

Christ in Prophecy

Rapture 5: Christian Aliyah

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Last week I talked with you about the miraculous Aliyah of the Jewish people, about how God orchestrated the regathering of the Jewish people from the four corners of the world back to their homeland during the 20th Century. This week I want to continue with the theme of Aliyah as it applies to Christians. The Hebrew word, Aliyah, means “going up” or “ascending,” and God has promised that one day very soon all those who have put their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior will experience a great Aliyah, a going home to the Lord. Stay tuned for the details.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. As I mentioned in the introduction to this program, last week I talked with you about the Aliyah of the Jewish people during the 20th Century as they were regathered from all over the world back to their ancestral homeland in Israel. Did you know the Bible promises an Aliyah for Christians? This week I want to share with you what God’s Word promises about that Christian Aliyah, a glorious event when we will be gathered home to the Lord. Here now are some remarks I made about this subject at a Bible prophecy conference in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan's Presentation

Dr. Reagan: Well, let’s explain the word Aliyah. Aliyah is a Hebrew word that means ascent, or ascension. For Christians this means going home to the Lord. So when I talk about Aliyah for Christians I am going to be talking about going home to the Lord. And my presentation this evening is going to cover three things: How is that going to happen? When is it going to happen? And where are we going when we say we are going home to the Lord? Where are we going?

I want to begin with some key verses taken from Titus chapter 2 beginning with verse 11, "The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men." That is the First Coming of Jesus Christ. Now as we go to verse 12 we are going to skip to the Second Coming, and it is like a spiritual mirror being held up in front of your face. And it tells you what you are to do as you wait for the coming of the Lord. See if you are doing these things. "Instructing us to deny ungodliness, and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age." Are you doing that? Denying ungodliness, deny worldly desires, live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age. And then verse 13 tells us another thing we are to do as we wait for the coming of the Lord. "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 living looking for the blessed hope? I hope you are, we are instructed to do that.

Now I have a question for you, when you think of the Lord's return what kind of image comes to your mind? Think about that for a moment. When you think about the Lord coming back what type of image comes to your mind? Is it joyful, or is it fearful? I know a lot of Christians scared to death to think about the coming of the Lord. Is it calming or disturbing? Is it hopeful or is it anxious? Is it your blessed hope, or your holy terror? How do you feel about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? And I have another question for you: How would you describe the Lord's return to an unbeliever? To a person who knows absolutely nothing about the Bible and there are more and more and more of them in America today who know nothing about the Bible. They don't know who Noah is. They don't know who Abraham is. They don't know anything about it. How would you describe the return of the Lord to a person who knows absolutely nothing? Well there are only two detailed descriptions in the New Testament of the Second Coming or the return of Jesus Christ, one is in 1 Thessalonians 4 the other one is in Revelation 19. So, let's take a look at these two descriptions of the return of the Lord and as we look at them I want you to compare in your mind your description of the Lord's return with what the Bible says.

Let's go to 1 Thessalonians 4 first of all. Now what had happened here is this Paul has spent quite a bit of time in Thessalonica preaching to the people there. He had told them about the Lord returning. He had told them the Lord might return any moment. He had told them to be on the watch for the Lord, and then he left. After he left some of the members of the congregation died, and the people were very upset about that. They wanted to know, well you know you told us the Lord's coming, but some of our members died, well what is going to happen to them? Are they just going to be left behind in their graves, or what's going to happen? So, Paul is writing to answer that question. He says, "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." And when he refers to those who are asleep he is talking about those who have died. That doesn't mean soul sleep. That doesn't mean that at all. The reason the metaphor sleep is used of death is because the body that dies is one day going to come back alive. When the Lord comes back those bodies are going to be resurrected it doesn't matter whether worms have eaten them. It doesn't matter whether they dissolved in the ocean. It doesn't matter whether they were cremated or whether they were in airtight casket those bodies are going to come back together in a great miracle of recreation. After all we are talking about the One who spoke and the whole universe came into being. He is going to speak and those bodies are going to come back together and He is going to take their spirits and put them back in their bodies. When you die your spirit goes to be with the Lord. Your body may go into a grave, but your spirit goes to be with the Lord. So he says, "We do not want you to be uninformed brethren about those who are asleep," those who are dead, "that you may not grieve as to the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus." He says, "Let me tell you something when Jesus comes back He is going to bring with Him the spirits of the dead, of those who have already died in Christ He will bring their spirits with them." And then look what it says in verse 15, "For 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 precede those who have fallen asleep. For 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." Don't worry about those who are already dead, let me tell you something when the Lord comes back they are going to be resurrected and taken up to meet the Lord before you are, so don't worry about it. And then he says, well you know what is going to happen to those who are alive. "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and thus will always be with the Lord." So we are going to follow them. Do you know what

