



A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE ENDTIMES

Week 12: Introduction to the Rapture

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NOTE: In this lesson we start to move beyond the foundational Nephilim agenda as they pertain to Biblical Prophecy. That mini-series has taken the past eleven lessons.

- Those things studied have put the necessary structure in place for all the other things we will be studying from this point forward.
- With respect to “what’s next”, I want to start unpacking the doctrine of The Rapture. So for this lesson and the next two, The Rapture will be our focus.
- The Rapture is a supernatural event in which the church, those who are truly saved in Jesus Christ, are suddenly and visibly removed from this Earth. Believers are taken out of here, and are no longer found present in this world.
- The Rapture could very easily be the next even in our lives from a prophetic standpoint. It makes the most sense to me to deal with this matter now in the sequence of this lesson series.

NOTE: I want to say one very important thing right up front. The Rapture is a topic that is much debated in Christian circles today. There is very little understanding of the Biblical doctrine of The Rapture in most churches, and, instead there is much pushback on the issue. This unfortunate reality is actually a confirmation of Biblical Prophecy and of the encroaching end times we live in. **(Cf. 2 Peter 3:1)**

“First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”

I. BACKGROUND TO IMMINENCY

- A. What is imminency? Imminency is the position that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, could come in the clouds at any moment to take The Church to be with Him in His Father’s House. With that understanding, there are several issues to keep in mind:
1. No prophetic event needs to occur first in order for The Rapture to happen.
 2. The Rapture is essentially a “sign less” prophetic event.
 3. Believers throughout the Church Age have dutifully awaited The Rapture. This is well documented, starting with the Early Church Fathers. This position is mentioned in a number of the writings of those who studied under the Apostles.

4. The Rapture is mentioned (via the Latin term “rapturo” (from the Vulgate around 382 AD) and the derivative Greek term “harpazo”, which literally means “snatched or taken away”, at least five times.

NOTE: It is of interest that the term “born again” is mentioned just three times in the Bible. The Trinity is never mentioned by that term and yet we never diminish the importance of these doctrines. Why then does the church diminish the importance of The Rapture? Something to think about.

5. **Imminency is not a doctrine:** It is a ‘term’ which entered the evangelical lexicon around the end of the last century to contrast the prevailing ‘Post-millennialism’ view that was popular at that time.
6. What is Postmillennialism?
 - a. Post-millennialism teaches that Christ’s return will not happen at any moment, but is scheduled for a specific time. In fact it is one and the same with Christ’s Second Coming. This is the dominant view of Post-millennialism.
 - b. Specifically, Post-millennialism teaches that Christ’s return must await the full Christianization of the entire world by The Church. Those that embrace this view believe things are getting better and better as a result of the activities of the church.
 - c. Other pre-millennialism’s try not to emphasize the ‘Christianization of the World’ aspect since that’s pretty tough sell given what is going on in the world.
 - d. They simply try to argue that we are in The Tribulation now. As we will see, these are not Biblical positions.
7. By the 1930’s, basically all the New Testament passages which describe Christ’s return as ‘soon,’ or ‘at any moment,’ were lumped into a general ‘imminence’ view. This is generally an accurate view to hold.
 - a. By its very definition, the imminency of The Rapture supports a “pre-tribulation” view.
 - b. It means that you are not looking for any key events to happen first.
 - c. Therefore, imminency is often fiercely attacked by opponents of a “pre-tribulation” view. Specifically, those of a post-tribulation persuasion (mentioned earlier) or a mid-tribulation persuasion.
8. There are three important elements of imminency:
 - a. First, The Rapture could occur at any moment from the present to any point in the future.

NOTE: While other events may take place before The Rapture (ex. War of Gog and Magog; Ezekiel 38 & 39), there is no event that must precede it.

The bottom line is this:

- If prior events are required before The Rapture, then it could not be imminent.
- Nor does it make sense for us to look forward to it as the Bible makes clear. Instead, we would be looking forward to the fulfillment of other prophecies first.

