

“The Essentials Of Our Faith”

Session XI

November 21, 2010

Coming World Events: “RAPTURE” For The Church; “TRIBULATION” For The World!

Introduction: The Background of These “Coming Events”.

A. God’s Choice of a “Nation”:

Through the unilateral covenant made with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) God chose a man to become the “father” of a nation → **Israel**. The promises made to this one man became the hope for the future of all mankind. Through Abraham’s descendants God promised to send a “**Redeemer**” for all mankind.

--**Note:** God gave the Law of Moses to His Chosen Nation, Israel, **not as a means of salvation**, but as a “Rule of Life” to govern their conduct in the Promised Land of Canaan. The government of Israel was intended to be a “**theocracy**” – **the rule of God on earth through a chosen representative**. The nation lived under the Dispensation of Law for 1500 years with a repeated pattern of failure to obey the Law or to govern the earth as God intended. This led to God’s judgment.

B. God’s Fulfillment of His “Promise”:

God fulfilled His unconditional promise made to Abraham by sending His “only Son”, Jesus Christ (“**Messiah**”), to be the “**Redeemer**”. The leadership of the Nation of Israel rejected Him, falsely accused Him, and then crucified Him! As the “Lamb of God” (Jn. 1:29), He paid the price of mankind’s “sin-debt” by shedding His sinless blood!

--**Note:** Christ’s “Substitutionary Atonement” became the basis of a new Dispensation – “**Grace!**” (The unmerited favor and blessing of God!)

--**Note:** **Salvation is offered to ALL mankind as a “free gift” by believing in the finished work of Christ! (Acts 16:31)**

C. The Rejection of “Messiah” by Israel:

The Nation of Israel **rejected** their promised Messiah!

1. God “suspended” His dealing with Israel and dispersed them throughout the world, Acts 8:1; Rom. 11:1-36 (note v. 25).
2. God began “calling out” a **new** people – not a nation, but individuals who would believe in Christ and make up the “**Church**”, the **Body and Bride of Christ!**

D. The Unconditional (“Unilateral”) Promises Concerning the Future:

1. To the Bride of Christ:

When the “calling out” of N.T. Christians is completed, Christ promised to **“Come Again”** and carry His Bride to a **“Place”** He has prepared for her eternal dwelling! (Jn. 14:1-3) This event is called the **“Rapture”** of the Church!

2. To the Nation of Israel:

After the Bride has been removed to the safety of Heaven, **judgment** will begin on those who have rejected Christ – the **“Christ-rejecters!”** This period of world history is called the **“Tribulation”** and will be a time of **God’s “wrath”** being unleashed on Satan and on rebellious mankind!

--Note: The **“Tribulation”** period will have a special purpose – to prepare the Nation of Israel for the fulfillment of the **“Kingdom”** promises God made to her in the Old Testament, II Sam. 7:8-17; Jer. 31:31-34; 33:1-26. By the end of this seven year period, Satan will be defeated and all **“Christ-rejecters”** slain, leaving only “believers” in Christ to enter the Millennial reign of Christ! The “Battle of Armageddon” will conclude this judgment process in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom.

The “Rapture” Of The Church

Riverwood Bible Church holds the doctrinal position of a **“Pretribulation Rapture” of the Church, the Body and Bride of Christ.**

- The next event on God’s prophetic timetable is the **“Rapture”** of the Church;
- The Church, the “Bride” of Christ, **will not** go through the **Tribulation** period;
- The **“Rapture”** of the Church **is not** the **“Second Coming”** of Christ to the earth!

A. We Believe the Church will be “Raptured”:

1. The Meaning of the Word “Rapture”:

The word “Rapture” does not appear in the text of Scripture. It comes from the Latin translation (“rapio”) of the Greek word “harpazo” (“to catch up”; “to snatch away”) used in I Thess. 4:17 where Paul answers the confusion of the Thessalonian Christians concerning Believers who have already died. He settles their fears with the assurance that their bodies will be resurrected just before Christians still alive on the earth are “caught up” to be with the Lord. (I Thess. 4:13-18)

--Note: Those who hold an **“Amillennial”** position believe there will be **no** Millennial reign of Christ on the earth and therefore **no “Rapture”** of the Church! (They look for Christ’s “Second Coming” as the next event)

2. The Analogy of the Jewish Wedding:

*“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.
In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were no so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”*
John 14:1-3

“Those who live in a modern Western world do not catch the full significance of Jesus’ promise. This is because Jesus was drawing an analogy from Jewish marriage customs in Biblical times . . .

