

A Biblical View OF THE END TIMES

INTRODUCTION TO THE RAPTURE, PART 1

Week #15; March 29, 2026, 6PM

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NOTE: I want to quickly comment on what we've learned to date, because we are now shifting to a whole new topic in this study on Bible prophecy.

- Our first three lessons laid down a foundation on the quality and character of the Bible and our need to properly study and interpret it.
- In the next eight or so lessons, we explored the history and agenda of the fallen angels and the Nephilim.
- As we've learned, this was a key element of the very first Bible prophecy in **Gen. 3:15**, and this fallen angelic agenda will continue until Jesus Christ physically returns a second time.
- In our last three lessons, we've taken some of the puzzle pieces from the past and present, and we've knit them together – looking at Scripture and current matters.
- In that exercise, we've seen that a 'powerful delusion' will sweep over the post-Rapture world. This will be a strategic Satanic lie that seeks to convince those who are left behind that God is not real and the Biblical Rapture did not happen.
- We've also had a special lesson on the significant events taking place in Iran. I shared in that lesson that I believe we are seeing Bible prophecy being fulfilled in 'real time.'
- We've covered quite a bit. All those things have put the necessary structure in place for the remaining things we will be studying from this point forward.

NOTE: Now, with respect to 'what's next' – I want to start unpacking the Biblical doctrine of the Rapture. So, this week – and for the next few lessons – this will be our focus.

A. BEGINNING WITH SOME GENERAL BACKGROUND COMMENTS

- The Biblical Rapture is NOT a fictional matter. It is REAL. It has not happened yet, but it WILL happen. The Bible is very clear about this.
- The Rapture is that supernatural occasion in which the greater church – comprised of all those who WERE – and ARE - **truly saved** – are **suddenly** and **visibly** removed from this earth to be with Jesus Christ.
- We will be lifted up and taken out of here, after which point we will no longer be found present in this world. Those who are NOT raptured – meaning, those who are not **truly saved** - will watch us go up. They will be 'left behind.'
- Both groups -those who have already died 'in Christ,' and those who are alive at that time - will receive glorified bodies in this wonderful supernatural process.

- The Rapture could easily be the next event in our lives from a prophetic standpoint. It could happen at any time.
- It therefore makes the most sense to me to deal with this matter now in the sequence of this series' lessons. In all respects, the Rapture is THE NEXT BIG THING.

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.

- I confess (at some level) this is challenging for me to understand because – as we will discover – the Bible is quite clear on this matter of the Rapture.
- Nevertheless, there is little understanding of the Biblical doctrine of the Rapture in most churches. Instead – there is much pushback. The Rapture is often mocked and attacked.
- While this posture is an unfortunate reality, this reality is also a confirmation of Bible prophecy and of the 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.”*

NOTE: I want to start with some basic definitions and then develop this topic from there.

A. THE WORD ‘RAPTURE’

NOTE: The word ‘rapture’ is not found in our Bibles, although the truth of the rapture is clearly taught in Scripture.

1. The English word “rapture” is used to describe a state or an experience of being ‘forcibly’ carried away – or a ‘catching away.’
 - This ‘forcible’ element does not mean ‘against our will’ – rather, the idea is the rapture is an event of God that overpowers our human experience and limitations.
 - It is something that far exceeds the physics and understanding of our natural world. It is a miraculous event – a ‘supernatural’ event.
2. This English word ‘rapture’ originates from the translation of the Bible known as the Latin Vulgate. There, we find the Latin terms ‘rapturo,’ ‘rapere,’ or ‘raptus.’
 - When the Bible was first translated from Greek to Latin, the Greek term *harpazó* (Strong’s # G726) – meaning, “to pluck up, to seize, to catch away” – was translated in these Latin terms.

NOTE: This Greek term “harpazo,” is mentioned with reference to the rapture at least five times. By way of ‘food for thought,’ ‘born again’ is just mentioned three times, and the ‘trinity’ is never mentioned by that term. We don’t diminish these latter two important doctrines – so why do so many people diminish the Rapture? Something to think about....

- Anyway, from these origins, this term ‘rapture’ has come about, though almost all English Bibles translate this word as “caught up.” (**Cf. 1 Thess. 4:17**).

