

Introduction.

In this booklet we are going to look at what the Bible teaches about the last things. When we study the last things, there are two things we look at specifically: death and the Second Coming of Christ. This booklet, therefore, is divided into two parts. In the first part we will look at death, and in the second part we will look at the Second Coming of Christ.

These are the things that we will be studying in this booklet.

Part One, What the Bible Teaches about Death.

Lesson One, What the Bible teaches about death.

Lesson Two, The Bible's teaching on what happens after death.

Part Two, What the Bible teaches about the Second Coming.

Lesson Three, What the Bible teaches about the Second Coming of Christ.

Lesson Four, How we are to live in the light of the Second Coming of Christ.

Lesson Five, The Bible's teaching on the Second Coming of Christ.

Lesson Six, The Final Judgement.

Lesson Seven, Eternal Punishment.

Lesson Eight, The New Heaven and the New Earth.

Part One, What the Bible Teaches about Death.

Lesson One, Rom. 5:12-17, Phil. 1:20-26.

The Bible's Teaching on Death.

In this lesson, we are looking at two important passages from the writings of Paul, Rom. 5:12-17 and Phil. 1:20-26. Please make sure you read these passages before continuing with this lesson. These two passages teach us four important lessons about death.

1. Death came into the world as a result of the judgement of God.

Paul writes, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). What Paul is teaching here is that when God made Adam and Eve, He did not make them in such a way that their bodies would die. If Adam and Eve had not sinned, they and all their descendants would have lived on earth forever. But when they sinned, they faced the judgement of God, and part of this judgement was that their bodies would not live forever, but would die: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Gen. 3:19).

This is why death is such a problem for us human beings. Everytime someone dies we know deep inside us that something wrong has happened, that something has happened which should not have happened. This is why we never get used to death. You will sometimes hear of a family which has lost four or five of its members in a year. Each time there is a death, there is grieving. It is not the case that after two or three deaths they are now used to death and do not grieve anymore. Human beings have been on this earth for a few thousand years now, and death is still a problem to us: we know that this is not how God intended things to be when he created man. Death is here on earth because of man's sin and it is a constant reminder to us that we have sinned against God and are under His judgement.

2. Christ overcame death by His death and resurrection.

Paul writes, "For, if by the trespass of one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man – Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17). When the Bible teaches us that Christ overcame death by His death, it means two things in particular.

(i) It means firstly, that He overcame spiritual death by His own death. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden they died spiritually, meaning that they were separated from God. When they were created they were the children of God and in fellowship with Him. But after they sinned, they tried to hide from God, they had been separated from God and were now spiritually dead. This is the condition of all their descendants: we are all born into this world spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1), we are all born “separate from Christ, without hope without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). When the Lord Jesus hung on the cross, He was separated from God on our behalf so that we who believe in Him do not ever need to be separated again. He cried, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46), so that we should not be forsaken but reconciled to God.

(ii) It means that He overcame the fear of physical death by His own death and resurrection. Before the death of Christ the people of the world were “held in slavery by their fear of death” (Heb. 2:15). But by His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus defeated death and removed the fear of death for His people. Death could no longer hold Him, He had removed its power to hold people in fear.

The reason why people fear death is that they do not know what there is after it. For the unsaved, there is no security and comfort beyond death, which is why they fear it so much and will do anything to avoid it. But for those who are saved that is not a problem now. They know that they are saved and their sins are forgiven and that when they die they will go to heaven. Those who are saved and yet fear physical death need to meditate on the death of Christ and how He destroyed the fear of death by assuring His people of their eternal salvation. For us death is the means to enter the presence of God (Phil. 1:20-26). This is why the Bible says, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Ps. 116:15). The death of a saved person is precious in God’s sight because death removes His beloved child from this world of sin and takes him into God’s eternal presence.

What this means is that the attitude of the saved person to death should be completely different from the unsaved person’s attitude. The unsaved person does not want to die and will avoid even speaking about death. But the saved person should not be like that. When Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians, he faced the possibility of death, and his attitude was, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better” (Phil. 1:21-23). Paul did not fear death, in fact he preferred it, because it meant being with Christ. This is the

Christian attitude to death, we should not be afraid of it or refuse to speak about it in case we die while we are speaking of it, we should be perfectly willing to die if the Lord wills it.

