

Grace Bible Church
Pastor Robert R. McLaughlin
Tree Of Life
Week Ending 4-18-2021

“The Rapture: Strong encouragement to hold firmly to the HOPE set before us”

In this ongoing study of the Doctrine of the Rapture, Pastor will be revealing a lot of detailed information on the nature, mechanics, and timing of the Rapture, as well as scriptural basis of our pre-tribulational view, and the contrasts between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. Also covered will be some in-depth examination of the Tribulation period, or the Great Tribulation, and the proof that the Church will not be on the earth at this time.

In these lessons Pastor will teach

- first contrasts between the Rapture and the Second Advent.
- Jesus’ “seven woes” of the Pharisees
- description of the Tribulation period
- immanency of the Rapture and instructions on living on standby in the Church Age
- Why Jesus had to leave so the Holy Spirit could come
- How the Rapture gives us hope and confidence to endure
- The Bema seat judgment vs the Great White Throne judgment
- The sheep and goats/conclusion of the Olivet Discourse

We will pick up where we left off, but first, a little review. We are looking at the Rapture of the Church at the conclusion of the Church Age. This is the mystery which was hidden in God from all who came before and revealed by our Lord to Paul and the through Paul to the early church (**Col 1:25-27**). Daniel did not know about this! Between the 69th week and the 70th week, the Jewish Age is interrupted so that the newly ascended Savior, having received His Royal title as King of Kings and Lord of Lords may call out His royal family of believers. These things are revealed for the first time ever by the Lord Jesus and are recorded only in the New Testament.

Christ is resurrected, ascended, and seated at the right hand of the Father as part of the strategic victory of the angelic conflict. This is known as our Lord's battlefield royalty. The Church Age is that period of human history when the Royal family of God is being formed on earth, (**Eph 1:22-23, 2:16, 4:4-5; Col 1:18, 24, 2:19**).

Once the royal family of God is completed, the Church is resurrected as the body of Christ to become the bride of Christ, which we refer to by the term the Rapture. The word “rapture” is not found in scripture, but the concept is clearly described (**1Th 4:16-18; 1Co 15:51-58**). It is not given a name, so we give it one for the sake of categorical teaching.

After this comes the “Big Genuflex” and acknowledgment of Christ (**Phi 2:9-11, Rom 14:11**).

Next is the Judgment Seat of Christ, when all Church Age believers are evaluated and rewarded according to their production of divine good and either receive or lose rewards (**1Cor 3:11-15, 2Cor 5:10**).

Last lesson, we discussed that the Great Tribulation is a time of punishment for the Christ-rejecting gentiles and nation of Israel. We went over **Mat 24** and pointed out the many statements which clearly point to the Jewish people. Leading up to this discourse, Jesus has been teaching and speaking in Israel's temple structure in Jerusalem. He has just completed pronouncing seven "woes" of judgment against Israel's religious leaders: the Scribes and the Pharisees in **Mat 23:13**. He concluded with a declaration that He was officially abandoning Jerusalem and her children to coming judgment (**Mat 23:37-38**). A “woe” is an exclamation of grief, similar to what is expressed by the word ‘*alas*’. In pronouncing these woes, Jesus was prophesying judgment on the religious elite who were guilty of hypocrisy and other sins. The seven woes are addressed to the teachers of the law and Pharisees; in one of the woes, He calls them “blind guides” (**Mat 23:16**).

Jesus prefaced His seven woes by explaining to the disciples that they should obey the teachings of the Jewish leaders—as they taught the law of God—but not to emulate their behavior because they did not practice what they preached (**Mat 23:3**).

The first of Jesus’ seven woes condemned the scribes and Pharisees for keeping people out of the kingdom of heaven:

Mat 23:13 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to”

Jesus is the only Savior and the only way to heaven. In their rejection of Jesus Christ, the Pharisees were effectively refusing to enter the kingdom of heaven. They also hindered the common people from believing in Him, thereby blocking the way to heaven for others.

Repentance and faith in Christ is the door of admission into this kingdom, and nothing could be more disagreeable to the Pharisees, who saw no need for repentance in their own lives and attempted to justify themselves by strict adherence to the law.

