

Christ in Prophecy

Rapture 2: “*The Rapture vs. The Second Coming*”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Hello I am Dave Reagan Senior Evangelist for Lamb and Lion Ministries. I greet you in the name of Jesus our blessed hope and I welcome you to this special program about the Rapture versus the Second Coming. I'm going to be talking to you specifically about your concept of the Lord's return. And I would like to get into this program by going immediately to Scripture. So if you have your Bibles handy would you turn with me to Titus the second chapter. You'll find the book of Titus right before Hebrews look at chapter 2 and let's begin reading there in verse 11. It says, "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." Now that is the First Coming of Jesus Christ, the grace of God appeared bringing salvation to all men. Then as we go to the next verse he starts talking about what we are to do as we prepare for the Lord's return. Hold this up to yourself as a sort of spiritual mirror and see if you are doing these things as you wait for the Lord to return. Verse 12, "Instructing us to deny ungodliness, and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." And then in verse 13 he tells us one other thing we are to do, we are to live looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.

Are you doing that? Are you living looking for the coming of our blessed hope, the Lord Jesus Christ? I want to ask you some questions about your concept of the Lord's return. For example when you think about the Lord coming what sort of thoughts come into your mind? Are they positive? Are they negative? If you think about the Lord coming do you think of love, or do you think of wrath? Do you think of something that you are anxious about, something that you want to happen any moment or is it something that you dread terribly? What is your attitude about the Lord's return? And let me ask you something else. If a person who had never read the Bible, never gone to church knew absolutely nothing about God's Word asked you to tell them about the Lord's return, what would you say? What sort of words would you use? What kind of concepts would you use?

How would you describe the Lord's return? Now I want you to really think about that for a moment, how you would describe the Lord's return, because I want you to compare what's in your mind right now, compare it with what the Bible has to say.

Let's look at the only two references in the Bible concerning, in the New Testament at least, concerning the return of Jesus Christ. These are the two references in detail, not the only two, but the only two that are given in great detail. One is in 1 Thessalonians 4, the other one is in Revelation 19. Now I hope you have your Bibles and would turn with me as we look at 1 Thessalonians 4. Here is the first description of the Lord's return, and as I read it I want you to compare in your own mind your concept of the Lord's return. It begins with Paul speaking in verse 13 in saying, "We do not want you to be uninformed brethren about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as do the rest who have no hope."

Now let me set the context for you here, Paul had been to the Thessalonica church, he had taught them about the return of the Lord. In the process of doing so he had evidently told them the Lord could come any moment then he left. And after he left some of the members of that church died. Now when they died this raised the question of what is going to happen when the Lord returns. Are they just going to lie there in the ground? Are they going to be overlooked? Will only those who are alive be taken up to meet the Lord in the sky? This was a serious question. And so people began to send messages to Paul, what is going to happen to those that die before the Lord comes? And Paul says in verse 14, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him that have fallen asleep in Jesus." He says, "Hey, I've got good news for you, there is hope. When those die who are in Jesus their spirits go to be with the Lord. And when the Lord comes back He is going to bring with Him the spirits of the dead." And it says that when He brings them He says, "With this we say to you by the Word of the Lord that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not proceed those who have fallen asleep." He said, "We are not going to go up and meet the Lord we are not going to go up and do that before those who have died." He says, "Let me tell you what is going to happen. The dead in Christ are going to be resurrected first, and they will go up and meet the Lord in the sky. You don't have to worry about them. They have hope; the Lord is going to resurrect them first. And he says, "The Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trumpet of God, and the

dead in Christ shall rise first, and then we who are alive. Those of us who are alive it says, "We will remain but we will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and then we will always be with the Lord." Isn't that wonderful! What a tremendous concept that is, it is no wonder that this whole passage ends with the statement, "Therefore comfort one another with these words." We are to comfort one another with these words because both the living and the dead are going to meet Jesus in the sky when He appears.