3. Death is under the control of God alone.

In Phil. 1:19-20 Paul writes about his life in prison. He says in these verses that there is a possibility that he will be killed for his faith. Notice that throughout this passage he makes it clear that whether he lives or dies is for God to decide, and not anyone else. He says that if he continues to live it is for the good of God’s people here on earth, and that is why he is confident that he will live (see v. 25). Paul does not say, “I would like to remain on earth, but the devil has many people here and they may kill me even though God wants me to remain.” This is a very important matter for us as the people of God. There is a great belief in our country that when an accident happens or when someone dies of an illness then it is the devil who caused it. People often say that God did not want that death to happen but the devil caused it to happen. They usually imply that God was powerless to stop the devil. This, of course, is not true at all. God is the complete and absolute ruler of the universe, and everything that happens here on earth happens because God has permitted it to happen. If God does not wish for something to happen then it will not happen, no matter how hard the devil or human beings try to make it happen. The death of a believer and the death of an unbeliever, both are under the control of God alone, He alone decides when a person will die.

4. Death means the end of all personal dealings here on earth.

In Phil. 1:23 Paul says, “I desire to depart and be with Christ.” It is quite clear from this that when a person dies, he departs this earth and finishes all personal dealings with this earth. Some people believe that the spirit of the dead person returns to earth and that it has an influence upon the people of this earth. This is why in many cases, people are very careful to take a body home and to do traditional practices and to bury the body carefully in a certain place. They believe that if you do not do these things properly then the spirit of the dead person will return to disturb the family. The Bible never teaches any such thing. The Bible makes it clear that when a person dies he has finished all dealings with this earth. You can bury his body where ever you want and how ever you want, it will make no difference to him or to his family.

Lesson Two, Luke 16:19-31, The Bible's Teaching on What happens after death.

Please make sure that you read Luke 16:19-31 before studying this lesson. In this parable we find some very important and interesting teaching about what happens to people after they die. The main lessons we learn are these.

1. When a person dies, his body and his soul separate.

We read in this parable, "The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side" (vs. 22-23). The rich man died and was buried, but he was in hell. How could this be? The simple answer is that there are two parts to man, the body and the soul. At death, the body dies, it does not function any longer. At the point of death, the soul departs from the body. So the body is buried and in time it rots away, but the soul is eternal and continues its conscious existence.

2. The soul of the believer goes to be with the Lord.

This is what the Bible means when it speaks about Abraham's bosom. Lazarus the beggar died and went to heaven the moment he died. The soul of the believer does not go to some other place when he dies, it goes straight to heaven. This is why Paul said, "I desire to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23) and it is the reason why Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk. 23:43). There are two very important things here that we need to notice.

(i) The Bible teaches very clearly that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. Therefore, we know reason the Lazarus went to heaven is because he was saved by faith in Christ, not because he was poor. The Bible does not tell us specifically that he believed in Christ, but the fact that he went to heaven when he died tells us that he must have had faith in Christ, because there is no other way to enter heaven. There are some people who believe that if a person has had a really terrible life here on earth, then God will have mercy on him and will give him a place in heaven to comfort him and somehow compensate him for his years of difficulty here on earth. This, of course, is not true at all. If a person is not saved then he will not enter heaven, even though he may have had a life of poverty and sickness here on earth. Only those who are saved enter heaven.

(ii) Secondly, notice that a person may have a lot of the world's wealth, but that does not mean that the blessing of God is upon him. The rich man in this parable "was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury everyday" (v. 19). The food he ate everyday was so good that the poor beggar longed to eat what fell from his table because it was so much nicer than the food he ate everyday. But all this did not mean that the blessing of God was upon him, it did not mean that God was pleased with him and had therefore blessed him in his life. In fact, he was unsaved and therefore still in his sins and under the judgement and anger of God. This is why he was sent to hell when he died and was in torment there in eternity. A person may be very rich here on earth but it does not mean that he has the blessing of God upon him. Lazarus, on the other hand, was very poor, but that did not mean he was cursed by the Lord. He was a blessed man because he was saved and when he died he went to heaven. The lesson for us is clear: we cannot assess a person's status before God by looking at his condition here on earth: the rich man who enjoyed a good life was under the wrath of God and went to hell; the poor beggar who had a terrible life here on earth was saved and was under the blessing of God and therefore went to heaven!

