

Lesson 4 Lecture
The Resurrections and The Rapture
By Dan Leppo

Greetings! For those of you who I'm providing this lecture to in person, it is GREAT to see you! It has been too long. Thank God for Zoom, though. Without it, we would not have had People of the Word last year and many of us would not be participating this year. I know this pandemic has impacted each of you differently with varying levels of severity. While I have my thoughts about what has been going on the last 18 months, I'm not here to share those opinions.

My sole exhortation is for each of you to draw closer to Christ, and ask Him to give you the power to love and show grace to those who are *not* on the same page as you regarding your opinions on the pandemic. This cursed virus has been highly divisive within the Church, and that has to stop. As we go through this study, we're going to learn that what we're experiencing today is nothing compared to what is coming. We need to stick together, take off our robes of judgment, pull back our pointy fingers of condemnation and shaming, and extend the same kind of grace and mercy Christ extends to each of us each and every day. Amen?

One declaration before I get into today's teaching – I'm going to regularly reference Dr. David Reagan's book, "*God's Plan for the Ages*" – not just in this lecture but in all of my lectures. It is one of the best books on prophecy I have read because it is Scripture-based. I highly recommend you add it to your library.

From a biblical timeline perspective, we are currently in the Church Age – this began with Christ's resurrection, the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and commissioning the apostles and all future believers to share the good news of the Gospel to an unbelieving world. The Church Age has been going on for almost 2,000 years, but it has an end to it. The next phase in the biblical timeline is the

Tribulation. Carol is going to give us a great teaching on this topic next week. For the purpose of helping you better understand the Resurrections and the Rapture, I'm going to give you a couple of bullet points to remember on the Tribulation:

- It will be 7 years – divided in two 3 ½ year segments.
- Its purpose is two-fold: 1) to wake up the Nation of Israel to the truth that Jesus is the Messiah; 2) for God to pour out His wrath on an unbelieving world.

I'm curious as to how many of you found the fact that “Resurrections” in this lesson’s title was a plural word – meaning there are going to be more than one. Jesus Himself said there would be more than one resurrection in John 5:29: “*and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.*” Paul confirmed this in Acts 24:15: “*and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*”

Much to the chagrin of my ever-patient and tolerant wife of almost 32 years, I'm a **big** sports fan. While I enjoy most sports, I prefer team-based sports. There's something about the comradery of being on a team – sharing your successes and failures together – holding each other up. There's an important fact about team-based sports – you can only be on **one** team. You can't play for more than one team. Did you know there are teams in the Bible? You have the Jews and the Gentiles. You have the righteous and the unrighteous. As we go through this year's study, knowing what team is being addressed in the prophetic Scriptures will be critical for you to understand your place in them. Some prophecies are written for the Jews, while some are for either the Gentiles or all of humanity. Other prophecies are for the righteous, which includes the Church, and others are for the unrighteous – the non-Christ believing people. Therefore, your understanding of

what team you're on should lead to a greater confidence of your place in the prophetic outcomes.

When it comes to the Resurrections, there are two teams:

- The Just/Righteous (“Team God”)
- The Unjust/Unrighteous (“Team Satan”)

Members of Team God will actually have three resurrections, while Team Satan will only get one. That brings the total number of resurrections in the Bible to four.

The *first stage* of the resurrection of the Just is Jesus' resurrection as noted in 1 Corinthians 15:20, “*But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.*” Covering Jesus' resurrection alone is at least one lecture – if not several. What we should take from Christ's resurrection is its:

- Power of Good over Evil
- Power of Life over Death
- Power of the Spirit World over the Physical World
- Power of Forgiveness

The *second stage* of the righteous resurrections is the gathering of the Church-age saints, living and dead, at the appearing of the Lord (the Rapture). Jesus said in John 14:1-3: “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*”

The Apostle Paul, speaking of the time of the Rapture, said there will be a resurrection of the Church Age saints that have died. He said in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17: *“For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”*

The *third stage* of the resurrection of the righteous will be at the end of the Tribulation with Jesus’ second coming. There will be two groups:

