

Resuscitation, Rapture, and Resurrection

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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Those who lived in the eastern area of Alabama around the Opelika, Auburn area but thanks to a global pandemic and virtual church, that could mean literally anywhere on planet earth and I want to welcome you and thank you tonight for allowing us to be a part of your lives.

Now if you do happen to be a resident of the east Alabama area, there is no better time than right now for a good old fashioned Bible study. The weather is so bad outside, you can't go do "anything else," so let me invite you tonight whether you're in your living room, seated at your kitchen table, hopefully on a covered back porch, wherever you find yourself, just sit back and relax, we're gonna do some just old fashioned dig in your teeth Bible study.

You know, in the book of 1 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul challenges the church at Corinth, he challenges them on the fact that they were not, shall we say, willing to grow in their faith and he uses a very interesting comparison, he said that when he came to them, he thought they would be at the point where they would desire to eat meat but unfortunately because they had not grown in their faith, they had not studied the Scriptures, they had not taken it seriously, they were relegated to, as he described, as drinking milk and there's an interesting parallel there between the physical growth of a child going from milk to meat in our spiritual growth, and so allow me to share with you from the very beginning, tonight's gonna be one of those good old fashioned, shall we say, rib-eye steak nights. We are going to dig in and we're gonna see some pretty meaty things regarding Scripture.

So that being said, before we go to our Bible study tonight, if you don't mind wherever you are, just join me in prayer that the Lord will guide us and he will assist us and he will give us discernment as we go through some of the meatier items in Scripture.

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, as we gather tonight or shall I say whatever time somebody is watching this program, thank you that you have not only inspired but you have preserved your word, that we have a copy in front of us, we have a copy on our phone, in fact, we

probably have multiple copies that we have access to, and God, we confess from the very beginning that there are times in our lives that we have become milk drinkers rather than meat eaters and, God, I pray tonight over the course of the next few moments that we would take advantage of the meat of your word. Your word tells us in 2 Timothy 2 to rightly divide and, God, I pray that's what we would do tonight, we would rightly divide your word for that which is profitable and even if it's needful for correction. Help us, O God, tonight to get from your word what we need so desperately in our lives. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Alright, friends, I want to encourage you to turn to the Gospel of John 11 and tonight we're gonna study one of the most famous stories in all of the Bible, it is the raising of Lazarus from the dead. In fact, even if you have a nominal or limited biblical exposure in your life, this most assuredly is one of the stories that has been referenced to just in the culture of life. We refer to people that have a miraculous physical healing, maybe they had some type of heart issue or stroke or whatever it may be and through the medical miracles of today, they are brought back to life, we jokingly call them modern-day Lazarus'. Why? Because we have an individual who has been dead for four days, in fact, his sister, one of the great lines in the Bible says, "Behold, Lord, he stinketh," and yet Jesus is going to call his name and he's gonna come forth from the dead and Jesus says to remove his grave-clothes.

Well, tonight we're really not gonna focus on the fact that he's been dead four days, we're not gonna focus on the fact that Jesus calls him out of the grave, I want to focus on the front end of this story. We're gonna discover that Lazarus is sick, his family is concerned, but Jesus is gonna make some statements to his sisters regarding his death that are gonna give us some incredible insight tonight, and what I want us to do is kind of do the three R's of this passage. You know, in the school world that would be reading, writing and arithmetic, but tonight we're gonna talk about resuscitation, rapture and resurrection. There are two verses in John 11 where Jesus deals with these subject matters in depth even though it's very brief, but to set the stage, I want to read the entirety of the story, at least leading up to verses 25 and 26, because I believe the condition we discover Lazarus in, not just that he is deceased but Jesus knew he was at the point of death prior to. It gives us a little insight to why he says what he says and why it's important for us to understand the difference between resuscitation, resurrection, and as we'll throw in tonight, rapture.

So beginning in chapter 11 of the Gospel of John, verse 1 it says,

1 Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) 3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. 4 When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. 6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in

the same place where he was. 7 Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. 8 His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? 9 Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. 10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. 11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. 12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. 13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. 14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. 15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. 16 Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. 17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. 18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: 19 And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. 20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. 21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. 23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. 24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

Now I'm gonna push pause there for just a moment because it's verse 25 and 26 that we want to focus on tonight. We have a situation where Lazarus is sick unto death. He gets information of this sickness but he stays two days where he is, and even tells his disciples that he purposefully did not go so that the glory of God would be shown. Here he asked Martha very clearly if her brother will rise again. She makes the statement that at the last day at the resurrection. What we see happening here even in the midst of a family who the Lord Jesus had a very close relationship with, is Jesus is gonna take his death and resuscitation in just a moment and he's gonna take Martha's very biblical but yet, shall I say, incomplete understanding of Scripture and he's gonna make something very clear for us. In verses 25 and 26, he's gonna take Lazarus' current condition and his sister's current, shall I say, theology and he's gonna give some incredible clarity for you and I today. Verse 25 and 26,

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

Interesting pair of statements there where Jesus says that if one believes in him, if he is dead, he shall live, and if he is alive, he shall never die, and what we see in these two verses is Jesus is bringing clarity to what it means about the resurrection at the last day, he's utilizing Lazarus, a dear friend of his, as an example to all of us of what this means.

