

# The Future in Review

Thy Kingdom Come – Part IX

Selected Scripture in Revelation

## Introduction – Questions about Future Events

The Sunday morning 11 o'clock ministry offered for third through fifth graders in our church is called Colonial Corners. It doubles as the name for an amazingly creative town where actors and actresses – volunteers – act out key truths from God's word. If you have the idea that this is fluff and meringue, understand that they recently finished a series of vignettes on the attributes of God.

Once a year Scott Wylie, our Children's Pastor who serves as the Mayor of this creative little town, has an annual "Ask the Mayor" week. He sent me a list of the questions that were asked this past year.

- Was it possible for Adam and Eve to have not sinned in the garden of Eden?
- What does sin have to do with natural disasters, pain, and sickness?
- Can the Holy Spirit leave you?
- What happened to people who died before Christ came to earth?
- Why did God make heaven?
- Can you see earth from heaven?
- Will we eat in heaven?
- Can you see your family from heaven?
- Will there be computers and TV in heaven?
- Will we have churches in heaven?
- Are there mochas in heaven?
- Will there be horses in heaven? (Yes, but there won't be any . . .? Cats. You are learning the truth so well!)
- When people die, is that what they look like in heaven? (Let's hope not!)
- Will we live in the new heaven or new earth?
- Does a church have to have a preacher? (I want to know who asked that!)
- Why is the Bible called the Bible?
- How do we know the Bible is true?

- Will the tribulation happen before the rapture?
- When is the rapture?

These are just a few of the questions asked by third through fifth graders. Aren't you glad Pastor Scott is answering all of them for us?

How many of you heard these questions and thought, "I want to know the answers."?

Get out a pencil and let me give you Scott's cell phone number.

Actually, these questions were intriguing to me. Many of them, in fact, had to do with future events. Let me briefly address some of them.

### • **Why did God make heaven?**

God made heaven in order to display His glory and grace toward His beloved throughout eternity.

### • **Can you see earth from heaven?**

I believe so. In fact, we are given the implication that deceased individuals, like the martyred Tribulation saints, not only know what is happening on earth, but remember what happened to them while they were on the earth. They pray, "Lord, when will You bring vindication on our murderers?"

Going to heaven, then, does not necessarily erase our memories, but it does give our memories a glorified perspective. This is much like a mature believer – like Joseph, who told his conniving brothers, "...it was not you who sent me here, but God..." (Genesis 45:8). Later he said to them, "...you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good..." (Genesis 50:2).

Had Joseph forgotten what had happened? No. However, his perspective ruled over his memory and he had nothing but joy in God's providence.

### • **Will we eat in heaven?**

Absolutely. We will learn that fruit trees bear fruit year round for our enjoyment. We just will not gain weight!

### • **Will there be computers in heaven?**

I would not doubt it at all. In the new heaven and new earth we will not be omnipresent, so the systems

of communication will probably be more advanced that we can imagine. The ability to talk to and perhaps even see someone on the other side of the globe through vastly superior communication systems is not beyond the scope of scripture.

- **Will we have churches in heaven?**

The church will *be* in heaven – we *are* the church.

We are not told, but I can easily imagine assemblies meeting at different times all around the new earth – perhaps even on the Lord’s Day – to give Him praise. We might be connected in some way with everyone else through technology or travel arrangements to give God our praise.

We are not told how, but we do know that glorifying God through song and verbal praise will be a major component of heaven. It is certainly implied that we will not only be doing this individually, but corporately.

- **Are there mochas in heaven?**

One child evidently has a parent who runs him or her by Starbucks. Again, I have little doubt that what we will be able to eat and drink will utterly amaze us. Mochas? I do not know.

Someone would have to grow the beans and cultivate them; someone would have to manufacture the machinery – unless we are able to just snap our fingers, so to speak. The resurrected Lord did this at the seaside as He called His disciples to eat – He had a charcoal fire going, fish frying, and fresh bread that they ate (John 21).

Peter illustrated the changes that will one day be commonplace when he got out of the boat and walked on top of the water to Christ. Perhaps we will have this ability as well throughout the millennial kingdom and the coming new heaven and new earth as glorified immortals.

A mocha coffee does not sound that difficult, does it?

- **Will there be horses in heaven?**

Absolutely. We come riding back to earth on white stallions (Revelation 19:14).

- **When people die, is that what they look like in heaven?**

I certainly hope not. I am counting on some major improvements!

