

LESSON 39: RAPTURE

THE BLESSED HOPE - THE IMMINENT RETURN OF CHRIST AND THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

WHAT WOULD CHANGE IN MY LIFE IF I TRULY BELIEVED JESUS COULD RETURN AT ANY MOMENT?

THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

BIBLICAL PROPHECY IS NOT GIVEN PRIMARILY FOR SPECULATION, BUT FOR SANCTIFICATION.

TITUS 2:13 “LOOKING FOR THE BLESSED HOPE AND GLORIOUS APPEARING OF OUR GREAT GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST”

PROPHECY SHOULD:

- **PRODUCE HOLINESS**
- **AWAKEN URGENCY**
- **STRENGTHEN HOPE**
- **MOTIVATE EVANGELISM**
- **COMFORT SUFFERING BELIEVERS**

1 JOHN 3:2–3

ROMANS 13:11–14

2 PETER 3:11–14

A.W. TOZER “THEOLOGICAL TRUTH IS USELESS UNTIL IT IS OBEYED. THE PURPOSE BEHIND ALL DOCTRINE IS TO SECURE MORAL ACTION.”

THE PROMISE OF CHRIST’S RETURN

JOHN 14:1–3 JESUS PROMISED HE WOULD COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE HIS PEOPLE TO HIMSELF.

ACTS 1:11 “THIS SAME JESUS... WILL SO COME IN LIKE MANNER AS YOU SAW HIM GO INTO HEAVEN.”

HEBREWS 9:28 “...TO THOSE WHO EAGERLY WAIT FOR HIM HE WILL APPEAR A SECOND TIME...”

IMPORTANT DISTINCTION:

- **CHRIST COMING FOR HIS SAINTS (1 THESS. 4)**
- **CHRIST COMING WITH HIS SAINTS (REV. 19)**

ADDITIONAL CROSS REFERENCES:

- **PHILIPPIANS 3:20–21**
- **COLOSSIANS 3:4**
- **JAMES 5:7–8**

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13–18

KEY PHRASE: “CAUGHT UP” = HARPAZO (GREEK)

MEANING: TO SEIZE, SNATCH AWAY SUDDENLY

LATIN TRANSLATION: RAPTURIO → WHERE WE GET THE WORD “RAPTURE”

SEQUENCE IN 1 THESSALONIANS 4:

- **THE LORD DESCENDS**
- **THE TRUMPET SOUNDS**
- **DEAD BELIEVERS RISE**
- **LIVING BELIEVERS ARE TRANSFORMED**
- **THE CHURCH IS CAUGHT UP**
- **BELIEVERS ARE FOREVER WITH THE LORD**

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51–52 “WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP, BUT WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED...”

ADDITIONAL INSIGHT:

THE RAPTURE IS DESCRIBED AS:

- **SUDDEN**
- **COMFORTING**
- **HOPE-FILLED**
- **MOTIVATING TOWARD READINESS**

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (EARLY CHURCH FATHER, 4TH CENTURY)

"WHEN HE SHALL COME FROM HEAVEN, THE DEAD SHALL RISE, AND THOSE WHO ARE WORTHY SHALL BE CAUGHT UP IN THE CLOUDS TO MEET HIM."

QEPHRAEM THE SYRIAN (OFTEN CITED IN RAPTURE DISCUSSIONS)

"FOR ALL THE SAINTS AND ELECT OF GOD ARE GATHERED, PRIOR TO THE TRIBULATION THAT IS TO COME..."

THE IMMINENT RETURN OF CHRIST

THE EARLY CHURCH LIVED EXPECTING CHRIST'S RETURN AT ANY MOMENT.

MARANATHA = "OUR LORD COMES!"

KEY SCRIPTURES:

- **MATTHEW 24:42–44**
- **PHILIPPIANS 4:5**
- **JAMES 5:8**
- **REVELATION 22:20**

THE DOCTRINE OF IMMINENCE DOES NOT MEAN:

- **SETTING DATES**
- **OBSESSION WITH HEADLINES**
- **FEAR-DRIVEN CHRISTIANITY**

IT MEANS:

- **READINESS**
- **WATCHFULNESS**
- **FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE**

CHARLES SPURGEON - "OH, IF WE WERE ALWAYS LIVING WITH THE EXPECTATION OF CHRIST'S APPEARING, HOW HOLY, HOW SEPARATE FROM THE WORLD WE SHOULD BE."

THE CHURCH AND TRIBULATION

- 1 THESSALONIANS 1:10
- 1 THESSALONIANS 5:9
- REVELATION 3:10

FAITHFUL BELIEVERS HOLD DIFFERENT VIEWS:

- PRE-TRIBULATION
- MID-TRIBULATION
- POST-TRIBULATION
- AMILLENNIAL PERSPECTIVES

AREAS CHRISTIANS AGREE ON:

- JESUS IS RETURNING PHYSICALLY
- CHRIST WILL JUDGE EVIL
- BELIEVERS WILL BE RESURRECTED
- GOD WINS HISTORY

WHY THIS DOCTRINE MATTERS

THE RETURN OF CHRIST SHOULD:

- COMFORT GRIEVING BELIEVERS
- PRODUCE ENDURANCE
- STIR EVANGELISM
- LOOSEN OUR GRIP ON THE WORLD
- INCREASE WORSHIP

1 THESSALONIANS 4:18 "THEREFORE COMFORT ONE ANOTHER WITH THESE WORDS."

HEBREWS 10:24–25 "...AND SO MUCH THE MORE AS YOU SEE THE DAY APPROACHING."

IF JESUS RETURNED TONIGHT:

- IS THERE ANYTHING I NEED TO SURRENDER?
- IS THERE SOMEONE I NEED TO FORGIVE?
- IS THERE SOMEONE I NEED TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH?
- AM I LIVING EXPECTANTLY OR COMFORTABLY?

REVELATION 22:20 "EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS!"