



A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

Week 13: Introduction to the Rapture

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A. Review

- Last week we began to look into the doctrine of the Rapture
- In particular, we unpacked the matter of imminency. The Bible teaches that the Rapture is an imminent event which means:
 - No prophetic event needs to occur first in order for the Rapture to happen.
 - The Rapture is essentially a 'signless' prophetic event.
 - It is why faithful believers throughout the ages have dutifully anticipated this event. (We looked at several references to show how the Early Church had this anticipation).
- The doctrine of imminence stands in opposition to those who would argue for a mid-Trib or a post-Trib timing
 - a. If either of those positions were taught in Scripture, then the Biblical position of imminency would fall apart (We'll be looking a bit more at some of these details later in today's lesson).
- Last week, we spent considerable time looking into the passage of **1 Thessalonians 2:1-9**
 - b. In this passage, we saw how Paul emphasized the teaching of eschatology to the church. In fact, shows how he made it a priority for young believers.
- We went through a four point outline that helped us understand what Paul made very clear concerning the Rapture to this body of Thessalonian believers:
 - 1. They were taught to expect a certain situation.**
 - c. *That is, they were taught they would not go through the Tribulation if they were truly saved in Christ*
 - 2. They were taught to understand a specific sequence.**
 - d. *That is, they were taught that the Rapture was a sequential event with seven specific things taking place in a particular order*
 - 3. They were taught to be assured of certain destiny.**
 - e. *Paul told them "...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 never was for you."*
 - 4. Lastly, they were taught they were preserved against judgment.**
 - f. *Specifically, this judgment is called "the wrath to come." We looked at how the Bible makes a clear case that this wrath is one and the same with "the Day of the Lord" (AKA The Tribulation)*

I. **SIX REASONS WHY THE BIBLICAL POSITION ON THE RAPTURE IS THE “PRE-TRIBULATION” VIEW:**

A. **The Lord Himself promised to deliver us.**

1. Several passages make this point, but a clear teaching is seen in (*Cf. Revelation 3:10*) letter to the church at Philadelphia – see passage.
2. NOTE: Seven letters written to seven real historical churches, but these 7 represent churches of all ages as well. Why?
 - a. Each church ends with plural phrase seen in *Revelation 2:7a*,
 - b. There were many other churches of that time too, and....
 - c. Some of the prophetic content has not yet occurred, so it is still future.....i.e. *Revelation 3:10 (Review)*
 - Refers to a future event.
 - The historical church at Philadelphia has long been destroyed and disbanded, yet the truth of this verse STILL applies
 - The promise is about a trial coming ‘on the whole world’ (not just Philadelphia).

B. **Only the Pre-tribulation view preserves the doctrine of imminency.**

1. As I’ve stated - the other two views negate this doctrine, and identify Christ’s coming at the middle of the tribulation (Mid-trib) or at the end (Post-trib).
2. The emphasis of the other two views is not on Christ’s return, but on details of the antichrist and the tribulation
3. We are reminded again and again in the Bible to wait for a time we do not know of.

C. **The church is to be delivered from ‘the wrath to come.’**

1. We looked at this in-depth last week (*Cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10*) – “...to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come
2. Not soteriological salvation [present reality] but eschatological salvation [future reality] – describing a future, chronological event

D. **Christians, as we’ve seen, are not appointed to wrath.**

1. *Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:9* – “God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”
2. NOTE: This passage follows one of the strongest passages on the rapture in the Bible (*1 Thessalonians 4*) and must be considered in light of that context.
3. It is deliverance from an event.

- a. Think about this: Since so many saints will be martyred during the Tribulation, there will be few alive at the glorious appearing of Christ.
 - b. This cannot mean then that Christ will deliver us ‘during’ the time of wrath, but ‘from’ it instead.
4. Keep in mind that the Tribulation is ESPECIALLY a time of God’s wrath on those that live on the whole earth (**Cf. Revelation 3:10**) to test them.

E. The church is absent in Revelation 4-18.

1. The church is mentioned 17X in first three chapters of Revelation.
2. John called up to heaven as a member of the church in beginning of **Revelation 4**, and he looks down on events of the Tribulation in **Chapters 4-18** where the church is no longer mentioned.
3. “Church” appears again in **Ch. 19** when she returns to earth with her bridegroom at Jesus’ glorious appearing (Why? She is not in the tribulation; she was taken out of it before it started).
4. NOTE: Conversely, Israel is mentioned 26X in **Chapters 4-18**, proof of **Daniel 9:24** (“*Seventy weeks are appointed for your people and your city...*”)
 - a. The Tribulation is also called ‘the time of Jacob’s trouble.’
 - b. Israel is the main character of this time.

