

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Things which accompany Salvation The Rapture and The Appearing

‘Jesus is coming! sing the glad word!
Coming for those He redeemed by His blood.
Coming for us as the glorified Lord!
Jesus is coming again!’

What wonderful words, written by the nineteenth century Christian poet Daniel Webster Whittle!

1. General introductory comments

Throughout the Bible, even in the Old Testament, we are repeatedly told about the Lord's Second Coming. The certainty of this event is well established. However, nowhere are we given the slightest indication as to exactly when this will actually take place. Jesus Himself said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36). Then the disciples asked Him, immediately before He went back to heaven, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). They were enquiring about when He would come again to set up His kingdom upon earth. His answer was, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in His own power." Having said that, there can be no greater assurance of the fact of The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus than that He Himself promised it. In John 14:2 – 3 He said, "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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." The fact that we believing Christians are still living in this world is, in itself, proof that He has not yet come again the second time. In case we are in any delusion, scripture affirms our expectation. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the Second Time (apart from) sin, unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

2. The Second Coming of Christ

I want to speak particularly about the distinctive features and characteristics of **The Rapture** and **The Appearing**. But, first of all, a little about what they are and when they will occur.

A Second Coming implies a First Coming. There is no doubt that Christ has been here upon earth before. His First Advent, of course, was His birth as a baby at Bethlehem, recorded plainly in the Gospels, and even in history. In respect to The Second Coming of Christ, scripture at first appears to refer to only one future coming of the Lord, but, when we get down to the detail, we see that it will take place in two parts or stages.

The first stage of His Second Coming will be to gather in all those who had righteous faith in God, from Adam up to the end of the present Christian period. It will indeed signal the end of that era. For a good reason we shall come to, we call that aspect of His Second Coming **The Rapture**. Then, a distinct, separate, second stage, His coming to reign, when "every eye shall see Him" (Revelation 1:7). Christ will come, accompanied by all His saints, to rule and reign over the earth

for a thousand years. He will truly be “King of kings and Lord of lords” (First Timothy 6:15). The event that will begin the second stage of The Second Coming is called **The Appearing**. By the way, all Old Testament references to The Second Coming of the Lord refer to **The Appearing**. None refer to **The Rapture**.

In Titus 2:13 we can see an implicit distinction, “Looking for that blessed hope (**The Rapture**), and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (clearly **The Appearing**).

3. The Timing of The Second Coming of Christ

As to timing, Hebrews 10:37 tells us: “For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come and will not tarry.” When the time is right, in God’s eyes, there will be no delay. Clearly, since that statement was made almost two thousand years ago, The Second Coming is two thousand years closer than when the scripture was written. As Romans 13:11 says: “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

The first phase of The Second Coming of Christ, which will open the door to the accomplishment of as yet unfulfilled prophetic truths, will be **The Rapture**.

Scripture records no promise from either God the Father, or the Lord Jesus Himself, that remains to be fulfilled before **The Rapture** will take place. As the Lord Jesus said, it awaits only the moment when God the Father gives the word. That can happen at any moment now.

The Christians at Thessalonica had evidently been taught about The Second Coming of the Lord. However, as time went by, and some of their fellow Christians died, they were disturbed as to whether their absent friends had missed The Second Coming. It apparently seemed to at least some of them that those who were already dead would be at a disadvantage compared with those who were still alive on earth. Not a bit of it! Death will not defraud any Christian from being with Him when He appears.

The Apostle Paul reassured them in First Thessalonians 4:13 – 18:

“I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

And, in First Corinthians 15:51 – 52:

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

4. The distinctive character and features of The Rapture

Now, what about **The Rapture** itself? What exactly will happen then? Let me give you a natural illustration. I suppose most of us will be aware of a class of birds that are called raptors. Such a bird will fly in the heavens, and when it sees, way down at earth level far below it, a small creature it desires for its food, it hovers over it. Then, when it decides that the time is right, it

swoops down upon it, and takes it for its own pleasure, or, as we would say, for its daily food. That class of bird is called a raptor. It gets that name because of the speed and accuracy with which it swoops down upon its target, snatching it away for its own pleasure. Now, there are those who would not like to use such a negative comparison about the Lord Jesus. However, I would suggest that there is no harm at all in comparing what others do in a negative or fleshly way with what the Lord Jesus will do in a very positive and spiritual way.

When the time is right, and God the Father gives the word, the Lord Jesus will come down from heaven, and take to Himself those who are His, and take them up to heaven to be with Him and like Him for evermore. Once that has taken place, we shall never again be separated from the Lord.

It must be significant that the words so used in First Thessalonians 4:16 – 17 are from the same source as the group name for the raptorial birds. I personally am quite happy to speak of the Lord Jesus as The Divine Raptor, in His very positive activity of coming down from heaven and taking us up to live with Him for evermore. The verb used for the method of His taking us to be with Himself for evermore, and the dramatic, instantaneous way He will do it, is used elsewhere in scripture in the same sense of snatching something for one's own self at instantaneous speed. Summing up, at **The Rapture** the Lord will come personally for His own, whom scripture happily call "they that are Christ's."

The dead in Christ shall rise first and be given a new body and a new spirit. The living will be changed and made like unto their Lord and Master. All His own shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. We shall never again be separated from the Lord. We shall be with Him and like Him for evermore. This sequence shall take place at **The Rapture** but shall not be manifested publicly until we are with Him when He Himself is publicly manifested, at **His Appearing**.