So tonight I want to take these two verses and if you'll allow me the time to kind of dig into the "meat" of this passage, I want to, shall we say, use some definitions and some distinctions and even this word "dispensation" that we see in the Bible as well.

Let's begin with some definitions tonight. Let's begin with resuscitation. Now for those of you that were with us earlier in the day in our Sunday morning worship experience, I alluded to this but I'm gonna explore it more in depth tonight. Resuscitation is what happens when somebody dies physically and then becomes alive physically once again. We know that Lazarus is raised from the dead, in fact, one of the great theological points of chapter 11 of the Gospel of John is that when Jesus called him from the dead, he made it very clear, "Lazarus, come forth." Jesus is God in flesh. If he'd of just said, "Come forth," every single grave would have been emptied, but he said, "Lazarus, come forth." And Lazarus came out of the grave, even though according to this passage he'd been dead four days. We also discover that in the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ, that he raises the widow Nain's daughter, he raises the widow Nain's son, and Jairus' daughter. There are at least three situations, places, and shall I say people in the Gospel account that were definitively declared dead that when Jesus Christ entered the situation, they were breathing again.

Now based on how you count stories and is a story of multiple people the same as the story of one person, there are at least 10-11 different accounts in the Bible where people who physically experienced death just like Lazarus were brought back to life. One of the most famous in the Old Testament is when the prophet Elijah lay on the son of the widow woman who had given him that last bit of oil and made the cakes for him and he rose back to life. But each and every one of these situations experienced resuscitation. They did come back to life as you and I know it, however they experienced death again, and as we're gonna see toward the end of the message today, we experience this almost on a daily basis thanks to the gifts, the talents, the education and the experience that the Lord has given even our medical community today, that we have stories each and every day of somebody who goes through a "flatline experience" or their heart stops beating at least from an earthly temporal perspective, and through the use of medication and other items, they are brought back to life. Resuscitation is somebody coming back to life but it necessitates that they must die again.

You know, it's interesting that the Bible expresses what I call rules of thumb but there are some outliers. You know, in Hebrews 9:27 it says it is appointed unto men once to die, after this the judgment. Well, there are a few people including Lazarus who actually experienced what you and I know as death twice, and so that's kind of one of those outliers, so to speak, but as a general rule of thumb, the majority of us never experience resuscitation, there are some of you even watching and listening tonight that you have been blessed by the medical community and the technology of today to have experienced exactly what this is talking about but what's important to note and we'll deal with Lazarus more in just a moment is, yes, he was dead four days, yes, Jesus called him out of the grave, but he was resuscitated. He experienced death again just like the child of Jairus and just like the widow's son in the story of Elijah.

The second term that I want to utilize tonight is the term rapture. Now there may be some of you who have done indepth biblical studies throughout time and discovered that the term rapture as you and I know it in an English word is not actually found in your Bible or your biblical record or even the New Testament, and that's true however there is a phrase in the Bible that's utilized in several places, it says "to be caught up." It's found in the book of Acts 8, it's found in 1 Thessalonians 4, it's found in Revelation 4 where an individual is caught up, and the term "rapture" and I know it has Second Coming, I guess, definitions surrounding it, we'll get to more of that in just a moment, but by a strict definition the idea of being raptured is to be supernaturally taken from one location to another in an instant.

Allow me to give you an example in the Bible that is not a "Second Coming scenario." In the book of Acts 8, a man whom we know as Philip has witnessed or shared the Gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch. Remember that famous story where he's reading the story of or shall I say the account of the prophet Isaiah and he comes upon his chariot and he confesses that he doesn't know where to begin, he doesn't understand what he's reading unless somebody teach him, and there Philip shares with him the Gospel story of Jesus Christ as we discussed this morning, that he died, he was buried and he rose again, and there in Acts 8:37 this Ethiopian eunuch confessed that he believes in Jesus Christ as his Savior, he is baptized right there in the desert, and at the end of the story, I believe it's in verse 39, it says that Philip was caught up to a different location. Now here's why the definition is important: the definition of rapture does not necessitate being taken from earth to the heavens. That's typically how we define it and we'll explore more of that in just a moment, but what it does mean is to be taken from one location to another instantaneously supernaturally. What's important about the word "rapture" tonight in these two verses is that one who is raptured is not experiencing death, but as we'll see in a moment, the Bible speaks just as Jesus said of people who are alive who never experience death.

