

**"God's Prophetic Timetable"**

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

**Introduction:** Today we are going to step away from Zechariah and we are going to consider a message that connects with last Sunday evening's message and our study of the Kingdom. Today I want to talk to you about the Rapture and how close we may be.

Let us begin with the:

**I. The Definition of the Rapture**

We need to understand what the rapture is because there are many who misunderstand the Rapture. Let us notice the first mention of the Rapture.

**John 14:1-3**

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

<sup>2</sup> *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.*

<sup>3</sup> *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

The Rapture is an event when Jesus will return IN THE AIR to gather His church to be with Him in heaven. The details are in 1 Thessalonians 4.

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

<sup>13</sup> *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

<sup>14</sup> *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

<sup>15</sup> *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

<sup>16</sup> *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

<sup>17</sup> *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

<sup>18</sup> *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

## **II. Timing of the Rapture**

The Rapture of the church is imminent, which means it can happen at any time. There is NOTHING on God's calendar that must take place before the Rapture can happen. The Rapture is known as a sign-less event meaning that there are NO SIGNS that must precede it.

Many people want to look at what is happening in the USA and use this as a barometer to teach that the Rapture is going to happen because of what is happening here in our nation. I have heard it said many times that the Lord has to return because of how sinful our world has become. But what we need to understand is that things were far worse in the church age than what we are seeing today. Let me show you.

### **1 Peter 1:6-7**

<sup>6</sup> *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:*

<sup>7</sup> *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

### **1 Peter 4:12**

<sup>12</sup> *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

These believers went through far more than what the church in the United States is going through today. Then there are those who use Matthew 24.

### **Matthew 24:6-8**

<sup>6</sup> *And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

<sup>7</sup> *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.*

<sup>8</sup> *All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

These verses are describing what will happen under the Seal Judgments of Revelation 6. Let me show you.

**Revelation 6:3-8**

<sup>3</sup> *And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.*

<sup>4</sup> *And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.*

<sup>5</sup> *And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.*

<sup>6</sup> *And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.*

<sup>7</sup> *And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.*

<sup>8</sup> *And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.*

These verses are parallel with Matthew 24:6-8 and these events will happen in the Tribulation. Therefore, we are not going to see these things in our day. We may see shadows of them but not the actual events. We must also rightly divide the Word of Truth and when we do we understand that Matthew 24 is for the Jews in the Tribulation.

So, there are no signs that the Bible tells us to look for in our nation. The US is not the place to look to get an idea concerning God's timetable. We need to watch the nation of Israel.

There is nothing that **MUST** happen before the Rapture but there is something happening that helps us to see that we are so close to the Rapture. Now I know that for many years you have been hearing that Jesus is coming back soon and many have grown cold toward His return and have fallen asleep spiritually speaking. But I am going to show you something that should certainly wake you up.

**III. Israel's Return to their Land.**

**Deuteronomy 28:47-49, 64-67**

<sup>47</sup> Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things;

<sup>48</sup> Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

<sup>49</sup> The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand;

<sup>64</sup> And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone.

<sup>65</sup> And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind:

<sup>66</sup> And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life:

<sup>67</sup> In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

God had told the people of Israel that if they turned from Him, they would be scattered across the globe. This happened in AD 70 when the Romans attacked. They are still scattered even today. But He also told them something else.

### **Deuteronomy 30:1-3**

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,

<sup>2</sup> And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;

<sup>3</sup> That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.

Here is what we need to understand, there are two regathering of Isarel in the Tribulation.

➤ **The First**

This regathering will happen so that God can discipline the Jews for their unbelief. This must happen in order for them to enter the covenant with the Anti-Christ.

**Daniel 9:26-27**

<sup>26</sup> *And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.*

<sup>27</sup> *And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.*

➤ **The Second**

After the first regathering God will unleash the judgments of the book of Revelation. This will cause the Jews to be scattered again and then He will gather them one more time in belief. The tribulation will cause them to turn and accept Jesus Christ as Messiah and King.

Now let me show you what Isaiah wrote.

**Isaiah 11:10-12**

<sup>10</sup> *And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.*

<sup>11</sup> *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.*

<sup>12</sup> *And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.*

Now we need to understand that when the Jews are gathered the last time in unbelief this gathering will be the SECOND gathering. That means there is only ONE before it.

The FIRST gathering is happening today. The Jews are returning to their homeland in great masses. This is the first regathering. That means God is gathering them to discipline them with the Tribulation and guess what must happen before the Tribulation? It is Rapture! This is how close we are!

Listen to the words of Walvoord.

*"Of the many peculiar phenomena which characterize the present generation, few events can claim equal significance as far as Biblical prophecy is concerned with that of the return of Israel to their land. It constitutes a preparation for the end of the age, the setting for the coming of the Lord for His church, and the fulfillment of Israel's prophetic destiny."*

He goes on and I want you to pay close attention to what he says:

*"The third and final dispersion began in A.D. 70, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the desecration of the entire land which followed the next century. From this dispersion, Israel has begun to return in the twentieth-century as witnessed in the establishment of the nation Israel. Two million of these people are now established in their ancient land. The present regathering being witnessed by our generation is the largest movement of the people of Israel since the days of Moses, and may be understood to be the beginning of that which will be completed subsequent to the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His earthly Kingdom on this earth."*

**Conclusion/Application:**

I do not know what you are living for but if it is the world, you had better change your life and start living for the Lord.

**Romans 13:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*

<sup>12</sup> *The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

If you are not saved you better come to Jesus Christ! He is coming back and if you miss the Rapture you will go straight into the Tribulation and it will be far worse than you can even imagine.