

## **68. Always being ready**

*March 5, 2017*

In April, 2016, a new telephone survey was done of 1,000 Protestant senior pastors and their views on end-times theology by Nashville-based LifeWay Research. As you can see, according to this research, 25% of Protestant pastors don't believe the literal rapture. It means that they don't believe many other things in the Bible as the truth, either. To me, that is horrifying news, because those pastors are teaching heresies to their congregation.

Bible prophecy study has a great attraction to believers and unbelievers alike for many reasons. However, if we are not careful with the true reasons why we study these prophecies, it is no different than reading horoscopes or goofing around with a crystal ball. There is one word for it – "USELESS".

Then we have to ask ourselves: "Why do we study Bible prophecies?" The purpose of Bible prophecy is not for us to make a rapture calendar, nor to scratch our itching prophecy bones, but to build godly character in us, so that we live holy lives.

Jesus shifted the emphasis from being worried about the present to being watchful about the future. The themes in Luke 12 all go together, because one of the best ways to conquer hypocrisy, covetousness, and worry is to look for the Lord's return.

### **A. THE END TIME PROPHECY – ESCHATOLOGY**

Eschatology, which means the end time prophecy, has aroused many people's interest about the current events in the Middle East and Europe. However, the majority of people don't have a good solid biblical foundation to stand on when it comes to this theology. That is why many of them can be easily swayed by wrong doctrines.

I am going to cover a few areas before we start to study the second half of chapter 12 in the Book of Luke.

#### **1) The difference between the rapture and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**

The rapture is one of the most important future events that all of us should be anxiously waiting for. The word 'rapture' means "caught up". In the Greek, it is 'harpazo'. We get the word 'rapture' from the Latin Bible Vulgate 'rapturo'.

It is going to happen right before the seven years of the Great Tribulation. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Jesus will come down from heaven to take up all the living born-again Christians as well as all the dead born-again Christians' bodies in whatever condition they are in.

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is going to happen at the end of the Great Tribulation. This time Jesus will come down from heaven to earth on a white horse to conquer and destroy all the evil and its followers.

#### **2) Five different theologies regarding when the rapture will occur**

There are many controversies regarding the timeline of the rapture. Generally Calvary Chapels and our church subscribe the Pre-Tribulation theology. I provided you with "Twelve reasons for Pre-Tribulation" in a two page note format. Please take it home, read it and study it carefully. If you have questions, please come see me later.

- The pre-tribulation rapture position believes that believers are caught up before this seven-year period.
- The mid-tribulation rapture position believes that believers are caught up in the midst of this seven-year period.
- The pre-wrath rapture position believes that believers are caught up at some time in the second half of this seven-year period.
- The post-tribulation rapture position believes that believers are caught up at the end of this seven-year period.
- The Preterism position believes that the rapture already has happened.

Many Post-Tribulation people say that Matthew 24 is about the church going through the Tribulation. They even come up with "The replacement theology" which insists that the church has replaced Israel in the biblical eschatology. Nonsense.

When you read Matthew 24 in context, Jesus was talking about the nation of Israel during the Tribulation time, not the church. Besides, the church is not mentioned on the earth throughout the Tribulation period in the Book of Revelation.

### 3) No one knows the day or the hour

*Mark 13:32-33 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.*

I don't know which portion of "No one knows" people don't understand. Some delusional individuals come up with fancy formulas and predict a particular date of the rapture. Many gullible people say, "Wow, I didn't know that," and go down hook, line, and sinker. 'No one knows' means 'no one knows'.

### 4) There is not one prophecy that needs to be fulfilled before the rapture happens.

Some say, "The temple must be built first before the rapture," or "The entire human race must hear the Gospel first before the rapture." What they are confused about is that it is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ which requires these prophecies to be fulfilled, not the rapture. The rapture can happen any time and any day now.

## B. MANY PARALLELS BETWEEN ANCIENT JEWISH WEDDING AND JESUS' RAPTURE PLAN

It is very interesting to see these parallels between ancient Jewish weddings and Jesus' rapture plan. The Bible symbolizes the church as the bride of Christ.

