

Christology- The States Of Christ (Part 2)

Selected Scriptures

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Tonight it is my joy to finish with you what we began a few weeks ago in terms of the states of Jesus Christ. What do we mean by that? Well we're talking about Christ in His humiliation, and in His exaltation, and specifically when we refer to His humiliation, theologians are talking about three great events: His incarnation, when, as the choir sang so beautifully this morning from Philippians 2, He condescended to take on flesh. His suffering and His death, secondly. And then thirdly, His burial, as Jesus' body was placed in the grave as He experienced in His humanity death as we all will experience it if the Lord tarries. This was His humiliation. From the glories of heaven to this.

Theologians speak secondly of Christ's exaltation. And when they speak of His exaltation, they speak of His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, His session, that is, His being seated at the right hand of God, and His Second Coming. Now where does this idea, and by the way, these two categories, His humiliation and His exaltation are referred to as the states of Christ. Where does this idea come from? It comes from Philippians 2, where I invite you to turn with me as we begin tonight. Philippians 2:5, begins to describe His humiliation,

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who although existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death [and not just any death, but the death of the worst criminal], death on a cross.

There's His humiliation, and it encompasses those categories that I showed you a moment ago. Here is His exaltation, verse 9,

For this reason also [because He humbled Himself in that way], God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth [that's every intelligent being], and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So there you have it. His humiliation and His exaltation. Now last time we looked at His humiliation and we finished last time by beginning to consider His exaltation. We, first of all, examined some things about His resurrection. This is where we ended last time. We looked at the nature of His resurrection. That is that it was a physical bodily resurrection in which He received a glorified body like the body that you and I will one day receive. We looked at the doctrinal

consequences of the resurrection including the fact that He was raised to new life means that we enjoy regeneration. We are raised in the moment of salvation to new life with Him. And then we had just begun to consider, and there were other doctrinal consequences as well, but we had just begun to consider the arguments for the resurrection. In fact, Scripture presents at least nine biblical reasons to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We looked just at these first two last time. The prophesy of the Old Testament. We saw it in Psalm 16. We saw it in Isaiah 53. The reality of the resurrection of the Messiah. We saw it in the prophesy of Jesus Himself, as He Himself predicted that He would be killed and then would rise on the third day.

Now that's where we left off the last time. Let me briefly give you the rest of the nine arguments for the resurrection. I'm not going to spend a lot of time here, since we just studied several of these last Sunday on Resurrection Sunday, and so I'll just touch on those reasons, but let me give you the rest of them.

Reason number three is the certainty of Jesus' death. We know the resurrection happened because Jesus appeared alive, and we know that He actually died. There is the biblical evidence for the resurrection that we looked at last Sunday from John's Gospel. Where John tells us in John 19, that when the soldiers came to Christ to break His legs, to hurry His death, so that He would die and could be buried before sundown on that Friday before Passover began at sunset. When they came to Jesus, the soldiers determined that He was already dead. These were men used to death. These were men accustomed to crucifixion. Who knew what it looked like, and they determined that Jesus was in fact dead. But their very lives depended on the certainty of His death and so one of them to insure that Jesus was dead took that Roman spear and shoved up into the chest cavity of Jesus piercing His heart to insure that, in fact, He was dead. As I mentioned last Sunday, don't picture a little pinprick like the paintings of Christ had, that wasn't the point of this at all. This was insurance that Jesus was dead, and it was very important, their very lives were at stake in making sure of that. So, the biblical evidence is clear, Jesus was certifiably dead.

What's interesting though, is this has never been an issue for even the enemies of Christ. There are extra biblical non-Christian, they are non-biblical sources that affirm the reality of Jesus' death. For example, Josephus writes, "Pilot upon hearing Him accused by men of the highest standing among us, condemned Him to be crucified."

Tacitus says,

Nero fastened the guilt of the burning of Rome and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace, Christus [that's his misunderstanding of the name of Christ], from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty [this is I told you Romans, Romans didn't even like to refer to crucifixion, it was not to be spoken of in polite society.

So instead they used these sort of euphemisms], He suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus.

