

87. Be ready, be wise, be watchful

July 30, 2017

In my opinion, the rapture survey done among Protestant pastors last year showed a very pathetic result. 36% of mainline Protestant pastors said that the rapture isn't literal. Pastors who hold this view include 60% of Lutherans, 48% of Methodists, and 49% of Presbyterian/Reformed pastors. 6% of Baptist and 1% of Pentecostal pastors hold that view as well.

In other words, these pastors claim to be the followers of Christ, but they DO NOT believe what it clearly says about the rapture in the Word of God. Whether these pastors believe or not, the rapture will happen and I would not be surprised if those pastors will be left behind, because they are not ready.

Before we go into the study of the second portion of Matthew 24, we must understand the meaning of the rapture.

A. WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. 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. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The word translated 'caught up' in the Greek is 'harpazo,' which means 'to be taken away by force.' It's usually used as a military term related to the taking of hostages. The Latin Bible, Vulgate translates 'harpazo' as 'rapturo,' and that's where we get our English word 'rapture.' Jesus will return to rapture His church, the born-again believers from the beginning. That's a promise of God.

As we studied last Sunday, this is not the same thing as the Second Coming of Christ by the end of the Tribulation. The Second Coming is to judge the unbelieving world, but the rapture is to take away the believers into heaven before God unleashes His holy wrath on the unbelieving habitants of the earth.

I asked you to underline "the trumpet of God". Some people are confused between this and the Seven Trumpet Judgments in the Book of Revelation. They are NOT the same one. This is a single trumpet call, not seven. The Seven Trumpet calls were made by angels, not by God Himself. It is like God's wake-up call for the physical bodies of His dead followers. It doesn't matter if they have been dead for thousands of years. That's not a problem with the Lord.

B. WHEN IS IT GOING TO HAPPEN?

1) The time is near

Matthew 24:32-35 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near-at the doors! 34 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

The fig tree is the symbol of Israel nationally, historically, and scripturally. On May 14, 1948, the fig tree, Israel blossomed once again when the land of Israel was

returned to the Jews. Jesus said the generation that sees this event take place will not pass away. Who is that generation? We are.

The Greek word of the article "this" is "houtos". Though the English translators of all the Bible translations used the word "this" here, but the original Greek definition also contains "that" as its definition. In other words, we shouldn't think that Jesus was talking about His first disciples' generation.

Though heaven and earth declare the glory of God in their beauty and majesty, they are not inspired by the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, they will be destroyed by the fire of God after the Great Tribulation (2 Peter 3:10) and He will create a new heaven and earth for His followers (Revelation 21:1). But His Word will remain unchanged. You have that unchanging Word on your lap.

2) No one knows the day

Matthew 24:36-39 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. 37 But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Jesus told us that His Word is final and there cannot be anyone who can reverse His Word. However, we find many people come up with unbiblical comments and books about the rapture.

Jesus said, "No one knows." In Greek, it is "No one knows"; in Swedish, it is "No one knows"; in Korean, it is "No one knows." I don't know which part of this "No one knows" people don't get. Whenever some Lala land theologians come up with fancy formulas that would confuse people with their manufactured date and time of the rapture, people go for it hook, line, and sinker all the way. They'd rather believe what unbiblical men insist on more than what Jesus said.

Among many of the controversial Christian doctrines, we find that the rapture is one of the top ranking hot topics. Many, who are much smarter than me, have more Bible knowledge than me, strongly believe that the rapture would happen during the tribulation. We call them 'Mid-Trib' people. There is another camp of theologians who again are so much smarter me believe that the rapture would happen after the tribulation. We call them "Post-Trib." So, which one is the right one? It is OK for them to be wrong. The majority of the Bible scholars whom I admire and respect interpret the Bible that the rapture will happen before the Great Tribulation which is known as the "Pre-Trib." That is what I believe, because that is what the Bible teaches us.

Is this important enough to make a big deal out of it? Yes, if you don't understand this well, your eschatology which means the end time prophecy will completely go out of whack.

There were three things that signified the days of Noah that Jesus talked about:

i. In the days of Noah, the people were more concerned about physical gratifications than spiritual depth.