that means? All my life I've been told there are two things you cannot escape in life; you cannot escape death and taxes. Well I've got news for you the only thing you cannot escape is taxes. There is a whole generation that will not taste death. It could be our generation. I believe it very well likely be our generation, that we will be raptured. And we will be changed from mortal to immortal on the way up. Wouldn't that be a great experience? Man alive. Come quickly Lord Jesus. It is no wonder he ends all this in verse 18 by saying, "Therefore comfort one another with these words." Folks, these are comforting words. Let me give you a summary here now, a trumpet will blow, and an archangel will shout, Jesus will appear in the heavens bringing with Him the spirits of the dead Saints. He will resurrect their bodies, reunite their spirits with their bodies, and then He will glorify their bodies.

Let's look at the second passage in the Bible that tells about the coming of the Lord. Ok, this particular passage in Revelation 19 begins with the Tribulation just ending. The Tribulation has just ended when you get to Revelation 19. God has poured out His final wrath in the bowl wraths, He has poured it out, His wrath is over with, He has poured it all out. And then following that the Antichrist meets his fate. The Antichrist is finished and Jesus is about to return to earth again. All of this right at the beginning of Revelation 19. All of heaven is shouting, "Hallelujah!" It is the only place in the New Testament you are going to find this Old Testament term hallelujah is at the beginning of Revelation 19. When all of heaven is shouting, "Hallelujah!" and why is that? Well they are shouting, "Hallelujah!" because the Tribulation is over. They are shouting "Hallelujah!" because the Antichrist is finished. And here we go Revelation 19, look at this verse 11, "I saw Heaven open," this is the Apostle John speaking, "and behold a white horse and He who sat upon it is called Faithful, and True, and in righteousness He judges, and He wages war." Now what does he see here? He sees Heaven open. He sees a person coming out of Heaven riding a white horse, and He who sat upon it is Faithful, and True. Is there any doubt who this is? Who has ruled the world for seven years? The unfaithful, the untrue one, the Antichrist. Now the Faithful and the True One, Jesus Christ comes and He comes on a white horse. Here we go. He comes on a white horse which is a symbol of a victorious general. He breaks from the heavens and He comes in righteousness. He comes to judge. He comes to wage war. This is a serious return. A very, very serious return; He is coming to judge and wage war against the enemies of God. And look at His eyes; His eyes are like a flame of fire, and upon His head are many crowns, and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself.

I want you to notice here the difference between the First Coming and the Second Coming, the First Coming Jesus came as a little baby, and innocent child in a manger. He returns as a victorious warrior on a white warhorse, a symbol of a victorious general. The first time He came He came to die for the sins of mankind. Now He is coming to judge the leaders of this world, to judge the nations, to pour out the wrath of God upon those who have rejected the grace, mercy and love of God. The first time He came with tears in His eyes, He wept over the city of Jerusalem. He wept over the tomb of Lazarus. But this look He is coming with eyes like a flame of fire. This is an indication that He is coming in judgment. And the first time He came He had one crown, a crown of thorns that was crushed down onto His head until the blood ran down upon His shoulders. But He is returning with all the crowns, all the diadems because He is coming as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and He is going to reign in majesty from Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