- b. Second, and this plays off the first point. One must be prepared for The Rapture to occur at any time without sign or warning.
 - Multiple scripture references implore the believer to “be alert, watchful, ready...”
 - The Rapture event is signless (which means, without any preceding announcement).
- c. Third, it is impossible, and therefore irrational, to attempt to set specific dates and times for The Rapture. This is not the same matter as studying the season. (More on that later).
 - Those who set specific dates and times are self-incriminating frauds.
 - “Imminency,” by its very definition, cannot ascribe to a specific future time.
 - Rather, The Rapture combines two conditions: certainty and uncertainty.
- d. It certainly WILL occur, but the WHEN is uncertain.
 - Paul himself lived in expectation that The Rapture could come in his lifetime. (This is evident in his use of pronouns).
 - Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13....*then we who are still alive and remain....*”
 - It’s the same in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, and 2 Thessalonians 2:1*”and our being gathered to Him.”*
 - It is interesting to note that Paul changed his use of pronouns when he realized he was at the end of his life.
 - He no longer anticipated being part of The Rapture (cf. 2 Timothy 4:7, “*I have fought the good fight...I have finished the race....I have kept the faith...etc.*”). He knew his end had come without seeing The Rapture.

9. A brief review of the New Testament basis for an imminent Rapture.
 - a. First, we must consider the instructions to believers to have an “any moment” attitude:

- **Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:7** *“as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.”* The principle of imminency was as relevant to Corinthian believers THEN as to us TODAY, for the application of this is always true.
- **Cf. 1 Corinthians 16:22** Paul uses the term “Maranatha,” or “Come Lord.” Paul closes 1 Corinthians the same way he began it, by focusing on the unknown time of Jesus’ return and emphasizing the hope of that event.
- **Cf. Philippians 3:20.** *“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Two things to note here:
 - Don’t be tied too tightly to earth.
 - Be eager for Jesus’ return from heaven.
John 14:3, “I will come back.”
- **Cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:10;** *“to wait for His Son from heaven”,* we are to wait for this event, He is coming from heaven to earth to get us, but we are not told when.
- **Cf. 1 Timothy 6:14-15;** He will appear *“in His own time.”* In other words, we don’t know when it will occur, however we are to *“keep this command”* stated earlier in vs. 12 to, *“fight the good fight of faith”* until a time appointed by God when Jesus will appear. This is a call to endurance.
- **Cf. Hebrews 9:28;** *“He will appear a second time, to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.”*

NOTE: He is coming here again to bring salvation. This is a future eschatological salvation as referenced in 1 Thessalonians 5:8; *“the hope of salvation.”* This is pointing to a culmination of the soteriological salvation we have right now in Christ.

As we wait for this culminating event scripture says we should do three things: **James 5:7-9**

- Be patient,
- Wait,
- Stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. He is *“standing at the door.”*

It is passages like these that show the faithful Christian life is one that is constantly expectant. It is a behavior pattern; it’s a choice. It is an understanding that does not impose man’s conditions upon God’s terms.

How do we do this? *Cf. 1 Peter 1:13*

- Be disciplined,
- Prepare your minds,
- Be self-controlled
- Set your hope fully on Christ

- a. The second basis for an imminent rapture as seen in the New Testament are those declarations from Jesus Himself regarding His unexpected arrival:
 - **(John 14:1-3)** While Jesus teaches about His own return, He does not specify when it will take place.
 - **(Cf. Revelation 3:11, 22:7, 12, 20).** *“I am coming quickly.”* This is followed by the faithful believer’s response in verse 20, *“Let this be; come Lord Jesus.”*
- b. What are the common themes that tie all these passages together?
 - The Lord’s coming is something that could occur at any moment.
 - We are to remain faithful and watchful.
 - Jesus’ physical return is what we are to wait for, hope for and look for.
 - We are not to wait for a series of events like those that are spelled out in the tribulations, which lead up to Christ’s Second Advent. This is what the tribulations saints are encouraged to look for, there is a strong distinction between the two.

10. An example of a New Testament situation that pulls some of these perspectives together:

a. ***Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-9***

2 Thessalonians 2:1–9 (NASB95):

1. Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,
2. that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.
3. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,
4. who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.
5. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?
6. And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.
7. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.
8. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;
- 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

- b. 2 Thessalonians was written in follow up to 1 Thessalonians, both around 51 AD. (Paul had only been with this early church

a month or less. **Cf. Acts 17:2** "...three Sabbath days." 3-4 weeks.

