

## **The Promise of Christ's Return** (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 & other selected texts)

- The end of God's grand story is the point of His story. If Jesus Christ doesn't return, everything Christianity represented and revealed is a colossal waste of time, money and life energy.
  - 22% (1,800 references) of the 27% of predictive prophecy in the Bible (8,352 of 31,124 Scripture references) is about Christ's return. It is a central focus of the end of the story.
  - There are **seven dramatic events** that describe the key aspects of the promise of Christ's return.
1. **Jesus Christ is returning to rapture His church** (1 Thess. 4:13-18; John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-53)
    - The word "*rapture*" is from the Latin word *rapturo* which describes the word Paul applies to the sudden departure of the church ("caught up" in 1 Thess. 4:17)
    - Between 1 Thess 4:13-18, John 14:1-3 and 1 Cor. 15:51-53, there are 8 components of the rapture:
      - It's personal (1 Th. 4:16a; John 14:3b: Jesus Himself will come to take us to our heavenly home)
      - It's sudden (1 Cor. 15:52: it will happen "*in a moment*" and "*in the twinkling of an eye*")
      - It's loud (1 Th. 4:16b: "*with a shout*")
      - It's affirmed (1 Th. 4:16c: "*with the voice of the archangel*")
      - It's signaled (1 Th. 4:16d" "*with the trumpet of God*"; 1 Cor. 15:52: "*the last trumpet*")
      - It's transformative (1 Th. 4:16e: "*and the dead in Christ will rise first*")
      - It's reuniting (1 Th. 4:17)
      - It's reassuring (1 Th. 4:18)
  2. **Jesus Christ is returning to resurrect believer's bodies** (1 Cor 15:38-53; Phil 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2)

- Everyone (believer or unbeliever) will be resurrected, but not at the same time: the saved (Rev. 20:5; John 5:29; Dan. 12:2) and unsaved (Rev. 20:6, 14; 21:8; John 5:29; Dan. 12:2)
  - Resurrection will bring about a be change in our bodies (1 Cor. 15:52-53)
    - Similar to Christ's (1 Jn. 3:2b)
    - A spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:44; Lk 24:31, 36; Jn 20:19-20)
    - It has physical capabilities (Lk 24:42-43, 39-40); Jn 20:27)
    - A powerful body (Acts 1:9-11)
    - A glorified body (Lk 24:31)
    - An incorruptible body (Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:42)
    - Similar to the earthly body (1 Cor. 15:38)
3. **Jesus Christ is returning to reward His people** (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 2:11; 2 Cor. 5:20; Rev. 22:12; 1 Cor. 3:10-15)
- God desires to bless and reward His people (Heb. 11:6)
  - Rewards are like compensation for your good works which express your faith and become the basis of God's judgment (Jer 17:10; Jer 32:19; Ezek 33:20; Matt 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal 6:7-8; Eph 5:6, Rev 2:23; 20:12; 22:12 Job 34:10-12; Ps. 28:4; Jer. 25:14; 51:24; Hos. 12:2; Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5: 10; 11:15; Eph. 6:8; Col. 1:21-23; 3:5-6, 24; 2 Tim. 4:14)
  - God alone is the impartial Judge (Rom. 2:11) and makes the final assessment (2 Cor. 5:20; John 5:22; Rev. 22:12)
  - Everyone is accountable to God (Heb. 9:27; Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 16:27)
  - 1 Cor. 3:10-15 teaches us there will be a personal review (v. 10-13), a performance reward (v. 14: for works that "*remain*") and some painful regret (v. 15: "*suffer loss*")

4. **Jesus Christ is returning to release His wrath** (2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12; Rev. 6-19; Rev. 19:20; 20:10)
  - It involves a catastrophic 7-year period of earthly tribulation (Rev. 6-19; Dan. 9:27; Rv. 11:2b-3; 12:6, 14; Dan. 7:25; 12:7)
  - It involves a conscious period of eternal punishment (Rev. 14:9-13; 19:20; 20:10-15)
  - It involves a cataclysmic destruction of “*the heavens and earth*” (2 Pet. 3:7, 10, 12)
  
5. **Jesus Christ is returning to remove the curse** (Rom. 8:20-21; 2 Cor. 4:16; Acts 3:21; Matt 19:28; Rev. 21:5)
  - Romans 8 teaches us that our creation “was subjected to futility” (v. 20) and enslaved to “corruption” (v. 21).
  - When Christ returns, there will be a “*restoration of all things*” (Acts 3:21), a “*regeneration*” (Matt. 19:28) and God says “*I am making all things new*” (Rev. 21:5)
  - This removal of the curse will bring a dramatic renewal: Geography will change (Isa. 2:2-4, 32:15, 35:1-2, 6-7, 40:4, 51:3, 65:17, Ezek. 47:6-12), fruit is abundant (Isa. 4:2, 30:23, 43:19, 55:12-13, 65:21), animals will lose their venom/ferocity (Isa. 11:6-9, 35:9, 43:20, 65:25), The Sun and Moon’s light will change (Isa. 30:26, 60:19-20, Zech. 2:5), physical health is changed (Isa. 35:5-6, 49:10, 33:24, Jer. 30:17), emotional health changes (Isa. 35:10, 51:11, 65:19), peace will reign (Isa. 2:4, 9:4-7), holiness is manifested (Isa. 24:23, 4:2, 35:2, 40:5), perfect justice is administered (Isa. 9:7, 11:5, 32:16), there is full knowledge (Isa. 11:1-2, 9), life is protected (Isa. 41:8-14, Zech. 14:10-11), freedom from oppression (Isa. 14:3-6, 42:6-7, 49:8-9), no immaturity (Isa. 65:20), human reproduction will be plentiful (Jer. 30:20, Ezek. 47:22, Zech. 10:8), work in a perfect economic system (Isa. 62:8-9, 65:21-23, Jer. 31:5), economic prosperity

(Isa. 4:1, 30:23-25), obedience is pandemic (Jer. 31:33, Ps. 22:27-28, Mal. 1:11), righteousness will reign (Isa. 60:21, Mal. 4:2, Ps 72:7, Isa. 33:5). No Jewish unbelievers (Jer. 31:31-34), but unbelief will be among the Gentiles who will die by age 100 (Isa. 65:20)

6. **Jesus Christ is returning to rule the world** (Zech. 14:9; Luke 1:32-33; Rev. 11:15; 19:11-16; 20:1-7)

- Jesus is a king (Matt. 3:2): king of the Jews (Lk 1:32-33); king of the church (Col. 1:13); King of all kings (Rev. 1:5; 19:16)
- Jesus will reign over a worldwide kingdom (Zech. 14:9; Rev. 19:11-16) from Jerusalem (Ps. 110:1-2), dispose of His enemies (Heb. 10:12-13) as One who possesses all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18)
- There are three expressions of God's kingdom and Christ's rule:
  - » The spiritual rule and reign of Christ in our hearts when we bow to Him as Savior and King
  - » The Millennial (Latin for 1,000 years) rule and reign of Christ on earth (Rev. 20:1-7)
  - » The eternal rule and reign of Christ (Rev. 11:15)

7. **Jesus Christ is returning to reconcile all things to Himself** (Col. 1:20; 1 Cor. 15:24-28)