



Last Days Beacon

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THE GOOD NEWS - SIGNS OF THE RAPTURE ARE EVERYWHERE

*WHO ARE THE FALSE TEACHERS?
RAPTURE-DENIERS OR RAPTURE-TEACHERS?*

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Jesus compared the last days before this "coming" to "the Days of Noah." The GREAT FLOOD was the first global judgement of wicked humanity. The TRIBULATION is the Church Age judgement. In both cases there is a Rapture-Rescue of God's People.

As readers saw in last month's *Last Days Beacon* - **"WILL THE TRIBULATION BEGIN IN AMERICA?"** - Revelation 6:8 seems to say Christ is sending the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse first to the United States. So, the question that arises is: will Christ gather His people out before the Tribulation begins? Around one in four American believe this. Why? Because, as we'll see, (1) Jesus introduced and prophesied the Rapture doctrine. (2) Because around 1,500 already fulfilled Bible prophecies give Scripture its enormous authority. Sadly, Rapture-Denier teachers have convinced most American Christians that their Savior will not rescue Christians. They claim to hold the intellectual high ground on the Rapture question. So, let's see how "biblical" Rapture-Scoffing is.

A recent poll provides a mind-reading on the Tribulation question. Just under half (4 of 10) Americans believe they are living in "the end times." *In this 2022 Pew Center survey most evangelicals (63 percent) and 3 or 4 black Americans indicated they believe we are living in the Last Days that Jesus predicted. Oddly, more than a quarter of Catholics (27 percent) and nearly 1 in 10 (9 percent) atheists agreed with evangelical and black Americans. One of Jesus' major teachings (Matthew 24 and 25) was about the "end times," "the last days."

WHO WILL SAVE AMERICANS - THE RETURN OF DONALD TRUMP - OR THE RETURN OF JESUS THE MESSIAH?

As the President Biden steamroller-demolition of America approaches its final phase, the question becomes - which savior will rescue Americans? Half of American voters are looking for the return of Donald Trump and many view him as their "Messiah." Much of the evangelical portion of Trump voters are looking for Jesus' Rapture-Rescue. The 2 big questions before us are - (1) is America even salvageable and (2) does Trump have the ability to save the United States after his 2020 political "defeat" by a man now regarded worldwide as senile? More importantly - why won't the 2024 election be stolen? Is America so far gone, like "in the days of Noah," that only Jesus can *rescue* people out of a nation deeply mired in lies, delusion, intoxication, addiction, mental illness - and nauseating wickedness? America today bears an eerie likeness to Noah's generation.

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THE TRIBULATION

Because today's American Christians are what pollster George Gallup called "Bible illiterates," they are easy prey for false teachers. When Rapture-Deniers teach that authentic Christians will go into the Tribulation, they disclose a deep misunderstanding of God's purpose in sending the Tribulation at the end of the Church Age. God's intention is to heat up the frying pan, so to speak, to bring as many Jesus-resistant people, beginning with the Jewish Chosen People, into the Messiah's Salvation Ark. The Tribulation is designed to take the anti-Christ world into an apocalyptic high noon showdown where protection and rescue dominates their minds.

The lurking idea at the bottom of the human soul is that demonic doctrine that God is a vengeful sin-counting sadist. But God's overarching purpose of the Tribulation is salvation not damnation. The Tribulation is the prelude to the marvelous 1,000-year Millennium. Authentic Christians have elected Jesus as their Lord and Savior. His crucifixion paid the full debt to God for a Christian's sins. And because true Christians have elected Jesus as their Savior, they don't need the *convincing* that Christ-phobic-haters do. Paul the apostle says Christians are saved from wrath-of-God-Tribulation. "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Jesus is the proof of God's mercy and love; however, God's gift of His Son must be sincerely *received*. Noah and his family were saved because of Noah's belief and trust in God. And Lot was saved by his relationship to his Uncle Abraham, who was under God's salvation covenant (Genesis 15:1 and 9-18).