In the second of the seven woes, Jesus condemned the leaders for teaching their converts the same hypocrisy that they themselves practiced. They led their converts into a religion of works, but not into true righteousness, making them “twice as much a child of hell.” (**Mat 23:15**).

The third woe Jesus pronounced referred to the religious elite as “blind guides” and “blind fools” (**Mat 23:16-17**) which is later echoed by the apostle Paul in **Rom 2:17-20**.

However, they themselves were blind and therefore unfit to guide others.

Their spiritual blindness caused them to be ignorant of many things, including the identity of the Messiah and the way of salvation. They were blind to the true meaning of Scripture and to their own sin. Instead of teaching spiritual truth, they preferred to quibble over irrelevant matters and find

loopholes in the rules (**Mat 23:16-22**).

The fourth of the seven woes called out the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy in the practice of tithing. They made a big deal of small things like tithing spices, while they ignored crucial matters. They diligently counted their mint leaves to give every tenth one to the temple, but they “neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness” (**Mat 23:23**).

Jesus said, “You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel” (**Mat 23-24**). In other words, they were careful to avoid offense in minor things of little importance (straining gnats), while tolerating or committing great sins.

In the fifth woe, Jesus likened them to dishes that were scrupulously cleaned on the outside but left dirty inside. Their religious observances made them appear clean and virtuous, but inwardly their hearts were full of “greed and self-indulgence.” (**Mat 23:25**).

In the sixth woe, Jesus compared them to “whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean” (**Mat:23:27**).

The hypocrisy Jesus addressed in the seventh woe was directed to those who erected monuments and decorated the tombs of the prophets of old. Jesus points out that those prophets had been slain by the Pharisees’ own ancestors. They imagined themselves much better than their fathers, saying, “If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets” (**Mat 23:30**). But in that very statement they acknowledged their lineage: Jesus says they were truly their fathers’ sons; they had inherited their ancestors’ wickedness and were following in their steps. Jesus knew their evil hearts, which would soon plot to murder Him (**Mat 26:4**), just as their ancestors had murdered the righteous men of old.

The seven woes of Matthew 23 are dire warnings to the religious leaders of Jesus’ day, but they also serve to warn us against religious hypocrisy today. Jerusalem has refused to acknowledge Him as the Messiah and receive His protection. Now Jesus and His disciples have left the temple and are walking away from it. Jesus and His disciples have left the temple after an extensive time of teaching which ended with Jesus mourning over Jerusalem's refusal to recognize and receive Him. Despite the serious tone of Jesus' most recent pronouncements, the disciples turn and comment to Jesus about the buildings of the temple. The temple had been extensively renovated in recent years, and historians report that it was known for its beauty and grandeur. Christ will not allow the disciples to miss the point of His recent revelations about the coming judgment on Jerusalem. His prediction will be shocking (**Mat 24:2; Mark 13:2**).

MAT 24:2 And He answered and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

First, Christ makes it clear he's referring to the temple buildings they are all looking at. He is not speaking in parable, or symbolism, or talking about some other location. The prediction He gives is dire: the entire structure will be obliterated, down to the foundations. Jesus is predicting the utter destruction of the historic and beautiful temple of Israel (**Mark 13:2**).

This prophecy of judgment was completely and fully fulfilled when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. In response to a Jewish revolt, the Roman Empire laid siege to Jerusalem for five months. At the end of this time, the city was invaded and ransacked, bringing the Jewish death toll into the hundreds of

thousands. Romans burned the temple, causing leftover gold to melt into the cracks of the masonry. To remove it, soldiers literally tore the structure apart brick-to-brick, leaving nothing but the level foundation. At that point, Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled, and the Old Testament system of sacrifices had entirely ceased to be (**Heb 8:13**). This discourse which Jesus gave which is recorded in Mat 24 is known as “the Olivet Discourse” because it was given on the Mount of Olives.

In response to this prophecy, apparently, the disciples ask Jesus a two-part question. His long and involved answer focuses on future events for the disciples and Himself. Beginning in the next verse, the rest of Matthew’s gospel is devoted to Jesus' words, through the end of chapter 25.