The Jewish Talmud says, "On the eve of the Passover, *Yeshu*, was hanged." So understand then that Jesus was certifiably dead, that even those who don't believe in His resurrection, believed in the certainty of His death. And this is why, because He was clearly dead, when He appeared to many after the resurrection, they understood that He had in fact actually risen from the dead.

A fourth reason to believe in the resurrection is the confidence of the disciples. Whether you believe in the resurrection or not, it's clear that Jesus' disciples believed He had been raised from the dead. They both believed and proclaimed that He had been raised from the dead, and had appeared to them. And you see these, I won't even take you through all of these references, throughout the books of Acts. Again and again, and again they maintained that Jesus had been raised from the dead, and had appeared to them. And of course Paul makes the same proclamation in, 1 Corinthians 15, in fact, in 1 Corinthians 15 you have what was the earliest creed of the Christian church, where he says, this is what was preached to you, this is what you believe and part of that was that Jesus was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures. So this is what they believed and proclaimed, but more than that, they died for their testimony that Jesus had been raised from the dead and had appeared to them.

Let me just talk for a moment about the death of the apostles, the eleven plus Paul. Now when you look at, let's look just at those besides Judas, obviously Judas committed suicide, but the eleven plus Paul. You have one natural death and eleven martyrs. Of the eleven martyrs, best we can put it together, four of them were crucified, two were beheaded, and one was flayed. This is what tradition tells us in terms of how these men died. But eleven of the twelve, the eleven plus Paul, gave their lives for the reality of the resurrection. They believed in the reality of the Resurrected Christ.

A fifth argument for the resurrection is the post-resurrection appearances. One of the ways that God chose to establish the reality of the resurrection was through at least 13, possibly 14, different post-resurrection appearances. I mentioned these last Sunday so again I am not going to belabor this, I just want you to let this sink into your minds. This too is part of the gospel contained in the first basic creed of the Christian church, 1 Corinthians 15. Paul says, this is what I preached to you, that Jesus died, according to the Scriptures. That He was buried, there's point number two. That He was raised from the dead, there's point number three. And that He appeared to many, there's point number four. Part of the basic gospel is that Jesus appeared, proving the reality of the resurrection.

These appearances were to more than 500 different people, in at least ten different locations and again, I won't walk through them, you can go back and look at the slides, they'll be on-line afterwards, but because we just walked through these just last week. The bottom line though, is when you look at all the post-resurrection appearances, you realize that there is sufficient evidence. How much evidence, let me just ask you a question, how much evidence would you need to believe in a resurrection? What about 500 witnesses? That's the point. God has proven to the world that His Son was raised from the dead.

A sixth reason to believe in the resurrection is the conversion of the persecutor, Paul. Turn over to Acts 26. There are a number of texts where Paul talks about how he treated Christ and the church before the Damascus road, but look at this one, Acts 26, and look at verse 9. This is his defense before Agrippa, and he says, verse 9, "So then, I thought to myself," this is interesting because Paul gives us insight here. So then, I thought to myself, "that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Why? Because he saw Him as attacking the faith. He saw Him as a pretender, a deceiver, claiming to be the Messiah when, in fact, He was not. And he says, as a result of that, verse 10, "this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons," now let this settle, this is Paul before Damascus. Not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, "having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they," notice it wasn't just Stephen. When they, "were being put to death I cast my vote against them."

"And as I punished them often in all the synagogues," this is the Jewish beatings that were authorized, "I tried to force them to blaspheme;" Can you put this picture together? This happened in the Jewish synagogues. Where there were true followers of Christ. Paul came in and he, being authorized to do so, had them corporally, physically beaten and insisting that it would stop if they would blaspheme the name of Jesus of Nazareth. "And being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities." That's Paul, before his conversion. What about after his conversion?

Stay here in Acts 26, but look at this. After his conversion, Galatians 1:22-23,

I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."

Now he's preaching it. Listen to how he begins Romans. Romans 1:1, "Paul, a slave of Messiah Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God," He said I'm a slave of Jesus, the One who is the Messiah.

