

The Day of the Lord

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NT397 1 and 2 Thessalonians- Fall 2015

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20 November 2015

With all the events occurring in our backyard, including the rise of persecution in the church, violence, sin, and terrorism, many become exceedingly discouraged and confused. As the church, we have no reason to feel this way, for God has given us the answers to things to come. He has promised to come again for us and make right the wrong that has been done. His name will be lifted high and magnified above all else. Here we will discuss a few things that scripture points out regarding the things to come and gain insight on the Day of the Lord, which includes the rapture of the church, the Great Tribulation, and the Second Coming of Christ which is followed by the Millennium. The state the earth is in is not without hope, for God almighty has a plan in mind and by His sovereign will it will come to pass.

### Three Different Millennial Views

Before going into detail about the specific events taking place in the Day of the Lord, I want to take a look at all three views of the Millennium in general, beginning with Postmillennialism. Postmillennialists believe that the second coming of Christ will occur after the Millennium. They believe that the thousand years spoken of in Revelation 20:4-6 is not a literal one thousand years, but a figure of speech to say “a long period of time.” It is their belief that “the church, fulfilling the great commission, will be the instrument to bring about and promote the Millennium on earth.”<sup>1</sup> Postmillennialism does not interpret the Bible literally and “fails in that it interprets Bible prophesy subjectively and holds that the millennial kingdom will be established by the church, not by Christ Himself.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 1986, 1999), 512.

<sup>2</sup> “What is postmillennialism?” Got Questions Ministries, [www.gotquestions.org/postmillennialism.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/postmillennialism.html) (accessed November 20, 2015).

Another view is amillennialism. Among amillennialists there are two views: one is that the Millennium is being fulfilled now by the church on earth and the other says that it is being fulfilled now in heaven. They do not believe that the thousand year reign of Christ is literal, but that “Christ reigns in the hearts of believers.”<sup>3</sup> They have two ways of interpreting prophesy. Prophecies that are already fulfilled should be interpreted literally, but unfulfilled prophesy, according to amillennialists, should be interpreted spiritually or non-literally. There is a major issue with interpreting unfulfilled prophecies in this way, for “this allows for a wide range of meanings.”<sup>4</sup> I believe that amillennialists fail by using different forms of Bible interpretation, in a way that allows the scripture to say what they think seems right.

The last view, and the one that I believe, is premillennialism. Premillennialists believe that “the second coming of Christ will occur prior to the Millennium, which will see the establishment of Christ’s kingdom on this earth for a literal one thousand years.”<sup>5</sup> Within premillennialism there are differing views regarding the Rapture’s timing. They interpret scripture literally. Because all “Old Testament prophecies of Jesus’ first coming were fulfilled literally... we should expect the prophecies regarding His second coming to be fulfilled literally as well.”<sup>6</sup> It is with this view of the Millennium in mind that the rest of this paper will be written.

## The Rapture

The Rapture of the church is the moment when God takes the church out of the world, when “we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet

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<sup>3</sup> David Wilson, “Understanding the Future,” (Calvary School of Ministry, Waterford, Calvary Chapel Waterford, October 06, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> “What is Amillennialism?” Got Questions Ministries, [www.gotquestions.org/amillennialism.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/amillennialism.html) (accessed November 20, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 522.

<sup>6</sup> “What is Premillennialism?” Got Questions Ministries, [www.gotquestions.org/premillennialism.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/premillennialism.html) (accessed November 20, 2015).

the Lord in the air...”<sup>7</sup> The word “rapture” is not found in the Bible but derives its name from the Latin Vulgate where the word is *rapare* or *raptus*. “In the Greek, the word translated ‘caught up’ is *harpazo*, meaning ‘to be snatched away with force.’”<sup>8</sup> It is important to understand that “it is the same word, just different language translations.”<sup>9</sup> There are a few different views as to when the Rapture will occur: a pretribulation Rapture is the belief that the Rapture will take place before the seven year Tribulation period, a midtribulation Rapture is the belief that it will take place in the midst of the Tribulation, after a three and a half years have passed and before God’s wrath is poured out on the world, and a posttribulation Rapture is the belief that the Rapture will occur at the end of the Tribulation. Pan Tribulation is the belief that it will all pan out in the end. I believe that God has not appointed His people to His wrath and therefore, along with a few other reasons, I believe in a pretribulation Rapture.

