

Will The Church Go Through The Tribulation?

I. BE A BEREAN AS YOU STUDY ESCHATOLOGY

- A. Don't accept BHOP's view of Eschatology (the study of the end times) without seeing it in Scriptures for yourself. Our desire is for you to search the Bible for yourself and to discard anything that you can't see with your own eyes in Scripture much like the Bereans did with Paul's teaching. (Acts 17:11)
- B. The Lord is calling His church to have living understanding of the Bible and to have clarity of what He says through it so we will be able to rightly discern between truth and deception as more and more "false christs" emerge in the end times. (Mat. 24:4-5)

“Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.” (Rev. 3:3)

- C. I want to honor the sincerity and godliness of many who hold to the the pre-tribulation (pre-trib) view, but I do see it as a mistake that will leave many not prepared for the end-time events and judgments. My heart is to always love even in disagreement.

II. MOST CONTROVERSIAL POINT OF BHOP'S ESCHATOLOGY: WE WILL BE HERE

- A. The church will be on the earth to endure **unprecedented persecution** that will be a refiner's fire of purification. (Mat. 24:21-22; Mal. 3:1-5; Rev. 13:7)
- B. The church will be on the earth to experience the **unprecedented outpouring** of the Holy Spirit. (Joel 2:28-32)
- C. The majority of us grew up with the pre-trib rapture view teaches the Church will be raptured to avoid the great end-time crisis, the great tribulation (Mat. 24:21). There is agreement that the Church will be raptured—that is not the issue. The issue lies in timing. I believe the Church will be raptured at the end of the Tribulation, rather than at its beginning.

III. WHY IS PRE-TRIB THE ASSUMED TIMING OF THE RAPTURE?

- A. The pre-trib view was first put forth by **John Darby** who originated the “secret rapture” theory wherein Christ will suddenly remove His bride, the Church, from this world before the judgments of the tribulation.

- B. This idea that comes from the theological idea of **dispensationalism** is less than 200 years old. **The Scofield Reference Bible**, published first in 1909, was how this understanding of the End Times became so widely accepted in the United States. The belief that there is a “secret rapture” of the church will leave many not prepared for the for the events of the Revelation.

IV. COMMON PRE-TRIB PROOF TEXTS

- A. A basic premise: **God has never taken His people to another dimension when trouble has come.** There is some Biblical precedent for His removing people from judgment when they listened to His prophetic forewarning but God did not remove them completely from the earth.

“I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.” And they answered and said to Him, “Where, Lord?” So He said to them, “Wherever the body (dead carcass) is, there the eagles (vultures) will be gathered together.” (Lk. 17:34-37 [paralleled in Mat. 24:36-44])

- B. Jesus describes those taken in judgment in a sudden and unexpected manner. These will be “swept away” in death by God’s judgment coming on the earth. Jesus said that it would be like it was in the days of Noah when He returns to the earth. Many people in Noah’s day were surprised by the flood of judgment that killed them. They carried on with life as normal and ignored the crazy boat builder’s warnings. In the same manner, many will ignore the signs that Jesus described in this Scripture (2 Pet. 3:3-5). Jesus told them clearly that those taken were taken by death to the place the eagle or vultures will eat them. I believe this is a reference to the countless casualties in the midst of the battle for Jerusalem (Ez. 39:17-21; Rev. 19:17-18). So not a passage on rapture before trouble but rather one of the severity of the end time judgments.

“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” (Rev. 3:10)

- C. In speaking to His disciples in John 17, Jesus gives a window into what His heart is for us in the midst of tribulation. He wants to keep us from the hour of trial in this way, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep* them from the evil one.” (Jn 17:15) His desire is not to remove from the planet during trouble but to protect.

*Keep in the Greek [tereo] for both Jn. 17:15 and Rev. 3:10.

“And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (Gen 5:23)

- D. Enoch is often an example of pre-trib rapture. He certainly was one that escaped death and went directly to the presence of God. However, Enoch was taken not to escape judgment but because God liked him. He was taken to another dimension but not to escape judgment rather he was taken to be closer to his Friend.

“When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, ‘Arise...lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city...Hurry, escape...for I cannot do anything until you arrive.’...Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah...” (Gen. 19:15-24)

- E. Lot did indeed escape judgment, but, again, it was not by being taken to another dimension. He was spared because He heeded the warning from the angels and left town before the judgment came. He received the prophetic direction and acting on it in faith to not be in the wrong place when judgment hit. I believe that as the Spirit is poured out on all flesh this type of prophetic direction will be common.

