

Easter Sunday

2023

Topic

God is always seeking to save,
not willing that any should perish

Title

“Take a Seek Peek into the Future”

**Newsweek headline from November 2022:
*Shocking Number of Americans
Believe We Are Living in the End Times.***

- 39% of US citizens believe we are living in the End Times.
- 47% of Christians believe we are living in the End Times.

What is truly shocking is that *only 47% of Christians believe we are living in the End Times.*

For one, the End Times, also called the Last Days, began with the first coming of Jesus. The Book of Hebrews in the Bible begins, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has **in these last days** spoken to us by *His Son*” (1:1-2).

The shock is because the majority of Christians are not prepared to give an answer about the coming of Jesus at a time when over 1/3 of Americans are frightened by, and seek answers to, what’s happening in the world today, and what is going to happen tomorrow.

The first hurdles to clear in getting a handle on the future are vocabulary and terminology.

What if I told you that we are pre-tribulation rapture premillennial futurist dispensationalists?

We need to introduce a few key terms:

- The “Church” is a good place to start. The apostle Paul explained that the Church, and the Church Age, was a mystery. In the Bible, a mystery is a truth that was not previously known but has now been made known. The Church is the unique group of believers starting with the Day of Pentecost after Jesus’ resurrection until the Rapture. There is no Church in the Old Testament - only Israel and Gentile nations. One of the characteristics that sets us apart from other entities and groups in the Bible is that we currently have the permanent indwelling of God the Holy Spirit.
- You’ve undoubtedly heard of the Rapture of the Church. More accurately, it is the Resurrection & Rapture of the Church. It is the return of Jesus to catch-away all Church Age believers. Those deceased will be resurrected from the dead into glorified physical bodies. Those alive will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, immediately receiving glorified physical bodies.
- A significant feature of the Last Days is a seven year period of time that Jesus described by saying, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). Because of Jesus’ description, it is commonly called the Great Tribulation. It has several names and descriptions. We like to call it by the name the prophet Jeremiah used. It is the Time of Jacob’s Trouble. ‘Jacob’ is a way of referring to the physical descendants of Abraham, the nation of Israel. Although the tribulation of those seven years affects everyone on the planet, it is especially designed to bring the nation of Israel to saving faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that by the end of it, “all Israel will be saved.”
- Armageddon is a word that gets greatly misused. The word only appears one time in the Bible. It describes the Valley of Megiddo, where all the armies of the Earth will be gathered to battle in the closing days of the Time of Jacob’s Trouble.
- The Second Coming of Jesus is just that. There are many more references to Jesus’ coming a second time than there are to His coming the first time.
- Millennium is a Latin word meaning *thousand years*. The Millennium, or the Millennial Kingdom, is the Kingdom of God on Earth that will last for one thousand years after the Second Coming.

Regarding the Millennium, there are differences of opinion as to its relation to Jesus' Second Coming:

- Pre-millennial is the belief that Jesus' Second Coming is *before* the Millennium.
- Post-millennial is the belief Jesus will return *after* believers have established the Millennial Kingdom.
- Amillennialism is the belief that the current Church Age *is* the Millennial Kingdom with Jesus ruling not on Earth but in Heaven for a figurative, not literal, one thousand years.

It gets parsed further when we factor in the Resurrection & Rapture of the Church in relation to the Time of Jacob's Trouble:

- If you believe the Church will be resurrected and raptured *before* the Time of Jacob's Trouble, you are pre-tribulation.
- Others believe the resurrection and rapture happen ½ way through the Time of Jacob's Trouble. That's mid-tribulation.
- Others believe the resurrection and rapture happen *after* the Time of Jacob's Trouble, at the Second Coming. That's post-tribulation.
- Then there is preterism, the belief that all prophecy in the Bible is already history. The preterist interpretation of Scripture regards the Book of the Revelation as a symbolic picture of first-century conflicts, not a description of what will occur in the Last Days.

**We are pre-tribulation rapture premillennial
futurist dispensationalists**

- A futurist understands that unfulfilled prophecies, including those about the coming Tribulation in chapters six through eighteen in the Revelation, will be actually and accurately be fulfilled in the future.
- The most important feature of what is called *dispensationalism* is that we keep Israel separate from the Church. They are two different entities, two different groups, in the Bible.

The ushers are going to pass out the pop quiz now.

- This is important exposure because a majority of believers don't realize we are in the Last Days when the Bible says we are.

- This is important exposure because a lot of nonbelievers think these are the End Times but their knowledge comes from the movies.

Let's get chronological. The Resurrection & Rapture of the Church can occur any moment, and will occur *before* the Time of Jacob's Trouble.

- The Time of Jacob's Trouble does not involve the Church. The angel Gabriel told the prophet Daniel that the seven years were, "For your people and for your holy city," i.e., Israel and Jerusalem (9:24).
- There are numerous passages that definitely teach that the final seven years are a time of God dealing with the nation of Israel.¹ There is no passage in which the Church is described as participating in the Time of Jacob's Trouble.
- Jesus talked to His disciples on the Mount of Olives about the Time of Jacob's Trouble. At one point He said, "pray that your flight [from persecution] be not on the Sabbath." That is a very specific indicator of who He's talking to. The Sabbath is a Jewish ordinance, not binding on the Church.
- Jesus promised the Church in Philadelphia, in the Book of the Revelation, "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" (3:10). They will definitely not be on Earth during the time of trouble that exceeds all trouble. They will be kept "from" it, not be kept safe *in* or *through* it. It cannot be a promise for that one Church, especially when you factor in other verses that promise the entire Church will be kept from the future wrath of God that He will pour out on the planet.
- There are those who say the Church must be purified by going through great tribulation. *That is not how Jesus said He purifies His bride.* He said that we are washed by the Word of God.