- 1) The Tribulation martyrs - Revelation 20:4: *“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”*
- 2) The Old Testament saints - Daniel 12:2: *“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”*

Acts 24:15 speaks to a resurrection of the unjust – the wicked, *“and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”* This will take place at the end of the millennial reign of Jesus. This is at the time of the Great White Throne

Judgment of the damned, which is described in Revelation 20:11-15: “*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.*”

Dr. Reagan points out that judgment always follows resurrection. He references Romans 14:10b,12 and Hebrews 9:27 to support this position. I've never been a big fan of judgment, despite the fact that my very name means God is my judge. Thanks, Mom and Dad. What does judgment mean to us as believers? The judgment for our sins took place at the Cross. Isaiah 43:25 and Hebrews 8:12 both offer the believer the promise of forgiveness of sins and God no longer remembering them.

The Redeemed will be judged of their works, not to determine their eternal destiny, but to determine their degrees of reward. According to Ephesians 2:10 and Titus 2:14, believers are saved to do good works.

The believer's judgment will be based on three criteria:

1. Quantity – Luke 19:11-27; Romans 2:6-7
2. Quality – 1 Corinthians 3:10-14
3. Motivation – 1 Corinthians 4:5

All the *unrighteous* who have ever lived will be resurrected and judged at the end of the millennial reign of Jesus.

Before I move on to the Rapture discussion, one question that may be on some of your minds regarding our resurrection is the issue of what we choose to do with our remains upon our death. The three primary options are burial, cremation, or donation to science. Some may question that if they are cremated, how can their bodies be resurrected? I have the following responses to this point:

- In Genesis 1:1, the Hebrew word for “created” is “bara.” This word can be interpreted to mean to create something out of nothing. If God can create the human body out of nothing, then He surely can resurrect a cremated body.
- The Bible is silent on the issue of cremation. There is nothing in Scripture that neither promotes nor discourages cremation, so to take a stand one way or the other is a personal decision – not a biblical one.
- Warren Wiersbe’s commentary offers the noteworthy statement that “resurrection” does not necessarily mean “reconstruction.”

In the end, how you choose to manage your remains is a personal decision. From a biblical standpoint, there is no clear directive one way or the other. What is clear, though, the Scriptures do say *everyone* will be resurrected – no exceptions, so God clearly has the power to resurrect a buried or cremated body.

The term, Rapture, is derived from the Latin word, *rapier*, which appears in the Latin Vulgate. This was the only Bible used by Western civilization for 1,200 years. The word means to *catch up*, to *snatch away* or to *take out*. The word can be found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 – the words “*caught up*” are used. The promise of the Rapture is unique to the New Testament church – it is not found in the Old

Testament. As we noted earlier, the saints of Old Testament times will be resurrected at the end of the Tribulation and not at the time of the Rapture of the Church.

The first mention of the Rapture in the New Testament came from none other our beloved Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ in John 14:3, “*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.*” He doesn’t mention He’s coming to earth, so it doesn’t appear that He’s talking about His second coming.

The Apostle Paul offers the most detailed revelation of the actual events related to the Rapture. From 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, we learn this about the Rapture.

- The dead in Christ (Church Age saints) will be resurrected and caught up to meet the Lord in the sky.
- Those of us alive in Christ will follow
- We will meet the Lord in the air and be taken back with Him to Heaven.

Paul also spoke about the Rapture in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, “*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.*” This promise applies to both the living and the dead in Christ. That means there is going to be a generation of Christians who will not experience death. Think we’re that generation? I’m praying for it.

Sadly, a significant component of the church today is either ignorant of the Rapture, or it refuses to acknowledge it because they don’t understand it, or they are scared of it. To me, the Scriptures we’ve just looked at are pretty clear as to its

existence. Therefore, if you believe that every word of the Bible is God-breathed, to dismiss the truth of the Rapture is simply willful ignorance.

