

Prophecy - Part 1

by John Walvoord

The sermon discusses the importance of understanding prophecy, the second coming of Christ, and the rapture, and provides a clear outline of the order of major events that precede the second coming.

Duration: 50:21

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 3:3, John 6:37, Revelation 19:11

Topics: "Second Coming", "Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that trouble and tribulation are a part of life, but the three and a half year period of the Second Coming of Christ will be a time of unparalleled trouble. The preacher urges the audience to reflect on their salvation, their service to the Lord, and their love for Him. The sermon also highlights the dramatic description of Christ's Second Coming as described in Matthew 24, emphasizing the power and authority of Jesus. The preacher concludes by emphasizing the importance of accepting the free gift of salvation through faith in Christ.

Transcript

Welcome with me, Dr. John Wolvert. I want to say how delighted I am to be with you today. I appreciate it so much, the kind invitation of your pastor and staff to come and hold this meeting.

I've been in a number of Calvary Chapel services, of churches, and I find them alive spiritually and warm and receptive to the Word of God. And that's not always true, sometimes God's chosen people are God's frozen people, you know. And they're hard to reach.

And I'm delighted here to talk about the second coming of Christ and the rapture this morning. I want to say also that these meetings are very short, and I bring along a lot of my books for sale, and they're a limited quantity, but they still have some left after the first service. And I sell them at greatly reduced prices because not much profit motive in it the way I sell them.

But I get a big discount and I pass that on, and the result is that you can buy the books at quite a bargain. One of the books that I'm strictly hopeful you look at is what we call the Bible Knowledge Commentary. This is written by 36 members of our faculty and covers the entire Bible, the Old Testament, New Testament.

The Old Testament is 1,500 pages, and the New Testament is 1,000 pages, and there's about 100 maps and charts to help you understand the Bible. It's my theory that every Christian home should have a commentary like this, where when you read the Bible and don't understand what it's saying, you have a resource to go to and get at least a plausible explanation. So if you don't have it, I hope you'll stop and look at it.

I'd rather imagine you're all going to sell what I brought with me, but we want you to have it in your home if you possibly can. There's a number of other books. I don't want to take time to talk about them all, but there's another book called Every Prophecy in the Bible, which covers every prophecy in the Bible.

There's no other book in print like it, and I wrote that at my publisher's request. It's about a 600-page book, I believe, and it's just been issued in paperback at a reduced price, so you can buy it at a reasonable price. There's a number of other books there, commentaries on Daniel and Revelation, books on Jesus Christ, Person and Work, and the Holy Spirit, and other books, major Bible prophecies, and the final drama, different books on prophecy.

But my wife is at the table, assisted with other women, and she'll be glad to explain to you what's available. So I hope you'll stop and get books that suit your particular need. This morning we want to do something that I hope will be helpful to you.

There's a lot of confusion in prophecy today. Some teachers are teaching it wrong, I think, and some are just not teaching it at all. In some churches, they just don't talk about prophecy.

I've been in places where even a senior citizen told me that she hadn't heard a sermon on prophecy since she was a teenager, 50 years with no prophecy at all. And some churches just don't teach it. And I think that's not true of Calvary churches, generally speaking.

But people need to know. And then there's confusion about how to interpret prophecy, and it certainly is confusing. But if you follow certain simple rules, you'll find it brings clarity and understanding and accuracy to your interpretation of prophecy.

There's three basic rules. First, it was recognized that the Bible is verbally inspired and without error. The Bible has errors, of course, and we couldn't use it as a prophecy base.

But it always is true, and prophecy fulfilled has demonstrated that again and again. The second rule is that prophecy should be interpreted literally. There's the false notion, and it's followed by many, that you can't interpret prophecy literally.

Well, if you come to what it says and you say it doesn't mean what it says, then you've opened the door to all kinds of wild theories and the result is you don't have any prophecy scheme at all that's worth believing. Prophecy should be interpreted literally. And in my book, Every Prophecy of the Bible, I dealt with a thousand passages and 500 have already been literally fulfilled.

How many arguments do you want that prophecy should be literal? When you have 500 arguments, you're not in favor. So when it says something, it's going to happen. It's going to happen precisely and in detail often.

