



A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

Week 14: Introduction to the Rapture

July 31, 2022

Instructor: Steve Schmutzer

I. Review:

- A. Over the last two weeks, we've been studying the Biblical doctrine of the Rapture
- B. In particular, we've had the opportunity to study the following points that Scripture makes:
 1. The imminency of the Rapture – the Bible teaches the Rapture could happen at any time.
 2. The pre-Tribulation timing – the Bible makes the strongest case for a pre-Trib Rapture timing; it is the only position which supports an imminent doctrine.
 3. The sequence of the Rapture – the Bible lays out a specific sequence of events that take place when the Rapture occurs; it's not all "poof" then done. There is an orderly sequence of events that occurs.
 4. There are differences between the Rapture and Christ's physical Second Advent. These two distinct events are not one and the same. In the last lesson, we looked at a group of reasons that clarified why they are different events.
 5. We also looked at the five different resurrections within the Scriptures, and we did an overview of our glorified bodies. (See Week 13)

NOTE: Today, I want to look at one final issue concerning the Rapture, the issue of timing. Specifically, I want to ask the question, "Can we narrow down the timeframe in which the Rapture might take place?" I think the answer is yes, and so we'll look at that.

I want to offer two clarifying comments up front:

1. By suggesting that we can narrow down the timing of the Rapture, I am not suggesting that the early church fathers, or apostles like Paul himself, were somehow deluded in their day and age as they were expectant for the Rapture.
 - I believe that faithful followers of Jesus Christ have always lived in the hope and expectation of Jesus Christ's imminent return in the clouds.
 - As I have made clear already, this is an attitude we ought to have that is taught in Scripture
 - However, as the march of human history has developed, and as developments in the world have taken place, I think we can see certain things with greater clarity today than before. There are matters that early believers could not understand as easily in their time as we can now.
 - I therefore think we now live in a time when the Bible makes clearest the case for the Rapture. I believe it is most likely to happen in our lifetime.
2. The second point I want to make and to emphasize is: I'm not a date-setter.
 - I believe the Scripture says that we cannot, and should not, be setting dates. We are told clearly in **Matthew 24:36** that we cannot know the 'day or the hour.'
 - There are prophetic issues we cannot identify with that specificity. I think this instruction includes the Rapture.
 - However, we are told we need to recognize "the times and seasons." Paul, in fact, reminded the church in Thessalonica that they were to know this information (**Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:1**).
 - The bottom line is faithful believers are called to perceive this narrowing window, to understand those things which make us expectant, and to grasp the decay and depravity of this world through the lens of our "blessed hope."

II. **A LOOK AT THE ISSUES THAT HELP US UNDERSTAND THE “TIMES AND SEASONS.”** In doing so, it is my hope that we all come away with a better grasp of our limited time left on this earth.

A. First, let’s set the right tone about “times and seasons.”

1. First, Jesus’ disciples wanted to know when exactly Jesus Christ would set up His earthly kingdom
2. The Jewish people lived in the hope and expectation of the promises made to them, and Jesus’ disciples wanted to know when this would happen.
3. Jesus responded to them in **Acts 1:7** that is was not for them to know the “times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority.”
4. In effect, Jesus told them they needed to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, and to invest themselves in the events and responsibilities which were more proximal
5. Jesus framed future prophetic events in the “times and seasons” language.

B. Secondly, Paul in *1 Thessalonians 5:1* – instructed his readers that they, in fact, were to ‘recognize the times and seasons.’

1. Paul gave them this instruction concerning ‘the day of the Lord’ (AKA The Tribulation) and concerning those events leading up to it
2. In effect, Paul was saying to his readers, and to you and I: that we have a responsibility to see the things that are going on, to recognize how they portend “the end of time”, and to properly prepare our hearts in the process.
3. This instruction by Paul corrects the position of Christian leaders today who suggest that the study of Biblical prophecy is not important, or that these themes in Scripture are somehow fringe. That is not true!

C. Thirdly, Jesus spoke directly to the religious leaders of His time, and He rebuked them for not understanding the signs of the times.

1. In **Luke 12:56**, Jesus said, *“You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”*
2. The pharisees and the religious leaders had missed the importance of Jesus Christ’s First Coming. They had the Scriptures, but they had deliberately overlooked and ignored the truth.
3. In context, Jesus told them: they needed to recognize the seasons and the times around them. The religious leaders then were like many religious leaders today, they utterly failed to do this.

NOTE: I want to use the balance of this lesson today to explore a few Scripturally-based patterns and principles which suggest we live, RIGHT NOW, within a narrow window of time during which we can expect the Rapture.

