

Lesson #4

Basics About The Future

This lesson will first present a brief overview of the future. First we will look the last two items in the Strategic Foundations list 4) Resurrection and 5) Judgement, which we saw in Lesson #2: *Introduction: Starting the Journey*. This lesson will also present a brief overview of the parable of stewardship from Luke, Chapter 19. This parable provides a general framework for understanding the future which is built upon the strategic foundation. We will also see why Jesus gave His disciples this parable which points to our responsibilities in the present.

4) Resurrection and 5) Judgment

Though we often think these things are universally understood among Christians, this is not always the case. If you have not considered these events as a 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.

Resurrection

The resurrection is our final victory over death. At Christ's return, "...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" (1 Cor 15:52,53). Faithful servants of God who are alive at this time will not die, but will undergo a bodily transformation to immortality. The scripture tells us, "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor 15:54-55)?

Paul referred to this event as the manifestation (or revealing) of the sons of God (see Rom 8:19) and 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. The promise of resurrection and immortality gives us 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 to work toward, then why do I put myself in a position to be ridiculed and accused by those who do not believe? Why do I pour my life out for people, some of whom abandon me and the purpose of God? 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!

Judgement

Judgment has long been understood to be an inevitable future event. The last verses of the Old Testament speak of this judgment.

“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

Peter undoubtedly had this passage in mind when he wrote: “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).

The last book of the New Testament, Revelation, also 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.

Preparing for the Kingdom: A Framework for Understanding the Future

Jesus told one parable that was specifically designed to give us understanding regarding 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.

The context of the parable (why Jesus told it) is essential to understanding it. Jesus told this parable to help us understand something about when His Kingdom would appear. His disciples correctly understood at least three things: 1) Jesus was the Messiah who was promised, 2) He was going to establish His kingdom and rule the world and, 3) the Messiah would rule from His throne in Jerusalem. Now, because they were nearing Jerusalem, “...*they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately*” (Luke 19:11 NKJV).

However their assumption was incorrect in that their timing was a bit off. The disciples would not understand until later that there was a mission to accomplish, a job to be done first. 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.

- The Lord wanted His followers to know that He would leave for an extended period of time to receive a kingdom and then return. This implies that there were preparations to be made before the kingdom would appear.
- Jesus has given us resources and responsibilities and expects us to be good stewards of His resources in His absence.

- These responsibilities include leadership in this world and influencing the culture. We are to be his delegated authorities looking after His interests and promoting His will 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 rewards and positions of authority in His kingdom when He returns will correspond to our stewardship of His resources in His absence.
- Those who resist God's stewards (and thus God) will be judged severely at His 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

The appearing of the Kingdom of God is another basic about the future that deserves attention here. It implies the appearing of the King, and as mentioned above, the disciples correctly understood that Jesus was going to establish His throne in Jerusalem and rule the world. The appearing of the Kingdom of God on earth essentially rolls resurrection and judgment into one. However, there are other aspects to resurrection and judgment which will be explore later in this study.

When we read about the Kingdom of God in the Bible, it is almost always talking about a literal government that will appear on earth. *Kingdom* is a political term. It is a form of government with a king as its sovereign ruler. Therefore, the Kingdom of God (or the Kingdom from Heaven) is a governmental order where the administration of all things is conducted according to the oversight and will of King Jesus.

When Jesus taught us to pray to the Father, "Thy Kingdom come." He was teaching us to pray for the establishment of God's Kingdom rule 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 world view. 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.