Our glorified bodies will be perfected, whole, healthy, and never-aging; capable of handling all the activity of heaven. Our joints will work without pain; our bodies will be without disabilities or hindrances – more than likely reverting back to the created state and age of Adam and Eve, which

perhaps was similar to the glorified age of our Lord in His early thirties, although we are not told.

One author supposedly died, went to heaven, and then came back to life and wrote about it. I could not help but laugh at the naivety of this author’s vision, and was rather disappointed in the approval of so many people who read his words. I skimmed through it and found, among other things, that everyone he met looked exactly as he remembered them. His grandfather still looked like his grandfather, and I thought, “Poor Grandpa – he didn’t get a new body.”

- **Will we live in the new heaven or new earth?**

Both. In fact, as we will learn together, the Father’s house, which we read about when we study heaven, will actually be on a newly constructed planet earth. There will be a new universe *and* a new earth to explore and discover, and maybe even cultivate forever.

- **Why is the Bible called the Bible?**

The word “Bible” is simply the Greek word “Biblion,” which is transliterated “Bible”. The word “Hagios” was attached early on, which means “holy or sacred”. As a result, we call this book the “Holy Bible”.

- **How do we know the Bible is true?**

We know the Bible is true because the Author of it, moving through the prophets and apostles, is God (II Timothy 3:16-17). The scriptures are God-breathed through His servants, and God always tells the truth.

- **Will the Tribulation happen before the rapture?**

You know the answer to that – in fact, we have noted the absence of the church during the Tribulation, as well as the purposes of the Tribulation, which are not to purify the church. The church has already been purified without ever having to experience the wrath of God.

We do not believe in some protestantized version of the Catholic doctrine of purgatory – yet I have talked to evangelicals who unknowingly support it. They defend the basic idea that the believer really ought to be purified through suffering before being allowed to enter heaven.

The Bible clearly states we are purified – justified – now, completely, through the blood of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1) and that we have been promised to be spared the coming wrath of God (Revelation 3:10). This wrath will literally pummel the earth and mankind in judgment as God prepares the nation Israel, primarily, for the coming King and His kingdom.

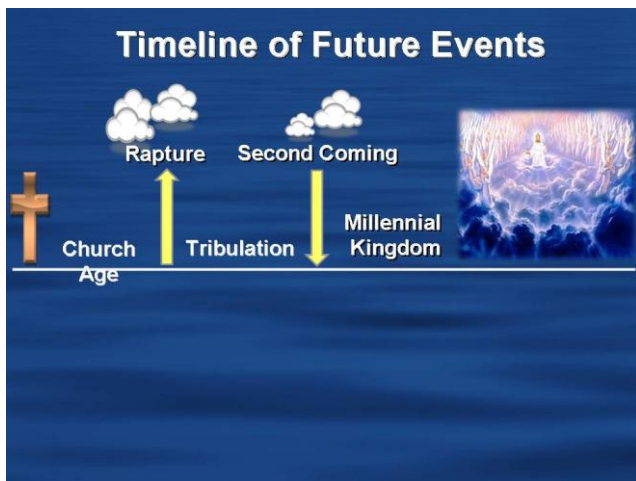
- **When is the rapture?**

The answer is – sooner than it has ever been.

These are amazing questions from third through fifth graders. How thrilled we can be that even in our elementary grades, answers to these questions are being provided from the truths of scripture.

## Review of Future Events

As we have been studying our way through the millennial kingdom, I have also gotten quite a bit of feedback and questions related to our study. As a result, I thought we would quickly review our timeline of future events and specifically answer some questions that have surfaced.



So far we have covered the rapture of the church as the church age ends and the Tribulation period begins.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in I Thessalonians 4:13,

***But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.***

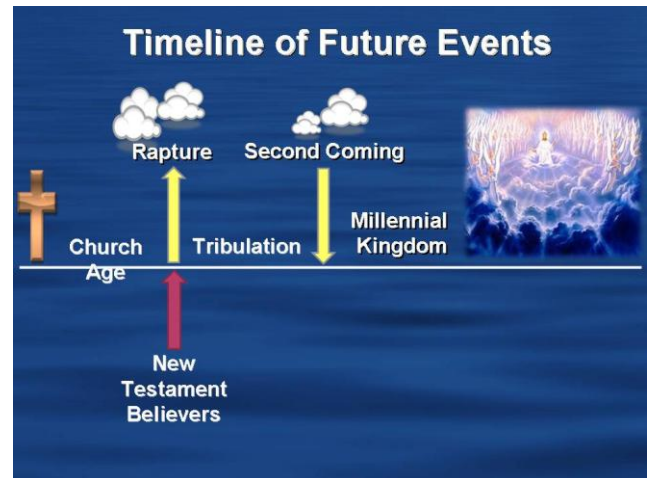
The word “sleep” is a metaphor for death – the body looks like it is sleeping.