The disciples ask, first, when the temple will be destroyed and second, how they will know Christ is returning to complete the end of days. The first response is a warning to the disciples to watch themselves, so they are not deceived. He tells them to make sure nobody leads them astray, referring to the time when He will be absent from them. He will warn in the following verse about deceivers who will pretend to be the Christ (**Mat 24:5**). He wants them to be clear that He alone is the Messiah. Jesus does not mean that they will pretend to be Him, specifically, as the disciples would know Him from another person. Instead, Jesus is saying that many will come who claim He was not the Messiah—Jesus will have been executed by Rome by then (**Mat 16:21**)—and that they are really the Christ. Jesus adds that many of these liars will be successful: numerous people will be taken in. Since Jesus is the only true path to the kingdom of heaven, those led astray will be led toward destruction.

History records examples of people who claimed to be the Promised One after Jesus' earthly ministry was over. One such false Messiah, Simon Bar Kokhba, failed in an attempt to revolt against Rome in 135 AD. Jesus does not want His followers to be caught in any such foolish deception.

In **Mat 24:6-8**, Jesus predicts that stories about violence, unrest, and chaos will come. However, just because there are battles or conflicting reports about them does not, itself, mean the end is near. These real and rumored wars are part of God's unfolding plan for the earth. They must take place, but they are not the signal of the end.

Last Sunday (4-11-21), Pastor taught that the Tribulation was punishment for the unbelieving who had refused to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, both Gentile and Jew alike. He also taught that the Church will not be subject to God’s wrath (**Rom 5:9; 1Th 1:10; 5:9; Rev 3:10**). In **1 Th 5:7-28**, Paul gives thorough instructions to the Church at Thessalonica as well as to all Church Age believers. The instructions by the apostle Paul never include any preparation or warning that the Church will encounter the great Tribulation. If the Church goes through the Tribulation then the Jew's as well as the Gentiles of the Tribulation period would become part of the Church. The church at Thessalonica would not be concerned of any disadvantage of the dead in Christ if those who were alive had to go through the great Tribulation (**1Th 1:4**). The message of the Church is the message of the Gospel of grace, and peace which was secured at the cross by Jesus the Christ. The iniquity of the anti-Christ cannot be released until the Holy Spirit, the restrainer (God the Holy Spirit) is removed with the Church (**2Th 2:3-7** – the mystery of lawlessness). The believer is told to watch, or have an attitude of anticipation for the Lord's coming.

1Th 4:13–18 represents an important shift in the subject matter of Paul's letter. Realizing the Thessalonian believers needed further teaching about Jesus' return (the Rapture) and specifically about what happens to Christians who die before Jesus returns, Paul turns to address these vital matters.

Pre-tribulation Rapture theology maintains that Christ will remove His church *before* the great tribulation, for all the reasons given above, and then that the church will return with Christ at the Second coming to establish the Millennial reign of Christ!

So, we must begin this subject with some prophecy concerning the future of planet earth.

II. The Great Tribulation.

There is a time coming on this earth which is called "Satan's time of desperation" It is also called "the day of wrath" or "the hour of trial". It is a period of the greatest power struggle in all of human history. And it involves not only people but angelic creatures as well. It is not a time that you would want any of your family members, friends, neighbors, and if you truly understood it, even your enemies to have to go through. It is a great period of wrath on this earth, both from God and from Satan (**Zep 1:14-18**). It is said to be a great time of indignation (**Isa 26:20-21**). The hour of testing (**Rev 3:10**). Destruction, (**Joel 1:15**). Darkness and gloom (**Joel 2:2**). Desolation (**Dan 9:27**). Punishment (**Isa 24:20-21**).

It is a very difficult time to be alive and it is called the Tribulation period! The "wrath of God" will be poured out upon the world during the great Tribulation period. And according to the word of God, it is a time that could take place on this earth tomorrow! This is because of the immanency of the Rapture! The nature of the Tribulation is also one of practical importance - If the church is destined to endure the persecutions of the Tribulation, it is hopeless to proclaim the coming of the Lord as an imminent hope. Instead, it should be recognized that Christ cannot come until these predicted sorrows have been accomplished. On the other hand, if Christ will come for His church before the predicted time of trouble, Christians can regard His coming as an imminent daily expectation.