Like Christ was going to be born in Bethlehem, not Nazareth. He was born in Bethlehem, wasn't he? Even though it took a Roman decree to get his parents there. And so it goes.

So many prophecies about Christ and prophecies that have already been fulfilled have been fulfilled very literally. And that's what we expect. And the third rule is simple.

Pay attention to details. There's been all sorts of false teaching because they put things together that aren't together. And that includes the rapture and the second coming, as we're going to see.

If you follow those three rules, you'll come out with a correct view of understanding of the Bible. Now, first of all, we want to deal with the subject of the second coming of Christ. It's rather interesting that even the unsaved world that are not Christian and don't necessarily believe it know that Christ predicted he'd come again a second time.

And that has been demonstrated again and again. And, of course, it's in all our creeds, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic or Greek or Orthodox, they all have a statement to the effect that Christ is coming again to judge the world. And they take that literally.

They may not preach it, but it's there in their creed. And the secular world knows this. And I must confess I was somewhat surprised when the Gulf War broke out how the secular press raised the question, is this the second coming? Is this the final judgment? Is this the end? They raised it.

They had whole articles covering whole pages sometimes on this question of whether the Gulf War was Armageddon in the final. Now, of course, it wasn't. But the interesting thing was that they did something about it.

Now, because I wrote the book Armageddon, Oil, and the Middle East Crisis back in 1974 in the oil crisis, they thought I knew something about it, so I got a lot of phone calls. I was interviewed by over 100 radio stations, and some of them were chains. Goodness knows how many people I reached about the subject.

And then all the major TV stations did something about it. They either had me there in person or they discussed my book about whether this was the end and the final judgment. It's rather amazing.

The Southern Baptists gave me a half hour on their 100 stations to explain what I believed. And so it went, CNN and all the other major stations. So there's interest about it, and the world knows that the second coming is going to occur.

Now, this year 2000 business has sparked more interest in it because there are some that predict that the second coming is going to come on January 1st. Of course, they're wrong, as we'll demonstrate this morning. But it shows the interest that there is in this important doctrine.

Now, what is the second coming of Christ? Well, actually, the Bible never uses the term second coming. It says he'll come a second time to the earth to judge the world. But it's presented often in the Bible.

In Daniel chapter 7, it pictures him coming with authority from God to rule the world. In Matthew 24, the disciples were under the mistaken notion that he was going to deliver them from Rome. They thought he was going to fulfill the prophecies of his second coming.

It seems that everybody got confused and put the first and second coming of Christ together, two totally different events, and they were expecting the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning his second coming. And they were wrong. It took them quite a while to get straightened out.

In fact, I don't think they ever really understood it until he ascended into heaven. They realized his sufferings were past, his glory was future, and they realized that there are two comings. It illustrates how easy it is to be wrong if you don't pay attention to the details of a prophecy.

And that's the way it is. Now, the major revelation is found in Revelation chapter 16, chapter 19, I beg your pardon, beginning of verse 11. And the book of Revelation, we're going to deal with this tonight.

But the book of Revelation has to do with the second coming. In verse 7 of chapter 1, it says that every eye will see him. Of course, that's exactly what Christ said in Matthew 24.

And here we have a picture of the event as it will occur. Now, please notice the details. Verse 11 and following, I saw heaven opened.

John, the apostle, is writing this. And behold, a white horse. A white horse is a symbol of victory.

He who sat on them was called faithful and true, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. This is the second coming. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns and diadems, and he had a name written that no one knew himself.

He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies in heaven clothed him fine linen, white and clean followed him on white horses. And out of his mouth goes a sharp sword that with it he should smite the nations.

He himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he has on his robe and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

This is an awesome picture, the second coming. And what is it? It's a movement from heaven to earth. And he's going to be accompanied, I believe, by the angels and by all the saints that are in heaven, because he's going to be on earth for a thousand years to fulfill the thousand-year kingdom that's prophesied here in the book of Revelation and elsewhere.

And that's what's going to happen. Now notice that it's a coming to judge the world. It's an awful hour for the unsaved world, because the unsaved are going to be put to death, that is the adults, and only the saved are going to be surviving and to go into the millennial kingdom which follows.

