

Christ in Prophecy

Rapture 3: The Timing of the Rapture

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Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Hello there, I'm Dave Reagan, Senior Evangelist for Lamb & Lion Ministries and this is my wife Ann. We want to welcome you to this program in the name of Jesus our Blessed Hope. And our program today is concerned with a very important topic: the timing of the Rapture. And speaking of timing we were just sitting here talking about whether or not Ann would have time to do some last minute shopping for our grandchildren before I have to rush back to the studio and join my colleague, Dennis Pollock. And Ann the answer is yes. So, I'll see you back here in just a few minutes. Okay.

Folks, have you ever stopped to think about how much of our lives are dominated by consideration for time? I was thinking about this recently when I felt into my pocket and saw this little stop watch that I carry around with me. This stop watch has been a very important part of my life during the last 20 years because I've had a radio program that's broadcast daily around the nation. And this is the timer that tells me when to start and when to end. And it is pretty ruthless it never variates. You know I don't know if you know this or not, but in a 15 minute program you only have 13 ½ minutes to begin with. And if you have a 1 minute opening that cuts it to 12 ½. And if you have a 1 minute conclusion like we do, well then you only end up with 11 ½ minutes of air time. And if you are going to get anything covered I guarantee you you've got to get cranking and really roll. And by the time I get to the end of program I'm usually talking so fast people say I talk faster than an Uzi machine gun can shoot. And I get down to the end and I tell people write to Lamb & Lion Ministries. Well, they don't quite understand what I'm saying there that I'm saying Lamb & Lion. And you know what the result is? We get letters addressed to the strangest places. We get letters addressed to Lemon & Lime Ministries, Leg of Lamb, oh we got one onetime to Land of Lions. And I guess my all-time favorite was Lame & Blind Ministries.

You know folks considerations of time are really always on our mind either consciously or unconsciously whether we realize it or not. We are always thinking about things like how many seconds are left in the basketball game? Or how many minutes are left in the football game? Or how many hours are left in the day? Or how many days in a month? Or how many months left in the year? Even little children are always concerned about time. You ever taken any kids recently on a long motor trip? I'll tell you they bug you every five minutes. How much longer is it? Will we be there in an hour? Will we be there today? When are we going to get there?

And I had two daughters. I tell you every time it got near Christmas, even a month ahead of time they were asking me: "Is Christmas tomorrow? Is Christmas next week? When is Christmas, Dad? Come on we want to have Christmas." Well, I have found that people are particularly concerned about time issues when it comes to the future, and to what the Bible says about the Lord's return. I'm always getting phone calls. I'm getting letters from people who are saying, "Dave, do you think the Lord might come back this year? Or maybe next year? Or do you think it will be in the season that we're in now? Do you think we'll be alive when the Lord comes back?"

And you know what? The answer to that question may surprise you, because the answer to the question depends upon what you mean by the Lord's return.

So, let's go back to the studio where my colleague, Dennis Pollock is waiting on us and we'll take an in depth look at this important topic of the timing of the Lord's return. And speaking of timing I really do have to rush but I've got to find my wife first. Oh, here she is. Honey, what in the world did I really talk that long? And look it there you got them a lion and a lamb. Now, that ought to be a winner. But I tell you what at the rate you're going we're going to go into bankruptcy buying things for our kids. Well, folks, time marches on. We're going to have to get to the studio just as quickly as we can. But I tell you what before we go would you turn over to Luke 12? That is where we are going to start. You'll be all prepared for Dennis and I to get into this message. Ann we got to rush. Let's go Dear.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Hello, Dennis.

Dennis Pollock: Well, I'd say it is about time you were getting here.

Dr. Reagan: Well, yes, I know. I know. It's all my wife's fault. You know how these women are they have to go and shop for the grandchildren. So it is all her fault. Let's see I've got my notes. I got my Bible. I think we're ready to go.

Dennis Pollock: I think you've forgotten one thing, uh, the baseball cap.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, okay. Now, let's see where we going to start?

Dennis Pollock: Luke 12, I believe.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, yeah, Luke 12 verse 35 I believe it was. Let's get turned over there and we'll be ready to go. You ready?

Dennis Pollock: I'm ready.