When the Rapture happens our bodies will be changed. Scripture tells us that “...we shall be changed- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51-52). Our bodies will go through what some term a “metamorphosis” where our corruptible bodies will be made incorruptible. The Rapture is imminent, meaning there are no prophecies or signs that need to be fulfilled before it happens; it can happen at any moment. Knowing the Rapture could happen at any time we should bring the Gospel to the world urgently, live purely, watch for Him and have a correct attitude toward earthly things.

## The Tribulation

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<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville, Dallas, Mexico City, Rio De Janeiro: Thomas Nelson, Inc. 1982), 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

<sup>8</sup> Chuck Smith, *The Final Act* (Costa Mesa, California: The Word For Today, 2007), 102.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *The Final Act*, 102.

Once the Rapture takes place, the stage is set for the Great Tribulation to take place, and “the world we leave behind us will be thrown into a state of increasing sadness, terror, and devastation.”<sup>10</sup> The Great Tribulation is the wrath of God being poured out onto a sinful world. Scripture informs us of a few purposes this time will hold: “(1) to test those who dwell upon the earth; meaning those who refused to receive Christ prior to the Rapture (Revelation 3:10); (2) that God might vent His wrath upon the wicked (Revelation 15:7); and (3) to destroy those who destroy the earth (Revelation 11:18).”<sup>11</sup> This will be a very dark time, but as the church, we know from scripture that God has not appointed us to wrath (1 Thess. 5:9). Romans tells us that “...having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom. 5:9), and Jesus says that He “...will keep [us] from the hour of trial which shall come upon the world...” (Rev. 3:10). Comfort is found knowing that the Lord will come to rescue His people and bring us to Him.

There are a few events that scripture tells will take place during the Tribulation, and we will look at some of them. The Tribulation will begin “...with the signing of a covenant between the leader of the ‘Federated States of Europe’ and the Jewish people,”<sup>12</sup> (Dan. 9:27a). At the beginning of the seven year period of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will be revealed and he will make a peace treaty with Israel. This first half of the Tribulation will be a time of peace between Israel and the antichrist. They will feel confident and secure. The temple will be rebuilt and they will be worshipping by the Old Testament ways, “...but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes

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<sup>10</sup> Smith, *The Final Act*, 144.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *The Final Act*, 166.

<sup>12</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 541.

desolate” (Dan. 9:27). This refers to the Antichrist when he will stand in the temple and demand to be worshipped and perform an abomination which causes desolation.

At the beginning of the Tribulation all will seem well between Israel and the Antichrist, but after three-and-a-half years “he’s going to stand in the temple and declare that he is God (Daniel 12:11).”<sup>13</sup> This marks the beginning of the last 1,290 days told of in Daniel 12, before the Lord will come in glory and establish His kingdom here on earth. That last half of the Tribulation will be filled with great judgements explained in Revelation 6-19. Revelation tells us that there are three series of judgements where “the first series is related to the opening of the seven seals of a scroll, the second to the blowing of seven trumpets, and the third to the pouring out of the contents of seven bowls.”<sup>14</sup> Some believe that these are all the same event but explained multiple times, though I do believe they are separate events that follow each other in chronological order. The scriptures do not specifically say where the middle point of the tribulation occurs in regards to these judgments.

The first judgements that are listed are in the scroll that is sealed with seven seals, but “...the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals” (Rev. 5:5). The judgements found in the loosing of the seals include a man going forth to conquer, a man taking peace from the earth, a famine, Death, catastrophic events, and the implication that there were some who were saved during the tribulation and martyred for their faith (Rev. 6). The next series of judgements begins with seven angels standing before God, who are then given seven trumpets (Rev. 8:2). The trumpet judgements include hail and fire, a third of the sea turned to blood, water contamination, a change in the day and night cycle, the release of

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<sup>13</sup> Smith, *The Final Act*, 59.