Now let's go to Revelation 19 and let's see what that particular passage has to say, this is the only other detailed passage in the New Testament concerning the Return of Jesus. In Revelation 19 you are going to see quite a different description. It says in Revelation 19:11, "That John saw Heaven opened and it says when he saw Heaven open he saw Jesus come out on a white horse, the one who is called, Faithful, and True." And it says, "That He comes with the purpose of judging and making war against the enemies of God." You will find that in Revelation 19:11, it says, "His eyes are like a flame of fire, and upon His head are many crowns." And it says, "The He has a name written upon Him which only He Himself knows. And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood and His name is called the Word of God." Now notice how different this description is Jesus bursts from the Heavens on a white horse. He comes as a Warrior, He comes with blood all over His clothes. He comes to pour out the wrath of God against the enemies of God. It is an incredible scene of judgment and wrath and vengeance. And then it says, "The armies which are in Heaven clothed in fine linens, white and clean are following Him on white horses. I want to tell you something that is one of the most exciting verses in the Bible for me, because that army that comes with Jesus Christ are the believers in their glorified bodies that have gone on to be with the Lord. It is not angels we know that because earlier in the passage it says, that the Bride of Christ is in Heaven with Jesus and the Bride of Christ is clothed in linen, garments that are white like this. And suddenly when He breaks from the heavens and verse 14, who is with Him? The saints, those of us who are in Jesus Christ are going to come back with Him and we are going to see this with our very eyes. "And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He might smite the nations. And He will rule them with a rod of iron as he treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written which is King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Now there

you have it, the only two detailed descriptions of the Return of Jesus that you will find anywhere in the New Testament.

And folks, if you have been following what I have been saying here, you know at this point we have a major, major theological problem. This is no minor league deal, this is a major theological problem. What is the problem? Very simple, only two detailed descriptions in the New Testament of the return of Jesus and the two have absolutely nothing in common, not anything what so ever. Except that they both focus upon Jesus Christ. Did you notice that? They are just as different as night and day. It is like they are describing two different events. In one, in 1 Thessalonians 4 what do you have? You have in 1 Thessalonians 4 Jesus appearing in the heavens, but in Revelation 19 He returns to the earth. In 1 Thessalonians 4 He doesn't come to the earth He just appears.

What is the second difference? The second difference is that in 1 Thessalonians 4 He appears as a Deliverer. He comes to deliver His people from the wrath that is to come. But in Revelation 19 He returns as a mighty warrior to pour out the wrath of God upon those that have rejected the grace, mercy, and love of God.

The third difference: in 1 Thessalonians 4 He appears for the Church, but in Revelation 19 He returns with the Church. That is just as different as it can be, in one He is appearing for the Church and in the other He is returning with the Church. Another difference, you'll find that in 1 Thessalonians 4 He comes in love, He comes in compassion, He comes to deliver His blessed Church from the wrath that is to come. But in Revelation 19 He comes in vengeance, He comes in wrath, He comes to pour out the judgment of God upon those who have rejected God's grace, love, and mercy.

That leads to the final difference between these two, and that is that in 1 Thessalonians 4 you have Jesus returning as a bridegroom, a bridegroom, where as in Revelation 19 He is returning as a King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Now folks when you look at these two you can see that there is just nothing in common. And this is a major theological problem. Now what are we going to do with it? How can we reconcile it? We know that God's Word is infallible, we know that God's Word does not contradict itself. Yet we only have two detailed descriptions in the New Testament of the Return of Jesus. They are

as different as night and day. How do we reconcile them, how do we bring them together?

That is the crucial question of this program. And it is the question that is going to clearly distinguish between the Rapture and the Second Coming. Think about that for a moment think about how you would reconcile these two very vivid but very drastically different descriptions of the coming of the Lord.

