

The Last Day

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And Jesus said to them....

³⁹ "This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:39-40)

Introduction

Every one of us has often thought about our death and whether there is an after-life. As Christians, we believe that when we die we will experience Paradise in heaven with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I have talked with many people about this subject and a variety of questions are often asked about death, the return of Christ, the resurrection, the judgment, heaven, hell, and the lake of fire. Therefore I wanted to write a book that will answer many of those questions.

This book is written from a Christian perspective, and I will use the Bible to address these issues. Whether you are a Christian or not, I invite you to read this book and learn what the Word of God has to say about death, the after-life, and what will happen on The Last Day.

Chapter 1

Where Do We Go When We Die?

The answer to that question depends on whether we are believers in Jesus Christ at death or not. Are we saved or unsaved? What are believers saved from? We are going to examine two different situations to see where we go at death.

The Saved

Who are the saved? These are people who have faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31)

God, in His great love, sacrificed His Son Jesus on the cross so that believers would not perish in hell but have everlasting life.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Jesus Christ died on the cross as an atonement or payment for our sins. In God's holy and wonderful plan, Jesus became our substitute on the cross. He paid the penalty for our sins, and we receive His righteousness at the moment we believe in Him. What a glorious love that both the Father and the Son have for His children! We are saved by His grace and mercy.

At death our bodies are buried. The body is an empty shell.

⁸ *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. (2 Cor. 5:8)*

When a Christian dies his or her spirit is transported immediately into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in Paradise. We see an example of this in the account of Christ's crucifixion and the thief who turned in faith to the Lord.

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." ⁴⁰ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." ⁴³ And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

What is Paradise? It is heaven, a place of extreme happiness and pleasure with the Lord Jesus. What will we be doing in heaven? We will be praising and worshiping God and giving Him glory and honor. We will be having wonderful fellowship with all those in heaven and what a joy it will be to reunite with our family and loved ones who died in Christ. We will experience joy and contentment that we can't even imagine now.

⁹ *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Cor. 2:9)*

We will be doing this while we await the resurrection of our bodies and the final judgment. This will be discussed in more detail later in this book.

What are Christians saved from? They are saved from God's wrath and a place of torment which will be addressed next.

The Unsaved

Those who die without faith in Jesus Christ also have a spirit. Their bodies are buried. However their spirits go immediately to a temporary place of torment and suffering called hell. Here they await the resurrection of their bodies and the judgment. Hell is a real place of suffering in fire.

Jesus gives us an account of two men who died. One was a beggar named Lazarus, who went to heaven and the other, a rich man, who went to hell.

²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

²⁴ "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'" (Luke 16:22-26)

Hell (Hades) is a place of suffering. Those who reject the Son of God will receive the wrath of God.

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

Hell is also a place where many of the fallen angels (demons) are in chains suffering in flames of fire waiting for the judgment. These demons are being punished as they rebelled against God along with their leader Satan and therefore will be ultimately cast into the lake of fire.

⁴ *For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; (2 Pet. 2:4)*

⁶ *And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; ⁷ as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. (Jude 6-7)*

Hell is a place reserved for demons and those people who have rejected Jesus Christ. If you do not believe in Jesus Christ it is not too late for you to be saved from the fires of hell by faith in Christ.

³¹ *So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31)*

What about Purgatory?

The Bible only mentions two places where departed souls go at death, heaven or hell.

There is no mention in the Bible of a place called purgatory or other realm where the spirits of dead men or women go for temporary punishment or cleansing before going on to heaven.

Chapter 2

Three Popular Views Regarding the Return of Jesus Christ and the Resurrection of the Saved

The Date of Jesus' Return is a Secret

When will Jesus Christ return? Many theologians have tried to figure out or calculate using the Bible when that day will be. In every case those who have set dates have been wrong. God has kept the date of His Son's return a secret. This motivates us to continually live to please the Lord and be prepared because He can come at any time. Otherwise we would put off living for Him until the last minute.

³² But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Mark 13:32)

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. ² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. (1 Thess. 5:1-2)

The return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of all believers who have died are linked together. They happen almost simultaneously.

Key Verses Regarding the Rapture of Believers

The following verses are important to help us understand how believers in Christ, both dead and alive, are translated up to Christ in the clouds when He returns. This event is referred to as the rapture.

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thess. 4:16-18)

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 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. (1 Cor. 15:51-52)

⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. (Rev. 1:7)

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture View

This view is perhaps the most popular view among Christians today. What this view maintains is that there is coming a time of great tribulation on Earth. An evil world dictator, the Satan energized Antichrist, will seek to rule the world during a seven year period of distress. Right before this time of tribulation, Jesus Christ will return in the clouds and the bodies of the dead believers in Christ will come out of their graves and be joined with their spirits which have been in heaven. Those believers who are living when the Lord returns in the clouds will then immediately undergo a bodily transformation and be translated up in the clouds to also be with the Lord Jesus Christ. All the saved, both dead and alive, will hear the shout of the angel and the trumpet call to come forth and will see Christ in the clouds. All the unsaved who are left on Earth will not hear the shout or

trumpet nor be aware of Christ coming in the clouds and the resurrection of the saved. All that people on Earth will know is that millions of people are missing without explanation. This is referred to as the secret rapture. Then the time is ripe for the Antichrist to come to power.

