

Eschatology – Specific Subjects #3

Grace Bible Chapel

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The Imminence of Christ's return:

- From the earliest days of the church, the apostles and Christians spoke of an earnest expectation and hope that Christ would suddenly return at any time.
 - **The idea of imminence** - there are no other events that must occur on the prophetic calendar before Christ comes to catch us in the air.
 - **The importance of Christ imminent return:**
 - **1 John 3:3** - the knowledge of Christ's coming is a motivator to pursue Christ likeness.
 - In **Titus 2:11-13** it is called our "blessed hope."
 - **Rom 13:11-14** - in light of the Christ's return there are three prominent Christian objectives:
 - **Awaken – (Rom 13:11)** the only time we can take for granted is the time we currently have. The time to obey is now. There is urgency in this command. There is no time for lethargy and inactivity (**Mat 25:5; Mk 13:35-36; Eph 5:14-16**).
 - **Lay Aside – (Rom 13:12)** the term carries renouncing and forsaking sin. The similar concept (**1 John 3:3; Eph 4:22; Col 3:8-9; Heb 12:1; Jms 1:21; 1 Pet 2:1**).
 - **Put on – (Rom 13:14)** imagery of a soldier preparing for battle (**Eph 6:12; Mk 13:35-37**).
 - **Scriptures stating an imminent return with direct commands or admonitions:**
 - **James 5:7-9** - deals with **steadfastness** and **kindness**.
 - **1 Pet 4:7** - stimulates **prayer**.
 - **Heb 10:24-25; 37** - encourages **faithfulness in assembling together**.
 - **2 Pet 3:11** - motivates holy **conduct in godliness**.
 - **1 John 2:18; 28; 3:2** - encourages **purity in Christ likeness**.
 - **Col 3:4** - consideration of the temporary nature of the present – alluded is **living for eternity**.
 - **2 Tim 4:8** - motivation to **love his appearing**.
 - **1 Pet 5:4** - motivation to be a **righteous example**.
 - Passages that **do not seem to state an imminent return:**
 - **2 Thess 2:1-3; Mat 24:4-44**
 - These passages deal with the physical second coming of Christ to rescue Israel and establish Christ's millennial kingdom on the earth – these passages do not deal with the rapture which must precede Christ's physical coming in order to be imminent.

Arguments for a Pre-tribulation Rapture:

- Exemption from Divine wrath during the "Day of the Lord" or the tribulation (**1 Thess 1:10; 5:9; Rev 3:10; 6:17; 7:3; Eph 5:6; Col 3:6**) is promised.
 - What is the basis of God's wrath? (**Eph 5:5-6; Col 3:5-6**). Examples, the wrath of God on the Canaanites (**Ex 23:20-33; Deut 7:1-6**), it abides on all who disobey Christ (**John 3:36; Eph 2:3**).
 - The tribulation is the repeatedly predicted time of unprecedented trial because of the pouring out of God's wrath (**Deut 4:26-31; Isa 13:6-13; 17:4-11; Ezek 20:33-38; Dan 9:27; 12:1; Zech 14:1-4; Mat 24:9-31**).
 - The "great tribulation" is spoken of as a particular time of God's wrath with special emphasis upon Israel (**Mat 24:21; Luke 21:23**).
 - Exemption from "the great tribulation" or divine wrath does not mean that the church will never experience trial, persecution, or suffering (**John 16:33; Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 3:3; 1 Pet 4:12-13**).
 - What is the basis for the promise of God to spare the church from "the great tribulation?" It is like salvation in that it is a sovereign decision of God. Historically, he has saved his people at other times of particular wrath (Noah, Lot, Rahab).

- The church's exemption from God's wrath includes not just protection, but also from the very time of wrath (**Rev 3:10**).
 - It is not a matter of being preserved through it but removal or being kept from it (**Rev 3:10**).
 - The terminology "that hour which is about to come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth" must be referring to the often predicted particular tribulation. Anything less than this would have been a local persecution.
 - The phrase "who dwell on the earth" is repeated seven other times in Revelation. In each case it refers to unsaved – examples (**Rev 6:10** persecutors; **Rev 8:13** are the ones who gloat over the death of the two witnesses in **Rev 11:10**).
- There is a necessity of an interval between the rapture of the church and the 2nd coming of Christ.
 - Some of the Saints must be saved after the rapture but before Christ returns so they can enter into the millennial kingdom in non-glorified bodies (**Mat 25:31-46**).
 - Even though the millennium will see the radical reduction of evil and the flourishing of righteousness, as Christ will rule with a rod of iron still sin will exist and thus the need for sacrifices (**Ezek 43:13-27; Is 19:21**).
 - There will be sickness and death (**Is 65:20**) - associated with the unrighteous.
 - There will be a rebellion that closes the earthly reign of Christ (**Rev 20:7-10**).
 - There will be a repopulation during the millennium (**Isa 19:18-25; Zech 14:16-21; Is 60:1-3**).
 - Wicked live in the kingdom (**Isa 37:32; 66:15-20; Joel 3:7; Zech 14:16-19, Rev 20:7-9**).
 - These things are incompatible with those living in glorified bodies along with Christ.
- There is a distinction between rapture passages and 2nd coming passages.
 - Rapture passages: **John 14:1-3; 1 Cor 15:51-58; 1 Thess 4:13-18**.
 - 2nd coming passages: **Zech 14:1-21; Mat 24:29-31; Mk 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-27; & Rev 19**.
 - In passages that deal with the second coming there are signs or events that lead up to it and signal the time of Christ coming (**Mat 24:4-28; Rev 19:11-21**).
 - There is no mention of any signs or events that precede the rapture.
 - Every passage that deals with the second coming is set in the context of tribulation and judgment (**Zech 14:1-2**) and particularly upon Jerusalem.
 - There is no clear, indisputable reference to the rapture in any second coming passage.
 - In the rapture Saints meet the Lord in the air (**1 Thess 4:17**), and at the second coming Saints meet Christ on the Mt of Olives (**Zech 14:3; Acts 1:11**).
 - What purpose would the rapture serve in a plan where the Saints immediately accompany Christ to the earth after meeting Him in the air.
 - Nowhere in texts that deal with the second coming is there teaching about the translation of living Saints (as there is with rapture texts).
 - The rapture is called a mystery (**1 Cor 15:51**) because it was not revealed in the Old Testament, whereas the second coming is predicted even in the Old Testament.
 - At the time of the second coming great geological changes will occur (**Zech 14**). Rapture passages show no indication of geological change – the rapture appears otherwise invisible.
 - The destination of those raptured is shown to be heaven, while the destination at the second coming continues to be on the earth moving into the millennial kingdom (**Mat 25**).
- The term church which was predominant in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation but does not appear again from until the benediction in **Rev 22:17**.
 - In Revelation 4 and 5 twenty four elders clothed in white garments and with golden crowns on their heads are seen in the throne room of God in heaven. There is little dispute these are shown as the saints including the saints from the church age.
 - If Revelation is taken as being chronological (**Rev 1:19; 4:1; 6:1 etc..**) then the church is shown to be removed to heaven prior to the tribulation recorded in detail in chapters 6 through 19.