3. The soul of the unbeliever is in hell in torment for eternity.

Just as the soul of the saved person goes to heaven when he dies, so the soul of the unsaved person goes to hell when he dies. We are told very clearly in this parable, "The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side" (vs. 22-23). There are two very important lessons that we are taught here with regard to the rich man.

(i) We are taught that once an unsaved person dies and goes to hell, then there is no way he can enter heaven. The rich man asked Abraham if Lazarus could bring him some water. Abraham replied, "Between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to here" (v. 26). There are millions of people in the world today who are taught that their dead relatives and friends are in some place called purgatory and that if they pray and give money to the church and hold a special service for these people, then these people will be released from purgatory and can enter heaven. But this is a lie of the devil, it is intended to make people careless about salvation. The devil does not want people to get saved so he says to a person, "It does not matter if you die unsaved, you will have another chance after death." It is a lie. Once a person dies his place is fixed for eternity, he cannot go from hell to

heaven even if a million people pray every hour of the day for him. The rich man knew this was true, which is why he wanted Lazarus to go back to earth to warn his five brothers (vs. 27-28). If there was a chance for his brothers to get saved after their deaths then he would not make such a request. But he knew that after death there is no chance of salvation, which is why he wanted Lazarus to go and warn his brothers while they were still on earth.

(ii) We are taught that a person cannot take any of his worldly possessions with him when he dies. The rich man “lived in luxury everyday” (v. 19), which means he ate the best food and had the best drink that money could buy. But when he was in hell, he did not have even a drop of water and pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus to him with just a drop of water. All his worldly wealth was of no use to him. He was in great need but he could do nothing about it: “For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it” (1 Tim. 6:6).

4. An unsaved person does not realise how important it is to get saved until after he has died.

The rich man lived a life of sin here on earth and did not repent and get saved. He loved the world and the things of this world and wanted to enjoy them. There are many people like him. They know that God is calling them to Himself so that they may get saved, but they love their sins and they love this world and they do not want to give these things up. So they remain unsaved. But after the rich man died, he realised how foolish he had been. He realised that he had enjoyed the world and the sins of the world for a short time and now he was going to be in torment in eternity. He did not realise this until after he died when it was too late. This is how unsaved people are: they do not realise how important it is to get saved. They enjoy the pleasures and sins of this world and hope that somehow they will enter heaven when they die. It is foolishness. If you are not saved then you will never enter heaven because you are still in your sins. You need to repent and come to Christ today or like the rich man you will spend the whole of eternity in regret and in torment.

Part Two, What the Bible Teaches about the Second Coming of Christ.

Lesson Three, 2 Thess. 2:1-12, The Signs of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus made it clear in His teaching that no one knows when He will return (Matt. 24:36). However, there are certain things that will happen in the world, just before the Second Coming of Christ and we read about them in this passage. The reason why Paul wrote this passage is that some people had informed the church in Thessalonica that the day of the Lord had already come (v. 2). Paul writes to tell them that this is not true, and that in fact that day will not come until certain things have first happened.

1. The Rebellion will occur (v. 3).

Paul writes, “Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs.” Paul does not say anything more about this event, he just says, “until the rebellion occurs.” The word for “rebellion” that he uses means “apostasy” or “falling away.” It seems what Paul is saying is that throughout history many people will hear the gospel and many millions will claim that they have received the gospel and have believed in Christ. However, many of these will not be true believers. Some will be deceived into thinking that they are true believers and others will deliberately deceive the people of God by saying that they are true believers. However, before the Lord comes back, a very large number of these people will stop claiming that they are saved, they will fall away, they will go away from the Lord. The apostle John writes about such people, “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us” (1 Jn. 2:19).

2. The man of lawlessness will be revealed (vs. 3-8).

Paul writes, “Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed.” Paul does not say anything more about this event, he just says, “until the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction” (v. 3). It seems from this passage that one day a man will be revealed whom the Bible calls “the man of lawlessness.” We need to note that this is a particular person, one particular individual. In this passage Paul tells us three things about this man of lawlessness.

(i) In v. 4, Paul tells us about this man's activities: "He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God, or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God." The man of lawlessness will reject all authority, especially the authority of the One True Living God. He will take upon himself the honour and devotion that is due to God alone, and in his opposition to God, he will persecute all those who belong to God and worship Him.