So resuscitation means to come back from the dead to die again, to be raptured is to be caught up by the Lord to be taken to another place, another location instantaneously by him, and then we have the term to be resurrected. Resurrection is the day that we formally call or, shall I say, culturally call Easter. Jesus Christ when he was raised from the dead, the Bible calls it the resurrection. The Bible says that he is the firstborn of the Lord, that he is the firstborn of the resurrection. To be raised from the dead or to be resurrected means to come back from the dead and to never die again. That's the distinction of this word.

Now in just a moment we're gonna go all the way into the book of Revelation 20 and delineate some of the distinctions of the idea of to be resurrected, but to be resurrected is very different than to be resuscitated. Lazarus here in John 11 was resuscitated. He was not raptured and he was not resurrected. When Jesus Christ came up from the grave, he was resurrected. He was not raptured and he was not resuscitated. When Jesus Christ ascends into the heavens in Acts 1, he was raptured even though he'd already been resurrected and he had no need to be resuscitated. Now I don't mean to bring confusion in the mix but I think it's important to understand the words that we're utilizing and the

definitions because in just a moment when we talk about their distinctions as Jesus spoke of them, it's very important that someone who is resuscitated can become raptured, but one who is resurrected would have no need. We'll unpack that in just a moment.

So back to verse 25 and 26. Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." Here's where we have to draw the distinctions, "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Now again, I don't want to just reiterate the definitions that we've discussed but I do want to draw some distinctions of clarity. Let's speak of Lazarus, the most famous of the raising of the dead, not just in the biblical record but specifically in the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ. Here it is on the fourth day where the women were going to prepare his body for the final burial, here it is where they declare he stinketh, that there is no opportunity from their perspective for a medical recovery. It's not like he was, as oftentimes people call, swooned, he appeared to be dead but wasn't really dead. Lazarus is really dead or his sisters would not have described him as they did, and in fact, Jesus says, "Remove the grave-clothes from him." In other words, that very particular way of which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus would have even wrapped the body of Jesus Christ there in John 19, had taken place in his life, Lazarus' life, as well.

So we have a definitively medical dead individual for four days. When Jesus calls him forth, he is very much alive. He doesn't just appear to be alive, he wasn't swooned and not really dead, because in chapter 12 of the Gospel of John the enemies of Jesus put Lazarus number 2 on their proverbial hit list. Jesus was number 1, in fact, many of them had made a vow and had made a commitment that they would not eat again until Jesus had been taken care of. When you read in John 12 they did the same thing with Lazarus, they sought after him because it was his testimony that was taking people and they were paying incredible attention to who Jesus Christ was.

Now think about that for just a moment. We think it's incredible that Jesus healed the lame, we think it's phenomenal that he multiplied food, it's fantastic that he walked across the water, but how about raising somebody from the dead? I think we could all agree that's the big one, so to speak, and yet this was not Jesus' first, it was actually his third person to raise from the dead. In chapter 12 of the Gospel of John, they are seeking after Lazarus, they want him to experience a permanent death not to be raised, and here's the thing that's interesting: Lazarus is never spoken of again in the entire Bible. Now this is why that is significant: not only were he and his two sisters, shall we say, close friends with Jesus Christ, this is the famous chapter in verse 35 where it says "Jesus wept," it talks about them being close friends, but Mary and Martha were there from the beginning, they are there throughout the other accounts, and as you study throughout the book of Acts and even the Pauline epistles and what we might call church history, we know that this family remained a part of the early church's existence. We don't know for sure but the Bible says in Acts 1 that when the early disciples were waiting on the coming of the Holy Spirit, there was 120 men in the Upper Room plus the women. There's a good chance that Mary and Martha would have been among those women that were there. There's a good chance they would have been there at Pentecost. We're not told explicitly.

We are told, though, that in chapter 12 Lazarus had made some enemies because of what Jesus had done in his life, and yet we never hear of him again.

Now I cannot prove emphatically what I'm about to state but I believe that they got to Lazarus. I don't know if it took place that week of the famous Passion Week, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, I don't know if it took place some short time or a long time later, but I do believe that they did get ahold of Lazarus because his testimony was so contrary to what they desired and wanted and was against their agenda. Why is that so important? Because Lazarus, though the most miraculous of the bringing back from the dead, he died. In fact, it says they wanted to end his life. Now that's very important compared to the next two terms because when we deal with rapture and resurrection, those who experience these two terms do not experience death.