And much more could be said about that. Now you'll notice that it's a very dramatic event, but also notice that it follows a whole sequence of previous events. Now I find that very few prophecy teachers do this, but one of the things I think we must do if we're going to get any sense out of prophecy is to draw up a list of prophesied events that are going to occur in the order in which they are going to come.

Now I do that in my little book Armageddon. There's a list of prophecies for Israel, prophecies for the church, prophecies for the nation, and we put it all together in a sequence of major events that are going to be fulfilled in the future. And we need to do that in order to really understand where the second coming fits.

Now first of all, we need to put several scriptures together. One of the major events that's going to occur in the end time is the revival of the Roman Empire. Now it's out of existence now, but Daniel 7, verse 7, indicates it's going to be revived in the form of ten kingdoms.

They're called horns, but it's described in verse 24 as kingdoms. They're going to be banded together in sort of the United States of Europe. It's very interesting that even the secular world is predicting that now because of the events in Europe.

But it's going to be revived in the form of ten nations. It's going to be a friendly situation. They're going to get together because they are friends.

But then something dramatic happens. In Daniel 7, 8, it speaks of a little horn coming up and conquering three of the ten horns and then apparently all the rest. And this is a conqueror who is going to conquer the Roman Empire in its revived form.

And as we trace this through, it turns out that this person who does this is the future antichrist that's going to, the man of sin or the man of lawlessness, that's going to govern the whole world in the period just before the second coming. And so he is emerging there when that Roman Empire is revived. And it could happen any time.

Now, after he gets this position of power, we move on to the next phase. It's found in Daniel 9, 27, which describes the last seven years of Israel's program of prophecy. And it culminates, of course, in the second coming of Christ.

And it pictures a peace treaty which the antichrist imposes upon the Middle East in an effort to solve the problem of Israel in a relationship to the nations. It's a seven-year covenant. It's observed for three and a half years and certain events do happen in those three and a half years.

But then suddenly, overnight, the antichrist declares that he is the ruler of the whole world, something that's never happened before. And because he's ruling the whole world, it brings to a head a lot of different things. And apparently nobody is able to stand against him.

And the next three years are what the Bible calls the Great Tribulation. Now we're in trouble today. We have lots of troubles.

We'd have a meeting where you could recite your troubles. I'd probably find every one of you have something that you don't like about life. But the fact is that that's just general.

It's always been that way. Every man is born to trouble like the sparks flow upward, you know. And as the point of demand, Christ said, in this world you shall have this tribulation.

But this three and a half year period is different. As Christ Himself says in Matthew 24, there's never been a time of trouble like this and it's never going to happen again. And He says it furthermore very dramatically that if He didn't stop it, three and a half year program, by His second coming, there wouldn't be any human beings left in the world.

And we sometimes are criticized because we're dramatic. Try to get more dramatic than that. And that's Christ Himself that's talking.

No, it's going to be a terrible time of trouble. It's the Great Tribulation. And the end of Christ reveals at the beginning of that time of trouble that He's an atheist.

He doesn't regard any God. He claims to be God Himself. He's allied with Satan.

He demands that everybody worship Him or be put to death. And apparently thousands are going to be killed who resist Him in some form or other, especially Jews and Christians. And it's going to be a terrible time of trouble.

And then as we're going to see tonight as we review the book of Revelation, God begins to pour out the terrible judgments that decimate the world and bring it in shambles practically to the time of the second coming of Christ. It's a very dramatic situation. And that's what the Bible describes for this period.

Now, I'll get the sequence of events. First of all, the Roman Empire revived. Then the end of Christ gets control of three in all ten countries.

Then out of that position of power He makes a seven-year covenant of peace. He observes it for three and a half years. Then He breaks it and becomes Israel's persecutor.

And the Great Tribulation runs its course of three and a half years and the second coming of Christ occurs. Now, that's the order of major events that precede the second coming. Now, if you put that all together, you'll see that the end of Christ appears on the scene more than seven years before the second coming of Christ.

That's when He conquers the three and then the ten countries. And as I believe 2 Thessalonians teaches properly interpreted, the rapture has to occur first. He can't be revealed until after the rapture.

So that puts the rapture more than seven years before the second coming. And that just wipes out all the foolishness of making the rapture a part of the second coming or the pre-wrath position that occurs in the middle of the tribulation or the mid-tribute that occurs in the middle. All that's passé because there's more than seven years the rapture has to occur before the second coming of Christ.

