

Series: Standing on the Promises of God

WE SHALL BE CHANGED

2 CORINTHIANS 15; 1 THESSALONIANS 4
AND OTHERS

Text: John 14:3, 1 Corinthians 15:51

John 14:3

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

1 Corinthians 15:51

⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

Introduction:

The rapture and the second coming of Christ are often confused. Sometimes it is difficult to determine whether a scripture verse is referring to the rapture or the second coming.

However, in studying end-times Bible prophecy, it is very important to differentiate between the two.

The rapture is when Jesus Christ returns to remove the church (all believers in Christ) from the earth. The

rapture is described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-54.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Corinthians 15:50-54

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this

corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Believers who have died will have their bodies resurrected and, along with believers who are still living, will meet the Lord in the air.

This will all occur in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye.

The second coming is when Jesus returns to defeat the Antichrist, destroy evil, and establish His millennial kingdom. The second coming is described in Revelation 19:11-16.

Revelation 19:11-16

¹¹ And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

¹² His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. ¹³ And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

¹⁶ *And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Before we actually get into the message this morning I think it we be helpful to consider a few differences between the rapture and the second coming.

Note:

1. At the rapture, believers meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). At the second coming, believers return with the Lord to the earth (Revelation 19:14).

1 Thessalonians 4:17

¹⁷ *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

Revelation 19:14

¹⁴ *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*

2. The second coming occurs after the great and terrible tribulation (Revelation chapters 6–19). The rapture occurs before the tribulation (1 Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 3:10).

1 Thessalonians 5:9

⁹ *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain*

salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

Revelation 3:10

¹⁰ Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

3. The rapture is the removal of believers from the earth as an act of deliverance (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, 5:9). The second coming includes the removal of unbelievers as an act of judgment (Matthew 24:40-41).

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:9

⁹ For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

4. The rapture will be secret and instant (1 Corinthians 15:50-54). The second coming will be visible to all (Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:29-30).

1 Corinthians 15:50-54

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Revelation 1:7

⁷ Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

Matthew 24:29-30

²⁹ Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: ³⁰ And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

5. The second coming of Christ will not occur until after certain other end-times events take place (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Matthew 24:15-30; Revelation chapters 6–18). The rapture is imminent; it could take place at any moment (Titus 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

You may be asking why is it important to keep the rapture and the second coming distinct.

Here are few reason why and then we will get into the message.

1. If the rapture and the second coming are the same event, believers will have to go through the tribulation (1 Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 3:10).

1 Thessalonians 5:9

⁹ For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

Revelation 3:10

¹⁰ Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

2. If the rapture and the second coming are the same event, the return of Christ is not imminent—there are many things which must occur before He can return (Matthew 24:4-30).

3. In describing the tribulation period, Revelation chapters 6–19 nowhere mentions the church.

During the tribulation—also called “the time of trouble for Jacob” (Jeremiah 30:7)—God will again turn His primary attention to Israel (Romans 11:17-31).

The rapture and second coming are similar but separate events. Both involve Jesus returning.

In summary, the rapture is the return of Christ in the clouds to remove all believers from the earth before the time of God’s wrath. The second coming is the return of Christ to the earth to bring the tribulation to an end and to defeat the Antichrist and his evil world empire.

Now let’s briefly consider 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

I believe that we're living in the days of the coming of the Lord for believers or the church.

We can't set a date but I'm kind of like that old farmer who woke up in the middle of the night and heard the grandfather clock sounding the hour chime. He heard it chime once, then twice, then a third chime, and a fourth.

It continued ten, eleven, twelve, and then something odd occurred. The clock chimed a thirteenth and fourteenth time.

Frightened he turned over and woke his sleeping wife.

He said, "Wake up!"

She said, "Why? What time is it?"

He said, "I don't know but it's later than it's ever been."

I can't tell you exactly what time it is on God's clock but it's later than it's ever been.

I believe that God is writing in large letter that you and I who a living in this generation to be prepared for His coming.

Note this first word:

1. REASSURANCE (VSS. 13-15)

1 Thessalonians 4:13-15

¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

The Christians at Thessalonica were concerned, because the Lord had gone away, and had promised to return; and, they believed that promise literally.

But, some in the church fellowship had already died, or *gone to sleep*, as the Scripture uses that term.

And, they said, "Well, now, what will happen to them? Will they miss the coming of the Lord? Or, are they gone forever?"

Somehow, these Christians did not have a good understanding of what will happen when Christ comes again.

Paul wrote this, to reassure them that, when the Lord comes, there's going to be a resurrection, and we're all going up together to meet the Lord, whether dead or alive.

Notice secondly the word:

2. RETURN (VS. 16)

1 Thessalonians 4:16

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Paul wants it to be clear that this is the same Jesus which was spoken of in the book of Acts.

Acts 1:11

¹¹ Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

The Lord Himself, just as real as His first coming,

The same Jesus that came into this world through the virgin's womb

The same Jesus who spoke to the raging storm until it became as calm as a farm pond

The same Jesus that opened blinded eyes and straightened crippled limbs

This same Jesus who told His disciples "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also."

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God"

The words reassurance and return encourages and blesses my heart.

Note a third word:

3. RESURRECTION (VS. 16)

1 Thessalonians 4:16

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

There's going to be a resurrection of those saints who know the Lord, those who are born again.

Note what we read in Revelation 20:

Revelation 20:6

⁶ Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Those who have been saved, are going to come forth out of their graves.

Note there will be:

A. The Resurrected Body

Note 1 Corinthians 15:

1 Corinthians 15:35-38

³⁵ But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? ³⁶ Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

³⁷ And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: ³⁸ But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

- Illustration

Paul uses an illustration of nature to describe this.

Every time you plant a seed in the ground, and that seed rots, it dies, it decays. And yet, somehow, there is a sense of continuity. There is a germ of life. Even though that seed goes into the ground, it dies, it decays, and it rots—there's a principle there that causes it to spring forth into something even more glorious."

Note only do we see this illustration but note another word:

- Improvement

1 Corinthians 15:42

⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

This natural body in death will be placed into the ground in corruption but at the resurrection will be raised in incorruption.

Illustrations:

An acorn and an oak tree are really the same.

When you are discouraged, take a look at an oak tree and see what a nut can do.

What an improvement.

Look at the ugly caterpillar.

What comes from that caterpillar after spending some time in a cocoon is a Monarch butterfly.

What an improvement.

Look at a lump of coal and then look at a diamond. They are both the same. The difference is brought about by heat and pressure. One is carbon in humiliation and the other is carbon in glory.

At the resurrection there is going to be a great change.

1 Corinthians 15:43-44

⁴³ *It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*

We have considered the words Reassurance, Return and Resurrection note a fourth word. The word:

4. RAPTURE

Now, the word *rapture* is not here in the text, but that doesn't mean there's not going to be a rapture, because the Bible describes the rapture. The *rapture* is just a word to describe what's going to happen to those living at the time.

The word *rapture* is not found in the Bible, but *catching away* is.

The word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible, but the doctrine is taught.

The word *millennium* is not found in the Bible, but it speaks of a thousand years, which means exactly that.

The word *rapture* means, "to seize, to snatch away," and that's what's going to happen.

We're going to be raptured. We're going to be caught away.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The final word we will consider is:

5. REUNION (VS. 17)

1 Thessalonians 4:17

*¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up **together** with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

There is going to be a glad reunion day.

Close:

I'm glad the Lord is coming again. Will you go out with the rapture or will you be left behind?

