

## **SERMON NOTES OF THE RESURRECTION AND RAPTURE**

Thank you for taking time to listen to this message:

### **TITLE: THE RESURRECTION AND RAPTURE**

Introduction:

The resurrection and rapture are two major events in eschatology [the study of last things]. It is the view of many Bible commentators that there will be a resurrection and rapture of the church before the great tribulation. But a less popular view is that the resurrection and rapture shall occur after the great tribulation. Let us now examine this starting with 3 biblical texts regarding the resurrection and rapture.

Let us first turn to 1 THESS. 4:16-17:

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord.”

Let us also turn to 1 COR. 15:20, 51-52:

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruit of those who have fallen asleep.”

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.”

And finally, JOHN 11:23-24:

Jesus [Yahushua] said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

This sermon focuses on the timing of the resurrection and rapture taken from these biblical texts. I have 3 headings as follows:

1. The Resurrection of the Dead in Christ Occurs before the Rapture
2. The Appointed Time of the General Resurrection
3. The Resurrection can be likened to Seed, Time and Harvest

## 1. The Resurrection of the Dead in Christ Occurs before the Rapture

The **Resurrection** is one of the basic teachings of Christ revealed in Hebrews 6:1-2. It is so important to get back to the basic teachings of Christ, and teach the Resurrection of Christ as a foundational doctrine to new believers (Rom. 10:9), and follow this up by teaching about the Resurrection at Christ's return, which is the Resurrection of the dead in Christ, 'an event that shall occur before the Rapture.' This may appear obvious, yet it needs to be analysed because the way certain Bible teachers teach in regards to the rapture, some who are less informed perhaps may misunderstand or conclude that the time of the rapture precedes the resurrection and also the great tribulation, whereas notable Christian leaders like Matthew Henry and Charles Spurgeon understood that Christ's coming would be a glorious event for God's persecuted people who would be raptured after they endured the great tribulation at the time of the general resurrection of the dead. **Resurrection** is the concept of coming back to life after death. The death and resurrection of the Son of Man, Christ are the most important events, and the foundation of the Christian faith. The Son, Christ's **resurrection** is the guarantee that all Christians who have died trusting in Christ will be resurrected at His return, often referred to as the second advent. The *rapture* refers to the living ones in Christ upon the earth at the time of the Lord's second advent (Matt. 24:29-31; 1 Cor. 15:51-57). The English word "rapture" comes from the Latin word [*rapio*] which means to be "seized" or "taken in relation to actual removal from one place to another." The Greek word from this term "rapture" [*harpazo*] can be defined as "caught up." In regards to the rapture, the apostle Paul reveals, "*Now, brethren, concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus [Yahushua] Christ and our gathering together to Him.*" (2 Thess. 2:1; 1 Thess. 4:17) – "*our gathering together to Him*" is a reference to the rapture. The rapture at the time of the Lord's return can be likened to two men in the field [the world], one transformed in a twinkling of an eye and caught up in the cloud [rapture] to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:30-31), and the other left behind (Matt. 24:40-41). According to 1 Thess. 4:16-17, the resurrection and rapture happen in one event, but in a particular order.

Turning again to 1 THESS. 4:16-17:

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord."

Notice in 1 Thess. 4:17, that living ones on earth will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, therefore contrary to certain teaching which is in error in regards to the Lord shall rapture His church in secret—the rapture "shall not be in secret," *as every eye shall see the Lord return in the clouds* [this includes those who actually pierced Him – Rev. 1:7; Mark 14:62; Is. 40:5; 1 Thess. 3:13; Dan. 7:13-14]. Another Scripture reveals that at the Lord's return, He shall light up the heavens from one end of the earth to another (Matt. 24:27). Furthermore, in Act. 1:9-11, the Scriptures reveal clearly that the Son of Man [Christ] shall return publicly in the same way that He ascended, and the Scriptures also specifically mentions five events that must take place "first" prior to the rapture (2 Thess. 2:1-4; Mark 13:10-27; Matt. 24:14-31):

