



Personal Eschatology

Future Events Sunday School
12 May 2024

Introduction

- During the spring of 56AD Paul leaves Ephesus after a riot by the silversmiths (Acts 19:23-41). He plans to collect an offering for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem, “for if the Gentiles have shared in their (Jewish apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists) spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things” (Romans 15:27). He is traveling to Troas to meet Titus and receive news about the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 2:13) and then continue on his way to Macedonia (Acts 19:21, 20:1). However, he did not meet Titus and so he anxiously went on to Macedonia fearful for Titus’ safety (2 Cor. 7:5-6). “There he met Titus who brought good news about the Corinthian church as a whole and bad news about a group there opposed to Paul. From Macedonia, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians. Paul then visited Corinth during the winter of 56-57AD. What concerned Paul was the presence of false teachers there who claimed to be apostles. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to defend the authenticity of his apostleship and message.”

Paul's Third Missionary Journey



Serving Christ

- “Paul knew well what it was to suffer in ministering for Christ. His distress at not finding Titus in Troas had been a part of that suffering. Remembering that painful experience (2 Cor. 2:12-13) and God’s provision of comfort (7:5-6) touched off this intervening meditation (in 2:12-7:4) on the greatness of the New Covenant ministry. The ministry triumphed in Christ (2:12-3:6), was glorious because of the ministry of the Spirit (3:7-18), and received its power from God (4:1-15). Now Paul turned to another aspect of this ministry, its eternal perspective.”

Hardships Prepare an Eternal Glory

- “Paul had no rest when he went to Troas since Titus was not there. Situations like this reminded Paul of his mortality (2 Cor. 4:11). But God had given him this ministry and God—the triumphant Son (2:14), the glorious Spirit (3:18) and the powerful Father (4:7) was at work in it. God was also the assurance of his resurrection (4:14). Because of all this, Paul did not lose heart even though outwardly he was wasting away (4:8-12).
- “While he grew weaker physically, he experienced the renewing work of the Holy Spirit day by day. He was becoming more like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). God uses suffering for transforming, renewing (1 Pet. 4:1, 13-14). Paul compared the sufferings he had experienced (2 Cor. 11:23-29) to light and momentary troubles or pressures or hardships. These were nothing compared to the eternal glory that would be his in Jesus’ presence. Though his hardships were “far beyond” his ability to endure (2 Cor. 1:8), Paul said his coming glory far outweighs them all.

From: David K. Lowery, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, 2 Corinthians*, 1983, 564-565.

An Eternal Perspective

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor. 4:16-5:10).

Eternal Perspective—Part I

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” (2 Cor. 4:16-5:8).

The Earthly Body, The Resurrection Body

- “The world and its present sufferings are passing away (1 Cor. 7:31). What is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal. The temporary will be replaced by a “glory that will never fade away” (1 Pet. 5:4), “an eternal glory in Christ” (1 Pet. 5:10). As believers in Christ we should look on what is eternal.
- Paul had explained that his body was wasting away (2 Cor. 4:16) and now he compared his body with a worn-out tent soon to be destroyed. The Lord Jesus had lived / tented among us (John 1:14). We should maintain the eternal perspective FOR the earthly tent which is our house is torn down (2 Cor. 5:1).
- “An earthly body is temporary; but a heavenly body is eternal like a building from God, a house not built by human hands (see also Jesus’ description of his own resurrection body as a temple not made by man (Mark 14:58). The resurrection body is raised an imperishable body (1 Cor. 15:42) and so WE KNOW that we have a building from God not made with human hands.

Two Conditions

- Because of our suffering, we groan longing to be clothed with our heavenly body (2 Cor. 5:2). When we receive our heavenly bodies, all such groans and burdens will be replaced by laughter and triumphant rejoicing (Luke 6:21; 1 Cor. 15:51-55). For Paul his present mortal life was like nakedness, marked by humiliation and deprivation. He did not want to focus on a tent when an eternal home awaited him (2 Cor. 17-18).
- Some commentators see a connection with an intermediate state: dead believers are without bodies while awaiting their resurrection bodies or dead believers receive an intermediate body that differs from a resurrection body. These views suggest that Paul wanted to live until the return of Christ so he would not experience an intermediate body. These views lack support since Paul wrote of only two conditions—the decaying outer man and the daily renewing of the inner man (2 Cor. 4:16). Paul describes two bodies: being in a mortal earthly tent and unclothed and yet possessing an immortal heavenly body (2 Cor. 5:4) without any intermediate steps.

