

# *The Second Coming Of Christ*

## *Syllabus / Study Guide*

COURSE TEXTBOOK: *The Second Coming of Christ: His Appearing,  
His Return, Our Preparation* (By Greg Hinnant)

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## 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 Interlude before) 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. Why are we 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; see 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 Gospels (Jn. 14:1-3)
2. Posthumously, in the Epistles (1Th. 4:13-18; 1Cor.15:50-53)
3. And Scriptural prophecies cannot fail! (Mk. 14:49; Jn. 10:35)

**D. He is preparing for it!**

1. In antiquity, Jewish bridegrooms built rooms on their fathers' houses for their brides during the betrothal (engagement period).
2. As stated earlier, Jesus promised to prepare "a place" for His bride church. (Jn. 14:2)
3. Over sixty years later (AD 95) the apostle John saw this amazing "place" and described it. (Rev. 21-22)

**E. He paid for it!**

1. In antiquity Jewish bridegrooms paid a "bride price" to the bride's father.  
—This compensated the family for the loss of the bride's labor.
2. The bride price was usually a *large* sum, which ensured:
  - a. The bridegroom was serious about his marriage contract.

- b. The bridegroom would pursue his betrothal responsibilities diligently.
  - c. The bride could be confident—absolutely *sure*—he would return for her!
3. Jesus paid a *very high* price for His bride church. (Jn. 19:30; Eph. 5:25-27)  
—So we can be *sure* He is coming back for us!

**F. 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!

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

—It is the most important topic of our generation!

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-Times 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 already in the great “falling away,” or spiritual nighttime.  
—THIS PRESENT spiritual nighttime:
  - a. Began with biblical “historical 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 major End-Times views concerning: (1) the Rapture; (2) the Tribulation; (3) the Millennium; (4) the testing of Christians; (5) the trend in the world; and (6) Israel’s End-Times prophecies.**

- FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE TEXTBOOK: (1) “A Brief Review of the Major End-Times Views” (pp. 95-102); and (2) the Appendix. (pp. 417-434)

1. THE PRE-MILLENNIAL VIEWS:

- a. Partial (Select) Pre-Tribulation -
- b. Pre-Tribulation –
- c. Mid-Tribulation -
- d. Pre-Wrath -

- e. Post-Tribulation –
2. THE POST-MILLENNIAL VIEWS[S]:
    - a. Post-Millennialism -
    - b. Dominion Theology -
  3. THE AMILLENNIAL VIEW:

#### **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, see “they” and “ye”; see 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-Times 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 *four* inspired portraits of the mature church. (Eph. 2:19-22; 4:11-15, esp. v. 13; 5:25-27; 6:10-18)
  - 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-Times 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 also 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* with spiritual salt!
  
  - d. Such utterly full darkness *cannot coexist* with spiritual light!
  
  - 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 give 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; Gen 19:12-14, 17-23)

—WE KNOW FROM SCRIPTURE:

- a. Lot was righteous. (2 Pet. 2:7-8)
- 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—*only* 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; Heb. 11:5)

—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, 9-11)<sup>1</sup>

##### **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

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<sup>1</sup> 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-Tribulation translation of Israel’s harvest.
    - ii. *Enduring faith*, and the deep, full, intimate *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; see 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. (see Jer. 30:5-7; 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 313 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)
10. The current experience of churches outside the United States confirms this!

### **III. Jesus will appear before the Tribulation—so it may begin (after an Interlude)!**

- 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 that we understand: the Tribulation is divinely designed and predetermined for *Israel*, not the church. (Dan. 9:24-27; 12:1-4; Jer. 30:6-7)
2. It is vital that we understand: the Tribulation account contains numerous references to Jewish symbols, language, people, and places, *not* Christian things. (Rev. 7, 11, 12, 13, 14)
  - FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE TEXTBOOK: “Revelation’s Account of the Tribulation is Filled with Jewish Places, People, and Symbols.” (pp. 375-380)

**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 (translate) Israel's believing remnant and its Gentile harvest to heaven at the mid-point (Rev. 7:9-17)
    - d. Catch up (translate) 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-Times 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. (see 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 70<sup>th</sup> week of years will be fulfilled. (Dan. 9:24-27; Isa. 28:14-22)

### 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 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> weeks of years.
  - a. Daniel's prophecy of Israel's 70<sup>th</sup> 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-Times 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 (Ezek. 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; see 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; see 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; Joel 3:2, 9-17)**

**III. Israel’s major prophets will be confirmed by these fulfillments. (see 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; see 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).

