

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - November 16, 2023

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Title: Eschatology - The Doctrine of Last Things - Part I

I. Introduction

A. Some of you have heard me many times over the last 35 years teach on the Doctrine of Last Things. I consider this topic to be another significant subject in the life of a Christian and every Christian should be biblically educated on this subject.

B. Living a life that is pleasing to the Lord includes knowing and believing God's Word, and this vitally important subject will better equip the saints and give you hope and assurance of a joyous eternal life.

II. The Rapture

A. Every study of doctrine must have its eschatology. That which has a beginning must also have an end and thank You Lord that we as Christians, have a glorious end.

B. The study of eschatology has been commonly divided into two parts:

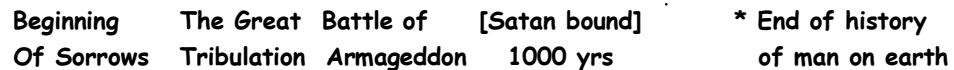
1. **General eschatology**: The study of the future of the world.
2. **Personal eschatology**: The study of the future of the individual.

C. This lesson begins with the study of general eschatology and God's time line of the future as revealed in His Holy Word. My continuing prayer is that you will be informed, blessed, and joyous in the Lord as we go through this and future lessons.

Eschatological Time Line



CHURCH AGE



D. The next great prophetic event on God's time clock is the Rapture of the Church. The word rapture is not found in the Bible but is based on the Latin word meaning "to catch up or to catch away" (1 Thess. 4:17).

E. The Bible teaches two separate stages in Christ's return. At the rapture Christ comes for His saints; at His Second Coming He comes with His saints.

F. At the rapture He comes in the clouds as Christians meet Him in the air; at His Second Coming He (Christ) comes back to earth. These two events will be separated by a seven-year period called the Tribulation.

III. Scriptures Concerning the Rapture

A. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

"But I would not have you to be ignorant brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as other which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 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. 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: 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

1. **"Asleep"**

a. This expression is used only of Christians to describe the state of their bodies at death (Luke 8:52-53; John 11:11-14; 1 Cor. 15:51).

2. **"Sorrow not, even as others which have no hope"**

a. This does not teach that a Christian should never sorrow over the death of a loved one.

b. The stress of the phrase is not on the **fact** of sorrowing, but on the **contrast** between the sorrowing of this **hopeless** world and the sorrowing of the **hopeful** Christian.

3. **"Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."**

a. This speaks of the departed saints who have been with Christ ever since death.

b. The immaterial being will be reunited with the body, which will rise from its earthly grave. Simultaneously, that corruptible body will become incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:52).

4. **"Prevent"**

a. This old English word means "precede." Those alive at the rapture will be preceded into Christ's presence by

those Christians who have already died.

5. **"A shout" "the voice of the archangel," "the trump of God."**
 - a. These expressions are found wherever the Bible speaks of the rapture of the Church (1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 4:1).
6. **"To meet the Lord in the air."**
 - a. This distinguishes the rapture from the Second Coming of Christ.

Remember: At the rapture, Christians **meet** the Lord in the air. Seven years later, Christians will return **with** Christ to the earth (Rev. 19:7-16).

B. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53

"Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

1. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"
 - a. Christ's return in the clouds will be in an instant of time. At the speed of light or even faster, Christians will join Him in the air.
2. "We shall be changed"
 - a. The corruptible body of flesh must be changed. This is the final "redemption of the body" promised to every Christian in Romans 8:11, 23.

- b. In this passage "immortality" refers to the body's inability to die from this point throughout eternity. It will be a glorious body "fashioned like unto his [Christ's] glorious body" (Phil. 3:21).
3. "Must put on incorruption"
- a. No one could stand in Christ's presence in his or her natural condition. But because of Calvary, the Christian stands justified in God's sight.
 - b. Those Christians living at the rapture will immediately receive their glorified bodies.

C. Revelation 4:1

1. In the book of Revelation is one of the few passages that views the events of the future chronologically. Revelation 1:19 gives a threefold outline of the book:

"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."

- a. The **past** ("hast seen") - Rev. 1
- b. The **present** ("are") - Rev. 2-3
- c. The **future** ("shall be hereafter") - Rev. 4-22

Comment: According to this outline, the very first event of the future is found in Revelation 4:1 -

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me: which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter."

2. This passage describes a "Voice" and a "trumpet." God's words to John are a picture of God's call to all Christians at the rapture: "Come up hither and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter."

IV. Principles Concerning The Rapture

A. The promise of the rapture is found only in the New Testament.

Comment: There are "seed pictures" of the rapture found in the Old Testament but not the promise. //I will expound on this point later.//

1. It is logical that the promise of the rapture is found only in the New Testament since the Church was not begun until after the Old Testament was completed.
2. Once Christ established His Church in the New Testament He gave her His promise that He would return for her in the clouds.
3. By contrast, Christ's promise to the nation of Israel is His Second Coming to earth to rule and reign as the promised Messiah.
4. The Church looks for His coming in the clouds: Israel looks for His coming to earth.