One more. Those of us who are pre-tribulations, like to point out that in the Book of the Revelation, the Church is prominent in the first three chapters, but never in chapters six through eighteen, which describe in detail the seven year Time of Jacob's Trouble. Critics immediately dismiss it, calling it an argument from silence. It isn't an argument at all. It is an observation of facts. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* mentions many unique players, e.g., 144,000 sealed Jews, the four horsemen, two witnesses,

¹ Deuteronomy 4:25-31, Jeremiah 30:5-7, Daniel 12:1, Zechariah 13:8-9, Revelation 12:1-17, Matthew 24

twenty-four elders, four living creatures, seven angels with seven trumpets, the inhabitants of Earth, three angels who give testimony, etc. The omission of the Church in the tribulation chapters really is significant. It may not prove anything by itself, but it makes perfect sense with the pretribulation rapture of the Church.

Think with me for a moment about the Resurrection & Rapture of the Church. It will create worldwide chaos and panic as multiplied millions of people disappear. It will provide the perfect opportunity to set up a global, totalitarian government like we read about in the Book of the Revelation.

Global government, a cashless system of commerce, and every person having some sort of personal identifier in order to participate in the system.

We could spend all day finding article after article showing we are already trending towards these things:

- Globalism is no longer considered a conspiracy theory. World leaders have come out in favor of a New World Order, a Great Reset as they call it, to “build back better.” Their plan involves nations surrendering their sovereignty and cooperating with all the other nations of the world with a central totalitarian leadership.
- The COVID pandemic has prepared the citizens of Earth to submit to every whim of government for the common good of humanity. It doesn’t matter what we believe about the pandemic. I’m simply saying that many world leaders have openly stated that it is an opportunity to further their globalism agenda.
- Climate change mandates are giving governments greater power everyday. We are not commenting, pro or con, about climate change. Whatever your opinion, you must admit it has the potential for radically altering nations.
- For the first time ever, we have the technology to eliminate cash and establish a truly global economy. This is exactly what Bible predicted would happen more than two thousand years ago.
- Any number of personal biometric identifiers could become the way we conduct our business. Once the entire planet is on that system, it will be easy for the Beast, who we commonly call the antichrist, to demand worship, threatening to cut a person off from all goods and services, and to hunt them down, and kill them.

Fast forward to the end of the Time of Jacob’s Trouble. The armies of the world are gathered together at Armageddon, in the Valley of Megiddo. Suddenly the heavens

break open, and Jesus Christ appears, riding a magnificent white horse, in all of His glory and power. Earth's armies turn upon Him, and He destroys them with the breath of His mouth.

The Church arrives with Him. We will aid Him in the rule of the Kingdom of God on Earth, the Millennium.

We began with a headline. Here is yesterday's headline: *Muslim world must unite against Israel, Erdogan says to Iran's Raisi.*

Erdogan, Turkey's prime minister, is quoted as saying, "Whoever is on Israel's side, we are against them."

When Israel became a sovereign nation in her homeland in 1948, it was a miracle, and the fulfillment of prophecy. Israel is fulfilling many other prophecies, included this one in the Book of Zechariah, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it."

The facts don't tell the whole story. At every step, in every dispensation, the Lord is seeking to save lost sinners.

The nature of God, and His pattern of reaching out to save, are established immediately in the Bible. From the very beginning, God communicates to His creation, that He is not willing that any should perish.

Adam and Eve sinned. They hid. God sought them, to save them. Then the LORD told them that He had a plan, and that it involved Him coming to Earth as what He called the "seed of the woman." We know this as the virgin birth of Jesus Christ in His First coming. This conversation in the Garden of Eden is called by theologians, the *protoevangelicum*, the first evangelism.

A little while later in the Bible, we read that God came down to Earth when human beings were rebelling against Him by building a tower to the gods. The LORD scattered them all over the Earth. We read in the Book of Acts, "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the Earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, **so that**

they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (17:26-27).

Following this scattering, the LORD determined to create a new nation, the nation of Israel, through Abraham. One of the purposes of Israel was to be a light to the Gentile nations, showing them the beauty and holiness of Jehovah.

The Church Age is a time for Christians to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that [Jesus] commanded..." (Matthew 28:19-20).

For all its horror, the Time of Jacob's Trouble features the greatest evangelistic effort of any age of man.

- We are introduced to a unique group of Jews, 144,000 strong - twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. They are sealed by God in such a way that they cannot be harmed. Immediately after we meet them in the Book of the Revelation, there is a scene in Heaven of multitudes who have been saved.
- We are introduced to two men whom we call the Two Witnesses. They go about sharing the Gospel. They are not only indestructible for a time, but are able to defend themselves by calling fire down from Heaven. They are eventually martyred, but three and one-half days later, the entire world is watching live as they rise from the dead and ascend into Heaven.
- If that is not enough, we are introduced to an "angel flying in the midst of Heaven, with the everlasting Gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth - to every nation and tribe and language and people" (Revelation 14:6).
- The prophet Isaiah declares that, in the future Millennium, "the Earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea" (11:9).

From beginning to end, God is seeking and saving.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. No one can come to Jesus unless God draws them. Jesus said that by being lifted up on the Cross to die as our substitute He would draw all men to Himself. He is thus the Savior of all men -

especially those who believe. If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. By grace you have are saved through faith; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. We are looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. 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. 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.

If you are here today, and are not a believer in Jesus, it is absolutely, 100%, because Jesus is seeking you, to save you.