

Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond

PRELUDE

The Reward Ceremony Imagined - Good News, Bad News and More Good News

⁹ However, as it is written:

*“What no eye has seen,
what no ear has heard,
and what no human mind has conceived”—
the things God has prepared for those who love him—*

1 Corinthians 2:9

Our Rapture journey is complete.¹ It happened so quickly! We’ve arrived in heaven and stand² before our Savior, Jesus, and our Father, God. We are in new glorified bodies³ with eyes that can truly see Him⁴ for the first time - in His majesty and glory. We are in awe and can barely take it in.⁵

All of the holy angels⁶ and the Old Testament Saints (in temporary bodies suited for heaven) are waiting for us there to witness⁷ this never-before event. It is as if they too are holding their breaths in eager anticipation. If we still had our earthly eyes we couldn’t see any of this, not even the sheer number of people and angels present. But somehow, now we can.

Individually we each approach the throne⁸ and look deeply into the eyes of Jesus. It seems as though everyone else fades from view. They are still there and can see one another and us, but for us in that moment, only Jesus matters.

Jesus asks me, “Do you know where you are?”

“Yes sir,” I humbly reply, “this is heaven.”

“Yes, yes it is. Do you know why you are here?”

“You invited me, Sir. You came and got me and brought me here.”

“You are correct. My Father and I invited you.⁹ In fact, I died so you could come here today.¹⁰ And I, myself, came and got you and brought you here.”¹¹

I lower my eyes, “I know” is all I could mumble.

“Do you know what the purpose of today is?” He asks.

“No, sir. I don’t, but it seems really important.”

“It is. It’s very important. Today is the first day of the next phase of My Kingdom. Today I will review the lives of everyone who made the journey with us.”

A bit uneasy I inquire, “Review our lives? Why, Sir? I thought you died for us, so our sins were already paid for.”

“Indeed, that was the purpose of my death. That has already been settled forever. Today is for a different purpose.¹² Today is the day I reveal the rank of authority and responsibility each of you will have in My Kingdom forever. Today exposes how the determination was made.”

He motions His hand toward an elaborate table with a “pile” of something under a beautiful tablecloth that has my name embroidered on it. As we walk toward the table something like a lightning bolt comes out of nowhere and touches the tablecloth. It bursts into flames and disappears. What remains is a pile of ash¹³ covering something underneath.

Jesus slowly and gently reaches into the ash and begins to pick up small nuggets of gold and silver and some precious stones and lays them carefully aside. As He picks up each one, joy floods His face.

*“What are these things, my Lord?” I ask. “Each one represents a righteous act you did for Me, for My Kingdom, while you lived on the earth. This is your life in Me. These are the rewardables. **These are what I was seeking.**”*

As He picks up each nugget both our minds flash to the event it represents. Some I remember, some I don’t. In a matter of seconds everything “good” I ever did comes to my mind represented there in the nuggets. Many of them I didn’t realize were “worth” anything when I did them. Some of them were nothing more than a smile or kind word that seemed somewhat “natural” at the time. A few were when I held someone as they cried. My sincere and earnest prayers for the good of others were there “in full force” as well.¹⁴ I am thrilled beyond measure. The joy in Jesus eyes is almost more than I can bear. “The more you became like Me, the more holiness¹⁵ you grew in to, the more obedience you showed, the more valuable each one became. This filled my Father and Me with great joy.”

In a few minutes, He stops and gazes at me. With trepidation I ask, “What is the ash¹⁶ that is left, what does it represent?” He pauses; a note of sadness covers His face. “It is precious moments in your life that you wasted, filled with thoughts of that world and your life there¹⁷ rather than here and now with Me. It’s all the opportunities¹⁸ I gave you to follow Me, to obey Me, to glorify Me but you chose not to. You chose short-term happiness, comfort and earthly pleasures. You considered yourself over others.¹⁹ Please make no mistake, you chose.

“Some of them are times when you could have gone just a bit out of your way to honor Me through your actions, but you chose to do something you wanted to do instead. Others are times when you did good things, but you sought recognition, honor or praise for yourself – you chose to receive your reward on earth²⁰ rather than waiting for it here. It could have been a nugget, but you chose the recognition and praise of men instead.”

Regrettably, these events are on full display as well. I close my eyes in shame and sorrow.

He quietly adds, “It saddens Me too, mostly for you.”

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He then resumes sifting through the ash to find a few more small jewels and smiles once again. We serve a gracious and generous Savior. As He does, He continues to pluck out even more tiny nuggets and jewels, adding them to the pile He had begun earlier. My eyes widen in amazement and delight at how He can even see these tiny fragments, but He does and He keeps searching.

