

Th122 Foundation Doctrines

Lesson Th122 – 23 Resurrection of the Dead – The Rapture

In our last lesson, you learned that God commanded the Jewish people to have seven feasts or celebrations each year. The first month of the traditional Jewish calendar happens in spring. Thus, the first feast, Passover, happened in the first month of the Jewish calendar. We remember that Jesus was crucified at Passover, buried during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and was resurrected on the Sunday of the Feast of Firstfruits. Jesus' resurrection was the promise and proof to all believers that the resurrection of the dead would one day occur and that all believers would be raised from the dead.

The fourth feast of the Jewish calendar is called "Pentecost." It happens 49 days after Firstfruits Sunday. On Firstfruits, the Jews would present an offering of barley unto God from the early harvest. The first complete harvest, the wheat harvest, happened seven weeks later. So the Feast of Pentecost was when the Jews gathered in Jerusalem to present an offering unto God in thanks for the completion of that wheat harvest. It was on the Feast of Pentecost that God poured out upon the Church his gift of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

After Pentecost, the Jews would return to their villages and prepare for the harvest of grapes, pomegranates, figs, and olives. The Jews were commanded to return to Jerusalem for the Feast of Trumpets. Sometime at the end of September or early October, the Jewish high priest would blow a trumpet announcing that all of Israel should cease harvesting and come to Jerusalem to present their offerings unto the Lord. Some Christians believe that the next great event in God's eternal calendar will happen some year during this feast. This great event is called the Rapture of the Church. Just as Jesus was resurrected on the Jewish feast of Firstfruits, it is believed that someday during the Feast of Trumpets, God will harvest the earth and resurrect the dead believers just as Christ was resurrected. Jesus clearly taught his disciples, however, that no one knows the day nor the hour of the Rapture, not even the angels in heaven, only the Father (Mark 13:32).

Now the apostle Paul planted a church in the city of Corinth which is west of Athens, Greece. From there he traveled about 275 kilometers (125 miles) east to modern day Turkey and planted a church in the city of Ephesus. Paul would remain in Ephesus for three years while he taught and built up the local believers. While in Ephesus he received news of problems that the young believers in Corinth were experiencing. So, Paul wrote a very long detailed letter to them. He gave them fatherly instruction and correction in their faith and their behavior. Among the issues he addressed was the subject of the resurrection of the dead.

It would seem that someone in Corinth was teaching people that there would not be a resurrection of the dead. This was obviously incorrect, but whoever was teaching this must have been very persuasive. Here are some of the things Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to

more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, he appeared to me also, as to one untimely born. ...

“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ...

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ...

“So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. ...

“I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: 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. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality” (1Cor 15: 3-4, 12-14, 20-23, 42-44, 50-53).

The apostle Paul clearly teaches that one day Christ will return for his Church. The most amazing thing will happen! Everyone who has died a believer will suddenly come back to life. It will not be their old bones or rotted flesh, but rather, in a single moment they will come to life with a brand-new supernatural body. It will be a spirit body like Jesus' glorified body. Paul teaches that any believer who is alive at this moment will also suddenly be transformed. They will be changed in a blink of the eye. Suddenly their human body of flesh and bone will be transformed into the supernatural body that will never become sick, will never age, but will be in the presence of God forever.

We can know a little of what this body will be like from what the Bible teaches us about what Jesus was able to do after his resurrection. Jesus was able to eat and drink. He also was able to appear and then disappear. Walls and doors were not able to keep him out of a locked room. Finally, his disciples watched as he floated up into the sky and out of sight. We can assume that all of the things that limit our human bodies will not apply to our supernatural resurrected ones.

And rightly so. We were created and intended to become God's children. God is a spirit being. We also have spirits, but right now our human bodies limit us. One day we will all receive a supernatural spirit body and thus we will be in the presence of our Father forever.

This lesson is **important** because it explains the blessed hope of all who follow Christ. Whether you die before Christ comes back for the Church or whether you are alive at that time, you will receive a supernatural spirit body. And so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God's timetable is settled, and believers must be ready to meet him in the air when he comes for his Church.

To **review** this lesson, please answer these questions:

1. What is the Rapture of the Church? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said that the Rapture of the Church is when Christ returns for the Church, then you are correct.

2. What will happen to those believers who have already died, at the Rapture? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said, "The dead in Christ will be resurrected from the dead and given a supernatural body," you are correct.

3. What happens to believers who are alive at the time of the Rapture? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said that believers who are alive at the Rapture will be instantly transformed and receive supernatural bodies, then you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it at least three times until you clearly understand the Rapture of the Church and the resurrection of believers. Find a few believers and discuss this truth with them.