

INTRO: Last week I spoke to you about the Rapture of the church from 1 Thessalonians 4. My sermon title was THE CHRISTIAN'S GREATEST COMFORT. The topic of the rapture should bring a smile to the face of every Christian. To know that the Lord cares about His children enough to come take us out of a harsh and sinful environment and take us to be with Him, and His desire to live with us forever, should bring joy to our hearts.

The rapture of the church and the events that take place after, are known as eschatological events. Eschatology is the study of the end times.

Beginning with the rapture and continuing through the tribulation period, on into the millennial reign, and the eventual setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth, everything described in the prophetic teachings of Daniel and Revelation, and to a lesser degree in other places in the Bible, are considered eschatological studies.

Simply, what we're talking about is WHAT HAPPENS NEXT. We are in the here and now, the grace age of the church, but this is not all there is. Time won't just continue as is. Things will change. There is something on the horizon, and today I want to talk about it. So I'm preaching on the subject, "WHAT HAPPENS NEXT".

Before we talk about what happens after the rapture, let's look at the Bible, God's Holy Word, and see what it says will be happening around the world just prior to His coming. The Bible is clear in **Matthew 24:36** that *"no one knows the day or hour of the Lord's return, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."* But Jesus did tell His disciples in that same discourse of Matthew 24 that many signs will precede His coming. And He tells them to watch for the signs and take heed.

So, what are these signs? There are 10 of them...

1. A Time of Deception: **Matthew 24:5** *"For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many."*
2. A Time of Dissension: **Matthew 24:6-7** *"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars... 7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom..."*
3. A Time of Devastation: **Matthew 24: 7** *"...There will be famines..."*
4. A Time of Disease: **Matthew 24: 7** *"...pestilences..."*
5. A Time of Disasters: **Matthew 24: 7** *"...and earthquakes in various places..."*
6. A Time of Death: **Matthew 24: 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."*
7. A Time of Disloyalty: **Matthew 24:10** *"...many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other"*
8. A Time of Delusion: **Matthew 24:11** *"...many false prophets will appear and deceive many"* It is likely that this delusion will be facilitated by increased drug use. One characteristic of the end time's false religion will be what Revelation 9:21 calls "sorceries". The Greek word is Pharmakos, from which we get our word pharmacy. It is an ancient reference to the ingestion of drugs.

9. A Time of Defection: **Matthew 24:12** *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold”* People will turn away from God, and turn against one another.

10. A Time of Declaration: **Matthew 24:14** *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”*

“AND THEN THE END WILL COME”. That’s an ominous statement. Without the knowledge of scripture it would be most unsettling. Thankfully, we do have God’s Word to answer the questions we might have.

To help give understanding, the vast majority of end time events—apocalyptic events—will be played out in two arenas...EARTH and HEAVEN. Let’s notice...

I) THE TRIBULATION: This is what the Bible calls the period of time on earth that follows the rapture of the church. It will last for 7 years. As the word denotes, the *tribulation period* will be far worse than things are today. **2 Thessalonians 2:7-8** *“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...”*

The events of the tribulation are recorded in the Book of Revelation, chapters 6-18. The first 3 ½ years will know a false peace as alliances are made with the nations of the world and the “lawless one”—the Antichrist. But even during this time of supposed peace there will be a decline in morality and conditions will worsen, as God’s anger burns against the wicked. During the last 3 ½ years, the Antichrist will be empowered to sit at the center of the tribulations evil as he personifies Satan.

NATURAL DISASTERS: The tribulation period will see the world giving way to death and many natural disasters will occur.

The sun will turn black, the moon becomes red, and great earthquakes will be common: **Revelation 6:12** *“I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red,”*

When Jesus died on the cross, the whole earth darkened at midday. When Egypt was judged, there was a blackness of night. When the Lord descended at Mt. Sinai, the mountain was shrouded in black clouds. Likewise, darkness will fall on the earth at the onset of the tribulation period.

Stars will fall from the sky: **Revelation 6:13** *“and the stars in the sky fell to earth”*

The Greek word used here for stars is the word *Aster*. It refers to luminous bodies in the sky other than the moon and sun. It is referring to asteroids that will pummel the earth.

The mountains and islands will be moved: **Revelation 6:14** *“The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.”*

A devastating effect of the earth being hit by multiple asteroids. All of life and Earth itself will be changed.

I) THE TRIBULATION: CONTINUED

The ocean will become bloody: **Revelation 8:8-9** *“The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, 9 a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”*

The far reaching implications of this judgement is beyond imagining. Oceans occupy about ¾ of the earth’s surface, so the extent of this judgement will be staggering.

The fresh water supply will be poisoned: **Revelation 8:10-11** *“The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water— 11 the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.”*

This literal star of meteor will crash into the earth and poison the water supply.

This is not an exhaustive list of the things that will take place during the tribulation. Read it for yourself! Suffice it to say, it’s going to be bad.

Other questions arise when we speak of this time...

When will the rapture and tribulation occur? As the Word of God showed us earlier, no one knows the day or hour when Christ will come and these events are set into motion. But according to the Bible, the return of Christ is imminent!

Hebrews 10:24-25, 37 *“Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching”... 37 “Yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry”.*

Paul, who knew the scriptures well, was expecting Christ to return in his day. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. V 17 “and WE which are alive and remain...”

Will people be saved during the Tribulation period? Keep in mind, there will not be any believers left on earth at the beginning of the Tribulation period. However, God’s Word tells us that there will be two witnesses and 144,000 sealed Israelites who will proclaim the truth during the Tribulation (Revelation 11, 14). Also, there will be the silent witness of the Word of God. Bibles literally cover the earth. It’s the best selling book of all times. Undoubtedly, given the extreme nature of the Tribulation, people will read the Bible in hopes of an explanation. People will be saved during this time...**MANY PEOPLE!**

Revelation 7:9, 13-14 *“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands...Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes who are they, and where did they come from?” 14 I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”*

I) THE TRIBULATION: CONTINUED Last Question...

If I can be saved during the tribulation, why should I change my life now? Just as death terminates the day of Grace for those who reject Christ, so the rapture will end the day of grace for those who have rejected Him. Those who have resisted the gospel message in this time, will succumb to strong delusions and believe a lie. There will be no salvation for those who have heard the gospel message prior to the rapture of the church. **2 Thessalonians 2:10-12** *“and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”*

CONCLUSION: We've only scratched the surface of what will happen on earth after the church is taken out. Next week we'll look at what will happen in Heaven after the rapture.

The question today is, What does all this mean to you? Are you ready to go should the Lord come today? Have you made Jesus Lord of your life. Are you a Christ follower? Are you certain? Today, you can make it sure. By believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and committing your life to Him, you can know for certain that you will take part in the rapture of the church and miss the tribulation that follows here on earth.

1 John 5:11-13 *“And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”*

John 3:16, 36 *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life...Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”*

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