This is why **Ti 2:13** calls the rapture or the appearing of TLJC, "**our blessed hope (makarios elpis) or happy guarantee**"

So you should know the rapture is coming. It can come at any time! This is why it is said to be "imminent." There is no prophecy to be fulfilled before it can happen. All the signs we are given are happening throughout the entire Church Age. We are told to live as though the Master (aka TLJC) will return at any moment, and we (the watchman in the parable) ought to keep our lamps lit (**Lk 12:35**). In this way you apply doctrine....day in, day out:

- You are occupied with the person of Jesus Christ.
- You utilize +H.
- You operate in virtue-love.

-You have a wonderful life and death.

Principle- All believers can have confidence, hope and a guarantee with regard to the rapture.

And the confidence is the fact that we have been delivered from the wrath to come! And, the Rapture or the resurrection of the church is totally beyond our control because resurrection which is the Lord's victory.

1Co 15:57 "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

So, the Church-age terminates with the transferring of the church into the Lord's presence. The doctrine of the translation of the church is found in many passages - **Joh 14:1-3; 1Co 15:51-52; 2TH 2:1; Phi 3:20-21; 1Th 4:13-18; 2Co 5:1-9; 1Co 1:8.**

JOH 14:1-3 "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, {there} you may be also.

2Th 2:1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him,

Because the Church and Israel are two distinct groups with whom God has a divine plan, one has to be taken away while the other is dealt with. Therefore, the distinction between the Rapture and the Second advent must be noted.

Another very important point concerning the rapture of the church and the fact that TLJC will remove the church from this world when that terrible Tribulational period comes is found under the principle of mystery doctrine.

For example, we have noted many times those passages in the New Testament such as **Eph 3:1-6; Col 1:25-27; Rom 16:25-26**, which all make it crystal clear that the church was a mystery and was not known in the Old Testament. The church, therefore, could not have been in view in the Old Testament prophecy concerning the Tribulational period which is to come upon the whole earth.

And there can be no question that this period will see the wrath of God poured out upon the whole earth.

Rev 3:10; Isa 34:2; 24:1,4-5, 16-21 and, many other passages make it very clear as well. **Jer 30:7** says this period is particularly called the time of Jacob's trouble and Jacob refers to Israel. In **Dan 9:24**, God says 70 weeks are determined upon "thy" people (Jews not the church).

DAN 9:24 "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression,

So, again, this whole Tribulational period has special reference to Daniel's people Israel and Daniel's holy city, Jerusalem.

In the Old Testament, the seventy weeks of prophecy are weeks of years. In **Gen 29:26-27**, and **Dan 9:24**, one week is equivalent to 7 years. So, 70 times 7 equals 490! God owes Israel seven years! They have had 69 weeks already, i.e., 483 years. Therefore, the Church has nothing to do with this prophecy since the Church did not have its existence until after the death of Christ - **Eph 5:25-26**, after the resurrection of Christ - **Rom 4:25; Col 3:1-3**, and after the ascension of Christ - **Eph 1:19-20**. The church could not have been in the first 69 weeks of this prophecy. So, since the church had no part in the first 69 weeks which are related only to God's program for Israel, then it can have no part in the 70th week which is again related to God's program for Israel.

Now, **Rev 2:22** indicates clearly that the unsaved professing church will experience the tribulational period (**Rev 2:18-22**). Remember, the professing church is composed of those who make a profession of faith in Christ.

But it's another Jesus....**2Co 11:4**

Another spirit...**2Co 11:4**

Another Gospel...**Gal 1:6**

Another doctrine **1Ti 4:1**.

So the "True" church will not and cannot go through the Tribulation period which is coming upon this earth and therefore the church must be taken out from the earth which is what we call the rapture. In fact **Rev 3:10** also describes this principle: **'Because you have kept the word of my perseverance, I also will keep you from or take you out from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.'**

Now, **Rev 13:1-9** makes it clear that all who are in the 70th week or the Tribulation period are brought into subjection to the beast and through him to Satan who gives the beast power.

