Essential Doctrines

Part 6 — Death, the Rapture & the Lord's Day (Lessons 27–30)

A 4-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

Lessons 27–30 close Keith Blades' Essential Doctrines series with what he calls "the sixth and the final of the six essential doctrines": "physical death, the rapture, and the Lord's Day", introduced by Paul's "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren" (I Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11). Keith takes the three issues in the order they come: where the soul and spirit goes at physical death; the rapture resurrection ending this dispensation of grace; and the Lord's day, beginning simultaneously — which we need not be written to about, because we aren't going to be here to go through it.

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Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
L27	Physical Death, the Rapture, and the Lord's Day — I Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:2: Essential Nature, Attacks, and Physical Death Defined
L28	Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord — I Thessalonians 4:13–15; Luke 16; Psalm 16; II Corinthians 5; Philippians 1; I Corinthians 15
L29	Our Mystery Resurrection and the Last Trump — I Thessalonians 4:14–18; I Corinthians 15:20–57; Jeremiah 25; Psalm 47: the Timing of the Resurrection
L30	Delivered from the Wrath to Come — I Thessalonians 5:1–11; II Thessalonians 2:1–8: No Need of the Times and the Seasons

Lesson Summaries

L27

Physical Death, the Rapture, and the Lord's Day *I Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:2: Essential Nature, Attacks, and Physical Death Defined*

The Sixth and Final Essential Doctrine

- This is the sixth occurrence of Paul's unique expression introducing an essential doctrine; the passage dealt with primarily is I Thessalonians 4:13 down through verse 11 of chapter 5, taken in four lessons
- Physical death, the rapture, and the Lord's Day are three issues "wrapped up

into one package"; Keith takes them in the order they come in the passage

Three Issues in I Thessalonians 4–5

- "them which are asleep" are members of the church, the body of Christ, that have died; verse 17, being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, is the rapture concept
- "the times and the seasons" (5:1) concern the resumption of God's program with Israel and the coming of the day of the Lord; there is a coming of the Lord associated with both programs, and it is essential to keep them distinct
- The goal of the satanic policy of evil is not to get Christians to throw their Bibles away but to get them back in Israel's program

"that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope"

- The issue is not that you sorrow not — when physical death becomes an issue to a Christian, the sorrow is genuine — but that you sorrow not even as others that have no hope
- Without the doctrine a Christian has only human viewpoint, no different than an unbeliever, or a false doctrine producing worse results than ignorance; with it, the sorrow is mitigated by joy that overcomes it

The Blessed Hope Kept Blessed

- The doctrine makes sure our blessed hope, the rapture, is as blessed as God designed it to be; in Titus 2 the Lord's coming for us at the end of this dispensation is called the blessed hope
- Our looking is different from the looking the Lord speaks about in the gospel accounts; we are not watching the signs of the times or events on a time schedule

Commonly and Favorably Attacked

- Keith says this doctrine is "commonly and favorably" attacked by the policy of evil; some Thessalonians were taken in by an extremely clever tactic — a counterfeit epistle of the Apostle Paul
- It was attacked in the churches in Ephesus — Hymenaeus and Philetus said the resurrection is past already — and at Corinth the doctrinal corruption began with the doctrine of physical death
- Successfully attacked, these doctrines act like a lever and a wedge; Keith says, "They're opposing themselves", and "you're your own worst enemy when you don't get yourself educated like God tells you to"

A Working Definition of Physical Death

- Any death is a separation from something that gives it life; physical death is the body being without the spirit — when the soul and spirit separates from the body
- Peter, writing to the remnant of Israel, describes his own coming physical death as putting off his tabernacle — not a building or a tent, but his body
- The present body is fit for the soul; the body we will have in resurrection at the rapture is going to be fit for the spirit
- Physical death is not the soul and spirit ceasing to exist; it's the body that has no animation — the soul and spirit still does

L28 Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord

I Thessalonians 4:13–15; Luke 16; Psalm 16; II Corinthians 5; Philippians 1; I Corinthians 15

"we which are alive *and* remain"

- This lesson and two more complete the sixth of the six essential doctrines, which begins with what takes place at physical death and proceeds to what takes place at the rapture
- "alive *and* remain" contrasts us with those who died in Christ: their body returned to the dust awaiting resurrection, but their soul and spirit didn't hang around here — they are not ghosts
- There is a particular place designated for the soul or spirit, depending on whether it is justified or not — and a dispensational thing to understand about where it has gone

Before the Cross: Luke 16

- This is no parable: the Lord cites two individuals the Pharisees knew; Lazarus was a justified man in God's program, while the rich man believed the Pharisaical doctrine
- Abraham's bosom is not the third heaven but a compartment down in hell in the heart of the earth; that lower part of the earth is divided into two sections, with a great gulf between them — the shaft of the pit
- Justified went to Abraham's bosom, unjustified to the torment section; either way the soul and spirit went someplace, with a form to it, reserved there until a resurrection
- This was all before the battle on the cross, before the spoils of the victory of Christ as Israel's Redeemer began to be experienced

