

## **4. The Return of Jesus as Taught By Christ and the Apostles for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Many false doctrines of 21<sup>st</sup> century are at odds with the teaching of Jesus and the apostles on the subject of the Lord's return. Most come out of the various millennial doctrines of *the Rapture* and a *1,000 year reign of Christ on earth*. Many Christian faiths believe and teach about an end-times event when all true believers, who are still alive before the end of the world, will be taken from the earth by God into heaven. The term describing this event is *the Rapture*, a term not found in the Bible. Those who accept the Rapture theory believe that all non-believers on the earth at that time will be left behind for the *tribulation period*. According to most who hold this view, *the tribulation* period will last for seven years, the final seven years of this age, until Christ returns to set up his earthly kingdom during *the Millennium*, another term not found in the Bible. Their false words teach false doctrine.

The plain teaching of Christ and the apostles preclude any of these false ideas.

### ***What Jesus and the Apostles Taught in the 1st Century about His Certain Coming?***

Jesus and the apostles taught emphatically that Jesus would come again. Jesus himself taught in John 14:2-3: "2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." When Jesus comes, he will take the righteous to be where he is and not remain himself on the earth where they are. Paul describes this coming in detail in 1 Thess 4:13-17:

13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 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 own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till 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.

The Lord will come back, and we be caught up to meet him, and so we will be with the Lord forever. Jesus is coming back to take us with him and not coming back to be with us on the earth. There is not one scripture that says Jesus will step foot on the earth.

### ***What Jesus and the Apostles Taught about the Predictability of His Coming***

Jesus and the apostles taught clearly that no man knows when the Lord will come. Many 21<sup>st</sup> century religions predict the coming of Jesus. Some religions predict his coming, and then alter their predictions, when he fails to come. Jesus taught that no one knows the time or place of his coming. Jesus taught in Matt 24:23, "At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it." In Matt 24:26-27, he added:

"So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."

When the Lord does come it will be apparent to all, and we will not be left to wonder. Peter described the coming as that of a thief in the night in 2 Peter 3:10, "10 But the day of the Lord will

come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, if men predict the coming of the Lord, they will always be wrong.

### ***What Jesus and His Apostles Taught about How Apparent His Coming Will Be***

All the scriptures speak of the coming as instantly apparent. Yet, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, some teach that Jesus' coming was a secret event. For example, there are those who claim that his coming was with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. His coming will be as visible as the lightning that is seen from the east to the west (Matt 24:2). It will be with the command of the archangel and the trumpet call of God (1 Thess 4:16). It will be apparent to all men everywhere. Any 21<sup>st</sup> century doctrine that teaches that it has already happened is false doctrine, and not worthy of consideration.

### ***What Jesus and the Apostles Taught about the Fate of Mankind at His Coming***

When Jesus comes, he will deal with three groups of people in three distinctly different ways: The dead in Christ shall rise, the living in Christ will change, and the wicked will receive vengeance. Consider the dead in Christ. The teaching is plain in 1 Thess 4:14, "14 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." Paul further teaches, "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 (1 Thess 4:16)." The dead in Christ will join the living in Christ, being caught up with them where they will ever be according to 1 Thess 4:17: "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."

1 Cor 15:42-44, agrees with the passage in 1 Thess 4:

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, 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.

Paul explains this happening at the coming of Christ in 1 Cor 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.

Notice that the coming is quick like a flash or a twinkling, yet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century some teach that there will be other events like the rapture (unscriptural term) and a thousand year earthly reign (unscriptural concept). These ideas are 21<sup>st</sup> century false doctrines regarding the coming of Christ.

With those dead in Christ and those living in Christ being immortal and living forever with the Lord, what will be the fate of the sinners and unbelievers? James asked this very same question rhetorically in 1 Peter 4:17-18:

17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And,

"If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,  
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

Paul answered the question explicitly in 2 Thess 1:7-10:

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from

the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

### ***What Jesus and the Apostles Taught about the Fate of the Earth***

The best explanation of the destruction of the physical universe and the earth is 2 Peter 3:10-12:

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

Again, his coming is sudden, leaving no time for the false doctrine of a 1,000-year reign on earth. At this very same and sudden time when the earth will be destroyed with fervent heat, when those in Christ become immortal by resurrection from the dead or by being changed, and when they are forever with him, the last enemy will have been conquered and the kingdom will be delivered to the father. Paul explains completely in 1 Cor 15:22-28:

22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. 28 When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

### ***Study Questions from the Scriptures***

1. Where are the terms *the rapture* and *the millennium* found in the Bible?
2. John 14:2-3: Where did Jesus go? Why did he go? Will he come back? What will he do?
3. 1 Thess 4:13-17: What do we believe about Jesus' death? Because we believe this, what do we believe about those who have fallen asleep? What about those who are alive? How will we know when Jesus comes? When the trumpet call sounds, what will happen to the dead? The living? Where will they all meet the Lord? How long will we be with the Lord?
4. Matt 24:23: How are we to respond if someone says that here is the Christ?
5. Matt 24:26-27: How will the Lord's coming be like the lightning?
6. 2 Peter 3:10: How did Peter describe the day of the Lord? What will happen to the earth?
7. 1 Cor 15:42-44: How will be the resurrection of the dead? How will the body change?
8. 1 Cor 15:51-53: How will the dead change? What two groups of people will be changed?
9. 1 Peter 4:17-18: What will become of the sinner and the ungodly? What will happen to those who do not obey the gospel?
10. 2 Thess 1:7-10: How will Jesus be revealed from heaven? What will happen to those who know not God and obey not the gospel?
11. 2 Peter 3:10-12: What will happen to the earth when Jesus comes? What kind of people ought we to be?
12. 1 Cor 15:22-28: When will the end come? What will Christ do with the kingdom? What all will be under the feet of Christ? Who, after the end, will *all in all*?