

THE RAPTURE

Part 2: When is It? (Past, Present, or Future?)

(preached 12/17/23)

Please turn to *Daniel 9:24-27*.

LAST WEEK:

- The Rapture is the Resurrection of the saints—the one Jesus and Paul talked extensively about.
- While the word “rapture” doesn’t appear in the Bible, the Greek word for it means “snatch/catch away, pluck violently” denoting harvest and rescue.
- It’s our reward and destination.
- Upon death, all who know Jesus will ascend as spirits up to Heaven and wait.
- The day will come when Jesus comes back to earth, and the dead in Christ will follow Him.
- Angels will accompany Him as well.
- Those in Christ who are still alive will be “harvested” by the angels and brought to the skies above Jerusalem, where they will meet up with Jesus and the dead in Christ.
- We’re told to encourage one another about this event and so we should!

Now let’s begin the journey to answer, as best as we can, the BIG question: **“WHEN?!?!?”**

I realize the “when” is what causes division in the Church, and my purpose isn’t to do that. I’m not dogmatic on a specific timing whether pre, mid, or post, therefore won’t die on that hill. That being said, I will share where I’m leaning and why.

Today’s sermon won’t get into pre, mid, pre-wrath, or post...**it attempts to “sandwich” a timeline down to the proverbial ballpark using events in the Bible.** In today’s sermon I will be taking a firm stance for the general timeline I’ll be sharing. Next week we’ll get into pre, mid, pre-wrath, and post where I will share where I lean.

Allow me to give the conclusion of today’s sermon right the beginning: **the rapture hasn’t happened yet. This glorious event will be fulfilled in the future.**

I won't be insulted if you chuckle, but here in the last days error and confusion have set in and some believe the event is already past. Believe it or not, this problem existed in the first century too! There was an expectation among some of the saints that Jesus would come back in their lifetime, and Paul had to address this very issue with the *Thessalonians*. Remember that in his first letter to them, he explains what happens at the Rapture. That got them excited, but apparently someone sent them another letter saying it had already happened and that they missed it! Paul indicates someone forged said letter from him or another Apostle. Thus he immediately writes a second letter to them to clear the matter up:

[2Th 2:1-4 ESV] 1 Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has [already] come.

In both letters to the Thessalonians Paul is talking about the same event: the Rapture.

HE'S NOT REFERRING TO 2 SEPARATE EVENTS, nor is he talking about 2 stages of the same event. The Thessalonians were told via a forged letter that the resurrection had already taken place and that Jesus had returned, so they were stressed! Paul clears the air and says *"no, Jesus hasn't returned and the resurrection hasn't happened yet."*

Here in the modern age, there's parts of the church (mostly the western church who tends to overthink & complicate things) who **claim the rapture has already happened and that it was purely a spiritual and secret event.**

Please remember what I've taught you: **when it comes to believers, God is a revealer and not a concealer.** He tells us what's going on and the resurrection & second coming will be the biggest event like, ever! We will KNOW when it happens.

Don't believe anyone who tries to convince you that the return of Christ and the resurrection of the saints already happened—IT HAS NOT!

It's going to take place in the future and we'll now move forward to getting an approximate time.

What Jesus and the Apostles spoke of, over and over, was **the coming Kingdom** and our Lord taught us to pray that said Kingdom would come here to earth, as it is in heaven.

Let's not completely spiritualize the Kingdom as some have done!

Yes, there's a verse where Jesus says it's within us and that's true! When we get Saved and the Holy Spirit makes us His temple, a portion of the Kingdom exists within. Call that the "first coming" of the Kingdom.

The 2nd coming of God's Kingdom will be a physical

manifestation here on earth as it is in heaven. God's Kingdom is His government and when Jesus returns, He's bringing His system of rule with Him starting with Him sitting on the throne to reign supreme. The Book of Revelation tells us of the coming of Jesus' Kingdom:

[Rev 20:4 ESV] 4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. **They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.**

This thousand year reign is often called **"THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM"** and has NOT happened yet. The Millennial Kingdom takes place shortly after the Second Coming of Jesus.