Dr. Reagan: I'm ready too. Hello, folks, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries. I greet you in the name of Jesus our Blessed Hope, and I welcome you to this broadcast of Christ in Prophecy. Well, this is my colleague Dennis Pollock and I and we're going to be talking with you today about the important question of the timing of the Rapture. And we want to get into this right away by looking into God's Word in Luke chapter 12, verse 35. So if you have your Bibles there just turn along with me and let's see what it says here. Luke 12:35, "Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight." Now, folks, Jesus here is speaking about His return. And He says, "Be dressed in readiness, keep you lights alight." And then in verse 40 He adds, "Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at any hour, an hour that you do not expect." Now, folks, as most of you are probably well aware the New Testament is filled with warnings like these regarding the Lord's return. In fact Jesus was always warning us to be ready, to be ready, to be ready. Now, let me ask you something: Why should we be alert, and watchful, and ready at all times? When the Bible makes it clear that Jesus is not going to return to this earth until the end of a seven year period of worldwide war called The Great Tribulation. Since that period has not yet occurred, why should I be watching for Jesus today? If Jesus is not going to return until the end of the Tribulation, shouldn't I be watching for the Antichrist? Rather than Jesus Christ?

Dennis Pollock: Well, Dave that's an excellent question. You always do ask good questions though. The answer is that there are going to be two future comings of the Lord. The one that will occur first is called the Rapture; that is the appearing of the Lord for His Church to take them off the earth. The other is what we call the Second Coming when the Lord actually returns to the earth to pour out the wrath of God and to begin His Millennial reign. The verses Dave read in Luke 12 which warn us to be alert at all times apply to the Rapture; to the appearing of the Lord in the heavens for His Church. The Second Coming cannot occur until the end of the Tribulation. The Rapture can happen at any moment. There is not one prophetic event that has to happen before the Rapture can occur. By contrast there are many, many events that must occur before the Second Coming. Events like the signing of an effective Middle East peace treaty. The rebuilding of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. The revelation of the Antichrist. The pouring out of God's wrath during seven years of Tribulation.

Dr. Reagan: Okay, now we have established two points. First the timing of the Second Coming can be precisely known because it will occur seven years after the Tribulation begins. Second the timing of the Rapture is highly imprecise because it can occur any moment. Is that the point?

Dennis Pollock: That's right, Dave.

Dr. Reagan: Okay, now, let me ask you this: Is there anything at all that can be known, Dennis about the general timing of the Rapture? If we can't know its precise timing like we can on the Second Coming, can we know anything about the general timing?

Dennis Pollock: Well, absolutely Jesus gave us many signs to watch for. And there are two things we can know about the general timing. The first thing is it is most likely to occur before the Tribulation begins. Secondly, it's most likely to occur right at the beginning of the Tribulation.

Dr. Reagan: Okay, Dennis, what biblical evidence do you have for those two statements? Again the statements are: That it is most likely to occur before the Tribulation, and secondly it is most likely to occur right at the beginning of the Tribulation. Let's have some biblical evidence.

Dennis Pollock: Okay, well that is good. Let's be some good Bereans here and study what the Bible has to say. Four verses come to mind that strongly infer a rapture before the Tribulation begins. The first two are in Luke 21, the third is in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, and the fourth is in Revelation 3.

Let's consider Luke 21 first. The context of this chapter, it's a very important chapter is that it's the last week in the life of Jesus. He is sitting with His disciples on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem. And as He speaks to them about the signs of the end times He suddenly says in verse 28, "When these things begin to take place straighten up and lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near." Notice it says when these things begin to take place, speaking of the end times signs we're to look for, for our redemption. And then in verse 36 he adds, "Keep on the alert at all times. Praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place and to stand before the Son of Man." Now, I want you to notice that the Lord is speaking here about us escaping the horrible things that are going to happen during the Great Tribulation.

The third verse that infers a Pre-Tribulation Rapture is found in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1:10, where we are told to "wait for God's Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead, that is

Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." This verse says that Jesus is going to deliverer from the wrath of God. And the Tribulation is the time of the pouring out of God's wrath.

Now, the fourth verse that implies a Rapture before the Tribulation is found in Revelation 3:10. Here Jesus is speaking to Christians who remain faithful to Him. And here is what He says to them, "Because you've kept the word of my perseverance I also will keep you from the hour of testing, the hour which is about to come upon the whole world to test those who dwell upon the earth.