Now I want you to understand what Jesus said here, "though a man, if he believeth though he die, yet he shall live, and if he lives he shalt never die." Now I want to take those statements and apply it to this concept of rapture and resurrection. Now let's deal with this term rapture, probably one of the most discussed and debated topics in all of 20th and 21st century Christianity. There are so many different views on this we don't have the time tonight to get into all of them, but what we do know is this, that the Bible speaks emphatically both in 1 Corinthians 15 and in 1 Thessalonians 4 that there is coming a time where those who are dead in Christ and those who are alive in Christ will be raised together to live with the Lord forever and so they will always be with him.

You know, I don't think there's much discussion on the, shall we say, the what of the rapture as much as there is about the when of the rapture, and so tonight because this is one of those meaty Bible studies, I want to spend just a few moments digging into the distinction of this famous rapture event because I believe there is, shall I say, unwarranted animosity among the family of faith regarding this rapture event. To keep it somewhat simple tonight, there are those who believe that this famous event will take place before that time period that Jesus Christ called the Great Tribulation. There are people that believe it will take place at the end of that famous event that Jesus Christ called the Great Tribulation. And there's a lot of differences and opinions in between. Can we all agree that's two very drastically different opinions? If one is "raptured" before it gets really bad, that's a whole lot different than if they're "raptured" after enduring all that is incredibly bad. In fact, Jesus in Mark 13 said it will be the worst experience of humanity since the creation of humanity.

So one of the big issues really isn't if it's going to happen, it's when it's going to occur, and so I want to take you to three other passages tonight in the Scriptures and look at these rapturesque type events. I want to begin in Matthew 27. For those of you who have ever been a part of the Bible studies I've had the privilege of leading throughout the years, Matthew 27 is one of my favorite passages, not simply the fact that it details the death of Jesus Christ but it also alludes to the resurrection. Now in chapter 28 of Matthew, we get the details of what we call resurrection day or Easter Sunday, so to speak, but in verse 51 of Matthew 27, I want you to hear what the Bible says,

51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; 52 And the graves were opened [listen to this]; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Now the Bible states that when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, he was not the only one whose tomb was empty on that famous resurrection day. It says many of the saints of old, they rose with him as well and it says they walked around the holy city. Now I think there is a rapturesque event here and here's what I'm gonna allude to, not the fact that they were dead and now that they're alive, that's not the definition of rapture, okay? Resurrection means to come back to life to never die again, but to be raptured means to be supernaturally taken from one place to another in an instant.

Now I want you to hold the thought. We've got a bunch of Old Testament dead guys who are now walking around Jerusalem after Jesus Christ rose from the dead, alright? Now fast forward to the book of Acts 1. Acts 1 is this famous ascension of Jesus Christ that can be defined as a "rapture." Why? Because he supernaturally goes from dwelling on the earth to being in the throne room in an instant supernaturally by the hand of God. The book of Acts 1 beginning in verse 9, it says,

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Now let me unpack that real quickly. We know that he went up in the clouds and Revelation 19 says the clouds opened up and he descends at his famous Second Coming. What we also know about Revelation 19 is when Jesus Christ returns, he does not return alone. The Bible says there is an entire army of believers who are following him on that famous white horse experience. What did these two men say, these obvious angelic creatures? The way that he went up is the way that he is also going to descend.

Now I realize this passage speaks particularly of Jesus Christ and it does not allude to these "many saints" that are walking in the holy city, but the reason that I classify this under the rapture term and not the resurrection term is these saints of old because of Jesus' resurrection, they have been resurrected as well. What is the definition of resurrection? To never die again. If these men just died out after a period of 10, 20, 30, 40 years, I think number 1, we would hear of it, but number 2, they could not be raised from the dead with Jesus' resurrection, they would have simply been resuscitated and it says here they did so after his resurrection and they walked in the holy city.

Now I will allude to the fact that the Bible is not completely explicit on this but just look at the evidence. Jesus is gonna come back the same way that he departed. When he comes

back, he comes back out of the clouds and with a great army behind him. To me it only makes sense that these saints of old who were resurrected with him, raised from the dead to never die again also raised with him at this famous event. And so what we see is for this rapture event where those who are dead in Christ and alive in Christ are caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, has precedence not just because what Jesus said in John 11:25 and 26, but what is potentially pictured here in Acts 1 in light of Matthew 27.

