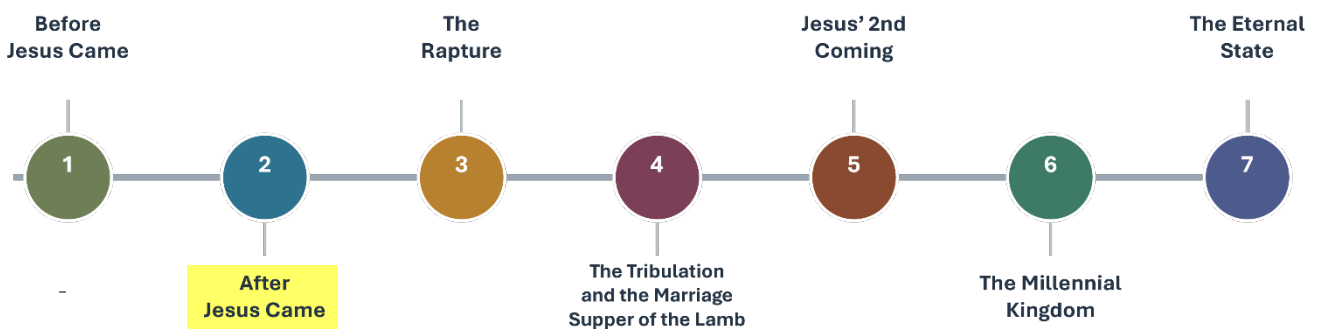


Last week we concluded talking about the state those who died before Jesus were in while they awaited Jesus' coming into the world and then ascending after the crucifixion to take them up to heaven with Him. There we discovered the Bible displays they could see, speak, have relationships, had a type of form that could be seen and interact with matter, enjoy music, touch, be recognized bodily, and were covered with garments (not naked with wings or being like Casper the ghost).

- I'm hoping this cleared up a lot of misconceptions going around about what takes place after a follower of Jesus dies bodily.
- And since I didn't finish all the points I gave you notes for last time, I'm hoping you read ahead and are therefore already subject matter experts on the first part we are going to cover today. Additionally, since I added a quiz to the end of the notes last time (which was optional), I have made some modifications and additions to it for this week if you desire to use that for your own studies.

2. AFTER JESUS CAME (Church Age)

We're now moving to the time period which speaks directly to us. Which is after Jesus came into the world, but before the rapture. And we're going to now look at the same 3 key areas: **1** the **location** where those who are in Jesus, who have or will die before the rapture of the church, go to, **2** the state of the **soul** during this time, and **3** the state of the **body**.



Coming back to the **location** of heaven, the next question is, was Paradise closed or relocated and upgraded after Jesus ascended with those who were formerly in Paradise in the center of the earth? And if relocated, where to? To begin with, let's eavesdrop on a conversation Paul had with the Corinthians in [2 Cor. 12:2-4](#), telling them, *"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows (he's talking about the soul possibly leaving the body here)—such a one was caught up to the third heaven (the place where God resides [the first being the atmosphere and the second being all outer space]). And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise (the name of the side in Sheol where believers went before Jesus came) and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter (emphasis added)."* (See also [Rev. 2:7](#).)

- This is kind of an interesting account for which Paul doesn't even know all the details. But what he does know is this follower of Jesus went *up* (said twice). Because once Jesus took the saints of old *up* with Him into the place where God dwells, the location of *Paradise* moved to the third heaven.
- And after Jesus' 40 days of being seen while ministering in His glorified body, He ascended ([Luke 24:50-51](#)). He didn't go down. He went up. [Eph. 4:9-10](#) states it this way, *"(Now this, 'He ascended (up)'—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens (likely speaking of the second heaven—all outer space), that He might fill all things.)"*

- And the Bible clearly tells us Jesus is seated “*up* (Mark 16:19)” or “*on high* (Heb. 1:3)” in glory with the Father. **And where They are, heaven is!** But as a teaser, that is not where the third heaven (the place God resides) will remain forever—stay tuned for this later in this series, because the reason for this change is so exciting for those who seem to think we have no idea what we will be doing in heaven eternally. Or whom we will be doing it with.