(ii) In vs. 5-7, Paul tells us that the man of lawlessness will not be revealed "Until the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way." Who is this one who is now holding back lawlessness and will continue to do so until he is taken out of the way? The simple answer is that we do not know for sure. Paul had already taught the Thessalonians on this matter, and so in his letter he does not give details. It seems that here he is speaking about the on-going work of the Holy Spirit here on earth. The Holy Spirit came not only to convict and convert the people of God, but also to ensure that there is order and justice and general good will in the world today. This is His work of common grace by which He makes sure that the rulers of the nations are just and fair and will seek to be honest, and that there is order in society. However, as the Second Coming draws near, He will do less and less of this work so that order in society breaks down, making way for the man of lawlessness to become prominent.

(ii) In v. 8, Paul tells us about the destruction of the man of lawlessness: "Whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming." The coming of the Lord Jesus and the splendour of it will destroy the man of lawlessness. The holy presence of God is a terrible sight for all who are evil and they will all flee, including the man of lawlessness, when the splendour of Christ is revealed at His Second Coming.

3. The gospel will be preached to all nations.

The Lord Jesus spoke about this in Matt. 24:14 where He said, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." The Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to take the gospel to the whole world, and the Bible makes it clear that He will not come back until all His people have been saved from their sins and brought into His kingdom (2 Pet. 3:9). This is why the task of preaching the gospel to the lost is such an urgent one.

Lesson Four, Matt. 24:42-25:46, How we are to live in the light of the Second Coming of Christ.

In this passage, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches about His Second Coming and how we are to be prepared for that event. There are four parables in this passage.

1. We are to be wise and faithful servants right up to the end (24:42-51).

In this passage we find the parable of the unfaithful servant (vs. 48-51). The story is about a rich man who owns a large house with many servants in it. He has to go on a journey and so leaves one of his servants in charge of the house and the other servants. This man is to make sure that the other servants are doing their work and is to pay them their salary. At first, the servant carries out his duties faithfully. But after a while he begins to think, "My master is staying away a long time," and so he begins to "beat his fellow-servants and to eat and drink with drunkards" (vs. 48-49). Then one day, when he is not expecting the master to ever return, the master suddenly comes back and finds him living a sinful life, and so cuts him to pieces (v. 51).

The purpose of the parable is to encourage those who are saved to remain faithful to the Lord in their service for Him. This is particularly true of those who have been appointed shepherds of God's people, just as this man was appointed head over the other servants. Like this servant, there are many who begin their life of service well; they are diligent and faithful in their work. But then after a while they forget that one day the Lord is coming and they will have to give an account of how they lived their lives and how they served Him. Some, sadly, are seduced by money and power and so become unfaithful servants, living a life of sin rather than of faithful service to the Lord. They begin to abuse their position and the money they have been given just as this servant did. Such a person will not enter heaven because he was never saved: he will be called a hypocrite by the Lord and face eternal judgement (v. 51). The parable is a reminder that only those who persevere faithfully to the end will be saved (Matt. 24:13).

2. We are to be ready right up to the end for the Lord when He returns (25:1-13).

In this parable we read about a wedding feast. It seems that in the culture of Jesus' day, the bridegroom would travel to the bride's village where he would be welcomed at the gate by her friends who would then lead him to the wedding banquet. It also seems that at times the bridegroom was late in coming, so the bride's friends had to take oil lamps as they waited for him. In this case, there were ten girls waiting. All of them had oil lamps with oil in them, but only five had brought spare oil. The bridegroom was very late and did not come until midnight (v. 6). Then the girls were required to light their lamps and welcome him. The five who had spare oil were ready, but the five who did not have spare oil were not ready to meet him. The ones who were ready were the ones allowed into the banquet, the other five were told, "I don't know you" (v. 12). Jesus then finishes the parable by saying, "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour" (v. 13).

The parable teaches us that we are to keep watch and to be ready for when the Lord returns. Those who are truly saved will keep watch and be ready because God is at work in them and He will make sure that they are ready for Christ. Those who profess to be saved but are not truly saved are like the five foolish virgins. They were in the party that was there to welcome the groom but they were not ready for him. There are many who profess to be saved and to be a part of Christ's kingdom here on earth and profess to be waiting for Christ, but when He does return, it will be revealed that they are not ready because they were never saved.

