21:34-36

B. Our Savior’s exhortation gives us *His* description of a spiritually worthy life.

1. Spiritually worthy Christians discipline themselves, avoiding overindulgence in food and drink.
2. Spiritually worthy Christians take their “cares of this life” to Christ in prayer. (cf. Phil. 4:6)

3. Spiritually worthy Christians will *not* be caught in the “snare” (trap) of the Tribulation (cf. 1 Thess. 5:2-3).

4. Spiritually worthy Christians cultivate an ever-increasing prayer life, “pray[ing] always”—as frequently and habitually as they breathe. (cf. 1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:18)

5. Spiritually worthy Christians will “escape all” the Tribulation.

—LIKE PHILADELPHIA’S ENDURING CHRISTIANS, they will be kept “from” that time. (Rev. 3:10)

6. Spiritually worthy Christians will be *presentable*. “Stand before the Son of man” reveals after arriving in heaven they will be presented to Jesus to be evaluated and rewarded. (2 Cor. 5:10)

7. Thus, Jesus implied that He, not any Christian leader or board, will personally determine those who are and are not living spiritually worthy lives.

C. Our Savior also described spiritually *unworthy* Christians.

1. They take His Second Coming “lightly” and “go their ways” to seek their own interests in purely worldly things. (Matt. 22:4-5,8)

2. They live *prodigally* (wastefully), wasting the rich spiritual resources of their salvation: Christ’s closeness, peace, strength, gifts, answers to prayer, and countless other benefits, all because they will not do His will. (Lk. 15:19, 21)

3. They reject their crosses, refusing to suffer for our suffering Savior. (Matt. 10:37-38)

4. Therefore, living unworthily, when Jesus appears they will be left behind, “snared” in the Tribulation. (Lk. 21:35)

D. Like Jesus, Paul urged us to live spiritually worthy lives. (1 Thess. 2:11-12)

II. Worthy Christians heed—and need—holiness.

A. What is holiness?

1. Holiness is _____

_____.

2. Holiness is the opposite of worldliness. (ct. 1 Jn. 2:15-17)

3. Holiness is a key attribute of God, one of the greatest pillars of His nature. (Ps. 99:5; Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8)

B. Why is holiness so important and how may we obtain it?

1. When we are born again God graciously *gives* us a new nature (man) with “true holiness.” (Eph. 4:24)

2. Since holiness is a key attribute of God (Ps. 108:7), we must be holy:
 - a. To be like Him and His Son. (1 Pet. 1:16)

 - b. In our “entire way of life.” (1 Pet. 1:15, CJB)

3. During her betrothal period (Church Age) Christ’s bride must be holy—faithful and pure, dedicated, separated, submissive. (2 Cor. 11:1-2; Eph. 5:25-27; 1 Pet. 3:1-6)

—IF NOT, she will not “see” the Bridegroom’s face. (Heb. 12:14)

4. By consistently yielding to righteousness we grow in holiness. (Rom. 6:19)

5. As we walk increasingly in love to one another and all people we become established in holiness. (1 Thess. 3:12-13)

6. God patiently trains us until we are “partakers of his holiness” in our characters—consistently demonstrating holiness in our daily lives (Heb. 12:10)

7. The apostle Peter declared holiness *hastens* Jesus’ appearing. (2 Pet. 3:10-12)

—UNHOLY LIVING, therefore, *delays* Jesus’ appearing.

III. Worthy Christians heed their new occupation: worship!

A. In heaven our primary occupation will be worship, as seen in the twenty-four elders’ frequent worship. (Rev. 4:9-11; 5:13-14; 7:11-12; 11:16; 19:4)

B. Worthy Christians prepare now for their heavenly occupation by becoming *worthy worshipers*—worshiping God privately every day.

1. The apostle Paul worshiped not only in public but also in private, “in everything” giving thanks. (1 Thess. 5:18; Acts 16:24-25)

2. The apostle Paul ministered not only for but also *to* the Lord. (Acts 13:1-2)

3. The apostle Paul ministered to the Lord in song. (Col. 3:16)

- a. The song of the Lord draws us near the Lord of the song. (Ps. 100:1-2, 4; 22:3)

- b. The song of the Lord brings the strength and peace of the Lord. (Ps. 29:1-2, 11)

- c. The strength and peace of the Lord will see us through even our worst trials. (Matt. 26:30)

- d. Let us, therefore, like Paul, become *worthy worshipers*—worshiping God privately every day, prepared for our heavenly occupation.

—And *presentable!*

Lesson Eight Questions:

1. *Jesus' revelation that worthy living will qualify many to "escape all" the Tribulation reminds us of which of the churches of Asia? And of what Bible verse?*
2. *During her betrothal period the bride of Christ must be holy. Define holiness?*
3. *Jesus' appearing cannot be delayed regardless of the condition of the church. True or false?*
4. *Our heavenly occupation will be: (a) helping Christ finish building New Jerusalem, (b) worship, (c) fellowship, (d) ruling in the heavenly places, (e) preparing for our return with Christ? Select the best answer.*
5. *In Luke 21:34-36, Jesus urged all believers to live _____ lives.*
6. *How do we grow and become established in holiness?*
7. *Name one way spiritually worthy Christians discipline themselves?*

Lesson Nine

How Do We Prepare? Be Watchful!

I. Watchful Christians heed their Savior.

—TO “HEED” (Greek, *prosechō*) is “to consider carefully; continue to believe; continue to give oneself to carefully; devote; apply oneself.”