Second Corinthians 4:5, "we do not preach ourselves but Messiah Jesus as Lord." What could have possibly produced such a radical change in the Apostle Paul? Well both Luke's testimony

and Paul's own testimony identify the foundation of that change. It's that he firmly believed he had encountered the risen Christ. His conversion, of course, is recorded in Acts 9, but when you look at his own explanation of the events, he makes this clear. In Acts 26:12, after he had just explained what he was before, he says in verse 12,

While so engaged, [while I was pursuing these people of foreign cities, furiously enraged at them], as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, [in Jewish Aramaic], "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads." And I said, "Who are You, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. Get up, stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness." [Verse 18], "To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light from the dominion of Satan to God, and that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

Folks, this is sovereign grace. It's not like Paul was looking for Jesus. What produced this change? Well, obviously, it's the work of the Spirit in regeneration. But what was the tool He used? The revelation of Jesus, the risen Lord on the road to Damascus. Only the reality of Jesus' resurrection can explain the radical, sudden change in the man who tortured Christians.

Reason number seven to believe in the resurrection, the conversion of the skeptics, James and Jude. Before the resurrection, this is what we read in Mark 6:3, speaking of Jesus, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and," watch this, "the brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" Now, I pointed this out before. But what this means is that Jesus was one of at least seven children in this home. He was the oldest of the children, He was born first as we know. Mary was a virgin when Jesus was conceived and born, and then these other children were born to Mary and Joseph afterwards. Six of them, because sisters is plural, so we know there's at least two, but likely it was even more, so it was a family of at least seven. But these brothers, four brothers are listed here, and they all refuse to believe in Jesus. In fact, Mark 3, and I won't take you there in the interest of time, but you can look at Mark 3, they all thought He was crazy. They went from Nazareth to Capernaum, where His ministry headquarters was in order to seize Him by force, and take Him back to Nazareth because they thought He was out of His mind.

And in John 7:5, this is about six months before the crucifixion, we read, "For not even His brothers were believing on Him." Skeptics, at best. What about after the resurrection? Let's start

with James. First Corinthians 15:7, says, that one of those appearances was to James, after the resurrection. And the next thing we read is this, Acts 1:14, "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." Don't you love that? God saved the brothers of Jesus Christ. By the way, this again, is an indication that only God, the Spirit can bring light. They lived in a home with a perfect brother. Anybody here lived in a home with a perfect sibling? And they didn't believe. It took a sovereign work of grace. And one of the tools the Spirit used, was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Now, what's interesting is the next time you meet James, it's in Acts 15, and he is the leader of the Jerusalem church. In Galatians 1:19, Paul writes, "But I did not see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother." He had become an apostle of Christ, a sent one.

James 1:1, these are his own words, his own testimony, "James, a slave of God and a slave of the Lord Jesus Messiah." By the way, before I finish with James, let me just say, that James confidence in Jesus and in His resurrection, and in the reality of who he was, was so strong that James died as a martyr. Worshipping his brother as God.

What about Jude? In Jude 1, Jude writes, "Jude, a slave of Jesus Messiah, and brother of James," he won't even bring himself to say that he is a brother of Jesus because he realizes he doesn't even belong in the same sentence with Jesus, except as a slave. In Jude 4, he writes, "certain persons have crept into the church unnoticed, those who were long before marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and," watch this, "deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Messiah." Remember, this was his brother.

How did this happen? It happened, in part, through the resurrection, in both James and Jude, we have the ultimate skeptics. These two men grew up in the same home as Jesus. He actually functioned in a Jewish home where the father had died, Joseph had apparently died, so Jesus was their Father for all practical purposes for the years they were growing up. They were younger than He. For 33 years of Jesus' life, and for how ever long they lived during those 33 years, they rejected His claims and even believed He was crazy. What produced the change? Again, the Holy Spirit had to bring life, and part of what He used to bring life, was the resurrection.

An eighth argument is the empty tomb, and here again, I dealt with this at length last week, so I'm not going to deal with this very much, except to just say, that on that first day, on the resurrection Sunday, there were multiple witnesses to the empty tomb. Jesus' enemies even admitted that the grave was empty, that His body was gone. They even bribed, the Jewish leaders remember, bribed the Roman soldiers to say that Jesus' disciples had stolen the body, Matthew 28 tells us. And neither the Romans not the Jewish leaders ever furnished the body in order to prove that the apostles were wrong, that Jesus hadn't been raised. There is no question from the

historical record of the New Testament from secular history that Jesus' tomb was empty. Again, this is made clear at length in John's Gospel, as we studied together last Sunday. The empty tomb is huge in terms of an argument for the resurrection.