And notice He says He comes with a name written upon Himself that no one knows, except Himself. Oh, that is so interesting. God loves to change names. He changed the name of Abraham. He changed the name of Sarah. He changed the name of Peter. He changed the name of Saul. He loves to change names. It says that when we stand before the Lord Jesus Christ we are all going to get new names. He is going to hand you a white stone an indication of

your innocence because you have put your faith in Jesus Christ. And it says on that stone is going to be written a new name. And I believe that new name is going to be related to your walk in the Lord Jesus Christ in this life. Wouldn't it be great if that stone said your name for eternity is Faith? Your name for eternity is Perseverance. Your name for eternity is Righteousness. Wouldn't it be terrible to get that and your name for eternity is Wishy-Washy. He loves to change names and Jesus is going to have a new name and we get a hint of what that new name is going to be over in Jeremiah 23:6 the new name it says, "Will be Yahweh Tsidqenu." Do you know what that means? The Lord is our righteousness. The first time Jesus came His name was Yeshua which means the salvation of God. But He is not coming back as our Savior, He is coming back as our King of Kings, and Lord of Lords to bring peace, righteousness, and justice to the earth. And His name would be Yahweh Tsidqenu, the Lord is our Righteousness. I can hardly wait! Come quickly Lord Jesus!

Let's continue with Revelation 19 verse 13, "He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood. His name is called the Word of God." No doubt who this is now, this is Jesus. This is John writing this. What did John say in the first chapter of his Gospel of John? He said, "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." And now he refers to this person as the Word of God. This is Jesus. And then he says, "The armies which are in heaven clothed in fine linen, white and clean were following Him on white horses." Notice too, in verse 13 it says He comes with a robe that is dipped in blood. You know we know what that is. Sometime just make a note, go over to Isaiah chapter 63 and read the first few verses. In Isaiah 63 Isaiah has a vision of the Second Coming of the Messiah. And He says to the Messiah, "Your robe is all covered in red. What is this?" And the Messiah says, "It is the blood of the enemies of God." It is not the blood He shed on the Cross. He comes back with a blood splattered robe because He is coming back to pour out the vengeance of God upon the enemies of God. And He is splattered with the blood of the enemies of God. And then it says in verse 14 that the armies which are Heaven, clothed in fine linen white, and clean were following Him on white horses. What a glorious picture this is. I don't know what has happened over here on this side. But on this side you can what it looks like, an incredible picture of returning with the armies of heaven. You know I always thought, I always thought that meant angels, that He was coming back with the angels. And surely the angels will come with Him. But folks, let me tell you something that maybe you've never heard before. It is going to be you and me. When He returns He is coming, He is coming with the Saints. We are coming with Him. I mean I can prove it to you. Look at this. Look at Revelation 19 verse 8, it says that right before Jesus leaves Heaven we have the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. "And it was given to her the Bride, the Church to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean." Then look at verse 14, "And the armies which are in Heaven clothed in fine linen, white and clean were following Him on white horses." That means my friends you and I are coming back with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are going to be there when His feet touch the Mount of Olives, when the Mount splits in half. We are going to--millions of us will be hovering in the sky over millions in the Valley of Kidron. And when He speaks that supernatural word, you know there is going to be no Battle of Armageddon, there isn't going to be one. He's not going to send an army against the Antichrist. All He's going to do is speak a word and the whole Antichrist and his armies are going to drop dead in their tracks. It says, "Their eyeballs will melt, their tongues will melt, their skin will fall off." It says that the only that is going to be left is their blood which will be as deep as a horse bridle. He is going to speak and instantly it will all be over with. And we will be there to see it and to shout, "Hallelujah!" when it happens. I can hardly wait for it to happen. And then look what else happens here. Revelation 19:15, "And from His mouth comes a sharp sword so that with it He might smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rode of iron, and He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God the Almighty." There is no wonder His robe is red. And then it finally says, "And on His robe, and on His thigh He has a name written, 'King of Kings',"

it's not a name really, it is a title, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Ok, there you have the only two passages in the New Testament that give any detail about the return of Jesus.

