

Christ in Prophecy
Conference 44: Ron Rhodes on the Rapture
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Opening

Dr. Reagan: One of the most fiercely debated topics in Bible prophecy today is the timing of the Rapture. Specifically, will the Rapture occur before, during or at the end of the Tribulation? For a thorough, biblical answer to this issue, stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. As I said at the beginning of this program, we are going to consider one of the most hotly debated topics in all the field of Bible prophecy namely, the timing of the Rapture. Specifically, we are going to consider when the Rapture is most likely to occur whether at the beginning of the Tribulation, in the middle of that terrible time, or at the end of it.

Our guest expert is Dr. Ron Rhodes, the founder and evangelist for Reasoning from the Scriptures Ministries located in Frisco, Texas, just north of Dallas. Dr. Rhodes is a prolific author who has written more than 70 books. He is also a frequent conference speaker. He has spoken at our Bible conferences several times, and he has been our special guest on this program a number of times in the past. He always speaks with great clarity, and he always bases all his remarks on the Bible. At our recent annual Bible conference, we asked him to speak on the issue of the timing of the Rapture. Here now is Dr. Rhodes.

Ron Rhode's Presentation

Ron Rhodes: Well I'm going to talk about the Rapture today. I am going to be talk about the Pre-Tribulational View, and the Mid-Tribulational View, and the Post-Tribulational View, and the Pre-Wrath view. And if that sounds like a foreign language to you, don't worry we are going to define those terms very carefully today and by the time that we're done it is going to make a lot more sense to you.

Now, I came across a Seminary, ah cemetery in Indiana, that had a tombstone and on the tombstone were written the follow words, "Pause stranger when you pass me by, as you are now so once was I. As I am now, so you will be, so prepare for death and follow me." Ok, well he had a sense of humor. One day somebody was walking by and decided to scribble some more words underneath. And here are the words: "To follow you I'm not content, until I know which way you went." That's probably smart, right? Of course we don't have any such concerns about the Rapture because it's one way, straight up, we are going to meet the Lord in the air, and from that time forward we will forever be with the Lord. Isn't that something to look forward to?

You know as I was contemplating the Rapture this week in preparation for this weekend, it sort of came to me that I don't have a single problem in life that can't be fixed by the Rapture. [audience laughing] Have you ever thought about that? I mean some of you might have an illness, maybe even a terminal illness; well that is going to be fixed by the Rapture. Some of you are getting old like me; that's going to be fixed by the Rapture. I know what some of you are thinking, well I've got that big credit card bill. You are being caught up and you are up in the air and you look down at your bank, "sorry." "Sorry." Well I didn't have that problem in my mind when I thought of this but when you think about it every problem that we've got is going to vanish at the moment of the Rapture. And that is just one more reason to get excited about it.

Now, the Rapture may take place before this presentation is over. Some of you might be praying for that. And you know that would just be fine with me. I mean it would be the ultimate sermon illustration. Right in the middle of my talk on the Rapture, bam we are with the Lord Jesus. Now the thing is with the different views that Christians have on the Rapture many people throw up their hands and wonder if we can have any certainty. Well I think that we can. And I base that on my basic approach to Scripture. And it goes this way: When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense. Therefore take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context studied in the light of related passages, and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise. Now, sometimes I sum that up by saying, that when the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense, lest you end up in nonsense. Does that make sense? Yeah.

Now based upon that methodology a principle emerges in the study of Bible prophecy and it goes like this: If you want to understand how God is going to fulfill prophecy in the future, take a look at how He has fulfilled prophecy in the past. And when you look at how God has fulfilled prophecy in the past we see that He has fulfilled it quite literally. Consider the Messianic prophecies of the First Coming of Christ. Christ was to come from the line of Abraham; Genesis 12. That was fulfilled literally. He was to come from the line of David; 2 Samuel 7. That was fulfilled literally. He was to be born of a virgin; Isaiah 7:14. In Bethlehem; Micah 5:2. He was to be pierced for our sins; Zechariah 12:10. I could go on, and on. But the point that I am making to you is that they were all fulfilled literally. And that emboldens me to say that I believe that all the prophecies dealing with the Rapture, the Tribulation Period, the Second Coming, Christ's Millennial Kingdom, and the eternal state will be fulfilled just as literal. Now, what I'm saying is this: I believe that there will be a literal snatching up of Christians, before a literal Tribulation period. Amen. I think it is important to establish that because there are a lot of Christian leaders today who are teaching there is no such thing as a Rapture. And I always tell them jokingly, "I'll explain it to you on the way up." But the fact is we've got to be biblical folks. We got to be biblical. And the Bible teaches the doctrine of the Rapture.