For those who are willing to talk about the Rapture, there is one primary debate – its timing. This is the case because the Bible doesn't specifically identify the timing of the Rapture. Churches have split over the timing of the Rapture – that is just stupid. The Church needs to be unified around the core truths of who Jesus is and what He accomplished in His crucifixion and resurrection. Things like the timing of the Rapture are, at best, secondary issues and not worth dividing the body of Christ. The four primary positions on the timing of the Rapture are:

- Post-Tribulation
- Mid-Tribulation
- Pre-Wrath
- Pre-Tribulation

Regarding the proponents of the Post-Tribulation Rapture, they point to two parables in Matthew 13, and Jesus' teaching on the end times on the Mount of Olives in Matthew 24. This teaching is known by many as the Olivet Discourse.

- Matthew 24:29: "*Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*"

Matthew's version of the Olivet Discourse was targeted at the Jews. Luke's version was targeted at the gentiles – the church.

- Luke 21:28, 36: "*Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.*" *Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.*"

Matthew is speaking about the martyred saints during the tribulation. According to Revelation 7:9-14, most of those who accept Christ during the Tribulation will be martyred. Those that do survive the Tribulation will be gathered by the angels according to Matthew 24:31. Luke is talking about the church saints who received Christ *before* the Tribulation. The Matthew 13 parable of the wheat and tares can be explained by this same argument of martyred vs. survivor of the Tribulation.

While there are variations of how the Mid-Tribulation scenario plays out, the most common one is the Church will be taken out in the exact middle of the Tribulation – the point in time when the Antichrist will be revealed. The primary verse used to support this position is 1 Corinthians 15:52, “*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.*” Mid-Tribulation supporters identify this trumpet with the seventh trumpet of the trumpet judgments in Revelation. Since the blowing of the seventh trumpet is recorded in Revelation 11, the mid-point of the Tribulation, the conclusion is that the Rapture must occur in the middle of the Tribulation.

The primary problem with this interpretation is the trumpet in 1 Corinthians 15 is blown for *believers*. The seven trumpets in Revelation 8, 9, and 11 are sounded for *unbelievers*. The Revelation trumpets have no relevance for the Church. The seventh trumpet relates to the end of the Tribulation, so this casts a pretty big question mark over the Mid-Tribulation supporters.

There is also a misconception among many people that the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation period are going to be a cake walk. Yes, there will be a temporary peace in the Middle East, and the Jews will be allowed to finally construct their long-yearned for 3rd temple in Jerusalem. However, they don’t call this 7-year period “Tribulation” for nothing. There will be evil forces at work moving towards

the half-way point, and, especially for those who come to faith in Christ in the first 3 ½ years, the persecution will rapidly intensify. Trust not me – but the Word of God – it will be a whole lot easier coming to faith and living for Christ now than it will be during the first half of the Tribulation. You don’t want to be here during that time.

The pre-wrath Rapture is a twist on the Mid-Tribulation scenario – this places the Rapture at the beginning of the last quarter of the Tribulation – about 5 ½ years in. The basis of this concept is in the first 5 ½ years, there is the wrath of man and Satan – but not from God. The promise to the church is that it will be spared from *God’s* wrath; therefore, the belief is that doesn’t kick in until the last 1 ½ years. The big problem with this belief is that man and Satan can act apart from God’s will. We learned in chapter 1 of Job that Satan can’t do anything without God’s willingness to permit it. The same goes for man. Any carnage brought about by man or Satan during the Tribulation period can be attributed to God’s wrath because He must ordain it, or allow it, if it is to take place.

There are strong arguments for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Three of the better ones are:

1. Imminence
2. Protection from God’s Wrath – Promise of Deliverance
3. A Restraining Force Holding Back the Antichrist

In His Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, Jesus used the words “*be ready*”, “*watch*”, and “*let your waist be girded and your lamps burning*.” Referencing Matthew 25, the wedding of a bride groom was an extraordinary event. In Jesus’ time, the bride-to-be was to be ready at all times for the groom to surprise her and take her to the wedding ceremony. Jesus is the Bridegroom and

the Church is His bride. Jesus' words speak to the reality that He can come at any moment. Therefore, if the Rapture is placed at any point *after* the beginning of the Tribulation, then the concept of a surprise visit from Christ is destroyed because certain knowable things must happen first. For example, with the Mid-Tribulation scenario, we know that the peace treaty with Israel and the construction of the temple must first happen as a pre-cursor to Jesus rapturing us. Where's the surprise in that?