So, what is the state of the soul for those who have died (having received the grace of God) after Jesus died, was resurrected, and ascended? We covered this pretty well in section one, but here are a few more things to take in.

- Jesus told the thief on the cross that on that very day he would be with Him (Jesus) in Paradise (Luke 23:43).

Before we move on, this is just one of many places this study reveals some incredible things for us to think about. When Jesus descended into Paradise, this thief went with Him and then got to witness Jesus coming to collect all the saints of old to take them up into heaven, while he himself would never reside there.

- He saw it and then his **soul** ascended to heaven with all the Old Testament saints (try to picture that experience in your mind). Which also means he most likely would have been the first New Testament saint to enter into heaven **above**.
 - All of which affirms to us once again that it’s not about status or even your history when it comes to grace and eternity. **It’s all because of the goodness of God and what you do with Jesus.**
- Now coming back to the state of the **soul**, because Jesus has a constant and unending communion with the Father (being He is also God), we know He’s always been spiritually alive (Luke 23:46). And anyone who has come to Jesus is also spiritually alive and will go to Him, where He is, when they die. Paul completely got this, saying of himself in Phil. 1:23, “*I am hard-pressed between the two* (the option to stay and minister to them or leave his body [to die] and go to heaven), *having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.*”

What all of this should be conveying to us is that **death of this body is not the end of all that is desirable**. But rather the transition to that which is so much better than what you have ever known before. You will not be lost in death if you have been saved from sin by placing your faith in Jesus. Rather you will have arrived at a destination you will not want to return from. Not even for a second. **There you will find more life, not less.**

- I want to close this section with this thought. Rom. 8:32 tells us, “*He* (God the Father) *who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all* (speaking of sending Jesus into the world to die for our salvation), *how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?* (emphasis added).”
- **Do you believe this to be true and yet somehow think you will go to heaven and find that God has withheld the good things He has given us on earth from you then?** Folks, that would be incongruent, nonsensical, illogical, contradictory... But is that what you have been imagining?
- If so, I pray this study will transform your thinking (Rom. 12:2). And when you truly get that, fear and/or dread will be replaced with **eager expectation**. Just as it should be. Each stage of heaven for the believer gets progressively better. And every stage there is better than anything you’ve experienced here!

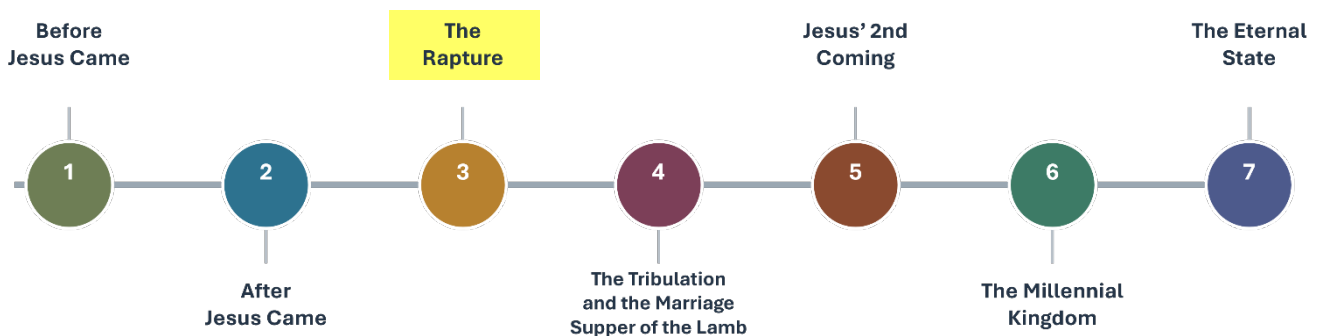
Now we move to the condition of our **bodies** while we await the rapture. And then we will begin to dig into the rapture itself. So what is the state of the **body** for those who came to life after Jesus came, and have since received Him by faith?

