

“ARE WE THERE YET?”

JROC

Week 1 – Them/Rapture/Now

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Who are “we”? Is there a “them”? Who are the “them”? Is Jesus concerned about the “them”?

WHAT IS THE REASON FOR END TIMES?

When we grasp the REASON, we can then UNDERSTAND end times. And, we find the REASONS in the Bible. The Bible is our authority!

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“What are we going to go through as believers in Jesus?”

What is the tribulation? Jer. 30:7 – the time of Jacob’s trouble.

The tribulation is a future seven-year period of time when God will purge/refine the nation of Israel and pour out His judgments on the unbelieving world. Believers will NOT come under the wrath of God. The 7 years of tribulation is the wrath of God! How do we know?

Rev. 5:1-7 - And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” ³ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. ⁴ So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. ⁵ But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.” ⁶ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. The seven seals contain end-times judgments from God. As each seal is broken, a new judgment is unleashed on the earth. Following the seal judgments open up to the trumpet judgments and then to the bowl judgments. The fact that the scroll is written on both sides speaks to the extensive nature of the judgments that are about to be unleashed...the judgments are spilling over from the inside to the outside of the scroll. Who takes the scroll and opens it? Jesus – the Lamb Who was slain. And, in so doing, Jesus pronounces judgment on the unbelieving world.

Rom. 1:18 - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

I Thess. 5:9 - For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Rom. 8:1 - *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, Our sins...believers' sins have been judged at the cross.*

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Rev. 3:10 – in the letter to the faithful Church in Philadelphia, Jesus states *Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*

The Church will be kept from the time of trial coming upon the whole world – specifically mentioning those who dwell on the earth. Those who are left behind during the tribulation are called earth dwellers. (Cross reference Rev. 13:14-17 – the earth dwellers will build the image to the beast and take the mark of the beast – the beast being the antichrist).

Daniel 9:24-27 – within Daniel's prophecy concerning the Jewish people and Jerusalem – Daniel's prophecy which speaks of the tribulation, the Church is not mentioned. Daniel's prophecy is labeled as "the backbone of prophecy" re: end times. All end times prophecy in Scripture must line up with Daniel 9:24-27.

I don't believe that the Church will go through God's wrath being poured out on the world during the tribulation... After Rev. 3 – the Church is not noted ON THE EARTH in the book of Revelation during the 7 years of tribulation...until the Church returns with Jesus in Revelation 19:11ff.

What's next in God's plan for believers since Pentecost ("in Christ" – I Cor. 12:13)?

The rapture. What is the rapture? What's the timeframe for Jesus' coming for believers – in the air? What's the difference between the rapture and Jesus Second Coming?

The rapture can be considered the first phase of Jesus' Second Coming. His physical Second Coming comes at the end of the tribulation.

Why can't we say that His physical Second Coming comes seven years after the rapture? What launches the tribulation? The rapture doesn't launch the tribulation. The treaty that the antichrist will "confirm" (to be mighty, to strengthen, to prevail) with the "many" will launch the tribulation.

There are those within the Church who are NOT teaching the rapture as they don't believe in the rapture. Is there really going to be a Rapture? What is the Rapture?

Harpazo – the catching up (to seize, carry off by force; to snatch out or away) of the dead "in Christ" (believers from the Church Age who have died) along with believers "in Christ" (Church Age believers who are ALIVE) – to meet the Lord Jesus in the air – to be forever with Him.

There are three main passages supporting the rapture of the Church:

John 14:2-4 - *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.*

I Thess. 4:15-18 – The Thessalonians were sorrowful, thinking there was no hope because their loved ones had died before the EXPECTED return of Jesus (I Thess. 1:10 – they were waiting *His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come*), Paul told the Thessalonians, *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until*

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the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. (Paul is telling the Thessalonians that those who are alive won't go before their loved ones who have died) 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 (harpazo - to seize, carry off by force; to snatch out or away) 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.

I Cor. 15:51-52 - *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (trumpet of God). For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

Will there be a physical Second Coming?

Is Jesus really going to return physically?

Will there be a Millennial Kingdom and what will that look like?

