

# A Biblical View OF THE END TIMES

## INTRODUCTION TO THE RAPTURE, PART 5

Week #19; May 3, 2026, 6PM

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### REVIEW:

- For the past four lessons, we've been systematically unpacking the Biblical doctrine of the pre-Tribulation Rapture. We have more to learn about it with today's lesson.
- We've discovered some foundational things about the Rapture:
  - **#1**, the Rapture is an **imminent** event – it is CERTAIN to happen, but its timing is UNCERTAIN. No prophetic event needs to precede it.
  - **#2**, saints from all ages of church history have lived in faithful anticipation of the Rapture. Even Paul displays this posture in his letters to various early churches.
  - **#3**, the apostles and the early church fathers – those who were discipled BY the apostles, and then those who were discipled by THAT group – held to a pre-Tribulation Rapture view in their writings.
    - These are folks like Ephraim, Eusebius, Irenaeus, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, and others.
    - See [www.biblefacts.org](http://www.biblefacts.org) and [www.soothkeep.info](http://www.soothkeep.info) for further excellent research on this.
    - The bottom line is the pretribulation Rapture view is not a new idea since John Nelson Darby in the 1800's. That assertion is pure fallacy and willful delusion.

**NOTE:** Here is some insight concerning church history. The **post-tribulation** Rapture view (meaning, the Rapture takes place AFTER the seven-year Tribulation) gained significant push under Augustine (4<sup>th</sup> Century), and then later under Martin Luther and John Calvin.

**QUESTION:** “Now - what have we **already** learned about these three well-known figures from church history?” (Listen very carefully):

1. They **CHOSE** to interpret various passages and themes of the Bible allegorically – rather than literally (especially on matters of Bible prophecy). They **INTENTIONALLY** abandoned a Biblical **dispensational** view.
2. This is why all three subscribed to **amillennialism** – they rejected the clear Biblical truth of a 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth, headquartered in Jerusalem.
3. It's also why they rejected a proper interpretation of **Gen. 6:1-4**, why they pushed the baseless 'Sons of Seth' theory, why they embraced and promoted the heresy of Replacement Theology - - and it's why they were **all** strongly antisemitic.

4. Unfortunately, because these men were influential, their views have since become common for many people in the Reformed or Covenant Theology camp.
5. Within this group, amillennialism is the most common view among their churches and leadership – conversely, the **pre-Tribulation Rapture** view is **rare** in Reformed circles ('food for thought....').

**NOTE:** Last week, we wrapped up our focus on **2 Thess. 2:1-12**. This passage gives us a clear CASE EXAMPLE of this confusion and debate surrounding the pretribulation Rapture.

- We have learned several very important things from this key passage, as well as the complimentary passages of **1 Thess. 4:13-18** and in **1 Cor. 15:51-54**.
  - **#1**, Paul fed this new body of believers a strong diet of Bible prophecy during the short time he was with them. He obviously felt these themes were vital to a strong faith foundation.
  - **#2**, Paul also taught them a pretribulation Rapture position. This is very clear from the context. He followed up his time with them with the letter of **1 Thessalonians** in which he affirmed this position.
  - **#3**, he subsequently wrote **2 Thessalonians** to remind them once more of what he'd taught them. Of note, we learned that Paul wrote **2 Thessalonians** to combat a false teaching that had crept into this new church.
  - **#4**, that false teaching was that this new body of believers had MISSED the Rapture and they were already IN the '*day of the Lord*.'
  - **#5**, we learned the FUTURE '*day of the Lord*' is that timeframe which **starts at the Rapture** and concludes with the end of the Millennial Kingdom. The '*day of the Lord*' follows the pattern of a Jewish day cycle: it starts with darkness and it ends with light.
  - **#6**, therefore, the full future '*day of the Lord*' **kicks off** with the Rapture, it has an initial phase of wrath, judgement, and darkness. It then moves into its second phase – a period of joy, blessing, and light.
  - **#7**, this is why the Thessalonian believers COULD NOT be in '*the day of the Lord*.' They could not be IN the Tribulation. Paul makes it very clear that this period FOLLOWS the Rapture, or as he phrased it, '*our being gathered to Him*.'
  - **#8**, we learned multiple ways the Bible contrasts two groups of people. There are those who will be caught unawares by the Rapture coming '*as a thief in the night*,' and there are those who will NOT be caught unawares by this sudden event.
  - There will be those who are asleep and drunk - versus those who are awake and sober, and those who are '*of the darkness*' - versus those who are '*sons of light*,' and so on.
  - Paul makes it clear that true believers will MISS '*the day of the Lord*' because they will **first** '*be gathered to Him*' (they will have been Raptured).