Now, I believe that there are three passages that are the three pillars of the Rapture. Do you mind if I get biblical with you right now? Is that ok? These three pillars are: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, John 14:1-6, and 1 Corinthians 15:51-55. Let's take a look at pillar number one first. "The Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words." Don't you love that passage of Scripture? I do. The Greek word for caught up here means to seize upon with force. To snatch up. My friends the Rapture is not going to be some kind and gentle rising up into the sky. It's going to be a sudden, immediate, seizing of us by the Lord so that we meet Him instantly. Just like that. It's going to be an awesome thing.

Now I want you to notice the four essential elements in 1 Thessalonians 4 verses 16-18. First of all the dead believers will resurrect. My mom, my dad, my brother, my nephew I am going to see all of them. The dead in Christ shall rise first. (2) Living believers will be translated. That's us, those of us who are still alive. We who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds. (3) We will meet the Lord in the air and we'll always be with Him, and never again will we be separated from Him. It will be absolutely awesome. And then (4) we are to encourage one another. Why? Because death is a reality. You know I was with both my mom and dad when they passed into the Lord's presence, but I knew I am going to see you again at the Rapture of the Church. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Now I've got to tell you folks I think this encouragement only makes sense in the Pre-Trib view. I really do. Let's imagine if Post-Tribulationism were true. And by the way Post-Tribulationism means that the Rapture happens after the Tribulation. Imagine if that viewpoint is true here's what we'd end up saying from this passage: You'll go through the 7 years of God's wrath, yup. You'll suffer through Satan's furious wrath. You'll experience the agonizing Seal, and Trumpet and Bowl Judgments which grow progressively worse, and increasingly painful. And many of you will die painful deaths as martyrs. Therefore, encourage one another with these words. Look friends it doesn't work. Would that encourage you? It wouldn't encourage me. It only makes sense in the Pre-Trib viewpoint.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Wasn't that an outstanding illustration that Dr. Rhodes just presented about how illogical it is to believe the Church will go thru the Tribulation? He proceeded to discuss the other two pillar scriptures for a Pre-Trib Rapture, namely John 14:1-6 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-55. Now, following this outstanding introduction, Dr. Rhodes proceeded to give the arguments in favor of a Pre-Trib Rapture. Let's return to his presentation.

Ron Rhode's Presentation

Ron Rhodes: Today we'll be focusing a bit of attention on four primary views and you can see them on this chart. With the yellow arrow that represents Pre-Tribulationism the idea that the Rapture happens before the Tribulation. On the other side is Post-Tribulationism represented by the pink arrow. Right in the middle is an orange arrow representing Mid-Tribulationism, the idea that the Rapture happens at the mid-point of the seven year Tribulation. And then the Pre-Wrath view which places the Rapture late in the Tribulation before God's wrath falls. Now we'll talk more about that wrath in a little bit because I think they're wrong on this. But the fact is it's late in the Tribulation period.

I got to tell you Christians get animated on this, they really do. In fact some Christians get just a little bit mean about it. I don't want to get mean. In fact I want to say this to my Post-Trib brethren and Mid-Trib brethren, and Pre-Wrath brethren, if you believe those views Ron Rhodes still loves you. I'm not going to break fellowship with you, but I think you're wrong. I don't think you're being biblical, and I think it is important to be biblical. The main question I always ask myself is: Which view is biblical? In fact the "8 Great Debates" book that's all I do in that book, which view is biblical?

I'm kind of reminded of that second grade girl who came home from Sunday School one day and she was so excited about what she learned. And so her daddy said to her, "What did you learn in Sunday School?" And the little girl said, "Oh, Dad it was just so awesome, so great, because you see God created Adam first. But then God saw that it was not good that Adam be alone so God put Adam to sleep. And when Adam was asleep God took out his brain and made a woman out of it." [audience laughing] And all the women said? [audience Amen] No, that's not biblical, that's in 2 Illusions chapter 3. We need to be biblical.

Now the thing of it my friends in covering four different views we can only give a representative sampling of some of the main arguments here. I'd really prefer to have five hours for this session. Dave, can I take five hours? No, he's not going to let me take five hours. I've got 50 minutes with you today. And so I'm going to take some of the most important arguments that the different views offer and we'll talk about those, ok? Does that sound fair?

Let's begin with Pre-Tribulationism which is my personal view. And this is the view that says that the Rapture will take place before the Tribulation even begins. And of course the Tribulation period is a seven year period during which God's wrath is poured out on the world prior to the Second Coming. Now, this means that we'll be exempt from all the judgments that fall during the Tribulation including the Seal Judgments, the Trumpet Judgments, and the Bowl Judgments. The Pre-Tribulation view says we won't go through any of these. That's good. That's good, ok.