1. Firstly, as revealed in 1 Thess. 4:16, that at the time of the Son of Man's second advent, "the dead in Christ will rise FIRST." Moreover, this text accords with 1 Thess. 3:13 which reveals that when Christ returns, He shall return with all His saints [referring to those who have fallen asleep trusting in Christ], who shall rise from the dead first before the rapture of *those living upon the earth* (1 Thess. 4:15-17; 1 Cor. 15:23, 51-52). And also, 1 Cor. 15:52 reveals: *the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*. Therefore, the Scriptures clearly reveal that the resurrection of the dead in Christ shall occur before the Lord raptures His church (1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52).
2. Secondly, the *last great apostasy* must also take place FIRST, before the Lord's second advent to rapture His church. Turning to 2 Thess. 2:1-3, "Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus [Yahushua] Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, <sup>2</sup> not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of <sup>a</sup>Christ had come. <sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of <sup>b</sup>sin is revealed, the son of perdition." The reference to *the falling away* is the apostasy which must take place first, before the Lord's second advent to rapture His church.
3. Thirdly, 2 Thess. 2:3 [which we just read], the reference to *the man of sin* is the "manifestation of the last great Antichrist" which must also take place FIRST, before the Lord's second advent to rapture His church. The Bible makes it clear that the last great Antichrist shall be destroyed by the brightness of the Lord's coming (2 Thess. 2:1-8; Dan. 7:24-25; Rev. 13:1-7).
4. Fourthly, the *gospel preached worldwide* must take place FIRST, prior to the Lord's second advent to rapture His church, which the Lord is also more than capable of using effectively in regards to a last great worldwide awakening (Mark 13:10-27; Matt. 24:14-31; Rev. 7:9-14; 14:14-16).
5. And fifthly, the *great tribulation* must take place FIRST, before the Son of Man's second advent to rapture His church, as the Son of Man, Christ Himself has revealed that He shall return after the commencement of the great tribulation days (Matt. 24:29-31; Mark 13:14-27; Luke 21:25-31). Moreover, in 2 Tim. 3:1 the believers are warned that in the last days—which began with Christ's incarnation until His return — *perilous times* will come until Christ returns to physically raise all those who have died (2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5). Therefore, the resurrection of the dead in Christ and rapture shall occur after *perilous times* with all indications after the catastrophic events during the great tribulation (Matt. 24:21-22, 29-31; Rev. 14:6-15; 2 Thess. 2:1-8).

## 2. The Appointed Time of the General Resurrection

The Scriptures reveal that the Day of the Lord's return shall be sudden (Matt. 24:36-44; Rev. 2:5; 22:7), like a thief in the night to those who are in darkness, but not to those who are *sons of the light* (1 Thess. 5:2-5) [see Rev. 3:2-6, what the Spirit of God says to the churches is to be *watchful* lest the Lord should come as a thief]. The *day or hour* of the Lord's return cannot be predicted, but like the weather by certain signs in the sky can be predicted (Luke 12:54-56), in like manner, the Lord's return can be predicted particularly by certain events and signs revealed in the Scriptures (Luke 21:25-28; 2 Thess. 2:1-8; Matt. 24:3-30; Joel 2:28-32). But the actual *appointed time or the season of fulfilment* shall not be known (Act. 1:7) until these predicted events or signs of the Lord's return occur (Luke 21:25-28, 33), which shall particularly be evident by the catastrophic events on earth during the great tribulation (Heb. 12:26-29; Matt. 24:29-30; Joel 2:30-31; Is. 13:10), and then the sign of the *time* or season (Luke 12:54-56) of the Lord's return shall also be evident (Matt. 24:33-35; Luke 21:25-33). But once again, *the day or hour* shall not be known, for this remains unknown to all, except to God (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32). All prophecies have an appointed season for their fulfilment (Hab. 2:2-3; Dan. 2:21; Eccl. 3:1; 2 Thess. 2:6) that may appear long to mankind, but it is imminent, or about to happen with God (Rev. 22:20; Is. 48:3), but not occurring at once or immediately (Luke 21:9). In other words, these prophecies have already been set for an appointed season known only to God (Act. 1:7), and also that when they begin to occur, they may occur rapidly until *the Day of the Lord's return* (2 Pet. 3:10-13; Luke 17:24; 1 Thess. 4:15-18). God has made everything to occur at its *appropriate time* (Eccl. 3:11), this included for instance in times past, the *time* of Christ's first coming (Num. 24:17; Hag. 2:6-9; Gal. 4:4-5), and this also includes future prophecies such as the *time* of the manifestation of the last Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:3-6), and the *time* of the return of the Lord (Matt. 24:29-31; Act. 1:9-11). It is also apparent that God has appointed the time of the general resurrection (John 11:23-24).

According to John 5:25-29 & 11:24, there is an appointed time for the general resurrection at the last day for both the righteous and the wicked, we are informed in the Scriptures that Martha made it an article of her faith (John 11:24).