So that's a very important situation. And the second coming of Christ is the climax of all this that leads up to Christ taking over the world and beginning His millennial kingdom. Now, by contrast to that, consider the subject of the rapture.

Now, the rapture was a truth that was not revealed in the Old Testament. And Christ never mentioned it in His public ministry until the night before His crucifixion. But according to John 14, He announced He was going to come back and take the disciples to heaven.

Now, you'll bear in mind that the disciples weren't looking for a rapture at all. There were some teachers that tried to say that they were looking for it. They didn't know anything about it.

In fact, they were misguided thinking He was going to fulfill the promises of His second coming. And they were wrong thereto. And Christ told them several times that He was going to have to die first, and they didn't pay any attention.

They didn't even remember it when He died. And, of course, His enemies did. They sent a guard around the tomb and sealed it, you know, trying to prevent Him from being resurrected.

Herod had told them, make it as sure as you can. And they did. He wasn't sure enough.

He couldn't stop the resurrection. So, that is the way it was. But they didn't understand it.

Now, in John 14, Christ told His disciples He was going to heaven, to the Father's house, and that He was going to prepare a place for them in heaven. And then He was going to come and take them from earth to heaven. Now, immediately you see that the rapture is a totally different event than the second coming.

The second coming is the movement from heaven to earth with the purpose of judging the world and bringing it into subjection for the thousand years of Christ's reign. The rapture is a totally different event. His feet never touch the earth.

He comes to the air above the earth, according to the Scriptures, and the church is caught up to meet Him and goes to heaven. It's a simple act of extraction. It's a movement from earth to heaven.

Whereas the second coming is the movement from heaven to earth. There's no excuse, really, for mingling these two, as some have tried to do in ignoring the details that contrast the two events. Now, the Apostle Paul, you remember, was a persecutor of Christians and was marvelously saved when he had a vision of Christ on the road to Damascus where he was going to persecute Christians.

And as a result, he became a flaming evangelist and preached the gospel and founded many churches. And Christ took Paul in the desert and gave him a postgraduate course in theology. He had to be taught about the church, the body of Christ.

He had to be taught about salvation by grace and not by works. He was a legalist. And he had to be taught about the rapture.

And the result was that when he went on his missionary journeys, he had two basic messages. First, Christ died for our sins and rose again. We can be saved by trusting Him as our Savior.

And that was the first part. Then the second part, He's coming again to take us to Himself anytime. And then he preached those two great truths.

And the church understood that. And in Thessalonica, some were saved. He was there three weeks, but some were saved and they were looking for the coming of the Lord.

Well, Timothy went back to see how they're getting along. Paul had been driven out. They were plotting to kill him.

So he had to leave. And he found they had some problems. If you have problems understanding the Bible, imagine Christians here that had only three weeks of instruction.

The New Testament hadn't been written yet. You can understand how they had a lot of questions. And they asked Timothy questions and he answered as best he could.

But then he reported back to Paul that there were some questions he couldn't answer. It's amazing when you read 1 Thessalonians how many deep theological truths they debated about. But one of them was this.

They said, if the Lord comes to us we're living. And they obviously expected any time. You see, the rapture, wherever it's presented in the Bible, never presents a preceding event.

It's always the rapture. You're never told to look for the Antichrist. You're never told to look for the Tribulation.

You're never told to look for these events that will follow the rapture. You're told to look for Christ Himself. The blessed hope of Christ's return.

As in Titus 2. That's our expectation. And so they had this problem. But they wondered, now some of their number had died.

Would they have to wait until some future time for their resurrection after they themselves were raptured, you see? We don't know exactly what they had in mind except possibly they understood that the Second Coming would occur later, which of course was the fact. But they were troubled and Timothy couldn't answer their question. So when Paul heard about it, he wrote a letter of joy that they were standing true in spite of persecution.

But then he explained in 1 Thessalonians 4 exactly what the hope was of the rapture of the church. And in effect, he tells them they don't have to worry. First of all, in verse 13, he said, I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are fallen asleep, lest ye sorrow as others who have no hope.

