

## 7 Pre trib (rapture) problems

### Part 6

#### Imminence

#### Intro

Comparison of Pre-Trib and Pre-Wrath teaching.

Not necessarily about proving one view right and the other wrong, but being good Bereans.

#### Recap

Pre-Wrath position based upon the 'triple lock'.

- That Joel 2:31, Matthew 24:30-31, and Rev 6:12-14 describe the same cosmic event.
- Thereby, chronologically linking these passages together (and placing their contextual information into a specific chronological sequence).

So far, we have...

- Unlocked the idea that the cosmic sign of Joel necessarily precedes the rapture.
- Unlocked the idea that Mt 24:30-31, is referring to the rapture of the Church saints.
- Distanced the 'signs' of 2<sup>nd</sup> Thess chapter 2, from 'necessarily' preceding the rapture.
- Questioned the idea that the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal 'begins' God's outpour of wrath, and is the sign that locates when the rapture takes place within the book of Revelations chronology.

#### Premise of this video segment

**Alan Hultberg:** "Imminence is really a keystone issue for the Pretribulational Rapture."

The Pretrib doctrine of "imminence means that there are no prophesied events that **must** happen before the rapture. The rapture is sign less; it could happen at any moment—right now. And hence, they consider the rapture imminent."

"The first thing that you should know about imminence is that it is a brand-new doctrine".

- It appears to have originated in the early 1800s with John Darby of the Plymouth Brethren.
- All the 'Church fathers' thought the Antichrist would appear before the rapture could take place.
- Pretribulationists agree that it cannot be found in the writings of the early church.

#### Response

- **The doctrine of imminence means that there are no prophesied events that *must* happen before the rapture.**
  - **This is because the next 'event' for the Church *in history* is the resurrection and rapture.**
    - **For every believer who has ever lived the next historic event for them will be the resurrection and rapture.**
    - **If the resurrection and rapture were to follow the revelation of the Anti-Christ, this would only be a historic precursor for that generation alive at that time.**

- This means that no sign, or sequence of signs, are *historically* necessary to bring about, or herald, the resurrection and rapture.
- This is not the same as saying that no prophetic event can chronologically precede the rapture.
  - For example, the regathering of Israel in 1948 is clearly a prophesied event and sign that prophetically we are closer to the end than the beginning. It is also an indicator that we may be the generation of the Church that will be translated and raptured, not resurrected and raptured. Nevertheless, we are no more informed as to when the rapture will be by this prophetic sign, other than it is still a future event.
- Many prophetic events could precede the rapture, but none of them are theologically necessary, or contribute, to when the rapture must take place.
- The only determining factor will be when the Father tells The Son to go get His bride.
  - We could have some inkling as to when the rapture may be, by seeing a decline in the conversion of gentiles, signifying the coming to an end of the ‘fullness of the gentiles’ (Romans 11). However, detection of this sign would depend upon human ingenuity (fallibility), and it is very difficult to accurately know conversion rates, as few news agencies obtain, or publish, such data.

Critique of verses that Pretribulationists use to prove imminence categorized by theme.

1) ‘Waiting for Jesus’

Titus 2:13 which says: “*Waiting* for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Not. waiting for the Anti – Christ (see also Philippians 3:20, and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:7).

Prewrath critique -

- To be expectant of something is not the same thing as thinking it will happen at any moment.
- These verses do not exclude ‘signs’ preceding the rapture.

**Response –**

**‘We wait for Jesus’; because that is the next theological and historical event that every believer from every time is unified in waiting for.**

- Looking out for any ‘sign’ would not influence the theological, or prophetic imminence of the rapture, which depends only and entirely upon Jesus coming for His bride.

2) ‘Be good because Jesus is returning.’

1st John 2:28 which says: “And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears, we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at His coming.”

“John MacArthur claims that our very sanctification depends on imminence. He says, quote, ‘The hope of Christ imminent return is therefore the hinge on which a proper understanding of sanctification turns.’”

Prewrath critique –

- The motivation for our sanctification does not flow from our fear that Jesus may return to find us sinning.
- Sanctification flows from our gratitude, love for God, and desire to please Him.

**Response –**

**‘Be good for Jesus is returning’; is not the source of our sanctification, nor the means, but is a timely reminder of the need of sanctification (Pretribbers have overstressed the importance of this idea).**

3) ‘Christians will not experience the wrath of God’

1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:9 which says: “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Church will not be on the earth when Anti – Christ is active in Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week.

Prewrath critique –

- The Pretrib application of this verse depends upon when the wrath of God is poured out.

**Response -**

**‘Christians will not experience the wrath of God’; is true for every viewpoint on the rapture. This would contribute to the idea of a Pretrib rapture, if we could conclusively prove the entire 70<sup>th</sup> week was the wrath of God.**

4) “the-rapture-is-a-good-thing”

John 14:1-4.

*“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.”*

Because Jesus says the rapture will be ‘good’, then nothing bad, like the persecution of Anti – Christ could precede it.

Prewrath critique –

- Jesus told them not to “be troubled” because the disciples did not understand Him when He said, ‘*Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.*’ So, the disciples were troubled they did not know to where he was going.
- Most, if not all the Apostles were martyred for their faith, hardly not seeing ‘trouble’.

**Response -**

**This view of the rapture, that it precedes any strife, persecution, or trials, is a western Christian construction. It became increasingly popular from the late 1950’s onwards, as mankind realised that we now possessed the means to wipe ourselves out (nuclear bombs), and the political situation that could lead to this happening existed (the tension between East, the USSR and West NATO).**

5) “nearness proof texts.”

Philippians 4:5 which says:

“Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. *The Lord is at hand.*”

The rapture will be sudden, ‘at hand’ therefore no signs precede it, otherwise it is not sudden.

Prewrath critique –

- In the ‘fig tree’ parable, Jesus uses the same ‘nearness’ terminology, BUT, points to signs warning us that His coming is near!

**Response -**

**Agreed, these types of texts often stress the suddenness of Jesus’s return, perhaps a certain unexpectedness of the ‘hour’, but in and of themselves do not prove imminence, because imminence is an ‘inferred’ doctrine (as is the Prewrath position).**

6) “Thief in the Night”

“For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (1Thess. 5:2).

The idea is that if Jesus’s return is unexpected, like a thief breaking into your house at night, then it must be imminent (without precursor).

Prewrath critique –

- The return of Christ (preceding Daniels 70<sup>th</sup> week) will only be like a thief for *unbelievers*.
- For unbelievers, the return of Christ will come suddenly and unexpectedly, because they will *not be* watching for it.

- Throughout the New Testament where the idea of the thief is used, it stresses the importance of watching for the signs of the return of Christ.

Examples –

*“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”* (Mt 24:42-44).

*“Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the **day of the Lord** will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.”* (1<sup>st</sup> Thess 5:1-6).

**Response -**

**‘Thief in the Night’; these passages do not teach that signs precede, or initiate, the rapture. Rather, they teach that signs precede and point to the prophetic events that will take place surrounding the Day of The Lord, and the Lords return to the earth.**

**No ‘signs’ precede the arrival of a thief who is intending to rob your property (they don’t drop flyers round first), unless they are an incompetent thief. Neither do you limit watching out for a thief to when you see signs that they are, or might, be coming. You need to be on watch 24/7 to be ready for a thief.**