Although there is no direct biblical text for this view, the pre-tribulation view makes some biblical conclusions based primarily on several sections of Scripture as follows:

John Taken Up to Heaven

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, Jesus Christ sends a message to seven churches in Asia (present day Turkey). In His message He evaluates these churches regarding their service to Him. Chapter 4 describes an unusual experience that happens to the Apostle John who is the one who records what takes place in the book of Revelation.

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." ² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. ³ And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. (Rev. 4:1-5)

In this passage John said that he was in the spirit and he heard a voice as a trumpet which told him to come up so that the one speaking to him could show him things which were to take place

in the future. Next John was before the throne of God in heaven. It is not clear if John was actually transported to the throne of God or if this is a vision he is experiencing on Earth. In either event he did see what was taking place in heaven. Since Jesus will return one day at the trumpet of God (1 Thess. 4:16), the conclusion is that John's moving upward into heaven is symbolic of all believers being translated upward to Christ.

This conclusion is based on the fact that after this account of John before the throne of God in chapter 4, the church or word church is no longer mentioned during the time of God's judgment in Revelation chapters 5-18. Therefore, it is believed that the church or believers must be raptured up before the time of tribulation.

There are several problems with this interpretation. First, only John is mentioned as being translated. It is quite an assumption to say that his being called up to heaven is thus symbolic of all believers in Christ being raptured up. Second, the rapture is when believers are translated to Christ in the clouds. However, nothing is said about John being translated to Christ in the clouds. In his vision or experience he finds himself before the throne in heaven. Finally, the fact the word church is not used after chapter 4 is not unusual. Christ was talking to seven churches of that day in chapters 2 and 3. He specified that this revelation was to go to those various churches. There would be no reason to refer to them again or use the word church later. Just as in the salutation of a letter the writer mentions the name of who it is being written to initially but not again in the letter.

The Return of Christ Is Pictured in Rev. 19

¹¹ *Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness*

He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Since chapter 19 is between the tribulation chapters and before the millennium or 1,000 year reign mentioned in chapter 20, it appears that Christ returns before that reign begins. One thing to keep in mind is that all the events that happen in the book of Revelation do not necessarily happen in chapter order. We must also remember that this book is the most highly symbolic book in the Bible. It is not clear where this 1,000 year reign is taking place. Is it on Earth, in heaven, or within us spiritually while we live the Christian life? More will be said about the millennium later in this book.

Protection from the Hour of Trial

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. (Rev. 3:10)

Some think this verse is referring to the church that is raptured or translated up to Christ in the clouds before the coming seven year tribulation. However, these comments were actually directed to the church in the city of Philadelphia in the first century for their faithfulness. What is this hour that this church was protected from? No one knows and it would be pure speculation for us to make an application to any event.

Jesus Comes as a Thief in the Night

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. ² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³ For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. ⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸ But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. (1 Thess. 5:1-8)

There are those who feel that since it says that Jesus comes as a thief in the night, His first coming will be a secret one. It is true that a thief comes secretly at night to hide from being seen by others. However, the comparison to the Lord's coming as a thief in the night is to make us understand that He may come at any time, not that His Own coming is going to be secret or silent to some. No one knows when Jesus is coming back. It is a secret. So we need to be prepared and watch and not be lazy. We want to be of the day, alert, awake, not sleeping when He comes. This is how Jesus comes as a thief in the night; He comes unexpectedly.

Some will be Taken and Some Left Behind

³¹ In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. ³² Remember Lot's wife. ³³ Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. ³⁴ I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and

the other will be left. ³⁵ Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. ³⁶ Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left. (Luke 17:31-36)

Some feel that those who are taken are Christians in a pre-tribulation rapture and those left behind are the unsaved who will endure the tribulation period. Again, these are just conclusions. Actually, under all views discussed in this book Christians are taken upward to meet the Lord in the air and the unsaved are left behind on Earth. There is no biblical evidence in these verses to make a case for a pre-tribulation rapture any more so than for the other views.

The Mid-Tribulation Rapture View

This view believes that the seven year tribulation is divided up into 2 three and a half year segments. The last 3.5 years is thought to be the great tribulation half. According to this view, the silent rapture of believers occurs right before the last 3.5 years. The following verses are used in support of this view:

He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. (Dan. 7:25)

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. ² But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. ³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." (Rev. 11:1-3)

¹³ *Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. ¹⁴ But*

the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. (Rev. 12:13-14)

⁵ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:5-8)

These verses do refer to a 3.5 year time of great tribulation caused by the Antichrist or the beast of Revelation. The problem is these verses or others used by the mid-tribulation view never make reference to the coming of Jesus Christ. This view makes the assumption that He comes at the mid-point of the tribulation period which is right before the great tribulation begins.

The Secret or Silent Rapture Theory

The secret or silent rapture theory of the pre-tribulation and mid-tribulation views has been popularized by a series of books and movies. The problem is there are no verses in the Bible that support it. Why should Christians living when Jesus returns be spared tribulation when other Christians have had to suffer great persecution and even martyrdom throughout history? On what basis do they get to escape tribulation and testing?

The Bible is very clear that when Jesus returns it will be an event that every eye will see. It will be an amazing display in the sky.

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