

THEN COMETH THE END

I Cor. 15:24-28

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Several weeks ago we began a series of lessons with the general theme of “grow[ing] in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.” (2 Pet. 3:18)
 - A. These lessons are designed to help Christians grow and be strong in the Lord (1 Pet. 2:2).
 - B. We cannot remain “babes” in Christ (1 Cor. 14:20); and even if we’ve been Christians for many years, we need to be reminded of these first principles (2 Pet. 3:1; Heb. 5:12-14).
2. Today’s lesson will be the thirteenth and last of this series.
3. To set the stage for today’s lesson, let’s notice Paul’s statement in 1 Cor. 15:24: “*Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.*”
 - A. ****** There is a lot of misunderstanding and false teaching about the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. Many are guilty of taking figurative passages of Scripture and interpreting them literally and/or misapplying them.
 - B. The best way to understand the events concerning the end is to read and study the simple and clear Bible passages that deal with the subject.
4. **3** Let’s “search the scriptures” today and look at some of the events that will take place when the end comes.

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **4** Christ will return:
 - A. Most people believe that when Christ returns, He will return to the earth, set up an earthly kingdom that will last 1,000 years, etc. He will certainly return! **Acts 1:11:** “*Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.*”
 - B. But, the Bible never states that Christ will come back to this earth!
 - (1) Christ has promised to return (**Heb. 9:27-28:** “*And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 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.*”).
 - (2) The time of His return is unknown (**Mk. 13:32:** “*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*”).
 - (3) In fact, the Bible teaches very plainly that Christ will never set foot on the earth again (**1 Thess. 4:16-18:** “*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.*”).
2. **5** The dead will be raised:
 - A. Many believe death is the end of things. When you die, you’re “dead all over, just like Rover.”
 - (1) Jehovah’s Witnesses: “The spirit can be compared to electricity.” (www.watchtower.org)

- (2) **“Death is a state of unconscious nonbeing. (Eccl. 9:5: “For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing.”; but cf. Eccl. 1:14: “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.”). (Adventist Review, 2003)**

B. The Bible teaches differently:

- (1) Soul/spirit is separate from the body (Gen. 1:26; Jn. 4:24; Lk. 24:39; **Matt. 10:28:** “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”; Acts 2:27; Jas. 2:26; **Eccl. 12:7:** “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.”; **2 Cor. 5:1:** “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”).

- (2) Soul/spirit is conscious after death (Lk. 16:22-25; **Matt. 22:31-32:** “But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”).

C. The Bible says that there will be a resurrection of the dead (Jn. 5:28-29: “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”). Note that there will only be one general resurrection of the dead (v. 28; Acts 24:15: “...there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.”).

D. What happens to the dead prior to the final judgment? Lk. 16:19-31

- (1) Death is a separation of the body and soul (Jas. 2:26).
- (2) Hades: “the common receptacle of disembodied spirits” (Thayer); “the place (state) of departed souls...grave” (Strong).
- (3) Characteristics of “hades”:
- (a) It is the place for both the righteous and the wicked dead (“Abraham’s bosom” vs. “torment”, cf. Acts 2:31; Lk. 23:43: “paradise”).
 - (b) The dead are conscious and retain their personal identity, memory, desires, etc. (Lk. 16:24).
 - (c) The dead recognize one another (Lk. 16:24).
 - (d) The wicked are in a place of torment (Lk. 16:22).
 - (e) The righteous are in a place of comfort, “Abraham’s bosom” or “paradise” (Lk. 16:26; Lk. 23:43).
 - (f) The two places are separated by a great, impassable “gulf” (Lk. 16:26; “chasm” NIV).
 - (g) Thus, one’s eternal destiny is, therefore, sealed at death (Heb. 9:27).
 - (h) The dead are conscious of events on earth (Lk. 16:27-31).
- (4) When Christ comes the second time:
- (a) There will be a resurrection of both the righteous and unrighteous dead (**Jn. 5:28-29:** “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”).

- (b) All men will be judged and sent to either heaven or hell (Matt. 25:31-34, 41; **Rev. 20:13**: “The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.”).
- (c) Christians alive at the time of the second coming will join with the departed saints and the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16-17).
- (d) Death and hades will be destroyed (**Rev. 20:14-15**: “Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”).

3. **6** We will be changed:

- A. Since time began man has pondered what will happen after death (**Job 14:14**: “If a man dies, will he live again?”).
- B. One thing we can know for sure is that we cannot inherit God’s eternal kingdom in our present form (**1 Cor. 15:50**: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.”).
- C. Our bodies are corruptible, that is subject to death and decay, but the spiritual body will be incorruptible just as our spirit is incorruptible or immortal. We will be given a body that is like Jesus’ glorified body (**1 Jn. 3:2**: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”; **Phil. 3:21**: “who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”).
- D. All will be resurrected and given new bodies (**1 Cor. 15:35-54**):
 - ✓ “not yet been revealed what we shall be” (1 John 3:2),
 - ✓ “we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2),
 - ✓ “you do not sow that body that shall be” (v. 37),
 - ✓ “God gives it a body as He pleases” (v. 38),
 - ✓ “raised in incorruption” (v. 42),
 - ✓ “raised in glory” (v. 43),
 - ✓ “raised in power” (v. 43),
 - ✓ “a spiritual body” (v. 44),
 - ✓ “bear the image of the heavenly Man” (v. 48; cf. 1 Jn. 3:2),
 - ✓ “we shall all be changed” (v. 51).
 - ✓ “will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (Phil. 3:21).