Psalm 16: Not Left There

- When David died he went to the comfort section, Abraham's bosom, but knew he wouldn't be left there; his release from hell would be based on what the Holy One of Israel would do
- It is the body that sleeps in the grave waiting for resurrection, not the soul or spirit

At Home in the Body, Absent from the Lord (II Corinthians 5)

- When a member of the Body of Christ dies during this dispensation of grace, the soul and spirit goes to a destination commensurate with the spoils of that victory
- The earthly house being dissolved is what takes place at physical death; at the rapture resurrection we go from an earthly house to a heavenly house — a body fit to exist out there
- Right now we are at home in the body and absent from the Lord — where we are supposed to be; if physical death takes place before the rapture, the soul and spirit goes present with the Lord

Paradise: a Locale in the Third Heaven

- In Philippians 1 Paul, his course just about over, speaks of the gain of death: the soul and spirit departs the body and this earth to be with Christ in the third heaven
- Paradise is not just another name for the third heaven but a particular locale in it — where a member of the Body of Christ goes at death

Reuniting and the Five Changes

- There will be a reuniting of soul, spirit and body, and of separated members of the Body of Christ, never to be separated again — far better than the original togetherness
- In I Corinthians 15 Paul breaks the changes into five categories; those alive

when this dispensation ends get them without physical death; they include corruption to incorruption and the fifth, climactic change to a body fit for the heavenly place

L29

Our Mystery Resurrection and the Last Trump *I Thessalonians 4:14–18; I Corinthians 15:20–57; Jeremiah 25; Psalm 47: the Timing of the Resurrection*

We Shall Not Prevent Them (I Thessalonians 4:14–17)

- The concern now is the timing of the resurrection: when the Lord returns for us, those who died in Christ throughout this dispensation of grace are resurrected at that time
- Not preventing them means we don't go ahead of them and get things in advance; without the resurrection we would get a glorified, immortal body before they did
- This coming and this resurrection are part of the revelation of the mystery committed to Paul, not found in the prophetic scriptures — so he says "by the word of the Lord", not "As it is written"

The Order of the Resurrections (I Corinthians 15:20–28)

- Because of evil communications affecting the Corinthians, Paul shows both the reality of the resurrection and a prescribed order of resurrections; Christ the firstfruits is the first
- "they that are Christ's at his coming" is not His coming at the end of this dispensation of grace, but at the end of the day of the Lord, when He establishes the kingdom
- Paul can't prove the resurrection by asking the Corinthians to find in the Scriptures a resurrection that isn't in their pages yet; he proves it must take place, or the Lord Jesus Christ can't fulfill the Davidic Covenant — and God would be shown a liar

"Behold, I shew you a mystery" (I Corinthians 15:50–57)

- Since corruption does not inherit incorruption, the body has to be changed; a resurrection of the dead in Christ has to take place for the inheritance to be ours
- What God hadn't spoken about was this dispensation of grace and a coming of Himself as He concludes it, with a resurrection; in "We shall not all sleep", "We" is not all men
- All of us in this dispensation of grace will partake of the fivefold changes, and we get the same benefits promised to Israel from that redemptive work — death destroyed, the grave swallowed up in victory

"at the last trump"

- The last trump is not last in a series of trumps — a common mistake, going to the Book of the Revelation — but the announcement of the end
- We are the ones upon whom "the ends of the world are come"; this dispensation of grace was brought in against the backdrop of the readiness for the day of the Lord's wrath to begin
- When the Lord ends this dispensation of grace, He simultaneously announces the beginning of His day; the last trump is the end of His long-suffering and grace to the world

A Shout, the Archangel, the Trump of God

- The three concepts of I Thessalonians 4:16 are familiar in God's program with Israel and all tied to the Lord's day of wrath — not Sunday, but the day of the Lord
- Jeremiah 25:30 is the commencement of the Lord's day; it starts with a shout like a war cry and ends with that shout of victory (Psalm 47)

Comfort One Another

- Understanding these details is the primary comfort Paul gives to assuage grief; in grief and sorrow a wedge of contrary doctrine can easily be driven in, so have the sound doctrine settled beforehand

L30

Delivered from the Wrath to Come *I Thessalonians 5:1–11; II Thessalonians 2:1–8: No Need of the Times and the Seasons*

Delivered from the Wrath to Come

- By the Lord's coming for us we are delivered from the wrath to come: the dead in Christ resurrected, those alive and remaining changed and caught up together to meet the Lord in the air
- The end of this dispensation of grace and the beginning of the Lord's day, with the resumption of His program with Israel, are "simultaneous events"
- From the air the Lord conducts His day of wrath until He returns at its end, then physically takes up His residence on this earth and reigns as Israel's king in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant
- Every moment is a moment of grace; our conduct ought to reflect that long-suffering and grace could stop at any moment

"ye have no need that I write unto you"

