

**FULFILLED SPIRITUALITY IN A TAINTED CHRISTENDOM**  
**"Part VI: Discerning The Right Eschatology To Sustain A Holy Life"**  
**(2 Peter 3:14-18)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) All we have to do is pick up a newspaper or listen to the evening news and one can tell that the world is in great need of God's intervention! Whether we hear of Japanese police confiscating another gas bomb from a subway in Tokyo or the "unibomber" threatening to blow up a plane at the L.A. International airport, wickedness is certainly abounding, and we long for the peace and righteousness that is promised in the coming kingdom of Christ!

(2) However, as Dr. John Walvoord, former President of Dallas Theological Seminary wrote, "In the theological world, however, almost complete confusion reigns in the interpretation of prophecy." He explains this confusion as follows:

(a) "The majority of the church following the amillennial interpretation (that there is no literal coming kingdom of Christ) continues to ignore the signs of the times."

(b) "Among premillenarians (those who believe that Christ is coming back to earth before His literal 1,000 year reign) a wide variety of views can be found, varying from the extreme of date-setting on the one hand to discounting any imminent hope of the Lord's return on the other. In such a matrix, the question as to whether the church . . . will go through the tribulation again becomes acute." (Walvoord, The Blessed Hope And The Tribulation, p. 7)

(3) The **reason** this issue is so important is that enormous **emotional** pressure is raised if a believer thinks he will go through the Great Tribulation. **In Revelation 20:4, the antichrist is predicted as beheading the Tribulation Period saints!** In fact, some have built retreats and are stockpiling weapons and foods in wilderness retreats to prepare for this era as they want to defend themselves from the antichrist's world rule to come! **They do this as a priority over living peaceable lives and carrying on the work of world evangelization.** Walvoord states: "It would be difficult to present a greater contrast between the blessed hope of the imminent return of Christ and the prospect of probable suffering and death in the great tribulation . . . the alternatives are drastically different . . ." (Ibid., p. 10)

(4) **Well, will we be raptured before the Great Tribulation and escape being beheaded by antichrist or will we have to go through that holocaust?** (We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

***Need: "Some teach that Christians will go through the Great Tribulation, facing antichrist's tough times! Does this mean that we should shore up food and weapons in retreats?! I need to know what's going to happen so I know what I should be doing NOW!"***

- I. **Even in Peter's day, people mishandled Scriptures like Paul's epistles on prophetic, future events (eschatology), 2 P. 3:15b-16!**
- II. **Such misunderstandings led to distortions in how believers thought they were to live, and that hindered their remaining godly!**
  - A. Peter taught that some would consider the long time interval of divine silence between apostolic times and Christ's return as God's being indifferent about world affairs, leading people to slip into irresponsible living, 2 Peter 3:14-15, 17 with 2 Peter 2:1-2.
  - B. Yet, Paul wrote to correct the error that the "day of the Lord" was already present for the Church, a belief causing Christians to be fearful and immobilized from serving God, 2 Th. 2:2,17.
- III. **From Peter and Paul's criticisms about such mishandlings of Biblical eschatology, we have some guidelines about eschatology:**
  - A. According to Paul's 2 Thes. 2:2, 17 objections, the Church will not experience the troublesome "day of the Lord" as some taught!
  - B. Peter **promotes** Christ's return contrary to errorists, 2 Peter 3:4a.
  - C. He warns of destruction of this universe by fire, 2 P. 3:10!
  - D. God's long "silence" until this judgment arrives is not due to His being indifferent, but to His patience for men to be saved, 3:8-14.
  - E. **Whatever** is next on God's prophetic calendar, it should not lead to our being unproductive, but to godly living, 2 Peter 3:14, 17.
- IV. **Using these guideline truths, we determine from the epistles what is going to happen so that we can live as we ought (as follows):\***
  - A. From Paul, we learn that the next prophetic event is the removal of the Church to heaven, the "**Rapture**":
    1. Paul stated that the "day of the Lord" would not occur until the following events all took place, 2 Th. 2:3-10:
      - a. There has to be a worldwide departure from the truth, 2:3a.
      - b. Then the antichrist must be revealed in his office, 3b-4.

