

Lesson #4

Basics About The Future

This lesson will introduce the future by looking at #4 (Resurrection) and #5 (Eternal Judgment) from the list of strategic foundations which we saw in Lesson #2: *Introduction: Starting the Journey*.

- 1) Repentance from dead works and faith toward God
- 2) Doctrines of baptisms (washings)
- 3) Laying on of hands
- 4) Resurrection of the dead**
- 5) Eternal judgment**

If you have not considered Resurrection and Eternal Judgment as part of your personal future, even this brief treatment of these events can provide a sense of direction and illuminate the path of destiny. These two basics will be developed in more detail in following lessons.

This lesson will also present a brief overview of the parable of stewardship from Luke, Chapter 19, which provides a general framework for understanding the future. We will see why Jesus told this parable to His disciples and how it points to our responsibilities in the present.

5) Judgment

The last book of the Bible, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, speaks of judgment to come. Though some of the book of Revelation is already fulfilled, it is indeed a book which provides a window into the future through which we can see the coming judgment of God on this world.

But we should remember that judgement is not always bad. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "... we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ... according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (see 2 Cor. 5:10). Hebrews says: "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation (Hebrews 9:27-28 -NKJV). In these verses we see that judgement for those who love Jesus, is for reward, not destruction.

Judgment has long been understood to be an inevitable future event. Most people have some version of an "end of the world" in their minds. Peter wrote about this:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up

— 2 Peter 3:10 (NKJV).

Maybe Peter was thinking of the last verses of Malachi which sounds similar:

“For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” Says the LORD of hosts, “That will leave them neither root nor branch. ...Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.”

— Malachi 4:1,5

In the passages above, both Malachi and Peter speak of a “*day of the Lord.*” and Peter also says, “... with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8 NKJV). This one thousand-year day (also known as the millennium) is spoken of in Revelation, Chapters 19-20. These chapters describe the return of Christ, an intense war to subdue all who resist Christ, and a first resurrection of righteous saints who are given seats of authority to rule and reign with Christ for 1000 years.

We also see a rebellion at the end of the 1000 year period that is dealt with by fire from heaven, a second resurrection of where the rest of the dead are raised to stand before God and be judged. Through these and other passages, we must conclude that the day of judgement is not an instantaneous event, but covers a long period of time, which culminates in final or *eternal* judgment.

4) Resurrection

Jesus rose from the dead and just before He ascended into heaven, the promise was given that He would return (see Acts 1:9-11) At Christ’s return, two things will happen to faithful servants of God: 1) the dead will be raised, and those who are alive we shall be changed.

...For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “*Death is swallowed up in victory.*”

— 1 Corinthians 15:52-54 (NKJV)

Paul referred to this event as the manifestation (or revealing) of the sons of God (see Rom 8:19) and as the redemption of our bodies saying, “but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope” (Rom 8:23-24).

The resurrection is a primary component of the Christian faith. It is the great hope of all who believe; it is our final victory over death. The promise of resurrection and immortality provides a foundation for hope, comfort, motivation, and purpose. “If the dead are not raised,” Paul said, “Why are we also in danger every hour?” (1 Cor. 15:29,30). Good question. If I had no hope of resurrection (eternal life), if I did not have the return of Christ to look forward to and a desire to be judged in a favorable manner, then why would I waste my time writing this? “If the dead do not rise, Let us eat and

drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32)! But there will indeed be a resurrection because Christ is raised from the dead!

Preparing for the Kingdom: A Framework for Understanding the Future

Jesus told one parable that was specifically designed to provide a framework for our understanding regarding of the future, specifically His return and the appearing of His kingdom. This parable gives us a general framework for making plans in the present, shows how these plans relate to the future and sheds light on what Christ's return will be like. It is *The Parable of Stewardship* found in Luke Chapter 19 and Matthew Chapter 25.

Jesus told this parable as they neared Jerusalem and His disciples correctly understood at least three things about the Messiah: 1) the coming Messiah was going to establish His kingdom and rule the world; 2) the Messiah would rule from His throne in Jerusalem, and 3) Jesus was the Messiah who was promised. As they neared Jerusalem with those thoughts in mind, it makes perfect sense that "...*they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately*" (Luke 19:11 NKJV).

However their assumption was incorrect in regards to timing. The disciples would not understand until later that there was a job to be done first, a mission to accomplish. In hindsight, we now know that their job was to continue for at least 2000 years! This is why this parable is a critical framework upon which to begin building an understanding of the future and *when* Jesus and the Kingdom of God will appear.

If you are not familiar with the parable of stewardship in Luke 19:11-27, I suggest you read it before continuing. But without going into too much detail, the main points of this parable are listed below.

- ***Jesus will return and His Kingdom with Him.*** The Lord wanted His followers to know that He would leave for an extended period of time to receive a kingdom and then return.
- ***We are making preparations in His absence.*** Jesus has given us resources and responsibilities and expects us to be good stewards of His resources in His absence. This implies that there were preparations to be made before the kingdom would appear.
- ***Our responsibilities include leadership in this world and influencing the culture.*** We are to be his delegated authorities looking after His interests and investing His resources while he is gone. This is why the citizens of the country sent a letter protesting the nobleman's His rulership while He was gone.
- ***Our positions in His coming kingdom are related to our stewardship now.*** The parable showed those who exercised greater stewardship an increased their mina from one to five were given authority over five cities. Those who increased their mina from one to ten were given authority over ten cities.
- ***War ensues immediately after Christ's return.*** The parable shows that those who militantly oppose God in this age risk capital punishment at Christ's return.

This parable provides a general guide for our present plans based on our expectation of the future. There are several other issues that can be addressed from the foundational understanding given in this parable. We will plug them in later, but having established this framework, we will begin adding more detail to our understanding of the future.

The Appearing of the Kingdom of God

We have looked at judgment and resurrection as two basics about the future. But these two basics are essentially summed up in the appearing of the kingdom of God. The kingdom appears at the resurrection of the righteous -and- the kingdom is staffed by immortals ruling with Christ bringing justice to the planet. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.

¹⁴ Righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face.

¹⁵ Blessed *are* the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance.

— Psalm 89:14-15

This righteous judgment will result in an age of peace and order on earth. This is exactly what the angels announced at Jesus's birth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men (see Luke 2:14).

When Jesus taught us to pray to the Father, "Thy Kingdom come." this is what He was asking us to pray for. He was teaching us to pray for the establishment of God's government on earth by which the whole world will come into subjection to Him. As Paul put it, Jesus will come and "subdue all things to himself" (Phil 3:21).

The appearing of the Kingdom of God on earth, is the hope of all who understand and hold a biblical worldview. It is what we are preparing for and working toward if we understand the strategy that God has laid out for us to accomplish. Keep this literal/earthly idea of the kingdom of God in mind as we continue. In the two lessons that follow, we will sharpen our vision of the future by examining in more detail what the Bible tells us about life in the age to come and the day of judgment.