3. We are to make sure that we use our God given gifts faithfully in His service (25:14-30).

In this passage we read the parable of the talents. The story is about a businessman who goes on a journey and entrusts his property to three servants. When he comes back he finds that two of them had used what they had been given to make a profit for their master, but the third one had not used it at all but had kept it buried. The master was pleased with the two who had used his property well and the worthless servant was thrown outside, into the outer darkness.

The Bible teaches us very clearly that we have all been given gifts by God (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:7-13). It is clear from all these passages that these gifts are given

freely and graciously and that different people are given different gifts. The Bible also makes it clear that we have a duty to use our gifts and not to keep them buried. This parable actually tells us that the people who claim to be saved but never do any work for the kingdom of God are actually not saved: the worthless servant was thrown outside into the darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth (v. 30). This tells us how important it is for each Christian to discover their gifts and to use them for the glory of God. It also tells us how important it is for the pastor to help his members discover their gifts and to help them develop and use those gifts. The pastor who does not allow his members to do anything, but insists that only a few people in the church are allowed to serve is not a faithful pastor.

4. We are to do good in this world to show that our faith is a living faith (25:31-46).

In this passage we read the parable of the sheep and the goats. As we read this parable, we need to keep in mind that it is not teaching that we earn salvation by our good works. The Lord Jesus Himself taught clearly that our good works do not earn us a place in heaven (Luke 18:9-14), and the Bible in other places makes this very clear (Rom. 3:20-22; Gal. 2:15-16; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 3:9). We are saved by faith alone in Christ alone.

However, the Bible also teaches us that the person who is truly saved will have living faith and not dead faith (James 2:14-26). This means that his faith will produce in him a love for others and a desire to help others who are in need. If he has no such desire and is only selfish and self-seeking then it is clear that he does not know the love of God and is not saved: "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need and has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:17-18).

The parable of the sheep and the goats teaches us that our good works are to be directed primarily at our Christian brothers and sisters. Jesus says to His people, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (v. 40). The Bible tells us, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Gal. 6:10). If a saved person is able to help others, he must first help his fellow Christians. In this way, he shows that his faith is a living faith and so he will enter heaven when the Lord Jesus returns.

Lesson Five, John. 5:28-29; Matt. 24:36-41, The Bible's teaching on the Second Coming of Christ.

The Second Coming of Christ is a subject in which a lot of people are interested, and it is a subject over which there is much disagreement. In this lesson, we are going to look at two passages, John 5:28-29 and Matt. 24:36-41. In both passages we find the teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself. Please make sure that you read the passages before you continue with this lesson, and please make sure that you refer to these passages and others which are mentioned carefully. The main things that we learn from these passages are these.

1. The Second Coming will happen suddenly.

Jesus said, "No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood happened and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man" (Matt. 24:36-39). There are three important things to notice about this passage.

(i) It tells us that no-one knows when the Lord will return. This means that if a person says he has worked it out from the Bible or has been told by the Lord when the Second Coming will be, then he is lying. No-one knows.

(ii) When the Lord returns, it will catch people by surprise. People will be doing ordinary things like eating and drinking. And just as the people in the days of Noah knew nothing about what would happen, so people will be caught by surprise when the Lord returns.

(iii) On that day the wicked will be swept away and the saved will remain here on earth. Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken the other left" (Matt. 24:37-41).

When we read this passage carefully, we notice that in the days of Noah, it was the wicked who were swept away into judgement by the waters of the flood and the righteous

remained to populate the earth again. The same thing will happen when the Lord Jesus returns: the wicked will be taken away and the righteous will remain.

2. When the Lord returns all who are in their graves will rise and be given resurrection bodies.

Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement" (Jn. 5:28-29, English Standard Version). In this passage the Lord Jesus says that when He returns all who are in their graves will rise and be given resurrection bodies. The soul that departed when the person died will come again and be united to this new, resurrection body. In 1 Cor. 15:42 Paul says about the body, "The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable." The body we have at the moment is perishable, which means that it grows old and weak and eventually will die. The resurrection body will be imperishable, it will never grow old and weak and it will never die, it will live for eternity. Even those who die in their sins will be given these resurrection bodies, they will be in hell in eternity with these bodies that will feel pain and torment but will never age and will never die. This is one of the reasons why the torment of hell is eternal, the body never dies, it continues to experience torment for eternity.

