

TALK ABOUT 1. What great work (or commission) did the Father give to the Son to do (Gal 4:4)? 2. When the Christian Church is complete, Jesus will come again __ True __ False? 3. Will everyone be ready when Jesus comes again? 4. Will you be ready? 5. What must we do to be ready?

A FINAL WARNING

The writer of Hebrews does not stop with a picture of heaven. He gives all men and women a final and urgent warning: "See to it that you do not refuse Him (the Holy Spirit) who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth (Moses and the apostles), how much less will we (escape) if we turn away from Him who warns us from heaven?" (Heb 12:25).

God calls us by His gospel, that "Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day" (1 Cor 15:3-4).

"A man (and a woman) is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Heb 9:27). But Christ died to take your judgment and mine! Take Him as your Saviour and you will not be judged for your sins. Paul wrote, "There is no condemnation (judgment) for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1).

The gospel call is plain. Trust Jesus as your Saviour now, while He is speaking to you. Do not delay. Confess your sins and turn away from them. God will pardon and deliver you. And He will make you one of His own children. Jesus said, "Him who cometh to Me I will in no way cast out" (John 6:37 KJV).

Jesus Christ is waiting to welcome you!

Call out to Him today and ask Him to save you!

TALK ABOUT 1. How does God speak to men and women today? 2. How do we know the gospel message is true (John 14:6)? 3. Have you shared God's word with your friends? 4. Is it possible to know what is true and what is wrong teaching? How (Matt 7:15-20)?

Manna Publications
1130 Highlands Place, Apt 205
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

5.2.2005 R

Coming in the Clouds

(Jesus' return)



Revelation 1:7-8

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By Fred Morris

To the Reader: Keep your Bible beside you as you read this study. Go slowly. Find the references in your Bible. Ask a friend to study with you. Talk over what you have learned from the study and what God is doing in your life. You will be blessed.

JESUS CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN

At the last great day Jesus Christ will come again. He will come in the clouds to gather His people (Matt 24:30-31; 1 Thess 4:14-18). He wants them to live forever with Him in heaven (John 14:2-3).

Those who are alive on the earth will be “caught up.” They will join the resurrected saints who will rise from the four corners of the earth. They loved God and served Him while they lived on earth and they will live on with Him forever in heaven. This is His promise (John 14::2-3). He will gather His faithful followers from the days of righteous Abel to the very last person who accepts Him as their Lord and Saviour. It will be His glory to have His redeemed people with Him (Col 3:4), and their glory to be in the company of their Lord.

The Lord will awaken their spirits with a “loud command” and a trumpet blast. All will hear His call and they will rise up “to meet Him in the air.” Though their human bodies have turned to dust and ashes, they will spring to life in new resurrected bodies. God will clothe the redeemed spirits of His people with new bodies and they will shine like the sun (Matt 13:43). And the power of God will gather them into the New Jerusalem, the eternal city of God (Matt 8:11; Dan 12:2; Rev 21:1-6).

In his vision John saw this great multitude “wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.” With one voice they sang the victory song, “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Rev 7:9). And all heaven declared, “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ” (Rev 12:10).

TALK ABOUT 1. Did Jesus promise to come again to take those who love Him to heaven (Acts 1:11; John 14:2-3)? 2. Who will God raise at the last great day? 3. Will Christ come to earth or appear “in the clouds” (Matt 24:30)? 4. Will you be there to greet Jesus? 5. Does it matter where our old body is buried? Why? 6. What kind of people ought we to be (2 Peter 3:11)?

SOME FROM EVERY TRIBE

Saints from every tribe and nation and people and tongue will be gathered into heaven. Jesus said, “This gospel of the Kingdom (which He preached)

is the Kingdom which God has been building, the city of the living God. It is a spiritual community of worshipping people, not a place with shape and size as some teach (Rev 21:15-22).

THEN THE END WILL COME

“Then the end will come (the absolute end, the end of world history), when He (Christ) hands over the Kingdom to God the Father, after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power” (1 Cor 15:24 – 25). This will be the end of the Kingdom of God on earth, not the beginning of it as some claim.

God gave Jesus Christ, the Son, a work to do, a commission to be accomplished. The commission the Father gave the Son was to redeem men and women from sin and make them citizens of His Kingdom. Christ’s commission will have been fulfilled when He hands over the Kingdom to the Father.