Now why do I believe in Pre-Tribulationism? There are six primary reasons. Can I share them with you? I'm going to share them anyway. Here we go. (1) The Tribulation focuses on Israel and unbelieving nations, not the Church. Tribulation focuses on Israel and unbelieving nations, not the Church. How do we know that it focuses on Israel? Well, the Tribulation is one and the same as Daniel's 70th Week. Now here's the backdrop. In Daniel 9 God provides a prophetic time table for the nation of Israel, and He talks about 70 weeks of years. The first 69 group of 7 years, or 483 years counted the years from the issuing of the decree to restore and build Jerusalem until the anointed one, the ruler comes. Now, when Jesus rode on a donkey into Jerusalem and people were singing, "Hosanna" and were waving palm branches that was 483 years to the day. To the day, an amazing prophecy. At that point God's prophetic clock stopped. Daniel describes a gap between those 483 years and the final 7 year period in the prophetic time table. Several events were to take place in that gap: the Messiah would be killed, the city of Jerusalem and its Temple would be destroyed, and the Jews would encounter difficulty and hardship from that time on. The final week of 7 years begins when the Antichrist signs a covenant with Israel. That is the thing that begins the 70th Week of Daniel. Now here's what I'm building up to, here's the main point. All that was backdrop and here's the main point, the 70 weeks deal with Israel, not the Church. They deal with Israel, not the Church. Now, you have to compare Scripture with Scripture and look up all the verses on the Tribulation, and when you do that we also discover that during the Tribulation God deals with the unbelieving nations who have rejected Him. And He pours out His wrath upon them. So the Tribulation deals with Israel and unbelieving nations, but not the Church. This is important.

(2) The Church is missing in Tribulation passages. The Church is missing in Tribulation passages. For example in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation you find the word church 19 times. But then in the chapters of Revelation that deal with the Tribulation chapters 4-18 you don't find the Church mentioned once, not once. And then when you sort of back up and do a panoramic sweep of the entire Bible we see that no Old Testament passage on the Tribulation mentions the Church. And no New Testament passage on the Tribulation mentions the Church. I think that that is a resoundingly powerful argument that the Church is not there. Now I need to make a qualification here. Some people will say, "Well wait a minute there are

believers during the Tribulation period." Yes, but we believe they become believers after the Rapture. We'll talk more about just a little bit later.

(3) The Church is not appointed to wrath. The Church is not appointed to wrath. Romans 5:9 says, "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God." Now notice also 1 Thessalonians 1:10, "Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come." The Greek word for delivers means to snatch out to oneself. Does that not sound like the Rapture to you? It means to snatch out. Now 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says that we are caught up. But this verse says we are snatched out of the time of wrath that sounds like the Rapture. And then in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, "God has not destined us for wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now my friends all this means that we cannot possibly go through the Great Day of Wrath, which is the Tribulation period. Does that make sense? Good.

(4) It's God's pattern to protect His people before His judgment falls. Enoch was transferred to Heaven before the judgment of the Flood. Noah and his family were in the Ark before the judgment of the Flood. Lot was taken out of Sodom before judgment was poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah. The first born among the Hebrews in Egypt were sheltered by the blood of the lamb before judgment fell. Spies were out of Jericho and Rahab was secured safely before judgment fell on Jericho. So, too will the Church be rescued by the Rapture before God's wrath falls on the world during the Tribulation period. So God delivers His people before judgment.

(5) In Revelation 3:10 Jesus speaks the following words to the church of Philadelphia, "I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth." Now my friends the word keep you from, or the phrase keep you from literally means to be saved out of. It does not mean to be saved in the midst of, or saved through. It means saved out of. You see. And we are going to be saved out of the hour of trial, the time period itself. You see. So Post-Tribs who say that God is going to save us through the Tribulation that just doesn't make sense. And it's also a global trial, not just located in Philadelphia but all over the planet earth. In fact no matter where you live on planet earth you're going to experience God's wrath. God is going to keep the Church out of that time period. By the way this promise is not just to the Church of Philadelphia. How do we know that? Well our text goes on to say, "He who has an ear let him hear what the spirit says to the churches." Plural. I believe that this a promise to all true Christians, that we will be saved out of the Tribulation period.