Rev 13:7-8 And it was given to him to make war with the [Tribulation] saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the lamb who has been slain.

If the church were in this period she would be subjected to Satan and Christ would either lose His place as head or because of His union with the Church, He would be also subjected to Satan's authority. Such a thing is unthinkable and blasphemous!

So the order of events which will take place for the Church needs to be noted.

1. The Rapture.
2. The Big Genuflex.

3. The Judgment Seat of Christ.
4. The Second Coming.

The Rapture of the church is basically held by two schools of theology: the Pre-Tribulational view, and the post-Tribulational view. Amillennial and postmillennial theology does not believe in the rapture of the church at all! Their position is basically promoted through the "kingdom now theology", which adheres to the notion, that the Church will usher in a world peace. Post-Tribulational theology believes that the Church will go through the great tribulation, and then be raptured, and return with Jesus Christ to reign in the Millennium Most covenant schools of theology subscribe to this position. We are Pre-Trib, which means we believe scripture is clear that the Church will be removed when it has been completed and gathered to our Lord, bow and confess that Jesus is Lord, receive resurrection bodies, and be wed as the bride to the bridegroom (according to the analogy of the Jewish wedding), judged for our production of divine good during our lives, rewarded or not rewarded, and then will return with the Lord in the second advent.

III. The Rapture vs. The Second Advent: Compare and Contrast

Basic contrasts between the Rapture and the 2nd Advent:

The Rapture

1. Private, ACT 1:11.
2. In the air, 1TH 4:17.
3. Judgement of believers works, 2CO 5:10.
4. Church goes to heaven, JOH 14:3.
5. Holy Spirit is removed, 2TH 2:6.
6. Change in the believer's body, PHI 3:21.
7. Christ appears as the groom, REV 19:7.
8. End of the Church-Age, 1CO 15:52.
9. Israel under fifth cycle of discipline, REV 3:10.
10. Believers taken from the earth, 1TH 4:16-18.
11. A time of comfort, 1TH 4:18.

Second Advent

1. Public, REV 11:7.
2. On Earth, ZEC 14:4.
3. Baptism of Fire, MAT 25:31-46.
4. Church returns with Christ, 1TH 3:13.
5. Removal of Satan, REV 20:1-3.
6. Earth is changed, ZEC 14:9; ROM 8:19-22.
7. Christ appears as Messiah, REV 1:7.
8. End of the Jewish Age, REV 21:1.
9. Termination of Fifth cycle of discipline, REV 21:1.
10. Unbelievers taken from earth, MAT 24:37-43.

11. Time of terror, REV 6:15-17.

Rapture 1. Private ACT 1:11

The rapture is a private event, in the sense that only those who are saved will see Jesus.

Acts 1:11 and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

Acts 1 sets the stage for the establishment of the church and the spread of the gospel. According to **Joh 16:7** Jesus is alive but if the Holy Spirit is to come Jesus must ascend into heaven. In fact **Acts 1:1–11** fulfills Jesus' teaching that for the Holy Spirit to come, He must return to heaven.

JOH 16:7 "But I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I am leaving; for if I do not leave, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."

In **JOH 16:5- 7** the idea that Jesus is leaving understandably makes these men both fearful and sad. The suggestion that Jesus leaving is somehow beneficial was probably absurd in their minds. However, in order to complete His atonement for sin, it would be necessary for Jesus to leave (**JOH 12:31–32**).

As long as Jesus is there, in person, the object of the disciples' faith would always be a tangible, external person. That's not necessarily bad, however, it means they would constantly depend on Him to direct them, or to answer their questions. Their own thoughts and conscience would perpetually be pushed aside, in favor of asking Jesus for His judgment. In short, Jesus' physical presence in some sense limits the depth of their reliance on God. It also limits how many people Jesus can influence at once.

The Holy Spirit, [on the other hand], completely fulfills the prediction given in **Jer 31:31–34**:

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

God the Holy Spirit, aka The Helper, enables us to live in God's plan without Jesus' physical presence for us just as it did for the disciples. Instead of relying on other people, believers in the Church Age can rely on God's power as He is dwelling inside us at all times (**Joh 14:17**). The supernatural Christian life depends on supernatural power. God has graciously provided the solution! We have the advantage of His influence, so far as we're willing to submit to it (**1 Cor 2:14–16**).