- The topic is what takes place after the rapture: the resumption of God's program with Israel and the times and seasons of the Lord's Day — the fine details of the progression on the time schedule
- We have no need to be written unto because we are not going to be here; the times and seasons are written to the nation of Israel as a whole and particularly the remnant of Israel
- They are given provisions to make it through, places of protection and a course of action; being written to gives a calendar on which to recognize the progression of the Lord's day

Acts 1, Matthew 24 and the Revelation

- In Acts 1 they understood the program is the restoration of the kingdom, the goal of the Lord's day; it was not for them to know the times or seasons
- In Matthew 24 the Lord takes Daniel 11 and 12 and sets forth the times and the seasons; the book of the Revelation sets them forth like a daily newspaper for the remnant of Israel

Children of the Day, Not Appointed to Wrath

- Paul contrasts the time in which we live with the time after we're gone; we are children of light belonging to the Lord and children of the day
- "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation" — deliverance from the wrath; Paul knows this doctrine is going to be attacked

Shaken in Mind (II Thessalonians 2:1–5)

- "our gathering together unto him" is the rapture, resurrection issue; contrary doctrine came in the guise that Paul was now teaching it, even through a

counterfeit letter as from Paul

- The falling away is not a reference to the rapture; in Paul's day it applied first and foremost to a political falling away, out of which comes the revelation of the man of sin
- When Israel sees it, they'll know "the fifth installment, the fifth course of punishment is underway"; it is set forth in Daniel 11, and the Lord refers to the same things in Matthew 24

What Withholdeth: the Mystery of Iniquity

- Keith says "the mystery of iniquity is a reference to what's going on in this dispensation of grace": instead of the prophesied day of His wrath, God responds with long-suffering and grace and the formation of the one new man
- God is the one withholding, by what He is doing in forming the one new man; not until He takes him out of the way will the Lord deal with that other man — "until he be taken out of the way" is the rapture

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

The Lord's Coming for Us vs. His Coming at the End of His Day

Keith says there is a coming of the Lord associated with both programs, and it is essential to keep them distinct; the rapture resurrection that ends this dispensation of grace is completely distinct from the Lord's coming for the resumption and fulfillment of Israel's program. Rightly dividing, recognizing the two programs, is the key to keeping them distinct; when that doctrine is successfully attacked, members of the Body of Christ slide back into Israel's program as on a greased runway. When the Lord ends this dispensation of grace He simultaneously announces the beginning of His day; Keith calls them "simultaneous events".

The Order of the Resurrections vs. Our Mystery Resurrection

The prescribed order of resurrections in I Corinthians 15:20–28 wasn't a mystery; with "Behold, I shew you a mystery" Paul shows something God hadn't spoken about. Our resurrection and the Lord's coming for us are not found in the prophets or spoken by the Lord in the gospel accounts; they are part of the revelation of the mystery committed to the Apostle Paul.

Before the Cross vs. This Dispensation of Grace

Before the cross all justified Israelites went to Abraham's bosom, a compartment of hell in the heart of the earth; that was right for that time, but it is not going on with us today. We receive the benefits of the redemptive work according to the mystery of Christ; when a member of the Body of Christ dies, the soul and spirit goes present with the Lord, to paradise in the third heaven.

Going Through the Lord's Day vs. Delivered from It

The only people who need to be written to about the times and seasons are those going through it — Israel, with provisions; we are delivered from it by the Lord's coming for us at the end of this dispensation of grace. What God is doing in this dispensation of grace withholds Israel's program from being resumed; the one new man, the Body of Christ, stands in stark contrast to the one satanic man, the man of sin.

Key Scripture References

Psalm 16:8–11	David's release from hell based on what the Holy One of Israel would do
Jeremiah 25:30	The commencement of the Lord's day: He roars and gives a shout
Luke 16:19–26	Before the cross: Abraham's bosom, a compartment of hell in the heart of the earth
Acts 1:6–7	Not for them to know the times or seasons
I Corinthians 10:11	We are the ones upon whom the ends of the world are come
I Corinthians 15:20–28	The prescribed order of resurrections, tied to the Davidic Covenant
I Corinthians 15:42–49	The five categories of changes at the rapture resurrection
I Corinthians 15:50–57	Our mystery resurrection: we shall all be changed at the last trump
II Corinthians 5:1–8	Earthly house dissolved; absent from the body, present with the Lord
II Corinthians 12:2–4	Paradise: a particular locale in the third heaven
Philippians 1:21–24	At physical death a member of the Body of Christ departs to be with Christ
I Thessalonians 4:13–18	Sorrow not as others that have no hope; the resurrection and rapture; comfort one another
I Thessalonians 5:1–11	No need to be written to about the times and seasons; not appointed to wrath
II Thessalonians 2:1–8	Shaken in mind; the falling away is not the rapture; "until he be taken out of the way" is the rapture
Titus 2:11–13	The Lord's coming for us called the blessed hope