Reading again the text of JOHN 11:23-24:

Jesus [Yahushua] said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Moreover, the Bible makes it clear that there is an appointed time of the general resurrection in John 5:25, 'The hour is coming, when all that are in the graves,' all that are dead, without exception, 'shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth.' However, Bible commentators are divided in regards to the resurrection from the dead, whether the resurrection of the just and the wicked occur at different stages, or whether the resurrection should be interpreted as a general resurrection at the last day. It appears that when Christ our Lord speaks of men coming out of their graves at the last day, "some unto the resurrection of life, and others unto the resurrection of damnation", in John 5:29, that upon these words it may well be thought the apostle Paul grounded his faith of the resurrection of the dead of both the just and the unjust, in Acts 24:15, but although the resurrection of both is spoken

of here and elsewhere together, yet it is the view of some Bible commentators that it will be at distinct periods of time; the resurrection of the just at the beginning of the one thousand years reign, and that of the wicked at the end of them (Rev. 20:5-6, 11-15). Therefore, a very important question is, 'Does the resurrection of the just coincides with the resurrection of the wicked?' [which refers to *the general resurrection* of both the just and the unjust]. There appears to be a stronger case for a general resurrection of both the just and the wicked occurring at the same time (John 5:29). For the Scriptures reveal that the resurrection of the just [that is the dead in Christ], and also the resurrection of the wicked are events that shall both occur at the last day (John 11:23-24; 12:48). Moreover, the Bible makes it clear that we are living in the last days since Christ's incarnation until His return on *the Day of the Lord* (2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 6:17), a special day that will occur when God's will and purpose for His world and for mankind will be fulfilled, and therefore, it is the last day in time (John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:23-24; 12:48), when time shall finally be replaced by eternity, as Christ returns to earth to redeem His faithful believers and send unbelievers to eternal judgment and punishment in hell (2 Thess. 1:6-10; John 12:48). Although eternal judgment or punishment in *hell* that many will suffer is not a popular subject, yet *hell* must be taught as a divine deterrent to living ungodly, for the Son of Man spoke many times about *eternal judgment*, it is one of the basic teachings of Christ (Heb. 6:1-2), which the Lord also taught through parables, as a clear warning of the terrors of eternal condemnation of the soul (Matt. 10:27-28; 23:14-15, 33) on *the Day of the Lord* (2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 6:17). Let me reiterate this very important point of the Day of the Lord. It is a special day that will occur when God's will and purpose for His world and for mankind will be fulfilled, and therefore, it is the last day in time (John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:23-24; 12:48), when time shall finally be replaced by eternity, as Christ returns to earth to redeem His faithful believers and send unbelievers to eternal judgment and punishment in hell (2 Thess. 1:6-10; John 12:48). So, it seems that the resurrection of the just unto eternal life is not a separate event from the resurrection of the wicked unto condemnation (John 5:28-29; Matt. 25:31-46) due to an intermediate period of one thousand years, because there shall be "no more days in time" when Christ returns to end these last days at the resurrection on the last day (John 11:23-24).

The Scriptures also reveals that there is an order to the bodily resurrections.

Reading again the text of 1 COR. 15:20, 51-52:

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."

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."

In the text just read of 1 Cor. 15:20, it is clear that Christ's bodily resurrection is notably referred to as the firstfruits of all future resurrections. The Book of Revelation also notably mentions the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5-6), which has been interpreted by some Bible commentators as Christ's bodily resurrection. Moreover, 1 Cor. 15:23 reveals that there is an order in the resurrections in this way: [1] Christ the firstfruits, and [2] afterwards those who are Christ's at His coming, which clearly reveals that there is a harvest or a great ingathering to end the process of the resurrection [we will look at this in more depth in the next heading]. Therefore, it can be argued that the biblical text in Dan. 12:2