Part 2

Let's go back over here to the illustration board for a moment, and let's take a look at the dilemma we were talking about. I mentioned that in 1 Thessalonians 4 Jesus appears, but that in Revelation 19 He returns. Those are the two key words to remember. He does not return to earth in 1 Thessalonians 4. Secondly we saw that in this particular passage in 1 Thessalonians 4 that He comes as a Deliverer, one who is delivering the saved from the wrath that is to come. Where as in Revelation 19, He is not coming as a deliverer He is coming as a Warrior to pour out the wrath of God upon those who rejected His grace, mercy and love. Then we saw in 1 Thessalonians 4 that He is coming for the Church a big difference here, coming for the Church, whereas in Revelation 19 He is coming with the Church. I don't know how two images could be any different than that. We also saw that over here in 1 Thessalonians 4, He is coming with love, whereas over here He is coming in wrath. And finally we saw that the fifth difference between them is that over here He is returning as a bridegroom for His wonderful bride the Church. Whereas over here He is returning as a King of Kings and Lord of Lords, just as different as they can possibly be.

Now how in the work do we reconcile these? I tell you the only way I have been able to do it. The only way I have ever been able to reconcile this is to come to the conclusion that these descriptions are talking about two different events, two different events. One we are going to call the Rapture of the Church, the Rapture. The other one we are going to call the Second Coming and that is the only way I know that we can reconcile these two. It is simply talking about two separate events. In other words the point is there is going to be two future comings of the Lord. There is going to be one coming for His

Church, and there is going to be another when He will return with His Church. Okay, now with that in mind, let's look for a moment at some Scripture that backs up this concept, the Scripture that backs up the concept that there really are two future comings of the Lord because some of you may be sitting there thinking, "Well you know you are just playing around with this. This is kind of off the wall. Surely there isn't going to be two future comings of the Lord." But there are a lot of Scriptures that indicate this and one of the things that I want to try to show you is that there is a similar phenomenon in the Old Testament. And just as it exists in the Old Testament it exists in the New Testament.

Now stop and think for a moment, can you think of a similar phenomenon in the Old Testament where there appears to be two future comings of the Lord that are just as different as night and day. Well if you know your Old Testament Scriptures at all you will know what I am talking about. You know that if you go through the Old Testament and you take all the passages that have to do with the Second Coming of Jesus you will find that about half of them that refer to Him as coming as a suffering lamb, whereas the other half refer to Him coming as a concurring lion. Let me show it to you in Scripture. If you will turn with me to Isaiah 53 and look there at verse 7 you will see a classic description of Jesus coming as the suffering lamb. In Isaiah 53:7 it says, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth, like a lamb that is led to slaughter and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers so He did not open His mouth." Now the Old Testament is full of descriptions of the Messiah as the suffering lamb, just like that.

They are also full of descriptions of Him as the concurring lion, for example if we turn over to the book of Jeremiah and look there at Jeremiah 25 we will find a description of Jesus as the concurring lion. Jeremiah 25:30, "The Lord will roar from on high and utter His voice from His holy habitation, He will roar mightily against His fold, He will shout like those who tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A clamor has come to the end of the earth because the Lord has a controversy with the nations He is entering into judgment with all flesh."

Now there you have two very different descriptions of the Lord's coming. One He is coming as a suffering lamb, the other He is coming as a concurring lion. Now these descriptions were so totally different that the Old Testament rabbis just simply could not

understand this. I mean how can He be a suffering lamb and a concurring lion? They just couldn't figure it out. In fact some of the rabbis came to the conclusion that there were going to be two future comings of the Lord, two future Messiahs. One would be Messiah Ben Joseph who would suffer, and the other one would be Messiah Ben David who would concur. Now you may be asking, "Well, why is it that this was not clearly understandable in the Old Testament?" Well the reason is that God does not give any particular prophet the whole end time scenario. And when He does give them an end time scenario what He does, is He gives them the scenario in such a way that they do not understand the time between the events. It is like you are standing in Colorado and you are just looking down a mountain range, and as you look down the mountain range you see one mountain behind another mountain and you can see these various peaks but you can not see the valleys in between the peaks, the valleys are simply not there, because you are not looking at it that way.