**NOTE:** All that said, we've looked at various ways Paul corrected this errant idea which had confused these new believers – that they had missed the Rapture and they were going into the Tribulation. Repeatedly, Paul reinforced to them that this notion was WRONG!

**NOTE:** With this lesson, I want to go just a bit deeper on why an **imminent rapture** should also be seen as a **'pretribulation' rapture** – I want to drill the next layer down. This will add to some of the things we've already learned.

**NOTE:** I want to briefly look at 6 additional reasons why the Biblical position on the Rapture supports a "pre-tribulation" stance:

**1. The Lord Himself promised to deliver us from a defined period of global 'trial.'**

- Several passages make this point, but one such clear teaching is seen in **Rev. 3:10**, which is part of the letter John is instructed to write to the church at Philadelphia – **READ:**

*"Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from **the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.**"*

- **NOTE: Revelation chapters 2-3** contain seven letters written to seven REAL historical churches.
- Loosely, there is also a pattern with these letters that appears to conform well to the flow of church history.
- For example, the greater apostate lukewarm church of today is CLEARLY represented by the letter to Laodicea - the 7<sup>th</sup> and last church.
- The letter to Ephesus – the first letter – is the best of the seven letters which represents the challenges and dynamics of the **initial** early church.
- However, at the same time, these seven churches also represent ALL churches of ALL ages as well. **How do we know that?**
  - The letter to each church ends with a plural phrase. For example, in **Rev. 2:7**, it says:

*"Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says **to the churches.**"* (it's plural)

- The fact is, there were many other churches of John's time too, but...
- Some of the prophetic content within these letters has NOT YET occurred, so it is **still** future.....**(EX): Rev. 3:10 (see text again)**
  - ✓ This refers to a future eschatological event - the Tribulation – which the Lord promises to keep His faithful FROM.
  - ✓ The historical church at Philadelphia has long been destroyed and disbanded, yet the truth of this verse **STILL** applies to us today. It **STILL** anticipates a **FUTURE** event.

- ✓ Keep in mind, this is about the promise of a trial that is coming *'on the whole world'* (and not **just** the church in Philadelphia).
- ✓ **NOTE:** I will be doing a more thorough overview of these 'seven letters to seven churches' in a forthcoming lesson.

## 2. Only the pre-tribulation Rapture view preserves the doctrine of imminency.

- As I've clarified before - the other two views of the Rapture negate this important – and self-evident - Biblical doctrine.
- They either identify the Rapture as coming at the middle of the tribulation (mid-trib) or at the very end (post-trib).
- There is therefore NO aspect of 'imminency' with these other two views. Rather, their emphasis is on watching the details of the antichrist and the events of the Tribulation.
- If one assumes the timing of the Rapture can be determined based on other prophetic information and fulfillment - - then the Rapture is not an imminent event.
- **IMPORTANT:** We are reminded again and again in the Bible to wait, watch, and be alert for a time we do not know of.