3. Those who are still alive when the Lord returns will be changed in an instant.

We have seen that when the Lord Jesus returns those who have died will be brought back to life and given resurrection bodies. What about those who are alive at the time of His Second Coming? The apostle Paul wrote, "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51-52). This passage makes it clear that the people who are alive when the Lord returns will be changed in an instant so that they too will have imperishable resurrection bodies.

4. All humanity will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus spoke about this in Jn. 5:28-29 when He said, "those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement." The Lord Jesus came the first time to bring salvation to His people, He will return to judge the whole world.

Lesson Six, Rev. 20:11-15, The Final Judgement.

In this passage, we read about the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the final judgement. There are three important lessons we learn from this passage

1. Who will be the judge on the final day?

The Bible makes it very clear that the one who will be seated on the great white throne (v. 11) will be the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself said that He has been given authority to judge by the Father (Jn. 5:27). There are two very important reasons why the Lord Jesus is going to be the judge on the final day.

(i) Because salvation is through faith in Him alone. The Bible makes it very clear that we are not saved by our own efforts but by faith alone in Christ alone (Rom. 3:21-22; Gal. 2:16). The person who comes to faith in Christ will be changed by the Spirit of God so that on the day the Lord Jesus returns, he will be exactly like Christ. This is why the Lord Jesus is the judge and not an angel or a human being: He is coming to save His people, those who are exactly like Him in their character.

(ii) Because only those who are perfectly like Christ will be saved. Many people think that salvation is like an exam. They think that as long as you try your hardest to live a good life, and do fairly well, you will enter heaven. But the Bible teaches us that it is not those who have tried hard to live a good life and have done quite well who enter, it is those who have trusted in Christ and have been given Christ's righteousness who will enter. It is those who have been perfected by God Himself who will enter. This is why the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will come to judge the world: only those who are perfectly like Him can enter heaven, and we can only be perfectly like Him when we are saved by faith in Him.

2. Who will be judged?

The Bible tells us very clearly that the first thing the Lord Jesus will do when He returns is to call all people before Him, and to separate the saved from the unsaved, "as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:32). He will then receive those who are His people to Himself, and will judge those who are unsaved. This passage in Revelation speaks about the judgement of the unsaved. We know this because we are told that they are "dead" which means they are not born again. Also we are told that "Hades gave up the

dead." This is a reference to the souls of the unsaved who are sent into hell and remain there until Christ returns.

The Bible therefore teaches that all who are in their sins will be judged. Every person on the face of this earth will stand before Christ and they will be judged for their sins. Those who live in Africa and those who live in Europe, and those who live in America and those who live in Asia, all will stand before Him and be judged. Those who called themselves Christians and those followed other religions of the world will be judged. Those who were highly educated and very rich and were rulers of nations will be judged, and those who had no education at all and were completely poor will be judged.

No one will be able to escape the judgement of God. Those who heard the word of God but refused to come to Christ and be saved, but instead continued to live their lives of sin will be judged for their wickedness. The Bible says that on that day they will call upon the mountains and the rocks to hide them from the anger of God (Rev. 6:15-17).

This passage, then, teaches very clearly that the unsaved are judged when the Lord Jesus returns. However, we also need to keep in mind that all who are saved will also give an account for how they lived their lives here on earth after they were saved. Those who are saved cannot be judged for their sins because they have been cleansed in the blood of Christ (1 Jn. 1:7) and because, "There is now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). But God expects us to live holy lives and to use our gifts in His kingdom and to bring honour and glory to His name here on earth. We will therefore be required to give an account of how we lived our lives here on earth after we were saved. This is why Paul says, "For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

In addition, we need to remember that those who have served as pastors and teachers will give an account for how they conducted their pastoral ministry. The Bible says, "Not many should presume to be teachers for we shall be judged with a double judgement" (James 3:1). This means that those who exercised a teaching ministry in the local church will be judged for how they lived their lives as saved people, and how they conducted their teaching ministry. If they did not teach the word of God accurately and faithfully then they will have to give an account for that.

3. How will Christ judge the unsaved on the Day of Judgement?

John says, “The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books” (Rev. 20:12). The Bible tells us here that there are books in heaven and all the works of the unsaved have been written in those books. It also tells us that there is also the book of life and the names of the saved are in it. With regard to the judgement of the unsaved, the Bible teaches this.