Argument number nine; the inadequacy of the other explanations. There are alternative theories for the resurrection of Christ, but none of them satisfy all the facts of the case. I wish I had time to really go through each of these and show you how they simply don't account for the reality, but let me just give them to you in brief.

Here are the more common explanations for Jesus' resurrection if, in fact, He wasn't raised from the dead. Jesus never really died, but swooned. The centurion certified His death both before the spear thrust, and after it. There's no question that Jesus was dead. And he assured Pilot of this, besides, this theory, doesn't account for Paul's radical conversion. It doesn't account for James' and Jude's conversion.

A second alternative is that the resurrection was a group hallucination. But hallucinations are not collective group experiences. And, they can't account for the empty tomb, they can't account for the conversions of Paul or James or Jude, who were not in any way prone to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead, but instead were set against it.

A third explanation is the story of Jesus grew into a legend as time passed. The problem with this view is the original story told by the apostles expressed belief in the resurrection. The Gospels were written during their lifetimes. In addition, Paul, James, and Jude all happened very early without time for a legend to grow. So this just doesn't measure up to the facts.

Another explanation is that the resurrection was a fraud. There are various theories about who stole the body, Joseph of Arimathea took the body, the Roman or Jewish authorities took the body, the disciples stole the body. The problem with all of the fraud theories is they don't account for the fact that the disciples really believed they had seen the risen Christ and died confessing the risen Christ. Moreover, this kind of fraud would never have convinced the persecutor Paul and the skeptics, James and Jude.

A final explanation is that the women and other witnesses mistakenly went to the wrong tomb. But this doesn't account for the appearances to the disciples, to Paul, to James. And clearly, Jesus' enemies could have pointed to the real tomb, it would have been in their interest to do so. And Joseph of Arimathea would have known the location of his own tomb, and later had pointed this out, if the resurrection were based on such a misunderstanding. Listen, no other explanation, but the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ adequately explains the data for what happened on that Sunday morning. Jesus is alive.

Let's move on from the resurrection. God obviously exalted Him in the resurrection raising Him from the dead, proving that He was everything that He had claimed. That brings us to the next part of His exaltation; from earth back to heaven in the ascension. His ascension into heaven. There is plenty biblical evidence for the ascension. Jesus promised that He would ascend to the Father in a number of passages. John 6:62, John 14:2, John 14:12 He talks about going back to the Father and there preparing a place. And a number of other times. Luke, of course, records the actual event. At the end of his Gospel, Luke 24:51, he says, "While Jesus was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven." He describes it more at length in Acts 1:9-11,

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside Him; they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? [You have got to love that, it's like... because Jesus just went up there]. This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

By the way, why didn't Jesus just disappear? Why the sort of staged ascension? It was to make a point, a point to the disciples, that, in fact, He was gone permanently. He was ascending into heaven. The apostles, of course, affirmed the ascension. In Acts 2:33, on the day of Pentecost, Peter said, "He has been exalted to the right hand of God". In Ephesians 1:20, Paul writes, the Father, "raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places." And in chapter 4, verse 8, "He ascended on high."

So, what does it matter? What is the significance of the ascension? Very quickly it matters for these six reasons; first of all, because it demonstrated the visible ascent of the human nature of Jesus from earth to heaven. It proved this is what happened to all of those who witnessed it, and to us.

Secondly, it demonstrated that the Father had accepted the work of Christ because He welcomed Him back into eternal glory.

Thirdly, it demonstrated the eventual ascension of all believers. Listen, you too, are going up when Christ returns for His own.

Number four, it allowed Christ to send the Spirit. He said in John 16:7, "if I don't go away, then I can't send the Spirit."

Number five, it allowed Christ to go and prepare a place for His own, John 14:1-2. "If I go," He said, "I go to prepare a place."

And number six, it established the reality and the manner of the Second Coming because the angel said, "this same Jesus will come in the same way you have seen Him go." That's the ascension of Jesus Christ.