—OVER THE COURSE OF THE 7 YEARS OF THE TRIBULATION, these Jews and Gentiles 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; see 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 catching up (translation) of the 144,000 just after the mid-point (Rev. 14:1, 2-5)

- vi. The self-deification of Antichrist (Dan. 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:14-18)
  - vii. Antichrist's cruel persecution of Jews (Rev. 12:13-17; Matt. 25:31-40)
  - viii. The dying grace of the martyred Jesus believers. (Rev. 12:11; 14:12-13; 15:2-4)
  - ix. God's obviously superior power (omnipotence) displayed in the Trumpet and Bowl judgments. (Rev. 8-9, 16)
3. One that confirms what Jesus taught in His End-Times 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; see Hos. 6:1-3; Rev. 12:5)**

**D. Isaiah's, Jeremiah's, and Ezekiel's End-Times 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; Ezek. 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; Ezek. 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; Ezek. 38:1-17; see 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; Ezek. 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; Ezek. 40-48; Rev. 20:4-6)

**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*. (see 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. (see 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; see 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. (see 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; see Rev. 4:4; 22:12-13)
  
- 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 (see Deut. 29:29; 1 Cor. 13:10, 12)
  
- e. WITNESS KEY EVENTS in heaven (Rev. 5:5-14; Rev. 5:7; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1; 8:13; 12:7-9; 15:1-3)
  
- f. OBSERVE with awe the 7-year Tribulation drama unfolding on earth (Heb. 12:1; see Rev. 6:9-10)
  
- g. RECEIVE other groups of overcomers entering heaven—Tribulation 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; see 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)

- h. 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)

- i. 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!<sup>2</sup>**

“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.

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<sup>2</sup> 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; see 17:14; Zech. 14:5).



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 accomplished in us in this life by: (1) the Holy Spirit, and (2) our ministers. (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 presented:

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; see 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”? (see 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. (Luke 21:34)

—To “HEED” (Greek, *prosechō*) is “to consider carefully; continue to believe; continue to give oneself to carefully; devote; apply oneself.”<sup>3</sup>

##### 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

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<sup>3</sup> 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. Thus, they come to know Him intimately.***

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; see 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! (see 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 –
  
- God’s blessings (Deut. 8:10-11) –
  
- Growing interests (Mk. 4:19) –



- 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*!

**B. 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; see 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*, or God-confidence that has been refined, proven, & permanentized in fiery trials. (Eph 4:13 NLT)
  
  - b. This “gold” is the priceless, deep, wide, 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)

—THESE GOOD PURPOSES are:

- 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!

**C. 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. (Luke 21:34)

—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 “surfeiting,” or overindulgence in food and drink. (Lk. 21:34)
2. Spiritually worthy Christians take their “cares of this life” to Christ in prayer. (Lk. 21:34; see Phil. 4:6)
3. Spiritually worthy Christians will *not* be caught in the “snare” (trap) of the Tribulation. (Lk. 21:35; see 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. (Lk. 21:36; see 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 *five times* to live spiritually worthy lives. (Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:11-12; 2 Thess. 1:5; 1:11)**

## **II. Worthy Christians “heed”—and need—holiness.**

### **A. What is holiness?**

1. Holiness is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

2. Holiness is the *opposite* of worldliness. (see 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 God 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 primary 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. (Luke 21:34)

—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 TEXTBOOK: chapters 1-2, pp. 3-43.)
3. Jesus also charged us to work while we watch—each of us faithfully attending “his work.” (Mk. 13:34)
  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! (see 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 and among 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 Himself* 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 life, 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 “heed” (faithfully discharge) their commissions.**

**A. Christ charged every Christian and church with three commissions.<sup>4</sup>**

- 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. To fulfill these commissions we need the *full power* of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:8; see 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.

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<sup>4</sup> 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!

2. Their motto is: “If it’s not 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. (Luke 21:34)

—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: (1) Jesus pleaded for *readiness*, and (2) 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,” “worthy,” “faithful.”

We have also patiently endured long, sometimes fiery, tests of faith and emerged with the priceless spiritual “oil” and “gold” Jesus urged us to buy. (Matt. 25:9; Rev. 3:18) And through all of this, we are coming to personally “know” Christ better day by day. (contrast Matt. 25:11)

So we are ready. We are ready for Jesus’ appearing. 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 bride Christians. While Jesus 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-Times 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; see 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, 18-19)
  
7. Their Spirit-inspired counsels cut to the “roots” of sin in our lives. (Lk. 3:9; see 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, Luke

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-Times preparers having the "spirit and power" of what two biblical characters upon their ministries?*