“He (Jesus Christ) must reign until He (the Father) has put all His (Christ’s) enemies under His (Christ’s) feet.”

TALK ABOUT 1. On the cross Jesus said, “It is finished” or My work is done (John 19:30). What did He mean? 2. The New Jerusalem is the same as the Kingdom of God ___ True ___ False? 3. Who is “the Bride of Christ” (Eph 5:27; Rev 21:9)? 4. Are you a citizen of God’s Kingdom?

MANY WILL NOT BE READY

Peter said the Day of the Lord will come “like a thief “ in the night. Even among believers, only a few will be looking for Christ to return to gather His own to Himself (John 14:2-3).

Jesus said it will be like the days of Noah: “In the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, right 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. This is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man” (Matt 24:38-39). He may have been speaking of those who don’t know Him. But many in our churches are occupied with the things of this world. They still follow the standard of the world. They are busy making money and enjoying themselves. They do not seek the things of God (Matt 6:33).

Because many will not be ready for Christ’s Second Coming, Peter urged believers to “live holy and godly lives” and “make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him (God)” (2 Peter 3:12,14).

He said, “We (believers) are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.”

of New Jerusalem have been forgiven. They are free men and women (Rev 1:5). Judgment for their sins fell on Jesus Christ. He is "Jesus the mediator of a New Covenant" sealed by His own precious blood (Heb 12:24).

The "sprinkled blood" speaks about better things than the blood of Abel. Cain killed his righteous brother. Abel's innocent blood cried out to God from the ground where it had been spilled. It cried out for revenge. But Christ's blood cries out "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

YOU WILL HAVE A NEW BODY

Praise God, He will give each believer a new resurrected body. Early believers wondered what this new body would be like, so they asked Paul, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come" (1 Cor 15:35)? Paul answered with a thorough review of this subject of the resurrection of the body (1 Cor 15:31-49).

Jesus Christ set us an example; He led the way, "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (in death)." He rose from the dead in a new body. We follow in His steps.

The believers will be raised with a resurrected body just as Jesus was raised. The disciples saw Jesus after he rose again from the dead. His body was not limited by time or material things. He came into the upper room when the disciples had the door locked (Luke 24:36). He ate food with them. They could see the marks of the nails in His hands. They knew it was the same Jesus who was crucified. And they saw Him ascend to heaven (Acts 1:9).

TALK ABOUT 1. What did the writer of Hebrews tell us about heaven (Heb 12:22-24)? 2. Who saw Jesus Christ after He rose from the tomb? 3. Was He the same Jesus who died on the cross? 4. How did the disciples recognize Him (John 20:26-29)? 5. Who did the early Christians ask about the resurrection (1 Cor 15:35-44)?

A WEDDING IN HEAVEN

The angel who spoke to John said, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev 21:9).

Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom. He came to earth and gave His life for the Christian Church. He left heaven's glory to win a bride. When the Church is complete, Jesus will come and take her to be with Him forever. And there will be a great celebration in heaven. John called it "the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The Bridegroom will present His bride "a radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph 5:27). The Bride

will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14).

Because all nations will hear, all nations will be represented in that multitude which no man can number standing before the throne of God.

They were wearing white robes and singing in worship, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne..." (Rev 7:10).

The multitude of redeemed men and women boys and girls will be an eternal testimony to God's love and grace. Every mouth will declare: "God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in trespasses – for it is by grace you have been saved..." (Eph 2:4-5).

A GREAT DISTINCTION

Those who love the Lord and worship Him only are different. God commanded it to be so from the beginning. Speaking to Pharaoh of Egypt God said, "I will make a distinction between My people and your people..." (Ex 8:23).

God said His people are chosen or called to be "holy and blameless in His sight" (Eph 1:4). To Israel He said, "Be holy, because I am holy" (Lev 11:45). God repeated this command in the New Testament (1 Peter 1:15-16). He demanded that His people be holy under the Old Covenant and under the New Covenant. Whether we live in the East or in the West, God commands us to live holy lives, bringing our sins to Him daily for cleansing by the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:9).