A. Our Savior taught us to faithfully “watch” and “work” through the long night of the Church Age—and not sleep!

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels who are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father [only].

Take heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.

For the Son of man is like a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to *watch*.

Watch ye, therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning.

Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

And what I say unto you I say unto all, *Watch*.

—MARK 13:32-37

1. Jesus warned that “no man” knows the specific date of His appearing. That is His Father’s secret.
2. Jesus charged us to “watch” for His coming—maintain expectation of His imminent appearing and [by implication] a continuing vigil for the “signs of the times.”

—THE “SIGNS OF THE TIMES” (Matt. 16:3) reveal the general season (generation) in which He will appear. (See Appendix A)

3. Jesus also charged us to work while we watch—each of us faithfully attending “his work.”

4. Jesus warned us against succumbing to spiritual sleep—losing our expectation, becoming indifferent toward His appearing, our times, our spiritual condition, or the faithful discharging of our work.

5. His last word was to “watch” for Him—not Antichrist, peace agreements, false prophets, beast systems, or other figures or events scheduled for the Tribulation! (cf. Phil. 3:20-21; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20)

B. Failure to faithfully watch and work brings serious consequences.

1. When Jesus appears unfaithful servants will be:
 - a. SHOCKED – “The lord...shall come in a day when he looketh not...in an hour that he is not aware of” (Matt. 24:50)

 - b. PUNISHED (severely) – “And shall cut him asunder [lacerate by whipping]” (Matt. 24:51)

- c. SEGREGATED (separated from overcomers) – “and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites” (Matt. 24:51)
- d. REGRETFUL – “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 24:51)

2. Are we faithfully watching and working or foolishly sleeping?

II. Watchful Christians heed the kingdom “first.”

—THEY REALIZE with the King comes the kingdom.

A. They live daily focused on the first principle of the kingdom of God.

Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things [all your human needs] shall be added unto you.

—MATTHEW 6:33

1. Every day they seek the King, His interests, and His will “first,” before all other needs or desires.
2. In every issue they seek and do “his righteousness”—what is right by Him, as stated in Scripture or, if not written, revealed by His Spirit (Rom. 8:14).

B. The New Testament presents several specially focused, distinguished, kingdom-minded servants.

1. John the Baptist came to announce God's chosen King and His kingdom were at hand and prepare God's people to receive them. (Matt. 3:1-2)

2. Jesus of Nazareth came to establish and grow the kingdom. (Matt. 4:17)

—HE ESTABLISHED the spiritual, or "hidden," kingdom in believers who later became the church. (Lk. 17:20-21)

3. The early Christians remained focused on the kingdom—not wealth, power, or the glory of the Roman republic. (Acts 1:3, 6; 8:12)

4. The apostle Paul remained focused on the kingdom throughout his 30-year ministry. (Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; 28:30-31)

5. Are we focused on the King and His kingdom or caught up with other things?

C. How can we become focused, watchful, kingdom-minded Christians?

1. We should follow Paul's counsel to heed "those things which are above."
(Col. 3:1-4)
 - a. We should heed our personal time with the King daily. (Mk. 3:14-15)

- b. We should heed the King's Word daily. (Lk. 10:38-42)

 - c. We should heed the King's call daily. (Rom. 8:28)

 - d. We should heed the King's people daily. (Jn. 13:34-35)

 - e. We should heed the King's plan daily. (Jn. 17:17-26)
2. This seeking of "those things which are above" (Col. 3:1) makes us:
- a. **SPIRITUALLY FOCUSED** – maintaining our interest in, study of, and service to Christ and His kingdom; not entangled with ideologies, nationalism, or social causes, however good, or personal interests

 - b. **KINGDOM-MINDED** – seeing every issue from the King's viewpoint as it is so adequately revealed in God's Word

 - c. **HEAVENLY MINDED** – valuing the next life more than the present, like the pilgrims described by the writer to the Hebrews:

These all...confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country [kingdom]...

Now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.

—HEBREWS 11:13-16

III. Watchful Christians faithfully discharge their commissions.

A. Christ charged every Christian and church with three commissions.⁴

1. To EVANGELIZE – sharing the gospel with every person in every nation (Mk. 16:15-18; Matt. 24:14)

2. To TEACH – making *disciples* of all who receive the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20)

—A NEW TESTAMENT “DISCIPLE” OF CHRIST is: _____

3. To be His WITNESSES – testifying and exemplifying His claims and teachings to the ends of the earth to draw others to Him (Acts 1:8)

—IF NECESSARY, as a martyr (Greek, *martys*)

⁴ These three commissions include all of us. If not called to preach or teach (as an Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, or Teacher), we are still commissioned to be Christ’s witnesses—and support or assist those who preach or teach, thus sharing in their commissions!

4. To fulfill these commissions we need the *full power* of the Holy Spirit.
(Acts 1:8; cf. Lk. 24:49)

B. Satan tries in various ways to distract and divert us from these commissions.

1. But watchful Christians stay faithfully focused on their commissions.
2. Their motto is: “If it’s not in our commission, it’s not our mission!”
3. Are we focused on or forgetful of our three great commissions?

C. If we faithfully discharge our commissions until Jesus appears we will prove we are *watchful Christians*.

—And *presentable!*

Lesson Nine Questions:

1. *Every Christian can help fulfill all three of the commissions Christ left us. True or false? And why?*

2. *What Scripture reference gives us the first principle of the Kingdom of God?*

3. *In Acts 1:8, “witnesses” is translated from what Greek word? What does that word mean and why is this significant for us?*

4. *To “seek those things which are above” every day we should heed first the King and His Word, call, people, and _____?*

5. *Is every Christian a New Testament “disciple” of Christ?*

6. *When Jesus returns, unwatchful Christians will be surprised and reproached but not punished. True or false? And upon what Scripture do you base your answer?*

7. *What Scripture reference describes being heavenly minded? As thus described, are you becoming “heavenly minded” or still seeing things from another viewpoint, however good?*

Lesson Ten

How Do We Prepare? Be Ready!