Being Confident and Encouraged

- Our present condition of fading mortality, however difficult it may be, occurs according to God's design and sovereignty. Ordinary mortal people are like jars of clay which display God's all-surpassing power (2 Cor. 4:7). God has begun the process of transformation that culminates in a heavenly body and perfect Christlikeness for each believer in Christ. The security or pledge of this transformation is the Holy Spirit whose presence guarantees the completion of God's gracious salvation (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 4:30). With this perspective, Paul could be confident (2 Cor. 5:6) and encouraged (4:1). He lived in light of eternal rather than temporary conditions, he lived in obedient trust in God's word despite the hardships that come with obedience (2 Cor. 11:23-29). If he had a choice, he would have taken the opportunity to depart the earthly life of living in a tent and live at home with the Lord (Phil. 1:21-23). But the constraints of his commission as a servant of Jesus Christ caused him to press on (Phil. 1:24) and to please God during his life in a human body and continuing to please God when he received his heavenly body.

Eternal Perspective—Part II

- So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor. 4:16-5:10).

Evaluation of Believers in Jesus Christ

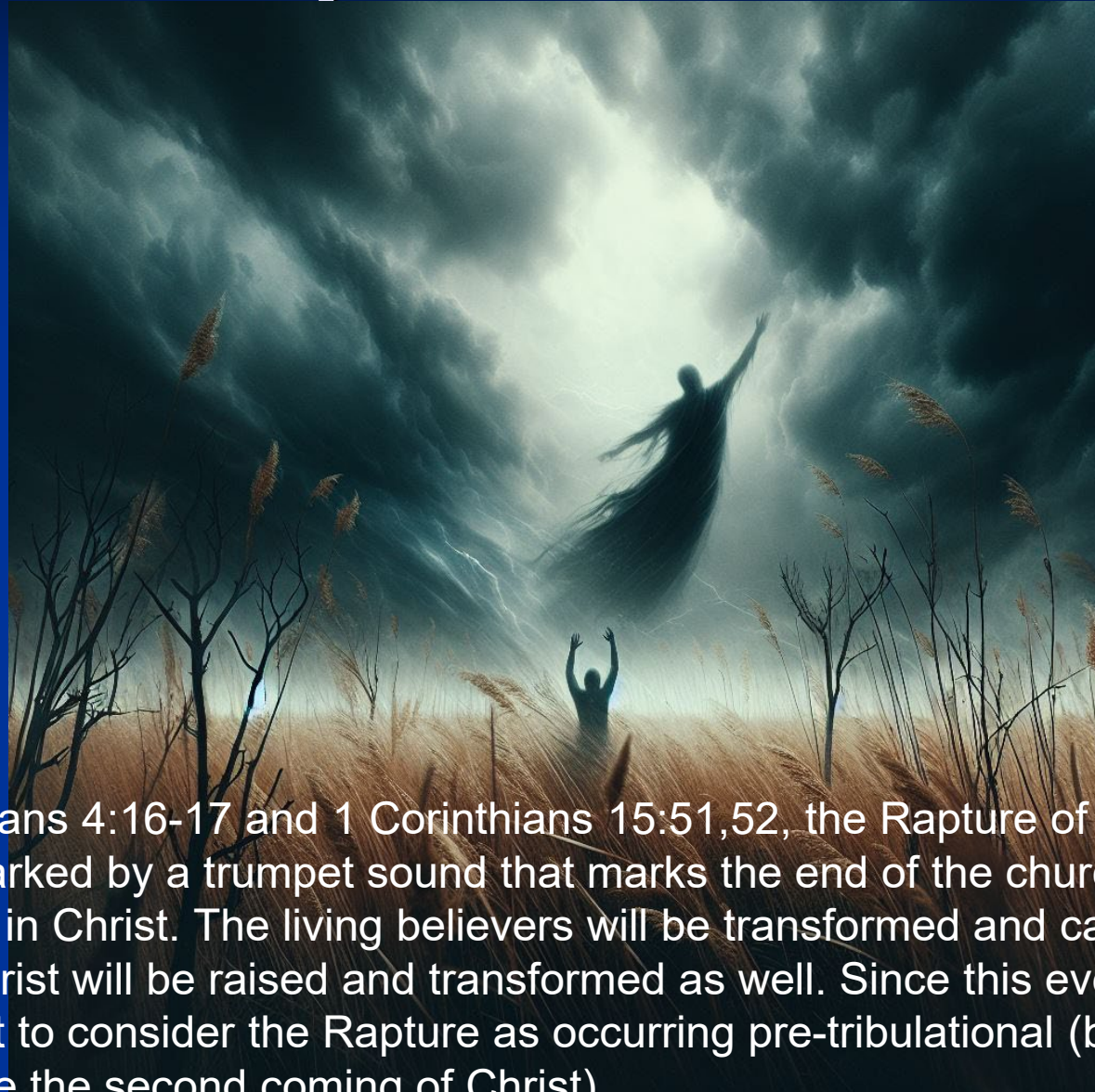
- Paul knew that one day he would be evaluated by the Lord Jesus. He wanted to please the Lord and hear from him, 'Well done, my good servant!' (Luke 19:17). All followers of Christ will be evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:12) which follows the rapture of the church. Believers will be rewarded according to the deeds they did while in their earthly bodies. These are saved believers. This perspective on a day of judgment encouraged Paul to persevere in spite of hardships (2 Cor. 4:7-12) and to be faithful in his ministry (2 Cor. 5:11).
- Every believer will give an account of himself and the Lord will judge the decisions he made—including those concerning matters of conscience. All that which has been accomplished in God's power and for his glory will survive the test of judgment (1 Cor. 3:12-15) to determine eternal reward. This is not a judgment for sin for believers because Jesus Christ has paid the price for their sin (Rom. 8:1).