So, it was time for Jesus' earthly ministry to end and the Holy Spirit's ministry to come into full effect (**Joh 16:8–14**). This is the time of the beginning of the dispensation of the church age.

Now back to **Acts 1:11** - After the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus spent forty days showing Himself

to His believers to prove that resurrection and give them instructions, and then He ascended into heaven. **Acts 1:1–11** is an expanded account of **Luk 24:50–53**. In **Acts 1:10**, the disciples are staring off into the sky, watching the spot where clouds took Jesus away, when two men in white robes break their stupor and explain that the Lord will return in the same way as He has just left them. HE WILL RETURN! Jesus' role as a physically-visible member of the Trinity working on earth is over; it is time for the ministry of God the Holy Spirit (**John 16:7**), but Christ still has a role. Specifically, He will honor Stephen (**Acts 7:56**) and confront Saul/Paul (**Acts 9:5**).

In the end times, before the tribulation begins, "the Lord Jesus Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord" (**1 Th 4:16–17**).

This is our transference into His presence, aka The Rapture! Now we will look at our first distinction of the Second Advent.

Second Advent 1. Public, (Rev 1:7).

At the end of the tribulation, when Jesus comes to destroy the Antichrist and his army and set up His millennial kingdom, Jesus will again come with the clouds just as the two angels said (**Rev 1:7**). In the past, God used clouds to shield His people from His glory (**Ex 19:9, 16–18; 1 Ki 8:10–11**). We just saw this in our study of the Shekinah Glory and theophanies.

This is the second advent and it is very much PUBLIC, involving ALL!

REV 1:7 "BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen."

Again, it is important not to confuse the second advent with the rapture.

The rapture occurs when Jesus comes in the sky and catches up Christians from the earth to be with Him.

We showed you that the Rapture is a private event, in the sense that only those who are saved will see Jesus. On the other hand, the Second Coming is a public event. John declares that *every eye will see Jesus* at the second coming. Also, the tribes of Israel will have undergone a national revival when Jesus comes again. There is no mention of such a revival before the rapture. John recalls what Zechariah had prophesied about Israel's revival when Jesus comes to earth again.

Zec 12:10 prophesies, "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn."

The angel promised that Jesus would come again in the same way as He went into heaven. Then, Jesus ascended in a cloud from the Mount of Olives **Acts 1:11–12**, and at His second coming He will return in the clouds to the Mount of Olives (**Zec 14:4; Mat 24:29–30**).

John's joyful anticipation of Jesus' return to earth caused him to exclaim, "EVEN SO. AMEN" (**Rev 1:7**). We, too, should eagerly anticipate the second coming, because Jesus will reign over the earth, and we will reign with Him (**2 Tim 2:12**).

The first difference we observed was that the Rapture is a private event in the sense that only Church Age believers will be involved, whereas the 2nd Advent is a very public event involving ALL. In the rapture, believers are called to meet Christ in the air. In the case of the Second Coming, Christ returns with angels and thousands upon thousands of His holy ones. He sets foot on the Mount of Olives and Battles the armies gathered against Him in the Valley of Armageddon. This can be seen in **Rev 16:16, 17:14, 19:11-19. Zec 14**.

That was the first distinction so now lets take a look at the 2nd distinction between the Rapture and the Second Advent. The Second Advent is designed to reveal Him as both battlefield royalty and Jewish royalty. At the Rapture of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ does not return to the earth as in the Second Advent.

2. The Rapture takes place *in the air* (1TH 4:17)

This rapture event will introduce Christians to an eternity in Jesus' presence. The word "clouds" is used metaphorically, most likely as a reference to sky but also symbolic of OT theophanies, as we have seen with our recent studies. Jesus' arrival in earth's atmosphere demonstrates that He offers Christians safe passage through the Devil's territory, reflecting imagery used elsewhere in Scripture. The Devil is "the prince of the power of the air" (**Eph 2:12**), but he is no match for Jesus.

