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LESSON 1 of 6

PRIMER ON PROPHECY

BY R.E. HARLOW

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A PRIMER ON PROPHECY

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LESSON 1 PRIMER ON PROPHECY

THE LORD JESUS PROMISED TO RETURN

The Lord Jesus had friends. Many people hated Him, but some loved Him. Those who hated Him tried many times to kill Him and at last they succeeded. His friends stayed with Him almost to the end.

On the last night before He died the Lord Jesus talked to His friends and told them what was going to happen. This proved that they were His friends and not just His servants, John 15.15. A master always tells his servants what they are going to do, but he does not have to tell them what he is going to do. The Lord Jesus told His followers what His Father wanted Him to do.

The Lord told His friends many things that would happen later. One wonderful thing is in John 14.3, I will come again. He was going away to prepare a place for them and He promised to come again. He wanted them to be with Him. Where is the Lord Jesus today?

He is in heaven and He wants us to be in heaven with Him. We cannot find the way to heaven or to get there by ourselves, so He promised to come back again. This is the first great truth we must learn: the Lord Jesus promised to come back again.

WHY CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN

1. Why did the Lord Jesus promise to come back again? One reason is because He loves us and wants us to be with Him.

2. Here is another reason why God wants Christ to return to this world. God's Son came the first time and did perfectly all that His Father wanted Him to do. God said He was well pleased with His Son, Matthew 3.17; 17.5. Men did not accept the Lord Jesus and God allowed them to beat Him and spit on Him and kill Him. Then God raised Him from death and put Him on His own throne in heaven, Acts 5.30,31; Hebrews 8.1. Today all who are in heaven give honour to Christ, but it is necessary that people on earth should do the same. God will never be satisfied until all men know that He has chosen and accepted Christ,

3. Another thing, God chose the nation of Israel and promised them that He would send a King who will rule for ever. There many promises like that in the Old Testament. We will study them in chapter 8, but here we see that Christ must come back because God promised that He will rule as King in this world, Jeremiah 23.5,6. Christ will rule when He comes again.

God promised Adam and Eve that their Seed or Descent would get the victory over Satan, even though Satan had led them to commit sin, Genesis 3.15. He promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his Descendant, Genesis 22 Galatians 3.16. God was looking forward to the coming of Christ when He promised that David's Son or Descendant will rule forever, 2 Samuel 7.16. Christ came once, but He did not rule over men. He will come again and fulfill God's promises in the Old Testament, Psalm 2.6, 7.

SOME PEOPLE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN

These people try to explain the verses we have read in different ways:

1. Some people say that the Holy Spirit is God and He came into the world after Christ died. They think that the Lord Jesus meant that the Holy Spirit would come when He said, I will come again.

It is true that the Holy Spirit is God and He came in world but He is not a man, He was not nailed to the cross Holy Spirit Himself said many times in the New Testament Christ will come again. So the Lord Jesus could not have been speaking about the Holy Spirit when He said, I will come,

2. Some say Christ comes into the heart of every man who' believes in Him. They think this is what it means when Christ is coming.

This is partly true; Christ comes into our hearts when we receive Him as our Saviour, John 1.12, but this does not fulfill all God's promises. Christ rules in our hearts, but He certainly is not ruling in the world today.

3. The Lord Jesus said, "I will come again and take you unto myself," John 14.3. Some say the meaning of this is that He takes the believer to heaven when he dies.

This verse could mean that but we know from other verses that the Lord is really coming back into this world.

It is important to learn that no verse in the Bible cannot be taken by itself. We must try to understand all the verses which speak about the same subject.

CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN SOON

So we see that Christ Himself must come back to fulfill God's promises and His own promises. After Jesus arose from death He talked with His disciples and taught them many things. They saw Him, heard Him speak, ate with Him, touched His body. One day He was speaking to them on the Mount of Olives and as they watched Him He was taken up into a cloud. Two angels came and told them that Jesus was taken up into heaven, and He will come back in the same way that they saw Him go into heaven, Acts 1.11. This Jesus will come in the same way.

The Lord Jesus not only promised to come back to earth, but He promised to come quickly or soon, Revelation 22.7, 12,20. It is now about 1,900 years since He made that promise. Some people get tired of waiting and fall into worldly sin, like the servant in Luke 12.45. Others say there must be some mistake and they try to explain the Lord's promises by saying He meant something else.

God knew long ago that men would laugh at Christ's promise to return. The Holy Spirit told Peter that this would happen in the last days, 2 Peter 3.3,4. Many people today make fun of Christians who believe that Christ is coming back. This proves that we are in the last days and the Lord will come soon.