I. Ready Christians heed their Savior.

—TO “HEED” (Greek, *prosechō*) is “to consider carefully; continue to believe; continue to give oneself to carefully; devote; apply oneself.”

A. Our Savior charged us to be “ready” for His appearing:

Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

But know this, that if the householder had known in what watch the thief would come he would have watched, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

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

—MATTHEW 24:42-44

They that were *ready* went in with him to the marriage and the door was shut.

—MATTHEW 25:10

Let us be glad and rejoice...for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself *ready*.

—REVELATION 19:7

IN THESE THREE KEY REFERENCES Jesus pleaded for *readiness* and John prophesied the true church will have it.

Readiness is preparedness. To be “ready” is to set oneself and one’s things in order for an anticipated event. It is fully preparing one’s heart and lifestyle, discharging one’s responsibilities, meeting one’s requirements, and completing one’s preparations.

Regarding Jesus' return, readiness implies we become the very embodiment of the things He said we should be: "wise," "watching," and "worthy." We have patiently endured long, sometimes fiery, tests of faith and emerged with the priceless spiritual "oil" and "gold" Jesus urged us to buy. (Matt. 25:4; Rev. 3:18)

So we are ready. We are ready for Jesus. We are ready for *anything*—so thoroughly trained to trust and obey God we are prepared to handle whatever test, duty, problem, or conflict He sets before us!

This is the bride church, and these are the bride Christians, for whom Jesus died. While He has been lovingly preparing a place for them, they have been faithfully preparing themselves for Him.

II. Ready Christians heed their "baptists."

A. John the Baptist was a divinely called, informed, and empowered spiritual preparer.

1. He was not the product of the religious schools and systems of his day, but was separated and unorthodox.
2. Yet John was unquestionably divinely sent and Jesus said he was the greatest of the prophets! (Lk. 7:24-28)
3. Will we recognize and heed ministers of John's mold?

B. Our "baptists" are End-Time preparers with the "spirit and power" of John (and Elijah) upon their ministries. (Lk. 1:17)

—LIKE JOHN THE BAPTIST:

1. They are sent to “turn” us back to full devotion to God and our God-given responsibilities. (Lk. 1:16-17)

2. Their messages “prepare his ways” in our lives, to make us “ready,” “a people prepared for the Lord.” (Lk. 1:17, 76)

3. Their disciples become Jesus’ disciples, as God planned. (Jn. 1:35-37; Acts 18:24-28)

4. They primarily call God’s covenant people (today born-again Christians) to repent.

5. They teach and minister the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.
 - a. In all four gospels John identified *Jesus* as the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:7-8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33; cf. Acts 1:32-33; 11:15-17; 19:1-7)

 - b. Dare we reject any experience *John* recommends? And *Jesus* ministers?

6. They minister correction, giving us many practical instructions for spiritual preparedness. (Lk. 3:10-14)

7. Their Spirit-inspired counsels cut to the “roots” of sin in our lives. (Lk. 3:9; cf. Ps. 19:12)

III. Ready Christians heed their calling.

—THROUGH PAUL, JESUS POSTHUMOUSLY CHARGED every Christian to faithfully execute their personal calling—ministry, gifting, and place of service in the body of Christ. (1 Cor. 7:17-24)

A. Natural and spiritual callings are essential to the church’s life and ministry.

—THESE ARE THE “GOOD WORKS” God has predestined for us to accomplish in Christ. (Eph. 2:10)

1. We may be called and gifted for natural vocations or professions.

—FOR EXAMPLE: Priscilla and Aquila, Simon the tanner, Zenas

2. We may be called and gifted for spiritual ministries.

—FOR EXAMPLE: Timothy, Apollos, Agabus

B. Ready Christians heed their callings—focusing on faithfully pursuing them till they are finished!

—THEY KNOW, *when we finish, we fly!* That is, when we complete our work, we will be caught up!

1. Paul finished his “course” of ministry and was taken home to heaven—by execution. (2 Tim. 4:7, 6-8)
2. Jesus “finished” His redemptive work and was caught up to heaven—with angels. (Jn. 19:30; Acts 1:9-11)
3. Philip finished his work in Samaria and the desert and was “caught away” to Azotus—by the power of the Spirit. (Acts 8:26-38, 39)
4. When bride believers and churches finish their works, we, too, will be “caught up”—by the power of the Spirit. (1 Thess. 4:16-18)

C. Focusing on finishing will make us *ready Christians!*

—And *presentable!*

Lesson Ten Questions:

1. *Natural callings are good and God-honoring but are not essential to the life of the church. True or false?*
2. *In the context of Jesus' return, readiness implies we have become the very embodiment of three things He said we should be, which are: _____, _____, and _____?*
3. *What character in the Book of Acts was caught away when his work was finished and is therefore a type of ready Christians?*
4. *Through which early church leader did Jesus charge Christians to faithfully execute their personal callings? And in what Scripture reference?*
5. *As to our fulfilling (finishing) God's call on our lives and churches, our readiness for the rapture may be described very simply: when we finish, _____?*
6. *In all four gospels, John the Baptist identified Jesus as: (a) the Lamb of God, (b) the Prophet Moses said would come, (c) the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, (d) the Bridegroom? Choose one answer.*
7. *Our "baptists" are End-Time preparers having the "spirit and power" of what two biblical characters upon their ministries?*

Appendix A

The Signs of the Times

THE FOLLOWING LIST cites “signs of the times,” or signs of the End Times. More specifically, each indicator listed reveals we are living in the season of the Rapture—Jesus’ personal appearing in the sky to catch away His church to heaven. Each sign is a trend or event that is historically unprecedented.

