INTRO:

• The Bible teaches us that our blessed hope is what is known and understood as the rapture of the born-again believer and the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

• There has been a lot of buzz in the news today about the Lord’s Return — unfortunately, it has been about misinformation and false teaching by Harold Camping, and not what the Bible teaches.

  o In Camping's latest publications, he states that May 21, 2011 (YESTERDAY) will be "the first day of the Day of Judgment and October 21, 2011 will be the end of the world.

  o Central to Camping's teaching is the belief that the Bible alone and in its entirety is the Word of God, and absolutely trustworthy. However, he emphasizes, this does not mean that each sentence in the Bible is to be understood only literally.

• DEC: The issue is not whether or not the Lord will return - HE WILL! - The issue is the setting of dates.

• Many well-meaning Christians fall prey to these false teachers because they are not aware what the Bible teaches.

• PROP: Today, we will look the source of all truth - the Bible - to answer the question, "Why We Are Still Here."

• TRANS: Let’s look at four aspects from the Bible surrounding the Return of the Lord.

I. THE TRUTH OF THE LORD’S RETURN – 2 Thess 4:15-18

a. Will happen in 2 parts

  i. Rapture - Christ in the air for believers.

  1. This is what will usher in the 7 years of Tribulation prophesied in Daniel and Revelation, amongst other places in the Bible.

  ii. Second Coming - Christ will bodily return to the Earth to set up the Millennial Kingdom at the end of the 7 year Tribulation.

b. Only the saved will take part in the rapture

  i. This is what we will focus on today because it is what will affect us immediately.

b. Only the saved will take part in the rapture

  i. Pre-millennial, Pre-tribulation return of the Lord.

  ii. If the believers in Thessalonica thought...
that the rapture happened after the 7 years of Tribulation, then they would not have worried about the dead.

iii. The dead in Christ would have had the advantage because they did not have to go through the Tribulation.

iv. They were worried that the dead in Christ were going to miss out on the Rapture.

v. This is another example of the Rapture happening before the Tribulation.

d. Truth – the Lord will rapture all believers before the Tribulation, then return after the 7 years of Tribulation to rule and reign on earth.

II. THE TIMING OF THE LORD’S RETURN

a. Unknown to Humans – Mark 13:32

i. One of the keys to properly understanding the Word of God is to understand the context surrounding the Scripture you are studying.

ii. This is important here, because many people read this verse and think that if Jesus did not know when He was returning, then He must not really be God.

iii. The best way to understand the context of our Lord’s statement here is to understand Philippians 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

iv. While we will never completely understand the marriage between the deity and the humanity of Christ, we know that he voluntarily laid aside, or emptied Himself, of some elements of His power when He became flesh in Bethlehem’s manger.

v. This is what is referred to as the Kenosis of Christ.

vi. Now, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus back to heaven, He knows when He will return, as he says in Revelation 22:12-13 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. (13) I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

vii. But here is how this affects us today – if Jesus, in His humanity during His earthly ministry, did not know the exact date and time of His return – why should any other man know today?

viii. It is not for us to know the time; that is God’s department!

b. Unknown Hour – Matt 24:42

i. You would think verses this clear would clear up this whole date setting issue – but most people never read their Bible to see what it says on this subject.

ii. And a lot of times we may read it, but we cannot remember where we found it and don’t have the proper study tools to recover it.

iii. Matt 24 tells us that we can see the signs
all around us and know that the Lord’s return is at hand – but we can never know the exact date and time.

c. TRUTH...TIMING...

III. THE TALK OF THE LORD’S RETURN

a. People Set Dates Today -

i. Dealing with Harold Camping and his followers in talking about their prediction, I came across this:

1. The prediction has been publicized in almost every country, said Chris McCann, who works with eBible Fellowship, one of the groups spreading the message. McCann plans to spend Saturday with his family, reading the Bible and praying. His fellowship met for the last time on Monday. "We had a final lunch and everyone said goodbye," he said. "We don't actually know who's saved and who isn't, but we won't gather as a fellowship again."

ii. Interesting that they think they could know the exact time, but not who is saved and who is lost.

iii. The Bible tells us that there will be more and more people like this as the time gets closer - 2 Timothy 3:13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

iv. We cannot allow false prophets and teachers lead us astray from God and His Word.

b. People Scoff Today - 2 Peter 3:1-10

i. One of the worst parts about situations like this is that it makes some people less likely to hear the truth.

ii. Verse 5 shows us that people today have no one to blame but themselves for rejecting Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

iii. Unfortunately, the more people like Harold Camping make false claims, the more likely unbelievers will scoff at the truth of God’s Word and the impending, eternal judgment they must face because of their sin.

1. The internet and television is filled with people and their “Rapture/End Times” jokes.

iv. When you and I stand up and proclaim the truth that the Lord will return soon, they laugh and ridicule it.

v. But we must continue to stand and warn this generation of the judgment to come, no matter what others may say and do.

c. Proclamation of the Scriptures - John 14:1-3

i. Our faith in the Lord’s return is not in fuzzy math based on bad Bible Hermeneutics.

ii. Our faith in the Lord’s return is not in some ideology of a church or organization.

iii. Our faith in the Lord’s return is based on His actual words!

IV. THE TASK TILL THE LORD’S RETURN

a. Fulfill the Commission - Acts 1:6-8

i. The disciples now fully understood that
Jesus, and did, come the first time as the suffering, sacrificial Saviour.

ii. Now, they wanted to know when He would return to rule and reign as the rightful King.

iii. But Jesus quickly tells them that is not to be their focus – they are to focus on being a gospel witness throughout the entire world.

iv. And the focus has not changed today!

v. Our job is not to set dates, but to spread the Gospel – and we must do a better job at it.

vi. We must do all we can and seek out different avenues of being a gospel witness in our city and throughout the world through Faith Promise Missions.

vii. We must give financially to missions on a regular basis, and we share our faith with more people than we have before.

viii. "Don’t be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good!"

b. **Faithful to Church** - Heb 10:24-25

i. Today should have been one of the highest attended Sunday’s in our church’s history because all of the events, or lack thereof, of yesterday where a reminder to us that the Lord will return, His return is soon, and we need to be faithful to His church until that day.

ii. When the Lord does return, may He find us faithful!

CLOSE:

- The Lord will return soon – are you ready?