That brings us to the third step in His exaltation. From the grave and dead and buried, resurrection that's the first step of His exaltation. From Resurrected on the earth, ascension. He ascends into the presence of God. That brings us to the third step of His exaltation; His session at God's right hand. His session at God's right hand.

Again this is punctuated again and again in the Scriptures. Obviously, the reference to God's right hand is anthropomorphic. You recognize that word? *Anthropos man, morph meaning form; the form of man.* God doesn't have a right hand in reality, God is a Spirit, right? He doesn't have a right hand like I have a right hand. That's an expression, a figure of speech. It's called an *anthropomorphism*; attributing to God those things that pertain to humanity so that we can understand something about God. So when it says that He's been exalted to the right hand of God, it makes the point that Jesus now occupies a place of honor and authority. The very same level of honor and authority as the Father Himself has. That's the point. He sits, as it were, at God's right hand.

Now what's the point of this seating at God's right hand or session at God's right hand? First of all, it serves an apologetic purpose, it proves Jesus' deity. Turn to Matthew 26. Matthew 26, and look at verse 62. This is that night time trial of Jesus. And the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, do you not answer? Matthew 26:62.

But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him [he puts Him under oath], "I adjure You by the living God [I am putting You under oath], that You tell us whether You are the Messiah, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself;" [and Mark's Gospel adds, He said, after he said 'you have said it yourself' He said, 'I am', no lack of clarity. Verse 64], "I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man [referring to Himself] sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

You see to say that He would be seated at God's right hand, was to say that He would have the same position, the same authority, the same honor, the same rights as God Himself. It was to say He was equal with God and that's exactly the point they got. Notice verse 65, "Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy." And he's right. If Jesus wasn't speaking the truth, then it would have been blasphemy because He was claiming by saying, I am going to be seated

at God's right hand, He was claiming to be God Himself. So it is an apologetic for Jesus' deity. The Father has seated Him at His right hand.

There are other purposes as well. And I'm not going to really deal with these in detail because we're going to touch on these in the future, so let me just mention them. From that seat at God's right hand: He reigns as King, He serves as a Prophet, and He serves as a Priest. And that's the one I just want to briefly develop for you, He serves as a Priest at God's right hand. We sing that song. You know, *"I have this perfect plea in the presence of God. My great High Priest whose name is love."*

What does Jesus do as our Priest at the right hand of God? Certainly His sacrificial work is done, so what does He do? He intercedes for us. And what is the nature of His intercession? Have you ever thought about this? What does Jesus do in the presence of God for you right now? This is what He does, and I love these, I wish I had time to do a sermon on each one, but let me just give the list.

First of all, He provides a constant reminder of His atonement as the basis for the Father's pardoning grace. In other words, His very presence, we sing that song, pleads for me. This is Hebrews 9:24, Christ's presence there with the Father is a perpetual reminder of His perfect sacrifice. By being there, our forgiveness is secured because His very presence reminds the Father that He paid for His own.

Secondly, He answers all of the charges that Satan brings against us. In Revelation 12:10, Satan is called the "accuser of the brethren". Do you realize that Satan, just like he did Job, just like he does those in Revelation, he accuses you, he knows your struggles? He knows what goes on in your life. And he accuses night and day, Christians before God. He has access to God, we learn about that in Job, by God's permission, don't think that Satan has any power on God. Luther was absolutely right, that Satan was God's devil, He has him on a leash. He doesn't go any farther than He wants him to go. But He allows him access, and he accuses us before God. And boy does he have plenty of ground for accusing us.

But Jesus will have none of it. In Romans 8:33-34, Paul writes, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" Who can bring a charge that sticks? And he goes on to say, Jesus intercedes for us. Think about that for a moment. Think about the reality of that. Satan brings a charge against you. Have you seen, have you seen how that person who claims to be a follower of Yours, how they act, and how they've thought and how they spoke today, and how they treated their spouse? And he accuses, and Christ answers.

Number three, He sanctifies our spiritual activities. Do you realize, the best things we do are filled with sin? And the only way that those things can be acceptable to God is through the

intercession of Jesus Christ? 1 Peter 2:5, speaks of spiritual sacrifices. And how can these be acceptable to God? They are, "acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Your worship is only acceptable because Jesus' intercession makes it acceptable. Your acts of service are only acceptable because Jesus makes them acceptable through His intercession.

