

=BIBLE PROMISES=

Lesson 11

Bible Promises About Jesus' Return

AIM: to teach my pupils to be ready and watching for Jesus' return from Heaven.

POINT OF CONTACT: Have you looked into your clothes closet and other clothes storage areas lately—especially at what is hanging there that should be stored for next season? Is your wardrobe complete, or will it need supplementing so that you will be appropriately dressed everywhere you go? Have you looked into Heaven's clothes closet lately? Do you have a new garment stored there so that you can go to Him when Jesus comes to keep His appointment with His own?

INTRODUCTION: Last Sunday's promises taught us that a Christian's sorrow can be mingled with joy. Sorrow, for the Christian, someday will vanish, turning to unmixed joy. This statement is based upon the fact that Jesus has gone back to Heaven to prepare for His own to come to join Him there. Jesus told His disciples, "I am going away. You cannot come with Me, but afterwards you will come to Me. While I am gone, I will be preparing for your abode with Me." While Jesus is gone bodily from the earth, He is serving us in Heaven. He is serving as the Intercessor as well as being the Creator of the individual places for each of His children, I Timothy 2:5; John 14:1-3. He is also the welcoming committee to those of His own who die before He comes back from Heaven, Acts 7:55-59; II Corinthians 5:8.

The day that Jesus ascended back into Heaven climaxed 40 wonder-filled days for His disciples. During these days, they were "piecing together" Old Testament prophecies about Jesus' coming to earth from Heaven, His crucifixion and resurrection. They still did not understand it all, and they would not understand until after Jesus had gone and the Holy Spirit would come to dwell within them. It was the Holy Spirit Who called to their remembrances all the words that Jesus had spoken to them and caused them to realize the significance of all the events which were happening around them, John 14:26. On the last day that Jesus was bodily present on the earth, He and His apostles were talking together on the Mount of Olives. Suddenly, Jesus ascended from the earth. His feet left this soil; He went up higher than the height of any mountain range in the world; He was then in the heavens where a special cloud received Him out of their sight. Jesus was gone from view! Acts 1:9-12; Luke 24:50-53. While the apostles stood staring at the place where they had last seen Jesus, two angels appeared to them saying, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Then they moved; they went back into Jerusalem. Jesus had promised and the angels promised that He would return in the same manner as He was seen departing. He would appear again in the same place where they last saw Him—in the clouds. This coming event we call the rapture. (His actual coming again to earth will be to the same place from whence He ascended—the Mount of Olives—seven years after the rapture.) Our lesson for this week mainly contains teachings about Jesus' next appearing from Heaven—the rapture. See John 14:3; Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:16.

I. JESUS WILL DESCEND INTO THE AIR IN THE SAME MANNER AS HE ASCENDED, Acts 1:9-11.

1. Suddenly

- 1) Jesus suddenly left earth and ascended into Heaven. A cloud received Him out of their sight. As soon as Jesus had finished speaking certain words to His apostles, He went up. He had not told them that there would be a certain day that He would ascend back into Heaven. He just left.
- 2) Jesus will come suddenly. His coming will be so sudden that it will be like a flash of lightning—so sudden that no one will have an opportunity to tell anyone about it, Matthew 24:26, 27. The day of His coming from Heaven is not known by anyone except our Heavenly Father, Matthew 24:36; Luke 12:40; I Thessalonians 5:2; Revelation 3:3. The rapture, therefore, is an "unsigned" event—neither signs nor events tell the actual time of His coming.

2. Secretly

- 1) Only His chosen apostles saw Him ascend into Heaven, Acts 1:10-12. Jesus and His apostles were alone on top of the Mount of Olives at the time.

- 2) Only Jesus' chosen ones will be conscious of His return. All saved people will be raptured—caught up—out of the earth. It will happen so fast that no one else will see it happening. It will be a universal event, of course, so that there will be some people on one side of the world sleeping while others on the other side of the world are working, Matthew 24:40, 41; Luke 17:34-36.
3. Audibly
 - 1) His apostles were hearing Jesus speak with them. Then He was taken up from them.
 - 2) Jesus will come with a shout. There will also be the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, I Corinthians 15:52; I Thessalonians 4:16.
4. Visibly
 - 1) The apostles saw Him go. “...While they beheld, he was taken up...”
 - 2) His saved people will see Him in the clouds as He returns. His own look for His coming again, Philippians 3:20. Those who look for His coming shall see Him; He will appear unto them, Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28.
5. Forcibly
 - 1) Jesus was taken up into Heaven. A cloud received Him out of their sight.
 - 2) Our Heavenly Father will send Him. The Father will say, “It is time now to go,” Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:26. He will come in the clouds, I Thessalonians 4:16.
6. Accompanied
 - 1) Two angels were present at the ascension of Jesus. (That is, we are told about two.) There were two men in “white apparel” who spoke with the apostles after Jesus had gone out of their sight. These angels explained to the apostles what had just happened to Jesus, and they gave instructions to them concerning what should be done next.
 - 2) One angel at least will be present at Jesus' coming again. The archangel's voice will be heard, I Thessalonians 4:16.

II. JESUS' OWN WILL ASCEND TO MEET HIM.

1. In a set sequence of events.
 - 1) The dead in Christ will rise first, I Thessalonians 4:15, 16. (Note that the words, “shall not prevent them,” mean “shall not precede them.”) Their souls, which had gone on to be with Jesus at the time of their death, will come with Jesus, II Corinthians 5:6, 8; I Thessalonians 4:14.
 - 2) The Christians who are still alive shall rise next, I Thessalonians 4:17.
2. With new bodies, Philippians 3:21; I John 3:2. The new bodies will be like His glorious body, the one which He put on when He arose from the dead. What was Jesus' resurrection body like? It had flesh and bones, and it bore marks of identification that distinguished it as being Jesus' body, Luke 24:39, 40; John 20:24-29. It bore within it the same personality which it had before—the personality that made a woman recognize the way that her name was spoken as being the same as it had been spoken before He was crucified, John 20:11-16.
 - 1) The dead, decayed, scattered bodies will be changed. They will also be changed into incorruptible bodies—they will never die nor decay again. The eternal bodies, which have not been made with hands, have been prepared for them in the heavens, I Corinthians 15:42, 52-54; II Corinthians 5:1, 2.
 - 2) The bodies of living Christians will also be changed. They will also be changed into eternal bodies which shall never die nor decay, I Corinthians 15:51-54.
 - 3) Jesus will change the earthly bodies. He is the One Who is able to do this, Philippians 3:21. (This is logical; He is the Creator.)
3. For eternity. After the saved and dead and living have joined Jesus in the air, they shall ever be with the Lord! There will be no more separation from Jesus' visible presence, I Thessalonians 4:17.

After the rapture takes place, saved people will be in the air with Jesus for seven years while the Tribulation Period takes place on earth. Then they will come back to earth with Jesus where He will

reign over His kingdom for 1,000 years—this is the period known as the Millennium. There will be some unsaved people on earth, and the Devil will be chained for this period, Revelation 20:3, 6. At the end of this period, the Devil, his angels, and the unsaved will be cast into Hell, and the old earth and the heaven will be destroyed, Matthew 25:31, 32. Christians will then take up their permanent abode with Jesus in their new home, Revelation 21:1-5. This will last forever and forever.

CONCLUSION: The return of Jesus from Heaven may be only as future as the next moment is future. Jesus can return at any time; only those who have asked Him to be their Saviour will join Him in the air. The pupils who have heard this lesson have heard the Gospel message; their last chance to accept Jesus may be the closing moments of the class session this week. With which group of people will they be after the rapture has taken place—with Jesus or still on earth?