4. **7** Present world will be brought to an end:

- A. Like our physical bodies, the earth is only temporary.
- B. God never did intend for it to last without end. (**2 Pet. 3:10**: “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.”).
 - (1) “elements”: “the substance of the material world” (Vine); “Here the word is of course used in a physical sense, meaning ‘the parts’ of which this system of things is composed.” (Vincent)

(2) “melt”: “More literally, as the English Revised Version (1885), ‘shall be dissolved.’”
(Vincent)

(3) Thus, this present world is not going to be merely “renovated”; rather, it is going to cease to exist...it will be “dissolved”!

C. Since this will be the case, Peter encourages us and warns us with very sobering words (2 **Pet. 3:11**: “*Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*”).

5. **8** The judgment:

- A. Everyone will be present at the judgment when the end comes, none will escape the judgment of God (Matt. 25:32; 2 Cor. 5:10; **Rev. 20:12**: “*And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.*”).
- B. Everyone will have to give an account for the things they have done in this life (**Eccl. 12:13-14**: “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.*”; 2 Cor. 5:10; **Rom. 14:11-12**: “*For it is written: ‘As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.’ 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.*”).
- C. The judgment will be individual in nature. You will not have to answer for me and I will not have to answer for you (Rom. 14:11-12).
- D. Christ will be the judge on that day (**Jn. 5:22**: “*For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,*”; **Acts 17:30-31**: “*Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.*”).
- E. The word of God will be the standard by which we will be judged (Jn. 12:48; Rom. 2:16). That being the case, isn't it even more critical that we know and obey God's word (Heb. 10:26-29; Lk. 12:10).

6. **9** The kingdom will be delivered up to God:

- A. Christ will deliver the Kingdom to God at the end (**1 Cor. 15:24**: “*Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.*”).
- B. Remember, the kingdom is the church (Matt. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13), so the kingdom, or church, will be delivered up to God (**Eph. 5:27**: “*that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*”).
- C. The Lord's kingdom is spiritual, not physical (Jn. 18:36; Phil. 3:20).
- D. Since the kingdom will be delivered up to God when the end comes:
 - (1) It defeats the notion that Christ is coming to set up a kingdom when He comes the second time (Jn. 16:28; Lk. 24:51; **Dan. 7:13-14**).
 - (2) It emphasizes that you and I need to be in the kingdom. The only provision God has made for people to be delivered to Him when the end comes is for those that are in the kingdom! Jn. 3:3-5; Col. 1:13

7. **10** The reign of Christ will end:

- A. Christ's reign on the heavenly throne is only temporary (**1 Cor. 15:24-28**).
- B. Christ was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom when He ascended to God after His resurrection from the dead (Lk. 1:32-33; Jn. 13:3; Acts 2:36; Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:19-23).
- C. Christ rules God's kingdom "till" the last enemy is destroyed (1 Cor. 15:24-26). At the judgment and resurrection, there will be no dead and Christ will give up His reign.

III. CONCLUSION: **11**

1. From the time we first obeyed the gospel we must:
 - ✓ Put "First Things First" (Matt. 6:33),
 - ✓ Strive to "Add to Our Faith" (2 Pet. 1:5-11),
 - ✓ Keep Ourselves "Unspotted From the World" (Jas. 1:27),
 - ✓ Show our "Faithfulness" in all things (Prov. 20:6),
 - ✓ Be diligent students of God's word (Eph. 3:4),
 - ✓ "Meet Our Responsibilities" (Rom. 14:12).
 - ✓ **12** Discharge our God-created roles in "The Family" (Mk. 10:6-8),
 - ✓ Study false doctrine in light of the Scriptures lest "Ye Do Err, Not Knowing the Scripture" (Mt. 22:29),
 - ✓ Closely watch our attitudes because "As He Thinketh in His Heart" so are we (Prov. 23:7),
 - ✓ Must come to an exact understanding of the one true church Jesus built (Matt. 16:18),
 - ✓ Must "Rightly Divide the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15),
 - ✓ Realize that God will judge us in the end (1 Cor. 15:24).
2. The choice is ours (Rev. 20:12, 15 or Rev. 21:3-4)
3. As we close this series of lessons let everyone of us, "...be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58)

Adapted from: *Growing in Grace and Knowledge of the Lord*, by Johnie Edwards, Titus Edwards,
Johnie P. Edwards, Edwards Publishing, pp. 41-43)