OUR PURPOSE IS TWOFOLD:

1. TO REFUTE the claims of today’s scoffing skeptics foreseen by Peter:

In the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth... They will say, “What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.”

—2 PETER 3:3-4, NLT

2. TO CONVINCe Christians and non-Christians that we are living in the last days of the Church Age, Jesus’ appearing is very imminent, and we need to get ready.

This appends Lesson Two, section I – A – 2.

SIXTEEN BIBLICAL SIGNS OF THE TIMES:

1. **The State of Israel** – Old Testament prophets foresaw the regathering of the Jewish people to their historic, divinely given land. This was necessary to the fulfillment of their many prophecies of the “Day of the Lord.” Ezekiel, for instance, proclaimed, “O mountains of Israel... my people of Israel... they are soon to come home... and I will multiply men upon you” (Ezk. 36:8-10). This prophecy was fulfilled in the Zionist movement that began in the last decades of the nineteenth century and culminated in the establishment of the modern State of Israel in May, 1948. For the first time in nearly 1900 years the Jewish people possessed and *ruled* their ancient homeland. (When they returned from Babylonian exile, the Persians and later the Romans ruled them.) And despite hateful, implacable enemies and numerous wars, Israel has continued to survive, and thrive, for seventy years. Unprecedented!

2. **Israel's repossession of Jerusalem and the temple mount** – In 1948 Israel possessed only half of Jerusalem and had no control over the temple mount. Yet Old and New Testament prophecies foresaw Israel possessing Jerusalem and the temple mount in the last days (Dan. 9:24-27; Zech. 14:1-2; Rev. 11:1-2). Then the Six-day War arose in June 1967, during which Israel retook all Jerusalem and the temple mount—for the first time in over 1900 years!⁵ And Israel continues to hold these key territorial gains. Unprecedented!
3. **Worldwide transportation** – An angel informed Daniel in “the time of the end, many shall run to and fro” (Dan. 12:4). Or, “many will rush here and there” (NLT, CJB). Since Christ's times people traveled on foot or by donkeys, horses, or slow sailing vessels or galleys. By the beginning of the twentieth century, people still traveled by horse and buggy, steam ships, steam locomotives, or strange new “horseless carriages.” But since the 1950s we have rushed about in cars on multilane freeways and flown to the remotest parts of the earth by jet airliners. As never before in history we are “rushing here and there.” Unprecedented!
4. **Rapidly increasing knowledge** – Daniel also wrote in “the time of the end” “knowledge shall be increased” (Dan. 12:4). This predicts a rapid growth of human knowledge in the last days. It is estimated before the twentieth century human knowledge doubled every century, but by the end of the Second World War (1945), it was doubling every 25 years. Today (2018) human knowledge is doubling about every year. Some have compared the Internet, which entered public use in the 1990s, to the printing press in its ability to multiply and thus expedite the growth of human knowledge, especially scientific and technological. Today wireless Internet access makes it possible for us to access any kind of knowledge anywhere on or above earth. Moreover, satellite TV broadcasts, which began in the 1960s now make it possible for the fulfillment of John's prophecy that the whole world will “see” the two witnesses laying dead for 3 ½ days (Rev. 11:9) and (likely) their ascension to heaven (11:12). None of this was possible until the last sixty years. Unprecedented!
5. **Like the days of Noah** – Jesus prophesied He would come when conditions were like “the days of Noah” (Lk. 17:26-27). In Noah's generation the world was morally “corrupt before God” and “filled with violence,” specifically murder (cf. Gen. 9:5-6). Our postmodern world, well educated and sophisticated as it is, is nevertheless like Noah's. We, too, have become an amoral society. We, too, utterly devalue life. This is most evident in the ongoing abortion epidemic and the growing trend of foreign and domestic terrorism. While with us throughout

⁵ The Temple Institute in Jerusalem, though not yet able to construct the Third Temple, is busily producing sacred objects and plans for it in anticipation of its construction. See: www.templeinstitute.org (accessed 3/8/2018)

history, these evils have grown exponentially in recent decades. As never before, our times are like Noah's. Unprecedented!