In our current state we are still in the same condition, where to be absent from the body is to be immediately present with the Lord.

- This is another place where these passages from the letters to the Corinthians speak to our topic. [2 Cor. 5:1-8](#) says to us, “*For we know that if our earthly house, this tent (our natural body), is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked (or without a body). For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life (speaking of being more alive physically than we have ever been). Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*”
- And [1 Cor. 15:50-53](#) (speaking to this also) says, “*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption (even after salvation the state of the body is still perishable and corruptible). Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep (die bodily), but we shall all be changed—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 (clearly speaking of the body). For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*”
- So, what state shall we be in then? That is not entirely defined, but we do know we are not disembodied spirits as we just read about in the above passages. But we also know our mortal bodies will not be raised again until the rapture. As we spoke about last time, some have called this the “intermediate state”. But again, we’re talking of the body, not the soul and spirit. There is no soul sleep. I hope you gathered that from our last two studies. It is abundantly clear.

3. THE RAPTURE (everything from here forward is future)

It’s necessary now for us to look at what has become a controversial subject inside of some church circles, because the reality of the rapture directly impacts the same three key areas: **1** the **location** where those who are in Jesus, who have or will die, go, **2** the state of the **soul** during this time, and **3** the state of the **body**.



One such example is our belief that at the rapture the dead in Christ (speaking only of the death of the body because the soul never dies or sleeps) will be raised at the same time the believers whose bodies have not died are caught up into heaven by Jesus ([1 Thes. 4:15-18](#)). Which is exactly what the next state of the body shall be—**raised and glorified!**

This is a point where there are more than a few opinions. I’m not sure why. But I know some intelligent people do not believe in the pretribulation rapture of the church. I want to let you know I believe it completely. And for good reasons which I will share with you more next week (maybe the next two weeks 😊).

- You will have to decide for yourself. But in this series I will be teaching a pretribulation rapture.
- And to set this up, we have to get some background.

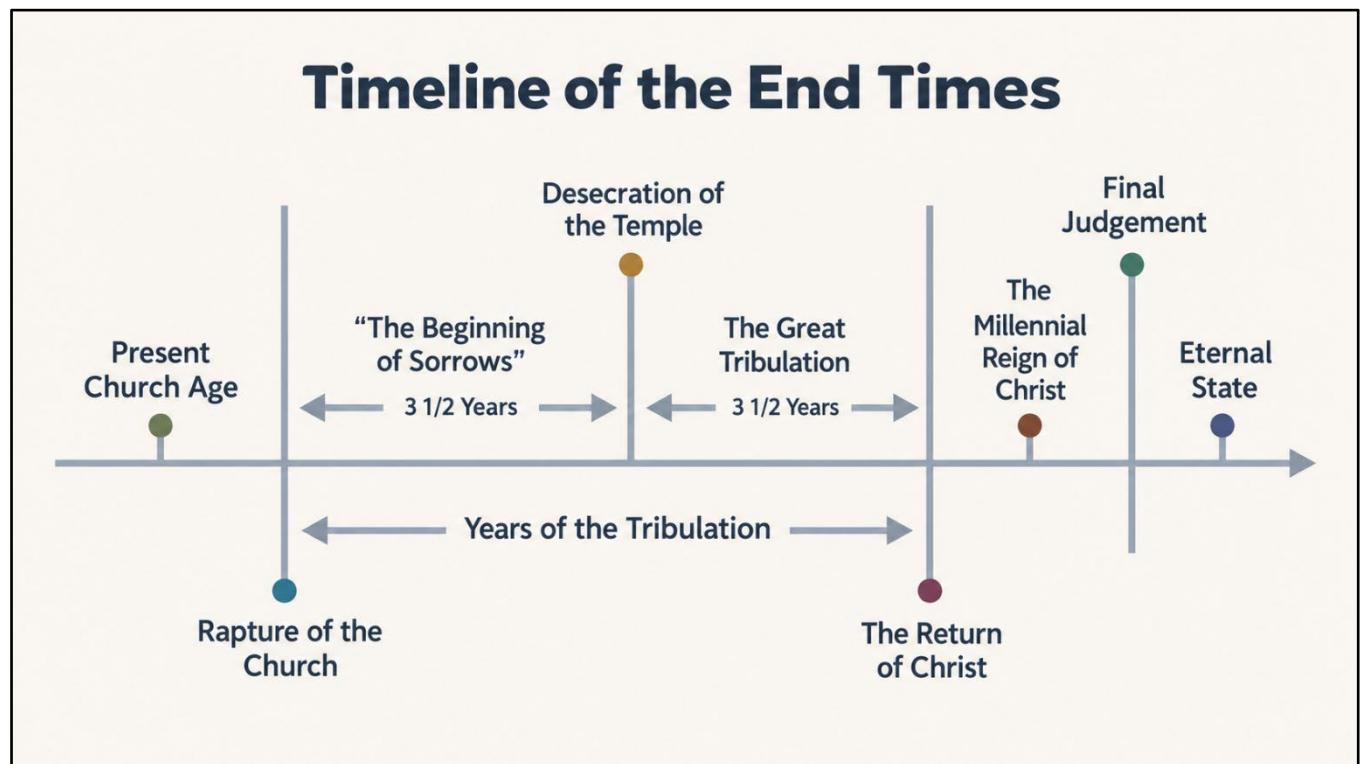
But before we do, let me make an important point. If you have a different view than I do on this subject, I am in no way trying to engage in a battle with you. What I do want to make sure of is we have both placed our faith in Jesus so that we are both going to spend eternity in heaven together. **And that our viewpoint in this particular area creates in us an urgency to preach the gospel** with words and actions so that others might make heaven their home. But I am a Bible teacher, so I'm going to teach what I believe the Bible clearly says.

