

PROPHECY OVERVIEW
"Part II: Living For 'The Blessed Hope'"
(Titus 2:11-14; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11; 2 Thess. 2:1-12)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

When the Gulf War ended early 1991, President George Bush called for a "new world order". His call sounded prophetic alarm bells for many as they had heard about the "world order" of the **antichrist** to come. Thus, the March 1991 issue of Newsweek reported that John F. Walvoord, former President of Dallas Seminary saw his book, Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis sell over a **million** copies in the two months after the President's statement!

Well, **knowing** just **WHAT** will happen, and **WHEN** creates not only questions, but *concerns* among many believers:

(1) Some like Robert Gundry, who promoted the newest form of this view as late as 1973, hold that the Church will go through the persecutions of the coming anti-christ and be "raptured", or taken out of the world by Christ at the **end** of this "Great Tribulation" era. **Concerned about facing this difficult persecution, some wonder if they should now be building forts in the wilderness and stockpiling ammunition, guns and foodstuffs for protection against such suffering of that time.**

Middle of the predicted "Great Tribulation." They believe they will see the rise of antichrist and be taken out of the world by Christ just before this antichrist breaks his Biblically predicted seven-year Daniel 9:27 treaty with Israel and really **intensifies** his persecution of them. Marv Rosenthal recently revived this view in his book, The Pre-Wrath Rapture. **However, even the thought of WITNESSING this RISE of the antichrist brings fear to Christians.**

(3) Another view taught by men like Thomas Waugh holds that Christians will be raptured **individually** as they "**mature**" out of spiritual lethargy through the trials of antichrist's **persecution**, a view known as the "Partial Rapture" view. Passages like Luke 21:36 where people miss out at Christ's return for not "watching" and thus are not "worthy to escape all these things" are used to **trouble** believers about **missing** the first wave of the rapture for being carnal!

Well, WHAT is going to happen, WHEN and HOW are we to live productively while anticipating the uncertain "end times?"

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "In view of our world's fall into evil and the Bible's prophecy of God's 'Great Tribulation' judgment (Rev. 6:12-17), I worry about my future! What will occur, when, and how can we brace for it?!"

- I. **Paul wanted Christians to live upright lives because they should anticipate the "Blessed Hope" of Christ's appearing, Tit. 2:11-14.**
- II. **This event is a "Hope" as by it Christians ESCAPE this troubled world through the "Rapture" of the Church, 1 Thess. 4: 13-5:11:**
 - A. Paul wrote that Christ will one day descend from heaven to the clouds, bringing with Him the souls of departed Christians, 1 Thess. 4:13f, 17.
 - B. These souls will be raised in glorified bodies, 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:52-53
 - C. Then, Christians still living on the earth will be physically changed into immortal bodies and ascend with these formerly deceased fellow Christians into the clouds to meet the Lord, 1 Thess. 4:17a,b.
 - D. We will all then proceed with Christ back to heaven (Jn. 14:1-3) ever to be with our Lord wherever He goes, 1 Thess. 4:17c; Rev. 19:7-8.
 - E. This event will occur in an instant of time, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52!
- III. **This event is a "Blessing" as by it Christians AVOID the WHOLE seven-year Tribulation Period, for the Rapture is PREtribulation:**
 - A. The view of "**Posttribulationists**" that the Church will go through the Tribulation before being "raptured" is **corrected** by 1 Thess. 5:1-9:
 1. After predicting the Rapture in 1 Thess. 4:13-18, Paul claimed the "day of the Lord" known throughout the Old Testament as the **entire** end time period would come with great trials, 1 Thess. 5:1-3
 2. He noted this time will experience God's wrath, the Tribulation, 5:3
 3. [Dan. 9:1-27, 12:11-12 & Rev. 12:6 teach this time is 7 years long, being formed around a 7-year treaty antichrist makes with Israel.*]
 4. Yet, the Christian is to be saved from that very **era**, 1 Thess. 5:5, 9.
 5. The only way Christians can avoid this Tribulation is for the rapture to occur **before** that time, so we hold to the **Pretribulation Rapture!**
 - B. The "**Partial Rapture**" view that believers will be **individually** raptured **during** the Tribulation is **corrected** by 1 Thess. 5:6-7, 10:
 1. Thomas Waugh, When Jesus Comes, p. 108 reflects a view that Christians will be raptured **throughout** the Tribulation Period as they are **matured** by its **trials** so as to qualify for heaven's glory!

