

MILILANI COMMUNITY CHURCH
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

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May 2005

LESSON 10: BIBLE PROPHECY - A CALENDAR OF FUTURE EVENTS

After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, His disciples saw Him many times. He talked with them of many things, but He did not remain with them for ever. The day came when He was ready to leave them. He took them with Him outside the city to a mountain called the Mount of Olives. There, He promised that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them and that they should be His witnesses.

As He spoke to them He rose from the earth, and He ascended up to Heaven. As they stood looking up into Heaven two angels stood by them in white robes, and said to them, *"You men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into Heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you into Heaven shall come again in just the same way you have seen Him go. But you must go back to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit which He gave you."*

This was a clear promise that Jesus would come again. He did not go to Heaven to stay there forever. He is coming back to this earth again. He had told them the same thing in John 14:1-3 *"I will come again and receive you unto myself."* We have His sure word that He is coming again. Isaiah chapter 11 tells us that when Jesus comes again, all the wild animals will become tame; the snakes will lose their sting. There will be peace on earth, such as there never has been since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden.

How is Jesus coming and what will He do? The second coming of Jesus is something like His first coming in one way. It does not take place all at once. At His first coming, there was the star and the angels' song, and the temptation and the miracles and the transfiguration and the crucifixion and the resurrection. When He comes again, many things will happen, too.

I. The Rapture of the Church (I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:51-52)

A. The resurrection of the bodies of believers who have died (I Thess. 4:13-15)

When Paul had been in Thessalonica he had taught the believers that they could look for the Lord to return at any moment. Every day when they got up in the morning they could say to themselves, Perhaps He will be back today! But then there came a day when some of their loved ones, a mother or father, a brother or sister, died. They immediately asked Paul if these loved ones, whose bodies had been put in their graves, would be left behind, and if the living ones should see the Lord first.

Paul answered them in I Thessalonians 4:13-18. Paul says that they are not to be ignorant about these loved ones, because God does not

want believers to sorrow like unbelievers who have no hope. Just as surely as we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so surely may we believe that he will bring with Him at his second coming, the spirits of the loved ones who have died. We shall not go first, but in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead in Christ shall rise first (Note that the dead out of Christ do not rise then. They will be raised from the dead at the Great White Throne judgment of Rev. 20: 11-15).

As soon as the bodies of these Christians are out of their graves and their spirits, brought from Heaven, are in them, all the living believers will be changed, to become like the Lord Jesus.

B. The rapture of living believers (I Corinthians 15:51-54)

The word rapture means "to be caught up". Only believers will be caught up to meet Jesus when He comes in the air. Just like a magnet picks up only steel or iron, but will not pick up tin or nickel or sawdust, so when the Lord Jesus comes, those who have been born again will go to meet Him. The unsaved will not.

In I Corinthians 15:51-53 we learn a little more about what is to happen to believers at the Rapture. Paul writes, "Behold, I tell you a secret. We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

What will this change be? How will we be changed?

In I John 3:2 it says we shall be made like the Lord Jesus when we see Him as He is. In Philippians 3:21 it says that when the Lord Jesus comes, He will change our bodies so that they may be made like His glorious body. All our sins will be gone. We will not even have our old nature any longer!

C. The reunion of the Church (I Thess. 4:17). We will meet the Lord in the air

D. The judgment of the Church (II Corinthians 5:6-10 – "Bema seat" or judgment seat of Christ). This judgment is not for sin but the basis of rewards for believers in the presence of Christ following the rapture.

II. The Tribulation (Matthew 24:15-22; Luke 21:25-26; Revelation 6:15-17; Revelation 7:13-14).

It will be wonderful for believers when Jesus comes, for then they will go to be with Him for ever. Their bodies will be made like His, and they shall live for ever with Him. Nothing could be better than that! But can you think what it will be for those who are not believers and are left behind at the Rapture. Not one of those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will be taken when He comes. Some day all Christians will disappear. The unbelievers will be looking for them, but they will not find them. They will be gone!

What a terrible place the world would be if there were no Christians in it. All the godless people will be able to do what they like. And God will begin to judge the earth. Judgment after judgment will come. There will be war, famine, sickness, death. In the midst of it many will believe in the Lord Jesus. All Jews and many Gentiles will come to believe in Him. They will have a very hard time, for there will be so many unbelievers and the judgments on the earth will be so great, that many of them will have to die for Jesus' sake.

In the midst of this time, which will last seven years, there will come a great ruler (the "Anti-Christ"). He will try to set up his kingdom over all the earth. At first he will pretend to be kind to the Jews, and will let them have their land, their temple and their sacrifices. But he will break his agreement with them. The world will divide into two great sides, and they will all be fighting. When the war is at its worst at the great battle of Armageddon, a sign will be seen in Heaven--the sign of the Son of Man. And like lightening, that shines from East to West, the Lord Jesus will come!

The Tribulation Period is also referred to as "the 70th week of Daniel" – see Daniel 9:24-27 and his prophecy of 70 weeks)

The chronology of the "70th week" of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27)

1. Design of Daniel's 70th week (Daniel 9:24)
2. Progression of the events of the 70 weeks of Daniel's prophecy
 - a. The 70 weeks (or 490 years) begins with a commandment to rebuild and restore the city of Jerusalem
 - b. After 7 weeks and 62 weeks (69 weeks) or 483 years the Messiah will come (Triumphal entry into Jerusalem)
 - c. The Messiah will be "cut off"
 - d. The city of Jerusalem will be destroyed (70 A.D.)
 - e. At beginning of 70th week the Anti-Christ ("the ruler that shall come") will make a covenant with Israel
 - f. In the middle of the week the covenant will be broken, the Anti-Christ will set up a worship of himself through the "false prophet."
 - g. The last part of the week characterized by wars and desolation
 - h. Then the end will come

III. The Second Coming of Christ to the Earth (Revelation 19:11-16)

At the Rapture Jesus will come in the air to call His own out of the earth. But following the Tribulation, He will come all the way to the earth. His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives. And we are coming back with Him, for we have His promise that we shall never have to leave Him again forever. When Jesus comes, the battle will be stopped, and He will judge the nations. Those who have rejected the Gospel which the Jews, His brethren, have preached during the Tribulation will be judged. And those who have accepted that Gospel will be rewarded. And then He will set up His Kingdom on the earth.

IV. The Millennial Reign of Christ (Revelation 20)

The Kingdom which Jesus will set up will last for a thousand years. It is called the "Millennium" which means one thousand years. There will be no more deserts. They will all be like flower gardens. There will be no more wild animals. They will be tame, every one of them. Then, if you like, you can have a lion or a tiger for a pet. Babies will be able to put their hands down the holes made by snakes that used to be poisonous, without fear of harm, for there will be no more poison. And best of all, the Lord will rule, and make every one obey Him. There will be no more war and no more fighting. All will be Peace because the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus will be here, and will be the King.

V. The Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15)

At the conclusion of the Millennium, the unsaved dead will be raised--whose names are not written in the "Lamb's book of life." They will be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire, along with Satan and his demons (Revelation 20:11-15)

VI. The Eternal State – A New Heavens and New Earth (Revelation 21-22)

Following the Millennial Reign of Christ, and the Great White Throne judgment, the earth will be purged of all evil and there will be a "new heavens and new earth" (II Peter 3:9-13). Then the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city will descend from heaven to rest upon the earth. This glorious city will be the place where we will live for eternity with God. Its beauty and glory is described in Revelation 21-22.