“Lord,” I say, “I thought You had already picked out everything truly good I ever did! What are these and where do they come from?”

“These, my dear one, are from the rewards others earned that you did some part in helping them. Don’t worry, I didn’t reduce their reward by giving some to you, I have more than enough to go around.” We both smile.

“Some of these are from support and encouragement you gave to My teachers and pastors,²¹ some are simply random acts of kindness²² that My Spirit packaged together with others to draw someone to me. They are second-hand, third-hand, even fourth-hand rewards. All valuable in their own right. I won’t overlook any of the things you did to bring honor and glory to Me²³ and increase My kingdom. I never overlook obedience to my commands²⁴ for they are evidence of your love for Me and My Father.²⁵ I never overlook the times you willfully and joyfully surrendered to My Spirit.”

This is when He says, “Well done good and faithful servant²⁶ ...”

I hope to hear those words. Don’t you?

Please note that while this is fictional (because I have no more first-hand knowledge about the actual event than anyone else), it has Scriptural foundation (see a list of a [few citations](#) below). For me, trying to picture it fills me with joy, excitement and anticipation. I think we are meant to do that, to savor the idea that we could bring joy to our Lord through our lives here and now. It spurs me on to see what I can do to produce more gold, silver and precious jewels and less ash. In the chapters ahead we will attempt to provide some practical suggestions to help in that endeavor.

Verse Citations for REWARDS CEREMONY IMAGINED

1 - 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

2 - 2 Corinthians 5:10

3 - Philippians 3:21, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 1 John 3:2, 1 Corinthians 15:49

4 - 1 John 3:2

5 - 1 Corinthians 2:9, Revelation 1:17-18

6 - Luke 12:8

7 - Hebrews 12:1-2

8 - 2 Corinthians 5:10

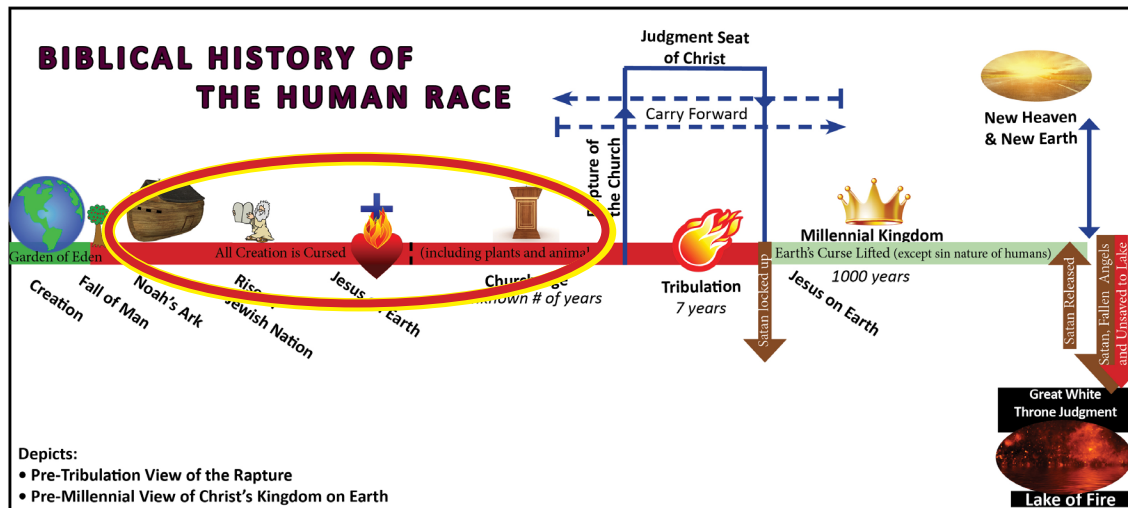
9 - John 3:16, Romans 10:13, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9

- 10- Romans 5:8, Romans 4:25, 1 Corinthians 15:3, Hebrews 9:22
- 11- 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17
- 12- 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15
- 13- 1 Corinthians 3:10b-15
- 14- Matthew 5:48
- 15- James 5:16, Mark 11:24, Romans 8:26-27, Ephesians 6:18, Jude 20, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, John 15:16
- 16- 1 Corinthians 3:12-15
- 17- Matthew 13:20-22
- 18- James 1:1-4
- 19 - Philippians 2:3-4, Romans 15:1, 1 Corinthians 10:24, Galatians 6:2
- 20- Matthew 6:1-4
- 21- 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Galatians 6:6, Hebrews 13:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Acts 20:35, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Luke 6:38
- 22- Matthew 10:42
- 23- 1 Corinthians 6:20, Romans 11:36, Psalm 115:1, Revelation 4:11
- 24- Mark 12:30-31, John 14:15, 1 John 5:3, John 15:10-15
- 25- 1 John 5:3, John 14:15
- 26- Matthew 25:21, 23, Luke 19:17

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See page 179 toolbox for full-page image.