2. Yet, though Paul urges believers not to be lethargic, but fervent in living in 1 Thess. 5:6-7, he uses the *same* Greek words for "awake" and "sleep" in v. 10 that described the variant lifestyles of v. 6-7 to show Christ died so believers will be raptured with him **regardless** if they are lethargic *or* fervent! (Bib. Know. Com., N.T., p. 706f)
 3. Well, if Christ's death makes fervent **OR lethargic** believers go to heaven with Jesus, **all** believers will be taken before the Tribulation.
 4. [So, Luke 21:36 does **not** warn Christians not to miss the rapture, **BUT Tribulation** folk **not** to miss Christ's **posttribulation reign!***]
- C. The "**Midtribulation**" or "**Pre-Wrath Rapture**" view, that says the Church will be raptured just before antichrist breaks his treaty with Israel 3 1/2 yrs. **into** the Tribulation, is **corrected** by 2 Thess. 2:1-12:
1. The Midtribulation, or Pre-Wrath Rapture view makes Christians witness antichrist's rise to power, and then for them to be raptured just before the antichrist breaks his treaty with Israel in the **midst** of the Tribulation. The "*last trump*" of 1 Cor. 15:52's rapture is thus treated as being the **Midtribulation's** 7th trumpet of Rev. 11:15!
 2. However, the **antichrist** is allowed to **rise** by **God** to judge the world for rejecting Christ, and **part** of that **judgment** is antichrist's *deceiving* the world with the **false gospel** of promoting himself, 2 Thess. 2:10-11 with 2:3c-4. Now, that **deception** will *mainly* occur during his **FIRST** 3 1/2 years of "peace" with *Israel!*
 3. Well, the Christian is **not guilty** of **rejecting** Christ, so he must not **experience** even God's permitted **deception judgment** under antichrist: thus, the Rapture is **not MID-**, but **PREtribulation!**
 4. [So, regarding the "last trump", **Paul** was martyred **long before** Jesus *revealed* Rev. 11's 7th trumpet to **John**. Thus, **Paul** would **not** have written about that Rev. 11 **Midtribulation** trumpet in 1 Cor. 15! Rather, Paul, a Hebrew writing to Hebrews in Corinth used the term, "last trump" in 1 Cor. to recall a Num. 10 **relocating** trump that calls God's people to **move up** to *heaven!* (Rev. 4:1)]
- D. Thus, we anticipate the "Blessed Hope" of the **PRETRIBULATION Rapture**, and thereby, as believers, we can live in peace about our own destinies, but also bear great fervency in our hearts to reach the lost with the Gospel of the **TRUE Messiah, Christ**, 2 Thess. 2:15-17!

Lesson Application: (1) *Believe in Christ as Savior from sin to belong to His true universal Church, John 3:16; Eph. 2:14-15.* (2) *Then, (a) trust in Christ's promise of the Pretribulation Rapture as the very encouraging, "Blessed Hope"; (b) we thus avoid worry and find comfort about our personal destinies, and yet (c) see the DIRE NEED of the lost so that (d) we use our resources to live uprightly and disciple others, 2 Thess. 2:15-17; Mtt. 28:19-20!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

Waiting for us **then** was very unusual!

I *glad* to see **you!**"

Strongly about the issue so early on Sunday morning! Then he explained: he had forgotten to turn his clock back with the 2 a.m. fall Sunday time change, and so had arrived in time for what he thought was the Sunday School beginning at 9:00 a.m. In reality it was only 8:00 o'clock, but **he** had wondered, "Where **is** everybody, anyway?!"

Rapture come and I **miss** it?!" he had asked himself. **That** caused him to *fret!* He had heard of Christian films predicting the Tribulation that would come on those who had missed the rapture, so for half an hour he had sat in his car and worried how he might have to face the *antichrist!* While he was deep in distress, we had driven up! Then he'd remembered the time change, and felt a huge weight lift off his shoulders!

I HAD to ask him, "WHY are you worried about missing the RAPTURE? Do you doubt your SALVATION?!" The man **thought** he was saved, but **still** worried about missing the rapture!

Well, if we are FEARFUL of missing the RAPTURE and going through the time of antichrist's reign on the earth, it is time to make SURE we have TRUSTED in CHRIST as Savior from sin. The RAPTURE comes BEFORE the Great Tribulation, and it includes ALL who truly BELIEVE in Christ -- that is a given! The REAL question we must answer is, "Am I a BELIEVER?!"

Make sure about THAT and then we can **joyfully anticipate the "Blessed Hope" of the Pretribulation Rapture -- even if we show up early Sunday morning after the Fall time change, and nobody else is here!**