

The Second Coming of Christ #3

The Rapture Question

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I. Introductory Remarks.

The question concerning Jesus's second coming is an important question for the Church to come to grips with in this hour of its destiny. If the Church continues to believe that Jesus can return at any time for an unperfected Church, then the Church will continue in its spirit of apathy instead of getting a vision for the glorious church without spot or wrinkle spoken of in the fifth chapter of Ephesians.

- **The Study of the Second Coming is Basic Bible Doctrine.**

The question concerning the rapture is part of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which is one of the foundational stones of the Christian faith; therefore, it is very important that we understand this doctrine in our minds and hearts. It is needed before we can mature.

***Hebrews 6:1-3** Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of **resurrection of the dead**, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do **if God permits**.*

- **We Are Not to be Deceived About This Truth.**

The question concerning the rapture or the second coming of Jesus was an issue that the apostle Paul had to address from time to time. Paul speaks to the Thessalonians here concerning the importance of not being deceived about this issue.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3** Now, brethren, **concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ** and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. **Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition...

II. Eschatological View Points.

Eschatological views fall into categories determined by the relationship of Christ's return and the millennium. The three basic views, with a myriad of adaptations, are that Christ's return will be: 1) Postmillennial, 2) Amillennial, or the 'realized millennium' and 3) Premillennial. ²

1. The Postmillennial View Point.

Postmillennialism is the belief that Christ's return will be after (Post) the thousand years (millennium). Postmillennialists hold both a historical view of Daniel's Seventy-Week Prophecy and a future view of the millennium.

2. The Amillennialism, Or 'Realized Millennialism' Viewpoint.

Amillennialism, or 'realized millennialism,' is the belief that the millennial age is now a present reality. The millennium is the time between Christ's first coming and the eternal state; it is the Church age. Then, Christ will return for his Church. They do not believe in a set time for the present age or the destiny of 'The Triumphant Church.' They hold the historical view of Daniel's Seventy-Week Prophecy and a present-tense view of the millennium.

3. The Premillennial View.

The Premillennialists believe that Christ's return will occur before (pre) the literal thousand years (millennium). They hold a futuristic interpretation of the 70th week of Daniel's 70-Week Prophecy and a futuristic view of the millennium.

- **Three Differing Views Amongst Pre-Millennialists.**

There are three differing views concerning the timing of the rapture amongst the pre-millennialists: (1) pre-tribulation, (2) mid-tribulation, and (3) post-tribulation. There are problems with all three of these views because they do not fit into the context or the exegesis of other scriptures. Any doctrine that we believe and hold to must fit into the context of the Bible because no scripture is of private interpretation.

The belief that will be presented in this lesson will basically be Premillennial, but somewhat different even from what they believe. The basic difference is how the 70th week of Daniel's Seventy-Week Prophecy

is fulfilled. The belief presented here is that the last 7 years are divided; 3 1/2 years ending at the crucifixion of Jesus and the final 3 1/2 years ending at the 2nd Coming of Jesus. It is also believed that the Church has a destiny to fulfill as the glorious church, the bride of Christ. (See [Daniel's 70 Week Prophecy](#))

III. The Challenge to Rightly Divide the Truth.

Anyone can tend to twist scriptures to fit their own view and interpretation, but the challenge is to learn how to divide the word of truth rightly. We have a responsibility before God and before each other to rightly divide the word of truth concerning any doctrine.

2 Peter 1:20 *...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation...*

2 Peter 3:16 *...as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*

2 Timothy 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

In this lesson and the lessons to follow, the goal will be to accurately understand what God has to say concerning the second coming of Jesus Christ and its timing by comparing the many scriptures on this important study of God's word and allowing the scriptures to interpret themselves.

- **The Bible says this is a great mystery concerning Christ and His church.**

Ephesians 5:32 *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

The goal of this study is to approach the subject by looking at all of the various clues found in the scriptures. By putting them together, you will begin to see a clear picture emerging of the Second Coming of Christ and the Church during the Great Tribulation.