We can make parallels between the day of Noah and current situations. This applies more to the younger generation around the world. They are more concerned about the latest fashions than their eternal salvation. It is a dangerous thing to get so absorbed in the pursuits of life that we forget Jesus' coming rapture.

ii. In the days of Noah, there were abundant abnormal sexual practices according to Genesis 6:1-4.

Sex has become one of the most discussed subjects of modern times. The Victorians Period pretended it did not exist; the modern people pretend that nothing else exists. If you think that I am joking, watch TV one evening – from TV commercials to regular prime time programs and late night programs, they are all about sex. It will only get worse.

iii. In the days of Noah, violence filled the earth according to Genesis 6:11.

It took 120 years for Noah to build the ark. God was using that time to allow the people to repent from their sins, but no one did.

It is not only a murder by a stranger, but also family members kill each other; kill their own children, including babies. The American society is brainwashed that it is OK to kill unborn babies under the name of women's right for their own bodies. They engrave that concept to the younger generation and how can they expect the young people to have respect for the sanctity of life? They cannot. I hope and pray that America soon turns from her wicked ways and repents and seeks God. He will forgive us and heal our land before it get too late.

3) Left behind

Matthew 24:40-41 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.

Can you imagine chaos on this earth? Especially, those who thought that they were Christians and heard about the rapture and they are left behind because they didn't receive Jesus Christ into their hearts. There will be car crashes and plane crashes due to missing Christian drivers and pilots.

There will be much cries, sorrows, and panics, because they'll realize that they missed the rapture. But they still can go to heaven, if they repent and live in faith with the willingness to be killed in the name of Jesus. If not, they will end up receiving the mark of the beast during the Great Tribulation and they will become the enemy of God, like satan.

4) No one knows the hour

Matthew 24:42-44 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 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. 44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Jesus used Noah to warn that men will not know the day, and He used the picture of the burglar to warn that they will not know the hour.

From v32 to v44, our Lord Jesus repeated the same words "do not know when" 3 times. As I mentioned it before, it is God's intention that every church age be convinced they are the last generation. I also believe that God's divine design is for the church to live in constant expectancy of the Lord's return. While we wait for His trumpet call, we need to pray, we need to watch spiritually. There is no time for us to backslide. We don't want to get caught in our sins when He calls us, do we?

C. WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO WHILE WE WAIT FOR THE RAPTURE?

Matthew 24:45-51 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. 47 Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The most dangerous lie is not "There is no God", nor is it "there is no hell." But the most dangerous lie of satan is "There is no hurry." It is not a small thing to say, "Jesus is not coming today, or for several years." We need to be ready for the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:6-8 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

I do not believe that the antichrist can take over the power and authority of the earth while the church is still here. I believe that the Holy Spirit within the church is the restraining force that is holding back the powers of darkness from completely engulfing and overwhelming the world right now. But the moment the church is removed, there will be nothing to hinder or hold back the powers of darkness from taking total control.

This is the reason why I'm not looking for the identity of the antichrist. This is just another subtle and deceitful device of satan, that leads people to be looking for the antichrist rather than seeking Jesus Christ and obeying His commands.

Many believers were taught wrong that the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the earth with the church at the rapture. That concept is incorrect. The reason is that no one else can bring people to Jesus except the Holy Spirit. He will do that to those who left behind, so that they may come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior during the Tribulation time. But the Holy Spirit will no longer restrains satan and He will be out of the way of satan. It means that this world will experience all out perversion at its worst.

Depend on how you live for Christ, your heart will be encouraged when you hear the trumpet call of God for Rapture. If you don't live for Him, your heart will turn to shame for His coming.

D. APPLICATIONS

I believe that God wanted every church age to believe that it was the last. Believing this has a three-fold effect:

1) It gives us an urgency for the work that we are doing, to get the Gospel out.

The people around you and me are living and dying without Jesus. It is our job and privilege to let them know about Jesus.

2) It gives us a correct perspective of material things.

Everything we have here on earth will remain on earth when that trumpet call of God sounds and we leave this earth. Let's hold everything loosely. We are not here on earth for those things. We are here for the glory of God.

3) It maintains a purity in our lives.

Let's keep a short account with our God for our sins. Let's constantly keep our eyes on Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Let's be ready. Let's be wise. Let's be watchful.