

God's Plan for the Ages - Part 4

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I. Introduction.

A. Key verse: there is to be no offense given to neither the Jews, the Gentiles nor the Church. (1 Corinthians 10:32)

B. Eternity past, present, and future involve these three entities leading to the Great Tribulation in which Christ will come and set up His kingdom.

II. The Church.

A. The *Ekklesia* or "the called out." Those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

B. The resurrected body and the Rapture.

1. Christ will bring with those who have died in Him already during the Rapture and the church present will meet Him in the air. The dead will be raised first and the rest will be joined with them. (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17)

2. There is no justification for soul sleep in Scripture because "sleep" is always used in connection to the body only. In a moment the bodies will be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:51)

3. Death's sting will be gone.

4. When Christ raptures believers out of the earth, one person will be taken and the other person will be left. (Luke 17:26-36)

5. Christ will hide believers in the Rapture until the judgment has passed. (Isaiah 26:20-21)

1) One man demanded that if the rapture occurred his money would be used to produce literature for salvation afterwards.

2) A prominent insurance company has even taken into account the Rapture.

C. The timing of the Rapture.

1. Three views: before the seven year tribulation (Pre-tribulation), in the middle (Mid-tribulation), and at the end (Post-tribulation).

2. Premillennialists foresee two visits of Christ - one to gather the saints and one to permanently return.

a. The Lord will come as a thief in the night. To be successful a thief comes undetected. (2 Peter 3:10)

b. The saints will be kept until Christ returns with them.

c. Some believe there is a secret number which Christ wants to add to make up his body, and when the last person makes that number up Christ will call them out. (Romans 11:25)

3. Mid-tribulationists base their belief on the idea that the middle point is where the Tribulation gets really difficult. They see the saints as being pulled *out* of the Tribulation.

4. Post-tribulationists see the Rapture at the end. They see a problem in Revelation 13 that all will worship the counterfeit Christ when he takes the throne except those written in the book of the Lamb. This implies that the saints are there. Some say that these are Jews and not Christians, however.

5. Others believe only in a partial Rapture where other believers will remain.

6. This is very controversial and is not the most essential matter.

D. The church will be taken out of apostasy.

1. Characters in Revelation 16: the dragon, the beast, the false prophet.

a. The dragon is Satan.

b. The “other” beast was the false prophet who performed many signs. (Revelation 13:1-10)

c. “Anti-Christ” does not appear in Revelation or Daniel, but in 1 John. Throughout the years the ecclesiastical ruler and the political ruler have been so closely related that it is difficult to determine who is the Anti-Christ.

2. The next major world ruler will work in conjunction with this ecclesiastical ruler to unite all religions. There is a great movement today to unite all major world religions under a political institution.

III. Conclusion. (Luke 21:26)

A. People will be shaken up.

B. Christians are to lift up their heads and tell others of the hope that they will have.

C. All things will come to fulfillment in Christ and all will be subject to Him. (Ephesians 1; 1 Corinthians 15:24)

D. The application is to enter into subjection to Christ right now so that there will be no disobedient or rebellious part about us.

Application questions.

1. What is to be expected during the Great Tribulation for the Christian?

2. Which view of the Rapture do you feel most comfortable with at a cursory glance or from former study? The speaker seems to leave it open because of the lack of substantial biblical evidence - what is your reaction to this?

3. What is the Christian response regardless of the Rapture's timing? Where are you at in your walk with Christ? Are there areas of disobedience that have not been confessed and committed to Him? Share your struggles with another believer.