F. Here are 12 Differences between Christ’s First Phase of His 2nd Coming (Rapture) and Christ’s Second Phase of His 2nd Coming (Glorious Appearing).

Christ’s FIRST PHASE of His Second Coming. (RAPTURE):	Christ’s Second Phase of His Second Coming. (GLORIOUS APPEARING):
Christ comes in the air for His own and we meet Him there.	Christ comes with His own to earth.
Rapture of all Christians.	Nobody is raptured.
No judgment on earth.	Christ judges the inhabitants of the earth.
Church taken to heaven.	Christ sets up His kingdom on earth.
Imminent (could happen at any moment).	Cannot occur for at least seven years.
No signs beforehand.	Many signs beforehand.
For believers only.	Affects all humanity.
Time of joy.	Time of mourning.
No mention of Satan.	Satan bound in abyss for 1000 years.
Marriage of the Lamb.	His bride descends with Him.
Only His own see Him.	Every eye will see Him.
Tribulation begins.	1000-year Mill. Kingdom begins.

II. THE VARIOUS RESURRECTIONS AND OUR GLORIFIED BODIES.

A. The various resurrections. NOTE: The Bible teaches that there are a series of resurrections (We tend to think of just the one that takes place at the time of the Rapture):

1. First, there is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is numero uno, the trend-setter event, the first one. It's why the resurrection of Jesus Christ is called the 'first fruits' resurrection.

a. There is profound significance to our own salvation that is wrapped up in all the matters pertaining to Christ's resurrection.

➤ *"If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is worthless, and so is your faith. In that case, we are also exposed as false witnesses about God. For we have testified about God that He raised Christ from the dead, but He did not raise Him if in fact the dead are not raised...." (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:13-15)*

➤ So the initial resurrection of Jesus Christ is directly linked to the integrity of our own faith, to the assurance of our own resurrection, and to the importance of proclaiming the Gospel

2. Then there is the resurrection of some of the Old Testament saints (Cf. Matthew 27:52-53). The Bible records that a limited number of Old Testament saints were resurrected, and AFTER Christ's resurrection they were seen in Jerusalem.

a. This was a limited event, contained to a certain area and to a certain number of people. Be that as it may, it is still a corporate event - and so I list it and refer to it as another resurrection event to consider.

3. The resurrection event we are all waiting for now is the one defined within the processes of the Rapture. As we've learned, that could happen at any time since no prophetic events need to occur for it to take place.

a. This is the event in which church-age saints (starting at the Day of Pentecost in **Acts Ch. 2**) who have died are raised to life and are given glorified bodies.

b. They ascend to meet Jesus Christ in the air, then those saints who are alive and remain on earth will also receive glorified bodies and ascend to be gathered with the first group in the air.

c. As we've seen, the Rapture process is a sequential event. Certain things happen first, then there are other things that happen after that, and so on.

d. The whole process – according to all prior Biblical types of the Rapture, appears to be one that can be observed taking place.

- e. As I shared last week, I think it's likely a mistake to say that we disappear in a flash. As I understand the matter, that is not Scriptural.
- f. The Bible teaches that our bodies will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. However, I think the world will see us rise as the disciples saw Christ rise, and as the future followers of the antichrist will see the Two Witnesses rise, and so on....

4. At some point after the Rapture there will be the onset of the event, and it is at the conclusion of The Tribulation that the next resurrection event takes place.

- a. This is when the Old Testament saints get resurrected, as well as those who were martyred during the Tribulation.
- b. It is after the Tribulation, at the physical Second Coming of Jesus Christ, when the Old Testament saints and martyred Tribulation saints also get their glorified bodies so they can enter the Millennial Kingdom.
- c. Presumably, any saints that may die during the course of the Millennial Kingdom will be raised at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, however, they will have glorified bodies for eternal glory.
- d. The Bible is relatively silent on this last point – but it's the only logical conclusion if one holds to the idea that saints may die during that time.
- e. Some feel, and I lean in this direction myself, that if you are a 'saint' during the Millennial Kingdom, if you have saving faith during the Millennial Kingdom, or come to saving faith during the Millennial Kingdom, then you won't die during that timeframe.

5. Finally, there is the last resurrection event. This takes place at the conclusion of the 1000-year Millennial Kingdom.

