

# *Eschatology Lesson 8*

## *The Rapture of the Church(2)*

### **THE PURPOSE OF THE RAPTURE:**

1. The main purpose of the rapture is to deliver God's saints from God's Wrath. In order to understand this it must be said that we are not talking about Christians being delivered from persecution, trials, or temptations. Belief in the pre-tribulation rapture has nothing to do with a cowardly desire to escape persecution! God has allowed His people to suffer trials and persecution for more than 2000 years. Why would he ask only the final generation of the Church to endure an unprecedented time of terrible destruction that is not intended for the Church, but as Judgment on an unbelieving world.

A. Persecution: *"Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."* (2 Tim. 3:12)

- Persecution; The Greek word is *dioko*: In any way whatever to harass, trouble, molest one; to persecute; to be mistreated, suffer persecution on account of something.

B. Wrath: *"For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:9) see also (1 Thes. 1:10)*

- Wrath; Greek word is *Orge*: anger exhibited in punishment, hence used for punishment itself

2. To bring the Church Age to an end; Thus opening a door for the Anti-Christ(the lawless one) to be completely revealed. 2 Thessalonians 2: 5-8

A. We are told that the "man of lawlessness" will not be revealed until "he who restrains" is taken out of the way.

-John 16:7-8 we are told that it is The Holy Spirit who will "convict the world concerning sin.." God the Holy Spirit can never be removed from the earth, but, in the sense that he is effectively restraining sin through Christians in whom he dwells, the time will come, once those Christians are gone, that wickedness will abound.

-Some see this as the end of a dispensation: *"The special presence of the Spirit as the indweller of saints will terminate abruptly at the parousia as it began abruptly at Pentecost. Once the body of Christ has been caught away to heaven, the Spirit's ministry will revert back to what he did for believers during the Old Testament period."* (Thomas)

### **EVENTS BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND CHRIST'S RETURN TO THE**

**EARTH:** There are certain events that will evidently take place between the rapture and Christ's glorious unveiling as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

1. The Bema Seat Judgment; According to 2 Corinthians 5:10, all believers of this age will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

- Not for the purpose of dealing with sin, which was fully dealt with on the cross. (Rom 8:1)

- We will give an answer for the quality of our Christian performance for the purpose of evaluation and rewarding. (2 Corinthians 3: 10-15)

- The motives of the heart will be revealed, and only the works the believer has done by faith "in the Spirit"- by faith in the indwelling

presence of God, will survive. The “works of the flesh” (our self-efforts to serve God) will be taken away

2. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb- Revelation 19:7-9

- Christ- the husband of pure virgin “the church” (2 Corinthians 11:2)
- The Invitation is for everyone in the Church age (Luke 14: 16-24)
- The Church is the “Bride” prepared for Christ. (John 3:29)
- This is also a great mystery in scripture (Ephesians 5:32)
- This “marriage supper” is happening in heaven before Jesus physically comes to the earth! His Bride the Church is with him in Heaven before he returns in glory to the earth! Rev. 19:7-9, Matt. 26: 26-30

**THE CHURCH IS MISSING FROM THE TRIBULATION (Revelation 4-19):** In the first three chapters of Revelation, there are constant references to the Church and to the Seven Churches. However Starting Chapter 4, verse 1 where John is told to “come up here”, the Church is obviously absent throughout the Tribulation period.

- Outline of Revelations is given in Chapter 1:19 in which John is told to write the things...
  - He has seen: The things he had seen in his vision of the glorious heavenly Jesus. (Rev. chapter 1)
  - The things which are: This means that John was to write about the things of his present day, the things regarding the Seven Churches of Asia (Revelation Ch.2-3)
  - The things that will take place after this: This means that John was to write about the things that would take place after the things regarding the Seven Churches, the things of the last days. (Revelation Ch. 4-22)
- In Chapter 4, “After these things”, the things pertaining to the Church, John is taken up to heaven in order that he would be shown what must take place after the “Seven Churches”. John is shown the future!
- “I was immediately in the Spirit”: John states that he was already in the spirit in Chapter 1:10. He was already seeing a vision of Jesus yet after the things of the church he was brought up to heaven to see the visions pertaining to the future judgment.
- This is a picture of the Rapture of the church.

