

Signs of the End of the Age The Doctrine of the Rapture

Studio Session 99

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One of the biggest and most controversial subjects today in the church, church circles, is the doctrine of the rapture. Simply put, the doctrine says: It really doesn't matter what is going to happen on the earth; we won't be here. And that conclusion is reached by a reading of Scripture, which is a true reading of Scripture that acknowledges we will be caught up to meet the Lord. Paul said in **II Thessalonians, chapter 2, "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him..."** (Inserted – **II Thessalonians 2:1a**) So we will be gathered to meet the Lord. So the doctrine of the rapture says, "It doesn't matter what is going to happen. By the time that these things start we will be out of here. We will be caught up just before the trouble starts."

Well I am personally not opposed to that idea, especially when you consider what the trouble will be, but it is not a Biblical idea. It is true we will be caught up to meet the Lord but I want for us to explore, using those very Scriptures that are used to say we will get out early—using those very Scriptures, I want for us to explore what the Bible actually says. The importance of this subject cannot be overstated. It is either that we will get out early, in which case we really don't need to worry about being prepared or we will be here, and being prepared is not only a nice thing it is the most important thing that the church could be paying attention to at this point, especially considering what the times are beginning to look like for us every day. Every day you turn on the news you begin to see indications of greater and greater trouble.

It is not that we love the thought that trouble is coming. There are some people who have a macabre sense of excitement because danger lurks around every corner. Personally, I would rather have a very quiet life, wait for my grandchildren and enjoy old age. Personally, I would rather have that than to be disturbed by alarms and the things that are to come upon the earth that I have been describing in this series entitled "The End of The Age"—as the Bible describes this period of time. Like you, I would rather have a quiet life but unfortunately it is not likely to be so because of the lateness of the hour.

God knew that a generation would live at that time and He planned for such a generation

to be the glorious representation of the person of Christ, his triumphant majesty and awesome victory over his enemy. But such a status cannot be attained apart from the context that brings it about, and that is what we are saying. The worst thing we could do is be derelict in warning the people of this age and in helping them to become ready. That is perhaps the worst thing we could do. It would be a gross dereliction of the duty of leadership.

If you think that you are going to get out early, then there is no real incentive or need to be prepared, and being prepared, it's not like learning new doctrines and practicing new hymns and so on. It is understanding that great trials will come upon you that God will permit. And sometimes He will even initiate this trial so that your response will be predictably faithful, so that when your enemy comes and when he unleashes that which God permits him to unleash upon the planet in pursuing the most complete expression of his deviant nature, so that he himself is judged on the foundation of what he does and says—the very things we have been describing in this series—then you will be ready in that day. Not only to stand your ground, but to represent the glorious alternative of Christ alive in you. So preparedness has to do with how you are meant to be readied to go through exactly this kind of time and circumstance.

Some people who have believed that we are going to be here have thought that the best way to prepare themselves is to remove themselves from the society as a whole and retreat to enclaves that they personally control. Well that would be fine if the enemy's approach were territorial. His approach is systemic, and such removal is pointless and it will do no good because every system upon which you rely for life will be co-opted and brought under the control of the evil one. So it doesn't matter if you live on a farm in Alaska or you live in a condominium underground in Utah. Unless you don't need to come up to breathe, and truly become a subterranean being or a recluse in the forest... if that would help you then there would be some value to that, but it will not help you because an absolute control of the flow of information and communication represents the very systemic way by which this culture of control is meant to be fostered. You cannot escape... quite literally, and it is folly to suggest that you can, and efforts spent in the pursuit of that kind of solution is bound to disappoint horribly. So if you are listening to this and you have engaged in some form of removal in the hope that somehow this will make you ready, you are deceived by that idea and you still have time to back out of it. You are simply wasting time and making yourself vulnerable.

The basic question that I want to address in this broadcast is whether or not we will be allowed to escape before these horrors are brought forth on the earth. The argument that is used is really kind of a simplistic argument. It takes things that are true but works to a conclusion that is false. It is sort of a syllogistical argument where premises of that argument are true but the conclusion is false because the premises do not adequately present what is in fact true. So they say for example, "God never punishes the righteous

with the wicked.” That is true. “The wrath of God represents the punishment of God upon the beast.” That is also true. “Therefore the church will be taken out so as to avoid the wrath of God upon the beast.” Not true. Why? If the first two are true why is the conclusion not true? Because the conclusion is not related to the premises. And in principle part, because there is a clear alternative to that conclusion.