That being said, there are **3 different positions** people in the western "overthinking let's make it complex" church have taken regarding the millennial Kingdom and we need to understand them in reference to when the Rapture will happen. You don't have to memorize these, just be aware of them:

- Pre-millennialism
- Post-millennialism
- Amillennialism

Pre-Millennialism is the belief that the millennial reign of Christ hasn't happened yet, but will take place in the future. It holds that the Rapture, Antichrist, Tribulation, and Second Coming are all future events and that things get worse before Jesus comes back. **This is what I believe, Gateway's official position, and what the Bible teaches. I am certain of this!**

Post-Millennialism is the position that the Church will successfully spread the gospel everywhere and "Christianize" the nations. That governments and laws will be converted along with people, and that after the world becomes Christian, Jesus will return. Post-Millennialists believe this process is already ongoing and is the impetus behind "Christian Nationalism."

This is also called “Victorious Eschatology” and seduces people because it claims the “doom and gloom” portions of the Bible have already happened and things are only going to get better from here. Do you believe things are getting better?

A-Millennialism denies a physical manifestation of God’s Kingdom and they spiritualize everything, turning the Kingdom into symbols and allegories. They’re the ones who promote that the Kingdom is “within us” only.

**So our first narrowing down of when the Rapture happens is simple:
IN THE FUTURE.**

Everyone in the early Church believed in pre-millennialism and the other timelines weren’t invented until centuries later. In my opinion, the other theologies were created because Jesus was and is taking longer than expected to come back. People got tired of waiting, started to doubt, then came up with other explanations (post-mill and a-mill).

Let’s pinpoint it further and we finally get to Daniel 9:

[Dan 9:24-27 KJV] 24 **Seventy weeks** are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. 25 Know therefore and understand, [that] from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince [shall be] seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks [69 weeks = 483 years]: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof [shall be] with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week [7 years]: and in the midst of the week [3.5 years] he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make [it] desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Books have been written on these verses alone and they’re the subject of great discussion and controversy among both Jews and Christians.

BACKGROUND. Daniel has just prayed and repented on behalf of his own nation, Israel, who is still in the midst of being exiled from their homeland. Daniel is pleading with God saying “*we’re sorry for our sins! When will You end this exile and return us to our homeland?*” Gabriel appears and begins to prophesy, hence the verses we just read.

First, the **70 weeks here represent 490 years**. Each “week” (7 days) equal 7 years. I’ll show you an equation to prove this in a few minutes. There are several things happening here:

- The 70 weeks are for both the people Israel and the city of Jerusalem.
- It will accomplish several things:
- To finish transgression.
- Put an end to sin & atone for iniquity.
- To seal the vision & prophet
- To anoint the holy.

VERSE 25 is where things get mathematical and controversial:

25 Know therefore and understand, [that] from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem **unto the Messiah the Prince [shall be] seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks [69 weeks = 483 years]**: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

- A “word” (authorization) goes out to rebuild Jerusalem and remember: at the time of this convo between Gabriel and Daniel, Jerusalem is still in shambles after the Babylonian invasion.
- Therefore someone in authority gives the green light for the Jewish people to return to their homeland and begin rebuilding process.
- ***Daniel is told when Jesus will arrive!*** One of the most amazing prophecies in all the Bible is right here in verse 25 of Daniel 9!
- $62 \text{ weeks} + 7 \text{ weeks} = 69 \text{ weeks}$. Why is it worded this way? Because they talked funny back then. 😊
- Remember that one “week” = 7 years. Thus: $69 \text{ “weeks”} = 483 \text{ years}$.
- Gabe is telling Dan that Jesus will appear 483 years **after** the command to rebuild Jerusalem!!!
- While there’s controversy over exactly what year said “command” went out and who issued it (most say Persian King Artaxerxes), the time ends up being late 20’s – early 30’s in the first century...exactly when Jesus appeared and began His public ministry!!!
- **I encourage you to do your own research** on how these “weeks” are actually years, when the command went forth, and how Jesus ended up being the only One Who fulfilled this Messianic prophecy.

26 **And after threescore [and seven] and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off**, but not for himself: **and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary**; and the end thereof [shall be] with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

The first part I have underlined above is the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior. After 69 “weeks” (483 years) have passed, Messiah Jesus would appear and then be killed on the Cross for the sins of the world (“but not for Himself”).