Satan hates the people of God and seeks to destroy them. Because Satan is "the prince of this world," the world hates the Christian Church and seeks to persecute God's people. Those who love the Lord suffer for their faith, but persecution makes faith grow stronger. Men and women of faith shine as 'lights' in this dark world. Jesus said, "A city set on a hill cannot be hidden," and a true believer's testimony shines brightly and cannot be put out.

Peter wrote to suffering believers, "And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while...make you strong, firm and steadfast" (1 Peter 5:10).

TALK ABOUT 1. Will all nations and peoples hear the message of Christ (Matt 24:14)? 2. Who will take the message to them? 3. Does God tell His people to be different? 4. What did He say about them to Pharaoh of Egypt (Ex 8:13)? 5. What would make them different (Eph 1:13)?

MARKED FOR GLORY

God marks every spirit-born son and daughter. He seals those who believe with His Holy Spirit. Paul said, "Having believed, you were marked in Him

(Christ) with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession..." (Eph 1:13-14). The Holy Spirit marks God's children as His own possession. They are 'God's people!'

We know for sure that God marks His people and He knows us by name. "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and were all given the one Spirit to drink" (1 Cor 12:13). God's people are born again by His Spirit (John 3:5,8). They are a community, a fellowship which the Bible writers call "the Body of Christ."

Paul said, "In this One Body God brings together men who were enemies and makes them to be at peace with each other" (Eph 2:16).

In God's sight "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

God dwelling in us by His Spirit, is glory indeed. But it is only the first instalment of the glory that will be seen in the child of God (Eph 1:13-14). "Christ in you" is the hope of glory, the same thing as the guarantee of our future glory in heaven (Eph 1:14; Col 1:27).

Paul said, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" at the coming of our Lord Jesus (Rom 8:18).

A GREAT SEPARATION

Jesus spoke of a great separation. He said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory...All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats..." (Matt 25:31-36).

No one likes separations – saying goodbye to family or friends can be painful. And when people we love die, we are very sad.

But the separation that cuts our spirits off from God is the most sorrowful of all. That is what happened to Adam and Eve when they sinned (Gen 3:1-7, 24). And that is what Jesus spoke of in the parable of the sheep and the goats.

With regard to Adam's body God said, "for dust you are and to dust you will return." But far worse than physical death, Adam's spirit died. He was cut off from the life of God. "God drove the man out (of the garden in Eden)... and placed an angel with a flaming sword... to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen 3:22-24).

Sin cuts man off from God (Isa 59:2). Adam's spirit 'died' the day He disobeyed God's command. God shut him away from the "tree of life." Adam's sin passed to all of us. We are all sinners because of Adam's sin. God said, "All have sinned and fall short..." (Rom 3:23).

Jesus said the Kingdom of God was prepared for those who love Him "from the creation of the world" (Matt 25:34).

The writer of Hebrews said, "You have come to Mt Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God" (Heb 12:22-24). This is the Christian Church, "the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Col 1:13; James 2:5). It is called "the Jerusalem that is above," so that no one will confuse it with an earthly city by that name (Gal 4:26; Rev 21:1-6).

It is the "city of the living God." God is King there and those who love and serve Him are its citizens. Its citizens are alive forever because the living God has given them everlasting life and they shall never perish (John 5:24).

Heaven's citizens are called "the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven" (Heb 12:23).

The firstborn are a great number of people. Their Lord Jesus Christ led the way in His resurrection and they followed. They are His church, His body. He gathered them from every corner of the earth. The patriarchs of old and the very last person to be saved will be one community in this New Jerusalem (Heb 11:40).

In an around this city are "thousands and thousands of angels in joyful assembly." The angel hosts are our companions now and always will be. They never stop their joyous singing around the throne of God: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty..." (Rev Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8).

The saints of all ages join the angels singing, "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!"

TALK ABOUT 1. What is the 'city' all Christians look for (Heb 11:10)? 2. What will heaven be like (Heb 12:22-24)? 3. What words do the angels sing? 4. Do you worship the Lord Jesus Christ like that now? 5. Paul told the believers at Ephesus to "put off" the old self with its old ways and "put on" the new self, "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:22-24). How can we do this?