The Four Views

To do this, let's begin with addressing the four main views when it comes to things like **1)** the rapture, **2)** the tribulation, **3)** the millennial kingdom, and **4)** the eternal heaven (state). These views often come to the surface in the study of the book of **Revelation**. And we're going to have to get a basic understanding of **Revelation** and these four views in order to move forward.

1. **Preterist View**. The view the book of **Revelation** (and other biblical pieces addressing the same subject) deals with early period church conflicts in a **symbolic** form. And is entirely historical from the point in time John was in when he penned this book (therefore being all past events from John's time—I find this one the least credible).
 - Full preterists treat even the second coming and the resurrection as already fulfilled, a view most churches reject for good reason.
 - And with this comes replacement theology (the belief that the church has replaced Israel, and therefore God is done with Israel) because they see all of this fulfilled roughly 2,000 years ago. Meaning they did not see the restoration of the Jewish people to Israel in 1948. The Bible just simply does not support this view.
2. **Historical View**. A progressive history of the church (**Ch. 2-3** [something many agree with to some degree]), but making even the scroll (**Ch. 5-6 & 8:1-6**), trumpet (**Ch. 8:7-9:21 & 11:15-19**) and bowl judgments (**Ch. 16**) as successive stretches of history **already underway** (e.g. they see the trumpet judgments as those that broke Roman power), covering only **the church age** (see chart below) and continuing until the return of Christ. Seventh-day Adventists are the largest group today that subscribe to this method of interpretation, while they still hold a premillennial view (Jesus' second coming followed by His 1,000-year reign).
3. **Allegorical View**. Idealist or spiritual interpretation which is a non-literal view—**all symbolic**—believing these are great moral lessons of **good versus evil**, but not literal at all (Amillennialists in particular [those who believe in no 1,000-year reign of Jesus upon the earth before the eternal heaven]—but can be true of all of the first three beliefs). The question we should all have here is **who gets to decide what these symbolic things mean since you have no literal pieces** (which are very specific in the whole of the biblical narrative)?
4. **Futurist View**. This is a more literal interpretation which believes the majority of the things spoken about in Jesus' rule and reign (including the rapture) **have not yet occurred**. **This is the view I hold** because **1)** it's the only one that takes account of the historical things which have occurred, **and which have never occurred**. **2)** It is also in complete agreement with the rest of prophecy and the Bible as a whole. **3)** And it's the one that follows the outline of the **3 divisions of the book**, given to us by God (we will come back to that next week).