It will also be important to make sure we major on the clear scriptures and not on the vague and unclear ones. When we focus on the clearly stated scriptures, we find that the vague or nebulous scriptures fit into the overall

puzzle.

IV. Definition of the Word “Rapture”

The word rapture is not even in the Bible but is derived from the words "caught up" found in I Thessalonians 4:13-17.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 *Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

The word "caught up" in Greek is "harpazo," which means catch (away, up), pull, or take (by force).

The word rapture in all actuality, refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ. In fact, if Biblical scholars down through the ages would have left it in the terms of the second coming or the first resurrection, there wouldn't be as much controversy surrounding this important doctrine.

V. Key Scriptures, Thoughts, and Words.

Many key scriptures, thoughts, and words will enable us to rightly divide the word of truth concerning the timing of the Second Coming of Christ. As we look at these key thoughts, words, and scriptures, we will see that the Bible consistently interprets the timing of the Second Coming of Jesus to be after the "Great Tribulation" spoken of in the Book of Revelation and other books as well.

1. When He Returns, He Shall Come On The Clouds Of Heaven.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples were told by two men in white apparel that Jesus would return in the same manner. A cloud took Him away.

Acts 1:9-11 *...He was taken up, and **a cloud received Him** out of their sight... two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, **will so come in like manner** as you saw Him go into heaven.'*

- **Jesus said that He would come again (speaking of His second coming) on the clouds of heaven.**

Matthew 26:64 *Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the **clouds of heaven.**"*

Luke 21:27 *"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a **cloud** with power and great glory.*

Matthew 24:29-31 *says, "Immediately **after the tribulation** of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the **Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven** with power and great glory. "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.***

These passages of Scripture place the timing of Jesus' coming on the clouds of heaven after the tribulation. It says, *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days... they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven..."*

I want to bring out here that in each of these passages of scripture, when the disciples were told to look for Jesus's second coming, they were told to look for Him coming on the clouds of heaven.

This scene of Jesus returning on the clouds of heaven is, without a doubt, placed at the end of the tribulation. If there is to be a secret appearing of Jesus that takes place before this, why weren't the disciples of Jesus told to wait for it or told what to expect?

2. Jesus Referred To The Timing Of His Second Coming.

The disciples came to Jesus and asked Him point blankly, "What will be the sign of your coming?" In response, Jesus gave them a very direct answer.

Matthew 24:3-5 *Now, as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" ⁴ Jesus answered: **"Watch out that no one deceives you.** ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many.*

Matthew 24:23 *At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the*

Messiah!' or "There he is!' do not believe it.

Notice in verses 4, 5 & 23 that He warns them about being deceived as to when His second coming would be. Jesus is telling them very clearly that people will try to deceive them concerning the timing of His coming. I believe Jesus wants us to have a clear understanding of when we can expect Him to come so that we don't get deceived into thinking that He has already come.

Verse 36 just says, *"that no one will know the day or the hour."* It doesn't say anything about the year or season in which He will come.

Those who advocate a pre-tribulation or a mid-tribulation rapture say that if He is going to come at the end of the tribulation, we will know when He is coming, so then they say that it is a contradiction of scripture because we are not supposed to know that. It is not a contradiction because you are still not going to know the day or the hour. Don't make the scripture say something it does not say.

Jesus directly responded to the question posed to Him in verse 3, where the disciples asked Him, *"What will be the sign of His coming?"* He said it would be immediately after the tribulation.

Notice that it also says that His appearing shall come with the sound of a great trumpet. This is another one of those key words to this great mystery, which we will discuss a little later in the lesson.

Matthew 24:29-31 says, *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven..."*

The question we must ask ourselves is, "If there is to be a rapture or a secret appearing of Jesus before this event, as both those who advocate a pre-tribulation and mid-tribulation rapture say, why didn't Jesus speak of it?" But instead, Jesus warns us against those who say, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'there!' do not believe it.

I believe they are actually simultaneous events. As soon as we are caught up, He gathers us from the four corners of heaven and earth, and we come with him as He descends and sets his throne up in Jerusalem.