6. **Like the days of Lot** – Jesus also foretold He would come when conditions were like “the days of Lot” (Lk. 17:28-36). The people of Sodom, the city Lot chose to live in, were “exceedingly wicked” before God (Gen. 13:13, NKJV). Most specifically, they were notorious for bold, aggressive, public homosexuality and their society had acquiesced to it as the new norm (Gen. 19:1-11). Again, though present throughout human history, homosexuality has never been a lifestyle that any generation has accepted until the final decades of the twentieth century. Now our secular public has embraced and even championed it as perfectly normal—which puts us in “the days of Lot.”⁶ And near Jesus' appearing. Unprecedented!
7. **Worldwide preaching of the gospel** – Jesus prophesied “this gospel...shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:14). The immediate context describes the world evangelism of the converted Jewish remnant during the first part of the Tribulation (Rev. 7:1-8). But worldwide evangelism is also occurring now in this Church Age. Through missionaries, tract and Bible societies, radio, satellite TV, and now Internet broadcasts, evangelists are presenting “this gospel of the kingdom” to unsaved people everywhere every day. These mass media, again, have been largely developed in the last half-century. Unprecedented!
8. **European reunification** – Daniel, who prophesied the initial ascent of the Roman “beast” empire, also foresaw it rising again as a ten-nation federation in the last days, followed by a “little horn” (Antichrist) who would terrorize Israel: “I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints [Jews]” (Dan. 7:21, 24; cf. 2:33-34, 42-44). After the Second World War left Europe in ruins for the second time in thirty years, its leaders decided unprecedented changes were needed. They would unite to avoid such future catastrophes! If their economies and politics were interlinked, war would be much less likely. Thus, the European Union was formed. Not since the fall of (western) Rome (AD 476) had any ruler (Holy Roman emperors, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin) successfully unified Europe. The European Union's emergence, growth, and longevity (over 70 years now) has been truly novel. Will this union be reduced to ten nations in the coming years? Will ten nations secede and form a new federation, to form the ten-nation “beast” Daniel foresaw (founded in the remnants of Roman culture)? All this proves Jesus will appear very soon. Why? He will retrieve us (and His Spirit) before releasing Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:6-9). Before 1945 a united Europe was unthinkable; today it's an established reality—and undeniable sign. Unprecedented!

⁶ Both homosexual and transgender people should be prayed for and treated with all basic human dignity, yet never should we accept or acknowledge their profoundly confused and unnatural sexuality as normal. It is wrong by all historical standards and sin by all biblical teachings.

9. **The Thermonuclear Age** – Paul foresaw in the “last days” “perilous times” would come (2 Tim. 3:1). In another epistle he added just before the “sudden destruction” of the Tribulation, the world (and Israel) would be crying for “peace and safety” (1 Thess. 5:2). I believe he envisioned our thermonuclear age, which began with the advent of nuclear bombs in 1945 and thermonuclear in 1956. Since that time weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and intercontinental delivery systems have grown stunningly destructive and our world frighteningly unsecure. The peril increased after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which spread nuclear technologies to many nations previously denied them (India, Pakistan, North Korea). Now the world is much more dangerous than it was in the twentieth century. The growing fearful cry? Give us “peace and safety,” by any means—peace accords, alliances, international federations—just prevent the use of WMD! This is our generation. Paul said it would immediately precede the Tribulation, which begins with Israel and Antichrist’s nation, and possibly others, making...you guessed it, a peace treaty, as Daniel foresaw (Dan. 9:27a). Oh, Jesus’ appearing is very close! Another unprecedented sign!
10. **The great apostasy.** Paul foresaw a great “falling away” (lit. “revolt, rebellion” against God, Scriptural truth, religion) just before the Day of the Lord (2 Thess. 2:3; cf. 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-17; 4:3-4). Again, this seems clearly to have come upon us. Until the mid-twentieth century, even many unchurched Americans had a quiet respect for the Bible. But not now. Everywhere secular humanists smugly reject and dismiss as myths biblical texts and teachings. Never in this age has there been such widespread disbelief in the inspiration and veracity of Scripture in the west. Humanistic science and truth by polling have arisen as the new gods to be lauded and trusted. Yet even this tragic delusion is serving God’s purpose. It is in just such a season of apostasy that the true, remnant church will be awakened, tested, purified, and prepared for Jesus (cf. Matt. 25:6). Unprecedented!
11. **The Laodicean Generation** – In Revelation Jesus sent messages to seven churches in Asia (Rev. 2-3). Laodicea, a materialistic, proudly self-sufficient, and spiritually and morally “lukewarm” congregation, was the last (3:14-22). Some have taken these seven messages as not only historic but also prophetic, laying out for us seven periods in church history. If correct, the last period of the Church Age will be generally like the Laodiceans. While many periods of church history have been unspiritual, none have had anything close to the material prosperity of post-Second World War America. Or the prideful self-sufficiency. Our churches, especially since the 1980s, have come to epitomize the spiritually apathetic Laodicean spirit and error. Yet there is hope. Jesus offers the precious spiritual “gold” of proven, purified faith and knowledge of God to even us in these last days—if we will wake up and walk closely with Him through the fiery tests that always come to awakened, uncompromising Christians and churches (Rev. 3:18,

20-22). Laodicea was last, Laodiceanism prevails now, so these are the Church's last days! And Jesus is at the door. Unprecedented!

12. **The last, greatest revival** – Jesus said at the world's "midnight" hour a "cry" will awaken His sleeping, spiritually lethargic, lukewarm church: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matt. 25:6). Suddenly *every* Christian, wise and foolish, will awake and try to prepare for His appearing: "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps" (25:7). For "all" Christians to suddenly start earnestly seeking a very close walk with Jesus describes an awakening of *unimaginable* proportions—but exactly this will happen! Jesus prophesied it. However, only those who have bought the precious "oil" of spiritual preparation will be taken when "the bridegroom comes" (25:8-10). So this revival will continue until Jesus appears! This Christ-prophesied revival—with its stunning magnitude and wondrous manifestations of Jesus' truth, grace, and compassionate miracles—will be the greatest, most unmistakable sign. Though it hasn't happened yet, it will, and soon. It is written, it must happen, have no doubt! Many revivals have proclaimed Jesus' return, but this one will experience it. Unprecedented!