In the same way, Christians are saved by their divine-contract relationship with Jesus. When Christians are "in Christ" they are in the *Christ Ark*, just as Noah was in God's Rapture-Rescue Ark. This is why Christians (living and deceased) will be Rapture-Rescued and will not suffer with unbelievers in the Tribulation Judgement of anti-Christ Humanity.

“RAPTURES” IN THE EARLY PART OF THE BIBLE

Rapture-Deniers insist that the Rapture is a false teaching, adding ideas to the Bible that aren't there. But the fact is, Rapture-Rescue is a doctrine that begins in the first two books of the Bible. The book of Revelation is just the climax of the Bible's Rapture doctrine. Rapture-Rescues of God-fearing people are one of the oldest ideas in the Bible. And - as we will see - it is one of the earliest doctrines of the Church Age. Jesus left earth in exactly the kind of Rapture (Acts 1:9-11) that many Christians believe and Rapture-Scoffers deny.

NOAH AND HIS FAMILY WERE RAPTURED

The water elevation of Noah and his family in God's ark was the first Rapture. Noah's terminally wicked, rebellious generation was "left behind." The Creator rescued Noah and his family from God's first worldwide judgement of irredeemable, lawless humanity - the Great Flood. The basic meaning of Raptures is rescue. Enoch and Elijah the prophet were raptured - supernaturally rescued from evil men.

THE EXODUS WAS A SUPERNATURAL RAPTURE-RESCUE

Even the Exodus was a type of Rapture - God's supernatural rescue of the descendants of Abraham, with whom He had made a protection covenant (Genesis 15:1, 9-18) centuries earlier. The Exodus was like the Great Flood event in that, instead of being lifted above water like Noah, the Hebrews crossed the Red Sea by God's supernatural parting of the water. Pharaoh's army was "left behind" in the water. Christ's people will, like Noah, and the Hebrews in Exodus, be rescued out of a wicked, demonic world. So, Rapture-Deniers are incorrect on one of their basic assumptions - Rapture is not a new idea. It is, in fact, one of the earliest ideas in the Bible - in the first 2 books - Genesis and Exodus. And the Rapture was one of the earliest teachings of the early Church initiated by Jesus.

JESUS WAS RAPTURED AT THE START OF THE CHURCH AGE. (Acts 1:9-10). AND REVELATION SHOWS JOHN THE APOSTLE RAPTURED AT THE END OF THE CHURCH AGE. (Revelation 4:1)

Paul the apostle warns against scoffing at prophecies, obviously referring to his Rapture-Anti-Christ-Tribulation prophecies that were being denied and mocked in his day. He says, "Do not treat prophecies with contempt" (1 Thessalonians 5:20) and "don't let anyone deceive you." (2 Thessalonians 2:3) Instead, Paul urges Christians to "comfort" each other with the good news of the Rapture. (1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11) Sadly, today, most pastors and Priests scoff at Jesus' and Paul's Rapture doctrine. How do Rapture-Deniers miss the plain fact that Jesus left earth in a drawn-up-in-the-air Rapture? One major Rapture-Denier, *American Vision* President Gary DeMar, says the word, "Rapture" is not in the Bible and that it was not taught until 1830 by British evangelist John Nelson Darby. The truth is Jesus introduced the Rapture doctrine prior to his crucifixion (Matthew 24:36-44, 25:1-13). And 40 days after his resurrection from the dead, Jesus was supernaturally drawn up to heaven in exactly the way Rapture-believers anticipate.