We must not forget that the term "they that are Christ's" (First Corinthians 15:23) refers to more than only the members of the Christian church. There is, of course, no doubt that all members of the assembly will respond to the Lord's assembling shout at **The Rapture**. However, there is also no doubt that there were Israelites and Gentiles in Old Testament times who were faithful to the revelation of God given to them in their day. Going on from there, it is reasonable to accept that "the voice of the archangel" will seek out those Israelites who had died in faith in previous dispensations (read Hebrews 11). Similarly, "the trump of God" will single out those Gentiles who died in faith before the Christian era began.

None of these Old Testament saints will be included in the Christian church, who will become the Bride of Christ, but they will be rewarded for their faithfulness to God in their own day. They will be with Christ for evermore in heaven. They will assuredly be guests at "The Marriage Supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9) and are referred to as "friends of the Bridegroom" in John 3:29.

5. Length (and character) of the time between The Rapture and The Appearing

Time does not permit any detailed comments on the time between **The Rapture** and **The Appearing**, but to keep the whole picture in perspective I feel I must say a few words.

At **The Rapture**, the restraining influence of Christians, both as individuals and as local companies, will be removed from the earth, with the simultaneous removal of the restraining power of the Holy Spirit. Satan, aided by his hirelings, will then take the opportunity to bring out even more fiendish ungodliness and opposition to God and His people than there has ever been seen before, other than at Calvary. This will obviously begin as soon as the brake is removed; that is, as soon as **The Rapture** has occurred. There will commence a period of approximately and at

least seven years, during the second half of which a time of unprecedented trouble and tribulation will be suffered by the Jews and any who help or support them. On the positive side, things will be happening in heaven, also.

First of all, there will be “The Judgment Seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10) at which all believers must stand. Their eternal salvation is secure. Their lives and service on earth will be reviewed in the light of His perfect judgment. He will declare His assessment and their reward. This will be followed by “The Marriage Supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:7 – 9) at which there will be great joy. As we have noticed, the Old Testament saints, who have already been resurrected at **The Rapture**, will be guests at “The Marriage Supper of the Lamb, as friends of the bridegroom” (John 3:29).

Both “The Judgment Seat of Christ” and “The Marriage of Christ the Lamb” with “The Christian Assembly, The Church of God,” will necessarily take place after **The Rapture** and before **The Appearing**.

Many righteous people on earth will be faithful to God during that seven-year period, and true to the revelation they have received. They will “not worship the beast, neither his image, neither will they receive his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands.” Many of them will be killed by their enemies during that seven year period, but will be raised by Christ at **His Appearing**. For their extreme faithfulness, they will be transferred from earthly to heavenly blessing, as will have occurred to the Old Testament worthies at **The Rapture**, and, like them, will be taken up from the earth to be for ever with the Lord. See Revelation 20:4 – 6.

Some Jews and Gentiles will be just as faithful in the same period on earth between **The Rapture** and **The Appearing**, but will somehow escape the martyrdom we have just referred to. They will be honoured by Christ by being given responsibility in the earthly sphere during The Millennium, which will be ushered in by **His Appearing**, when He brings His heavenly saints with Him. Christ, with His Bride, the Lamb’s wife, the assembly, will ride forth triumphantly through the opened heavens to receive their universal acclaim. The moment will be right. CHRIST WILL APPEAR.

6. The distinctive character of, and features brought in by, The Appearing

The Appearing stands connected with and is the grand focal point of much of Bible prophecy. Overall, let me say it again. Christ shall appear in power and great glory, bringing His saints with Him. As we read in those delightful verses, Psalm 126:5 – 6: “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” He shall put down His enemies. Satan and his hirelings will be bound. Christ shall set up His righteous kingdom. He shall rule and reign over the earth in righteousness for a thousand years. He will truly be “King of kings and Lord of lords” (First Timothy 6:15). He will deliver His earthly people and destroy their foes. Perhaps, at this stage, it would be well to recall that the first appearing of Christ in this world was in humiliation. His second shall indeed be in great glory.

To true present day Christian believers, nothing will give them greater joy than that when Christ, their beloved Lord, appears, He will be crowned with many crowns. This glorious prospect will govern the believer in His present life, sustain Him amidst or under any sorrows and trials, and motivate him in his present service for his Master.

7. Overall Distinctions between The Rapture and The Appearing

We must not confound **The Rapture**, His Coming for His saints, which will be a matter of great JOY, with **The Appearing**, His Coming with His saints, which will involve JUDGMENT.

The Rapture is entirely a matter of Privilege. **The Appearing** is related to our Responsibility.

The Rapture will take place in the air. **The Appearing** will be manifest on earth.

The Rapture will be effected by the Lord personally. The Judgments beginning at **The Appearing** will include angels, used instrumentally.

The Rapture will be 'private' whereas **The Appearing** will be 'public'. When Christ comes for His own at **The Rapture** He will not actually come to the earth. We who are His shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. This meeting will be too sacred for the eyes of the world to observe. **The Appearing** is clearly public in nature and character since "every eye shall see Him" (Revelation 1:7).

At **The Rapture**, those taken will be destined for heavenly, eternal, spiritual blessing. Those left on earth will be left (potentially) for judgment. Conversely, at **The Appearing**, those taken will be taken away for judgment, while those left on earth will be left (potentially) for earthly, millennial blessing (Matthew 24:40 – 41).

8. Finale

Surely our anticipation of the Second Coming with its universal joy and contentment prompts us to say even now the very words with which holy scripture virtually ends. "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

Let me say, Thank you very much for your patience in listening to this Truth for Today talk number T1129, entitled **The Rapture** and **The Appearing**, from our series named Things which accompany Salvation.

King James Version of the Scriptures used unless stated otherwise.

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