

Resources:

- David E. Thompson. *Christology #18*. Texas Corners Bible Church.
Mr. John Miles. *Doctrine 2 Notes*. FSB
Dr. Charles Ryrie. *Basic Theology - Things to Come*.

We come now to lesson #44 of Christology, and this is going to be our final session of this series. A number of months ago I anticipated that we would go over 50 weeks in this study, but as time went on, I decided to combine some subjects into one lesson that I thought I would break up into multiple sessions. Now I don't think I have skipped anything important, but I have given less detail and more of a brief explanation of certain things. In doing that though, I don't think I have done any in-justice to the topics. I have thoroughly enjoyed this series and I hope that you have found it to be useful for your personal study of the Person and Work of Christ.

Now tonight's topic of study is on Jesus' return. We believe here in this church that the Bible is clear, God is clear in His Word: Jesus will return. He has risen, ascended to heaven, but we anticipate His return. John wrote in Revelation 22:20 these words, "He who testifies to things says, 'Surely, I am coming soon.' Amen, 'Come, Lord Jesus.'"

The concluding words of the Bible are on the subject of the return of Jesus to this earth to wrap history up, if you will, for the glory of God, and our final subject of this series will be on that theme as well.

As we begin this topic, I need to tell you some things up front. First of all, tonight I am going to simply tell you the stance that we take in this church regarding Jesus' return. That stance, if you're familiar with these terms, is this: We believe in a Pre-Tribulation, Pre-Millennium eschatological stance. If you know what those terms mean, then there you go, that's our belief. If those terms were new to you, don't worry about it tonight. If you honestly want to investigate what the Bible says about the future, you will eventually learn those different terms.

The second thing I ought to mention up front, is that tonight will in no way be exhaustive. This is a Christology study. This is not an end times study. This is a study on Jesus, so we will briefly, and I mean, briefly discuss Jesus' return, but there are months and months worth of studies we could do at some point in the future to study end times, also known as the doctrinal study of eschatology.

So with that said, let's get into this:

To summarize what we are about to study tonight, I'll say this:

WE BELIEVE THAT THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT JESUS WILL RETURN IN TWO DISTINCT PHASES.

Now I said that very specially. We believe, in other words, this is our stance here in this church, that the Bible teaches.. we don't just simply want to believe this, and we don't believe this is a man made doctrine, we honestly believe that this is what the Bible teaches.. namely that Jesus will return in two distinct phases.

Now the natural question that flows from that statement is this:

What are those two distinct phases?

Well the terms we will use tonight to describe those two phases are these, and they both start with an R: Rapture, and Revelation.

Rapture and Revelation. Those are the two distinct phases of Jesus' return.

And the order of those events goes as follows. The rapture will occur first, and the revelation will occur second. The rapture will happen, then a period of time will pass. That period of time will be a minimum of seven years, but after that time period ends, the revelation will occur.

There is another way we could word this. We could say, the rapture is the catching away of the church, and the revelation is the second coming of Christ. At the rapture, the church will be caught up to meet the Lord in air, and at the revelation, Jesus will come to this earth and present Himself as King of Israel for the second time.

So I hope you're following me up to this point, but you may be wondering, "ok Charlie, do you have Biblical references to back up that claim?" How does the Bible teach a two phase return of Jesus?

Well, let's dissect this a bit more, starting with

Phase #1 - The Rapture.

Is the rapture in the Bible? That answer to this question is YES! The term rapture is used in the Bible. Let me explain by going to 1 Thessalonians 4:17. I will read that to you in English (READ.) Okay, now that I have read the verse, I bet you're more confused. You might say, "Charlie, you just read the whole verse to me but I never heard the word rapture." Well, let me explain. You may not have heard the word rapture, but this is the phrase you did hear: Caught up. Did you catch that phrase? (READ AGAIN). That phrase "caught up" is the definition of the word rapture.

The word rapture actually comes from the Latin language. In Latin, the term is *raptō*. The word means caught up. To give you a quick Bible history lesson. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek. The common language of the day. Common Greek of the first century. Now before the Bible was translated from Greek to English, it was translated from Greek to Latin - that translation is known as the Vulgate. The Greek word in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is *harpazo*. It means "caught up." When Jerome translated from Greek to Latin He used the word *rapiemur*. That word means the same thing as *harpazo* in Greek: "caught up, catch away, snatched up, taken away."