Two Possibilities

- Perhaps we will be taken into heaven with the rest of the church before we die.
- Perhaps we will die before the church is taken up to Jesus' presence.

Possibility One: Rapture of the Church

“Two men will be in the field, one will be taken, the other left” (Matt. 25:40).



According to John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51,52, the Rapture of the church will be a sudden and unexpected event, marked by a trumpet sound that marks the end of the church era and the moment of the resurrection of the dead in Christ. The living believers will be transformed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air, while the dead in Christ will be raised and transformed as well. Since this event is not connected with judgment, it seems best to consider the Rapture as occurring pre-tribulational (before the wrath of God is shown in Revelation 6-19, before the second coming of Christ).

The Rapture of the Church, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ

The Rapture of the Church

Christ returns in the air
([1 Thessalonians 4:17](#)).

The Rapture brings comfort
([1 Thessalonians 4:18](#)).

The Rapture concerns the church – “In Christ” ([1 Thessalonians 4:14,16](#)).

The Rapture changes the bodies of believers
([1 Corinthians 15:51-53](#)).

The Second Coming of Christ

Christ returns to the earth
([Zechariah 14:4,5](#)).

The Second Coming brings judgment
([Revelation 19:15](#)).

The Second Coming concerns Israel and the nations
([Zechariah 12:2-9](#)).

The Second Coming changes the hearts of Jews
([Zechariah 12:10](#)).

*From <https://bible.org/article/rapture-debate>

“For they themselves report...how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:9,10).

Possibility Two: Death Before the Rapture

- What happens when believers die?
- Is it right to grieve the death of believers?
- Why does God allow death to happen?
- What is our hope in the face of death?
- How does God view the death of his people in Christ?

The Lord Jesus Christ—the Resurrection and the Life

“Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world” (John 11:21-27).

- Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He alone can raise the dead to life. Jesus has power over life and death.
- Everyone who lives and believes in Jesus Christ shall never die, but at moment the body dies the soul will be taken immediately into God’s presence and live eternally with him. Meanwhile, the physical body remains in the grave “sleeping.” At the resurrection of believers, the physical body is resurrected, glorified, and reunited with the soul/spirit.

“For we walk by faith not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:7-8).

- Paul is expressing a heavenly homesickness to be at home with his Lord (see also Ps. 73:25-26). Believers in Christ hope for a heaven they have not seen by believing what Scripture says and living by that belief.

Evidences for Jesus' Resurrection

“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time, most of who remain until now [55AD], but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not to fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored more than all of them, yet not, I but the grace of God within me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed (1 Cor. 15:1-11).

- The church (1 Cor. 15:1,2)
- The Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3,4)
- The eyewitnesses (1 Cor. 15:5-7)
- The apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:8-10)
- The common message (1 Cor. 15:11)

What Happens When Believers in Christ Die?