Jude 1:14 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men, also saying, *"Behold the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints.*

3. The Apostle Paul Referred to the Timing of The Second Coming.

Paul also writes by the Holy Spirit concerning Jesus's Second Coming and exhorts his followers not to be deceived into believing that He will come before the Second Coming.

2 Thessalonians 2:2-4 *Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the **falling away comes first**, and the **man of sin is revealed**, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (See vss. 1-4)*

When Paul speaks here of the Second Coming of Christ, he is obviously referring to the same time sequence as Jesus because he says it cannot happen until the lawless one is revealed and destroyed by the brightness of His coming. When Jesus returns at His second coming, Satan and all of his cohorts and those who do not obey the gospel are going to be destroyed. (See 1 Thessalonians 1:7-10 also).

Again, we must ask ourselves the question, *"If there is to be a rapture or secret appearing before the Second Coming of Jesus, why didn't Paul mention it to these believers?"* He instead warns them not to be soon shaken or deceived by any means, because that day is not going to come until the falling away comes first and the man of perdition is revealed.

4. Luke Referred To The Second Coming of Jesus in Acts.

Acts 3:20-21 *says, "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, "whom heaven must receive (retain - NIV) until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*

This scripture makes it very clear that Jesus is literally being bound to heaven and cannot be released until all that the prophets have foretold comes to pass. *(There will be more about this later in the study.)*

This also shows us that the gospels, the Book of Acts, and the Epistles are all in agreement concerning the Second Coming of Christ. This is an important point to consider

VI. Summary.

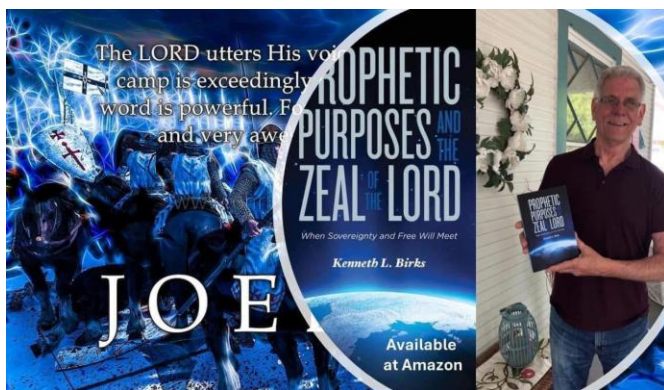
- The word rapture is not in the Bible but is derived from the words "caught up" and "found" in 1 Thessalonians 4:12-17.
- The Rapture, in all actuality, refers to an event that simultaneously occurs with the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- When Jesus returns, He shall return on the clouds of heaven. It is at the end of the "Great Tribulation" that Jesus returns on the clouds of heaven.
- When the disciples asked Jesus when His Second coming would be, He stated specifically it would be at the end of the "Great Tribulation". He did not speak of any other appearing.
- The apostle Paul said that the "falling away" and the revealing of the antichrist must come before the second coming of Christ when warning the Thessalonians about being deceived about His return.

End Notes

1. The three viewpoints of postmillennialism, amillennialism, and premillennialism were also taken from the Book A Summary of Contemporary Doctrines of Abbott Loop Christian Center, Conference Edition, pages 100-102.
2. The doctrinal position that has been communicated in this study is a result of the wonderful input I have had from people like apostles, Dick Benjamin and Jim Feeney and also from the teachings of W.H. Offiler, W.W. Patterson and Kevin Conner.

For a complete study on this subject and more, please see the book listed below:

Aside from complete teaching on the Second Coming of Christ and the Great Tribulation,



the essence of this book considers that God has sovereign purposes in the earth that He will yet fulfill through His sovereignty. Amid performing them, He uses imperfect vessels like you and me to do so. How does our free will work together with God's sovereignty to bring forth His purposes as He fulfills them from one generation to another? This book explores these questions and much more. We discover that one of the Father's most significant traits—His

patience, combined with our obedience - allows us to be involved with Him.

For more information and how to order the book, click the links below:

[Predestinated Purposes Sovereignty and Free Will](#)

[For all of the Six Lessons, Click Here](#)