THE SPIRITS OF MEN MADE PERFECT

The writer continued to describe heaven: "You have come...to the spirits of righteous men made perfect." They are the citizens of the city – Abel, Moses, Samuel, Rahab, Joshua, Martin Luther. All these were men and women like us, not perfect in this life, but made perfect in heaven.

Their spirits of the saints in heaven are clothed with a new body "so that we would not be found naked" before God (2 Cor 5:1-4).

"You have come to God, the Judge of all men..." All the citizens in the city

Those who heard the prophets and did not repent will be judged. The Queen of Sheba was a stranger to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, "but she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon."

However, there was One who was greater than Solomon standing among them. Yet these proud Pharisees rejected His kind words! There were also strangers who rose up and condemn the generation that heard Christ speak the words of God (Heb 1:1).

Jesus said that His generation would be judged more harshly.

He pointed the finger at the Pharisees. They had the Scriptures which told of Him. They had the Law and the Prophets. They had John the Baptist's testimony, yet they refused to believe. Even the people who repented when Jonah preached at Nineveh would condemn the Pharisees for their unbelief (Luke 11:29-32).

"And books were opened...and the dead were judged according to what they had done" (Rev 20:12). These books may contain a record of the lives of people who rejected Christ.

Some see "the books" as a record of the life, thoughts and deeds of every man and woman. Some suggest they are:

- a) The book of man's conscience (Rom 2:15-16).
- b) A record of all idle words spoken (Matt 12:26).
- c) Books of dead works (Matt 16:27; Heb 9:14).
- d) A record of all deeds, good and bad, for which each person must give an account to God (Rom 14:12).

TALK ABOUT 1. Will every eye see the Judge (Rev 1:7)? 2. When will this happen? 3. We will give an account for the things they have done ___ True ___ False (Rom 14:12)? 4. Who did the Queen of Sheba come to visit? Why did she make that long journey? 5. How should we deal with bad thoughts (2 Cor 10:5)?

WHAT WILL HEAVEN BE LIKE?

Paul took words from the prophet Isaiah when he wrote, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9). He goes on to say, "But God has revealed it to us by His Spirit."

What has God revealed to us about heaven? The Spirit of God directed the writer of Hebrews to give us a thrilling picture of the New Jerusalem (heaven), the Holy city where God 's people will live forever.

Men who had faith in God throughout all ages looked for the "city of God" or a place where God's people would dwell with Him. Abraham looked for "a city whose architect and builder is God" (Heb 11:10).

The tree of life was a picture of Jesus Christ, who gives eternal life to all who believe in Him (John 5:24). Jesus gives everlasting life to all who trust in Him to save them (John 5:24). This is God's promise.

TALK ABOUT 1. How does God mark His people (Eph 1:13-14)? 2. What does the Bible call the Christians (1 Cor 12:13)? 3. What cuts men and women off from fellowship with God (Isa 59:2)? 4. What is the "Tree of life" (Rev 21:1)? 5. Which is the greatest promise in the Bible (John 5:24)? 6. Have you "crossed over" from death to life (John 5:24)?

WE WILL SEE JESUS CHRIST AND BE LIKE HIM

On resurrection day, we will see our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and we will be like Him. Paul wrote, "Just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven" (1 Cor 15:49).

A dear lady said, "I am looking forward to seeing my mother, my brother and sister," and she named other members of the family who had been laid to rest in Jesus. But dear one, our hearts and eyes will be fixed on Jesus Christ. We will stand in awe and wonder gazing at His lovely face.

"Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (Matt 13:43). They will all bear His likeness and glory.

In olden days, God's glory was seen only in visions. Daniel said, "I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen,...His body was like chrysolite, [*a golden jewel*] His face like lightning, His eyes like flaming torches..." (Dan 10:5-6).

John had a vision of the Risen Christ: "His head and His hair were white like wool...and His eyes were like blazing fire...His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance" (Rev 1:14-16).

All these descriptions of the Risen Christ are limited by human understanding and words. Christ's disciples saw their Risen Lord. He appeared to them in His original form as He had been before His death and resurrection (Luke 24:36-40). He chose not to appear to them as Daniel and John saw Him in their visions, since that would have frightened them!

At His coming, the mysteries of iniquity and godliness will be brought into the light. Now we see but dimly, as through a glass, but then we will see as if we were standing face to face with Jesus Christ (1 Cor 13:12).