B. The Promise of the Rapture is found primarily in the Epistles.

1. This again makes sense. The epistles were written to **churches** (with a few exceptions ((i.e., Timothy, Titus,

Philemon)), and the rapture is a promise to the churches.

2. By contrast, when Christ speaks of His coming in the gospels, it is almost exclusively a description of His Second Coming to earth.
3. By understanding the eschatological emphasis of each section of the Bible, fewer mistakes will be made in prophetic interpretation.
4. One must always remember that while the Church looks for the rapture, the nation of Israel looks for the Second Coming of Christ, which will begin the Millennial reign (one thousand literal years) of Christ on earth.

Prophetic Emphasis of the Bible

Old Testament emphasizes the **Millennial reign of Christ**.

Gospels emphasize the **Second Coming** which ushers in the Millennial reign of Christ.

Epistles emphasize the **Rapture**.

Revelation emphasizes the **Tribulation**.

5. By keeping the above chart in mind, it is easy to organize the prophetic time line and keep from assuming that passages like Luke 17:20-37 refer to the rapture.
6. The "one taken" (Lk. 17:34,35,36) while the "others shall be left," are actually expressions that describe the

separation that takes place at Christ's **return to earth**.

7. The Lord's response to the disciple's question in Luke 17:37 is a reference to those who "shall be left" confirms the interpretation that this is **not** the rapture.

Comment: (Luke 17:37) - Where will the ones taken be taken? Where eagles (Vultures) will feed on their corpses, a reference to the carnage and judgment of Armageddon (Rev. 17-19). These people are taken to Armageddon and death.

"Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles [Vultures] be gathered together." (Luke 17:37)

"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." (Rev. 19:17-18)

C. The Rapture is **Typified Throughout the Bible**.

1. It appears to be God's pattern to remove the righteous before he sends judgment. He will do the same thing before the Tribulation begins.
 - a. God rescued Noah before he sent judgment. (Gen. 6:7-8; 7:1)
 - b. God rescued Lot from Sodom before he sent judgment (Gen. 18:23-25; 19:22)

2. Abraham used the Character of God as an argument in his request for mercy on the city of Sodom - "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: ... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? (Gen. 18:25)
3. God Himself says later, "Haste thee [Lot], escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither" (Gen. 19:22).

Point: God has limited Himself by His Word.

4. It is not His nature to destroy the righteous with the wicked. He will "rapture" the righteous before the Tribulation judgments come. Even during the Tribulation God will be merciful to those who at that time will accept Jesus Christ as Savior.
"For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, ... he hath shortened the days."(Mark 13:19-20)

D. The **twofold return** (Rapture and Second Coming) is an example of the **rule of double reference**.

1. The rule of double reference is a very important principle in prophetic interpretation. It states that many Scripture references may discuss prophetic events as if they were occurring at the same time, when in reality, they are separated by great periods of time.

Comment: This is also called the "telescoping effect" because it brings events separated in time into close proximity, much as a telescope brings images separated in space into close proximity.

2. This principle is found throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament, the First and Second Coming of Christ were discussed in the same verse. This caused much confusion in the time of Christ.
3. The disciples believed that Christ had come the first time to rule and reign. Even as He prepared to ascend back to the Father, they asked the same question, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)
4. They did not realize the difference until later. Notice in the following verses the description of the characteristics of Christ's First and Second Comings.

"The stone which the builders refused [First Coming] is become the head stone of the corner [Second Coming].
(Psalm 118:22)

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given [First Coming]; and the government shall be upon his shoulders: ... The Prince of Peace [Second Coming]." (Isa. 9:6)

"Behold, thy King cometh unto thee ... lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass [First Coming]. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: ... and his dominion shall be ... to the ends of the

earth [Second Coming]." (Zech. 9:9-10)

It is once again interactive time. Please respond to each question by providing the requested information, or by selecting the correct response from the choices given, as appropriate.

1. Define Eschatology

2. Eschatology has been commonly divided into two parts. What are they?
 - a.

 - b.

3. What is the next great prophetic event on God's time clock? (circle the correct letter)
 - a. Armageddon
 - b. The Tribulation
 - c. The Rapture
 - d. The Second Coming of Christ

4. What is the entire length of time for the Tribulation Period?
 - a. $3 \frac{1}{2}$ years

- b. 7 years
- c. 9 years
- d. None of the above

5. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, what does the term "asleep" refer to?

Write out your response:

6. At the Rapture, where do Christians meet the Lord? Support your response with Scripture.

7. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, what does "immortality" refer to?

8. Based on the information in your handout, what is the threefold outline of the Book of Revelation?

a.

b.

c.

9. According to the Handout, what is the Prophetic Emphasis of the Bible in the following locations:

a. The Old Testament -

b. The Gospels -

c. The Epistles -

d. The Book of Revelation

10. What is the Rule of Double Reference in the Bible as it relates to prophetic interpretation?

I sincerely trust that you have been challenged, blessed, and excited through this opening study on the doctrine of Eschatology.

As we continue to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus, let us occupy (stay busy doing the Lord's work) until He says, enough done.

In the Master's Service.

//Pastor Austin//