You see, God wants us to know the wonderful future that's ours. And we are not to sorrow when our loved ones in Christ die as those who do not have hope. I attended the funeral of a little 11-year-old girl who had leukemia.

Her parents were prominent Christian workers and a lot of people had prayed for her, but she finally died. And so they had a memorial service, but the church was packed. But it wasn't mournful.

They were happy. She was free from her leukemia. And she was in heaven in the presence of the Savior, and they knew they'd see her again.

It was a time of triumph. But I couldn't help but think, supposing the girl wasn't a Christian, supposing her parents weren't a Christian, then what? What are you going to say? See, the Bible doesn't say there's some hope. It says there's no.

You either are saved or you're not, you see. Either you go to heaven or you don't. And that's the sad fact that the Bible makes very, very clear.

And so that's the way it was here. God doesn't want us to sorrow as others who have no hope. Then in verse 14, he talks about the absolute certainty of the rapture.

If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, of course, every Christian believes that or he's not a Christian. Even so, will God bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus? He's saying that just as sure as the death and resurrection of Christ, the rapture will occur. Now, of course, in the Old Testament, the resurrection of Christ and His death were prophesied.

And sometimes people think because things are prophesied, it isn't so certain. It's just as certain as history. But the time now is that Christ died.

He rose again. There's no question about it anymore. And he says, just as sure as that is the fact of our faith, so is the fact that Christ is coming again.

Now, notice how he puts it. Even so, God will bring with Him, that is with Jesus, those who sleep in Jesus. Now, what happens when a Christian dies? Well, a medical doctor can come in and say they're dead.

And some of us have gone through experiences like that where loved ones die. But theologically, a Christian dies when the soul leaves the body. We believe when death, the soul leaves the body and goes immediately to heaven.

And we are comforted by the fact that our loved ones who perhaps suffered in their last days are now free from all that and are in the presence rejoicing in the Savior. And that we'll see them again. You see, that's the wonderful hope.

Now, when the rapture occurs, Christ is going to leave His position at the right hand of the Father and He's going to come back to the sphere of earth and He's going to bring the souls of Christians who have died with Him. Why? Because He's going to resurrect their bodies and the soul is going to reenter the body in resurrection. And that's what it tells us in the verses which follow.

And Paul introduces it by saying it's the Word of the Lord. You notice he doesn't quote the Old Testament because the rapture's not there. There's resurrection but not a rapture.

Out here, there is this Word of the Lord that describes it. He goes on to say, We who are alive and remain not as Christians until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. Remember what the question was? Will we have to wait for our loved ones who have died and will have to wait until they get resurrected? And the answer, of course, is no, you won't.

Of course, actually, they're going to precede our change. Now, the Bible doesn't explain why, but obviously, we have the custom of burying their body in the ground and they have a little bit farther to go, so they start first. Seems to be the best explanation.

And then suddenly, every Christian who is living is going to be instantly changed to bodies that are suited for heaven. What a wonderful thing that's going to be. A body without a sin nature.

A body that will never grow old. Some of us have a few problems with that. And then a body that will never die.

We have a wonderful new body, you see, that is ours when the rapture occurs. And so it tells us that the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain, that is Christians on earth, will be caught up, and that's where you get the word rapture, or snatched up, or caught up.

Caught up to be together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we'll be with the Lord. Now, we're not going to stay up in the air.

According to John 14, we're going to go to the Father's house. That's where He's going to take us. And thus He says, we shall always be with the Lord.

From then on, wherever Christ is, we are there. If in heaven, we're going to be with Him in heaven. In the Millennial Kingdom, we're going to come back with Him and be in the Millennial Kingdom.

In the new earth, and new heaven, and new Jerusalem, and eternity, He's going to be there. We're going to be there. We're with Christ forever once the rapture occurs.

And so He says, therefore, comfort, or encourage, exhort one another with these words. You see, I'm being obedient when I do this. Now, some pastors are being disobedient because they don't quote it, you see.

They don't discuss it. No, God wants us to know His wonderful plans for our future. Now, notice how totally different this is than the second coming.

First of all, no preceding events. The second coming has seven years or more of events that precede. But the rapture, it's momentarily.

It could be anytime. It could be today. That's the way it's presented in the Bible.