<sup>14</sup> Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 542.

demonic locusts, and an army of 200 million who kill a third of mankind. The last judgment is the bowl judgments where men who had the mark of the beast obtain a sore, waters turn to blood, the sun will scorch men with fire, the beast's throne will be defected, the River Euphrates will dry up, and earthquakes, thunderings and lightnings will occur (Rev 16). With this last judgement a voice will come out of heaven and declare "...it is done!" (Rev. 16:17).

### The Second Coming

The second coming of Jesus Christ will be at the end of the Great Tribulation. He will come riding on a white horse and He will be called Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11). This event will be so grand, He will be seen by all. The book of Daniel describes this moment:

I was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and the brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14).

When Jesus comes He "...will set up His rule on earth for a thousand-year period known as the Millennium."<sup>15</sup> Colossians 3:4 and Revelation 19:14 say that we, the saints, will return with Him. During this time Satan will be bound and the earth will be restored. The church will be in their glorified bodies and will be ruling and reigning with Christ (Rev. 20:4-6). There will be no sin and the "earth will finally be ruled by One who reigns with righteousness."<sup>16</sup>

When Jesus comes, the beast and the false prophet will be captured and cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20) and an angel with the key to the bottomless pit will come down from heaven with a great chain and lay hold of Satan, binding him for the thousand years that Christ will reign

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<sup>15</sup> Smith, *The Final Act*, 198.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *The Final Act*, 211.

(Rev. 20:1-2). I find it interesting that after all of Satan's attempts to ruin God's plan, this verse shows how just one angel captures him and it says nothing about the angel having any difficulty in his capture. God and His armies are so much greater and stronger than the enemy. After Satan is bound "all the nations will be gathered before [Christ], and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:32). It's during this time that Christ will judge "...to determine which of those who survived the great tribulation will be allowed the privilege of living in the kingdom age."<sup>17</sup> Christ will reign for one thousand years, us with Him also.

#### After the Millennium

But it does not end here. Satan will be released at the end of the Millennium and go about deceiving the nations. He will gather people together and they will go and surround the city of the saints, but the battle is a small one. Indeed, they really have no chance at all, for God from heaven, in all His power, will send fire down to devour them before any battle really begins. Satan will then be cast into the lake of fire where he will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:7-10). There will be a great white throne judgement (Rev 20:11-15), this earth will pass away and there will be a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1).

#### In Conclusion

To summarize, at the moment we are in what is called the Church Age, but soon the Rapture will take place and we will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Sometime after the Rapture there will be a signing of a peace treaty which will mark the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period. The first half will be a time of peace, then at the mid-point the antichrist will

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<sup>17</sup> Smith, *The Final Act*, 214.

stand in the temple, declare to be God and perform an abomination which causes desolation. During this time God's wrath will be poured out on mankind. At the end of the tribulation period the battle of Armageddon will take place, then heaven will open and Jesus Christ will come riding on a white horse. He will set up His kingdom and we will rule and reign with Him for one thousand years. At the end of the Millennium Satan will be released, deceive many, and gather an army to go and surround the city of the saints, but God will send down fire from heaven to devour them. The Great White Throne Judgment will occur and there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

After studying and learning about these things that are to come, a few things in our life should change. First of all, we should be watching for the imminent return of Christ. We, the church, should also bring the Gospel to the world with an urgency, for we know the things to come. We should be living purely, knowing Christ could return at any moment, and our attitude regarding the things of this earth should be corrected. The book of Revelation says that there is a blessing just for reading those words of prophesy, and indeed when we learn of the things to come our perspective is completely changed. No longer are we focused on the unimportant, but we are reminded that God is bigger and mightier than all our fears, worries, and burdens. He will come again and bring us to Himself, and make right what has been wrong; He does indeed have a plan, and in this we can find great comfort and hope.

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