(i) All the sinful works of the unsaved will be judged: “The dead were judged according to what they had done.” Every deed that an unsaved person has done throughout his life will be brought under judgement. Even those sins which a person thinks were very small and insignificant will be judged. Even those sins which a person committed when he was very young and cannot now remember them will be judged. God will judge all the sinful works of the unsaved.

(ii) All the words of the sinful will be judged. Jesus said, “But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgement for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:36-37). We need to remember that we sin not in our deeds only, but also in our words. When we speak unkind words and when we tell lies, these are great sins in the sight of God. The Bible tells us clearly that all liars will be sent into hell (Rev. 21:8). This is why we all have to be very careful about the words we speak, they are all recorded and God will judge the unsaved for all their sinful speech.

(iii) All the secret thoughts of the unsaved will be judged. The Bible says, “God will judge the secrets of men’s hearts” (Rom. 2:16). There are many sins that we do in our hearts and no one knows about them. A man may have sinful thoughts about an attractive woman or he may hate someone in his heart. These are sins that other people do not see, but God sees them and God records them and God will judge the unsaved for all their sinful thoughts that they kept in secret in their hearts.

This, then, is what the Bible teaches about the day of judgement. It tells us that the Lord Jesus on that day will ask all who are saved to give an account for how they lived their lives after they were saved, and that He will judge all the works and all the words and all the thoughts of the unsaved.

It is important to notice in this passage in Rev. 20:11-15 that the way of salvation is not good works but the work of God. Those who are not saved are judged according to their works which are recorded in their books. Those who are saved do not enter heaven because they have done good works, but because their names are written in the book of life. They are saved because God has planned their salvation from eternity and God has secured their salvation through the death of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson Seven, Matt. 25:46, Eternal Punishment.

The verse we are looking at in this lesson is found at the end of the parable of the sheep and the goats. The Lord Jesus says about the unsaved, “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” There are some very important lessons we learn from this text about eternal punishment.

1. Eternal punishment for the unsaved begins soon after the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches us the sequence of events quite clearly: the Lord Jesus will return suddenly and will call all people to himself. All people, the saved and the unsaved will be given resurrection bodies and will stand before Him. He will divide the whole of mankind into two groups, the saved and the unsaved. He will then welcome the saved to Himself and will condemn the unsaved to eternal punishment. This teaches us quite clearly that very soon after His coming those who are unsaved will be sent into hell.

2. Eternal punishment means to be separated from God for eternity.

Jesus says in this verse, “Then they will go away.” This is the most important thing about hell, that it is eternal separation from God. All people here on earth today are under the care, protection and love of God. Even those who are unsaved and do not believe in God or follow false religions are under the gracious care of God (Matt. 5:44-45). That is why so many who are not saved are able to have a nice and pleasant life here on earth. It is not because God is pleased with them, but because God is gracious to them. In hell, however, there is no grace of God; hell is a place specifically designed by God for the punishment of sinners. The gracious love and care of God is not present in hell, and this means that men live lives of sin with no restraint upon them. Unsaved people here on earth are able to be kind and generous to others because of the grace of God. In hell there is no such thing as kindness and generosity, it is a place of sin and darkness where the grace of God is not known.

3. Hell is the final destiny of the unsaved.

When the unsaved are sent into hell, there is no way out for them. That is the place the Lord Jesus has prepared for them and that is where they will remain in eternity. There are many people today who think that even after death an unsaved person will have the chance

to get into heaven. This is completely false. If you die unsaved, you remain unsaved and in hell for eternity.

4. Hell is a place of conscious punishment.

We must understand very clearly that hell is a place that God Himself created, and that He created it specifically for the punishment of sinners. Jesus says to the unsaved, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). Notice that the Lord Jesus says this place was “prepared.” This means God created it for a specific purpose: the punishment of sinners. The Bible teaches very clearly that hell is a place of suffering and punishment for the wicked.

Jesus said hell is “Where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 24:51), and the place “where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48). The apostle John describes hell as the lake of burning sulphur and the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10;14). These verses all teach very clearly that those who are in hell suffer for their sins. It is a place prepared by God for the punishment of the wicked.

5. Hell is eternal.

Here on earth if a person is suffering because of sickness or poverty, he can say to himself, “At least one day I will be free of this sickness and this poverty.” But there is no such comfort for those who are in hell. Their worm does not die and their fire is not quenched (Mark 9:48). Hell is eternal suffering, it is suffering that continues to go on and never comes to an end.