**THE 24 ELDERS:** In Revelation chapter 4, after the things of the church John is brought up to heaven where he describes a heavenly scene.

1. They are called “elders”

- They cannot be the tribulation believers. In Revelation 7:13-14 one of the elders asks/then tells John who the believers in verse 9 were. They were those who believed during the tribulation period, not the church age.
- They cannot be angels- Many Post-Tribulationists claim that the 24 elders are simply angels at the throne of the Lamb. This cannot be since the Bible speaks of “all the angels” and then mention the “elders”. These elders are NOT angels!
- They cannot represent the completed Nation of Israel- Revelation 7:1-8 pictures 144,000 Jews and Revelation 12 discusses the presence of Israel on earth during the Tribulation.

2. They are representatives of a larger group. Why 24?
  - The number 24 is found in 1 Chronicles 24-25 where 24 divisions of “priests” and “singers” are representatives of the entire Nation of Israel. But these are not “Priests” or “Singers” but are “elders”
  - The number 24 simply represents a larger complete group as it did in the Old Testament regarding Israel.
3. They sit on thrones: The connection here is with the messages given to the seven churches of John’s day that are listed in Revelation 2-3.
  - *“He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”* (Revelations 3:21)
    - Overcomers are believers in Jesus 1 John 5:4-5
    - Those who sit on the thrones are the true believers in the universal church of Christ
4. They are clothed in white garments:
  - In Revelation 3:5 we are learn of the promise to believers in the churches that they will one day be “clothed in white”
5. They have crowns of gold on their heads: The reference to “crowns” on the head of believers is found in Revelations 2:10 and 3:11.
6. They fall down and worship the One of the throne and His Lamb. Revelation 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 19:4
7. The proclamation of a “New Song”: In Revelations 5:8-10 (KJV) we learn these important words sung by the elders: See verse
  - The Greek word used is “Hamas” Meaning: us, we, our, ect.
    - KJV and NKJV rely upon the Greek text known as the “Textus Receptus” Modern translations have changed “us” and “we” giving it a completely different implication of the meaning.
    - The New Testemant was written in Greek. We have over 5500 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Out of the 5500 manuscripts about 250 of them contain verses from Revelation. But, the number of manuscripts on the “new song” of Revelations 5:8-10 is only 24. Out of the 24 Greek manuscripts, 23 of them read “us” in Revelations 5:9. The only on that does not is Codex Alexandrinus.
    - Some 10,000 manuscripts in Latin are known before the timing of printing. All of them read “us” in Revelation 5:9.

\*The is a clear identification of these 24 elders (who are in heaven during the Great Tribulation) with believers to whom promises are given is unmistakable.

### **SYMBOLIC PARALLELS IN SCRIPTURE:**

1. Noah and His Family: (Gen. 6)The flood of Genesis was a global, not local. If it was a local flood then God is a liar because He said that He would never destroy the earth again with a global flood.
  - The Flood was a judgment on sin and wickedness, not just an act of discipline in which Noah and his family were protected from.

- The Lord connected the flood with His second coming. Matt 24:37-39
  - Other passages: 2 Peter 3; 1 Peter 3:20-21
  - The is likened to the coming Tribulation. Noah and his family in the ark of safety clearly picture the believers who will be taken to heaven before the tribulation begins.
2. Lot and His Family: Another example of symbolic parallelism is the case of Lot who chose unwisely to live in Sodom. Sodom and Gomorrah are known to be cities of great wickedness and sexual sin. They are also pictured in the Bible in a negative way as cities deserving the judgment of God.
- 2 Peter 2:4-9 Connect Lot's story with the story of Noah and the flood.
  - Lot was delivered from God's wrath- disaster and punishment.
  - The Lord also uses the story of Lot as a parallel to believers in Luke 17:28-36
  - Lot is called a "righteous man" in spite of His compromise. 2 Peter