## 3. The church – AKA, 'bride of Christ' - will be rescued from 'the wrath to come.'

- **NOTE:** This point feels similar to the first one I mentioned here, but it is different in the sense that this point underscores God's mercy and care **alongside** God's *'wrath.'*
- We unpacked this issue in-depth last week. We saw in **1 Thess. 1:9-10** that we are to *"wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead - Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath."*
- As we learned in our last session, this *'coming wrath'* is NOT a comment on our **soteriological salvation** [that is our PRESENT reality]. Instead, it is a comment on our **eschatological salvation** [that is our FUTURE reality].
- This passage describes a future prescriptive event – a time of God's wrath – that we will be RESCUED from.
- The reason is simple: it is an event that is NOT intended for God's true followers. It is not intended for His 'bride.'
- Just as Noah and his family were rescued FROM The Great Flood which they had been told of, and just as Lot and his family were rescued FROM the total destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah which they were told of, so – once again – God plans to rescue His faithful from His prescribed wrath on a defined population which WE have ALSO been told of.
- In fact, this pattern of 'rescue preceding God's prescribed wrath' is emphasized in **Genesis 19:22** where the angel tells Lot, *"Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there."*

- As long as Lot and his family were present, God’s judgment could not be issued. Lot and his family were – in one way of thinking – a ‘preservation’ against God’s wrath for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.
- It is not inaccurate to see true believers today as ‘salt’ in this respect either. We preserve this world from God’s FUTURE wrath by our presence. When we are removed, then His wrath begins.
- This passage highlights this typological pattern of God’s divine care and mercy **within** His prescribed judgment. God ensured Lot’s safety by delaying His wrath until Lot was safe in a nearby town.
- This pattern is made clear in **Luke 17:28-29** – *“Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.”*

#### 4. True Christians are not ‘appointed’ to wrath

- Again, this sounds similar to some of the previous reasons – but it is different in its own right. It’s all about being ‘appointed.’
  - We are ‘appointed’ to die (**Cf. Heb. 9:27**).
  - Jesus is ‘appointed to judge the world with justice’ (**Cf. Acts 17:31**)
  - The Lord ‘appointed’ times for sacred assembly by the Israelites in **Leviticus 23:1-2** (and so on).
  - The Bible has many examples of God ‘appointing’ this or that. He made a sovereign decision that certain things would or would not take place.
- And now we come to **1 Thess. 5:9** which reads, *“God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
- It means true believers in Jesus Christ have been made exempt from this future ‘day of the Lord’ which is a time of God’s ‘wrath.’

**NOTE:** This passage follows one of the strongest passages on the rapture in the Bible (**1 Thess. 4:13-18**) and it must be considered in light of THAT context. It further elaborates on the ‘benefits’ of the pre-Tribulation Rapture.

- (And so a few verses later we read about the fact that we are ‘not appointed to wrath’). It is very simple; we have deliverance FROM this forthcoming event.
  - Think about this. Since so many saints will be martyred during the Tribulation – by far the vast majority - there will be very few survivors at Jesus Christ’s glorious Second Coming.
  - **1 Thess. 5:9** cannot therefore mean that Christ will deliver us ‘during’ the time of wrath, but ‘FROM’ it instead.

- Keep in mind, the Tribulation is ESPECIALLY a time of God's wrath on those that live on the whole earth. As **Rev. 3:10** says - 'to test them' (or to 'try' them, or to 'evaluate' them).
- The operative issue for those being 'tested' here is to PROVE their rigid unfaithfulness, or bring about a decision to repent and turn to Jesus Christ.
- True believers are not encouraged to pass the 'test of this FUTURE time of prescribed wrath, but rather we are instructed to pray in order to ESCAPE it (**Cf. Luke 21:36**).