- c. His appearance will be marked with miracles to deceive unbelievers to follow him as the "real" messiah, 2 Th. 2:8-9.
2. However, until He is taken away, the Holy Spirit through the Church now works to restrain antichrist's presentation, 2:6f:
3. The world will **then** be disciplined to be deceived by antichrist, for it has rejected the **gospel** in the Church age, 2 Thes. 2:9-12!
4. The Church is not destined for this judgment of being deceived since **Christians** are not **guilty** of rejecting Christ; thus, the Church is "saved" out of this judgment, 2 Thes. 2:11-13.
5. This "salvation" includes believers receiving the **glory** of their Savior, the Lord Jesus, 2 Thes. 2:14. Such an event occurs during the "rapture", 1 Thes. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-55 & Jn. 14:1-3.
6. Summary: **Since the Church is not going through the "day of the Lord"** (2 Th. 2:2, 17 ("III,A")), and since the **removal** of the Spirit's worldwide restraint of evil in the believer allows antichrist to appear, the Church is raptured before the Tribulation!
- B. During the Church's absence on earth, there exists a seven year era (Dan. 9:27) of great tribulation during which antichrist is revealed and martyrs many who believe on Christ! (Rev. 6:9-11; 13:7)
- C. Christ **then returns** to the earth **with** the Church (Jude 14 & "III,B") to set up His messianic kingdom with surviving believers on earth for 1,000 years; Tribulation martyrs and O.T. saints are raised in glorified bodies to rule with Him, Rev. 20:1-6; Dn. 12:11-13.
- D. At the end of that era, ungodly descendants of unglorified believers who survive the Tribulation rebel and are judged by God, Rv. 20:7-9.
- E. Afterwards comes the final judgment; believers of the Millennium are glorified and we enter Eternity; the old world **passes away** and God makes a new universe, Rv. 20-22 (2 P. 3:10 ("III, C"))!

***Application:*** Understanding the timeline given above leads one to (1) believe on Christ NOW to be raptured and escape the Tribulation, Jn. 3:16; 2 Th. 2:2-14! (2) Then, being comforted over the Blessed Hope of being saved from the Tribulation while also sensing his great accountability upon facing Christ after the rapture, he is "encouraged but driven" to live fervently for God!

***Lesson:*** (1) If he knows he is not destined for the Tribulation, the believer maintains an optimistic courage to live above service immobility, 2 Th. 2:16-17a; 1 Th. 4:13-5:11. (2) Yet, (a) knowing he will give an account at the Rapture, the next, imminent prophetic event (1 C. 3:13-15; 2 C. 5:10), and (b) that the Church era is extended so that men may have ample time to be saved ("III,D"), the believer fervently lives for God and disciples men around him! (2 P. 3:14, 17 ("III, E"))

*\*A chart diagram is supplied with these notes to illustrate the timeline.*

### **Conclusion: (To illustrate the lesson . . .)**

In 1973, while engaged to my future wife, Nadine, I was privileged to talk with her elderly grandfather, Reverend David Anderson while visiting him with her family in Rockford, Illinois.

He was curious as to what I believed regarding eschatology! I told him that I was Pretribulationist. He looked satisfied, and then, curiously said, "Well, I always believed that way, too!"

Reverend Anderson had ministered since graduating from Moody Bible Institute in 1918 in the days when the biggest discussions on future events occurred, when the battle as to when Christ would come back was most crucial for the Church. He remembered when people thought Adolf Hitler was the antichrist! His belief in the pretribulationist rapture of the Church had taken him through many things. I know that at one point, for standing against a fellow pastor's daughter getting an abortion, he was threatened by being **literally** tarred and feathered out of town! Due to his ministry, a church started in Wisconsin and now is flourishing as the Calvary Baptist Church of Wisconsin Rapids!

But he believed in the imminent return of the Lord. He was joyful that Christ could come back for him at any moment, that he might go without dying, and that hope kept him going through many challenges in his walk. When he died at 89 years of age, he was still fervent, still looking forward to the return of the Lord! I saw firsthand how a man could go from 1918 when he learned about the doctrine of the rapture for the next 60 years to 1978 through all sorts of ups and downs and still burn inside for God's will! In fact, when his wife was still living, during part of the last 18 years of his life, he prepared a sermon every Sunday and preached it to his wife as he had no congregation to hear him! The Blessed Hope of the pretribulationist rapture of the Church, as Paul said in 2 Thess. 3:17, both comforted his heart and established him in word and work.

**Let us also hold to it and go forward for Christ as well!**