Now that is an event that takes place in the early days of what we know as the church of Jesus Christ that oftentimes I hear people tell me they never saw that in Matthew 27 before. Now I want to take you to one of the most famous passages. Go to 1 Thessalonians 4 and one of the reasons I like to go to 1 Thessalonians 4 is because the book of 1 Thessalonians is chronologically the first book of the Bible that the Lord gave us through the Apostle Paul. This is early in his ministry days. This comes before the letters to Galatia, Ephesus, the church at Corinth etc., and they were dealing with the same issue that you and I are dealing with today, how can we claim that verse 25 and 26 of John 11 are true? How can we say there's everlasting eternal life with Jesus Christ and yet we still experience death? Jesus told us that if a man liveth and believeth he would never die, but he also told us that if a man believeth and died, he would live again.

I'm gonna pick up the account in verse 13 of 1 Thessalonians 4.

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep,

Pause. Remember Jesus made it very clear in John 11 that that does not mean to be snoozing, so to speak, that means to be dead.

that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Now there in verse 17 when it says that we are caught up, that's where we get that rapture word. In fact, you could go back if you wanted to, you could read this passage, "then we which are alive and remain shall be raptured together with them in the clouds." What this passage is alluding to and, by the way, there's a parallel passage in 1 Corinthians 15:51-55, is that there is a day coming where those who are alive in Christ and those who are dead in Christ shall be raised together with Christ. Now this is a different event than Matthew 27 because in that case it was only those that had already deceased that raised with him and I think there's evidence they then were "raptured" with him as well. But

what I want you to notice is when we get into this discussion of when this rapture event will happen, that there is nowhere in the book of 1 Thessalonians that alludes to at all that famous tribulation event. There is no real Second Coming language as far as running for the hills or avoiding the famous mark of the beast, or the antichrist rising with manipulation in his words and in his deeds. The idea that we get is they're just going about their everyday business and all of a sudden the trump sounds and the dead in Christ, the alive in Christ are caught up together to be with the Lord.

Now I've alluded to Matthew 27 in that event in Jesus' ministry days, here in 1 Thessalonians 4, this is a definitive rapturesque event. Dead in Christ, alive in Christ, brought together to meet the Lord in the air. But there's another famous passage in Matthew 24. So I mentioned tonight was gonna be kind of a meaty night, not a milk night, if we go back to Matthew 24, we're on the Mount of Olives and Jesus is teaching them about the Second Coming events, and by the way, we're not gonna do an exhaustive study of Matthew 24 but there's really two questions that the apostles ask him: when is it gonna happen, and what will the sign be?

Now just to kind of give you some future Bible study for your own sake, as you look at what Jesus taught in Matthew 24, there's really two teaching lessons separated by the famous parable of the fig tree in the middle. We're gonna go to the second one. Now we're gonna begin in verse 36 of Matthew 24,

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. 37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Now that sounds pretty rapturous, does it not, that the Lord descends and there's two in the bed, two in the field, two at the mill, one is taken and one is not, one is supernaturally instantaneously transported up or to "another location." Here's the problem, in Matthew 24 there is nothing but Second Coming language. This is a famous chapter with the abomination of desolation, wars and rumors of wars, it talks about children rising up against their parents, I mean, there is all kinds of what we might call global chaos happening, and one of the big issues that people have with this famous rapturesque event is this: how do you reconcile these passages?

Well, allow me to hopefully do so in brief tonight to get on to the term of to be raised from the dead or resurrected. You know, the Bible speaks in agricultural terms all the time, particularly when it comes to our relationship with the Lord. There are the firstfruits, there is the harvest, and then there are the gleanings. By the way, if you want a

great biblical example of this, go back and read the four chapter book of Ruth in the Old Testament where Boaz has this field and it talks about the firstfruits, the harvest and the women coming and the poor coming who are poor to take the gleanings from the edge. I think when it comes to this famous rapture event, supernaturally taken up to be with the Lord, I think you see the same process. Matthew 27 in light of Acts 1, I think you see the firstfruits. In 1 Thessalonians 4, here now looking at least from our perspective 2,000 years of who knows how many billions of people have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for their personal salvation. There are a whole lot of believers in Jesus who have died since his resurrection and there's a whole lot of believers that are still alive today, and as we'll discuss in a moment when and if that event occurs in the near future, there would be a whole lot of dead and a whole lot of alive coming together to be with the Lord just like the harvest is the greatest yield for a farmer.