D. I want to begin by pointing out the events of *Matthew Ch. 24* – and I want us to take a fresh look at what is said.

1. First, Jesus is answering His disciples' question, "What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (***Cf. vs. 3***)
2. In ***vss. 4-8***, we have a series of events and dynamics laid out which we need to focus on in our present time.
3. These things let us know we are "in a season" that we need to be paying special attention to:

a. "Watch out that no one deceives you..."

- A key element of the end times is deception. Jesus warned against deception because it will be pervasive and rampant.
- Deception will, in fact, increase as the very end of the age draws closer. It's not going to get better; it will get worse.
- In ***Daniel 8:12***, speaking of the antichrist, it says he will "throw truth to the ground," and in ***Daniel 8:25*** it says the antichrist will cause "deceit to prosper."
- Both of these statements discuss a dynamic that is INSIDE of The Tribulation, but we can see the signs of this development now.
- It doesn't matter if you are talking about politics, religion, society, God's laws, the fraudulent election, the so-called vaccines, or the direct assault on our food system - - if you speak the truth, it is not welcome.
- We live in a day and an age when deception and lies are prospering while truth is being suppressed.
- It is happening in Congress, it is happening in hospitals, it is happening in our schools, and it is happening in our churches.
- Truth is not welcome. Lies are being fertilized.
- I want to point out, this is NOT A PASSIVE PROCESS. This is an active agenda to promote deception, and it is fueled by "the father of lies," Satan himself.

b. The second point from *Matthew Ch. 24* I want to give attention to is this: Jesus warns that "...many will come in my name claiming I am the Christ."

- There are two main points to make about this statement:
 - First, there will be those who physically claim to be Christ, or a Messiah figure. The antichrist is the chief example here.

- But the numbers of those who physically claim to be Christ are less than those who claim to be “called by Christ.” (**Matthew 24:24**)
 - Secondly, we should focus that in our time - - it is those people who claim, as **vs. 5** says, “to come in my name.”
 - Note: It follows the warning about deception, and I think there is a relationship here we should not overlook.
 - Jesus says there will be mounting numbers of individuals (during a time when the signs of the end are gathering force) that will claim to be called by Christ, or who ‘come in His name’ – when in fact that is untrue, they were not.
 - I can think of many pastors and prominent so-called “Christian leaders” which fit this bill perfectly.
 - It is obvious when you look at the things they say, the sermons they preach, the convictions and beliefs they hold, the lack of true gifting that they display, and the hostility they have to Biblical truth - - that they are NOT called by Christ, and they do NOT come in His name.
 - Unfortunately, the numbers of these people are growing, not just in churches, but in seminaries and on the mission field as well.
 - These are people who claim to be “called by Christ,” but in truth they are self-serving, immature, and dangerous in their roles. They are a chief reason for many ministries becoming ineffective, apostate, and lukewarm.
 - Jesus said the numbers of such people will increase as the end of the age draws near. We are certainly seeing this in our time today.
- Like the first point about deception, THIS IS NOT A PASSIVE PROCESS. It is also fueled by “the father of lies,” Satan himself.

c. The third point in *Matthew Ch. 24*, concerns wars and rumors of wars.

- In the past 18-24 months, we’ve moved from a place where landmark peace treaties were made, where rogue nations stopped firing missiles, and where Iran’s nuclear program was stopped - - to a place where everything has rapidly gone upside down.
- Now, wars and conflicts threaten in many places, and have already broken out. Rogue nations are once again firing missiles and threatening others. Iran is on the threshold of having nuclear weapons.

- Any day now, Israel will find herself in a major regional conflict, and also most political pundits expect China to be at war with Taiwan within the next couple of years.
- Peace and stability have quickly turned to conflict and instability. From a strictly political perspective, this is the direct result of America's weak and fraudulent leadership.
- America is not respected on the world stage because we have a demented, weak, and illegitimate leadership now.
- Our nation's foreign policy is bankrupt, and international leaders know this for themselves. They do not respect the US's current role in world affairs.
- Once again, as with the two previous points, THIS IS NOT A PASSIVE PROCESS. This is an active agenda to promote global deception, and it is fueled by "the father of lies," Satan himself. It's a tragic situation.

d. The next point is about '*nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*' in vs. 7.

- This is not a phrase of repetition, it is saying two different things.
- 'Nation' here is the Greek word "ethnos;" we get the words "ethnic" or "ethnicity" from this Greek term
- It describes a surge in conflict between races - - or 'ethnicities'
- We are certainly seeing that surge now. We have never seen a time of greater conflict and rage between races in our own nation than the present.
- This surge was heavily fostered during the time of Obama's presidency who had the ambition of bringing about CHANGE from the view of radicals like the anarchist Saul Alinsky.
- And truth be told, Obama and his globalist cohorts are very much the main folks pulling the strings right now. Every effort is being made to promote conflict between races. Make no mistake about it.
- It is very alarming to me to see how so many churches are advancing the radical BLM agenda from the pulpit, or they are talking about the problems of 'systemic racism' or 'critical race theory.' It is clear that such leaders are not only useful tools of deception, it is further evidence that they are not "called by Christ's name" to even be in their roles at all.
- The other word in Greek is for 'kingdoms' and it is 'basileia.' It means what the English word is saying, a "kingdom or an empire." It is used often to describe Jesus Christ's kingdom.
- It means a seat of power from a world perspective. In simple terms, we can think of world empires or nations now, and Jesus said there

would be surging conflict between these world powers. This trend would accelerate as the end of times gets closer.