And, of course, that raises some interesting questions. The rapture is a very practical doctrine. What's the first question? Are you saved? You know, I was brought up in a church that believed that everybody was saved.

I never heard anybody tell me I was lost. Oh, I learned the catechism and learned Scripture verses that said it, but I didn't comprehend it. And I joined the church at age nine.

My parents were prominent in the church. My dad was very proud of me because I passed the catechism course, got a Bible and a reward for it. And then at age 12, I decided to be a preacher and announced that I was going to give myself to full-time Christian work.

Then at age 15, we moved to another town. My father got a different job. And I went to a class on Galatians.

And the second time I was there, the teacher said, You can't be good enough to be saved. I said, What in the world? I was reading my Bible every day. I was praying.

I was going to church every time it opened. I was a good boy. Wasn't that enough? And he explained it wasn't.

You don't get saved by doing the best you can because none of us do the best we can. But if we could, we still wouldn't be saved. You can't be saved by works, you see.

So he went on to explain how there was, that was why Christ died for our sins. And when we put our trust in Him, we'd be forgiven and accepted and be saved. I grabbed it.

I can't understand why anybody can hear the Gospel that Christ died for us and offers us eternal salvation for free. Why anybody even hesitate? What a bargain. What a wonderful result.

And I accepted Him immediately. And the next day, I knew something had happened. There was something stirring inside of me that wasn't there before.

I was born again. But it illustrated to me how it's possible to have churchianity and be a member of a church, be very faithful in all appointments, and still be lost. When Nicodemus had that trouble, he was a good Jew.

He went to the synagogue every Sabbath day. And I'm sure he tithed and bought his offerings, kept the law as best he could. But he couldn't understand Christ.

You see, the fact is that Christ had performed a lot of miracles. And Nicodemus' friends had said that he did it in the power of Satan. But he said, how could Satan do that? So he came to Christ by night.

He didn't want people to see him, I guess. And I asked him about it. And Christ just knocked him right down.

He said, Nicodemus, you can't see the kingdom of God unless you're born again. And he couldn't understand that. He struggled.

How can you be born twice, you know? Well, he eventually did, of course, because when Christ died, Nicodemus was one of those who helped prepare his body for burial. He'd become a Christian. But he had to be born again.

But the point was, he was a godly Jew, but lost. Now, I get invited to churches like this where the Gospel is faithfully preached. But you know, I've yet to see a church, in spite of all the faithfulness of the pulpit and the teaching, where there aren't some that are still doing the best they can.

Still unsaved. When the rapture occurs, with the church services in progress, every Christian is going to be gone. What about you? Are you going to be gone too? Are you born again? That's a question I can't answer, but you can.

The Bible makes it very clear that it's not a complicated process. Christ did all the work. He died for you.

But he promised, him that cometh unto me, that is, coming in faith and believing what he's done for him, I will in no wise cast out. If you really come to Christ, you can't be lost. Do you realize that? He's promised.

And God keeps his promises. If you're not saved, it's because you haven't come. It's not a matter of feeling.

It's not a matter of remorse for your sins. It's not a matter of turning over a new leaf. Sometimes evangelists make it very difficult.

It's accepting a gift. God wants to give you something. And if you put your trust in him, you'll be saved.

When the rapture occurs, regardless of where you are, you're going to hear that call from the blue and be gone. And that's the wonderful fact of the rapture. Now, that's the first question, of course.

And we'll settle that. And I trust each one of you will search your hearts to be sure that you're born again. If you have any questions, and sometimes Christians do, seek out someone who can help you.

They'll be glad to help you at this church and lead you to the Savior and to a sure faith in him. But then there's a second question. You know, after you're saved, God left you here.

Why? He has something for you to do. First of all, to lead a Christian life, to be an example. Second, to be a man of prayer.

There's a lot of people unsaved that need our prayer life. To be a faithful steward. Now, I don't believe the Bible teaches we should give everything away, as some have tried to do.

But I do think we should be as generous as we can because we know that when the rapture occurs, all our savings are going to be left behind for no good purpose. It's only what we give before the rapture that's going to accomplish something good for us. And we should be generous.

And we should be generous in our intercession for others and for our soul winning, our testimony. There's all sorts of things we should be doing as Christians. Be faithful in our worship and service for God.

