

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Wed. Eve. Bible Study - 11/2/16

Bible Prophecies

The Rapture Of The Church

The Lord Jesus Christ is coming again ☐- personally and soon! In our second study we considered the scriptures' weighty testimony concerning this glorious fact, and in our third study we saw that the promises relating to the second coming of Christ can only mean what they say: that the same Lord Jesus who first came 2000 years ago is coming back again the second time (Hebrews 9:26 and 28). But how is He coming, and when, and for whom?

In approaching this study it is necessary to point out that the scriptures teach that the second coming of Christ will take place, for want of a better way of stating the truth, in two stages. All the prophecies of the Old Testament tell us of His coming in power as the Son of man to reign and to rule. But there are two important passages in the New Testament which tell us that before our blessed Lord returns to the earth (Zechariah 14:4), as Son of man (Matthew 24:27 and 30), for Israel's deliverance (Zechariah 14:3), publicly (Revelation 1:7), and to take vengeance on His enemies (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8) ☐- before He comes like this, He will come into the air to gather to Himself all His saints (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). His coming in power and glory will be ushered in by signs (Matthew 24), but His coming into the air for His Church could happen at any moment. This is called "the rapture of the Church", because when He thus comes He will "catch away" all His people and take them to be with Himself. The two important passages which reveal this truth are:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Believers Who Have Died

"¹³ Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words."

1 Corinthians 15:51-53

“⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.”

1. **Notice** the significant words in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 □ “According to the Lord’s own word□” That is, Paul was speaking, or writing, what the Lord had expressly revealed to him. This was not simply Paul’s idea □ note this!
2. **Notice** also the significant word in 1 Corinthians 15:51 - □ “Listen, I tell you a mystery...□ A “mystery” in the New Testament always refers to truth which was unrevealed in the Old Dispensation. A “mystery” is something only known to the initiated. The truth of the rapture was promised by the Lord Jesus (John 14:3), but it was only fully revealed and explained by (or through) the apostle Paul.

All the teaching of 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 is included in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; let us therefore confine ourselves to a study of this latter passage, and let us ask: What exactly will take place when Jesus comes to rapture His people into His presence?

1. His Coming will be Personal.

1 Thessalonians 4:16: “the Lord *himself*□”; not another Jesus, but “*this same Jesus*”(Acts 1:11), the unchanging One (Hebrews 13:8). Yes, the same glorious One who in the days when He was upon earth was so loving and gracious and kind, and the One who died for us upon Calvary’s Cross, is the One who is coming again for us. Jesus Himself is coming!

2. His Descent into the air will be sudden and dramatic.

1 Thessalonians 4:16: “loud command...□voice...□trumpet...□” Whether the “world” will hear or understand what is happening we cannot say, (compare Acts 22:9), but that every believer will hear and understand we can be quite sure! Divine intervention has always been sudden and stupendous, (compare the Flood, the Exodus and Pentecost). The ascension of our Lord was dramatic (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:9) □ and His descent will also be dramatic.

3. When He descends, “the dead in Christ shall rise first”

1 Thessalonians 4:16; not all the dead, but all the dead “in Christ”, that is, all believers. This will be “the first resurrection”. All who were saved before Christ came to die, and all who have been saved since and who have died, will rise from the dead in their glorified bodies. Until He comes their bodies “sleep” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-15 and 1 Corinthians 15:51), but when He comes, their spirits, which are with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8 ; Ephesians 3:15 and Philippians 1:23), will be clothed with bodies which are incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:52).

4. Every living Believer will be changed and caught up

□ 1 Thessalonians 4:17. This is what 1 Corinthians 15:51 means □- "we shall not all sleep"; some Christians will never die, for they will be alive on the earth when the Lord comes and will be clothed upon with immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53), and in place of their earthly body they will receive their new heavenly body (1 Corinthians 15:35-49) □- and this will take place "in the twinkling of an eye!" Every true believer will suddenly be raptured into the presence of the Lord. *The millions of Christians who are alive when He comes will suddenly disappear*, as Enoch disappeared (Hebrews 11:5); as Elijah disappeared (2 Kings 2:11); and as Jesus Himself disappeared (Acts 1:9).

5. Then will follow a time of glorious reunion for the Saints of God.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 □- "together with them". What a gathering that will be! □- and to be "together" implies recognition of our loved ones and of all the saints of God.

6. Above all, we shall meet the Lord Himself □ "to meet the Lord in the air"

1 Thessalonians 4:17. What a meeting! □- to meet the Lord, our own beloved Saviour!

7. "So shall we ever be with the Lord"

1 Thessalonians 4:17. This is the goal at the end of the road (Psalm 23:6) □- compare Psalm 16:11 and John 17:24.

What comfort there is in this blessed hope (1 Thessalonians 4:18; Titus 2:13)! After our Lord has returned and gathered His saints to Himself, He will come in power and great glory to reign upon the earth (Luke 1: 32-33).

**O Lord Jesus, how long?
How long ere we shout the glad song?
Christ returneth, Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Amen.**