WE SHOULD REMEMBER THREE THINGS:

1. The Lord Jesus wants us to be with Him more than we want to go to heaven. There must be a good reason for His delay.

2. When Christ comes the day of God's grace will be over. God would like all men to turn from their sins and be saved, 2 Peter 3.9.

3. It seems like a long time to us, but a thousand years is like one day only for God, 2 Peter 3.8. When the right time comes the Lord will return and when He returns He will come soon or quickly.

THE HOLY SPIRIT SHOWS US THINGS TO COME

Before the Lord Jesus went away He also promised to send the Holy Spirit, John 16.7.

If I go - I will send the Comforter, John 16.7

If I go - I will come again

John 14.3

The Holy Spirit came to teach us all things and to show us things to come, John 14.26; 16.13. The teaching of the Holy Spirit is in the Bible and He has told us many things which are still in the future. In this book we will look at some of the great chapters of Bible which tell us about coming events:

1 Thessalonians 4: tells how Christ will come for His Church

Daniel 2 tells about four great kingdoms.

Daniel 7 and 8 tell more about the kingdoms, especially fourth one in the last days.

Matthew 24 tells what will happen before the Lord comes.

Revelation 2 and 3 tell about the Church at the present time.

Revelation 19-21 tell us about many things which will happen after Christ comes.

2 Thessalonians 2 shows us the Man of Sin.

Revelation 13 tells about the beast and the False Prophet.

Revelation 6-16 tell us about the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 17 and 18 show us Babylon, the great prostitute.

We will study these chapters a little at a time and many verses as well. Let us ask God to help us to understand His wonderful plans as He has revealed them in the Bible.

When the Lord Jesus went back to heaven the Holy Spirit came down from heaven. What is the most important work of the Spirit? His greatest work is to give glory to the Lord Jesus. He told us many things about the future, and, best of all, that Christ will come in glory. You will learn what will happen next in God's plan, but the most important thing is to know and love Christ more.

THE RAPTURE

We have seen that the Lord promised to return, but first He sent the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, John 16.13. The Holy Spirit did lead men to write the 27 books of the New Testament, half of these were written by one man, the Apostle Paul. In this chapter we will look at two letters written by Paul. We can be sure the Holy Spirit led Paul to write the truth.

Read the first letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 4, verses, 13--18. Some of the Christians were very sad because a few of the believers had died. The Christians in Thessalonica had enemies, Acts 17.5, and perhaps some believers had been killed. Paul was with the Thessalonians only three weeks, but he told them about the Lord's return, 1 Thessalonians 1.10; 2 Thessalonians 2.5. They believed this and when their friends died it made them very sad.

Paul told them they should not be sad like those who do not believe in God because when the Lord comes from heaven Christians who have died will rise from death and will be caught up meet the Lord together with those who are alive. Therefore when a believer dies we should not mourn and sorrow like other people because we have a real hope that the Lord will come. We can be sure that we will see that believer again, in heaven.

"ASLEEP IN JESUS"

Some Bibles say believers who have died are "asleep in Jesus." The word sleep is used for a believer who has died. For example, the Lord said Lazarus was sleeping, but He meant that he had died, John 11.11,13. This word sleep means that a believer is not dead forever, but his body is resting until the Lord comes. It does not mean that he is unconscious or cannot think. Paul taught that we will be very happy the minute we die because our spirits with Christ, Philippians 1.23. Here Paul says that Christ will bring' with Him all believers who have died, 1 Thessalonians 4. 1

Many people teach that death is the end of everything but this is not what the Bible teaches. These verses show plainly that believers will live again and other verses teach that all men will live again, John

5.28,29.

Paul said he was teaching these things because the Lord had taught him, 1 Thessalonians 4.15. The Lord Jesus had promised to send the Holy Spirit and He would show us things which will happen in the future. Even the apostles did not know these truths until Paul wrote this chapter.

The first thing we learn is that we who are alive will not go to heaven before those believers who have already died. We see at once that God knows all future events and He knows the order of these events. He knows what will happen first, what will happen next and what will happen last. God has all power and controls everything completely. He has told us these things because He loves us.

THREE SOUNDS

The Lord Jesus went up to heaven and He Himself will come down again. There will be three sounds: we will hear a shout, the voice of an angel, and the sound of God's trumpet, 1 Thessalonians 4. 16. The Lord Jesus will command His people to rise up and meet Him. Michael is called the archangel in Jude 9; he was one of the chief princes who fought for Israel, Daniel 10.13,21; 12.1; Revelation 12.7.

