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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

Personal Study of the Bible-49
(1 Thessalonian Rapture vs. 2 Thessalonian Second Advent)

We have noted that both Thessalonian epistles first provide a major category of doctrine and then proceed to spiritual directives to develop spiritual virtue in the believer. The major doctrine in both of these epistles is eschatology, “discourse on last states/times (τὰ ἔσχατα).” The subject of biblical eschatology is absolutely massive. There is more on biblical prophecy in the Bible than perhaps any other theme. My attempt here is to provide a basic outline of the two eschatological events explicitly referred to in Thessalonians, namely the Rapture and Second Advent. Let’s begin by noting the two key passages that describe these events:

Note the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18:

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall 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.

Note the Second Advent in 2 Thessalonians 2:8:

8 And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

Note the distinction in the two comings of Jesus Christ from these two passages alone. In the Rapture, the Lord comes to bring the blessing of gathering His own people *in the clouds*. At the Second Advent, on the other hand, He comes to bring judgment to the earth: *The Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth*. For the believer to see more details on the Rapture, the Blessed Hope, he needs to read John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:52; to see additional details on the Second Advent, read Matthew 25 and Revelation 19. The Rapture is imminent; it is the Blessed Hope which could come at any time; there are no prophecies awaiting fulfillment before Christ returns for His own in the air. This is in stark contrast to the Second Advent, which is preceded by many signs during the Tribulation after which Christ come to destroy the Anti-Christ, 2 Thess. 2:8.

Some believers, like Reformed believers (Calvinists), lump the Rapture and the Second Advent together. However, a plain reading of the passages indicate that they are separate events. While the Rapture is described as something which brings peace and comfort, and for which believers should anticipate with longing, the Second Coming is “after the Tribulation of those days,” following on the heels of the great pouring of God’s wrath (cf. Rev. 6-16). In the Rapture, Christ comes to the air. In the Second Advent, Christ judges the nations and Israel, and then rules

from the throne of David in Jerusalem over the world. At the Rapture, Chris comes *for* His saints. At the Second Advent, Christ comes *with* His saints.

Between the Rapture and the Second Advent is the Tribulation. Here is a list of the major eschatological events. Please read the passages I have provided (except for Rev. 6-16):

1. In the church age, there will be an increase in apostasy as this age draws to a close (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:1-5). This apostasy is in virtually all churches today due to doctrinal as well as philosophical blindness (deism, nominalism, anti-intellectualism, religionism).
2. Rapture: Resurrection of the dead in Christ (church age believers) accompanied by the rapture of living believers (1 Cor. 15:20-24, 35-50; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).
3. The 7 year Tribulation on earth (Rev. 6-16). Those who have been raptured earlier are with the Lord in Heaven. The Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:12-15) and the marriage of the Lamb take place (Rev. 19:7) while Tribulation judgments are poured out on earth.
4. The Battle of Armageddon and the end of the Tribulation. Christ comes with His own to the earth (Rev. 19:11-16). When Christ comes, Israel will be gathered and judged (Matt. 24:37-25:46). The Gentile nations will also be judged (Matt. 25:31-46).
5. The millennial reign of Christ begins. It will be 1,000 years in length (Rev. 20:1-6). Before it begins, however, Satan is bound in the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:1). After 1,000 year reign, Satan will be released for a little season (Rev. 20:7). He will deceive the nations and lead a revolt against God, be defeated by Christ, and then cast in the Lake of Fire where he will remain forever (Rev. 20:10).
6. The Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11-15) occurs at which all the unsaved of all the ages appear and are afterward cast into the Lake of Fire.
7. Creation of a new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1).
8. Eternity (Rev. 22:1-6).

*In 'Ehyeh,
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