- Again, as with the previous points before, THIS IS NOT A PASSIVE PROCESS. This is an active agenda to promote global deception, and it is fueled as well by “the father of lies,”

e. The last point is about famines and earthquakes. Once again *Matthew Ch. 24* says these things are going to dramatically increase as signs of the end of the age.

NOTE: The parallel account of *Luke Ch. 21* adds ‘pestilences’ (pandemics) to this list. These will increase too.

- I think, for me, there is something that has been a startling insight these last couple of years.
- Prior to that, I always read this issue about famines and pestilences with the idea that these were ‘acts of God’ the same way earthquakes, tornados, and hurricanes are.
- Not any more. I now see that these events, too, are NOT A PASSIVE PROCESS. They also are part of an active agenda to promote global deception, and they too are fueled as well by “the father of lies.”
- Perhaps there are some of you that would disagree with me on this point, but I feel the overwhelming evidence is the COVID-19 pandemic was man-made and man-orchestrated.
- There is SO MUCH clear evidence to support this claim. There is so much information that is being deliberately buried that would expose the real agendas of: depopulation, mass control, and genetic re-engineering.
- These dynamics are similar to what is happening with our food systems. They are being systematically and intentionally destroyed.
- The fires and assaults on food facilities (over 6,000 of them worldwide now), the campaigns against farmers and food growers, and all the destructive policies against basic food distribution systems, are intentionally designed to bring about famines and food shortages. It all makes perfect sense if you look at these issue through a Biblical lens.
- As the end of time draws closer, the Bible says famines and food shortages will increase. As I said before, there was a time I imagined this would all be ‘an act of God,’ however, now I see it as an ACTIVE PROCESS. It is something mankind is executing against itself.
- The goal is to have an elite class who has all the luxuries and all the power, and a massive under-class of ‘serfs’ who are dominated and controlled.

- This is what is meant by **Revelation 6:6** where we see the effect of one of the future Seal Judgements. It reads: *'Two pounds of wheat for a day's wages, and six pounds of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!'*
- This is a clear reference to future economic catastrophe. A time is coming when it will take an average person their full day's wages to feed one person for one day. The rich, however, will continue to have their 'oil and wine,' symbols of wealth and excess.
- That is a picture of extreme socialism, which, as we will learn, is the antichrist's system of governance. It is the political system which many of the far-left are trying to bring about now.
- As for earthquakes, it is the only element on this list in **Matthew Ch. 24** which I do not see as being directly man-made.
- Jesus says earthquakes will increase in frequency and intensity too. If you do a casual online search for yourself, you will see this to be true. There are more and more earthquakes in various places, and they are becoming more and more destructive.

NOTE: So what are we to conclude from this? The answer is we are called to understand the times and the seasons, and Jesus gives us several clues here for us to understand that we are in that season now that JUST PRECEDES the Tribulation.

All of these dynamics: the deception, the earthquakes, the conflicts, and so on - - will dramatically increase during the seven years of The Tribulation, but we are seeing the early onset of those things starting now. This is a strong clue that The Tribulation is just around the corner.

III. TWO ISSUES WHICH ALSO SUGGEST OUR TIME ON THIS PLANET IS VERY SHORT:

1) The Seven Thousand Years of Human History. 2) The Temple Pattern.

A. First, there is the Seven Thousand Years of Human History:

1. Jewish scholars, and many Bible scholars for that matter, subscribe to the idea that God has laid out a plan for seven thousand years of human history
 - a. There was 2000 years from Creation to Abraham (this is when the Jews and the nation of Israel came into the picture).
 - b. Then there were 2000 years between Abraham and the first coming of Jesus Christ
 - c. Then, there are 2000 years known as the Church Age (We are near the end of that age).
 - d. Lastly, there is the 1000-year Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ on this physical Earth.
 - e. Each of these are pretty well-defined in Scripture, and each plays out to pretty much the timeline I have stated here, plus or minus a couple of years or so.