In Israel someone would blow the trumpet to call the people together and command them to move forward, Numbers 10.3,5,6. We can be very sure that every true believer will hear the command of the Lord when He comes for us.

So we see that:

1. The Lord will come down with a shout.
2. Christians who have died will be raised from death.
3. They and living Christians will be gathered to meet the Lord in the air.

THE RAPTURE

It is good to know that dead Christians will rise from death when the Lord comes for all His people. We who are alive will hear the shout and will be caught up with them. The Spirit of God caught Philip away when his work in the desert was finished, Acts 8.39. And God's power is great enough to take up all believers at the same time. We will be caught up:

with all other believers,
in the clouds,
meet the Lord,
in the air, 1 Thessalonians 4. 16, 17

This great event is called the Rapture because we will be caught up by God's power. It is also sometimes called the translation because we will be changed, as Enoch was, Hebrews 11.5. We learn more later about being changed.

The Rapture means that all believers, body, soul and spirit, meet the Lord in the air. It is hard to understand how our bodies could go up to a cloud in the air, but we must remember that God has all power. He can raise people from death, He can raise them to the cloud. He would not raise the bodies of believers from death if only their spirits were to go to heaven; in fact the spirits are in heaven now, with the Lord. Read 2 Corinthians 5.8.

FOREVER WITH THE LORD

What happens next after we meet the Lord in the air? We will be with the Lord forever. This was His desire, John 12. 26; 14.3 and in John 17.24. He prayed that we should be with Him. Christ will be happy to have us with Him and we will be happy to be with Him.

There will be no sin in heaven and we will never sin there. We will see the Lord and be like

Him, 1 John 3.2, and of course cannot sin. When He is in heaven we will be in heaven. When comes to earth, we will come to earth. We will be with Christ forever.

So here in 1 Thessalonians 4 we have this wonderful promise that the Lord Jesus will come for His people and we will be with Him forever. What effect should this promise have on us today? Perhaps we are having a lot of trouble or the men of the world hate us and persecute us. Cheer up! The Lord is coming soon, 1 Thessalonians 4. 18... Some other believers are getting careless and becoming too friendly with the people of this world. This is because they refuse to obey God in their hearts, Romans 12.2. They need to be warned and to keep themselves pure, 1 John 3.3... Other Christians love the Lord and are trying to serve Him. They should try to help those who are in trouble and teach them that the Lord coming back soon...

CHANGED BODIES

Now let us turn to another great chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, m read verses 51 to 54. The main teaching of these verses is that our bodies will be changed when the Lord comes. Paul said this twice. at the end of verse 51 and at the end of verse 52. This change will take place suddenly, in a second, in the time it takes to blink your eye. One minute we will be ordinary men who could be killed, any time and the next minute we will have bodies which can new die. This great change will take place when we hear the last trumpet and the Lord comes.

We have read about God's trumpet in I Thessalonians 4. 16. The Holy Spirit spoke of the last trumpet in I Corinthians 15.52. We have also noted that dead believers will rise first, before we are changed and are caught up to the air. In 1 Corinthians 15 we also learn that death itself will be destroyed, see verses 26 and 54.

TEST YOURSELF

We have carefully studied parts of two great chapters which tell us about the Rapture. Some important truths are found in 1 Thessalonians 4. 13-18; others are in 1 Corinthians 15.51-54; some are in both. You should know where these truths are found so you can teach other Christians about the Lord's return. In the list below you can test yourself by showing where these things are taught. Look up the verses in the Bible if you are not sure.

Put T or C or TC or 0 or X alter each statement, 1 to 15. T means: this is in 1 Thessalonians 4. 13-18. C means: this is in 1 Corinthians 15.51-54. TC means: this is in both chapters. 0 means: that this is true, but is not found in either of these chapters. X means: this is not true.

1. The Lord will come from heaven
2. The Lord wants us to be with Him
3. The shout.
4. The voice of Michael
5. The trumpet will sound
6. Some true Christians love this world and will not hear the Lord's voice when He calls us
7. The dead Christians will rise
8. We will all be changed in a second
9. We will put on a body which cannot die
10. The living Christians will be caught up
11. We will meet the Lord in the air

12. We will see Him and be like Him
13. Only our spirits will go to heaven
14. Victory over death
15. When you die that is the end of everything

Check your answers at the end of the test page.

PLEASE NOTE! DO NOT MAIL THIS TO US

WHEN WILL THE RAPTURE TAKE PLACE?

The Rapture will be a wonderful time for the Lord Jesus and for all believers. When will it be? When will the Lord come? We do not know exactly when the Lord will come, but we believe it will be soon.