The apostle John offered strong encouragement by writing, **1 Joh 4:4 "... he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world"**.

When Jesus fully returns to earth for the second time in the Second Advent, He will do so leading the armies of heaven (**Rev 19:11–16**). Now we will take a look at the 3rd distinction of the Second Advent from the Rapture.

3. The Second Advent takes place *on earth* (ZEC 14:4).

At His first coming to earth, Jesus appeared as a baby and sacrificial Savior. This time, He arrives as King of kings and Lord of lords. Many prior Scriptures prophesied this epic day of victory (**Mat 25; Zec 14:1–4; 2 Th 2:7–12; Heb 9:27–28; Jude 1:14–15**).

This time, Christ arrives in a blaze of glory, obliterating His enemies single-handedly, at the head of the armies (aka 'hosts') of heaven.

The Antichrist and False Prophet become the first two cast into the lake of fire, ushering in the beginning of Christ's millennial reign on earth. **Rev 19:11** reports that the apostle John saw heaven open and observed a rider on a white horse. The rider is identified using names such as Faithful and True. This distinguishes Him from the earlier white horse rider in **Rev 6:2**. The rider in **Rev 19:11** is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who identified Himself to the church in Laodicea as "the faithful and true witness" (**Rev 3:14**).

Rev 19:12 emphasizes Christ's absolute majesty, power, and victory. Jesus' first coming to earth was

humble in **Luk 2:7** and included His sacrificial death (**Php 2:8**). His second coming, however, sees Jesus arrive as the King of kings and Lord of lords, with piercing eyes. The Jews who rejected Jesus as the Messiah did not understand this. They were expecting the triumphant Christ to come and destroy their enemies and fulfill the covenants without first becoming our substitute. They were only seeing the second coming and skipping over the first. But we must understand – the cross comes before the crown! The mystery doctrine of the Church Age was not understood by them and is still not today, even by many Christians. This is a tragedy!

In addition to His known Royal and divine titles, Jesus has a name that only He knows (**Rev 19:12**). In ancient times, it was often held that knowing a person's name provided certain spiritual leverage (**Gen 32:27; Mar 5:9**). As the Lord roars against His foes, another of His names is prominent: "the Word of God." This title clearly identifies the rider on a white horse here as Jesus, who came to earth the first time as God in the flesh but was rejected by the world (**Joh 1:1–2, 10–11, 14**).

In **2Cor 5**, Paul longs to occupy his eternal body, described as a permanent house built by God Himself. Knowing and anticipating his resurrection body, Paul has the courage to risk even more suffering in order to continue the mission to preach the gospel. When we live in our new self (**Eph 4:24**), as citizens of heaven but strangers to the earth, being focused on things above rather than things below (**Col 3:2**), confident in the hope which is set before us (**Heb 6:18**), resting in knowing that “to live is Christ, and death is profit” (**Php 1:21**), we are able to carry our cross. Paul’s faith in this promise of the mystery of the Rapture and eternal security gave him the ability to push on despite the extreme pressure and persecution he faced. Paul was not a superhero. He was not special. He was an ordinary man just like any other member of the human race. He simply utilized the power of doctrine and faith to carry on and fulfill his earthly mission. Can you see now the importance of this doctrine?

One motivation to please God is Paul's knowledge that he will be judged by Christ for his works in this life and that all believers in Jesus will appear before the judgment seat of Christ when He returns to earth. Paul is quite clear in his letters that this judgment is not about salvation. “For it is by grace that you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9). We are saved *FOR* good works (**Eph 2:10**), not by them.

The judgment seat of Christ is something exclusively for believers only, whereas the baptism of fire - all will be present. This refers to an assessment of what each saved, heaven-bound Christian has done "in the body" since coming to faith in Christ. How has he or she used this life in Christ? Did they make themselves available to God or were they too busy living for self?

Eph 6:8 tells us Christians will receive those efforts "back from the Lord". The works of those who have lived only for themselves, however, will be "burned up" or shown to be worthless.

1Co 3:15 If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved [no loss of salvation], yet so as through fire [nothing to show for their time].