INTRODUCTION

This study is a culmination of three+ decades of prayer, of study, of reading and (literally) copying the Scriptures. By His grace, I was saved in April 1989 – praise His name forever! I am now more than twice the age I was then.

I felt led by the Holy Spirit to reduce to writing some of the wonderful things I learned during this time, to share the joy with you. It is intentionally written in “first person” – I, me, we, us, etc. in hope that you will consider me a part of your small group, as if I am actually there with you discussing the Scriptures and what they mean to us, to humanity. Save a spot for me at the table, will you?

Thank you for allowing me this privilege, M

The free www.BemaBuilders.org booklet entitled ***After the Rapture*** focuses on the **events to occur on the earth during the upcoming 7-Year Tribulation period**. It is my deep desire that you won't experience ANY of the events described in the Bible as “the wrath of God.” The only way that you won't experience it is to be removed from the earth before it begins. That

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could happen one of two ways: (1) you die before it begins, or (2) you are raptured - removed from earth while you are still alive and go to heaven with other "saints" before it begins. This is a Pre-Tribulation viewpoint.

When we first began distribution of the booklet, we were surprised that so few had any true understanding about the Tribulation, the Rapture, the Millennial Kingdom and Eternity (the Eternal Kingdom) as described in the Bible. As a result, they have no knowledge of how to prepare for these events, or that **preparation is necessary and desirable**. The result will be unfortunate, even for those who believe in Christ Jesus as Savior and go to heaven one day.

When thinking about salvation, we primarily focus on what we are "**saved from**" i.e., the wrath of God in the Tribulation period and eternal damnation in hell/ the Lake of Fire. We would do well to contemplate and talk about what we are "**saved to**" equally. For once we have been saved, that can never be lost. Consider the following passage:

*²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who **for the joy set before Him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2*

The passage tells us that Jesus endured the cross **because He knew and thought about the "joy set before Him."** He deemed "the cross" worthwhile to achieve the purpose set for Him by the Father. We would be wise to learn more about our future, allowing it to fill us with joy as we face the trials of this life.

The purpose of ***ALL RISE! Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond*** is to provide Scriptural references to answer questions such as:

- Where am I going when I die?
- What will it be like there?

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- What will I do there?
- How can I prepare for the best life possible when I arrive?

This study is by no means exhaustive or a complete picture of what is to come. It is, by its size, a sample or glance at that time period. There are lots of great books and other resources that can expand your knowledge of the time (era) just ahead. A suggested reading list may be found in the toolbox, see page 179.

I presume you are among the “saints” – the saved ones, believers, the set apart ones.

¹⁰Therefore, believers, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you [be sure that your behavior reflects and confirms your relationship with God]; for by doing these things [actively developing these virtues], you will never stumble [in your spiritual growth and will live a life that leads others away from sin]; 2 Peter 1:10 AMP

If, from time-to-time, you find yourself “lacking” assurance/confidence of your salvation, you would be wise to humble yourself, **renew your submission to His Lordship once again** and **ask for a fresh filling of His Holy Spirit to help you walk/live with Him along the way.** In fact, this is a good policy for ALL of us on a regular basis.

To get the most from this study we recommend you take the time to look up, read and write the Scriptures referred to in each section. **Something unique happens to us** when we take the time and make the effort to soak in the Word of God, meditating on it and **allowing it to change us** into His precious image. The Apostle Paul says,

²“Do not conform to the pattern of this world [age], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:2

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Please make no mistake, this study is for people who are saved (Believers). It will be of no use to anyone who does not believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

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Later in the study, we will discuss this verse in more detail to show **how this works**, I think you may be surprised.

Unless specifically noted otherwise, the use of the word “man” in this study is intended to mean mankind in general, or to mean a person regardless of their gender, that is, “human.”

One last thing, **I claim no special revelation, no visions, nor dreams**, just a desire to accurately explain what the Bible says **as best I understand it**. You may disagree with my understanding or interpretation of some of the Scriptural passages contained in this study. That’s perfectly fine – as long as you read the passages in context, pray about them and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, come to a different conclusion. You’ll do well if you do those things, and nothing will be lost by either of us.