Number four, He provides help for the hurting and for the tempted. Both Hebrews 2, and Hebrews 4 talk about the fact that when we face these troubles in life, when we face temptation, we can go to the throne of grace and receive help. Why? Because He Himself has experienced those temptations without sin. And therefore, He's able to provide help for us.

And He prays for us. This is what we mean specifically when we talk about the intercession of Christ. How does Jesus pray for you? Well, read John 17, that's the answer, that's Him praying for you. But specifically, there are two ways, we can say, Jesus prays for us. First of all, He prays for our spiritual protection. In Luke 22:31, He says to Peter, "Peter, Satan has desired to sift you like wheat;" he's desired to destroy you, "but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." Listen, Jesus is praying for you Christian, that your faith will not fail. We sing that song, *He Will Hold Me Fast*, well, He holds us fast through His intercession with the Father. Father, don't let that one's faith fail.

And He also prays for our sanctification. John 17:17, He prays, sanctify them Father, "Sanctify them through the truth; Your word is truth." We were talking this morning about the importance of sanctification. Listen, Jesus is praying that you will be conformed to His image. And because the Father always hears the Son, if you are a true Christian, you will be, you will be. So, that's His intercession.

But that's not the final step in His exaltation. The final step in His exaltation is the Second Coming. He's at the right hand of God, He has been raised from the dead, He has been raised from the earth to heaven, He has been seated at the right hand of God at the place of authority and power, equal to God Himself. But the ultimate exaltation of Jesus Christ comes when He returns in the Second Coming. Now, let me just remind you of what we're talking about. This is for a different time, a different section, but just looking at the end time events.

The next event on the prophetic calendar is the Rapture of the church. It's when Christ returns for His own, for the church. Immediately after that, although we don't know if that's a minute after that, or if that's a day after that, or if that's a short period of time after that, the man of sin will be revealed, and the Tribulation period begins. The first three and a half years, encompassed by the first five seals of the book of Revelation, it's called the beginning of birth pangs. And in the middle of that seven year period, Daniel's seventieth week, than man of sin breaks the covenant that he has made. He sets up in the temple an abomination of desolation. And then comes the Great Tribulation. That's the name for the second three and a half years of that seven year

Tribulation period. That's when seals six and seven come, and out of those come the seven trumpets, the seven bowls, and this is likened to hard labor. And then, at the end of that seven years, comes the Second Coming. So, there are two aspects, of the return of Christ, at the beginning of that period, there is the Rapture of the church, at the end of that period, there's the Second Coming.

Now, let me just briefly, identify the difference between these two. This is, again, if you're curious, you can go listen to the messages I have done on this. I did a couple on the Rapture, and I think a couple on the Second Coming as well. But, let me just give you an overview. First of all, with the Rapture, there's no hint of judgment. The texts that speak of the Rapture of the church, there's no hint of judgment whatsoever. The Second Coming the emphasis is on judgment, the judgment of the world, not on us. At the Rapture, there are no warning signs that precede it. The Second Coming, there are dramatic signs that precede it, in the heavens and on earth. The Rapture, there is the Rapture of living believers. In the Second Coming there is no evidence of the Rapture of living believers. The Rapture, the resurrection of dead believers. The Second Coming, there is no Rapture of dead believers. The Rapture comes before the Tribulation. The Second Coming, after the Tribulation. The Rapture, Christ comes in the air, and we are caught into the air with Him. In the Second Coming, Christ comes to the earth, plants His feet on the Mount of Olives. In the Rapture, it is for His saints. In the Second Coming, according to Revelation 19, He comes with His saints. In the Rapture, He comes to take His saints to heaven. In the Second Coming He comes to defeat His enemies and establish His kingdom here, on this earth. So, those are the differences between these events.

What I am going to talk about from this time forward, is not the Rapture, but the Second Coming, at the end of the Seven Years of Tribulation. Now, first of all, just to punctuate the importance of the Second Coming. It is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. 23 of 27 New Testament books refer to Christ's Second Coming. In fact, it's mentioned more often than His first coming. The Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and all of the major confessions of the church, speak of the Christ's return.