And then (6) the restrainer will be removed. Now for this part put on your thinking caps. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 is in the context of the Tribulation period. And in that context we read the following words in verse 7, "The mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way." So, here's what's going on, lawlessness will come to a climax in the future Tribulation under the person of the Antichrist who fully embodies lawlessness as he is energized by the Devil. In fact 2 Thessalonians 2 tells us that he is energized by the Devil. So lawlessness is going to increase greatly. But in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 we are told of someone who restrains the mystery of lawlessness and the emergence of the Antichrist. Is it a human being? I don't think so because I don't think human beings are strong enough to withstand Satan. Is it human government? Well, there are some good Christians who hold to that viewpoint. That's not my viewpoint. My viewpoint it's the Holy Spirit. I believe that only the Holy Spirit has the power to withstand Satan and his work through the Antichrist. Now we know that the Holy Spirit indwells the Church. How do we know that? Well, we read, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you?" 1 Corinthians 3:16. And "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?" 1 Corinthians 6:19. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to withstand Satan. When the Rapture happens the Church indwelt by the Holy Spirit is removed from the earth and that in turn removes the restraining

influence of the Holy Spirit. So to me it all makes good sense. And when common sense makes good sense, seek no other sense, lest you end up in nonsense. Right?

So, in sum I am a Pre-Trib for the following reasons: The Tribulation focuses on Israel and the nations, not the Church. The Church is noticeably absent from all Tribulation passages. The Church is promised deliverance from the coming wrath. God's consistent pattern is to rescue His people before judgment falls. The Church is promised to be kept from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world. And the removal of the restrainer, of the Holy Spirit from earth necessitates the removal of the Church. To me those are good, sound reasons for the Pre-Tribulational viewpoint.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Dr. Rhodes proceeded to discuss each of the opposing viewpoints about the timing of the Rapture including the Mid-Tribulation view, the Two-Thirds Tribulation view and the Post-Tribulation view. And in the process he pointed out the biblical problems with each of these. Here are some of his concluding comments.

Ron Rhode's Presentation

Ron Rhodes: You know it is going to be a blessed event when you think about it, that's why it's called the blessed hope in Titus 2:13. Believers can hardly wait for it to happen. We are going to receive brand new bodies or body upgrades like I told you a little bit earlier; not subject to sickness or pain, or death. We live in this fallen world as pilgrims just passing through. But no matter what we face in life. No matter what trials we face this pulls us through, it gives us strength in the midst of the storm. And best of all it could be any moment it is imminent. The term imminent means ready to take place at any moment. There is nothing that must be prophetically fulfilled before this happens. The Rapture is a signless event and this is in contrast to the Second Coming which has seven years' worth of signs. No wonder Paul said in Romans 13:11-12, "The hour has come for you to wake from sleep for salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed." And in James 5:8, "The coming of the Lord is at hand."

Now I want you to think about it. Imminence only makes good sense in Pretribulationism. Have you thought about that? In the Mid-Trib view you've got to go through 3 ½ years' worth of signs before the Rapture can happen. In the Post-Trib view you've got to go through seven years of signs before the Rapture can happen. In the Pre-Wrath view you've got to go three-quarters of the Tribulation before the Rapture can happen. Imminence is the idea that Christ could come at any moment is only possible in the Pre-Tribulational viewpoint. And the fact that it can occur any moment should spur us on to live in righteousness. And how blessed it will be for us to be involved in righteous living when that moment occurs. And when it does occur we are going to be ushered straight into the New Jerusalem, that city that Christ has built.

My friends, death confronts all of us. Humanity is suffering. There are people who are denying the truths of Scripture out there. But one thing that all of us have in common in this room, at least most of us is that we believe the Bible. And if you truly believe the Bible then you must in necessity believe in the coming Rapture of the Church. Our deliverance is coming. We don't

know precisely when it is coming but in this world that seems to be spinning out of control, you see we can count on the fact that our deliverance is coming.

Even now we're witnessing terrorist acts and things going wrong almost every week on planet earth. Have you noticed that? Almost every single week. I believe that the ground is now being prepared for the emergence of the Antichrist. As global unrest increases, you see, people are crying out for somebody to take control and to make sense of this world. The stage is being set for the emergence of Antichrist. But guess what? We're going to be raptured before he's manifest. We are going to be raptured before he's manifested. And if you know who the Antichrist is, you've been left behind, ok. Second Thessalonians 2 proves it the Rapture has to happen first.

So, let this be your blessed hope, don't just leave this room and this being an intellectual thing in your head, but let it affect the way that you live your life. Your deliverance is coming. We don't know when it's going to happen but it's going to happen, and I believe it's going to happen soon.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: We have presented you with only about half of Dr. Rhodes' outstanding presentation. The rest is available on our 2016 Bible conference video that contains three DVD discs with six presentations. In a moment I will tell how you can get a copy of that album.

Well, folks, that's our program for this week. I hope it has been a blessing to you, and I hope, the Lord willing, that you will be back with us again next week. Until then, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near."

End of Program