Just as there are 2 Second Comings - Jesus' return to rescue his people - the Rapture - and then his bodily return to defeat the Anti-Christ and the devil (Revelation 19). likewise, it could be said that there are two Raptures. Jesus supernaturally rises from the dead and then Jesus supernaturally rises to heaven. Nine verses into the book of Acts, Jesus is - "Risen Indeed" - into heaven. This happened while the disciples were watching in mouths-open-astonishment. DeMar says the angels were incorrect in telling the disciples Jesus will return just as he went up in the clouds (Acts 1:11) because Revelation 19:11 says he will return on a horse. What, we wonder, did the disciples think about Jesus' Matthew 24 and 25 Rapture-teaching - and then his own Rapture? Would they agree with DeMar that the Rapture is a nonsensical false teaching? The most hostile, legalistic Rapture-Denier, DeMar went on an anti-Rapture Holy War 22 years ago. Ironically, his book, "End Times Fiction: A Biblical Consideration of the *Left Behind* Theology," was published a few weeks after the 2001 Islamic Jihad attack on America.

DeMar refutes virtually every point of Pre-Millennial Rapture-and-the-coming-Tribulation-and-Anti-Christ teaching. He says Rapture teaching is "dangerous" and "harmful" because it will cause disillusionment, disappointment, and discouragement when the Rapture doesn't happen. On the other hand, wouldn't a much worse fate be if Rapture-Scoffers are left behind after the Rapture? The Rapture will be the acid test of authentic Christian belief before the Tribulation. Jesus predicted that the "Wheat" - Holy Spirit-filled people - will be separated from "the Tares," *nominal, Laodicean* Christians.

Apparently learning from Jesus, Paul taught Jesus' Rapture-Good-News to the Thessalonians at the very start of the Church Age - only a few years after Jesus was Raptured. Paul was, after all, still persecuting Christians when Jesus taught his Rapture doctrine (Matthew 24-25) to his disciples. Significantly, the Thessalonian letters are the earliest writings in the New Testament, and ironically, they are about the last days of Christ's Church Age. Contrary to the Rapture-Deniers, the Rapture is not a new teaching. It was introduced by Jesus prior to Pentecost, the birthday of His Church.

IN PAUL'S DAY, FALSE TEACHERS SAID THE RAPTURE ALREADY HAPPENED. TODAY THEY SAY THERE IS NO RAPTURE IN THE BIBLE

DeMar's Rapture-Rebuking is not merely against Premillennial teaching, but also against Jesus' and Paul's teaching about the Rapture, the Tribulation, and the Anti-Christ. DeMar says Jesus' Last Days teaching and Paul's Thessalonian letters are not about the last days of the Church Age, but about the last days of the Old Testament Mosaic system. One of the reasons Paul sent the Thessalonian letters was to correct some false teachers who had convinced the Thessalonians that Christ's "gathering" (Rapture) of his people had already happened. It is ironic that in Paul's day, false teachers said the Rapture had already happened (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2) and today, false teachers say there is no Rapture in the Bible.

THERE ARE MANY WORDS IN THE BIBLE FOR “RAPTURE”

Rapture-Deniers say that the word “Rapture” is not in the Bible. But neither is “Trinity.” The fact is, there are many words used to convey the idea of Rapture, Christians being supernaturally snatched up to heaven. (1) “Taken.” Genesis 5:24 / 2 Kings 2: 1,3,9 are two examples of the earliest use. And Christ uses “taken” in his last days sermon (Matthew 24 16:40-41). (2) Paul talks of Christ “gathering” his people, using the same Greek word (*synago*) for a farmer gathering his wheat crop into his barn at the end of the season. In the same way the Rapture represents Christ’s gathering his crop (his *ekklesia*) into his barns at the end of the Church Age. Paul says, “Our gathering together unto him” at his [second] “coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:1). (3) Paul also uses a fishing image - “...caught up together... in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...” (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18). (4) When Jesus and Paul liken Jesus to “a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2 / Matthew 24:43-44) they are talking about the Rapture when Christ will *steal* his people out of the world. Thieves “take” things, and Jesus is “taking” his people from the devil’s world, that begins just before the appearance of the Anti-Christ.