- c. A significant part of 1 Thessalonians dealt with eschatological doctrines.
- d. These are mentioned in every chapter, proving these issues are of vital importance to Christian growth and development for all believers, including new believers.
- e. Paul felt prophetic teaching about the Rapture, the day of the Lord, the anti-christ, etc., were essential to the foundation of a new Christian, and not something to diminish.
- f. **2 Thessalonians** was written to accomplish two things:
 - Address confusion.
 - Provide correction concerning "Day of the Lord."
- g. **2 Thessalonians 2:1-3** also gives us some structure for studying the theme of the Rapture; NOTE: Paul's emphasis, "Don't let anyone deceive you..."
- h. It could be argued that there has been more "deception" about the Rapture than any element of prophecy, from:
 - Overt: setting dates, wearing pajamas, sitting on rooftops, to the Covert: misrepresenting scriptural intent, choosing to diminish the importance of the doctrine, etc.

Back to or text...what is going on in **2 Thessalonians 2:1-9**?

- **His readers had real confusion.** What about? About eschatology. About end times. Specifically, they had been told they were already in the Day of the Lord. (Similar to a mid-trib or post-trib perspective).
- **His readers had received instruction.** They already knew the Day of the Lord was a time of God's final wrath and judgment. However, they took their focus off the Word and put it on their circumstances (persecution, hostility, trials).
- **His readers were reacting to deception (vs. 2).** Misrepresentation of the truth (some translations mention "spirit" or "spiritual vision"). They were vulnerable to such wrong intent.
- **His readers were reminded of their foundation (vs. 5).** "Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things?" (i.e. 'Snap out of it. You know better.')
- This is the flow of **2 Thessalonians 2:1-9**: don't be alarmed (**vs. 2**), deceived (**vs. 3**); or forgetful (**vs. 5**).
- We would all be the wiser to exhort each other the same way.
- We should be able to see ourselves in the storyline here.

11. What did Paul's reader already know?

a. To learn that, we need to see the second perspective; What were they taught? **1Thessalonians 4:13-5:11**

- They were taught to expect a certain situation.
- They were taught to understand a specific sequence.
- They were taught to be assured of a certain destiny.
- They were taught that they were preserved against judgement.

NOTE: These are four points that are important for us to learn as well. Just as it was clarifying information for Paul's readers, so it should be clarifying information for us in our time.

II. UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLICAL TEACHING OF IMMINENCY.

A. First, being taught to expect a certain situation:

1. One thing is obvious in **2 Thessalonians**: the people did not expect to find themselves in The Day of the Lord. What sort of "day" is this?

- a. It is not a "day", but a timeframe, specifically the last "week" of **Daniel 9**. It is seven years.
- b. It is a terrible time. (**Cf. Matthew 24:21**) *"For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be equalled again."*
 - It will overwhelm human capacity. (**Revelation 6:17**) *"For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"*
 - This is why they were alarmed to think they were in the Day of the Lord. They weren't supposed to be there! What had gone wrong!
- c. To address their confusion and fear, Paul clarifies the truth by providing an authentic and inspired word in contrast to the false teaching they had received. (*The plain, factual record of scripture will always expose deceit. Put God's word first!*)
- d. Paul combats three things here:
 - First, he combats that the 'prophecy, report, or letter' was not from him. We need to be aware that there were and are many efforts to misrepresent the truth, sometimes from sources that seem to be legitimate, but in fact are not!

- Next, Paul combats the assertion that the Day of the Lord had come. His answer is, “That is impossible! You cannot be in the Day of the Lord because certain things have to happen first, and those things haven’t happened.!” Two things had not happened. (Moving backwards here):
 - Man of Lawlessness and not been revealed. First by signing the “Peace Agreement” (**Cf. Daniel 9: 27a**) “*he will confirm a covenant with many.*” Discerning believers will know at this point, and secondly and most clearly by the “*abomination of desolation*” (vs. 27) *after three and a half years.*
 - The ‘apostasy’ of ‘falling away’ comes first. “*Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first.*” (NASB) NOTE: The KJV says “falling away.”
- Third, Paul combats that they would be in the Day of the Lord when it does come. They knew enough about the Day of the Lord to know it was a time of God’s final judgement.

NOTE: In the first letter (1 Thessalonians Chapter 4), just a few weeks before, Paul had explained the Rapture (*cf. vs. 13-18*). Some of them worried they might miss the Rapture, and some were concerned that others had already died and missed the Rapture.

- So, Paul states, “No, when the Rapture comes, you’re going to go. And since the Rapture precedes the Day of the Lord, you won’t miss the Rapture, but you’ll miss the Day of the Lord.”
- So they were taught to expect a certain situation.