*“After that, we who are still alive and are left will be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”*

3. Now, this term ‘rapture’ can mean to be carried away in spirit or in body.
 - There are several different examples of “raptures” or “catching aways” spoken of in the Bible
 - **EX:** Enoch and Elijah were both taken up to heaven before they experienced death (**Cf. Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5; 2 Kings 2:1, 11**).
 - **EX:** Jesus Christ Himself was also caught up to heaven in His ascension after His physical resurrection (**Cf. Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 12:5**).
 - **EX:** The apostle Paul also wrote of a man (likely referring to himself) who experienced a type of rapture when he was caught up to the third heaven – he wasn’t sure if it was in body or in spirit, but it was real (**Cf. 2 Corinthians 12:2-4**).
 - Another rapture event we will learn of will happen in the future seven-year Tribulation period. There, the Two Witnesses will be caught up into heaven after being resurrected from death (**Cf. Rev. 11:3; 11-12**).
4. But the “Rapture” I want to focus on now is the most well-known future Rapture event of all of these – that is the corporate **Rapture of the Church**.
 - And again, this refers to what will happen to ALL those who have become **truly saved** since the church age began in **Acts. Ch. 2**.
 - And this Rapture refers to the literal, physical, bodily, supernatural ‘carrying away’ of this entire church FROM earth TO heaven by God.

B. THE ‘IMMINENCY’ FACTOR

NOTE: The Bible teaches that the Rapture is an imminent event - so we need to ask, ‘What is ‘imminency?’

- Imminency is the position that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, could come in the clouds **at any moment** and supernaturally take His church to be with Him.
- Christians throughout the entire church age have believed this and have dutifully awaited and anticipated the Rapture.
- This is well-documented, starting with the apostles. It was also the position of the early church fathers. This position is mentioned in several of the writings of those who studied under the Apostles.

1. But back to this term “imminency.” This specific term entered the evangelical lexicon around the end of the last Century in contrast to the prevailing ‘post-millennialism’ view that was popular at that time.

- Post-millennialism teaches that the Rapture will not happen at any moment, but it is scheduled for a specific time after the Tribulation. This is also known as the ‘post-trib’ view.
- The belief of post-millennialism is the rapture is one and the same with Christ’s Second Coming. This is the dominant view of post-millennialism.
- More 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 CHOOSE to believe things are getting better and better because of the effectiveness and activities of the church. (They, clearly, are not following the news or any trends within the church).
- Other post-millennialists recognize this position is a pretty tough sell. And so, they soft-pedal this emphasis on the ‘Christianization of the world’ since it’s obvious things aren’t trending in that direction.
- They simply try to make the case that we are in the Tribulation right now, and there are various strong ideas and opinions within that view.
- But as we will see, these kinds of notions are NOT Biblical positions.

NOTE: Remember when we learned the key differences between ‘dispensationalism’ and “Covenant theology” (AKA ‘Reformed’ theology)?

- ✓ We learned that those who adhere to the dispensational view interpret the Bible consistently and literally. This is the way we ought to approach the Scriptures.
- ✓ There is therefore general uniformity of interpretation within the dispensational camp. They believe the Bible means what it says and it says what it means.
- ✓ However, the ‘Covenant theology’ crowd CHOOSES to interpret much of Bible prophecy allegorically or symbolically. They have an agenda they want to cling to.
- ✓ And so, there are many different ideas within this bunch. There are lots of different interpretations, sentiments, and even prejudices.
- ✓ That’s because they don’t always believe the Bible means what it says and says what it means.

2. By around the 1930’s, basically all the NT passages which describe Christ’s return as ‘soon,’ or ‘any-moment,’ was lumped into this ‘imminence’ view.

This is an accurate Biblical position to take.

- The late Dr. Renald Showers, a Bible scholar and prolific author, describes this ‘imminence’ position of Scripture very well. He says:

*“The English word “imminent” means “hanging over one’s head, ready to befall or overtake one; close at hand in its incidence.” Thus, an imminent event is one that is always hanging overhead, and is constantly ready to befall or overtake a person. Other things **may** happen before the imminent event, but nothing **must** take place before it happens. **If something***

else must take place before an event can happen, (then) that event is not imminent. The necessity of something else taking place first destroys the concept of imminency.”

