

Th122 Foundation Doctrines

Lesson Th122 – 24 Resurrection of the Dead – The Return

In our last two lessons, we have learned that Jesus was the Firstfruits of the resurrection of the dead and that all believers, both dead and living, will one day be instantaneously changed into supernatural spirit beings at the Rapture. The Bible teaches us that we will meet Christ in the air at the Rapture. Many scholars teach that after the Rapture of the Church a terrible time of tribulation will come upon the earth for seven years. The Church will be gone from the earth and God's wrath will be poured out upon those left behind. During these seven years of Tribulation some people will realize that Christ is the Lord and will believe on him. These Christians will go through a time of great persecution and many will be martyred.

God revealed to the apostle John that these seven years would begin with a horrific war. One-quarter of the world's population will die because of the war. Some will die because of wounds received in battle. Many civilians will die because of famine and diseases caused by the war. But this is just the beginning of the seven years of the Tribulation. Next may be an impact of an asteroid or comet. This massive object will hit the ocean traveling perhaps 90,000 kilometers per hour. Massive tsunamis will destroy one-third of all of the ships at sea. One-third of the sea life will perish as well. The heat from the impact will set on fire all of the grass on the earth and one-third of all of the trees. Acid rain will fall upon one-third of the earth, poisoning the rivers, lakes, and even underground streams. A black cloud will cover one-third of the earth, plunging the earth into darkness.

Because of these terrible events an army of 200 million men will go to war. Perhaps an entire civilization may be forced to relocate, because their waters have become poisonous. The end result of this massive army and the war that ensues is that one-third of the remaining population of the earth will die. Over one-half of the entire earth's population will have died since the Rapture of the Church.

But the end still will not have come. Satan himself will be cast down to the earth and will cause great political intrigue leading to a one-world government. At the end of the seven years of tribulation the Bible says that Jesus will appear in the clouds with a great army clothed in white. Some people believe that this great army are the raptured saints. Others believe that they are all of the angels of heaven. Either way, Jesus will return in great power and glory. This is referred to as the Second Coming of Christ. The apostle John wrote this about it:

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev 19:11-16).

The apostle Matthew recorded Jesus saying this about his return:

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.’

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matt 24:29-31, NKJV).

What we know is this, when Jesus returns to this earth he will gather to himself all of the remaining believers upon the earth, both the living, and those who died during the tribulation. They will all participate in the resurrection of the believers. They will all receive supernatural spirit bodies and they will be part of Christ’s kingdom forever. And with this, the first resurrection is complete. It began with Christ who was the Firstfruits of God’s resurrection. Then came the Rapture of the church. And finally, the resurrection of all believers was complete at Christ’s return to the earth.

This lesson is **important** because it explains the difference between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ for those martyred and those believers still living at the end of the Tribulation. When Jesus comes with the Saints and the last group of believers is transformed, this completes the first resurrection.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that Christians should be ready to meet the Lord in the air at the Rapture. Though the suffering will be great, some will still be saved during the Tribulation and resurrected at the Second Coming.

Let’s **review** what you have learned in this lesson:

1. Who was the Firstfruits of God’s resurrection power? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said that Jesus was the Firstfruits of God’s resurrection, then you are correct.
2. Who are resurrected and changed at the Rapture? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said that the dead in Christ will be resurrected first, then we who are still alive will be transformed, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air, you are correct.
3. How is the first resurrection completed? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said that believers who came to Christ during the Tribulation are resurrected and transformed when Christ returns to the earth, then you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to this lesson at least three times until you clearly understand the progression of events that are tied to the resurrection of believers. Then continue your discussion with the few believers with whom you previously discussed the resurrection.