

CHRIST'S RETURN—OUR BLESSED HOPE

Titus 2:13; I Thess.4:13-18

In John 14:2-3, Jesus tells His disciples on the night before His crucifixion, “*In My Father’s house are many mansions (dwelling places); if it were not so, I would have told you. 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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*”

The Return

There are two comings of Christ in the future. First He is coming *for* us. Then He is coming *with* us.

The first coming we can call The Mystery of His Coming. The second coming we can call The Majesty of His Coming. The first coming is private, and is known as The Rapture. The second coming is public, and is known The Revelation. The first coming is to the air. The second is to the earth. The first has to do with the church. The second has to do with the Nation of Israel and the world. The first will occur: silently, secretly, suddenly, and selectively. The second will occur: openly, gloriously, judicially, and also suddenly.

Read I Thess.4:13-18.

I. The Shout Of The Lord

The Lord shouts on His way down from Heaven. The word translated “shout” here is a military term. It means “Forward march.” It is an authoritative command to move, that demands and expects obedience. The Lord is pictured as a military commander, the Captain of our Salvation, who is moving the troops who are under His authority.

The shout of the Lord is a command to the Church. His loud, thunderous shout will force the graves to give up their bodies. The Lord’s commanding shout will be similar to His raising of Lazarus from the dead, when “He cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, Come out.’”

II. The Voice Of An Archangel

God frequently uses angels as His emissaries and agents. At time of His coming He will give orders to the chief of the angels. It is believed, since Michael (Dan. 10) is an archangel and the defender of Israel, it is he who will shout a war cry and call all the other angels to fight the enemies of Israel, during the Tribulation Period.

The might voice of the Archangel will assemble the angels of God for the impending battles of the apocalypse. The Rapture of the Church kicks off the terrible Day of the Lord.

III. *The Trump Of God*

This trumpet call is primarily to Israel. The OT the trumpet was used chiefly for 2 things: 1) *to summon to battle* 2) *to summon to worship*. Read Num. 10:9; Ex. 19:16.

The blowing of the Shofar was meant to direct Israel's walk, warfare, and worship in the wilderness and to alert them that the time to be on the move again had come.

Here the trump of God is twofold: 1) assemble Israel, 2) deliver Israel. It is really the trumpet shout of deliverance for the remnant of the nation Israel as she faces the Tribulation.

It also sounds the alarm for the world at large. The day of grace is over; the Day of Judgment has come, the great tribulation is on the way.

The Resurrection

First, our deceased loved ones "in Christ" and then we will receive new resurrection bodies. The spirits of departed saints are with the Lord now. He will bring them with Him (v. 14) when He returns, join their spirits to their resurrected bodies, and the mortality of those who are alive will be changed into immortality as we meet them in the air.

We will not "precede", but we will all be changed in the blink of an eye and "*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*" (1 Thess. 4: 17).

The Rapture

In the classic sense, the word "rapture" implies a violent action. It means "to snatch" or "to seize by force." It is a "snatching away, a carrying-off" as a bird of prey swoops down from the heavens to seize its prey from the earth and fly up again into the heights with its catch.

Acts 8:39, refers to the Spirit *snatching* Philip away from the Ethiopian eunuch after he led him to Christ. Paul uses the word to describe his experience of being *caught up* into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2, 4).

This snatching away will be a rescue mission, a delivery from our enemies, from the Lord Himself.

Let us now take a look at Paul's reference to the Rapture in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, where he says, "*Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*"

I. Called A Mystery

It was not revealed in the OT, although it was illustrated with the translations of Enoch and Elijah. The mystery of the Rapture was a truth disclosed directly by the Lord Jesus, either to Paul or some other prophet. We don't know to whom. Mystery simply means it was hidden until it was revealed.

II. In The Twinkling Of An Eye

Many misread it for the "blinking" of an eye. Blinking is fast, but twinkling is faster. It is a sudden flash, immeasurable in time units. In 2009, the "shutter speed" of the world's fastest camera was at half a billionth of a second, and it can capture over six million images in a second continuously. I don't where it's at today. Today they tell us they can get laser beams to travel faster than the speed-of-light.

The rapture will be faster. One moment we will be on earth and in a sudden flash will find ourselves translated into glory.

III. At The Last Trump

Paul says it will take place at the last trump. That is the moment of time when God will conclude with this present dispensation, that is the Church age. This last trump is not to be confused with 7th and last trumpet in the Book of the Revelation.

When Jesus comes down from heaven and stops in the clouds, and calls with a loud shout, only those who have His divine nature, and are heaven-born, will be heaven-bound.

If you were to scatter a mixture of metals on the floor—silver, gold, zinc, lead, copper, and iron on the ground, and bury some of them beneath the soil, then take a powerful magnet and pass it over the different metals, what will happen? Immediately only one type of metal will leap out and attach itself to the magnet. The metal is iron. Why only the iron? Because it has the same nature of the magnet.

What a reception we will get, from the Lord Himself! What a thrill to be able to see Jesus our majestic Lord face to face for the first time! Think about it! He comes to receive us, only if we receive Him in our hearts now. Have you received Him?

The Reunion

We will be reunited with departed believing loved ones and we all will be forever with the Lord. It will be wonderful to be reunited with all of our loved ones who have died in Christ and to be with all of the saints from the past. But the best part of Christ's return is that we will *always be with the Lord!*

Jesus prayed (John 17:24), *“Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”*

The instant we see Jesus in His glory, we will be forever transformed into His likeness, free from all sin, sickness, and death.

We look for the upertaker, not the undertaker. We look for Christ, not the antichrist. The Rapture is “our blessed hope.” What is our comfort and encouragement? No more separation. No more divisions. No more distinctions. No more denominations. When we meet our risen and glorified Lord in the air, the Church will be indivisibly one, and together forever with the Lord.

Matt.24:42, Watch therefore, for you do not know at what hour your Lord is coming.

We know His return is imminent! Before the day closes, the Lord could come back. Before the new day dawns, believers might awake in glory.

Are you ready for the Rapture?

Are you saved? Are you born again? If you are not ready for the coming of Christ, I pray that by faith you will this moment receive Christ as your Lord and Saviour and not risk being left behind. Trust Him, for what he did on the Cross for you, before it is too late. There are no guarantees you will be saved once you are left behind.

Come, even so Lord Jesus!