Now what are the gleanings? It's those part on the edges that whatever device you're using or machinery you're using were not able to acquire. You know, we talk about this famous Great Tribulation event all the time, Jesus spoke of it in Matthew 24, did you know that even in that seven years that is a horrific experience as foretold not only by Daniel and Jeremiah and Isaiah and the other prophets but explored more in the book of Revelation, there are even those who refuse the famous mark of the beast, there are those who will believe on the Lord for their own salvation, in fact, we discover that there is a rapturesque event in the book of Revelation. In fact, it's in Revelation 11. It involves the famous two witnesses. Remember these two guys who have this incredible gift that whenever their enemies come against them they breathe fire on them and they die and they stand outside the Temple Mount and they testify against the antichrist and for Jesus Christ? Well, the day comes there in Revelation 11 where the antichrist or the beast has had enough of these guys. He actually removes their head from their bodies, they lie in the street for three days, then supernaturally their heads roll onto their bodies and they ascend up into heaven. That, my friends, is a rapturesque event. Why? Because they are supernaturally transported from this place that is very temporal and earthy, to the heavenly realm and much like Acts 1 and Matthew 27, there is a belief that those what we often call tribulation saints, those ones who during those horrific tribulation time period come to reject the antichrist and believe in Jesus Christ much like in Acts 1 potentially are caught up with them. They would be the gleanings.

Why is that important for a study of the rapture? Because there has been great dissension on the when and I've known individuals to lose their friendships because one believes it's before the tribulation, one believes it's in the middle or toward the end thereof and they can't reconcile. Well, I don't think it's either/or, I think it's actually both/and. And so we see Lazarus as an incredible example of resuscitation but when Jesus says in 25 and 26 of John 11 that if a man believeth and die yet he shall live, and if he lives he shall never die, is that not, my friends, a perfect description of that rapture event that we read in 1 Thessalonians 4 where those who are dead in Christ, those who are alive in Christ shall be caught up together to be with the Lord?

Now that being said, Martha made it very clear back in John 11 that at the last day he would experience the resurrection. The concept or the idea of what we call today the

rapture would not even have crossed her mind. That's why it's interesting in 1 Corinthians 15 when describing the rapture, the Apostle Paul called it a mystery, something that had been taught but had not been caught. Jesus was teaching the theology of this rapture event to her but it did not register until after the tomb was empty to the Holy Spirit indwelt her until it had been revealed unto them. But one thing she did believe was in the resurrection and I want you to look back in verse 24 of John 11. What did she say? "I know that my brother Lazarus will be raised at the last day." And it was the common theology and belief that everybody died, of course, we understand that except for a few cases in the Old Testament such as Enoch and Elijah and others, but that being spoken of, she understood that there would come a day where he would be raised from the dead, the resurrection.

Now I want to draw a distinction between the resurrection and resuscitation, but more importantly rapture, and to do so I want you to go to the book of Revelation 20 because what we discover is that Martha was not erroneous in her thinking or beliefs, she just didn't have all the details that Jesus gives her in verses 25 and 26. Now when we get to Revelation 20, this is one of the most strategic, most important passages in all of the Bible. Have you ever heard somebody when it comes to the Second Coming and the book of Revelation say, "Well, I'm a premillennialist or I'm an amillennialist or I'm a postmillennialist," all these different views regarding this term millennium or the thousand year reign of Christ? Guess what? Chapter 20 of the book of Revelation is the definitive passage where it speaks about the thousand year reign of Christ, but I don't want to focus so much tonight on the whole millennial concepts as the resurrection concepts that are alluded to.

So beginning in verse 1 of Revelation 20,

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

Now I want you to pay attention to verse 4 and 5,

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Now there's not a whole lot that I can put in concrete but I'm fixing to in verse 4. These people that are being specifically mentioned here in verse 4 are those tribulation saints

that I just spoke of. Why? They were beheaded, they didn't worship the beast, they didn't take the famous mark of the beast. Almost every single description of these "believers" is tribulational, it's end time, it's those famous seven years, Jacob's trouble, Daniel's 70th week, whatever term you want to give it. Notice what it says, that they were raised and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. This is the first resurrection according to verse 5,

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

So let me kind of peel the layers there of chapter 20. There's coming a day where Jesus Christ is going to physically return to earth, we know it as the famous battle of Armageddon. Soon thereafter, chapter 20 as we just read, takes place. Jesus is gonna sit on his throne for a thousand years, then you get to the latter parts of the Scriptures. Now when he reigns for a thousand years according to what we've just read, all of those who believed on him during that tribulation period who lost their lives, they were beheaded, they refused to take the mark of the beast, they are raised from the dead, it calls this the first resurrection. Why is that critical? Because based on what we just discussed on these rapture events, every person whether it's an Old Testament saint, a church age saint, or a tribulation age saint, every single person who's been a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ has been raised to never die again.