#### 5. The church is absent in Revelation 4-18

- The church is mentioned 17X in first three chapters of Revelation.
- John called up to heaven as a member of the church in **Revelation 4:1**, and he subsequently looks down on events of the Tribulation in **Chapters 4-18** where the church is no longer mentioned.
- Meantime, immediately AFTER John's type of the Rapture in **vs. 1**, he finds himself in the throne room of heaven where 24 elders (representing the corporate church) are now found.
- NOTE: We will learn more about these elders in a future lesson and why they represent the church - - but the point is the church is 'UP' there, not 'DOWN' here.
- References to the "church" do not appear again until **Ch. 19** when she returns to earth with Jesus Christ, her bridegroom, at Jesus' Second Coming (Why? She's not in the tribulation; she was taken out of it before it started).
- Conversely, Israel is mentioned 26X in **Chapters 4-18**, which is proof of **Daniel 9:24** ("*Seventy weeks are appointed for YOUR people and YOUR holy city.*")
  - The seven-year Tribulation is the last 'week' of those 70 as we will learn - - and the angel tells Daniel it is FOR YOUR PEOPLE, for the Jews (we'll be learning much more about this in later lessons).
  - The Tribulation is also known as '*the time of Jacob's trouble*' (**Cf. Jer. 30:7**).
  - In **Revelation 12:12-17**, Satan makes war against "*the woman*" (this is Israel) who flees into the wilderness for the last 3.5 years of the Tribulation for protection.
  - The bottom line is Israel is the main character – it is the main focus - of this FUTURE time, not the church.

#### 6. There are very distinct differences between the Rapture and Jesus Christ's Second Coming

**NOTE:** I could provide references for each of these things, but that will make this outline choppy - - we'll be seeing each reference in our studies ahead anyways. But here goes....

1. **In the Rapture**, Christ comes in the air for His own and we meet Him there in the air / in the clouds. **In the Second Coming**, Christ comes with His own all the way down to this earth.
2. **In the Rapture**, all Christians are taken up. **In the Second Coming**, nobody is raptured or taken up. Jesus stays down here.
3. **In the Rapture**, Jesus does not stay here to judge on earth. He returns to heaven, and we go with him there. **In the Second Coming**, Jesus stays here to judge the inhabitants of the earth.
4. **In the Rapture**, the church is taken to heaven. **In the Second Coming**, Jesus Christ sets up His kingdom on earth.
5. **In the Rapture**, it is an imminent event (could happen at any moment). **In the Second Coming**, multiple details need to take place, specific timelines are given, and this event cannot occur for at least seven years.
6. **In the Rapture**, there are no signs beforehand. **In the Second Coming**, there are many signs beforehand.
7. **In the Rapture**, it is an event that affects true believers only. **In the Second Coming**, ALL humanity is affected.
8. **In the Rapture**, it is a time of joy for believers. **In the Second Coming**, it is a time of great mourning for unbelievers.
9. **In the Rapture**, there is no mention of Satan. **In the Second Coming**, Satan is bound in the abyss for 1000 years
10. **In the Rapture**, there is the 'Marriage of the Lamb.' **In the Second Coming**, Jesus' bride descends with Him.
11. **In the Rapture**, only His own will see Him. **In the Second Coming**, every eye will see Him.
12. **In the Rapture**, the Tribulation follows. **In the Second Coming**, the 1000-year Millennial Kingdom follows.

**NOTE:** There are multiple reasons we should see the Rapture as a pre-Tribulation event.

I could say more about the chronology of **Revelation**, the primary purpose of the Tribulation being the restoration and redemption of Israel, the details and presence of the 24 elders in heaven BEFORE the events of the Tribulation, the types of Noah and Lot being rescued from God's judgment on a prescribed population, the church being the 'bride of Christ,' and so on. There are various other things which emphasize this **pre-Tribulation Rapture** view.

**NOTE:** These will all be outlined – together with a brief commentary about each – in this handout I am preparing. Might take a couple of weeks to get that put together, but I will.

**NEXT WEEK:** I'll have some concluding thoughts on this Rapture topic. We will also see what the Bible has to say about our glorified bodies and the various resurrection events that are laid out in Scripture.

We will then have two or three lessons on “**What Happens When We Die?**” We’ll learn all about what it **really** means to leave this life and go ‘UP’ or ‘DOWN.’ We will learn about Heaven, Hell, and Hades.

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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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