This is something that the church has always understood, and before the church, even in Old Testament times, it was understood. For example, even before the flood, in the time of Enoch, it was understood, that there would be this coming. Jude 14-15 says, it was also about these men, speaking of false teachers, that,

Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

That is a prediction of the Second Coming, before the flood, by Job during the time of the Patriarchs. Job 19:25, Job says, "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth." David understood this. He's quoted in Acts 2 by Peter, verses 30-31, "because David was a prophet and he knew," here it is, "that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and saw the resurrection of the Christ." He has to come back, and He has to sit on David's throne.

It's prophesied by all the prophets, Zachariah 14:1-6 describes it. Or look at the statement in Acts 3:21, Peter says, "heaven must receive Jesus until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time."

The Second Coming was, of course, predicted by Christ Himself. In the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:27, He says,

For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be [in verse 29], and then, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

Matthew 25:31, "when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne."

It's predicted by the angels. In Acts 1 at the ascension, they said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

It was predicted by the apostles. Acts 3, Peter says, "Repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Messiah appointed for you."

And of course, Paul admonishes us in Titus 2:13, to live, "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah Jesus."

When is it going to happen? Well the exact time is unknown. Jesus, during His days on earth, limited His knowledge of that, Matthew 24:36, "of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." Again, He limited in His incarnation His independent exercise of His omniscience, and He limited His knowledge of when that event would happen.

Acts 1, you remember, just before the ascension, "they were asking Him, saying 'Lord is it this time You are going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'" They misunderstood a lot, I don't have time to get into all that, but, "He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.'"

That's still the answer. You know, if another guy comes out with a book, saying this is the timing of the return of the return of Christ, don't buy it. In fact, let me tell you, you can get a really good deal on a bunch of copies of a book called, *88 Reasons Jesus Must Return in 1988*. Seriously, we don't know. But we do know that it happens after the Tribulation, because Matthew 24:29, Jesus says this, "immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory." That's all we know of the timing of the Second Coming.

Now, why? What's the point of the Second Coming? There are several of them and I want you to see them briefly. First of all, to be glorified in the saints. I love this. This is us. This is why Christ is coming. Second Thessalonians 1:10, "when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day," you realize that when Jesus comes back with us from heaven in the Second Coming, He will receive glory for all that He's done and accomplished from us, and from every intelligent being in the universe? For what He has accomplished with a bunch of sinners who deserved only His wrath.

Secondly, to judge the world. He'll come back at the Second Coming to judge. Matthew 16:27 says, "the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then repay every man according to his deeds." Those are sobering words. Jesus is coming back to judge every man. Second Thessalonians 1:7-10,

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day.

Listen, if you're here tonight and you do not know Jesus Christ, I just want you to understand that God has warned you. Jesus Christ will return, and when He returns, He will not come in grace and mercy. He will come in judgment. Dealing out retribution to those who have refused to obey the gospel, who have spurned His grace and mercy. If that's you, there will be no mercy, there will be no grace in that day. I plead with you, turn to Christ while there is still mercy, while he'll still receive you. He's coming to judge the world.

He's coming, also, to bring salvation to Israel. He's made promises that He intends to keep. Zechariah 12:10, says, "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born." He goes on in Zechariah 13:1, "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a fountain for sin and for impurity." In other words, forgiveness.

Here's how Paul puts it in Romans 11:26, "all Israel will be saved." You say, does that mean all Israel will be saved? It means all Israel will be saved. Does it mean that every last Jewish person alive on the planet when Christ returns will be redeemed? I can't answer that question, I can tell you though, it means, all Israel will be saved. "He will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob." This is why He comes, to keep His promises to the ethnic descendants of Abraham.

He also comes to destroy antichrist and his followers. Second Thessalonians 2:8, "that lawless one will be revealed," listen to this, I love this, "whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth," all He has to do is speak, and His enemies are destroyed. That's why He's described in Revelation 19 with a sword coming out of His mouth. It doesn't mean He's got a literal sword coming out of His mouth, it means, His weapon is His tongue. All He has to do is say it, and His enemies are destroyed.