13. **Abundant scoffers** – Peter prophesied lust-bound scoffers would appear in the "last days" mocking the Bible's predictions of Jesus' return: "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3:3-4). Mockers have always existed but not as they do today. A new generation has arisen that wholly trusts humanistic science and, girded by evolutionary biological theories and defiant amorality, laughs in the face of Scripture, God, and Christianity. Never before has Jesus' return—especially the Rapture—been so disdainfully and irreverently derided. But the joke is on them!⁷ By mocking Bible prophecy they are fulfilling it—specifically, Peter's prophecy—and confirming these are the last days. Unprecedented!

14. **Increasing wars** – Jesus warned "wars and rumors of wars" would be "the beginnings of sorrows" when Antichrist's aggression launches the Tribulation (Matt. 24:6-8). But the prelude to that war-filled period occurs in the final period of this age. There is consensus that wars, chiefly two world wars, caused more deaths in the twentieth century than in any previous century. Many more! Never before had planet earth seen such powerful, efficient weaponry leading us unwittingly to the dawn of the awful nuclear age. Daily reports and "rumors of wars" involving various nuclear-armed nations appear in our news. The

⁷ And may Christ save them every one before it's too late!

Tribulation is near. But because He must come first, Jesus' appearing is even nearer. Unprecedented!

15. **Exploding world population** – The apostle John foresaw a 200-million man army from the East killing one-third of the world's population as it fought its way west in the last months of the Great Tribulation. At the time (AD 95) that figure was greater than the world's population, making John's prediction laughable! Not until 1800 did the world population reach one billion and only in 1930 did it reach two billion. Since then it has increased exponentially and now stands at 7.5 billion (2018). In 1965, China announced its ability to field an army of 200 million men. From the viewpoint of twenty centuries of church history, that is new—and good news! The Tribulation, but first, Jesus' appearing, is near. Unprecedented!
16. **Knowledge of End-Time prophecies** – Daniel was ordered to conceal and (figuratively) seal the interpretation of his final prophecy and informed in “the time of the end” God would unseal these prophecies and the wise would understand them (Dan. 12:4, 8-10). Simply put, God will give increased, and ultimately full, insight into End-Time prophecies as their fulfillments draw near. Thus, we will know what we need to know when we need to know it. Faithfully, over the last one and a half centuries God has done just this as interest in the last things has greatly increased. After Israel retook Jerusalem in June 1967, eschatological interest skyrocketed. Today prophecy radio and TV programs, Internet broadcasts, and conferences are ubiquitous. We now understand far more of the last things with far greater clarity—proving their fulfillment is at hand. This was not the case for the church's first nineteen centuries. Unprecedented!
17. **The combined effect** – All the previous signs I have listed seem improbable or even impossible. Just that they have happened is surprising. But considering 2,000 years of Church History, their occurrence in roughly the same *half-century* is beyond surprising. It is shocking. Consider this: many of the parts and players Jesus, Daniel, Paul, Peter and other prophets predicted would participate in the End-Time drama arose very quickly after the Second World War. Before it they didn't exist. Afterwards, out of nowhere, there they were front and center on the world stage. Israel, the European Union, Russia (or USSR), China, American Laodiceanism, all these things were non-existent, backward, or not world powers before 1939; after 1945 they were birthed or transformed into large, influential factors in world and church affairs—in just a few decades! In the grand sweep of Christian history all these changes happening all at once is, well, a shocking fulfillment of prophecy proving Jesus' appearing is close. Felt the jolt yet?

EXCLUSIONS:

SINCE, AS STATED INITIALLY, this appendix cites signs of the pre-Tribulational Rapture of the church, I have excluded the phenomena Jesus and the prophets foresaw occurring *during* the Tribulation announcing His impending return to earth in glory: the abomination of desolation (Matt. 24:15; Rev. 13:14-15); Antichrist's miraculous resuscitation, other miracles, and divine claims (Matt. 24:24; Rev. 13:3, 12, 14); Antichrist's attack on Israel (Dan. 9:27); the false prophet (Matt. 24:24; Rev. 13:11-18); the Trumpet and Bowl judgments (Matt. 24:29; Rev. 8-9, 16); and so forth.

I HAVE ALSO OMITTED events or occurrences that, however catastrophic, have been part of the normal human experience for the last 2,000 years and are therefore not new to our generation or century.

Appendix B

Major End-Time Views

THIS SERIES teaches a *Select Pre-Tribulational Rapture*. Let's review, then, its primary positions on key End-Time issues and events—the timing of the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Millennium, the testing of Christians, and the trend in world—and how they differ with other major End-Time views.

This appends Lesson Two, section II - E.

Pre-Millennial Views

SELECT PRE-TRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE:

- The world will become increasingly evil in the last days.
- The church will be tested now in this Church Age.
- The Rapture of the church will occur *before* the Tribulation.
- Prepared, born-again Christians—living wise, worthy, watching, ready lives, and already tested—will be taken, escaping all the Tribulation. Unprepared Christians and unbelievers will be left behind.
- The seven-year period of Tribulation will ensue.
- Christ and the church will return to earth (Armageddon, Mount of Olives) to end the Tribulation.
- Christ will then rule all nations from Jerusalem for 1,000 years.

This view applies Jesus' repeated, explicit warnings about spiritual preparedness to those to whom He addressed them: believers! (See Matt. 24:42-44; 25:1-13; 25:10; Mk. 13:32-37; Lk. 21:34-36.) To enjoy *rapture assurance* we must comply with His instruction.