Dr. Reagan: Okay, Dennis you have now given us four scriptures that clearly imply Pre-Tribulation Rapture. For the purpose of impressing these upon our memory let's look at them once more in sort of abbreviated form. The first one Luke 21:28 says, where we are told to look for the Lord's coming when all the end time signs begin to take place. Again, it's when they begin to take place, not after they have already started. The second one is Luke 21:36 where we are told to pray that we may escape the terrible events of the end times. The third is 1 Thessalonians 1:10 where we are told that Jesus is coming to deliver believers from the wrath that is to come. And the fourth is in Revelation 3:10 where the redeemed are promised that they will be delivered from the time of testing that will come upon all the world. Now, Dennis I'd like for you to go one step further if you would and give us some further evidence that the Rapture is most likely to occur at the very beginning of the Tribulation.

Dennis Pollock: Okay, Dave, the evidence is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:6, this verse says that the Antichrist cannot emerge until that which restrains him is taken away. Now, the crucial question that emerges is who is the restrainer that must be removed before the Antichrist can appear? I believe that the restrainer of evil in the world today is the Holy Spirit as He works through the Church. Thus, when the Church is removed in the Rapture that restraint will be gone, and evil will multiply resulting in emergence of the Antichrist.

Dr. Reagan: Well, you know what I'd like to do at this point, Dennis is try to illustrate these concepts that we've been talking about. Again, to impress upon our visual memory what we've been talking about here. Particularly in terms of how all these events relate to each other in the end times. So, let's step over here for a moment to our illustration board and let's take a look at how all of these various events relate to each other in the end times.

I am going to begin with the most important event in history and that is the cross of Jesus Christ. And what I am going to do here is to present a timeline. So, from the cross of Jesus we will present the current period like this with a little wiggle in the middle of the line, and I'll explain that in a moment. And we're going to call this the Church Age; that's the period that we are living in right now. The period from the time of the cross until some event occurs, and in a few moments we'll identify what that event is. Now, why did I put the squiggle in the line? It is because this line is not drawn to scale. If it were drawn to scale it would be as long as this board. So, we have to abbreviate it, and this line represents 1,900 plus years. In other words the Church Age is continuing for over 1,900 years. We do not know for sure when it will come to an end. But I think we are pretty close to the end of it, about at this point.

Now, the Bible says that the Church Age will be followed by a period of time that will be known as the Tribulation. And I will simply put an abbreviation here T-R-I-B to stand for Tribulation. So, there will be a period of Tribulation, this period will last for seven years. And it is called the period of tribulation because it is going to be the most ghastly period in the entire history of mankind. In the first 3 ½ years of this period, one-half of the population of the world will die. That

is three billion people. They will die as the Antichrist builds his worldwide kingdom. He will start with his base in Europe and he will go out over all the world to conquer all the world. And Revelation 13 says he is going to do something that no one else has done in history, he is going to conquer every nation, every tribe, every tongue on planet earth.

Then once his empire is consolidated we are told that in the middle of the Tribulation where this little diamond point is that he will suddenly become obsessed by one thing, and that is the destruction of the Jewish people. He will be possessed by Satan and when he is he will become obsessed with destroying the Jewish people; he will pick up where Hitler left off. And so, during the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, during this period he will focus on trying to destroy every Jewish person on planet earth. Jesus in Matthew 24 called this last period, this 3 ½ years the Great Tribulation, not because it was going to be worse than the first half in terms of human carnage, but because it was going to be the Great Tribulation for the Jewish people.

Then at the end of this period of seven years, Jesus will return to the earth, this will be the Second Coming. And we move into the third period of time, and that third period will be known as the Millennium. I will just abbreviate it M-I-L-L. That is two Latin words, milli annum which means one thousand years. And Jesus will reign over all the earth for a thousand years, and the earth will be flooded with peace, righteousness, and justice. And then at the end of this period of time the earth is going to be consumed with fire. And God is going to take this earth like a hot ball of wax and He is going to reshape it. And out that fiery inferno is going to come a new heavens and a new earth. And we will spend, the redeemed, eternity with God in a New Jerusalem on the new earth.