Now, the reason, of course, is very plain. We are told that we should be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord because we do not labor in vain. In other words, there's coming rewards in heaven.

Now, you're not saved by works. But your rewards are based on works. You see, and that's not part of your salvation.

That's a result of your faithful service after you're saved. And you have to have that wonderful fact before us. And so, we have this tremendous contract.

Now, the church, generally speaking, has taught that the rapture is just a part of the second coming. And they missed the point completely. The two events are totally different.

And I don't see how they can be so blind to what the Bible teaches because the Bible expressly tells us that there'll be no rapture at the second coming. In Revelation chapter 20, verse 4 to 6, it pictures an event of resurrection of the martyred dead of the tribulation. These are people who died because they wouldn't worship the beast.

They're Christians, and they were put to death. And it says of them that they were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image, had not received a mark on their foreheads, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

What's happened? They're resurrected. And after that, reigned with Christ for a thousand years. It teaches the premillennial coming of Christ.

But notice that this happens a couple of days after the second coming. The second coming has occurred now and the period that follows this resurrection takes place. So it makes it very plain that there was no rapture at the second coming.

Otherwise, the martyred dead wouldn't still be dead. You see that? They have to be raised afterwards. Then there's the question about living Christians at the time of the second coming.

And in John 25, we have some very important statements made. You see, Christ was answering his disciples' questions, and he gave them answers and told them the signs of his second coming. And, of course, the sign is the Great Tribulation.

But then in verse 31 of Matthew 21 on to verse 46, he gives them something they hadn't asked for. That is what is called the judgment of the nations or the judgment of the Gentiles. Now, this is a judgment of people who are living at the time of the second coming.

And when Christ calls the nations before him, what's their situation? Well, the sheep and the goats are all mixed up. Now, the sheep represent the saved, and the goats represent the lost. And they're still all mixed up several days after the second coming.

Well, that proves that there was no rapture of the living, you see, or they wouldn't be there. The separation would have taken place at the time of the second coming. So both the dead in Christ and the living in Christ are not raptured at the second coming.

Their rapture has to occur much earlier than that in the sequence of events. So this whole idea that's so popular in the church that the rapture occurs at the second coming is simply false. And the Scriptures expressly deny it.

I don't see why people don't read what the Bible has to say about it and understand and believe what it says. Now, how does that affect you and me? Well, first of all, we have a wonderful hope. I don't have much hope for this world.

It's so wicked and so departing from God. You just wonder how God puts up with it, the indifference of a non-Christian world to the things of God. And sometimes Christians don't behave too much better.

I think God's putting up with it. But the day is going to come when it's suddenly going to be over and the rapture's going to take place. And the events that follow the rapture are going to follow in sequence, as I've outlined this morning, and climax in the second coming of Christ.

Now, how does this affect you? Well, I'm sorry to say there's a lot of Christians that don't know anything about the rapture. I've been in churches where people who have been going to church all their life come up and tell me after I've spoken of the rapture, I've never heard this before. It's all new to me.

I didn't know anything about it. The pulpit had been silent on this important subject. And, of course, it shouldn't have been.

It should have warned people and told people and exhorted people to accept the wonderful truth of the gospel message. But now I have another problem here. Here are Christians who are instructed in this.

To some extent, as you have been this morning. What's your feeling about the rapture? Are you looking forward to it? I find some Christians are actually afraid of it. Of course, it's an unknown in some ways, but what could be more wonderful than for Christ to come, take us to Himself with all the transformation that that involves in our bodies and our future, with all the wonderful promises that God has promised us? I can't imagine anything more wonderful than the rapture of the church.

We should be excited about this. I've been preaching on this for 60 years and I'm still getting excited. I think we should be.

You see, if Christ means something to us, it should be exciting that He's coming for us. Now, Geraldine is with me on this trip and we travel together now, but the time was when we had our boys at home and she had to stay home with the stuff, as it were, and I'd go on the road for a week or so in Bible conference ministry. And you know, she always asked a question when I left.

You know what that question was? When are you coming back? Now there are thousands of people in Dallas that couldn't have cared less. But she did. Why? Because she loved me.

She wanted to know exactly when I'd come back. How? When? She was going to meet me, of course, at the airline or wherever it was. And she was interested.

