

# The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Are You Ready for the Rapture? (Part 4)

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Last month we considered some more information showing The Evidence for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. We looked at passages in Jeremiah and Daniel that revealed our first piece of evidence—The Intense Focus on Israel in this time period. We will not go into detail again, but I want to refresh our memories about the words that are used in those books. Jeremiah calls it “*the time of Jacob’s trouble*” (30:7). Daniel uses the personal pronoun “*thy*” several times. He records the words “*thy people, thy holy city, and thy people*” in Daniel 9:24 and 12:1. In prophesying about this future time period the writers of the Old Testament clearly show that the focus is on Israel once again.

We also mentioned a few things last month about the word trouble. It is found in both Jeremiah 30:7 and Daniel 12:1. As you can imagine, this is not describing a blessed and wonderful period of time. It is even worse than we may initially think. As I mentioned last month, it is used to describe the attack of an enemy in war, the pain of giving birth, and God’s judgment upon those who have rejected Him. The Old Testament just uses the word trouble without much description of exactly what happens. But Revelation 6-18 does describe God’s outpouring of judgment upon the earth. It is an awful, terrible, horrendous time of trouble upon this earth. We should rejoice that God will spare those who have trusted in Him from this horrific time.

The Interesting Absence of the Church in Revelation 6-18 is the second piece of evidence that shows that the church will be raptured before the Tribulation begins. More than half of Revelation describes the Tribulation. Some wonder why so much is devoted to describing

-2-

something that saved people will miss. The answer is very simple—it is a warning to escape God’s judgment. He makes it plain that great catastrophes will fall upon this earth. In His great mercy, God is warning everyone to escape that judgment. Sadly, many read of these judgments and respond with mockery. They say that these are just scare tactics to cause people to depend upon religion. The details are scary. To read that millions will die in terrible calamities is not pleasant reading. But it is necessary to let people know what will happen if they continue to reject God’s mercy. This extensive passage of God’s judgments during the Tribulation is very similar to the number of times that Jesus preached on Hell compared with how much He preached on Heaven. Jesus only mentioned Heaven in some detail in Luke 16, where He calls it Abraham’s bosom, and in John 14:2-3. He may mention it in a few other passages, but it is only in passing without much discussion. He preaches about Hell in many passages throughout all four Gospels. Similarly, Revelation has 13 chapters on God’s judgments during the Tribulation, six verses on the Millennium, and only 2 chapters about the New Jerusalem. Clearly, God is more intent upon warning people of future judgment than in describing to them the blessings of coming to Him. The manner in which God records His messages in Scripture refute the liberal notion of enticing people with Heaven. Often, if you preach about judgment, someone will say, “You catch more flies with honey than vinegar.” They are trying to reason that more people will be saved if you preach more about Heaven than about Hell. Along that same line, they reason that if you preach more about God’s goodness than His justice, then more people would be saved. That is not what Jesus did and that is not what a simple reading of the Bible shows. Jesus preached far more about Hell than Heaven, and Revelation records more about the Tribulation than about the Millennium. It is right, proper, Biblical, and Christlike to preach more about God’s judgment. In our day and time, we do not need less preaching on judgment, we need more.

Obviously, in this message I cannot go through all of Revelation, but I do want to give an overview of the book to show that the church

is absent during the Tribulation period. Revelation opens with John's vision of Christ in chapter 1. Chapters 2 and 3 then record Jesus' messages to seven churches in Asia Minor. These were seven literal churches in existence at the time that John recorded Revelation. These messages are also applicable to churches in our time, so to some degree, you have the church age described in Revelation 2 and 3. Chapter 4 begins with a voice sounding like a trumpet and a call to John, "*Come up hither.*" By the end of chapter 4, crowns are being cast at the feet of Jesus by twenty-four elders, and they are praising Christ. By comparing several passages throughout the New Testament, we see that the saved are rewarded with crowns at the Judgment Seat of Christ. These twenty-four elders are symbolic of the saved who have been raptured out in Revelation 4:1. They have been rewarded with crowns because of their faithfulness to Jesus Christ. To sum up these early chapters, chapters 2 and 3 contain admonitions and warnings to seven literal churches and to all churches throughout the church age. In chapter 4, the saved are no longer on the earth. They have been raptured from the earth and are in Heaven before the throne of Jesus.

