

Introduction to the Future

The Future, Session 1

Pre-Tribulation Rapture Basics

- The Lord will remove the church from the earth before the great tribulation
- That event is imminent, could happen at any moment and there are no events that must happen first
- The tribulation directly concerns Israel, is God's judgment of Israel for abandoning their faith and crucifying the Messiah
- The tribulation is part of the Day of the Lord

Pre-Tribulation Concerns

- Doctrinal statement: "Christians are told repeatedly in the New Testament to be watchful for the Lord's appearing. Never are they taught to watch for the Great Tribulation or the appearance of Antichrist. To expect that such things must happen before the Rapture destroys the teaching of imminence with which the New Testament is replete."
- Imminence
 - "Imminence" indicates rapture's about to occur, nothing must happen first
 - Jesus tells us to be alert, that we won't know the day or hour of his return
 - Mt 24:36, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."
 - Rev 14:14-16, God will send an angel to tell Jesus it's time to gather the saints
 - Mt 25:13, "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."
 - Jesus explains a sequence of events; the rapture is not the first event
 - Mt 24:21, "For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now."
 - "great" (Gk, adj, *megas*): remarkable or out of the ordinary in degree, magnitude or effect; i.e., great or extreme
 - "distress" (Gk, noun, *thlipsis*): distress, affliction, tribulation
 - v 21, "there will be *megas thlipsis*" or "extreme distress" or great tribulation
 - few verses later: v 29, "Immediately after the distress of those days..."
 - "distress" (Gk, noun, *thlipsis*)
 - What *thlipsis* does he mean in verse 29?
 - Mt 24:29-31, ²⁹ "Immediately after the distress of those days 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' ³⁰ At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."
 - What event is described in verse 31?

- The Lord's appearance & the rapture occur "after the distress of those days"
- He said we'll see signs & begin to anticipate his coming for us
- Some people object at this point because they view this as a second "catching away" for the people who became Christians during the great distress; i.e., after the first rapture
 - If that's the case, then Jesus made a major mistake by forgetting to mention the "first" rapture
 - He wasn't mistaken; there's no scriptural evidence for two raptures
 - Mt 24:4-8, Jesus describes events during what he calls the "beginning of birth pains"
 - v 9, "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me."
 - Who is Jesus talking about when he says, "you will be handed over" and "you will be hated by all nations"?
 - v 13, "... but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."
 - "saved" (Gk, verb, *sozo*): (1) deliver from the penalties of judgment [Mt 1:21, "he will save his people from their sins"]; (2) heal, make well, make whole [Mk 5:34, "Your faith has healed you"] (3) deliver or rescue from danger, keep alive, protect, make safe and sound [Mt 14:30, Peter sinking in the water, "Lord, save me!"]
 - v 15, "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation....'"
 - When will the "abomination" be put in the holy place?
 - Who is "you" in this verse and where will they be?
 - If Jesus was referring to people who believed in him after the rapture, wouldn't he say so, instead of making general references, like "when you see standing...?"
 - v 22, "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened."
 - Who are "the elect"?
 - v 23, "At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!'...."
 - Who is "you" in this verse?
 - v 29, "Immediately after the distress of those days...."
 - v 30, "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky...."
 - v 31, "And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."
 - Who are the "elect"?
 - What event is this?
 - Does it occur before or after the great distress/tribulation?
- Mt 24:32-33, ³² "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door."

- Why would he say that if we're caught away before any of this happens?
- 1 Th 5:2, 4, ² "... for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night..." ⁴ But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief..."
- Bible states Lord's return is near (close in time), not imminent (nothing precedes it)
 - Jas 5:8, "... the Lord's coming is near."
 - Rev 22:10, "... the time is near."
- Nearness and imminence are different
- Appearance of Antichrist
 - Doctrinal statement: "We believe that the Antichrist will be revealed after the rapture of the Church, when Christ will come to take His followers to heaven."
 - 2 Th 2:1-3
 - ¹ Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. ³ Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.
 - Who is the "man of lawlessness" in verse 3?
 - He'll be revealed before what occurs, according to verse 1?
 - 2 Th 2:6-8(a)
 - ⁶ And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. ⁷ For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed..."
 - Traditional interpretation: "the one who now holds it back" is who?
 - Biggest problem: that interpretation violates the context
 - I suggest there are many biblical examples of spiritual beings restrained or held back until the proper time, then are released
 - Rev 9:14, an angel is commanded to release the 4 angels
 - v 15, they'd been kept ready for that very hour & day & month & year
 - 2 Thessalonians does not state or mean the believers with Holy Spirit must be removed from earth for man of lawlessness to be revealed; rather, he'll be revealed "at the proper time"
- God's wrath
 - Doctrinal statement: "The Tribulation directly concerns Israel and is God's judgment for long apostasy (abandonment of religious faith) and neglect of the Messiah – Jesus Christ."
 - God's wrath during tribulation is an assumption based on anti-Semitism
 - Lk 21:23(b), "There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people."
 - "wrath" (Gk, noun, *orge*): anger, judgment, wrath
 - A general reference to *orge*; not specifically God's wrath

- Jas 1:20, "... for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."
 - "anger" (Gk, noun, *orge*)
- Rev 11:18, "The nations were angry; and your wrath has come."
 - same Greek word group – noun & verb: anger, to be angry; fury, to be furious, wrath, to be full of wrath
- I suggest the anger/judgment/wrath poured out on Israel during Great Trib is Satan's wrath in which he's trying to destroy everyone associated with the true God
- Another problem: great tribulation is said to be part of day of the Lord
- They're separate periods with a major event between them
- What happened to the Jews in Old Testament times when they ignored their covenant with God?
- The Jews have already received judgment for ignoring their covenant with God & crucifying the Messiah
- To claim God will punish 21st century Jews for what their 1st century ancestors did accuses him of double jeopardy, multiple punishments for the same sin, and punishing people for what their ancient ancestors did; totally unjust!
- A gross distortion of scripture & slanderous accusation against God's character!
- Pre-trib perspective easily causes people to believe we won't experience any real difficulties before the Lord takes us away
 - That's a very American Christian perspective not held by believers around the world
 - People who rely on pre-tribulation rapture are totally unprepared for beginning of birth pains
 - I'm convinced that's a major reason Jesus said there will be a great falling away from the faith preceding great tribulation, probably during the beginning of birth pains (Mt 24:10)
- Some unbelievably great things are on the near horizon
 - A great awakening is already beginning, but most American Christians aren't ready for it
 - God doesn't force himself on people
 - Please humble yourself before God, cry out desperately to him & allow him to do what he wants in your life; don't stop until it happens
- We also need to acknowledge that whatever God allows us to experience, he'll use for our benefit, including spiritually refining, strengthening & maturing us
 - He's preparing us for greater things; things never seen before on earth
- Please pray about this, read the scriptures yourself and let Holy Spirit guide you into all truth, whatever that might be

Closing

- "No fear. God's in control and we can trust him to do what's best for us and his kingdom."