The Lord Jesus Himself said He did not know the day nor the hour when He will come. No man knew when the Lord would come, the angels did not know, only the Father knows, Mark 13.32. Later the Lord told His disciples that the Father keeps control of the future, Acts 1.7. However, God has told us many things which will happen in the future after the Rapture, and we believe He is now preparing the world for these things. In chapter 11 we will study a little of what is going on in the world now, things which show that the coming of the Lord is near. Some people have tried to set dates when the Lord will return, but nothing happened. We should wait with patience until the Father's time comes.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

All believers will be very happy when the Lord comes, but some will be happier than others. The Bible tells us that a very serious event will take place soon after the Rapture. This is called the Judgment Seat of Christ, Romans 14. 10-12; 2 Corinthians 5.8-10. We must all stand before the Son of God to be judged by Him. Many Christians work very hard to please the Lord and serve Him well; they will receive great rewards. Other true Christians live in sin and are friendly with the world. They will lose their rewards but not their eternal life, I Corinthians 3.15. When the Lord comes, only true believers will go to heaven and stand before Him at the Judgment Seat of Christ. People who do not believe will be judged at the Great White Throne. We will read about this in Chapter 7.

REWARDS

What will happen at the Judgment Seat of Christ? The Bible speaks of crowns and rewards. Some people will receive a crown of righteousness, 2 Timothy 4.8; others, a crown of glory, 1 Peter 5.4. The Lord Jesus knows all about us; He knows those who have served Him well. Some believers will stand before the Lord and hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," Matthew 25.21,23. These believers will have great joy when they hear these things. Of course the Lord will not speak these words unless they are true. Many Christians waste their time and do nothing for the Lord. They will be saved, but will have no reward, 1 Corinthians 3.15.

Now is the only time to earn these rewards or crowns. It will soon be too late. Give yourself to the Lord right now and ask Him how you can serve Him best.

TEST 1

A PRIMER ON PROPHECY

Choose the correct answer for each question and write the letter a or b or c or an X in front for your answer

1. Whom did Christ tell what He was going to do.
 - a. His enemies.
 - b. His friends.
 - c. All the Jews.

2. Why does God want Christ to return to this world?
 - a. To give men another chance.
 - b. To prove that God wants all men to honour Him.
 - c. To die for the sins of all men.

3. The Lord Jesus promised to come back and this means
 - a. He comes into our hearts when we believe in Him.
 - b. He would send the Holy Spirit to live in the Church.
 - c. He Himself will come again just as He went away.
 - d. He comes when a believer dies and takes him home to Heaven.

- 4 The Lord promised to come quickly. This means
 - a. Soon after He made the promise.
 - b. He was mistaken and after 1900 years He still has not come.
 - c. Suddenly

5. What is the name of the next great event for the Church;
 - a. The Rapture.
 - b. The Tribulation.
 - c. The Millennium

- 6 Where will believers meet the Lord when He comes?
 - a. At Jerusalem.
 - b. At the Judgment Seat of Christ.
 - c. On the clouds.

7. How long will they be with Him?
 - a. Until He comes to earth as King.
 - b. Until the Great White Throne.
 - c. Forever.

8. When Christ comes which will happen first?
 - a. The living believers will be changed.
 - b. Dead believers will rise from death.
 - c. We shall meet the Lord.

9. Which believers will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ?
 - a. Those who have served Him well.
 - b. All believers of this age.
 - c. Those who have fallen into sin.

10. Who will receive rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ?
- All who believe in Christ.
 - Only missionaries and evangelists and Bible teachers.
 - Those who have earned them.

Name:

Questions & Comments:

If I have made corrections that you do not understand, please write me for an explanation

If you do not hear from this test in two days please write inchrist@ca.inter.net

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ANSWERS

Check your answers to the questions on the following pages:

You should have written T after statements 1, 3, 4, 10, 11 because these truths are found in 1 Thessalonians 4. 13-18, but not in 1 Corinthians 15.

You should have written C after statements 8, 9, 14 because they are in 1 Corinthians 15, not in 1 Thessalonians 4.

You should have written TC after statements 5 and 7 because they are in both chapters.

You should have written 0 after statements 2 and 12 because they are true and are found in the Bible, but not in 1 Thessalonians 4 or I Corinthians 15.

You should have written X after statements 6, 13 and 15 because they are not true.

Check

- The head was made of gold which was the most valuable metal in the image.
- The legs were made of iron which is very strong, but the feet were mixed with clay, so they were weak. When the stone hit the feet the whole image was broken.
- The stone was cut out without human hands. This means that no man had cut it out: it must have been God.