

# The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Are You Ready for the Rapture? (Part 2)

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Last month we began the message with some thoughts concerning The Expressions about the Rapture. We covered the Post-tribulation Rapture and finished with just a few comments on the Mid-tribulation Rapture. We will continue looking at that false view now.

Those who hold to the mid-tribulation rapture say that the church will go through the first half of the rapture, and then will be removed before the worst part begins. They may use several verses to supposedly prove their teaching, but most of it hinges on Revelation 11:11-12. Those verses say, *“And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.”* They quote these verses and say, “See, it says, ‘Come up hither.’ That describes the rapture.” The words may be the same ones that Jesus says when He comes to rapture the church, but He is not speaking to the church in this passage. These words are spoken to the two witnesses whose ministry during the Tribulation period is described beginning in Revelation 11:3. Some may say that the “two witnesses” are symbolic of the entire church, but there is absolutely nothing in Revelation 11 to indicate that these are symbolic and not two literal men. If something is symbolic in Revelation it will have the words “like unto,” “as,” or something similar in meaning to indicate that it is symbolic. If there is no word to indicate symbolism, then it must be taken literal. Revelation 11 describes two literal men who will be on the earth during the first half of the Tribulation. Some think they are Moses and Elijah. Others think they are Enoch and Elijah. Still others, including me, think they are men alive on the

-2-

earth at that time whom God uses to proclaim His message. They have power to do great miracles and are probably greatly responsible for the many redeemed described in Revelation 7. When their ministry is concluded by the midpoint of the Tribulation, God will allow the Antichrist to kill them. After lying in the street of Jerusalem for three days, God will then call them up to Heaven unto Him. This is a wonderful thing that is described in this chapter and will literally take place. But it does not describe the rapture of the church. Only two people will be resurrected at that midpoint of the Tribulation—the two witnesses. Many, according to Revelation 11:12, will see what is happening, but only the two witnesses are resurrected and raptured out of the world at that time. Again, Revelation 11 does not in any way refer to the church. It is describing God’s calling unto Him the two witnesses.

There is another view that is similar to the Mid-tribulation teaching. It has been around for over 20 years but is really just the Mid-tribulation renamed. It is called the Pre-wrath Rapture. Supposedly, a man who had held to the Pre-tribulation view was troubled by some verses that he read and “discovered” that he had been wrong. He then revealed that the Bible teaches that the church will go through part of the tribulation but will be raptured out before the worst part, the wrath of God part, of the Tribulation begins. The problem with this teaching is that they have no evidence to say that the early part of the Tribulation does not contain God’s wrath. Revelation 6 describes the beginning of the Tribulation. It begins with the description of the seven seals, and by the end of the chapter, the people on the earth are begging to be hidden *“from the wrath of the Lamb.”* Millions are killed in these judgments that the Father and Jesus send upon the earth. Again, Revelation 6 is the first chapter that describes the Tribulation and judgment begins early. There is no “peaceful” first three years. All seven years are full of God’s judgment. I sometimes jokingly say that I believe in a Pre-wrath rapture, but I believe, based on what the Bible teaches and what we will cover in just a little bit, that the church will be raptured out BEFORE the tribulation begins.

There is a fourth view that needs to be mentioned. It is called the Partial Rapture View. Those who hold to this view say that only those who are saved and looking for Jesus to come back will be raptured. Those who are saved and not looking will be left on the earth along with the unsaved. I am not exactly sure what passage they use to “prove” their teaching. Perhaps they use the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. They may say that all were virgins meaning that they are saved, but only five were ready because they had the oil. The others were not ready for the rapture. There are many problems in saying that this parable teaches a partial rapture. The main problem is that the bridegroom says to the five foolish virgins in verse 12, *“I know you not.”* It is not that they were saved and not ready. It is that they were not saved because the bridegroom, who represents Jesus, did not know them. This parable does not teach a partial rapture.

Some may try to use Matthew 24:44 where Jesus says, *“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.”* They reason that Jesus is talking to believers and telling them to be ready. If some are ready, then some may not be ready. They conclude that those who are ready will be taken in the rapture, but the other believers, who are not ready, will be left on the earth. However, there is no Biblical basis to justify teaching a partial rapture. To be honest, it might make some people live closer to the Lord if the Bible did teach a partial rapture. But the Bible does not teach a partial rapture. In the clearest passage on the rapture, I Thessalonians 4:13-18, the Bible plainly states in verses 16 and 17, *“[T]he dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.”* All the saved will be caught up when the trumpet sounds. No believer will be left on the earth.

The fifth view about the rapture is the Pre-tribulation Rapture. It says that the church will be raptured out before the tribulation begins. That is what I believe because that is what the Bible teaches. We will spend the next portion of the message proving and defending this

view.

Notice with me **The Evidence for the Pre-tribulation Rapture**. One may be able to give a number of reasons for the Pre-tribulation rapture. I have narrowed them down to what I believe are the three strongest evidences. Some may think some others are stronger. That is fine. They may be right. But the three that I will give prove to me beyond the shadow of any doubt that the church will be gone before the Tribulation begins.

The first piece of evidence for the Pre-tribulation Rapture is The Intense Focus on Israel. As you read through the Old Testament you cannot help but notice that after Genesis 12, God is dealing primarily with Abraham’s descendants, the children of Israel. That is not to say that no Gentiles were ever saved in the Old Testament. Several were saved including Rahab, Ruth, Naaman, just to name a few. Although some Gentiles were saved, the overwhelming focus is on Israel. However, in the New Testament, during Paul’s ministry, the focus began to shift from primarily Israel to the equal status of the Gentiles. In fact, as Jews and Gentiles were saved, the distinction began to disappear. Galatians 3:28 says, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”* As more and more Gentiles were converted, the focus on Israel diminished. It was no longer a Gospel just for the Jews. It was a message of salvation and deliverance for the whole world. As the Gospel spread, more Gentiles were converted, but sadly less Jews were. That is not to say that it is impossible for Jews to be saved, and it certainly does not mean that we should not preach the Gospel to them. One also cannot say that less Jews are being converted because God’s judgment is on them because they crucified Jesus. The Jews are no more responsible for crucifying Jesus than you and I are. It was our sin that placed Jesus on the cross. The focus now is not on Jew or Gentile. The focus now is on a whole world for whom Christ died. Jew and Gentile can be saved if they will repent of their sin and believe that Jesus died in their place for their sin.

However, once the church is raptured out, the focus will be on Israel again. That is not to say that only Jews will be saved during the Tribulation. In describing those who are saved during the Tribulation, Revelation 7:9 says, *“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.”* Revelation 7:14 identifies who these are by saying, *“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”* Clearly Jews and Gentiles will be saved during the Tribulation. However, the focus is intently on Israel. Notice some of the verses that describe the Tribulation period. Jeremiah 30:6-7 say, *“Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.”* The tribulation is described throughout this passage but noticed that it is called *“Jacob's trouble.”* The whole world will feel the impact of God's judgment, but the focus is on Israel. We will continue with this thought next month.