And what about the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 21:1)? How is that possible? AND, the NEW Jerusalem descending from heaven (Rev. 21:1).

What about now? We must remember that Jesus told the disciples:

John 16:33 - *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*

Oswald Chambers - we need to be able to look at the bleakest, blackest situation – square in the face – and NOT damage God's character – and NOT denigrate His glory! We need to believe, no matter what transpires in our lives, that God is FOREVER on His throne!

“But if not....”

Dan. 3:17-18 - ...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ BUT IF NOT, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

Throughout history, GOD has intervened. He has visited us in our pain and suffering and in the midst of our questions, doubts, and fears. Our nations may have changed, and our cultures may have been cancelled or collapsed. But He remains the same.

We are CERTAIN of GOD! AND, this is where we ALWAYS need to begin.

WHAT ABOUT NOW?

The author of Hebrews admonished his readership, primarily Jewish believers who were fearful of persecution, who were doubting and desiring to veer from their faith in Jesus until the persecution ceased and then they would come back...the author told his readership...

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Heb. 10:24-25 - And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

The book of Hebrews teaches that...NOW

- In the midst of what is ongoing, we as believers need to seek to grow in our desire for greater intimacy with Jesus, to grow in faith, and in bolder actions of service.
- We as believers need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2).
- We as believers should not neglect God's word, intimacy with Him, and fellowship of His people. The book of Hebrews urges the readers to press on to maturity.

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- We as believers should not live lives of complacency (self-satisfaction; absorbed in ourselves). We need to ask God how He desires to use that spiritual gift in us that He has given us to equip other believers. How can I pour into the life of my sister-in-Christ?

- Heb. 10:23-25 – we are held accountable not only for our own walk with Jesus but also for how our lives impact others of our brethren who may be struggling
- Hebrews encourages us to persevere. GOD has given us a persevering faith – a faith that will endure! 1 Pet. 1:5 – we are kept by the power of God through faith.

John 15:1-4 - *I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away (lifts up); and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

When the words of John chapter fifteen were spoken, the disciples had spent 3.5 years, day in and day out, with Jesus. Intimate moments! They were not anticipating Jesus' death, even though Jesus had told them He was going to Jerusalem...that He would suffer...and be killed...and be raised the third day (Matt. 16:21-22).

In John 15 Jesus gave instructions concerning how His disciples could maintain fellowship and fruitfulness in the difficult days which lay before them – and how they could relate to Jesus after His departure. Judas had already left the Upper Room. His message in that upper room was for believers. The relationship with His followers was to change from a physical one to that which was spiritual, and the means of sustaining this kind of relationship are described for us in John 15. How does this speak to us in light of Jesus not as yet having returned to take us to be with Him?

What are we being told about how to live NOW as we WAIT and WATCH for Him?

John 15:1-4 - *I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me (positionally in Jesus; having a born again relationship with Jesus; justified-declared righteous) that does not bear fruit He takes away (“lifts up” – unproductive vines were lifted up off the ground; this was common in the ancient practices of caring for*

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*grapevines – lifting up the vines so that they would get more sun and bear fruit or bear better fruit); and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ **Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.***

The context of John 15 is not salvation – it's BELIEVERS – those already saved – BEARING FRUIT. The secret of the fruitful vine, as Jesus revealed in John 15, is in the pruning. But growing fruit means more than just pruning. It also has to do with depending daily—moment-by-moment—on the Lord Himself. We must make it our determined purpose to ABIDE IN the Vine – to remain in Jesus...to NOT depart from

Jesus...to be HELD, and KEPT CONTINUALLY by Him. And get ready for Him to grow the fruit of His life in you ESP. during this time!

I John 2:28 – *And NOW, little children* (we who belong to Jesus), *abide in Him* (it's a choice), *that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.* As believers we can either have confidence IN HIM when He comes for us or...be ashamed. Let's commit our lives esp. at this time – esp. this day – esp. this moment – to HIM – for HIS GLORY! AND, let us go out REJOICING!

WEEK 2 – FEASTS OF THE LORD CHART