NOAH’S GENERATION MOCKED HIM FOR HIS BELIEFS. AND TODAY, THERE IS WIDESPREAD RIDICULING OF CHRISTIANS FOR THEIR BELIEFS

The disciples ask Jesus about what last days signs they should look for and Jesus responds with 30-some verses concluding with, “No one knows the day or that hour.” (Matthew 24). He compares the last days prior to his Return with “the days of Noah.” We here today in the United States may be living in the “the days of Noah” that Jesus predicted. Noah was ridiculed as an unhinged loon. Aren’t Christians and their ideas today mocked as superstitious dumbbells? Like in Noah’s day, Americans are going about their everyday lives unaware that judgement is coming for all those who “delight in wickedness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:12) The Great Flood was God’s first global judgement of wicked humanity and the Tribulation will be the second worldwide Judgement of wicked humanity - at the end of the Church Age. Noah was saved, i.e., Raptured, because of his spiritual relationship with God. And Christians will be saved because of their spiritual relationship with Jesus. Those who are “in Christ” will be in the Christ-Ark when the Tribulation arrives.

BEFORE HE IS RAPTURED, JESUS GIVES EXAMPLES OF A RAPTURE

“That is how it will be at the coming of the son of man.”

In his Last Days teaching in the 24th chapter of Matthew, Jesus gives two examples of what a Rapture will look like. He is comparing his Return to the “days of Noah,” when people were going about their everyday lives and suddenly the flood begins. No one knows the day and hour when the judgement will come. Jesus says, “That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.” Two men will be in the field, Jesus says. One will be “taken” and “the other” will be “left” behind. Two women will be grinding meal. One will be “taken” and “the other” will be “left” behind. “Taken” is the same word used for Elijah’s Rapture. (2 Kings 2:10) “Therefore,” Jesus says, “keep watch because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.” (Matthew 24:36-42)

Jesus' "Watch" command is one of his most-repeated warnings. DeMar says that Jesus is not talking about a Rapture, instead he is referring to the final Resurrection of Christians. DeMar says the only unfulfilled prophecies left are Christians' death and resurrection. If he is correct, then what is Jesus telling us to "Watch" for? How do we watch for the resurrection? What are the signs?

THE 10 VIRGINS PARABLE - HOW MANY CHRISTIANS WILL BE RAPTURED?

After talking about the man and woman "taken" in Matthew 24, Jesus gives the kind of object lesson preachers do at the end of a sermon in Matthew 25. In Jesus' Parable of the 10 Virgins, he compares his Return to the coming of a Bridegroom for his wedding. The Parable lesson is a warning prophecy on the Rapture separation - the division - of authentic Holy Spirit-filled Christians from name-only-Christians. The Holy Spirit Christians (those with olive oil, symbol of God's Spirit, in their lamps) are taken into the Marriage ceremony and the other half (those without oil in their lamps) are left behind outside the hall crying to come in. In one of the most chilling statements in the New Testament - Jesus says, "I never knew you." The 10 Virgins Parable is one of the defining statements about authentic Christians.

The 5 Virgins without oil in their lamps symbolize "Tares," in-name-only Christians who have never really elected Jesus as their King and Savior and thus received God's Holy Spirit. It is the "Tares" who will be "left behind" with unbelievers. Although they still have a chance at redemption in the Tribulation - it will cost them their lives. Jesus talks about "wheat" (authentic Christians) and "tares" (nominal Christians) in Matthew 24:12 and 13:24-30.

PAUL'S THESSALONIAN LETTERS FURNISH THE MOST DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE LAST DAYS LEADING UP TO THE RAPTURE

Jesus Rapture ascension into heaven (Acts 1:11) and the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 1-13) are virtual back-to-back events - separated by only 40 days. The Church Age began with God's Spirit coming to earth and infusing Christ-believers. The Rapture will be the Exodus of the Holy Spirit because his residence on earth is only in Christians who will be taken out.