Using the analogy of Israel in Egypt in the days of the plagues, and the vials of the wrath of God, the thing that constitutes the Great Tribulation is strikingly similar to the ten plagues that decimated the Egyptians. My question is: Where were the Hebrews when God was raining down his wrath, his great tribulation... his great tribulation upon Egypt? Where were the Jews? They were in a part of Egypt known as Goshen. They were not in the Promised Land. God didn't take them out of Egypt first... take them across the desert into the Promised Land and then rain down his judgment upon Pharaoh. Why? Because God knows how to protect his people in the midst of the pouring out of his wrath.

So the argument, the conclusion of the argument, is not warranted by the premises that precede. Yes, God will pour out his wrath upon the beast and yes, God never pours out his wrath upon his own people. That is true. The righteous do not suffer with the wicked. But to state that therefore the saints are going to be taken out because the Bible says there will be a time when they will be taken out, that's not necessarily a conclusion that relates to the two previous premises because there is a clear alternative and the example is of God protecting Israel while it was in Egypt.

That leaves us free to examine the question of “When will the rapture occur?” The rapture will occur—if you understand “rapture” to be the catching away, the taking up, the catching out of the saints—yes, that will occur. The question is: When? So let's explore that now in Scripture. There is only one reference in the Scriptures to the saints being taken out, and even the most ardent believers in the rapture will have to concede this point. For example, when the rapture occurs the saints will be changed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye. The children of God will be changed in just the blink of an eye.

“The blink of an eye,” as used in the Greek means in the smallest measure of time...you can't further subdivide time beyond that measure. So [in] less time than it takes to snap our fingers the righteous will be changed from these human, earthly bodies into something that can be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Now you have heard all kinds of things about that. You have heard how one day, in the middle of the day or sometime like that, that suddenly airplanes will be without pilots because the Christian pilots have just been raptured out, or taxi cabs will be left without their drivers because the Christian drivers were taken out, and so on and so forth. And millions of people will be suddenly just missing from their desks and from their homes and from their work and wherever they are and no one will know what happened to them and they will evolve

some kind of explanation for why they were suddenly all taken out.

So the view is that the world continues on and the Christians have been taken up to heaven; they have been transformed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye [and] taken to heaven. Again, this is a theology that is part truth and part fiction. The Scriptures do say that the saints will be changed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, but once again the question is: When? So let's identify this precisely in Scripture and for that I would like to encourage you to read with me where it does say that this will happen (that is: that the saints will be changed). This is **I Thessalonians, chapter 4, verse 13**, **“Brothers,”** Paul says, **“...we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.”**

In other words, we don't want you to be uninformed about our brothers who have already died and we don't want you to grieve at their departure as the rest of men who have no hope. When someone who loves the Lord dies, we grieve because of what we have lost, not because the separation is permanent—because indeed it is not—and that is what he is saying, **“I want to tell you what happens to the brothers and sisters who have died.”** He says, **“We believe...”** (This is the standard belief of all Christians) **“We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe...”** So because Jesus died and rose again, what is he about to tell us? That those who die in him, though they are now dead, they too will rise again. Right?

So he says, **“...and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive...”** (That is the ones of us walking around on the planet who will be changed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye) **“...we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord,”** (So the event is about the day when the Lord comes) **“...left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not...”** I'd like for you to say those two words with me: certainly not. What does that mean? It means: certainly not. We will, **“... certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.”** (Inserted – **I Thessalonians 5:13-15**)

What is he saying? He is saying that when the Lord Jesus is coming, we who are still alive who are meant to be caught up to meet him—we will not be caught up to meet him before those who have already died and have been buried, have been resurrected. He begins by saying, **“I want you to know what is going to happen to those who have died.”** And he says, **“We are going to come again with the Lord and that will happen at the point where those who have fallen asleep in Christ are first resurrected.”** Stay with me... **“certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.”**

(Inserted – actual verse—**“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that**

Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 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. Therefore encourage each other with these words.” – I Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Now here are the events as he puts them forth as they will occur, “For the Lord himself...” The first thing that will happen is: “...the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God...” So like the announcement of the coming of the king, there will be a trumpet sound—trumpet blast—and that trumpet blast will be enough to arrest everyone in their tracks, no matter what they are doing. When you hear the sound of the trumpet, you stop. Then the archangel will announce the reason for the trumpet. This is exactly as you would expect the announcement of the coming of a king. If a king is about to enter the room, the hall; first there is the flourish of the pages, sound of the trumpets; stop everybody, get everybody's attention focused upon the importance of the entrance of the king and then a page or a herald will announce, “Ladies and gentlemen, his majesty the king.”

The Jews have a feast called Rosh Hoshanna. Today, their understanding of Rosh Hoshanna is that it is a day to renew yourself, to renew vows and pledges and a good time to just take stock of your life. They don't understand that it is the feast of trumpets and the point is, like all the events that affect the Jews have happened on various feast days of the Jews, so with the return of the Lord, He will come on the day—I believe on the last day—of the feast because on the last day is when the trumpet sounds. It is a feast meant to symbolize the fact that the King will return.