And I love this one most of all. The Second Coming is about the vindication of Jesus Christ. The vindication of Jesus Christ. You say, why does He need to be vindicated? Read 1 Corinthians 15, and there Paul lists all of those who saw Christ after His resurrection. And what you will discover is there is not a single unbeliever in that list. Not one unbeliever saw the resurrected Jesus. You know what that means? That means the last view that the world had of Jesus of Nazareth was as a dying criminal. And so, at the direction of His Father, He will return to this earth with the divine intention to vindicate Him as the Lord's anointed, the Lord's chosen.

Matthew 24:27, "just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be."

Luke 21:27, "they will see the Son of Man," everybody is going to see, that's the point here. They will see the Son of Man, "coming in a cloud," that's probably the Shekinah cloud, not like a thunderstorm, but like the Shekinah cloud of God's glory, "with power and great glory."

Revelation 1:7, "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen."

Jesus, our Lord, will be vindicated, and, "every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God, the Father."

Now very quickly, in the couple of minutes that we have remaining, what is the manner of the Second Coming? It's personal. Matthew 24:44, "the Son of Man is coming." Acts 1:11, "This Jesus, will come." And there are other references as well. He'll come bodily. Acts 1:11 says, "He will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." Or Zechariah 14:4, "in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east." He will come visibly. Not hidden from human view, but like lightening. You know what makes lightning unique? That you can't miss it, that's the point. Just like lightening comes from the east and from the west and even if you're trying to sleep, you can't miss it. That's the way the Second Coming will be.

He will come suddenly. It's interesting, there are several biblical illustrations for the suddenness of the Second Coming, it's likened to the coming of a bridegroom for his bride. You know when he shows up at the bride's house in the Jewish kind of a ceremony, to take her back to his house. He shows up, and it's time. Or like the bridegroom returning from the wedding, Luke 12:6. Or like a thief, that's the most common illustration. He'll come suddenly, like a thief.

Matthew 24:44, "For this reason you must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will." Mark 13:36, "he come suddenly." Revelation 3:3, "I will come like a thief." But, Revelation 16:15, "Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame." In other words, he's ready. He's ready. Those who are redeemed during the Tribulation period need to be ready. He's coming gloriously, clouds, I think the Shekinah glory cloud will be His chariot.

Matthew 24:30, "they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory." He'll come with the saints. First Thessalonians 3:13, "the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints." We will come back from heaven with Him, having been raptured before the Tribulation. We'll return with Him in the Second Coming. He'll come with His angels, we've read several texts to that effect earlier. And He will come in the glory of the Father. He will come in His own glory. And He will come victoriously. Read Revelation 19, He conquers everything and everyone. This is the Second Coming of our Lord. The victory of our king.

How should we apply the Second Coming. There are a couple of ways I would encourage you to think about it. First of all, it's an impetus to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Again, if you're here tonight, and you've never bowed the knee to Jesus Christ, understand what's coming. Paul says in Acts 17:30,

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere [that's you], should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

He is coming. And when He comes, it will be in judgment.

It's a reminder of the blinding power of unbelief. Even though this is all through the Bible, our Lord tells us that unbelievers will be surprised. They'll be surprised by His return. Matthew 24 talks about that. They'll even scoff at the idea of His coming. Second Peter 3 says, "Mockers mocking." Nothing has happened. "Where is the promise of His coming? Ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

The Second Coming is also a comfort in our trial. In 2 Thessalonians 1, that's how Paul uses it. He says, listen, if you're facing persecution, and there are people all over our world who are facing persecution, realize the Lord will come to relieve His own. He is coming.

And then finally, it's a source of encouragement in our battle for sanctification. How's that? First John 3:3, "everyone who has this hope fixed on Him," speaking of seeing Christ, "purifies himself, just as He is pure."

You know what's amazing? Is that you and I by grace alone, not by anything that we have done. No work that we've performed, nothing we've earned, by grace alone, He will come for us in the Rapture. And we will come back with Him to reign.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for these amazing truths. Seal them to our hearts. May we worship Jesus Christ, and may we always remember that it is only Your grace, Your grace to us in Christ, that makes all these things ours. We love You, we praise You, we thank You.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.