### 1) The groom goes to the house of the bride to make a formal announcement to marry her.

*Luke 1:31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.*

### 2) The groom leaves her with a promise of an undated return.

*Mark 13:32-33 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.*

### But as a dowry, he gives her gifts as a promise of his return.

*John 14:16-17 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever- 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

**3) The groom goes back to his father's house and prepares a place for him and his bride.**

*John 14:2-3 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

**4) In the meanwhile, the bride prepares herself to receive her groom, even though she has no idea when that might be.**

*Luke 12:35-36 "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; 36 and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.*

**5) When the house is finished, the groom sends forth his friends with shouts of the announcement of his coming.**

*1 Thessalonians 4:16a For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.*

**6) As the groom approaches the bride's house, the bride goes out and meets him. They will head back to the groom's home.**

*1 Thessalonians 4:16b-17 And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

**7) They will have a wedding ceremony and marriage supper.**

*Revelation 19:7-9 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

### **C. BEING READY FOR THE MASTER'S RETURN**

*Luke 12:35-40 "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; 36 and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. 38 And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. 39 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 40 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

In His day, when people "gird" their waist, it means that they were ready to work. Like them, Jesus wants us to be ready-minded for His return with His Word in our hearts day and night. In other words, our anticipation of His return should not have any down time. To "watch" means to be alert, to be ready, not to be caught by surprise. Always being ready for Him.

V37 shows us that after the faithful servants of God get to heaven, Jesus Himself will serve them. We would be most grateful when we get to heaven for our Savior to tell

us, "Well done, good and faithful servants," but He is going to serve us? Wow, that blows my mind away. That is our God. How many so-called gods do you know who love his people and wants to serve them? None except our Jesus.

#### **D. FAITHFUL SERVANTS AND WICKED SERVANTS**

*Luke 12:41-48 Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?" 42 And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. 45 But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47 And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

The trustworthy steward will prove himself worthy of more responsibilities in the future. For us, if we are faithful, we will receive the rewards God has reserved for us in heaven.

How many of you have heard a comment from some Christians who don't believe the rapture can happen anytime saying, "Jesus said that He would come back two thousand years ago, but He didn't. It will be a long time before He comes back"? They are like this irresponsible steward who was not expecting the return of his master.

Not all unbelievers will bear the same severe punishment, though. In v47-48, notice the different fates of those who know, but neglect God's will and those who are ignorant of it.

God's judgment will be fair. It will be based on what the servants know of God's will. We are told to know God's will and to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

#### **E. MAKING PEACE WITH THE ONE WHO WILL JUDGE OUR SOULS**

*Luke 12:49-59 "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! 51 Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. 52 For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. 53 Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." 54 Then He also said to the multitudes, "Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. 55 And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. 56 Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? 57 "Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge*

*what is right? 58 When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. 59 I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite."*

Today the popular thinking is that the earth is sacred, the "mother" of all life. They say that we must care for it, so it will last forever, right? Wrong. According to 2 Peter 3:10, this earth won't be here in the future.

*2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

I don't think that the New Age people, eco-friendly people, tree huggers, and the Jehovah's Witness people would like this fact. It would be better for them to come to reality and see the truth from the Bible.

There won't be any peace on earth as long as human governments are in place. Peace on earth will never happen until people first have peace with God in their hearts.

We must apply the truth of v54-55 to our own lives personally. How tragic that men today can predict the movements of the planets, split atoms, and even put men in space. But they are blind to what God is doing in the world. They know how to get to the moon, but they do not know how to get to heaven. Our educated world possesses a great deal of scientific knowledge, but not much spiritual wisdom.

If we knew a storm was coming, we would prepare for it. The storm of God's wrath is coming, and the Ultimate Judge is already standing before the door.

## **F. APPLICATIONS**

**1) Jesus' rapture will be like that of a thief: unannounced and unexpected. We must ALWAYS be ready!**

**2) Peace on earth will never happen until people first have peace with God in their hearts.**

**1) The Rapture doctrine is to be a comforting one.** 1 Thessalonians 4:18

The belief that the Rapture happens after or in the middle of the Tribulation is anything but comforting because it means believers must endure unbelievable agony before they are taken to heaven.

**2) The Tribulation is the outpouring of the wrath of the Lamb.** 1 Thessalonians 5:9

God has not appointed us to wrath. The wrath that should have been hurled at you and poured out on me was absorbed by our Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary.

**3) Pre-Tribulation Rapture is illustrated in Genesis 19, where we see angels delivering Lot and his family before the destruction of Sodom.**

How do I know this is a picture of the Rapture? Because in reference to this, Peter writes in 2 Peter 2:9

**4) When the Great Tribulation occurs on earth, I expect to be in heaven standing before the Son of Man and singing of the worthiness of the Lamb.** Revelation 5:9

Only the church can sing this song of redemption. Who else is going to be His kings and priest? No one else other than His church. We find that the church singing the song of redemption occurs in Revelation chapter five, before the opening of the scroll in chapter six, which shows the start of the Great Tribulation on the earth.