Chapter 5 describes the opening of the seven-sealed book out of which comes the judgments of God. The saved are still in Heaven with Christ. Chapters 6-18 record these judgments poured out upon the earth during the Tribulation period. The church is not found in these chapters because the saved have been taken from the earth. They are in Heaven with Christ throughout the Tribulation period. They are in Heaven with Christ being rewarded by Him at the Judgment Seat of Christ. They will remain with Him in Heaven until the Tribulation is finished. In Revelation 19, Christ comes back to the earth. The saved, who had been raptured out before the Tribulation begins, now come back with Him to this earth. Notice Revelation 19:14: "*And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*" Notice that the verse says that the armies are in Heaven. Who are they? Some say that they are angels, but pay attention to the description of them. It says that they are clothed in fine linen.

Revelation 19:7-8 describe those who are arrayed in fine linen. They say, "*Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*" The armies coming back to the earth with Christ are the saints who have accepted Him as their Savior. How is it that they are coming from Heaven to the earth with Him? They had been taken from the earth to be with Him seven years earlier. Those who had died had been resurrected, and those alive at the time of the rapture had been changed—all believers had received glorified bodies like unto Christ's resurrected body (I Corinthians 15:51-52; Philippians 3:20-21; I Thessalonians 4:13-18). The church is not mentioned throughout Revelation 6-18—the chapters describing in great detail the Tribulation upon the earth. Why is the church not mentioned? Because the church is not on the earth. We have been taken from the earth, and are with Christ.

There is a third piece of evidence for the Pre-tribulation rapture. It is The Imminency of Christ's Return. The word imminent means "about to happen." Another way to phrase the meaning of imminent is "something that could happen at any moment." The word imminent is not found in the Bible, but the truth of its meaning is found in the Bible, and it does describe properly and sufficiently the truth of Christ's return for His church. Many times I have heard preachers say "This just happened, nothing else needs to be fulfilled for Christ to return." They may be sincere, but they are sincerely wrong. Nothing had to be fulfilled in years past, and nothing is left to be fulfilled, for Christ to come back for His bride. That is the meaning of the "imminent return" of Christ. It could happen at any moment. Nothing on this earth had to happen, or needs to happen, for Christ to come. Many people are intrigued with events that happen with Israel, and they say that Israel's possession or non-possession of a piece of land or of some sacrificial animal is the key to the rapture. That is not the case. If that is true, then Christ's return is not imminent because something must happen before He can come for

His bride. But as we will see in many verses, the language of Scripture is very clear—Christ’s return for His bride, the church, may happen at any moment. Nothing else has to happen; we do not have to look for signs. The only thing we must look for is not a “thing”—rather, we should be looking for a person—Jesus Christ.

Several years ago a red heifer was discovered in Israel, and many said “now the rapture can take place.” Someone asked me about it and I replied, perhaps not as patiently as I should have, “I am not looking for a red heifer. I looking for the Lamb to return.” I purposely used that particular title of Christ because He should be our focus, not a red heifer. The red heifer may be needed to dedicate the temple and the priests for sacrifices, but that has nothing to do with the rapture of the church. The temple may or may not be rebuilt before the church is raptured, but the temple mount should not be what we are looking at. We should be looking to the sky to see if Christ is coming. Many are intrigued with the most recent observations of so-called “prophecy” preachers. But they are looking at the wrong thing and the wrong person. Nothing has to be fulfilled and nothing has to show up for Christ to come back for us. You had better be ready. It may be sooner than you think. If He does not return, we will continue next month.