Now when the English translators were looking at the Greek manuscripts to translate from Greek to English, they chose to use the phrase "caught up." So we have three languages all saying the same thing, but English is the one language of those three that does have its own word to describe the action, so in English we have a phrase instead of one word. Now I think the reason why this doctrine has historically been called the rapture is because of the Latin wording used centuries ago, and the reason we have the English word rapture is because it has its roots in Latin.

But just to be clear, the rapture is in the Bible. It is the phrase "caught up." You just need to look at the languages and definitions of words in order to understand it.

That's all I'll say on that, let's move on.

What does the doctrine of the rapture teach? Well, to put it simply, the doctrine of the rapture teaches this. There will be a day in the future where Jesus will come from heaven in air, He will not come all the way to earth, but He will come in the air, and the global Church will be caught up in the air to meet Jesus in the air, and the global Church will be taken out of this world and go to be with Jesus in heaven. By the term global church, or universal church, I mean the entire body of believers in Jesus.

Now there is more I could say, such as how the dead in Christ will rise first physically, then the remaining in Christ will translate from a perishable body to imperishable, and then we will all go together in a new physical body to heaven. That is something the Bible teaches, but I'll leave that for a future study of the doctrine of eschatology.

There is another question that I ought to ask at this point. What are the primary Bible passages that teach the rapture?

Well there are 3 primary passages even though this doctrine can be found in many more texts, and I'll include a list of others for you in the back of tonight's notes, but let's look at the three.

(Passage 1) - John 14:1-3 (READ).

This text clearly teaches from the mouth of Jesus to His disciples that He will come again and take them to be with Him in the place where He was about to go, the Father's house, also known as the third heaven, the dwelling place of God. Now we realize there are different viewpoints on this text, and if you would like to learn about the 5 major viewpoints, then I'd encourage you to go to listen to the message we did the summer of 2021 called the promise of heaven. That message is found in the Inheriting the Promises series. There you will get a more detailed explanation of these verses.

But that is the first passage used to teach the rapture, now

(Passage 2) - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (READ).

The method of Bible interpretation we use is simple: Let the Bible say what the Bible says. We accept what it says in its plain sense. If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense, lest it become nonsense.

To simply read what this text says and accept, I honestly believe will lead one to conclude that the Bible does teach that believers dead and alive will be caught up in the air together with Jesus and we will forever be with Him from that point on. Where He is, there we are. And where did John 14 say He would take his own? To heaven.

Now the third passage is

(Passage 3) - 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 (READ).

In this passage, we learn there will be a moment in time when all believers in Jesus, everyone in the Church, from all history will be given an imperishable body, a body fit for heaven. This text appears to be describing the same event as what we read in 1 Thessalonians 4.

So those are the three major passage of the Bible that we believe teach the doctrine of the rapture.

Now without going into too much detail, this event could happen at any moment, Jesus could take His Church out of this world at any moment. That is the hope of the Church. That is the day the Church looks forward to.

And I'll note this: This may not be Biblically taught, but I think it is Biblically implied. Some people ask: why hasn't Jesus raptured the Church yet? And I think a good answer is that Jesus is currently still building His Church. He is building His Church by calling sinners to salvation, but when Jesus completes the building, when that final person selected to believe comes to faith in Christ, that could be the very moment He takes us out. Maybe He'll keep us here longer, but there will be nothing hindering Him from taking us out of here.

So if you want a motivation to share the gospel with your co-workers and friends, just consider this: maybe there is only one more person Jesus is going to add to His Body of believers before He is going to take us out. Maybe Jesus would have you share the gospel with that final person.. How cool would that be?

Well let's move on from phase 1 known as the rapture to phase 2

Phase #2 - The Revelation.

By revelation, we mean, the revealing of Jesus to the world in His second coming. This is the literal second coming where Jesus will come to this world to reign and rule. Unlike the rapture, this is not a mystery revealed in the Church age, this was prophetically spoken of by Daniel, Zechariah, Joel, and Isaiah.

This event was well spoken of in the Old Testament. The Messiah of Israel will establish a kingdom of peace and righteousness for Israel, destroy enemies of Israel and enemies of God, and He will reign as King of Israel for 1,000 years, but He will also continually reign over the earth for all eternity in the new heaven and earth.

I think it's important to note at this point the rapture relates to the Church. It is directed at the Church. Jesus will come for His saints. But the Revelation, or the second coming, is not directed at the Church. It is directed at Israel. Jesus will come with His saints to give Israel her promised Kingdom, spoken of on many occasions in the Old Testament. Having said that the rapture pertains to the Church and the Revelation pertains to Israel, it will become evident to you that I am better prepared to discuss the rapture than the second coming, because it is the rapture pertains to me. But anyway

Now I should ask a few questions. Firstly, when will this event take place? This will happen at the end the tribulation period, also known as Daniel 70th week and the time of Jacob's trouble. Revelation 6-19 describe the Tribulation period, but in Revelation 19, and verses 11-21 we read of the second coming. This is what it says (READ).