**5) It simply isn't consistent with the nature of God to judge the righteous with the wicked.** Romans 1:18

We, the church, are not "appointed unto wrath" during the Tribulation.

**6) Jesus told us to pray that we would be raptured before the Tribulation.**

Luke 21:36

In speaking of the Tribulation in His Olivet Discourse, Jesus said, "Watch and pray always that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things." How are we accounted worthy? The only way: We are worthy because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross of Calvary.

**7) Pre-Tribulation Rapture makes sense historically and scripturally.** John 14:2

In accordance with Jewish custom, when a man came of age to marry, he would add a room on to his father's house for himself and his bride. When the addition was complete, and when the father gave the go-ahead, a trumpet would sound, and the bridegroom would go to meet his bride.

Following the wedding ceremony, the bridegroom would take his bride to his father's house, where they would be tucked away for seven days in the newly completed "bridal suite." At the end of seven days, the bridegroom would come out with his bride and introduce her to the community.

That's exactly what's going to happen with us. Jesus, our Bridegroom, is preparing a place for us in heaven, our mansion in His Father's kingdom. At the appointed time known only by the Father, a trumpet will sound and Jesus will meet us, His bride, in the air to escort us up to the "Bridal Suite" He has prepared for us. We will remain with Him in heaven for seven years before we are presented to the world, where we will rule and reign with Him.

**8) Pre-Tribulation Rapture follows the outline of the Book of Revelation.**

If you don't embrace a Pre-Tribulation view, your understanding of Revelation becomes as twisted as a pretzel. Because if you hold to a Mid-Tribulation stance, you've got to put chapters 4 and 5 after chapter 11. And if you take a Post-Tribulation point of view, you need to put chapter 4 and 5 after chapter 19. Only a Pre-Tribulation placement of the Rapture allows for a consistent flow of the Book of Revelation.

**9) Pre-Tribulation Rapture allows for the conditional aspect of the Tribulation.**

Revelation 2:22

If the Rapture won't occur until after the Tribulation, what would be the reason for this warning of Jesus against the church of Thyatira? The "great tribulation" mentioned here is "megas thlipsis" in Greek. This is the exact same word that is used to describe the seven year Tribulation throughout Revelation 6-19.

"Well, didn't Jesus say in this world we would have tribulation?" you might ask.

Yes, but that kind of tribulation which actually should be translated as 'trial' the believer goes through in the world, is from satan. The Tribulation of chapters 6-19, on the other hand, is from God as He pours out His wrath on a Christ-rejecting world.

Folks, God will not allow us to get hit from both sides. If we experience tribulation in the world because of our faith, we will not experience the Great Tribulation of those who have no faith in Christ Jesus.

### **10) Pre-Tribulation Rapture squares with the prophecy of Daniel.**

According to Daniel's prophecy in chapter 9, three and a half biblical years – a Biblical year being three hundred sixty days – from the day Antichrist enters the temple and demands worship midway through the Tribulation which we know as the Abomination of Desolation, the Lord will return. That is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ with His people from the heaven to claim the earth.

If it is post-tribulation rapture, what would be the purpose of the Rapture after the Second Coming? There is no reason for God to take His people away when He has already brought them down to the earth?

### **11) The Tribulation is unnecessary for the church.**

*Romans 11:25-26 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;*

Referred to as the time of "Jacob's Trouble", the Tribulation targets Israel, for through it she will be awakened and at last see Jesus as the Messiah according to Romans 11:25-26. The promises God made to Abraham and to the Jewish people have not been forgotten in Deut 4:29-30. God will work with Israel in the days of the Tribulation. He will make Himself known to them and they shall indeed be saved.

*Deuteronomy 4:29-30 But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice*

### **12) Pre-Tribulation Rapture illustrated in Enoch who was taken to heaven prior to the Flood.**

*Genesis 5:24 And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*

Some might say, "Wrong analogy. The correct picture is Noah who went through the tribulation of the Flood." But Noah is not a picture of the church, but of Israel. God protected and sheltered Noah as His judgment Flood was unleashed. Noah was sealed by God and safely taken through the Flood, just as the 144,000 in Revelation chapter 7. But Enoch was taken up to heaven before the flood, the church will be taken before the Tribulation.