However, Paul made it clear that at the time of death the body might lie motionless and lifeless, but the soul of the person is as alive as ever.

***. . . to be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord. (II Corinthians 5:8)***

The believer’s soul, or spirit – the immaterial part of us that lives inside our shells of a body – immediately goes to be with Christ.

The unbeliever’s soul immediately goes to Hades – a place of torment – where he awaits the final judgment (Luke 16:23).



The believer’s soul is immediately transported at death into the presence of Christ.

Paul says in I Thessalonians 4:15,

***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 not precede those who have fallen asleep.***

In other words, when the rapture of the believers takes place, we are not going up before those who have already died in Christ.

Paul explains in verse 16,

***For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.***

Christ is going to give a command. It is probably the same command He gave when He interrupted every funeral He ever attended by saying, “Rise” – and the dead body came back to life.

So Christ will command the dead bodies of believers to come out of their graves, and they will rise first to meet Him in the air. This means their bodies will be glorified on the way up – reconstituted, perfected, and re-inhabited by their souls, which have been with Christ all along. This will take place in an instant.

Then, Paul writes in verses 17-18,

***Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.***

***Therefore comfort one another with these words.***

Are you comforted by these words, or convicted? Do you know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior right

now? Are you concerned about this news, or confident?

One of our secretaries shared her testimony at our last Christmas program and I was struck by her decision – and her husband’s – to have written on their tombstone this statement of faith: “And they lived happily ever after.”

***Therefore comfort one another with these words.***

Paul describes a physical resurrection of the bodies of New Testament believers as the rapture whisks the bride of Christ away to be kept from the hour of great trouble – the wrath of God, poured out on planet earth during the Tribulation.

We have studied this period of seven years, according to Daniel’s prophecy, at length.

The first three and a half years are relatively peaceful. A smaller, simpler version of the temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem, and the Jewish people who have re-gathered will attempt to reconstruct their Old Testament sacrificial system.

It will barely get off the ground before the antichrist gains enough power and charisma through many false signs and wonders that he makes the claim to be god incarnate. He places in the holy place of the temple an idol of himself and demands the worship of the world (Revelation 13).

The great persecution of Israel begins as well as the hunt for Jews and Gentiles who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as the only true and living God.

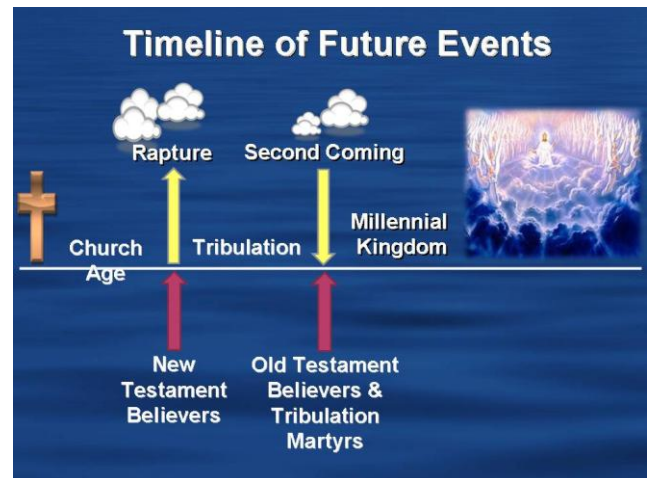
During this time, the Lord is pouring out His wrath upon the earth in one cataclysmic disaster after another. Still, most of the world will not repent, even though they recognize that these natural and cosmic upheavals are coming from the hand of God (Revelation 16 and 17).

Eventually the armies of the world coalesce and march against the returning Messiah who appears and descends with the hosts of heaven and His redeemed ones, riding upon white horses (Revelation 19:11). With one word from Christ the antichrist’s capital city of Babylon is destroyed as the city of God descends.