- We can now ALSO see – that by its very definition - the ‘imminency’ of the rapture ONLY supports a ‘pre-tribulational’ view.
- Imminency implies this view because we are not looking for any key events to happen FIRST.
- Therefore, this Biblical concept of the rapture’s imminence refers to the definite occurrence of it, but with a completely unpredictable onset. This event can take place at any time.
- There are no signs or preconditions that must take place first for the rapture to happen.
- **Any such expectations – or any requirement that ANY preceding signs need to happen first - is fundamentally contradictory to the definition of imminence.**
- This is why the ‘imminent rapture’ position is sometimes criticized by opponents of this ‘pretrib’ view (specifically, those of a ‘post-trib’ persuasion [mentioned earlier], or perhaps a ‘mid-trib’ persuasion).
- Christians have – for centuries - recognized that the New Testament clearly underscores this concept of imminence to the rapture.

NOTE: Opponents of dispensationalism (‘the consistent and literal interpretation of Scripture’) fail to understand that Jesus implied an imminent rapture and His apostles taught this clearly.

These opponents of dispensationalism often claim instead that this is a relatively new doctrine that arose in the 1800’s with a man named John Nelson Darby. This is simply not true, and even a casual study of God’s Word, and the writings of the early church fathers, rebut this assertion.

A great scholar in Bible prophecy, J. Dwight Pentecost, wrote:

*“This doctrine of imminence, or “at any moment coming,” is not a new doctrine with Darby, as is sometimes charged, although he did clarify, systematize, and popularize it. Such a belief in imminency **marked the premillennialism of the early church fathers as well as the writers of the New Testament.**”*

3. HERE ARE THREE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF IMMINENCY WE NEED TO KEEP IN MIND:

- **FIRST**, the rapture could occur at any moment from **right now** to any point **in the future**.

NOTE: While other events **may** take place before the rapture (for example, the war of Gog and Magog – **Cf. Ezek. 38 & 39**), there is no event that **must** precede it.

- The bottom line is this:
 - If prior events are required before the rapture, then the rapture could not be imminent.
 - Nor would it make sense for us to look forward to it as the Bible instructs us to do. Instead, we would be looking forward to the fulfillment of other prophecies first.
- **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, and ready...'*
- The bottom line is the Rapture is a sign-less event (without any preceding announcement).
- **THIRD**, it is impossible – and therefore irrational and irresponsible – 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 become self-incriminating frauds.
- “Imminency,” by its very definition, cannot ascribe to a specific future time.
- Rather, the doctrine of the Rapture uniquely combines two conditions: (a.) certainty, and (b.) uncertainty.
 - It certainly **WILL** occur.
 - But the **WHEN** part 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 Thess. 4:13** (“...then we who are still alive and remain...”),
 - It’s the same in **4:17**, and **2 Thess. 2:1** (“...and our being gathered to Him...”)
 - It’s interesting to note that Paul changed his pattern of pronouns when he realized he was at the very end of his life.
 - He no longer anticipated being part of the Rapture (**Cf. 2 Tim. 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 him seeing the Rapture.

4. A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE NT SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR AN IMMINENT RAPTURE

NOTE: First, we must consider the instructions to believers to have an ‘any moment’ attitude:

- **Cf. 1 Cor. 1:7** (“...as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.”) – The principle of imminency was as relevant to Corinthian believers back THEN as much as to us TODAY, because the application of this doctrine is always true.
- **Cf. 1 Cor. 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 by emphasizing the hope of it,
- **Cf. Philippians 3:20** - (“*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.*”) – There are three things to note here:
 - (a.) #1, Paul includes himself as one who is holding to the expectation of Jesus Christ’s imminent return, and...
 - (b.) #2, He therefore instructs us to not be tied too tightly to earth, but instead we need to be....
 - (c.) #3, ...eager for Jesus’ return ‘*from there*’ (NOTE: This recalls **John 14:3** where Jesus says, “*I will come back...*” obviously, from another place)
- **Cf. 1 Thess. 1:10** – (“...to wait for His Son from heaven...”) – we are to **wait** for this event, He is coming from heaven to here to get us, and we are not told when,
- **Cf. 1 Timothy 6:14-15** – He will appear “...in His own time”
 - In other words, we do not know when that is. We cannot argue for a specific time (i.e. mid-trib, post-trib, etc.)
 - But - we are instructed to ‘*keep this command*’ in **vs. 12 of this same chapter**, “*to fight the good fight of the faith*’ until a time appointed by God which results in Jesus’ appearing – this is a call to our 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 not soteriological salvation (how we are saved by grace through faith), but eschatological salvation (how we are saved from God’s wrath which is coming on this world).
 - **It’s the same thrust as 1 Thess. 5:8**, (“*the hope of salvation*”) > not the salvation we have right now, but the salvation we’re waiting for.
- **Cf. James 5:7-9** –

“Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!”

