

EYES TO THE SKIES

The Story of Hope

Lessons 36-38

How are we running the race of our lives? God wants us to run with our heads up, looking up and out to the next marvelous chapter of His Story of Hope.

In the Upper Room, Jesus stunned the disciples when He told them He was returning to the Father. But He comforted them in two ways. First, He assured them it was to their advantage He leave; He would send the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower them to *reach the nations*. Secondly, He promised He would return and bring them home to heaven to be with Him.

JESUS' RETURN FOR BELIEVERS

John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

God's heart throughout His Story of Hope is to be with us. Before the Fall, He walked with Adam & Eve in the Garden. Rather than reject us after the Fall, God pursues us. He provides a way for our sin to be covered by the blood of innocent animals so that He can live in our midst in the Tabernacle and Temple. He provides the Lamb of God Who to take away our sin so now His Spirit can live in us. Jesus' promise to take us home is the ultimate fulfillment of God's desire to be with us and we with Him.

Jesus made four promises:

- There are many rooms (dwelling places) in heaven (my Father's house).
- I will prepare a place for each of you.
- I will come again and take you to myself.
- You will be with Me where I am (my Father's house).

Jesus will fulfill His promises through an event called the *Rapture* (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

At the *Rapture*, the souls of deceased believers will be united with their resurrection bodies.

Believers alive at the time of the *Rapture* will be changed and then caught up to meet the Lord after the resurrection of deceased believers.

We don't know the day or hour of the *Rapture*. But we do know it happens before Jesus returns.

JESUS' RETURN AS KING

Revelation 19:11-19; 20:1-6

After taking us to heaven at the *Rapture*, we will come back with Jesus when He returns to defeat His enemies and establish His kingdom here on earth. From many prophecies in both the Old & New Testaments in addition to Revelation we can be confident of these three things:

- Jesus will return to earth a second time.
- Jesus will be accompanied by the armies of heaven – believers gathered at the *Rapture*.
- Jesus will defeat the Antichrist (Beast) and all those opposed to Him.

One of the unique characteristics of Jesus' Kingdom will be the absence of Satan. From the Fall til now, Satan is the *ruler of this world* (John 12:31) and the *prince of the power of the air* (Eph. 2:2). The world fell under Satan's dominion when Adam & Eve listened to his voice rather than God's. One of the main goals of God's Story is to restore dominion over the earth to mankind through the God-Man, Jesus Christ. Jesus will fulfill God's promise in Genesis 3:15 to crush Satan.

The crucifixion and resurrection were the beginning of Jesus bruising (crushing) the Serpent's head. The end result of Jesus' Kingdom will be to complete Satan's crushing. The first thing Jesus will do is bind Satan incarcerating him in the Abyss for the duration of the kingdom (Rev. 20:1-6).

Satan will be bound one thousand years. He will be released and will mount a final rebellion.

SATAN'S FINAL DOOM

Revelation 20:7-10

One thing the Messianic Kingdom will prove is the wickedness of the human heart. Though Satan is bound and absent from the Kingdom, citizens born during the Kingdom will still possess a sin nature, they will still need to put their faith in the blood sacrifice of Jesus. Even though they live under the righteous, wise and loving government of Jesus and His servants, the last generation of unregenerate citizens will embrace Satan's lies and join his force in a military strike against Jesus, Jerusalem and Jesus' followers.

Like Sodom and Gomorrah, God will rain down fire on His enemies. Satan's reign of terror will end. His crushing will be complete in the lake of fire.

This is our horizon: the *Rapture*, the *Kingdom* and the *Crushing of Satan*. We need to run with our heads up. We need to heed the words of Peter in 2 Peter 3:14-18.

2 Peter 3:14-18 (ESV)

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. ¹⁵ And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. ¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

For further details visit our Website at www.gccramona.com or App, "Grace Community Church Ramona"

Ramona Pregnancy Care Clinic – fill your *Changelopes* and return at RPCC table on patio!

Men's Breakfast, Saturday, Feb. 3rd, 7:30am. Signup on patio, app or website. \$10.

Baby Dedication Informational Meeting – Sunday, February 18th, 10:15, Conference Room.

Grace Family Desert Trip – March 2-4, register via app or website. Contact Joe Lacorte or Ron Serabia.

Ladies Bible Study – book of *James* – begins Thursday, Feb. 1st, 9:30A, Room. 2.

Adult Classes Starting:

<i>I Am N</i>	Feb. 18 – Mar. 25th, 8:30AM, Conference Room.
<i>Peacemakers</i>	Feb. 18 – April 22nd. 10:15AM, Room 1.
<i>Parenting</i>	Feb. 18 – May 20th, 4:00PM, Room 1.
<i>Tools for Studying the Bible</i>	Feb. 18 – April 29th, 8:30AM Room 1