The armies that march against Christ are slaughtered and the antichrist and the false prophet are sent to hell – the very first inhabitants of this eternal lake of fire (Revelation 19:20-21). Satan likewise is bound for a thousand years in a deep abyss (Revelation 20).

The first time Christ appeared in the sky, in I Thessalonians 4, He was coming *for* the believers.

The second time Christ appears in the sky in Revelation 19, at the end of the Tribulation, He is appearing *with* the believers. The one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth begins.



I am convinced the average Christian today thinks of his future only in terms of the rapture and/or death, and then heaven.

There is this incredible epoch of drama, joy, glory, development, economy, business, art, industry, nature, and discovery waiting to play out on the stage of human history called the millennial kingdom.

As Christ establishes His kingdom, there is another resurrection – this is the physical, bodily resurrection of Old Testament believers, as well as the physical bodily resurrection of Tribulation martyrs. They are not left out of the kingdom. They will be given glorified, immortal bodies and will, with us, reign with Christ (Revelation 20:4).

We immortals will reign over the mortals – both Jews and Gentiles – who believed the gospel and survived the Tribulation. They will enter the kingdom as subjects over whom we will govern.

Now one woman said to me, “You know, this idea of “ruling” has absolutely no appeal to me or my husband. In fact, my husband would rather be fly fishing for trout than working in a government post.”

I said, “Tell him that he just might be the one in charge of the entire industry of fly fishing. He might be the person who tests out the newest equipment and determines the best seasons to fly fish at the best places. He may very well get to enjoy fly fishing expeditions with Peter and Andrew. They can share their fish stories – only they’ll be telling the truth.”

We have no idea what our rule will entail.

If the Lord returns while our nation still exists as it does, then in the kingdom, Chicago will still be Chicago; Cary will still be Cary. The mortals will

experience life much like we do now – there will still be traffic jams, school exams, shopping malls (unfortunately), clothing designs, business deals, musical concerts, and sporting events. One of you might be the future commissioner of baseball – overseeing the athletic contests of the mortals. Farmers will still plant crops, drive tractors, milk cows, and ship produce around the globe. Houses, roads, bridges, and boats will still be built.

The mortals over whom we rule and reign will be normal people just like you and me. However, they will live a very long time.

In fact, I had this question asked of me last week, “Where do mortals who enter the kingdom as believers go when they die?”

There is not one verse in the Bible that tells us they will die. Conditions will revert back to the early days of creation, and they will live as long as Adam and Methuselah who lived more than nine hundred years.

While their bodies are remarkably improved and healed at the beginning of the millennial kingdom, according to Isaiah’s prophecies, they will still have their sinful natures and have to battle against sinful temptations. Having believed in Christ during the Tribulation, they are secure in Christ, but they will have to develop the same disciplines that we have to develop in our own lives.

Conditions for these believers will be more encouraging – sin will be repressed as truth is exalted; Satan will be bound and his influence nullified; Christ will be physically visible on the throne (Revelation 20:4).

The Spirit of God will be globally, unusually active among the nations of believers according to Joel chapter 2. Visions and prophecies will supplement the ministry of the gospel in this kingdom era like never before. The work of the Spirit that was partially unveiled at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 will have center stage in the kingdom, according to in Joel 2 and Ezekiel 36.

Another aid and encouragement to worship will be the newly constructed millennial temple.

Ezekiel’s prophecies inform us that the glory of the Lord will fill the temple (Ezekiel 43:5). Everyone who comes to observe the enactment of the sacrifices will leave in awe of the glory of Christ and the grace of the gospel.

Worship will center in Jerusalem (Isaiah 1, Jeremiah 3, Micah 5, and Zechariah 8)

The Levites will minister once again in the temple (Ezekiel 44). The sabbaths and feasts of Israel will once again be observed as a testimony to what Jesus Christ fulfilled.

I have been asked the excellent question, “Doesn’t this violate the finished work of Christ?”

Hebrews 10:10 tells us that Christ offered up Himself as one sacrifice for all time. Verse 18 says,

***Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.***

This is absolutely true. Hebrews 10 is defining the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement through His full and final sacrifice.

Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is necessary for salvation, and He alone is the path to forgiveness, the resurrection unto life, the millennial kingdom, and the eternal state of heaven.

You might say, “I’ve accepted Christ as living Lord; I’ve come to this cross and confessed my sin – this is all past tense for me and for all time.”

Yes, you have come to the cross; you have believed in the atoning work of Christ, but millions of mortals have not. They will hear the gospel of Christ’s sacrifice for them too.