A FINAL JUDGMENT OF SIN

Jesus told many parables about the great separation that would come at the end of the age (Matt 13:31-43). He spoke often of the Kingdom of God and those who were its citizens. And He spoke of hell where those would be shut out of God's Kingdom of love and light. Jesus would never have spoken of hell if it was only a myth or an idea.

Jesus' words painted vivid images for us. In Christ's own words, Abraham was in the Father's bosom in heaven; the rich man who had no time for God was in hell (Luke 16:19-31). Abraham represented all the people of all time who had faith to believe the Scriptures and live by them (Gal 3:29). The rich man lived for himself. He represented all those who reject Jesus Christ.

Those who are not marked for glory are marked for cursing. And a great gulf separates the two (Luke 16:26).

The spirits of those who have died will be sorted. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of heaven is like a net let down into the sea. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad fish away" (Matt 13:47).

Jesus continued, "This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them (the wicked) into the fiery furnace..." (Matt 13:47-50).

At another time Jesus said, "The Son of Man will send out His angels, to weed out of His Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace..." (Matt 13:41).

TALK ABOUT 1. In this age the 'good seed' and the 'tares or weeds' grow together. Explain what this means? 2. Who plants the 'weeds' among the good wheat? (Matt 13:47-50)? 3. When will the 'weeds' be pulled up? 4. Who will sort the good from the bad (Matt 13:41)? 5. What did Jesus say about hell?

EVERY EYE WILL SEE HIM

On Judgment Day, all eyes will see the Judge. John wrote, "Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him" (Rev 1:7, Zech 12:10). At the sight of His coming, those who had pierced Him will be terrified.

The Jewish leaders rejected Him at His first coming and brought judgment on themselves (John 3:36; Matt 23:38-39). And those who refuse to believe will reject Him to the end (1 Thess 5:2-3; Rev 16:9).

Those who receive Christ as their Saviour will not be judged for their sin. Paul wrote, "There will be no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). The saved ones will not be judged for their sin, Christ already bore that in His own body on the cross. But all Christians will give an account for their deeds done while they are alive (Rom 14:12).

The prophet Daniel saw this great multitude. He saw two groups of people and no more: some had been "awakened to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan 12:2).

Daniel also saw in a vision "the court seated and the books opened." He

saw the Judge and His throne "flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze..." (Dan 7:9).

Jesus Christ, in The Book of Revelation, showed the apostle John the dead, great and small, standing before the throne "and the books were opened" (Rev 20:12). These are the registers kept in heaven.

THE BOOKS WILL BE OPENED

Only God can give life. "He forms the spirit of man within him" (Zech 1). He crafts the body in the womb (Psa 139:13-14). When the body dies, the spirit goes back to God who created it (Eccl 12:7).

When God forms a spirit, He records that life in His "Book of Life." Moses recognized this when he pleaded with God to spare the disobedient people of Israel. Moses prayed, "Please forgive their sin – but, if not, blot me out of the Book You have written" (Ex 32:32).

God answered Moses, "Whoever sinned against Me I will blot out of My Book." Those who reject Jesus Christ to the end will not have a second chance. They will not find their name in God's Book of Life. It will have been erased.

Jesus made this truth very plain when He said to the church at Sardis, "You have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes (they lived holy lives). They will walk with Me, dressed in white...I will never blot out his (or her) name from the Book of Life" (Rev 3:5).

TALK ABOUT 1. Will both saint and sinner see the Judge of all men (Rev 1:7)? 2. Do Christians fear that great day? Why not (Rom 8:1)? 3. If you are a Christian, S.....may condemn you, but Jesus will not. 4. God has everyone's name written in His Book of.....(Rev 20:12)?

EVERY THOUGHT WILL BE LAID BARE

All hearts will be open before the Judge. God said, "Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Heb 4:13). The record of our lives and faith, or lack of it, will reward or condemn us.

Jesus warned the people against the "yeast of the Pharisees" (Luke 12:1-3). This is probably the only time Jesus gave yeast the meaning of something evil. He spoke of their deceit which they hid behind a pious outward show.

"There is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed," Jesus said, "or hidden that will not be made known...what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs." God will judge the thoughts and intents of men's hearts now, in this life and at the judgment.