- a. The Bible specifies that this is the time when unbelievers from ALL ages are raised to face the Great White Throne judgement.
 - As I mentioned before, we have to be aware that even these people who are receiving judgement for "everlasting shame and contempt" (as Daniel puts it) - - even they receive 'glorified bodies' in a certain sense.
 - The point is, they will live forever, so that's a requirement for a different body right there.
 - However, they will also live in eternal punishment and torment. They will receive bodies that can endure the unending traumas of hell. Our mortal bodies we have now cannot do that.

B. Our glorified bodies

1. Let's take a brief look at what the Scriptures tell us our glorified bodies will be like. We will wade into this by first understanding our present bodies:

- a. The bodies we have now are given various descriptions in Scripture: mortal, corrupt, perishable, and so on.
- b. We know from the Bible that the human body – in this fallen world, and under the weight of sin – is condemned as a physical structure:
 - It gets sick. It acquires diseases. It comes down with viruses – some natural, and some “Made in China.”
 - Our bodies also age. They start to fall apart. They show signs of wear and tear, and at any moment, they can entirely quit on us.
 - We feel pain. We endure aches and weaknesses. We go from young and supple and resilient – to old and frail and fragile. Then we die.
 - This is the cycle of life. This is the condition of our bodies in this fallen and sinful state, and no amount of botox, liposuction, tummy tucks, and plastic surgery can change the inevitable.
 - Personally, I’m at that point where my broad mind and narrow waist have exchanged places. I can see others of you are at the same place.
 - As **Hebrews 9:27** states it, we are “appointed to die.” It’s inescapable. Unless the Lord returns for us in this life while we are still alive, we will die.
 - Death is the result of sin, and so death is the curse we live with on planet earth.
- c. This is a very different situation when it comes to our glorified bodies. These bodies are much different.

NOTE: We need to think of our “glorified bodies” as being like the glorified body of Jesus Christ after His death and resurrection.

- d. **1 John 3:2** tells us “we will be like Him when He appears.” So the body Jesus had at that point is the body we will have. So, let’s look at this:
- e. I’ll begin with a passage in **Daniel 12:3** where we are told “the wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens...” (this is a verse that describes the resurrection events at the conclusion of The Tribulation).
 - This verse provides us with a point of contrast from those who are degenerate, dark, foolish, and lost.
 - But I also believe it’s a description to be taken as literal truth
 - Jesus also said in **Matthew 13:42-43** that the righteous will “shine like the sun.”
 - Furthermore, in the transfiguration of Jesus Christ, we are told in **Luke 9:29** that Jesus’ face “was altered and his clothing became dazzling white.”
 - Two verses later, in **Luke 9:31**, we read that Moses and Elijah “appeared in glorious splendor.”

- Moses himself, after receiving the ten commandments and being in the presence of God was noted to have a face that “shone” (**Cf. Exodus 34: 29-30**)
- f. Again, in **1 John 3:2** we are told that we “will be like Him” when Jesus appears. It’s a short distance between two dots to conclude that one quality we will have is this shining / illumination-like quality. That’s one aspect of having a glorified body.
- It’s clear from reading other post-resurrection accounts of Jesus Christ that He wasn’t shining all the time. His body was glorified, but apparently it was not bright and lit constantly.
 - He showed this quality at the transfiguration, so I can assume it will be similar for us. Maybe it’s a feature we can turn on and off or maybe it will be constant in the New Heaven and New Earth. I don’t exactly know.
2. What other qualities will our glorified bodies have....?
- a. Well, by virtue of comparison to our present human bodies which are described in **1 Corinthians 15:42-53** as being “perishable, dishonorable, and weak,” our glorified bodies will be imperishable, honorable, and powerful.
 - b. They will last forever, and they will never experience sickness, pain, or death. They will be perfect.
 - c. We won’t be subject to the natural laws of gravity, time, and space. I believe, as Jesus was able to move supernaturally from one place to another in a split second, so will we.
 - d. He was able to go through walls, and to instantly appear and disappear. So will we.
 - e. He ate physical food. So will we. I know that’s good news for most of us.
3. One question that often gets asked is, “What age will our glorified bodies be?”
- a. The Bible does not address this question so it’s not possible to answer it.
 - b. A number of scholars seem to feel that since Jesus ascended to heaven sometime around the age of 33, that this marks a general age point we all will be at. Who knows? It’s an interesting matter to study.