Referencing Matthew 24:42, what or whom should we be looking for? Many people get caught up in who the Antichrist is going to be. With all the political rhetoric we've been bombarded with, we've heard the extremists say it's one of these three men (show pictures of Obama, Trump, and Putin). I'm here to bring your searches to a rest. For those of you who have been listening to me all these years, you may remember I have been at times able to uncover some never-seen-before pictures of key biblical characters. Well, I've done it again – I know who the Antichrist is, and I have a picture of him. Are you ready? (show a picture of Bozo) I hate clowns!

Who should we really be looking for? If you listen to Paul in Titus and Peter and John in their first epistles, we should be looking for Jesus.

A second biblical argument for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is the notion that the righteous will be protected from God's wrath and promised deliverance. Listen to these Scriptures:

- Romans 5:9: “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, *we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*”
- 1 Thessalonians 1:10: “and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*”

- 1 Thessalonians 5:9: “For God *did not appoint us to wrath*, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,”
- Revelation 3:10: “Because you have kept My command to persevere, *I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world*, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

Pretty hard to argue with the consistent message of God’s righteous being spared from His wrath, huh?

A third argument that supports a pre-Tribulation Rapture is the notion that the power of the Holy Spirit in the believers and in the church is preventing the revelation of and initiation of the Antichrist’s power. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:6-7: *“And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.”* This is an important verse for two reasons:

1. For today, this should comfort you that the power you have via the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is greater than any demonic force that is in the world. This is confirmed in 1 John 4:4.
2. The second reason this verse is important is if this restraining force is indeed the Church, and I believe it is, then if this restraining force is removed, that is clear testimony the church is not going to be around during the Tribulation.

There is a “circle of life” in God’s Word and prophecy. God’s Word tells us God can’t lie, and it brings us His prophecy. Events in history have proven that God cannot lie – His prophecies have been played out exactly as His Word has told us. Charles Spurgeon summarizes this circle of life concept when he said, *“The past assures us, and the future reassures us.”* The study of prophecy and

recognizing its fulfillment is a critical way to build the foundation of your faith journey. Faith must be rooted in truth for it to serve any real and meaningful purpose.

Carol said in her opening lecture, “Prophecy is not written to *scare us* but to *prepare us*.” Maggie said in her lesson 1 lecture, “Prophecy is not to *frighten* us but to *invite* us to trust our Father in Heaven and be **excited** for His promises!” For those of you still awake, you will recall I opened this lecture with the importance of understanding what team you’re on. If you are on Christ’s team – the Righteous, then there is no need to be scared or frightened as Carol and Maggie noted. God is perfect (Ps. 18:30), and God is love (1 John 4:8). 1 John 4:18 promises, “*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment.*”

What team are you on? As I said earlier, you can’t be on both – you have to choose. I would hope most of you have chosen “Team Jesus”. However, if you have not, or if you know those who have not made this choice, there is no better time to do this than now. I’ll leave you with this important truth – Jesus *wants* you on His team. He takes no joy in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11), and He seeks that all shall come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Don’t believe that? Look at the cross. Those same arms that were stretched out and pinned to the cross to pay the price for your sins remain stretched out yearning to hug you and hold you forever as you confess His name as Lord and Savior. Revelation 3:20 assures us He is standing at the door of your heart and knocking. Will you let Him in? Let’s pray. *Abba Father, we give thanks to You and praise You for Your prophetic Word that proves time and time again that Your Word is truth. We thank you that You oversee all of our lives and are our beloved Author and Finisher of our faith. We ask that you impart Your strength and power to allow us to see and love others as You do. Finally, Lord God, we cry out Maranatha – come quickly Lord Jesus. May we all be ready for Your twinkling of an eye. In Jesus name, Amen.*