PLAN FOR SUCCESS

This study contains a bit of weekly/daily “homework” which is primarily reading, filling in the blanks of referenced Bible verses and answering a few questions. This is intentional. Something unique happens when we “bathe” ourselves daily in the Word of God. We are both cleansed by it and nourished by it. Even if, in the end, you decide not to do anything different as a result of this study, I hope and believe it will change you (not the study itself, but the daily practice of interacting with the Word of God).

I suggest that you do a few pages a day in preparation for a weekly discussion group meeting. Doing it this way should take less than 30 minutes each day. If that doesn’t work for your schedule, expect to spend about 2 hours each week preparing for a group meeting.

Take the time, make the time, to carefully read the Scriptures asking the Holy Spirit to give you **understanding** and **strength** to obey.

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The study follows the historical timeline of the human race, starting with creation of the world and humanity all the way into the Eternal Kingdom (eternity). The primary (nearly exclusive) focus is on Believers although some mention will be made of non-believers. A Timeline Graph is presented at the beginning of each chapter to indicate the focus of that chapter.

Let's begin.

SETTING THE STAGE

BE A "BEREAN"

You may have heard the (Biblical) expression, "Be a Berean." But what does that mean and how does it apply to us?

¹⁰As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character [more open-minded] than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. ¹²As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men. Acts 17:10-12

Paul and Silas had just been teaching in the city of Thessalonica. It was Paul's practice to start his teaching with the Jews first. In Thessalonica, rather than searching their own Scriptures to see if what Paul was teaching **could be true**, they formed a mob and drove Paul and Silas out of town, then dragged their hosts to the city authorities to condemn them for hosting Paul and Silas. Note that these same Jews pursued Paul and Silas to Berea and agitated the crowds against them there as well.

The author, Luke, chronicled these events in the Book of Acts and commends the Jews living in Berea for **being "open minded"** about Paul's teaching and **then doing the Scriptural research needed to determine the**

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Advice: Be careful what you read, be careful what you listen to, be careful what you say and be especially careful what you sing. Music is a major source of false teaching, and we remember songs much more easily than anything else.

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validity of his teaching. This is the right response to learning related to the Gospel, Jesus Christ, salvation, and the like. [Note the outcome stated: ¹²*As a result, many of them believed,*]

1. **Listen** (read) with an open mind --- but do not accept everything taught on its face value no matter who the (human) teacher is.
2. **Search the Scriptures** to determine the validity and truthfulness of the teaching (especially consider the context of any Scriptures given to support an idea).
3. **Pray, asking the Holy Spirit for His illumination** on the matter. He is the author of the Scriptures¹ and is fully capable of showing us what He means by what is recorded there. And, in my opinion and experience, He delights in doing so. It is one of the reasons He was sent to believers for this age.²

Don't trust me - be a Berean!

the primary purpose
of this study

¹ ¹⁶*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

² ¹⁶*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate ^[A]to help you and be with you forever— John 14:16*

^[A]Advocate = Paracletos, one called alongside to help, or Comforter, Helper, Intercessor



PIVOTAL POINTS IN HUMAN HISTORY:

GETTING TO TODAY

To begin let's consider some pivotal points in human history from a Biblical perspective. Refer back to the graphic on page 1 and in the toolbox (see page 179) as you follow along.

Read and write the following verses (or fill in the blanks), **praying and mediating** as you do. Ask for wisdom, understanding and the power provided by connection with the author, the Holy Spirit.

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1. God created the heavens, the earth and humanity:

Copy Genesis 1:1 here:

Fill in the blanks of these verses:

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26-27

⁷Then the Lord God formed a man^[a] from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became _____ . Genesis 2:7

[a] The Hebrew for man (adam) sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for ground (adamah); it is also the name Adam

2. Sin entered the human race, mankind "fell" and was banished from the Garden of Eden: [Read and summarize Genesis 3 in a few sentences here.]