Let me illustrate this to you on the board. This is what we call the prophetic prospective, and it is also referred to as telescoping and when I illustrate it to you, you will understand why some people refer to it as telescoping. This is one of the characteristics of Bible Prophecy that you absolutely have to understand if you are ever going to understand all of these Old Testament prophecies. Let's draw a prophet here and I am going to make him a happy prophet and let's say that he is standing here and looking into the future and you will have to excuse my very primitive drawing here. And let's say that he is looking into the future and this is his sightline moving along here like this. Okay, let's say the Lord gives him two visions the first vision is a vision of the suffering lamb, Jesus dying on the cross. Then let's say he gives him another vision and this vision is of the Messiah as King of Kings and Lord of Lords a crown representing Him as King. Now here you have two visions of the Messiah but you see the problem is that the prophet is looking down the mountain range like this and because he is looking down the mountain range like that he does not see the time period between the two. He does not understand that these events are separated in time they appear to him to be just bang, bang, bang, right up against each other. And you will find this particular phenomenon all through the Scriptures.

Now here is the point, this concept in the Old Testament, this confusion about the coming of the Lord because we really have prophecies about two comings is also in the

New Testament. In the New Testament we have the same phenomenon going on, let me draw it for you again. In the New Testament we have the prophet looking down that range of mountains just like this Old Testament prophet was doing. He is looking down the range of mountains, let's put his perspective back in there and as he looks down there he see two mountain tops. He sees the Lord coming for His people, and he sees the Lord coming with His people. The Lord is coming for and the Lord is coming with. And about half of the prophecies in the New Testament put the Lord coming for His people, the other half coming with His people. What that prophet does not see is that there is a time period between the two, just as there was in the Old Testament. And the time period here is at least seven years it is that period of the Tribulation.

Now let me just give you an example in the Scriptures themselves that show you this difference. Turn over with me to 1 Thessalonians 1 and I will show you in one book this difference in perspective about the coming of the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 1 and look there at verse 10, 1Thessalonians 1:10 says, "That Jesus is coming for the purpose of delivering us from the wrath that is to come." That means Jesus is coming for us to deliver us from the wrath that is to come. But if you turn over to 1 Thessalonians 3 and look at verse 13 it says that He is coming with His Saints that when He returns He will come with them. Now in one chapter it says He is coming for them, and in another chapter it says He is coming with them. The only way I know how to reconcile that is to conclude that there are going to be two future comings of the Lord. One is going to be for His Church and the other is going to be with His Church. The coming for His Church is the Rapture of the Church, the coming with His Church is the Second Coming. So we've got two future comings of the Lord.

Now this solves another problem for us. The problems it solves has to do with imminency, I want you to follow me very carefully here. The Bible says over and over that we are to be watchful that we are to look for the Lord's coming at any moment that we are to be dressed in readiness and alert. Let me ask you a question: If there is going to be only one future coming of the Lord, only one why should I be ready? Why should I be looking at the sky? Why should I be anxious about the coming of the Lord, because there are too many prophetic events that have to occur before the Second Coming? The Temple has to be rebuilt, the Antichrist has to be revealed, has to be seven years of tribulation. I should be looking for the Antichrist, not Jesus Christ. The only way that the

Lord's coming can be imminent is if there are two future comings of the Lord, two, not one, but two. Two future comings of the Lord, one would be what we call the Rapture of the Church which could occur any moment, and the other the Second Coming.

And that is the final point that I want to end with, and that is that there is not one prophecy, not one that has to be fulfilled for the Lord to come for His Church. He could come while you are watching this particular program. He could come any moment, there is nothing holding Him back, everything is in place. The Rapture is imminent it can occur at any moment. There are many, many things that have to occur before we have what is called the Second Coming. So my friends we are living in the season of the Lord's Return. He is coming any moment. And my question for you is: Are you ready? Are you ready for the Lord to come? Let me tell you when He breaks from the heavens He is going to come as your blessed hope, or He is going to come as your holy terror, one of the two, blessed hope, or holy terror. Which will it be? If you want Him to be your blessed hope then you need to reach out in faith and you need to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

End of Program