This is a judgment of the work of Christians, not the Christians themselves (**Rom 8:1**).

The Post-Tribulation view skips over all this and produces the “yo-yo effect.” Believers would be called up to meet Christ in the air and immediately come back down to earth in one instant. It causes another problem: how would there be any believers in mortal bodies, if they were Raptured at the second coming? Post-tribulationism is also not able to explain the sheep and goats judgment after the

second coming in **Mat 25:31-46**.

His glorious throne after arriving on earth in glory with His army. Here He will have returned as both the Judge and the King.

This marks the beginning of His kingdom on earth, a period known to many as the "millennium," the 1,000-year reign of Christ. Jesus' reign as King, in this depiction, begins with a judgment dividing people into two different groups. In **Mat 25:31** everyone alive on earth will answer to Him as the Judge of all, as He sits on His glorious throne with all power and authority to decide the fate of those subject to judgment.

Scholars and traditions differ on who, exactly, is subject to this judgment. This is one of the most difficult passages in the Bible and the interpretation can have profound and fundamental consequences. However, we believe that this judgment involves all people of the earth, believers and unbelievers, Jews and Gentiles, who have survived the tribulation previously described (**Mat 24:21**).

The people here have survived the tribulation and are now being judged to see who enters the millennial kingdom of Christ, also known as the "Great White Throne Judgment" (Rev 20:1–6). **If you are reading this and you have not been born again, truly truly I say to you, make Jesus Christ Lord of your life! In the privacy of your mind, tell God in your thoughts that you are believing in Jesus Christ as your Savior Whom He sent and trusting Him for eternal salvation. That's all there is to it! Welcome to the royal family of God !**

****Church Age Believers Will Not Be Part Of This Judgment! Our judgment has already taken place! (2 Cor 5:10)****

The eternal fate of non-believers is declared at the great white throne, sometime after the millennium (**Rev 20:11–15**) and just prior to the arrival of New Jerusalem (**Rev 21:1–2**).

Those who have believed in Jesus Christ during the Tribulation period, which is the greatest time of persecution for believers and dominance of Satan in all of human history, will be counted as sheep and will enter into the millennial kingdom (**Mat 25:34**). As Jesus will indicate, those who have trusted Him have demonstrated that faith (**Joh 14:15**) through obedience (**Mat 10:40–42**).

In **Mat 25:36** Christ is still speaking to the sheep and He will go on to explain that it was their service to other believers (**1 John 3:11**) which was, in effect, love shown to Him (**Joh 14:15; Mat 10:40–42; 25:40**). It's important to note that the reason these people did these good works was because they were living faithfully for Jesus.

This praise stands in stark contrast to the judgment of the second group, as shown in the following verses. In v 41 of Matthew 25, the group known as the "goats," on the King's left hand, have listened as Jesus has welcomed the other group, the sheep, to accept their rightful places in His kingdom on earth.

Turning to the second group, Christ delivers a very different message. He calls them cursed and banishes them to the same eternal destination as Satan and his demons. Unlike the first group, these people were clearly not believers in Jesus—proven by the fact that they were not faithful to Him while He was away. Again, this is the period of maximum persecution of believers, when it is forbidden to believe.

The goats failed to care for Him when He suffered all the various needs met by those called the sheep. They shunned Him by shunning His people. It's important to note that the actions Jesus describes here are not what cause these people to be approved or condemned (**Ti 3:5**).

Christ has condemned the goats, however, banishing them to eternal fire alongside the Devil and his demons (Matthew 25:41). When it comes to Jesus, this second group likely would not have served, even had they known the implications (John 5:39–40), because they were not willing to honor Christ (John 3:36). That inaction proves the opposite of Christian love (John 13:31–35). It demonstrates that these people are not part of God's family (1 John 4:20).

On this ominous note, Jesus reaches the end of His description about the judgment that will come at the end of the age (**Mat 24:3**). This is the end of what is called the Olivet Discourse where Jesus has finished describing to the disciples the future events they originally asked about. As Matthew's account continues, Jesus will turn to fulfill His destiny as the sacrifice for sin (**Mat 26:1–3**).