We can understand why some people do not believe that there is a hell and why most people do not even want to think about hell. The Bible’s teaching on this matter is very clear and frightening and it is not the kind of thing people want to think about. However, we need to understand that hell is a real place and that those who die in their sins are sent into hell for eternity. The way to respond to the Bible’s teaching on hell, therefore, is not to deny it or ignore it but to make sure that we are saved. The Lord Jesus invites all people to come to Himself for salvation. The Bible makes it clear that the way of salvation is through Him. All those who turn from their sins and trust in Him alone will be saved from all their sins. Then they will have no fear of hell.

Lesson Eight, Rev. 21:1-5, The New Heaven and the New Earth.

In this lesson, we will look at what the Bible teaches about the dwelling place of the saved. Many people think that the saved will live in some far away place called heaven where they will be in white clothes and sit on clouds or something like that. Actually the Bible does not teach this at all.

1. The Lord Jesus will make the earth perfect again.

In this passage in Rev. 21:1-5, the Bible says that the old heaven and the old earth will pass away and that there will be a new heaven and a new earth. This is what the Lord Jesus will do when He returns. He will restore the whole of creation to what it was in the beginning. In the beginning God created a perfect universe and a perfect place for man to live in. The world in which Adam and Eve lived was completely perfect and without any fault at all. But then Adam and Eve sinned and so God cursed the earth (Gen. 3:17). God, however, is a God of grace and mercy. He did not leave sinful man to die in his sin, He put into action His plan to redeem both man and creation from the effects of sin. The plan of salvation was not just to save man from the curse of sin, but to redeem the whole of creation from the curse of sin. This is what creation has been waiting for (Rom. 8:20-21). And so when the Lord Jesus will return, He will remove the curse that God pronounced upon creation, and will make the earth exactly as it was in the time of Adam, it will be a perfect and a beautiful place once again.

2. The people of God will live on the earth for ever.

The Bible says in this passage, “Then I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Rev. 21:2). It is quite clear that the Holy City is the church of God, the complete number of God’s saved people. The Bible says that the Holy City will come down from heaven to live on earth. It is teaching here that all those who have died in Christ and are in heaven with Him today will return to the earth and will live here for ever. When God made Adam and Eve, His plan was that they should live on earth forever, and that is exactly what will happen when the Lord Jesus returns to earth to complete His work of salvation. The world once again will be a beautiful place, perfect and without sin. The Bible gives us some wonderful descriptions of what it will be like:

“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6-9).

This is how the earth will be after the return of the Lord Jesus, it will be a perfect place and a wonderful place, the place where God’s people will live for eternity.

3. God will dwell with His people for ever.

John says, “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God’” (Rev. 21:3). When God created Adam and Eve, there was perfect fellowship between Him and them. Then, when Adam and Eve fell into sin, that fellowship was broken. When the Lord Jesus returns, He will make the earth perfect again, and then He will live with His people forever. This will be the most wonderful thing about the new earth, that God Himself will be present with His people at all times. He will never leave us again, He will be with us for eternity.

It is God’s presence with us that will bring us eternal joy and eternal satisfaction. The material things of this world will never satisfy us, it is only God Himself who can fulfil us and satisfy us and give us eternal joy.

4. There will be no effects of sin in the new earth.

The Bible says, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev. 21:4). The Bible tells us clearly that when sin came into the world it brought with it death and all the difficulties of life that we experience today. The Bible tells us clearly that this is not how God originally created the world, these things have only come as a result of sin. However, when the Lord Jesus returns, He will restore this world to the state it was in before the fall. That means that death and mourning and crying and pain will all pass away for eternity. We will have new resurrection bodies that will not age or become sick or die. The earth will be a new earth, one without famine or flooding or anything destructive or harmful.

Remember that when God created Adam, He gave Adam work to do (Gen. 2:15), and this is what we will do in the new earth. Work was not given to man as punishment for sin, it is a holy activity that God has given to man. After sin came into the world, work became hard for man (Gen. 3:17-19). But God will remove the curse of sin from the earth and work will once again be a pleasure and a fulfilling activity.

The fact that God will make all things new is a wonderful promise of God. It shows us what a great thing it is to be saved. We have the forgiveness of all our sins and we enter into God's family. But more than this, we have the promise of life on a perfect earth created for man. And we have the eternal presence of God Himself with us.