*The first major step in a Jewish marriage was **betrothal**. Betrothal involved the establishment of a **marriage covenant**. . . . The prospective bridegroom would travel from his father’s house to the home of his prospective bride. Then he negotiated with the young woman’s father to determine the **price** (*‘mohar’*) he would have to pay to purchase his bride. When the bridegroom paid the purchase price the marriage covenant was established; and the young man and woman were regarded as **husband and wife**. From that moment, the bride was declared to be consecrated or sanctified – set apart exclusively for her bridegroom.*

*After the marriage covenant was established, the bridegroom **left** the bride’s home and returned to his father’s house. There he remained **separated** from his bride for twelve months. This separation gave the bride time to gather her trousseau and prepare for married life. Meanwhile, the bridegroom **prepared living accommodations** in his father’s house to which he could bring his bride.*

*At the end of the separation, the man **came to take** his bride to live with him. . . . Although the bride was expecting her bridegroom to come for her, **she did not know when he would arrive**. As a result, the bridegroom’s arrival was preceded by a **shout**. This shout forewarned the bride to be prepared for the coming of the bridegroom . . .*

Shortly after the bride and bridegroom arrived, the other members of the wedding party would escort them to the bridal chamber (‘huppah’*). Before entering the chamber, the bride remained veiled so that no one could see her face. . . . After the marriage was consummated, the bridegroom would announce the consummation to the other members of the wedding party . . . After receiving this good news, the wedding guest feasted and made merry for the next **seven** days.*

During the seven days of the wedding festivities, which were sometimes called ‘the seven days of the huppah’, the bride remained hidden in the bridal chamber. At the end of the seven days, the bridegroom brought his bride out of the bridal chamber, now with her veil removed, so all could see who his bride was.”

--Renald Showers

3. The Analogy of the Jewish Wedding Supports the “Rapture” of the Church:

- a. Jesus Christ “left” His Father’s house to pursue His Bride;
- b. Jesus Christ paid the “purchase price” for His Bride with His blood;
- c. This act established a “marriage covenant” – a legally binding agreement;
- d. The marriage covenant “sanctified” the Bride, the Church, setting her apart exclusively for Christ;
- e. The marriage covenant is symbolized by the cup of “communion”;
- f. Jesus Christ left and returned to Heaven to prepare a “place” for the Church;
- g. The time of “separation” is undefined and the “return” unknown;
- h. The Lord Jesus will “return” for His Bride, announced by a “shout”, and “take her away” to the home He has prepared;
- i. The Church will dress in outer garments of beauty, purified by “fire”;
- j. The Church will be “wed” to Christ at the Marriage Supper in Heaven;
- k. Jesus Christ and His Bride will experience spiritual **Union** for eternity – they will **never be separated again!**
- l. After the seven years of the Tribulation period, Jesus Christ will bring His Bride with Him at His Second Coming for **all the world to see!**

B. We Believe the Church will be Raptured “Before” the Tribulation:

1. The “Time” of the Rapture:

*“The Rapture, which is distinguished from the Second Coming of Christ, is taught in John 14:1-3; I Corinthians 15:51-57; and I Thessalonians 4:13-18. Prior to the advent of the Tribulation, Christ will descend from Heaven, **catching up** the Church to be with Himself while the Tribulation is unleashed on an unrepentant and unbelieving world.”*

--Paul Enns

2. The Arguments for a “Pretribulation” Rapture:

a. The Nature of the Tribulation:

*“The 70th Week of Daniel – the ‘Tribulation’ – is an outpouring of the **wrath** of God throughout the seven years (Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1; 16:1,19). It is described as God’s judgment (Rev. 14:7; 15:4; 16:5-7; 19:2) and God’s punishment (Isa. 24:21-22).”*

b. The Scope of the Tribulation:

*The whole earth will be involved (Isa. 24:1,3,4,5,6,21; 34:2). It also involves God's chastisement of Israel (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:24). If this is the nature and scope of the Tribulation, **it is inconceivable that the Church will be on the earth** to experience the **wrath** of God.*

c. The Purpose of the Tribulation:

*The divine intentions of the Tribulation will be to judge people living on earth (Rev. 6:10; 11:10; 13:8,12,14; 14:6; 17:8) and to prepare Israel for her King (Ezek. 36:18-32; Mal. 4:5-6). **Neither of these pertain to the Church.***

d. The Unity of the Tribulation:

*The Tribulation is the 70th Week of Daniel; Daniel 9:24 makes it clear that it has reference to **Israel**.*

e. The Exemption of the Tribulation:

*The Church is the **Bride** of Christ, the object of Christ's love, **not His wrath** (Eph. 5:25). It would be a **contradiction** of the very relationship of Christ and the Church for the Church to **go through the punishments of the Tribulation**. Specific statements affirming the Church will be kept from the Tribulation (cf. Rom 5:9; I Thess 5:9; II Thess. 2:13; Rev. 3:10).*

f. The Sequel of the Tribulation:

*The signs of Matthew 24 (and numerous other passages) were given to **Israel** concerning the Second Coming of Christ; **no signs**, however, were given to the **Church** to anticipate the 'Rapture' (which means it will come suddenly, as pretribulationists have affirmed). The Church was told to live in the light of the **imminent** coming of the Lord to translate them into His presence (John 14:2-3; Acts 1:11; I Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:4; I Thess. 1:10; I Tim. 6:14; James 5:8; II Pet. 3:3-4)."*

--Paul Enns

--Note: Other interpretations concerning the "time" of the Rapture.