According to Ezekiel 43, these temple sacrifices are *not* being performed for the sake of atonement, but as illustrations of atonement.

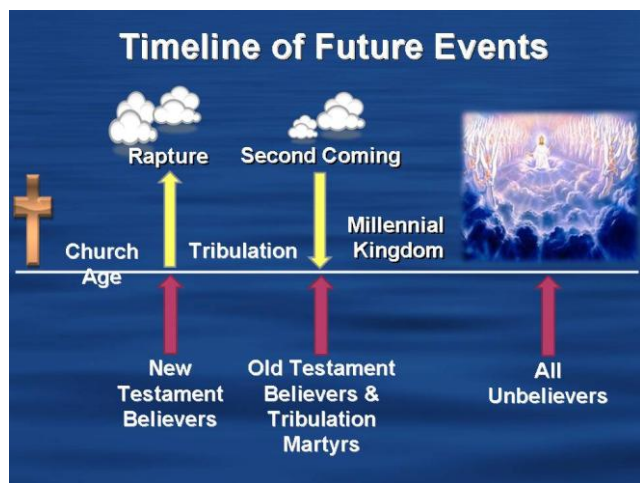
Today, in the New Testament church, we have an illustration of Christ’s atonement through the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine. We do not partake because Christ needs to be sacrificed all over again – which is why we cannot participate in Mass. Christ is not being sacrificed again – His sacrifice was once for all. However, He wanted us to participate in the illustration of His sacrifice. He said to His disciples in Luke 22, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” We call this the ordinance of communion.

We get into the big tank filled with water for baptism – in hopefully heated water, unless the heater is not working, and in that case, baptism occurs very quickly. It does not violate Christ’s death, burial and resurrection, but is an illustration of His death, burial as we go under the water, and resurrection as we are brought up for air. We have never lost anyone yet in this illustration.

Re-enacting the sacrifices of the unblemished animals in the millennial temple as illustrations of what Jesus Christ, the unblemished Lamb of God did on the cross, will be a powerful tool of evangelism

for the lost and a powerful incentive for worship and gratitude for the believers.

There is one more physical resurrection yet to happen on the timeline of human history. We are almost there in our study as Revelation chapter 20 comes to a close.



This will be the physical resurrection of the bodies of all the unbelievers who have died in all of human history. Their bodies will be immortalized and also reunited with their souls, which have been languishing in Hades while awaiting this terrifying moment of judgment.

No other god will be able to save those who stand before what John calls in Revelation 20, "a great white throne". It will be the finale of all unbelief.

The world will discover as they are swept into this awful scene that no matter how religious they were, if they were not redeemed by Christ, their religion will not be able to help them. They will discover that all roads do not lead to heaven spiritually any more than all interstates lead to New England physically.

They can get on I-95 South and say over and over again, "I believe this interstate is going to take me to Massachusetts. I believe I-95 South is going to take me to Massachusetts . . ."

They can say this all they want and even get a carload of friends and hitchhikers to say it with them. However, I-95 South will not take them north to Massachusetts, but south to Miami.

Do you know what the difference is between Massachusetts and Miami? About 100 degrees!

If they keep going south on I-95, they will eventually run off the southern tip of Florida and drown in the Atlantic Ocean.

## Questions for You

Where are you in this timeline of human history?

Physically, you are in the church age. The rapture may be just around the corner.

However, the church age could go on, if God designs it, for another thousand years – but you will not.

So the real question is, "Where are you *spiritually*?"

Where you are in relation to the cross will make all the difference in the world as to where you are in relation to the rapture, the Tribulation, the second coming, the millennial kingdom, and the final judgment.

If you are not in the body of Christ through faith in Him alone, then you will not go up with Christ at the rapture, will not come with Him at His second coming, will not be His co-regent in the millennial kingdom, and will not enter the new heaven and new earth.

The questions you need to answer today are not some of the intriguing questions we have answered, like:

- Do we get to eat in heaven?
- Can people see their families from heaven?
- Are there horses or computers in heaven?
- Why did Adam sin?
- What does sin have to do with natural disasters?

These are good questions, but there are more fundamentally important questions for you to consider. The only questions you must have an answer for today are:

- Am I a member of the family of God?
- Have I been born again?
- Is my faith genuinely rooted in the atonement of Christ alone?
- Do I belong to Jesus Christ?