- “One view held by many is that the soul of a believer who dies remains unconscious until the resurrection. This view is found in some of the noncanonical writings of the early church. Some current groups point out that the word “sleep” is often used in Scripture as a synonym for death. For example, Jesus told the disciples, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep” (John 11:11). And Paul described the dead in Christ as “those who have fallen asleep in Jesus” (1 Thess. 4:14).
- “But the sleep referred to in such imagery has to do with the body, not the soul. In his account of the crucifixion, Matthew wrote of a great earthquake: “The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised” (Matt. 27:52). It is the body, not the soul, that “sleeps” in death. The body lies in rest, utterly devoid of any sensation or awareness, awaiting reconstitution and resurrection in eternal perfection to join the soul that is already in heaven. But the soul never sleeps — it enters the very presence of the Lord at the moment of death. This was affirmed again and again by the apostle Paul as he described his desire to be absent from the body, so that he could be “at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23).

The Souls of the Departed

- The souls of the departed enter into their rest. But it is a rest from labor and strife, not a rest of unconsciousness. The apostle John said of the righteous dead that they “rest from their labors” (Rev. 14:13). Yet he is clearly not describing a rest of unconscious sleep; in the scene John witnessed in heaven, the souls of the redeemed were there, actively singing and praising God (Rev. 14:1-4).
- The bodies of men after death return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls, (which neither die nor sleep,) having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them.
- The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies (Job. 19:25-27).
- The souls of the unrighteous immediately enter into torment (Luke 16:22-24). Then at the Great White Throne Judgment, they are reunited with their resurrected bodies, judged by God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

Grieving in Death

- Death isn't the worst that can happen to us; on the contrary, for God's children, death leads to the best. Paul says, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.... I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Phil. 1:21, 23). Lest we think he was speaking purely by faith, the truth is that Paul himself had actually been taken into Heaven years before writing those words (2 Cor. 12:1-6). He knew firsthand what awaited him in Paradise. He wasn't speculating when he called it gain. To be in the very presence of Jesus, enjoying the wonders of His being, to be with God's people and no longer subject to sin and suffering? "Better by far" is an understatement!
- Yet this same Paul does not tell the Thessalonians that they should not grieve at all concerning their loved ones who have died. Rather, he writes, "that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13)—they should not grieve in the same way, with the same bitter despair, that unbelievers have. But certainly they should grieve.

From <https://www.epm.org/resources/2020/Jan/22/christians-grieve-death-hope/>

Jesus Christ Died For Us

- He assures them that Christ “died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him” (1 Thess. 5:10), and thereby encourages them that those who have died have gone to be with the Lord. That is why Scripture can say, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth . . . that they may rest from their labors” (Rev. 14:13). In fact, Scripture even tells us, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints” (Ps. 116:15).
- Therefore, though we have genuine sorrow when Christian friends and relatives die, we also can say with Scripture, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? . . . Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:55-57). Though we mourn, our mourning should be mixed with worship of God and thanksgiving for the life of the loved one who has died.

From: <https://www.epm.org/resources/2020/Jan/22/christians-grieve-death-hope/>

Physical Death—The Last Enemy

- “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:20-28).
- “At the cross, Jesus Christ broke the power of Satan who held the power of death (Heb. 2:14). Satan will be permanently deprived of his weapon of death at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. At that time, Jesus Christ will have completely fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 8:6 and then deliver the kingdom to God the Father and the eternal glory of Revelation 21, 22 will begin.

This World is Temporary But God's Love Never Ends (1 Cor. 13:8)

- “Every Christian friend that goes before us from this world is a ransomed spirit waiting to welcome us in heaven. There will be the infant of days that we have lost below, through grace to be found above. There the Christian father, and mother, and wife, and child, and friend, with whom we shall renew the holy fellowship of the saints, which was interrupted by death here, but shall be commenced again in the upper sanctuary, and then shall never end. There we shall have companionship with the patriarchs and fathers and saints of the Old and New Testaments, and those of whom the world was not worthy. . . . And there, above all, we shall enjoy and dwell with God the Father, whom we have loved with all our hearts on earth; and with Jesus Christ, our beloved Savior, who has always been to us the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely; and with the Holy Spirit, our Sanctifier, and Guide, and Comforter; and shall be filled with all the fullness of the Godhead forever!”

From: Jonathan Edwards, *Heaven is a World of Love*