Now folks, if you have followed this carefully you know at this point we have a major theological problem, this is not a minor problem this is a major theological problem. And what is that problem? Well the two passages have absolutely nothing in common. Nothing except that they both focus on Jesus Christ. Let me show you how different they are. In 1 Thessalonians 4 Jesus appears in the heavens, He doesn't come to earth. He appears in the heavens, we go up to meet Him and don't go back down. But in Revelation 19 He returns to earth. This cannot be a description of the same event. In 1 Thessalonians 4 Jesus comes for His Church. In Revelation 19 Jesus returns with His Church. In 1 Thessalonians 4 Jesus is pictured as a deliverer who comes to take His Church out of this wicked world. In Revelation 19 He is pictured as a warrior who comes to pour out the wrath of God. In 1 Thessalonians 4 Jesus appears in grace. In Revelation 19 He returns in wrath. In 1 Thessalonians 4 Jesus appears as a Bridegroom coming for His Bride, the Church. But in Revelation 19 Jesus returns as a King. These two passages have nothing in common. Yet, we know that the Word of God is inerrant. We know the Word of God does not contradict itself.

So the problem is this: How do we reconcile these two passages? How can we reconcile them? People have tried it many different ways. How can they be reconciled? Well my solution, and the solution of many, many people is this, that they are talking about two different events. One which we call the Rapture, 1 Thessalonian 4, and the other one the Second Coming Revelation 19, they are just simply two different events. In other words what this means is that the return of Jesus is going to occur in two stages; first the Rapture, then the Second Coming. This reconciliation solves another problem and that's this; the Bible says repeatedly that the return of Jesus is imminent, that is it can happen any moment.

When you say something is imminent it means it can happen any moment and the Bible says that over, and over and over, the return of Jesus is imminent. But how can it be imminent if there is only one future coming? If you do not believe in a Rapture, if you believe only in the Second Coming you got a problem because the Bible says that Jesus can return any moment, that His return is imminent. Why is it a problem? Very simply it is because there are many prophecies yet to be fulfilled before the coming of Jesus. Here's the point if there is only one future coming then the Lord's return is not imminent because there are many prophecies that must be fulfilled before He can return to this earth. If you only believe in the Second Coming, you don't believe in the Rapture the return of Jesus is not imminent because there are so many prophecies that have to be fulfilled before He returns, let me just give you a few.

I can give you a list as long as my arm, I'll just give you a few. Here are prophecies that have to be fulfilled before Jesus comes back to this earth; seven years of tribulation, rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, revelation of the Antichrist, killing of two witnesses in Jerusalem, the desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem, the institution of the Mark of the Beast, and the salvation of the Jewish remnant, and that is only a short list of prophecies that have to be fulfilled before the Lord can come back. The point again is this, the only way the Lord's return can be imminent is for there to be a Rapture that is separate and apart from the Second Coming and which can occur at any moment without the fulfillment of any prophecies.

Ok, that means the signs of the times are pointing to the Tribulation, and they are pointing to the Second Coming and they are not pointing to the Rapture because the Rapture is a signless event. Tim LaHaye gave me the illustration of this one time and I want to share with you. I was talking to him at a conference and I was talking to him about this particular thing how the signs of the times point to the Tribulation and Second Coming and not to the Rapture. And he said, "Well I got a good illustration then." He said, "One time my wife Beverly and I went to a mall in

October." And he said, "We are walking around this mall in October and suddenly she stops me and says, 'Tim I want you to look around and tell me what is different in this mall from the last time we were here.'" And he said, "I looked around, and I said, 'Well I didn't see anything different.' She said, 'That is exactly what I thought you would say because men are not very observant.' She said, 'Now, I want you to look around again and look carefully and tell me what do you see that is different about this mall then the last time.'" So he said, "I looked around again and suddenly it dawned on me every place I looked they were putting up Christmas decorations. And then she turned to him and said, 'What do those decorations point to?' He said, 'Well they point to Christmas.' She said, 'That is exactly right. But they also indicate that Thanksgiving is right around the corner.'" They don't point to Thanksgiving they point to Christmas. But when we see them we know that Thanksgiving is right around the corner. The signs of the times point to the Tribulation and the Second Coming. But boy when we start seeing them start piling up we know the Rapture is right around the corner and could occur any moment." I thought it was incredible the illustration that He shared with me.