Now if we were to continue reading, we would learn in chapter 20 that upon Jesus return to earth physically, there is a period of judgment, and then the Millennial kingdom begins where Christ reigns with His saints for 1,000 years.

Another question I should ask is this: Where will this event take place? Well, if you will recall, Jesus ascended to heaven from the mount of Olives. Acts 1:12 explains the location of His ascension, and Acts 1:11 tells us that Jesus will come in the same way in which the disciples saw Him go. Now if we compare Acts 1 to Zechariah 14 we will find that the LORD will stand on the Mount of Olives. We conclude that Jesus will return at His second coming to the same place He ascended, the Mount of Olives.

Now I'll just ask one more question about this: How can we be confident that the Bible does not teach that the second coming of Christ and the rapture are the same event? Why must we keep the two distinct?

Basically, I grew up in a church that did not teach the rapture. I was always under the impression that my church taught that someday Jesus will come again and we don't need to worry about our future because in the end God wins. Now there is a sense in which that is true. A believer does not need to worry. Jesus is coming back. And God does win, but that was the extent of my end times knowledge. Unfortunately though, the Bible has much to say about end times, and if you don't investigate what it says, you can easily be led to confusion and throw your hands up saying it doesn't make sense.

Why could this happen? Because the descriptions of the rapture and the second coming don't seem to agree unless you see them as two separate events. There is a difference between the two.

Now let me point out to you 8 differences between the two that make one conclude that they are two different events. This list is taken from William Macdonald.

1. - At the Rapture, Christ comes to the air (1 Thess. 4:17), but at the Revelation, Christ comes to earth (Zechariah 14:4).

2. At the Rapture, Christ comes for His saints (1 Thess. 4:16-17), but at the Revelation, Christ comes with His saints (1 Thess. 3:13; Jud. 14)
3. The Rapture is a mystery unknown in the Old Testament (1 Cor. 15:51), but the Revelation is not a mystery; it is the subject of many Old Testament Prophecies (Ps. 72; Isa. 11; Zech. 14).
4. The Rapture has not signs preceding the event, but the Revelation will have many signs preceding it (Matt. 24:29-30).
5. The Rapture is identified with the Day of Christ (1 Cor. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6,10), but the Revelation is identified with the Day of the Lord (2 Thess. 2:2).
6. The Rapture is presented as a day of blessing (1 Thess. 4:18), but the Revelation has an emphasis of judgment (2 Thess. 2:8-12).
7. The Rapture takes place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:52). This strongly implies that it will not be witness by the world. But the Revelation will be visible worldwide, possible through electronics (Matt. 24:27; Rev. 1:7).
8. The Rapture seems to involve the Church primarily, (Jn. 14:1-4; 1 Cor. 15:51-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18), but the Revelation primarily involves Israel, then also the Gentile nations (Matt. 24-25).

Now I am no expert on the second coming of Christ and you might be thinking, well you made that obvious, but I have at least given you a brief overview of this subject and as I have looked at these various texts with my own eyes and compared the differences, I have conclude exactly what I mentioned when we started

I BELIEVE THAT THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT JESUS WILL RETURN IN TWO DISTINCT PHASES. THOSE PHASES ARE KNOWN AS THE RAPTURE AND THE REVELATION.

Someday in the future, Lord willing, after I am far more prepared to teach eschatology, I would love to teach this subject in a detailed manner, but for now I'll leave it at that. Jesus is coming back, in the air for His Church, and then on earth with His Church. And to squeeze in a little bit of application if I can, in light of the fact that Jesus is going to return, that certainly ought to purify my thoughts, my motives, my actions, and prioritize my time for His glory.

Well, with that, we conclude this study and we conclude our Christology series. 44 weeks we spent studying the Person of Christ, and I would say that this is only the beginning, may we continue to study Him and learn from Him and walk with Him continually for all our days,

Now I say that we are concluding the series, but I am going to leave it open ended. There may be pet project lessons that I decide to do from time to time in order to continue to add to this resource, but for now, I'm going to considering finished.

It has been a challenge for me, and a joy. There have been easy lessons that came naturally and hard lessons that were a fight to get on paper, but at the end of it all, I am so glad that I personally took the time to prepare each of these lessons and I am confident that they will be of benefit to me in the future.

Let's pray