This view leaves us with a correct New Testament expectancy—looking for the imminent appearance of Jesus! (Matt. 24:42-44; 25:13; Mk. 13:32-37; Phil. 3:20-21; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20)

PRE-TRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE:

- The world will become increasingly evil in the last days.
- Christians will be fully tested now in this Church Age.
- The Rapture of the church will occur *before* the Tribulation.
- *All* born-again Christians will be taken (regardless of spiritual preparedness) and escape all the Tribulation. Unbelievers will be left behind.
- The seven-year period of Tribulation will ensue.
- Christ and the church will return to earth (Armageddon, Mount of Olives) to end the Tribulation.
- Christ will then rule all nations from Jerusalem for 1,000 years.

This view does not apply Jesus' explicit warnings about spiritual preparedness—all of which were originally addressed to *believers*—to Christians living in the End Times. It assumes all Christians will be taken whether or not they are walking closely with Christ. This unintentionally renders Jesus' warnings to us, which occupy much of His Olivet Discourse, meaningless. Or worse, misleading! And if so, what other of His teachings may we disregard?

This view is more acceptable to evangelical Christians today than the Select Pre-Tribulational view, but clearly less accurate to the New Testament record. It is what we want to believe but not what Jesus said we should believe.

This view also leaves us looking for the imminent appearing of Jesus.

MID-TRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE:

- The world will become increasingly evil in the last days.
- Christians will *not* be fully tested in this Church Age.
- The seven-year period of Tribulation will ensue, during which Christians will be tested.
- The Rapture of the church will occur at the *mid-point* of the Tribulation.
- Three and a half years later Christ and the church will return to earth (Armageddon, Mount of Olives) to end the Tribulation.
- Christ will then rule all nations from Jerusalem for 1,000 years.

This view fails to realize the Tribulation is designed *exclusively* for Israel, to:

1. Fulfill Israel's seventieth week of years and God's stated purposes in it (Dan. 9:24)
2. Afford the Jewish people a final chance to receive Messiah Yeshua, and, as God planned, fulfill their destiny to be His light to the saving of the nations.

It overlooks that God's intent is to fully test Christians now in this Church Age—a fact abundantly taught and exhibited by Christ, the Acts, the epistles, and Revelation's

messages to the churches, and underscored by the 2,000 years of fiery trials and tribulations uncompromised, God-seeking, Bible believing and obeying Christians have consistently experienced (Matt. 13:21; 2 Tim. 3:12). Such fully tested “Philadelphia” or “Smyrna” Christians know they need no special, additional time of testing. The Jewish people, however, who for 2,000 years have rejected her Messiah, do need such a final test and will have it in the Tribulation.

It overlooks Paul’s revelation that God has not ordained the church, Jesus’ precious bride, to experience any of what Paul described as the “wrath to come” (1 Thess. 5:9-11; cf. 1:10), a clear allusion to the Tribulation’s “wrath of the Lamb.” (Rev. 6:16-17)

It ignores Jesus’ explicit promises to:

1. Keep Philadelphia’s fully tested overcomers (representing all overcomers) “from” the “great time of testing” (Rev. 3:10, NLT), or the Tribulation
2. Enable spiritually worthy (consistently prayerful) believers to “escape all” its terrors (Lk. 21:36).

It fails to notice that in the Bible’s primary description of the Tribulation, Revelation 6-19, the word “church” does not appear, while Jewish people, places, and things are repeatedly mentioned. (cf. Rev. 7:1-8, 9-10; 11:1-2, 3-4, 8; 12:1-6; 14:1)

This view leaves us looking *not* for Jesus’ imminent appearing but for the events signaling the beginning of the Tribulation—Israel’s peace treaty with Antichrist, Antichrist’s resuscitation from a deadly wound, and so forth.

PRE-WRATH RAPTURE:

- The world will become increasingly evil in the last days.
- Christians will *not* be fully tested in this Church Age.
- The seven-year period of Tribulation will ensue, during which Christians will be tested.
- The Rapture will occur about *three-fourths’ way* through the Tribulation, in the latter stages of the Great Tribulation.
- During the Great Tribulation Christians will endure the *wrath of Satan* (Antichrist’s persecution of all who do not worship him) but be caught up just before the *wrath of God* (Trumpet, Bowl Judgments).
- Just before (and after) the Great Tribulation ends, Christ will appear (or return to earth) four different times:
 1. To take His church (Rapture) – just before the Trumpet Judgments
 2. To deliver Israel – just before the Bowl Judgments
 3. To defeat Satan (Antichrist) – at the battle of Armageddon
 4. To initiate His kingdom on earth – after the battle of Armageddon

- Christ will then rule all nations from Jerusalem for 1,000 years.

This view fails to understand:

1. The *exclusively* Jewish nature of the Tribulation
2. The adequacy of our testing now in this Church Age
3. Paul's revelation that God has *not* ordained the church, Christ's precious bride, to the time of wrath (1 Thess. 5:10; 5:9-10)
4. Christ's explicit promises to keep tested, overcoming Christians "from" the Tribulation (Rev. 3:10) and enable those living worthily to "escape all" its terrors (Lk. 21:36)

It implies the "wrath of God" is not poured out until the final, horrific Trumpet and Bowl Judgments. To the contrary, *from day one* people living in the Tribulation will experience the terrible "wrath of the Lamb." One-fourth of the world will perish in the first three and a half years! (Rev. 6:1-8)

This view leaves us looking *not* for Jesus' imminent appearing but for the "wrath of Satan"—Antichrist's murderous persecution of everyone refusing to worship him beginning just after the mid-point of the Tribulation.