Ok, all this raises now an additional question: When is the Rapture most likely to occur? When is it most likely to occur? Is it going to be before the Tribulation? Is it going to be the middle of the Tribulation? Is it going to be near the end of the Tribulation? Is it going to be at the end of the Tribulation? There are many people who teach that the Rapture and the Second Coming are just one event. They say what is going to happen is that at the end of the Tribulation Jesus is going to appear in the heavens and we are going to go up and meet Him and then we are going to immediately going to come back to earth. I call it the yo-yo rapture, boom, boom you know just like that. And they refuse to separate these two events that are so different. Well let me tell you some reasons why I believe that there is going to be a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, a Rapture before the Tribulation begins. And these are reasons that I base upon inferences in Scripture because the Bible does not give a precious timing of the Rapture. No place in the Bible says the Rapture is going to occur here. So what you have to do is you have to base your opinion upon inferences and that is why it is legitimate for people to disagree about this because they can come to different conclusions. But I am going to tell you what I think is the best inference of the Scripture and that is I believe the best inference is that the Rapture will occur before the Tribulation begins and the first and most important reason is one I've already mentioned it is summed up in the word imminence, imminence, the Pre-Tribulation view is the only one that allows for the imminent return of Jesus. For Him to return at any moment. He told us to watch for Him to return at any moment. Why should I watch for Him to return if He is not going to return until the end of the Tribulation? I should be watching for the Antichrist, not Jesus Christ. But this to me is the most important of all the arguments. There are others though.

My second reason is the structure of the book of Revelation. The book focuses on the Church during the first three chapters, the first three are all about the Church. Church this, church that, church that. Then at the beginning of chapter 4 a door is opened in heaven and John is caught up to the Throne Room of God where he is shown a great preview of the Tribulation. After chapter 4 there is no more mention of the Church in the book of Revelation until chapter 22 verse 16 after the Tribulation has ended suddenly the Church is mentioned again. No mention of the Church during the Tribulation. There is mention of saints but these would be those who are saved after the Tribulation begins. There are going to be a lot of people saved during the Tribulation. Thus the rapture of John in chapter 4 appears to be a symbolic type of the Rapture of the Church. Or take the nature of the Tribulation, I believe the nature of the Tribulation is a great argument in behalf of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Why is that? It is a time of absolute, unparalleled pouring out of God's wrath from beginning to end. It is a time when God deals with unrepentant sinners who have steadfastly rejected His grace, mercy, and love.

Now, why does the nature and purpose of the Tribulation infer a Pre-Tribulational Rapture? Because the Bible promises Christians immunity from the wrath of God. How can we be here during the period when God is pouring out His wrath when God has promised us that we are immune to the wrath of God? The Bible promises it over, and over. For example in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 we read Paul says, "We are waiting for His Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead," that is Jesus, "who delivers from the wrath that is to come." I don't know how that could be clearer. He is going to come and deliverer us from the wrath that is to come. This promise is reconfirmed in Revelation 3:10 when Jesus makes a promise to His Church. "Because you have kept the word of my perseverance I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world to test those who dwell upon the earth."

There is a fourth reason I would point to with regard to why I believe in a Pre-Tribulational Rapture and it has to do with symbolic prophecy. You will find this in 2 Peter chapter 2 look at what it says, Peter says, "That if God spared Noah and his family from the Flood, and if God rescued Lot and his family from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah then He, quote, "knows how to rescue the godly from tribulation and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of justice." Thus Lot and his family were removed from Sodom and Gomorrah before it was destroyed. Enoch a Gentile who was a symbol of the Church was taken out of the world before the Flood. And Noah and his family symbolic of the Jews were preserved through the Flood.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: I hope the presentation you just viewed has been a blessing to you and has helped you to better understand the nature and timing of the Rapture. You can find a lot more information about the Rapture and other Bible prophecy topics like the Tribulation, the Millennium and the Eternal State on our website which is located at lamblion.com. It's easy to do research at our website because it contains a high speed search engine. You can also find all our recent television programs archived at the site, and you can play them free of charge on demand.

What you saw in this program was only a portion of the presentation that I made about the Rapture. In a moment our announcer will tell you how you can get a video copy of the entire presentation.

Well, folks, that's our program for this week. I hope you will be back with us next week. And until then, the Lord willing, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near."

End of Program