- B. Next, they were taught to understand a specific sequence. (**Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff**). Consider vs. 13 – “*Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant...*”
1. Ignorance in matters of eschatology, is not bliss. In fact, our hope and our joy resides in our full knowledge of the truth as God has revealed it to us.
 2. Remember **Daniel 9:23** when Daniel has his vision explained to him; “*consider the message and understand the vision.*” (It is God saying, “Focus. Get this one right.”)

3. There is a specific sequence of Rapture events. (There are seven noted in verses 16-17. They are:

1. **The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven** – at some point in the future, God will come down from the Heaven of heavens into our atmospheric space (**Cf. John 14:3** – “I will come back....)
2. **With a shout** – this is a Greek word signifying a military shout or command such as when a military leader steps out of his tent and shouts an order – this sets in motion the resurrection and translation of believers
3. **With the voice of the archangel** – Angels are often used to execute God’s plan. This is probably Michael though we cannot be sure. We are not told what the archangel says, but if we continue in the military vein, then God’s command is repeated and the program of the Rapture begins.
4. **With the trump of God** – The trump was used for many purposes, chiefly for important announcements, to call for assembly or rally troops. This is not the 7th trumpet in Revelation. Some feel that it is to argue for a mid-trib rapture.
5. **The dead in Christ shall rise first** – makes sense, for they have six feet further to go. The ‘in Christ’ limits the resurrection at this time to those who were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ; these are dead ‘church age’ saints. Old Testament saints – we will see – are to be resurrected at a later point in God’s prophetic plan.
6. **Then we that are alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds** – The resurrection and translation of dead saints will be immediately followed by the translation of saints who are alive (think of the many scenarios and their implications - - utter chaos on earth)
7. **To meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord** – We meet our Lord, and we permanently remain with Him fulfilling the promises of **John 14:1-3**.

NOTE: ‘Therefore comfort one another with these words.’ (If we are not intended to understand all this, then this instruction makes not sense).

- C. Third, they were taught to be assured of a certain destiny. (**Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-8**). **NOTE:** Recall that the Thessalonians wondered why they were in the Day of the Lord. Paul instructs them in **2 Thessalonians 2:5-8**, “*Don’t you remember?*” He then goes on to assure them of their destiny.
1. Thief in the night – this day should NOT surprise you like a thief.
 2. They will not escape – but you are NOT in darkness.
 3. They belong to the night and the darkness – but you are all sons of the light and sons of the day.

4.In other words, “*you didn’t miss the Rapture, and the Rapture is before the Day of the Lord, you’re not in the Day of the Lord because it was never for you.*”
- D. Lastly, they were taught they were preserved against judgement. **NOTE:** *Paul had already told them this! However, some false teacher had come along and told them that they were, in fact, in the Day of the Lord right now.*
1. When we talk about God’s judgement, we are talking about God’s wrath. What is that exactly?
 - a. There is general wrath (**cf. Romans 1:18**). This is God’s wrath against sin. This is a present reality and is demonstrated many times in scripture as an ongoing issue. (**Romans 5:9**)
 - b. **THEN**, there is the “wrath to come.” (**Cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:10**)
 - This is specific to the future (**Cf. Revelation 6:17, 14:19, etc**) associated with future events and processes.
 - Cannot mean ‘hell’, the believer is already redeemed from hell; that was accomplished on the cross.

SUMMARY:

NOTE: God’s judgment is identified as one and the same with the Day of the Lord (**Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10 – and look at what precedes the issue in vs. 2: ‘The Day of the Lord’**).

- **Vs. 2-8** provide further detail on this ‘Day of the Lord’ _
- **Vs. 9** then states “*For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath*” (or *THAT wrath*)’*but to receive salvation*’_
- **IMPORTANT: This is referred to in vs. 8 as ‘the hope of salvation’** – so it is not soteriological (i.e. “*The Doctrine of Salvation*” - which is a present reality), but eschatological (which is a future reality)_
- This context in which this wrath element is presented follows the details of **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** in which the rapture is discussed. It is made clear that we will not be present_

NOTE: the ‘comfort and encouragement’ in **4:18** and **5:11** means believers don’t go through God’s wrath which is to come – *this instruction would mean little if God intended us to experience the full brunt of His wrath*_