particularly in regards to two resurrections [1] the resurrection to everlasting life; and [2] the resurrection to everlasting condemnation are NOT two separate events due to an intermediate period of one thousand years, but rather the same event of a *harvest or a general resurrection* for all the dead on the last day (John 12:48; 5:28-29; 2 Tim. 4:1; Rom. 2:5-8; Dan. 12:2), to face different kinds of resurrections—condemnation for the unrighteous, and everlasting life for the righteous (Dan. 12:2). Moreover, the resurrection for those who are Christ’s at His coming refers to “the time of the dead that they should be judged,” and the “servants” of God [*particularly in regards to “the prophets,” but generally also refers to all “the saints” or the righteous*] should be rewarded (Rev. 11:18; Dan. 12:2), as also revealed yet further in Matthew 25:31-46. There are other biblical texts that particularly also make a strong case in regards to a simultaneous resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous. Firstly, Matt. 25:32-33, this passage reveals how the Lord when He sits on His throne of glory as a Judge, He shall separate those who were godly and righteous from those who were ungodly and wicked (Matt. 25:32-33). Secondly, the Scriptures reveal that the Lord will judge both the living and the dead at His appearing (2 Tim. 4:1-8; Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 11:18), first the righteous are judged (Matt. 25:34-40), which accords with 1 Pet. 4:17 that reveals “judgment begins with the house of God” (1 Pet. 4:17), [this judgment refers mainly to the judgment seat of Christ for those written in the Book of Life], and then the unrighteous shall be judged (Matt. 25:41-46) [this judgment refers particularly to “the dead” in regards to the ungodly at “the great white throne judgment” for those not written in the Book of Life – *the Scriptures also figuratively reveals other books shall be opened such as the book of words, and the book of works* – Rev. 20:11-15; Dan. 7:10; Matt. 12:36]. Thirdly, every eye shall see the Lord return, this includes those who actually pierced Him (Rev. 1:7; Mark 14:62; Is. 40:5; 1 Thess. 3:13; Dan. 7:13-14). Fourthly, as revealed by Daniel, the apostle Paul (Act. 24:15; Dan. 12:2), but particularly by Christ in the parable of the wheat and tares that both the righteous and the unrighteous are to grow together [live] until the harvest (Matt. 13:29-30). And finally, all the righteous of the past and present who have believed God, due to Christ’s death and resurrection from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20; Rom. 4:25) – our “souls are revived” and raised up eternally (John 3:16; Eph. 2:6) before the souls of the unrighteous [those dead spiritually], which shall be restored to life along with their body for judgment in the last day (John 12:48). In short, the general resurrection (Dan. 12:2) refers to [1] the bodily resurrection of those who were righteous for fulfilment of *eternal life* in the Son, Christ (1 Cor. 3:9-15; Rom. 8:11-23), and [2] the resurrection of both the soul and the body of those who were unrighteous before the Son [Christ] for condemnation in the last day (John 12:48; Matt. 10:28; 25:41; Rev. 20:12-13).

### **3. The Resurrection can be likened to Seed, Time & Harvest**

Reading 1 COR. 15:23:

“But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterwards those who are Christ’s at His coming.”

In a broader sense, *the resurrection of the bodies of those in the grave* (Act. 24:15, 21; John 5:28-29) can be likened to a *Seed* sown which died first before springing to life (1 Cor. 15:36, 45)—first “the blade,” then “the head,” then “the full grain in the head” until when “the grain is fully ripen” (Mark 4:28-29), and yields a rich *harvest* [at the end of the world] in the last day (John 6:44; 11:24; Is. 26:19-21) when the Lord of the harvest comes (Rev. 22:11-13; 1 Cor. 15:20-24; Gen. 8:22; Matt. 13:30, 39-40; Jam. 5:7-8). Christ is the promised *Seed* of the woman (Gen. 3:15), and the Seed of Abraham (Gal.

3:16), the Seed sown that died first before springing to life (Rev. 13:8). The blade, the head, the full grain in the head until the grain is ripened reveals that the resurrection is a *process in time* until the *harvest* time, which has begun with the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:20-23). This progression was evident “after Christ’s resurrection” in regards to a miraculous event when the graves were opened and the bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep arose from the dead and were seen by many people in the holy city (Matt. 27:52-53). Sceptics to this miraculous event would argue *why only Matthew* recorded this amazing event, surely the other gospels would not have neglected to write about such an event. The fact that none of the other gospels record this event is really an excuse for sceptics to choose to question this event, for all four gospels include Christ’s resurrection, yet sceptics choose not to believe. It seems that the Holy Spirit impressed upon Matthew to include this miraculous event, for all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). Moreover, one gospel often gives us additional information and expands our knowledge on a topic that another gospel only briefly mentions or omits entirely [such as Christ’s final words on the cross, his inscription message, information about Joseph of Arimathea, etc]. So, when it comes to revealing truth concerning faith, doctrine, practice and historical events—the Bible is the inspired and inerrant word of God, so there is no reason to doubt that this miraculous event ever happened [*concerning the resurrection of a selected group of saints after the resurrection of Christ recorded only in the Gospel of Matthew*].