- f. Collectively, they comprise seven 1000-year blocks. Many scholars feel this is a layout that was first established in the Creation pattern of seven days.
2. For my part, I think this whole idea of seven thousand years of human history holds a lot of merit. I've studied this issue for some time, and I think it is supported in Scripture in a variety of ways.
 - a. Perhaps most importantly for you and I right now, we are at the tail end of the Church Age.
 - b. If the church began at Pentecost (debate as to whether or not 32 AD +/- a year or two), then the end of this present chapter of human history, and the start of the next chapter of human history is roughly 2032 (again +/-). That's 2000 years later...
 - c. This is a chronological pattern that has been well-established before this point, and it is unlikely to change going forward. The Bible is big on patterns, types, and so on.
 - d. That would essentially mean the Millennial Kingdom would start sometime around 2032 (again +/-).
 - e. Since the Tribulation is seven years, then we have to move forward from that point seven years. With this thinking in place, that would place the start of the Tribulation somewhere around 2025 (again +/-.....I'm not going to be dogmatic here)
 - f. Since the Bible teaches clearly that the Rapture takes place BEFORE the Tribulation, that would suggest the time between now and around 2025 is pretty ripe for sober consideration. Again, we are called to know and understand the times and seasons.
 3. This idea of thousand year sections of human history has great merit from another angle too, and this one concerns the Jewish people and their present situation (**Cf. Hosea 6:1-3**)

"Come, and let us return to the Lord. He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. Let us know. Let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord; His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth."

- a. To better understand this prophetic passage, we have to understand the Biblical concept that to God "a thousand years are like a day" (**Cf. Psalms 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8**)
- b. In the above passage in **Hosea**, this analogy is given prophetic significance. A prophetic lament is given where the Jews, who are despairing over the discipline they have received from God, are looking forward to a time when that will all change for them.

- c. See the discipline they refer to: “He has torn....He has stricken”
 - d. See the change then: “ He will heal us...He will bind us up...He will revive us and raise us up.”
 - e. See also the terms of the new situation that they look forward to: “We will live in His sight. We will know Him and we will pursue the knowledge of the Lord. He will come to us.”
4. NOW - - NOTE THE TIMEFRAMES MENTIONED: “*After two days He will revive us*” and “*On the third day He will raise us up.*”
- a. I am one of a growing number of prophecy students and scholars who feel that this is further evidence of these ‘thousand year sections of human history.’ It is further evidence that “a thousand years is as a day” is a concept that is supported in real time and chronology.
 - b. There has been the roughly 2000 years of the diaspora: the time when Israel was ‘torn, disciplined, and stricken’ by God. He scattered them among the nations due to their rebellion, just as Moses promised the Israelites that this is what God would do if they disobeyed him.
 - c. During that time, the Church Age was begun. Now, both the Church Age and the time of the diaspora are winding down.
 - d. The Jews, in this prophetic lament in **Hosea**, are expecting that after 2000 years (or two days) they will be healed, they will be bound up, and they will then live in His sight.
 - e. This subsequent time of blessing is called “one day” (or 1000 years). This lines up perfectly with the definition and the prophecies of The Millennial Kingdom which immediately follows The Tribulation.
 - f. Again, this all shows a pattern and a timeline which seems to be affirmed from several vantage points.

- B. And now I want to conclude by looking at something I have only recently begun to study, as several prophecy buff friends of mine have as well. I referred to this earlier as “the temple pattern,” and I’m going to refer to it as my friend, Pete Garcia does: in terms of *rounds*.

ROUND ONE

1. The Jews' great sin is rampant idolatry. In their failing to trust in God for their protection, and then instead making a foolish deal with their enemies.
2. The First Temple is destroyed.
3. The physical presence of God the Father who inhabited the temple departs from them.
4. A major round of judgment falls upon Israel via the Babylonians.

ROUND TWO

1. The Jews' great sin is turning God's Word into legalism, and rejecting their promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. They have Him crucified like a common criminal.
2. The Second Temple is destroyed.
3. The physical presence of God the Son, Jesus Christ Himself, who taught in the temple, departs from them.
3. A major round of judgment falls upon Israel via the Romans.

ROUND THREE (Today's time)

1. The Jews' great sin is dismissing, with anger and jealousy the salvation Christ offered them as they watched the Gospel go out to the Gentiles.
2. They should have understood all the prophecies, repented and received Jesus Christ as their own, but they refused to do so.
3. The Rapture takes place. God the Holy Spirit departs with His temple.
4. A major round of judgment falls upon Israel via the Antichrist. The Jews enter the Seven Year Tribulation, AKA the "Time of Jacob's Trouble" and receive judgment intended to bring a remnant of them into full salvation.

- The pattern is exactly the same as the two times before. The only missing piece in the pattern of these three rounds is: the way the third temple departs from the Jews (In essence, 'destroyed' from their presence as the two times before....and that is the Rapture.
- *"Do you not know that **your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost** which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19)*