1. The "Partial Rapture" View:

"Only Believers who are watching and waiting for the Lord will be raptured at various times before and during the seven year Tribulation. Those who will be raptured are spiritually mature saints, both dead and living (I Thess. 4:13-18).

2. The "Midtribulation Rapture" View:

The Church, Believers in Christ, are raptured in the middle of the Tribulation period, prior to the Great Tribulation. This view offers the best of the Pre-tribulation and Posttribulation positions. Is also has a mid-70th Week Rapture.

3. The "Posttribulation Rapture" View:

Living Believers are raptured at the Second Coming of Christ, which will occur at the end of the Tribulation. . . . Much of the teaching to the Church concerning the end times is meaningless if the Church does not go through

the Tribulation (Matt. 24:15-20).

4. The “**Prewrath Rapture**” View:

The Tribulation period is divided into 3 stages found in the Olivet Discourse:

1) the beginning of sorrows (Matt. 24:8), 2) the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21), and 3) the Day of the Lord (Matt. 24:30-31). The Rapture will take place between the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord, and the Day of the Lord is the time when God will release his wrath.” --Wayne House

The “Tribulation” Period

A. The Biblical Background:

“The unique, eternal God created the universe for His own benefit and sovereign purpose; therefore, only He has the right to rule the entire universe, and that includes the right to crush any enemy who challenges His rule.

*God gave mankind ‘tenant possession’ of the earth as an inheritance with the intention that mankind function as God’s representative, administering God’s rule over the earth in accordance with His will. This was a **theocratic** arrangement.*

*Mankind forfeited their ‘tenant possession’ of the earth by following Satan’s lead and rebelling against God. As a result, the **theocracy** was lost. Satan usurped the ‘tenant possession’ of the earth and has continued to rule the world system ever since mankind’s fall.*

*God purposed to restore the **theocracy**, which would require the redemption of mankind’s forfeited inheritance. To do so, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to become a man so that, as a **Kinsman**, He could redeem mankind’s ‘tenant possession’ of the earth. Christ paid the redemption price for mankind and their inheritance by shedding His blood on the Cross . . .*

*On the day of His Second Coming to the earth, when Christ confronts Satan and his forces gathered in Israel to try to prevent His return to take possession of the earth (Rev. 19:11-19), He will read publicly the open scroll ‘deed of purchase’ – the final, conclusive evidence that He is the true Kinsman-Redeemer and has the right to **evict** His enemies and take ‘tenant possession’ of the earth. . . . Thus, God will have finished His purpose of restoring the **theocracy** to the earth through the **Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ.**”* --Renald Showers

B. Its Purpose:

*“God’s purposes for bringing **Antichrist** on the world scene are to **punish Israel** for its rejection of its good Shepherd (Messiah) in His first coming; to **shatter Israel’s rebellion** and to **bring them to repentance**; to **judge** the lawless world by giving it the kind of lawless ruler it deserves; to expose the world’s **unbelief** and thereby demonstrate the necessity of the **world’s judgment**; to instigate the **final showdown** between Christ and Satan’s forces; and to **defeat** those forces.”*

C. Its Uniqueness:

*“In describing the period of the Great Tribulation, the Lord said it will be a time, ‘such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall’ (Matt. 24:21). It will be a time of **trouble** unique in the history of the world. . . . Two characteristics will distinguish the Tribulation from all other hard times that the world has seen. First, it will be **worldwide**, not localized . . . The intense local persecutions and calamities of the present day cannot be the beginning of the Tribulation, for that time will affect **the entire world** . . . The uniqueness of the Tribulation lies in its being worldwide and in its **terror**, which will cause men to want to die rather than live.”*

--Charles C. Ryrie

*“The **Tribulation** is the 70th Week of Daniel (Dan. 9:27), a week according to the prophet’s terminology equaling **7 years**. It is the last of a seventy week (490 years) prophecy regarding **Israel’s future** (Dan. 9:24-27), which began in 444 B.C. Sixty-nine weeks (483 years) concluded with the death of Christ (Dan. 9:26). There is a **gap** between the 69th Week (A.D. 33) and the 70th Week (the future **Tribulation** period). As the 70th Week of Daniel, the **Tribulation** has particular reference to **Israel (not the Church)**, because Daniel was told, ‘Seventy weeks have been decreed for **your people**’ (Dan. 9:24). When Jesus detailed the events of the Tribulation in Matthew 24-25, he explained to the disciples what would happen to **the nation Israel**, indicating **the Tribulation has reference to Israel**.”*

--Paul Enns

D. An Overview:

*“The **Tribulation** will begin with the signing of the covenant by the Beast, who promises to protect Israel (Dan. 9:27). Technically, the Rapture does not begin the Tribulation; there may be a brief period of time between the Rapture of the Church and the signing of the covenant. The Tribulation will involve the judgment of God upon an unbelieving world . . . The consecutive series of “Seals”, “Trumpets”, and “Bowl” judgments of Revelation detail God’s **judgment** upon unbelievers, climaxing in the triumphant **return of Christ** to earth with His Bride the Church (Rev. 19:11-21).”*

–Paul Enns