I would like to note here that the vast majority of those who teach the Bible chapter by chapter and verse by verse hold **the futurist view** and therefore believe in **1)** a pretribulation rapture, **2)** before the seven years of tribulation on the earth, **3)** then Jesus' second coming, **4)** followed by the millennial kingdom, **5)** then the great white throne judgment, **6)** and finally the eternal heaven (state).



The chapters of Revelation that speak to our course

Now as we close for today I want to provide for you a quick overview of which chapters of the book of [Revelation](#) speak to this series on heaven.

- [Chapters 4–5](#): John is shown the heavenly vision where no one is worthy to open the scroll (directly related to the scroll judgments which begin the tribulation), that is until Jesus appears and is the only one found worthy to do so. **This begins with the rapture** of the saints into heaven and the resurrection of the bodies of those who have gone to be with Jesus prior to the rapture. So it will be focal in this section. This is [chronological](#) to the set-up of the opening of the tribulation ([Ch. 6–18](#)).
- [Chapter 19](#): The rejoicing in heaven, followed by the 2nd coming of Jesus to the earth for judgment.
- [Chapter 20](#): Satan bound 1,000 years, Jesus reigns with the saints 1,000 years (the millennial kingdom), the Great White Throne judgment after the 1,000 years ends (very relevant to this course).
- [Chapters 21–22](#): The New Heavens and the New Earth. This is the final piece ushering in the eternal heaven (also very relevant to this course).

From this brief overview we can see the most significant pieces for this section dealing with **what it will be like for those who are raptured, and those whose bodies died before and will be there when the raptured saints appear all at once**, are contained in [Rev. 4 & 5](#). That's where we will be diving in next time.

- Then we will discuss why I believe it makes no sense to believe in anything other than a pretribulation rapture, a literal millennial kingdom, and then the eternal state.
- And how that relates to the subject of heaven. And how convoluting this has contributed to people being so confused about heaven (some even not wanting to go because they make it less than the paradise God has prepared for those who love Him and have put their faith in Jesus).
- And let me tell you that I don't think you are going to want to miss that! Because **when you start unlocking the truths the Bible tells us about what is coming, then things like hope, excitement, confidence, joy, and boldness, all begin to be fully realized in the precious gift of the life He has given you to live for His glory now.**

STUDY 3 QUESTIONNAIRE

Do you feel you have a good grasp on the differences between the first, second, and third heaven and how that relates to the place God resides? If you were asked by someone else what this was speaking of, how would you explain it?

Has this study given you more insight into what you or those who have died before the rapture might experience while awaiting the resurrection of the body? If so, in what way?

Based on what you have heard about the “form” of the saints who have died up to this time, what is it you will not be able to do if you were to die and go to heaven today, that you are able to do on earth now? And if there are limitations, is it possible they would make heaven better than earth?

If you were given the option to be taken up by God right now, or to stay here, which would you choose and why?

Did you know which of the four viewpoints you have held about what is still to come on God’s timetable? And where did you gain that viewpoint? Finally, have there been any changes to what you used to believe and what are they (if there are any)?

CROSS REFERENCES

Rev 2:7 NKJV – "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." '

Luk 24:50–51 NKJV – (50) And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. (51) Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

Mar 16:19 NKJV – So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

Heb 1:3 NKJV – who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Luk 23:43 NKJV – And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Luk 23:46 NKJV – And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.' " Having said this, He breathed His last.

Rom 12:2 NKJV – And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

1Th 4:15–18 NKJV – (15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. (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.

Rev 8:1–6 NKJV – (1) When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. (2) And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. (3) Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. (4) And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. (5) Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. (6) So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

Rev 11:15–19 NKJV – (15) Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (16) And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, (17) saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. (18) The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth." (19) Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.