So the events then: sound from the heavens; the voice of the archangel announcing the coming of the Lord; the sound of the trumpet indicating the arrest of all attention; and then what? Then, it says, “**...and the dead in Christ will rise first.**” Rise where? Well the Lord is coming; they will rise to meet him. They are the first ones to rise to meet him. Now we know what “certainly not” means. The living, “will certainly not precede those who have already died in Christ.” Those who are to be changed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, will certainly not precede those who have already died in Christ.

But what is the overall event? The overall event is not the rising of the dead or the transformation, in the twinkling of an eye, of the living. The overall context in which this is occurring is what? The return of the Lord; the announcement from heaven of the

coming of the King; the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God: that is the last event. After that, Jesus comes. At this point we are all the way through the last of the seven years of Daniel's seventy weeks. The last 'seven'—that is interrupted midweek by the one who creates the abomination—the next three-and-a-half are the reports of the vials of the wrath of God. God pours out his judgments upon the beast, deconstructing his lie; showing him to be the base liar that he is and this is the wrath that is to be poured out on him. At the end of that, the Lord comes.

It is when the Lord is actually coming with the clouds of heaven—this same Jesus, according to **Acts: 1**, that was taken up from us into heaven—it is when He is actually coming again, by the sounds of the trumpet and the announcement of the archangel—that's the time when first the dead in Christ will rise and secondly, those who are still alive will be changed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye. (Inserted – actual verse —**“After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’” – Acts 1:9-11**) So when will the rapture occur? Not before a. The return of the Lord—He is literally coming with the clouds of heaven, and b. The resurrection of the dead. That is what this says.

Now there are those who will say, “Well, He is going to actually gather out some of the saints first and then he will come and gather the rest and gather the dead.” There is nowhere in the Scriptures where it says [that], and at this point you are talking about two raptures. But that doesn't exist in the Scriptures. The transformation—in the twinkling of an eye—of the living saints, and their being gathered up to meet the Lord; that's the only reference to it in the Scriptures. It is not two of those... just one. And that will certainly not happen... certainly not happen until the dead in Christ have been first raised. Interesting, isn't it? You never hear of the talk of the pre-tribulation rapture, or even the mid-tribulation rapture... you never hear talk of it in the context of the resurrection of those who have already died. Isn't that shocking? And yet that is its context.

I Corinthians, the **15th chapter**, tells us the same thing. It says, “Listen...” **Verse 51, I Corinthians 15**, “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.” Everyone who belongs to the Lord will be changed... the dead and the living. “...in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet.” What is the sound of the trumpet about? It is the announcement of the return of the Lord. So this gives us exactly the same context, because the Lord is coming back. “For the trumpet will sound...” Look at this: First it talks about those who will not all sleep and then he is talking about those who have been asleep. “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.” Who are the “all?” The ones who are alive and the ones who are dead. “...in a

flash, in the twinkling of an eye, the trumpet will sound, for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will all be changed.”

(Inserted – actual verse—“**Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.**” – I Corinthians 15:51,52)

So the living will be changed and the dead will be changed. The nature of the change is: you go from being perishable to imperishable; from mortal to immortality; from a body of the earth to a body from heaven—a complete change. The body that we have now can be killed, like the body Jesus had before He was resurrected from the dead. The body we will have cannot be killed, like the one He had after he was raised from the dead. That body was capable of moving through walls and at the same time that same body was able to eat fish. So that body could perform in different dimensions and be the same body because it would adapt to the one circumstance and adapt to the other just as readily. “While they beheld, Jesus was taken up, a cloud received him out of their sight.”—without strings, wires or pulleys—because that is what that body is capable of doing.

Here is this final question: If, when we die, we go to heaven, why is there a need for the dead to be raised? The answer is very simple: The only thing about us that will ever die is our bodies. Our spirits and souls never die, and upon the point where they are separated from the body—the condition known as death—the spirit and soul go to heaven where they wait in the presence of God. The body goes into the dust of the earth. At the sound of the trumpet, the body, which died, is raised and joined with the spirit and soul, coming out of the heavens with the Lord, because the Scriptures say, “God will bring us, with Christ.” They will be joined together—body and soul—joined together, and will exist upon the earth in the presence of the Lord... totally victorious, having fully overcome. We will not escape early; we need to be here to show forth the fullness of the glory of God. I’m Sam Soleyn; God bless you. I’ll see you next time.

Scripture References :

II Thessalonians 2:1a

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Acts 1:9-11

I Corinthians 15:51,52