Reading Matt. 27:51-53: “Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

This resurrection of a selected group of saints after the resurrection of Christ further emphasizes the importance of the monumental event of Christ’s resurrection. But more on these saints who came back to physical life—we know from such Scriptures as 1 Thess. 4:15-17 and 1 Cor. 15:51-52 that there is *no one* that God has permanently raised from the dead in a glorified body—except Christ. It is also more likely that these selected saints raised after Christ’s resurrection were New Testament saints rather than Old Testament saints, for they appear to be known by those who saw them. Furthermore, our main text of 1 Thess. 4:15-17 and 1 Cor. 15:51-52 teaches us that God will change the righteous dead along with living Christians to immortal beings when Christ returns. Christ is the first to be permanently resurrected from the dead in a glorified body, and therefore, after God brought the people mentioned in Matthew 27:52-53 back to life, the Bible says nothing further about these selected people God resurrected after Christ’s resurrection, leaving us to conclude that just like other recorded resurrections such as the raising of Jairus’ daughter, the widow’s son and Lazarus—that as these resurrected saints *were not resurrected in glorified bodies*, that they eventually died (again) and their families buried them (again). Although some Bible commentators interpret Matt. 27:52-53 to the resurrection of Old Testament saints being delivered from captivity of Sheol, and generally hold the view that Eph. 4:8 supports this view, yet another interpretation of Eph. 4:8, is that it paints a picture of Christ’s wonderful and victorious entrance into heaven, after having triumphed over everything that sought to overcome Him, but due to Christ’s death and glorious resurrection, He was the victor over sin, Satan, death and hell. Therefore, the bodily resurrection here in Matt. 27:52-53 particularly serves two purposes. Firstly, death has been conquered, so it is evidence revealing the power of God to raise the dead. And secondly, it points to a greater future resurrection.

The resurrection process finally ends with “the general resurrection” at the last day, as this signifies *the time* when *the harvest* is ready, and so in a sense, the earth casts out the dead (Is. 26:19; Mark 4:28-29; Rev. 14:14-20). Christ’s body did not see corruption (Act. 2:31; 13:35-37; Ps. 16:10). Christ is the first human to permanently arise from the dead in a glorified body (Rev. 1:5, 18; Col. 1:18). As mentioned before, Christ is the *Seed* sown that died first before springing to life (Rev. 13:8)—He is the Resurrection (John 11:25), He is the First-fruit of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-23), and as the First to permanently arise from the dead in a glorified body (Act. 26:23), and upon His return (Rev. 1:8; 22:11-13; Jam. 5:7-8), He is the guarantee of the *harvest* of the resurrection of the dead of all those in the grave at the last day (John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:23-25; 1 Cor. 15:20-24; John 5:28-29).

In summary, our first heading: **“The Resurrection of the Dead in Christ Occurs before the Rapture,”** we saw that from our main text from 1 Thess. 4:16-17 that, “...the dead in Christ will rise FIRST. “And *“our gathering together to meet the Lord in the air”* is a reference to the rapture which the Scriptures reveal shall occur at the second advent of the Lord, and also mentions other events that must take place “first” prior to the rapture (2 Thess. 2:1-4; Mark 13:10-27; Matt. 24:14-31). The second heading: **“The Appointed Time of the General Resurrection,”** the Scriptures seem to imply that the general resurrection shall occur at the last day (John 11:23-24; 12:48), and that there shall be two different kinds of resurrections— [1] everlasting life for the righteous and [2] condemnation for the wicked (Dan. 12:2). And the final heading: **“The Resurrection can be likened to Seed, Time & Harvest,”** in regards to a process in *time* until the *harvest* time, which has begun with the resurrection of Christ, who is *the Seed* sown springing to life (1 Cor. 15:20-23), and this progression in time was evident after Christ’s resurrection in regards to a miraculous event when a selected group of saints were resurrected and they appeared openly to many people in the holy city (Matt. 27:52-53). Christ is the Resurrection (John 11:25), He is the First-fruit of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-23), and as the First to permanently arise from the dead in a glorified body (Act. 26:23), upon His return, He is the guarantee of a greater future harvest of the resurrection of the dead of all those in the grave to finally end the resurrection process at the last day (John 6:39-40; 11:23-24; 12:48).

I hope this message has been helpful to you and may God bless you richly.