Apparently, Jesus taught the Rapture doctrine to Paul who provided much additional detail in his two letters to the Thessalonian Church. Let's remember that Paul was still persecuting Christians as heretics when Jesus was telling the disciples about the Rapture. Paul's Thessalonian letters are the earliest writings in the New Testament, issued about 18 years after Jesus left earth in the first New Testament Rapture. Paul implies that the Rapture doctrine has been taught for some time when he says, "For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." The Thessalonian letters focus on the last days and Jesus' Return. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 are the key Rapture passages. It is the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians that defines the apostate state of the end of the Church Age that identifies the signs that the Rapture is very near.

PAUL'S PROPHETIC SIGNS OF THE RAPTURE ARE HERE - RIGHT NOW - IN THE UNITED STATES

A multitude of preachers have said repeatedly that the Rapture is the only thing left on the prophetic calendar. On the other hand, Paul shows prophetic happenings that signal the Rapture are going on right now in the United States. The rebellion against God, Christ, and the Bible (apostasy), a “great delusion,” massive rejection of truth and obstinate clinging to lies are the prophetic signs that come right before the Rapture. Although there are scholarly questions around the exact date of the 2,000th anniversary of Christ's crucifixion, resurrection and Rapture, this enormous-historic-anniversary is, at most, 10 years away - 2033. Paul's last days Thessalonian letters are the Bible's classic last-days-Rapture passages. Apostasy (rebellion against Christ) is the cardinal sign that the Rapture is at the door.

The lawless Spirit of the Anti-Christ (e.g., WW I and II, the Cold War, Islamic Jihad and now China) has been percolating for most of the last century preparing the way for the Anti-Christ. Is it my imagination or has that lawless Anti-Christ spirit been brazenly parading up and down the public square ever since the 2020 presidential election hoax? Isn't half the country tolerating and believing the torrent of lies, if not gloating over them? In 2 Thessalonians, Paul predicts people will reject the truth, be caught in a web of delusion, and “delight in wickedness.” “...all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness” (2 Thessalonians 2: 11-12). This description of people who “delight in wickedness,” lies and delusion are right in front of us - for those, as Jesus says, who *have eyes to see and ears to hear*.

When Paul says that, “God did not appoint us to suffer (His) wrath...” he is referring to the Christian's escape from the Tribulation.

The Tribulation is the-Day-of-the-Lord's-Wrath against rebellious anti-Christ humanity at war with His Son. The media's long war against Christianity, Christians, and the Bible, along with their brazen promotion of immorality and sin is the kind of rebellion Paul identifies. Is it possible, sadly, that the wholesale denial of and scoffing at Jesus' Rapture doctrine by most American pastors and Priests is, in fact, the outworking of the last days Church apostasy in Paul's Thessalonian letters?

THE RAPTURE IS A MAMMOTH HISTORICAL EVENT

The Rapture is not the “imaginative,” debatable doctrine Rapture-Scoffers insist. The Rapture marks (1) the end of the Church Age and, (2) probably, the end of America, History's Great Nation. (3) The Rapture includes the deceased Christians' Resurrection and (4) it signals the appearance of the Anti-Christ, the “Superman Savior” the world has been searching for. (5) And it heralds the Tribulation Judgement and the last days of history prior to the Millennium.

Unlike the 2,000-year Church Age and the 7-year Tribulation, the Rapture event will be instantaneous, in “the twinkling of an eye.” The Rapture could be called the Christ-believer's-Exodus. The Rapture doctrine that Jesus introduced in Matthew 24 and 25 is fleshed out in detail in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 2 Thessalonians 2. Christianity is founded on a supernatural event - the Resurrection (and

Rapture) of Jesus the Jewish Messiah. But in the naturalistic, anti-Christ-rebel state of 2023 America, many “Christians” are fascinated with the “miracles” of science, but have trouble believing the future forecasts in the supernatural Word of God.

The good news is this - Paul’s forecast of the last “hours” before the Rapture are right in front of true believers - and nominal Christians.

Editor’s Note: Paul Dinger is a Bostonian, a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, a former pastor and an avid student of American history. He is a descendent of an American Revolution soldier.

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