

STUDY NOTES

A SERMON *at* NEW CITY CHURCH

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The following content is based on the message “The Rapture, the Tribulation and the Tree(s) of Life” on 9/24/17 at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective community groups.

PRAYER

Pray and ask God to lead the discussion as everyone gets to share.

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 24:36-44

DIVISION ABOUT THE END

The disagreement over eschatology (end times) is not one that should threaten our fellowship. We should not make the 2nd coming of Christ a center of controversy, but a cause for worship and a hope for ministry. We have been in the “last days” since the resurrection of Christ. So the question really comes in when do we think we are taken to heaven and when will the final judgment be?

- *Why do you think that it is a good thing that Jesus doesn't give us an exact time for when He returns?*

What is the 2nd coming of Christ? And why is it important? The 2nd coming is final judgment of good and evil and a gathering of the saints. However, we need to remember that Sin has already been defeated! **Read Hebrews 9:27-28.**

- *In what specific ways can we remind ourselves that sin has been defeated?*
- *How can people focus so much on the second coming of Christ that they stop caring for the world?*
- *How does reminding ourselves that sin has been defeated help us care for the world in times of hardship?*

BUT WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

According to both Paul and Jesus, there will be many tribulations (or hardships) that Christians have to face—culminating in a great tribulation, which Jesus refers to in Matthew.

- *Since Christians aren't immune to hardship. Talk about some of the tribulations that you have faced in your life or some of them that you are currently facing.*

JESUS IS COMING BACK

He will return “immediately after” the tribulation of the current age. Whether He comes back pre-post-a- or whatever, what matters is that He is coming back. The hope is that He returns and He sets all things right! **Read Revelation 21:1-4.**

- *Many people feel like studying the end times is pointless because we can't fully know what the timeline will look like, however what do you feel like is important about studying the end times?*
- *How should knowing that Jesus is coming back change the way you live?*
- *Pray with each other that we would live as people who are ready for Jesus to come.*

REFERENCE FOR FURTHER STUDY

Rapture: The snatching away of believers from the earth. The word isn't in the Bible, but the concept could be found in Matthew 24:36 -42; 1 Thess. 4:16

Length of "final" tribulation: Seven years

Comes from Daniel 9:24-27 where Daniel predicts "seventy weeks of years" for the accomplishment of God's redemption. Arguments too detailed & involved to sort them all out. Many argue that the 70th week of Daniel is separated from the first 69 and begins with the appearance of the antichrist or man of lawlessness. The New Testament book of Revelation picks up this idea several times in its references to three and a half years (11:3; 12:6; 13:5).

Pre-tribulational Rapture: The view that before Christ returns in glory, he will return to catch up the church and take us to heaven. This happens before the tribulation, and so the view is called the PRE-tribulational rapture. This implies that the Church will not be here during the tribulation.

Post-tribulational Rapture: The view that the rapture and the glorious second coming are part of one simultaneous event. The saints rise to meet the Lord in the air and accompany him back as the rightful king of the earth. This implies that the church will go through the tribulation on the earth.

Millennium: The period of time mentioned in Revelation 20:4 during which the saints "reign with Christ a thousand years." During this time Satan is bound and thrown into a pit "that he should not deceive the nations till the thousand years are ended" (Rev. 20:3). Millennium is marked by peace and prosperity for God's people. After this time there will appear the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 21:1; 2 Peter 3:13).

Pre-millennialism: The view that the second coming of Christ will precede the millennium and that He will rule personally and bodily on the earth during the thousand years.

Post-millennialism: The view that the millennium will come through the success of the gospel gradually converting the world and ushering in a golden age of the church. After a long period of peace and righteousness there will be an outbreak of evil and Christ will come in person to win the victory.

A-millennialism: The view that the thousand years in Revelation 20 is symbolic of the church age in which we live. There will be no earthly millennium as such. Rather the second coming will usher in the final state of the new heavens and new earth.

Arguments for Post-tribulation Rapture:

1. The word for "meeting" the Lord in the air in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (apantesin) is used in two other places in the New Testament: Matthew 25:6 and Acts 28:15. In both places it refers to a meeting in which people go out to meet a dignitary and then accompany him in to the place from which they came out. Matthew 25:6 & 1 Thess. 4:17-that we rise to meet the Lord in the air and then welcome him to earth as king.

2. The wording of 2 Thessalonians 1:5-7 shows Paul expects to attain rest from suffering at the same time and in the same event that he expects the unbelievers to receive punishment, namely, at the revelation of Jesus with mighty angels in flaming fire.

*This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— 6 since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 **and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.***

3. Going through tribulation is not contrary to Biblical teaching. 1 Peter 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10; Hebrews 12:3-11.

The Strongest Pre-tribulation Text:

*Rev. 3:10, "Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, **I will keep you from the hour of trial** which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth."*

But to "be kept for the hour of testing" is not necessarily to be taken out of the world during this hour, and thus spared suffering. Compare Gal. 1:4 and Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17:15 where to "keep from" does not mean physical removal. And notice the inevitability of martyrdom in Rev. 6:9-11. The promise is to be guarded from the hour in the sense of being guarded from the demoralizing forces of that hour.