- Here, we see we need to do three things as we anticipate the rapture:

- (a.) be patient,
- (b.) wait, and
- (c.) stand firm; the Lord's coming is near. He's '*standing at the door.*'

NOTE: It's passages like these that show the faithful Christian life is marked as one that is constantly expecting the rapture. It's a behavior pattern. It's a choice. It's understanding and accepting that we cannot impose man's conditions upon God's terms.

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

"Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming."

- There are several implications of this passage:
 - #1: We need to be disciplined (we need to 'prepare our minds, be self-controlled). This is the idea behind being '**alert**' and '**sober.**'
 - #2: We need to see this event as a '**hope.**' This word is used to communicate something positive for us – not something negative.
 - We need to set our hope '**fully**' on this truth > not partly.
 - #3: We need to recognize that the rapture is stated to be an issue of our receiving '**grace.**'
 - In this word 'grace,' we need to see benefit, comfort, and receiving something that comes by God's goodwill to us.
 - None of these aspects of 'hope,' or 'grace' would apply as Peter uses these words here if the rapture required us to endure the Tribulation. That would not add up.

NOTE: Another basis for an imminent rapture in the NT are those declarations from Jesus Himself regarding His unexpected arrival.

(Cf. John 14: 1-3 [NIV]) – "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

NOTE: This passage is sometimes overlooked insofar as it pertains to the rapture, but the implications of it are significant.

- #1: While Jesus teaches His own return for us, He does not specify when that will take place.
- #2: Jesus said He's '*going there.*' Well, 'there' is not 'here.' It's another place, and the context makes it clear this is heaven.
- #3: Jesus is coming back to '*take us to be with Him where He will be.*'
 - Jesus will return and He will take us to heaven to be with Him.

- This is different than His Second Coming. In that event, Jesus comes to earth after the Tribulation and He stays here. We'll be learning about that.
- If the rapture were **after** the Tribulation, then this passage makes ZERO sense! Jesus wouldn't be taking us anywhere, and He wouldn't have needed to '*prepare a place for (us).*'
- And then #4: All of these truths in this passage are wrapped up in Jesus' words to '*not let our hearts be troubled.*'
 - If any of the implications of this passage were not as they are, then we WOULD have reason to have troubled hearts.
 - But Jesus is telling us not to fret. The rapture is cause for us to rejoice and be hopeful (again, that's a positive).

NOTE: We are instructed to be expectant, reassured, hopeful, sober-minded, alert, patient, firm, and so on.

- ✓ We also need to keep in mind the terms of **Rev. 3:11; 22:7, 12, and 20** where Jesus says, "*I am coming quickly.*"
- ✓ The Greek word here is '*tachu*' (**takh-oo**), and it's used primarily in **Revelation**. It does not mean 'occurring soon in time' - - like "I'm ending this lesson quickly."
- ✓ Rather, it means Jesus' return will be sudden, unexpected, and swift. It means the rapture is imminent—it could happen any moment—and we've learned that already.
- ✓ Again, this requires true followers of Christ to live in persistent anticipation, constant preparedness, and enduring faithfulness.
- ✓ That is why these passages in **Revelation** are followed by the faithful believer's response in **vs. 20**, "*Let this be; come Lord Jesus.*" This shows an expectant posture.

NOTE: OK, let's wind things down here. What are the common ideas we've learned here that tie all of this together?

- The Lord's coming is something that could occur at any moment.
- Until such point, we are to remain faithful, disciplined, and watchful.
- Jesus' return for His followers is what WE are to wait for. It's what WE are instructed to hope for and look for.
- We are not to wait FIRST for a series of events to take place like those events that are spelled out in the Tribulation, and which lead up to Jesus Christ's **physical** Second Coming.
- Those are things the Tribulation saints are encouraged to look for. There is a strong distinction between the saints of THAT time and the saints of THIS time, and we will be studying that.

NEXT WEEK: I want to begin by unpacking an example of a specific NT situation that pulls all this imminence and pre-trib stuff together. We'll look at how real people reacted to these things. We'll also be looking at the rapture event itself and the order of events that take place within it.



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Solid Bread Community was started with a passion to teach the truth of God's Word – every part of it, as it was divinely inspired to be understood.

The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don't pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

Second, don't teach what is NOT there. Don't force a passage to mean something it really doesn't.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.

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