So, to look back over this timeline now we have four periods: (1) The Church Age, (2) The Tribulation, (3) The Millennium; which will last 1,000 years, and then the eternal state will be the fourth one where we will live eternally with the Lord on the new earth.

Now, we at Lamb & Lion Ministries believe that the best inference of the scriptures, and we do not teach this dogmatically, but we believe the best inference of the scripture is that Jesus is most likely to appear for His Church at the end of the Church Age. That Jesus will appear at this point and the Church both living and dead will be taken out of the world to meet Jesus in the sky. That is the Rapture of the Church. In other words we see the Rapture as an event separate and apart from the Second Coming. And we believe the Church both living and dead will be in Heaven with Jesus during this period of time. So, there will be an appearing of Jesus for the Church, and a return of Jesus with the Church. And we will reign with Jesus over all the world for a 1,000 years.

This helps to explain something that I mentioned at the beginning of today's program when I was talking to you on that park bench out in the park. I mentioned to you that people are always asking me: "When is Jesus going to return? And can we know when He will return?" And my response always is, "It depends upon what you mean by His return." If you are talking about His Second Coming, then yes, we can know when that will occur. It will occur at the end of seven years of tribulation and you can almost clock it to the day. But if you are talking about the rapture of the Church, the appearing of Jesus for the Church both living and dead, there is no way we can know when that will occur. All we know is this: it can occur at any moment. There is not one prophecy that has to be fulfilled for Jesus to appear for His Church. There are many prophecies that have to be fulfilled before the Second Coming occurs. Now, Dennis let me ask

you something: Is there any other argument that you can think of in scripture in behalf of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture?

Dennis Pollock: Well, Dave there are many. One of the most powerful ones is what is called prophetic type. We find this concept mentioned in 2 Peter 2, beginning with verse 4. The passage here talks about how God preserved Noah and his family when He destroyed the earth with water. And how in like manner He rescued Lot and his family when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. The passage then concludes with this statement in verse 9, "The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the Day of Judgment."

Dr. Reagan: Now, Dennis that last statement there about the Lord knowing how to rescue reminds me of something and that is that whenever someone like us takes the position that the Lord is most likely to come back for His Church before the Tribulation begins they are usually denounced as escapists. People say, "Well, you just don't want to suffer for the Lord, you are just a bunch of escapists." What do you have to say about that?

Dennis Pollock: Well, we hear that all the time. And the truth is that Jesus Himself was an escapist. That people don't realize this. Remember the words of Luke 21:36 which we read a few minutes ago? Jesus said, listen now, "Pray that you might escape these things." And here in 2 Peter 2 we have God portrayed as a rescuer of Noah and Lot enabling them to escape the pouring out of the Lord's wrath.

Dr. Reagan: So that escapist mentality is really a very biblical one. The Lord said, "Pray to escape these things."

Dennis Pollock: Biblical and smart, Dave. And Smart.

Dr. Reagan: Amen. Now are there any other arguments that you would like to mention in behalf of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture?

Dennis Pollock: Okay, Dave, there is one in particular that clearly emerges from the chart that you drew a few minutes ago. The Bible teaches in Matthew 25 and Ezekiel 20 that when Jesus returns He is going to judge all those that are left alive at the end of the Tribulation, both Gentiles and Jews. And those who have not placed their faith in Him will be consigned to death. In other words the Bible teaches that only believers who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior during the Tribulation, and who live to the end will be allowed to enter the Millennium in the flesh. Now, this rules out a Rapture at the end of the Tribulation as an event combined with the Second Coming, because if the Rapture occurs at the end of the Tribulation all believers would receive glorified bodies, and there would be no believers in the flesh to enter the Millennium.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, Dennis, that is an excellent argument in behalf of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. And one that people very seldom ever think about because it is complicated, it is a little bit complex. So, let me go over to the board again, and let me try to illustrate this point that you are talking about here concerning the Rapture, and the Second Coming.

