

Biblical Theology

Unit 8: Doctrine of the Church – Lesson 1: Return of Jesus

Eschatology Vocabulary

- **Eschatology:** Study of last things.
- **Rapture:** The taking up or snatching up of believers to be with Christ prior to or at his return to earth.
- **Tribulation:** A period of great suffering and earthly misery believed to last seven years before the return of Christ.
- **Second Coming / Return of Christ:** The sudden, personal, visible, bodily return of Christ from heaven to earth.
- **Millennial Reign:** A term that refers to the period of 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation 20:4-5 as the time of the reign of Christ and believers over the earth.
- **Final Judgement:** The last and ultimate proclamation by Jesus Christ of the eternal destinies of all people which will take place after the millennium and the rebellion that occurs at the end of time.
- **New Heavens and New Earth:** A description of the entirely renewed creation in which believers will dwell with God after the final judgement.

Nature of Christ's Return

- Definition: The sudden, personal, visible, bodily return of Christ from heaven to earth.
 1. **Christ's return will be sudden.**
 - **Matthew 24:44** - *Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*
 - **2 Peter 3:10** - *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.*
 2. **Christ's return will be personal.**
 - **Acts 1:11** - *"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."*
 - **John 14:3** - *I will come back and take you to be with me*
 - **1 Thessalonians 4:16** - *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven*
 3. **Christ's return will be visible and physical.**
 - **Acts 1:11** - *will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."*
 - **Matthew 24:30** - *when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven,*

Signs Preceding Christ's Return

- Definition: Christ's return will coincide with many signs.
 1. **Outpouring of the Gospel**
 - **Matthew 24:14** - *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*
 - **Mark 13:10** - *And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.*
 2. **Tribulation, Suffering, and World Calamity**
 - **Mark 13:7-8** - *When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.*

3. False Prophets Working Signs and Wonders (Great Falling Away)

- **Mark 13:22** - For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.
- **2 Timothy 3:1-5** - There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

4. Salvation of Israel

- **Romans 11:25-26** - I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved.
- **Matthew 23:37-39** - Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'

Important Aspects of Christ's Return

- It is important for Christians to understand the return of Christ in its proper context.

1. Christ's return is imminent.

- **Matthew 25:13** - Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.
- **Mark 13:32-33** - But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.
- **Luke 12:40** - You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

2. The return of Christ and the rapture are two distinct events.

- Rapture
 - Believers meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thess. 4:17)
 - Secretive and instant (1 Cor. 15:50-54)
- Second Coming
 - Believers return with the Lord to the earth (Rev. 19:14)
 - Visible to all (Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:29-30)

3. The return of Christ is rightly seen in the context of his kingdom and kingship.

- **Genesis 1:1** - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
- **Psalms 22:28** - for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations.
- **Psalms 47:6** - Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
- **Isaiah 9:7** - He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.
- **Matthew 3:2** - Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand
- **Matthew 25:31-32** - When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
- **Revelation 19:16** - On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords

Actively Anticipating Christ's Return

- We are not called to passively await Christ's return but to live in longing, active anticipation.
 1. **Active anticipation looks like eagerness that encourages.**
 - **1 Corinthians 16:22** - *If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord!*
 - **1 Thessalonians 4:17** - *And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.*
 2. **Active anticipation looks like patient watchfulness.**
 - **James 5:7** - *Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.*
 - **Matthew 25:13** - *Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.*
 3. **Active anticipation looks like making disciples.**
 - **2 Timothy 4:1-2** - *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*
 - **Acts 1:6-8** - *Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*
 4. **Active anticipation looks like readiness.**
 - **1 John 2:28**- *And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.*
 - **Luke 12:35-34** - *Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.*

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between the rapture and Christ's return?
2. Why do you believe Christ decided to leave the world and come back a at a later time?
3. Which "Active Anticipation" point stuck out to you the most? Why?

Reading Assignment

Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem – Chapter 55: The Millennium?