At that point the prophetic fulfillment of “70 weeks” stopped at end of the 69th week. Say what?? Imagine watching a movie, getting to the last portion, and hitting the “pause” button.

The “prince” mentioned in verse 25 is Jesus and He’s correctly labeled “Messiah.” The “prince” mentioned in verse 26 is not Jesus, is not labeled Messiah, and shows up later on.

The verse 26 “prince” is the Beast...the Antichrist. This is proved out elsewhere in Daniel, who talks extensively about the Antichrist and what he will do. It’s also proved out in other books of the Bible that the Antichrist is the one who attacks Jerusalem and defiles the temple (the city and the sanctuary) and starts a war. Jesus doesn’t do that.

27 And he [the Antichrist] shall confirm the covenant with many for one week [7 years]: and in the midst of the week [3.5 years] he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation [in the Temple] to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make [it] desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Daniel explains this defilement in this verse: the Antichrist make a 7 year covenant with “many”...and some believe it to be a **PEACE TREATY** between the Jews and Muslims. While is that likely, it remains to be seen.

3.5 years into the treaty (“in the midst of the week”) **the Antichrist breaks the agreement**, defiling the temple with his own presence...centuries later Paul told the Thessalonians that the Antichrist would enter the temple and declare himself to be “god.” This event is called **“The Abomination of Desolation”** and the Antichrist himself is the abomination which defiles the temple.

3rd Temple. Keep in mind there is NO Temple in Jerusalem right now, as the Romans destroyed the last one in 70 AD. Therefore if these events take place in the future, some sort of 3rd Temple needs to be rebuilt.

None of this has happened yet. It’s still in our future.

Here's what we have so far:

- Jesus was crucified at the end of the 69th “week” and the prophetic timeline PAUSED.
- *We're still waiting for the last “week” (7 years) to happen.*
- That 7 years will BEGIN when the Antichrist signs some sort of covenant with “many,” and the covenant itself is a 7 year one.
- 3.5 years into said covenant, the Antichrist enters into the temple (which hasn't been rebuilt yet) and declares himself to be “god” demanding all worship him and take his mark. Revelation 13 states the FP will perform false miracles at that time to “confirm” that the Antichrist is deity.
- At the END of that final 7 year period, Jesus returns (2nd coming)!

This final seven years is often called “The Tribulation” after language we find in Matthew 24:

[Mat 24:15-21 ESV] 15 **“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place [the temple]** (let the reader understand), 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, 18 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. 19 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! 20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great **tribulation**, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

Jesus narrows down the timeline: **when we see the Antichrist enter the temple and call himself god (“the Abomination of Desolation”)** we're already 3.5 years into the final 7 years. Verse 21 is where we get the term “tribulation” which is the KJV word for “trouble.”

Therefore when it comes to the Rapture, most “futurists” like us realize it's going to take place—timewise—in context to the 7 year “tribulation.”

- **Pre-Tribulation** folk believe the rapture will take place BEFORE the final 7 year period. This position requires it be SECRET and IMMINENT and demands that the Rapture and 2nd coming are either 1) Two separate events or 2) two stages of the same event, a minimum of 7 years apart.
- **Pre-Wrath** folk claim the Rapture will happen at some point during the last 3.5 years of the Tribulation, but before God's “wrath” which are normally summed up at the Bowl Judgements in Revelation or the 2nd coming itself—both of which are referred to as “God's Wrath.”
- **Post-Tribulation** folk claim the Rapture and 2nd coming are the same event and therefore happen at the same time—after the final 7 years is over.

We'll get into that next week, but here is where we're at today:

- The millennial Kingdom of Christ is in our future and hasn't happened yet.
- The final 7 years of Daniel—aka “The Tribulation”—are in our future and haven't started yet.
- The Rapture will take place in context to the Tribulation: either before it, during it, or after it.

I end today with this:

[Story of cutting trees in snow]

[Rom 8:16-19 ESV] 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that **we may also be glorified with him.** 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with **the glory that is to be revealed to us.** 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the **revealing of the sons of God.**