So by the time we get to Revelation 20:4-5, all believers whether the Old Testament saints, you and I today, or even those who in the future will believe during this horrific time period known as the Great Tribulation, have been raised, resurrected to never die again, but I want you to notice that it says that the rest of the dead, the rest of the dead were not raised until afterwards. You say, "Well, who are these?" Well, when you get to verse 11 and 12, specifically verse 12 it says,

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

You know, the Bible speaks in Revelation 20 of two resurrections. The first one is completed at Jesus' Second Coming, it involves every person who has been a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The second resurrection is a raising of the dead who did not believe but are judged and cast into the lake of fire. Now remember, resurrection does not necessitate heaven. Resurrection means to be raised from the dead to never die again. What that means by the time you get to the end of Revelation 20 is those of us who experience the first resurrection in Christ have everlasting eternal life that John 3:16 promised, and those who are raised to this judgment experience everlasting damnation as is spoken of. So in other words, for all of eternity every one of us is raised to exist forever but we find ourselves in two very different places, either with the Lord in the place the Bible calls heaven, or with the enemy in a place the Bible calls technically at this place the lake of fire.

So when you begin to draw the distinctions of resuscitation, rapture and resurrection, I believe it helps us to understand not just those who have lived before us, those who are living now, but those who will come one day after us. So I guess in conclusion I want to talk about the term dispensation. Now that's one of those words that oftentimes can cause as much confusion and debate as even the term rapture, but the book of Ephesians talks about in this present dispensation, in the dispensation of the ages. Now what that word simply means is this: how one orders their house. That's what the word means. Let me give you a very practical example and then I'm gonna go into these three words, I'm gonna wrap up tonight looking at it from a dispensational perspective, how God is ordering his house and his family at this time in life.

Now if you were to apply the term dispensation to my home, many of you are aware that I have three young men, three teenagers in my home, but obviously they have not always been the ages that they are, and there was a time in days past where they had a very strict bedtime and it was very early. Momma was tired, I was tired, they had worn us out, and by a very early time period they were in their beds and they were out. Now that they're all teenagers, phew, it's wearing us out. In fact, one of the things I've shared with Tracy is the fact that the school is now in a virtual world, I mean, it's killing us. Why? Because the bedtimes are not what they would be if they had to get up at the hours they had to get up for the sports practice and for the school, now that everything's in a virtual world, let's just admit it's a little bit loosey-goosey, and so we are not restricting them now to even the "bedtime" we had for them a month ago as teenagers, much less what they were when they were little boys. Can you imagine, just fast forward 10 years from now. Can you imagine that, let's just pretend for the sake of illustration that they're married and they have the families of their own, that they come back to visit us, can you imagine, it would be ludicrous to say, "Alright, boys, it's about 10-10:30 it's time to go to bed. You've got to get ready for school tomorrow." They wouldn't have school at that point. Imagine us saying, "Okay, it's 8 o'clock, it's time to go to bed. You've got to get your rest." We would never do that.

Let me take it a step further. In our homes, we have multiple rules but one of the rules is this, not that there's a great occasion for it, but we do not allow anybody of the opposite sex in their room for any reason whatsoever. Just not gonna happen. Alright, that's our rule today. Why? Because they're 18, 15 and 14. Can you imagine when they're married with children we'd say, "Well, y'all gotta be in separate rooms. We do not allow people of the opposite sex in your room." I think you get the point, right? Based on the age that they are and the life stage that they are determines how we "rule" our home.

So when we use the term dispensational, don't let that word scare you. What it's basically saying is that God has ordered his house, God has ordered humanity over time and history in different ways, in different manners, but it never changes the relationship. When my children were 4 years old, when they're 14 years old and when they're 34 and married, I am no more or no less their dad than in any of those moments, but the rules of how we're gonna order the house are going to be different. So when I say tonight let's

look at these terms dispensationally, let me wrap this up tonight by walking through all three.

Resuscitation. That is something that can happen at any moment in anybody's life in a dreadful health situation. Are we promised resuscitation? No. The Bible says that at some point in our life we're all going to die and face the judgment, but I've known people very close to me, you know people, maybe even yourself, you can testify, "I've been resuscitated. There was a time that the surgeons, the doctors, the medical personnel, they told me that I was gone and yet here I am." You and I have access to resuscitation each and every day of our life. We are not promised it but we have access to it and if we find ourselves in a medical scenario where we are "brought back to life," I can promise you that you will at some point die permanently. Resuscitation is available to us at any time, any place in a medical condition assuming that those that are there and the situation is allowed of God. So resuscitation immediately anytime, we see it each and every day.

How about this term rapture? I think somehow, some way I've given some evidence that we're not gonna have to do, go through the tribulation before we experience it based on 1 Thessalonians 4. Allow me to give you one of my favorite statements in all of the world. Some of you have heard this so many times you can recite it, so feel free to do so with me. There is nothing that has to happen before Jesus comes back for us, there are a whole lot of things, meaning signs and wonders, that have to happen before Jesus comes back with us. Some of the things that have to happen before Jesus Christ comes back with us may, in fact, happen before Jesus Christ comes back for us. In other words, what we know as this famous rapture event where those who are dead in Christ, those who are alive in Christ meet up in the air together with Christ, could happen at any moment instantaneously. There is nothing that has to happen, there's no sign, there's no wonder, there's no prophecy fulfilled. In fact, 1 Corinthians 15 says it could happen in the blinking of an eye, which last I heard is about one one-millionth or one nanosecond of time. Why is that important? Because the catching up of the body of Christ according to Scripture can happen at any moment. In fact, you and I are not gonna have the privilege to "hear the trump" and have 5-10 seconds to respond. It says in the blinking of an eye.