Now, what Dennis is in effect saying here is that one of the arguments in behalf of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture is the fact that if you are just going to have the Rapture here at the end, let me just use my eraser here to point this out. There are some people who believe that the Church will go all the way through the Tribulation and that the Rapture will not occur here but it will occur over here at the end of the Tribulation. And their concept is that the Church will be

taken up, meet Jesus in the sky and come right back down immediately. In other words the Rapture and Second Coming is all one event that occurs in a twinkling of an eye. It is kind of like what might be called a yo-yo Rapture, you just go up fast and right back down. And they argue the Church will be here all through the Tribulation. Now, here is the point Dennis was making. If you put the Rapture and the Second Coming together at the end of the Tribulation you've got a problem concerning the Millennium, because the Bible teaches that the only people who will be allowed to go into the Millennium in the flesh will be those who accept Jesus during the Tribulation and live to the end of the Tribulation. Which is not going to be very many. But you see if the Rapture and Second Coming occur all at once then all of those who are alive in Christ at the end of the Tribulation will be glorified. And there will be no one to go in the Millennium in the flesh, because the Bible teaches that when Jesus comes back He is going to judge every person on planet earth. And all of those who live to the end of the Tribulation who have not accepted Him as Lord and Savior will be consigned to death. Well, if they are consigned to death and if all the believers are glorified, there is no one to go into the Millennium in the flesh.

On the other hand if you look at this the way we have been teaching it, and the Rapture occurs at the beginning of the Tribulation then when we return with the Lord Jesus Christ all of those who have accepted Him during the Tribulation and who are still alive are allowed to go into the Millennium in the flesh. It is only when you separate the Rapture from the Second Coming that you end up with a millennial population. Okay, Dennis.

Dennis Pollock: Well, Dave you know what some people will question about all this is if the Church is raptured at the beginning of the Tribulation, then who are the believers, the saints that the Bible talks about during the Tribulation?

Dr. Reagan: Well, that is a good question, Dennis, and the answer is really very simple, they will be those who accept Jesus Christ after the Rapture as their Lord and Savior.

Dennis Pollock: Alright, now some protest now that is second chance salvation. Are you offering second chance salvation here?

Dr. Reagan: No, no, no, this is not second chance salvation to say that people will be saved after the Rapture. Second chance salvation refers to the idea of people having the opportunity of being saved after they are dead. As long as we are alive we have chance, after chance, after chance, after chance, thankfully because we have a loving, and kind, and gracious, and patient God.

Dennis Pollock: Amen.

Dr. Reagan: Sometimes people take those chances for granted and hold off too long and then suddenly their lives are snuffed out and they are gone.

Dennis Pollock: David, there is one thing the Bible makes clear it's God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. That brings us to the final question that we want to leave with people today. Now, the signs of the times point to the soon beginning of the Tribulation. That means that the Rapture is close. It could occur at any moment. Are you ready?

Dr. Reagan: Yes, Dennis that is the bottom line question. Are you ready? You know folks it is a question that I try to pose daily to people throughout this Metroplex with this particular bumper sticker that I have on the back of my family car, and on the ministry's van. It says, "Jesus is coming soon! Are you ready?" Well, let me ask you: If Jesus were to appear today would He

appear as your blessed hope? Or as your holy terror? The choice is yours. If you have accepted Him as your Lord and Savior He will come as your Blessed Hope and you will go forth and skip about like a calf released from a stall. But if not He will be your holy terror.

Dennis Pollock: You know John 3:36 says that God deals with sin in one of two ways, grace or wrath. Each of you viewing this program are either under the grace of God or His wrath. If you would like to pass from wrath unto grace all you have to do is pray this simple prayer with me and mean it from your heart. Say, "Jesus, Christ I believe in You. You are the Son of God. You died on the cross for my sins. You rose again. I ask you to forgive all my sins, and come into my heart, and make me a new person. And I will trust you, and live for you for the rest of my life. In your name I pray Jesus, amen."

Dr. Reagan: If you have just prayed that prayer with Dennis I want to urge you to seek out a church where you can confess your faith in Jesus and manifest that faith in baptism. You cannot be a lone ranger Christian. You must be a part of a body of believers if you are to grow in the Lord. Find a church where the Bible is respected as the infallible Word of God, and where Jesus is exalted as the only hope for mankind. Well, Dennis that's it for today. I hope you will join us for our next program when we will wrap up this series on the Rapture by talking about the aftermath of the Rapture. Until then this is Dave Reagan and Dennis Pollock saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program