Why? Because she loved me. My father called her up and said, Honey, I've got so many meetings I won't be home for another six months. And she said, Well, that's okay.

It'd be a good time to go home and find out what's wrong. Because a wife that loves you doesn't want you to be gone for six months. No.

If you really believe the rapture and let it sink into your consciousness, there can't be anything more wonderful. And the truth of the matter is, you're going to be interested in the rapture in the same proportion as you love Christ. Think about that.

How much should we love Him? Well, we should love Him with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength and our neighbor as ourselves. That's the Bible standard. The most important question you have is, Do you really love Christ? If you do, then the rapture will be a wonderful truth that you can take for yourself.

And look forward to His coming with eager anticipation. Now it comes down to this. First of all, we need instruction in the rapture.

And then the question is, our response. And I think God wants us to be walking so close to Christ and so in love with Him that it'd be a wonderful thing for Him to come. You know, I read somewhere that some wives are lonely in their love life with their husband because he never says in so many words that he loves her.

And I hadn't thought about that before, but often you don't express it in so many words, you know. So I determined to not have that happen to our marriage. We've been married 59 years, and I think it's going to last.

But at any rate, I say to it first thing in the morning. I say, Honey, I love you, and the last thing at night. And it doesn't hurt to throw a few of them in during the day.

And that's important. Then I got to thinking about that. We have our morning devotions every morning after breakfast.

Devotions. What are devotions? They should be expressing our love for Christ. I said, I realize it.

We've been having devotions all right, and I do love the Lord, but I hadn't really expressed it. When was the last time you told the Lord you loved Him? You know, it's a funny thing how we don't do the things we should. And I'd suggest that not only do you read your Bible every day and pray every day, but every day tell the Lord that you love Him.

He wants to be loved. He really saved us. He wanted people who would be willing to love Him.

You know, it's an amazing thing. I think of it every morning when I pray. You know, our God is an infinite God.

And He's the creator of this universe and all its millions and trillions of stars. And yet the amazing thing about God, because He's infinite, when I start praying, He gives me His full attention as if I were the only one. You realize that? The universe and its creator gives you full attention while you pray.

That's amazing, isn't it? And the reason He does is because He loves you. And what we need to do in return is to love Him and tell Him so. And I'm just amazed that every day God is still a gracious God.

He doesn't reward us according to our worth, but He takes care of us in grace and forgives us and is patient with us in our idiosyncrasies and all the other things that we have that aren't quite right. And it's amazing to have a God like that. And then be able to bring Him all your problems, big and little, and realize He's listening.

And we're told that He answers. Seeking, you shall find. Knocking, it shall be open unto you.

Asking, you shall receive, you see. The Bible gives us so many exhortations to enter into this love relationship. So I hope this morning I've emphasized something that you probably knew before.

But I wonder, have you really responded in love for the Savior and in faithfulness to Him in the days that are past? Well, you can't change the past, but you can change the future. And I believe it's going to be a wonderful thing if you trust the Lord and say, Lord, I love You. I want to serve You today.

Help me to be all that You want me to be. That's the goal of life, isn't it? Now and throughout all eternity to come. Now today, I hope you'll ask the question, first of all, am I saved? Second, am I serving the Lord? And third, do I really love Him? These are important questions.

And I trust you won't postpone the decision, but you'll think it through. Say, Lord, here's my life. I want to surrender completely to You.

In fulfillment of Romans 12, 1 and 2, to present my body, a living sacrifice, holy, except one to God, which is our reasonable service. And that's the challenge that faces us today. Shall we pray? Our Father, how grateful we are for Your loving care and Your grace and the fact that You have been so kind to us and so thoughtful and so loving in providing us this eternal salvation and never leaving nor forsaking, helping us through all the hard spots of life.

We pray, Lord, that Thou wouldst undertake for us and answer prayer, make our lives all as they should be, and help us to be looking for that glorious event, perhaps today. It could be that Christ will come and we'll be in His presence forever. So we commit our needs to You now and we pray if anyone here today is not saved, that they'll not let this day go by without settling that question.

And if in our lives we've been short of surrendering to Him, we may say, Lord, I don't want to be plain Christian. I want to be a real Christian in my life and do the things that God wants me to do. We ask it all in Christ's precious name.

Amen.

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