Now the resurrection. When that event occurs, that first resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20, that means that you and I have been raised to never die again. So what does that mean for you and I? If you have come to a place and an understanding in your life where you have admitted that you have a sin problem and that Jesus Christ is the only solution to your sin problem and you have called on him to save you, you're a part of the body of Christ, you're a part of the family of God, you're a part of what we call the church of Jesus Christ. You are rapture eligible, alright? Which means that if that event were to happen right now at this very instant, you and I, by the way, you may have experienced resuscitation, I personally have not, you and I may not experience death, Jesus spoke of this in John 11:26, but when we are raptured, we are also resurrected because we will never experience death. However for those, and I'll just use a simple example, my grandfather who's been deceased for many decades, a believer in Jesus Christ, he will experience that rapture event with me whenever it occurs, assuming it happens

instantaneously today. His resurrection will take place at that event as well, even though he is dead, he is raised to never die again, I would be raised to never experience death.

So through the medical world resuscitation happens each and every day. You and I are waiting for that moment. In fact, the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3 called it winning a prize, those of us who are alive who are caught up in the air to be with the Lord. But whether you are deceased at some point in the future or alive, whenever that famous trump sounds and the dead in Christ and the alive in Christ are caught up together to be with the Lord, you will experience resurrection to never die again.

Now I understand that this was fire hydrant of biblical information tonight but I hope you would agree with me that it's fabulously, shall we say, exciting to hear about because this means that this mortal body as 1 Corinthians 15 says will become immortal, this life that all we experience of death will one day never experience death. But the days are coming where you and I can explore these topics even more indepth and maybe this morning you weren't with us and heard, but in two Wednesday nights, on April 29, I'm gonna be joined with a dear friend of mine for over 20 years, Dr. David Goza, he's the pastor of Jefferson Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, LA. We know each other back from our Texas, Southwestern Baptist Theological days. Throughout the years we have had prophecy conferences together. He is an expert on the book of Daniel, I claim to know a little something about the book of Revelation, and with all that is happening in the world and with the coronavirus and with the Bible speaking of pandemics in the last time, we thought it would be somewhat beneficial for hopefully for you to get biblical answers to what the Bible addresses of end time events. So on April 29 from 6-8 PM central time, he's gonna be in Louisiana, I'm gonna be here in Opelika, Alabama and we're gonna come together on a joint live prophecy conference together. He's gonna speak primarily about Daniel, I'll speak primarily about Revelation. We're gonna deal with 10 of the top Second Coming signs that you see in the Bible, whether that's the one world government, the mark of the beast, the nation of Israel, pandemics and earthquakes, wars and rumors of wars, all those topics that are on the top of our list. We're gonna deal with each of them in specific and then we're gonna give you the opportunity to ask any question you want regarding anything in the Bible involving prophecy, Second Coming, formally we might call it eschatology. Maybe tonight when we talked about the rapture and resurrection and all these topics, maybe it spurred some questions in you. I want you to go ahead and jot those questions down and write them down because on April 29th we want you to be a part of it. You can ask your questions in real time as we host our prophecy conference.

Well, tonight I realize that it may have caused you to have more questions than answers and we're here for you. If you have a question not only regarding maybe what we addressed tonight but your own relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, please make contact with us. Either mention it in the comment section below, send us an email or text, give us a phone call. We've got people on hand who would love to have this conversation with you because at the end of the day no matter all the details that we spoke of tonight, resuscitation, rapture and resurrection, at the end of the day all that matters is that we have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ which means we've come to an understanding that we are the problem, we have a sin issue that only he can fix. Maybe

you're that person tonight who needs to have a conversation about that, maybe in the days ahead you'll look back and think, "I need to talk with somebody about that." Please reach out to us. We would love the privilege of having a conversation with you.

Well, tonight I know it was a meaty discussion, there wasn't a whole lot of milk here tonight. I hope that you found it edifying. I hope you found it beneficial and until we meet again on the other side of the camera, keep studying the word of God, keep reading the word of God. Our Bible plan has us walking through the Gospel of John. Next Sunday when we meet again, we will wrap up this week's reading. Until then, God bless and thank you so much for being a part of this.