3. The nation of Israel was established through Abraham, Issac and Jacob (God later renamed Jacob Israel):

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Abram/Abraham:

²⁷This is the account of Terah's family line. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot. Genesis 11:27

¹The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. ²"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:1-3

Issac:

³Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. Genesis 21:3

Jacob/Israel:

²⁴When the time came for her to give birth, there were _____ in her womb. Genesis 25:24

¹⁰ God said to him, "Your name is Jacob but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel" So he named him Israel. Genesis 35:10

4. Jesus (Yeshua) was born:

⁴So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was _____. ⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and she _____ to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. Luke 2:4-7

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- lived a sinless human life and died on the cross to pay the debt to the Father for the sins of the world

²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin^[a] for us, so that _____ we _____ the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21 [The "Exchanged Life"]

^[a]Or be a sin offering

- was resurrected

⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen _____ and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will _____. ' Now I have told you." Matthew 28:7

- returned to heaven from where He had come

⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky [heaven] as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

¹¹"Men of Galilee," they said, "Why do you stand here _____ into the sky [heaven]? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back _____ you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11

- promised He would prepare a place for His people and return to get US one day – note this is NOT all humanity, just "His people." His **offer** of forgiveness of sin through his death/sacrifice **is to all humanity**, but only the ones who **accept** His grace and mercy will be invited to be with Him one day.

²My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. John 14:2-3

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Note what He is saying and what He is not saying. **He is not saying that heaven is our permanent home, He is our home** – wherever He is, is our home. He is not staying in heaven; He is returning to the earth. There are great implications to this – we are like an extension of Him **to be wherever He is, to work wherever He works.**

5. The “Age of Grace or the Church Age” began the day of Pentecost that same year (**said to be May 25, A.D. 33**).

⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.” Acts 1:4

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues [languages that were foreign to them] as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:1-4

We have been living in what is known as the “The Age of Grace or The Church Age” from that date until now. It is important to understand this and to know how incredibly blessed we are to live in this age. Let’s take a closer look at what this means.

The Greek word translated in English Bibles for **church** is ekklesia which literally means “a calling out.” According to Strong’s Dictionary: “people called out from the world and to God, the outcome being the Church (the mystical body of Christ) - i.e., **the universal (total) body of believers whom God calls out from the world and into His eternal kingdom.**” This is important to remember when praying for “the church.”

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I doubt many of us actually think of “church” this way, nor have we thought of ourselves as part of a bigger group that **God calls out from the world into His eternal kingdom.**



Have you thought about this – do you think about it when (if) you go to church regularly?

Jesus makes a declaration to His disciples in Matthew 16 that says He (Jesus) will build His church based on a revelation (a revealing) **the Holy Spirit will give** to people about Who He (Jesus) is. [Note that this is a critical part of salvation.]

¹⁵“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter [Petros] and on this rock [bedrock] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Matthew 16:15-18

Just to be clear, Jesus asked them (the disciples) who they thought He (Jesus) was. Peter replied that He is “the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed, the Son of the living God.” Jesus congratulated Peter on knowing this because He (Jesus) knew that **the Father had revealed this truth to him** (Peter) otherwise he **could not have known it**. Peter didn’t learn this on his own – and neither can we. **The Holy Spirit must reveal this truth to you and to me;** it is a spiritual truth that can only be learned spiritually (not intellectually or emotionally). We will discuss this in greater detail in the section about the relationship between evangelism and intercessory prayer.

Some interpret Jesus’ statement to mean that He will build His church on Peter. But He doesn’t say, “I’ll

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build it on you, Simon/Peter,” He says, on THIS. “This” is a revelation given to Peter – not Peter, himself. Just a point of clarification.

So “marry” this with the true definition of “church” as shown prior. On this bedrock (**foundational truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit**), Jesus is right now (in the Church Age) **building His eternal kingdom**. If we are true “believers,” we are supposed to be part of this building process – **an active part**. This important fact is often overlooked by believers and teachers alike. **There will be unfortunate eternal consequences to overlooking this important fact.**

**EVENTS YET TO OCCUR:**

1. The Rapture of the Church
2. The 7-Years of Tribulation (The Wrath of God)
3. The 75-day transition period
4. The Millennial Kingdom
5. The Final Battle of Good and Evil
6. Establishment of the Eternal Kingdom (The New Heaven and New Earth)

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UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION:

1. What is your level of understanding on the following topics?

Discuss this with the other group members to determine where you stand and what you would like to learn together.

	Nothing at all	Very Little	Some	Quite a Bit	Expert
The Rapture of the Church					
The Judgment Seat of Christ (Bema)					
Rewards Jesus wants to give His followers (including the prospect of losing some of them)					
What Jesus expects of believers					
What difference our present lives (behavior) will make for us in the future					
The Millennial Kingdom					
The Eternal Kingdom					

2. How often do you routinely read the Bible? Are you satisfied with this? Yes No

	Check one:
()	Daily
()	Once a week
()	Once a month
()	Occasionally
()	Never
()	Other (define) →

3. What is one thing you learned in this first chapter that could be useful to you in the future?

4. What will you do with that information (be specific)?