POST-TRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE:

- The world will become increasingly evil in the last days.
- Christians will not be fully tested in this Church Age.
- The seven-year Tribulation will ensue, during which Christians will be tested.
- Christians will endure the entire Tribulation period.
- At the *end* of the Tribulation the Rapture will occur. All Christians will be caught up to heaven and given glorified bodies.
- Immediately afterwards Christ and the church will return to earth (Armageddon, Mount of Olives) to overthrow Antichrist, officially closing the Tribulation.
- Christ will rule all nations from Jerusalem for 1,000 years.

This view fails to understand:

1. The *exclusively* Jewish nature of the Tribulation
2. The adequacy of our testing now in this Church Age
3. Paul's revelation that God has *not* ordained the church, Christ's precious bride, to the time of wrath (1 Thess. 5:10; 5:9-10)
4. Christ's explicit promises to keep tested, overcoming Christians "from" the Tribulation (Lk. 21:36; Rev. 3:10) and to enable those living worthily to "escape all" all its terrors

This view leaves us looking *not* for Jesus' imminent appearing but for the beginning of the Tribulation—Israel's peace treaty with Antichrist, Antichrist's resuscitation from a deadly wound, and so forth.

Post-Millennial Views

POST-MILLENNIALISM:

- The Church permanently *replaces* Israel, thus inheriting all the yet-unfulfilled promises and prophecies God revealed to Israel through the prophets.
- The world will become not worse but *better* in the last days.
- By evangelism, and missionary and political action, the gospel will gradually convert the nations, ushering in a golden age (or “Christian millennium”) of peace and godliness lasting (figuratively or literally) 1,000 years.
- Christ cannot return until this golden age ends.
- Christ is ruling the world now *spiritually* through His Church. His return to earth in judgment occurred *spiritually* when Jerusalem fell to the Romans in AD 70.
- There will be no 7-year Tribulation as described so vividly in Revelation 6 – 19.
- There will be no future Rapture of the church to escape such a Tribulation.
- When Jesus returns, the church will present the kingdom to Him and He will take believers with Him to heaven.

This view denies God will keep His promises and prophecies to restore the Jewish people and give them the Day of the Lord on this earth.

Most significantly, it ignores God's amazing work in regathering Jews to Palestine in the modern State of Israel in May, 1948 and their equally amazing subsequent preservation.

It denies Paul's prophecy—and the undeniable trend of the last century and a half—that in the last days the world will grow “worse and worse.” (2 Tim. 3:13)

It denies biblical prophecies revealing the church will be caught up to “escape” the imminent Tribulation. (Lk. 21:36; 1 Cor. 15:50-53; 1 Thess. 4:15-18; Rev. 3:10)

It denies that God will ultimately keep His prophecies and promises to Israel. In Romans 9–11 Paul revealed the church has only temporarily replaced Israel and predicted God will ultimately restore and save “all Israel.”

It denies Daniel's prediction that in the last days the visible, worldwide kingdom of God will manifest on earth *after* a cataclysmic divine judgment on a wicked ten-nation Gentile empire. (Dan. 2:34-35, 41-45; cf. Rev. 19, 20)

It renders John's prophecy of Christ' future return in judgment (Rev. 19) futile, even farcical, by stating it was fulfilled (AD 70) 25 years before John penned it (AD 95).

It denies Revelation 20's assertion, repeated *six times*, that Jesus will personally reign on this earth "a thousand years." And Revelation never uses numbers figuratively!

It misinterprets Jesus' prediction that the gospel will be *preached* worldwide before the end (Matt. 24:14) as saying it will be *accepted* worldwide (thus creating a golden age). But Christ taught only that the gospel will be preached "as a witness" to all nations and added relatively "few" will receive it. (7:14; cf. 13:3-9, 18-23)

This view leaves us looking not for Jesus' imminent appearing but for a Christianized world order.

AMILLENNIALISM:

- The Church permanently *replaces* Israel, thus inheriting all the promises and prophecies God revealed to Israel through the prophets.
- This Church Age is the Millennium (spiritual fulfillment of Revelation 20). Since His crucifixion (or Ascension) Christ has ruled the world through the church.
- Satan is "bound" during this age in that he cannot stop the spread of the Gospel.
- There will be no 7-year Tribulation, as described so vividly in Revelation 6-19.
- There will be no Rapture of the church to escape such a Tribulation.
- There will be no future, personal 1,000-year rule of Christ on this earth. (Amillennialism means "no millennium" or "no one thousand years.")
- The world will grow worse as time passes, a mixture of good and evil (wheat and tares) continuing until Christ returns to judge the world and consummate history.
- When Christ returns the redeemed will be raised, Christ will judge all (Christians, Jews, martyrs, the wicked, angels), the heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire, and the redeemed will immediately enter the newly created eternal world.

This view denies God will keep His promises and prophecies to restore the Jewish people and give them the Day of the Lord on this earth.

Most significantly, it ignores God's amazing work in regathering Jews to Palestine in the modern State of Israel in May, 1948 and their equally amazing subsequent preservation.

This view denies that in this present Church Age, Satan, though already judged at the Cross, is by divine permission still active as the malicious "prince of this world." (Jn. 16:11; cf. Rom. 15:22; Eph. 6:11-18; 1 Thess. 2:18; 1 Pet. 5:8).

This view denies John's prophecy that Christ will personally rule this present world, and Satan will be completely bound in the "abyss," for 1,000 years (Rev. 20).

This view leaves us *not* looking for the imminent appearing of Jesus to deliver us from the "wrath to come." (1 Thess. 1:10; cf. Rev. 22:7, 12, 20)