V. THE TIMING OF THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS

- A. A post-tribulation rapture means Christians will be raptured at the end of the Great Tribulation in the context of the Second Coming of Jesus.
- B. After describing the Great Tribulation in Matthew 24:15-26, Jesus states when believers will be raptured in Matthew 24:29-31.

“Immediately AFTER THE TRIBULATION of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. THEN THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and THEY WILL GATHER HIS ELECT from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Mt. 24:29-31 [paralleled in Mark 13:24-27])

- C. The Rapture will not be a secret event separate from the Second Coming of Jesus but will be part of it and will occur in association with the last trumpet (1 Cor. 15:50-52; 1 Thes. 4:16-17; Rev. 10:7; 11:15-17). This trumpet is the last in a series of seven trumpets that are seen in Revelation 8-9.
- D. Paul links the Rapture with the Second Coming. (2 Thes. 1:7-10; 2 Thes. 2:1-3)

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thes. 4:16-17)

VI. THE CHURCH IN THE MIDST OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

- A. The Lord’s dealings with His people through history bears out that we have not been spared from suffering, persecution, and tribulation. Scripture indicates that this will not change as the end time events unfold. The message to the 7 churches of Revelation is to hold fast, to be faithful unto death, to overcome, to persevere so that they would endure to the end and receive their reward given by Jesus.

“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But HE WHO ENDURES to the end shall be saved.” (Mat. 24:12-13)

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” (Rev. 12:11)

“It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.” (Rev. 13:7)

VII. 3 MEASUREABLE SIGNS FROM JESUS THAT WE'RE CLOSE TO THE END OF THE AGE

- A. 3 things that Jesus said related to His return that give us the ability to measure if indeed his return is possible in our generation or not. (When I speak of a generation, I am speaking of a time frame anywhere from 30 years to 120 years since it seems the Bible has that broad of a definition for a generation.) No generation since Jesus walked the earth have all three of these been at work.

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come” (Mat. 24:14)

- B. Even if we do a horrible job, missiologist associated with Call2All* are now saying, it will take no more than 50 years and it could take as little as 10 to have a witness of the gospel in every ethnos. The Call2All is one of the global initiatives that has as its mandate to finish the task of reaching the world with the gospel. The Joshua Project** brings hard evidence of what places are left to reach. *<http://call2all.org/> **<http://www.joshuaproject.net/>

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’” (Mat. 23:37-39)

- C. Jesus relates repentance and revival in Jerusalem directly to His Second Coming. A generation ago we had no Israel and no Jerusalem. For the first time in 1800+ years, we actually have Jews living in Israel that have the potential to fulfill this prophecy.
- D. They can recognize Jesus as their Messiah and have the chance to invite Him back to set up His rule in Jerusalem. The Jews will finally see Jesus in the way they always knew their messiah would arrive. He will be a victorious King and will literally liberate them from the clutches of a military coalition that are bent on their destruction. Even now there is a growing number of believers in Jerusalem that are declaring this with perseverance. There are 4 Houses of Prayer in Jerusalem. Literal watchmen standing on the walls night and day giving the Father no rest until He ultimately makes Jerusalem a praise on the earth (Is. 62:6-7)

“And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Lk. 18:7-8)

- E. Jesus knits night and day prayer and the breaking in of speedy justice with His Second Coming. Crying out day and night, speedy justice and the Son of Man finding faith on the earth when He comes back. There has certainly been expressions of night and day prayer throughout history. A bunch of monks did it a lot, the Moravians kept prayer meeting going for over 100 years. But it was always isolated to a particular group or region.
- F. What is happening now is an explosion. I can remember 5 years ago when I tried to find out more about this “crazy” thing called the prayer movement I could find minimal info. Today as I google “prayer movement”, I am amazed at the explosion of people interested in night and day prayer and the groups that have this as a stated purpose.
- G. The Luke 18 cry from the saints on earth will join with the Revelation 6:10 cry of the martyrs in heaven. These two prayers are one in the same. The cry for God to break in and make the wrong things right. To bring justice. Jesus is merciful. He is slow to anger and rich in love, but He will not be silent for ever. This age will culminate with Jesus answering the cry of the martyrs in heaven and the saints on the earth. He will avenge them speedily. Never before in history has there been such a desire for night and day prayer as there is now. There is a global expression of the saints’ persistent and consistent cry for Jesus to break in with speedy justice. If this movement continues to grow and mature as it has in the last 5 years, there will be literal night and day prayer happening in every nation on the earth in 20 years.