

Bible Study & Q&A: End Times, Rapture, and Prophecy

Overview

This gathering focused on eschatology (the study of end times), specifically addressing questions about the rapture, the return of Jesus, and related prophecies. The leader clarified various theological perspectives, responded to participants' questions, and sought to ground all teaching in scripture.

Keywords: End Times, Rapture, Prophecy

Key Takeaways

- **Rapture Rooted in Scripture:** The rapture doctrine, while popularized in the 1800s, is grounded in older biblical teachings, especially in 1 Thessalonians and the Gospels.
- **Distinct End Times Views:** The study clarified different theological views such as Amillennialism, Preterism, and Kingdom Now theology, highlighting the leader's emphasis on Jesus' literal return.
- **Sequence of End-Time Events:** Daniel's prophecy and Jesus' teachings outline a timeline including tribulation, the rapture, and the visible return of Christ.
- **Call to Readiness:** Believers are urged to remain watchful and patient, as the exact timing of the rapture and Jesus' return is unknown.

Key Themes & Discussion Points

1. Different Views on the End Times

- **Amillennialism & Preterism:** These positions suggest there is no literal end times; Jesus returns when the world is ready, and much prophecy is already fulfilled. The leader does not hold these views, emphasizing that Jesus spoke often about his return.
- **"Kingdom Now" Theology:** The idea that Christians must build the kingdom on earth before Jesus returns. The leader warned against this, noting it is not new but ancient theology, not necessarily biblically sound.

2. The Rapture: Is It a New Teaching?

- **Question Raised:** A participant asked about claims that the rapture doctrine only arose in the 1800s.
- **Response:** While the rapture became popular in the 1800s, the leader argued it is rooted in much older scriptural teaching, especially in 1 Thessalonians and the words of Jesus in the Gospels.
- **Historical Context:** The 1800s saw a surge in new doctrines (e.g., Adventism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses) due to increased access to printed materials, but this does not mean all such teachings originated then.

3. Jesus' Teaching on the End Times (Matthew 24)

- **Context:** Jesus foretold Jerusalem's destruction and described signs of his return.
- **Three Questions from Disciples:**
 - When will the temple be destroyed?
 - What will be the sign of Jesus' coming?
 - What is the sign of the end of the age?
- **Key Points:**
 - Jesus described tribulation, wars, false prophets, and global evangelism as precursors.
 - The "abomination of desolation" (referencing Daniel) is a pivotal event.
 - Jesus distinguished between the rapture (a sudden, unannounced event) and his visible return to reign (which follows known signs).

4. Daniel's Prophecy (Daniel 9)

- **70 Weeks Prophecy:** Daniel's timeline points to the coming of Messiah, his death, the destruction of Jerusalem, and a final period (the 70th week) yet to be fulfilled.
- **Focus on Israel and Jerusalem:** These prophecies primarily concern the Jewish people and their holy city, with implications for all believers.

5. The Sequence of End-Time Events

- **Current Era:** Known as the "age of the Gentiles," a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel.
- **The 70th Week:** Begins with a peace treaty involving Israel and a future leader (often called the Antichrist).

- **Tribulation:** A period of unprecedented suffering, culminating in the visible return of Jesus.

6. The Rapture in Jesus' Words

- **Matthew 24:36–44:** Jesus described a sudden event where some are taken and others left, with no prior warning or signs—distinct from his return in glory.
- **Emphasis:** No one knows the day or hour; believers are called to be ready and watchful.

7. The Rapture in Revelation

- **Revelation 4–8:** The leader drew parallels between Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24 and the seals in Revelation, especially the sixth seal (earthquake, sun darkened, etc.).
- **Gathering of the Saints:** Revelation 7 describes a multitude from every nation standing before God, interpreted as a picture of the raptured church.
- **Sequence:** Before God's judgments fall (trumpet and bowl judgments), his people are gathered and protected.

8. Comfort and Assurance

- **Not Appointed to Wrath:** Believers are encouraged that they are not destined for God's wrath but for salvation and rest.
- **Call to Patience:** While awaiting Jesus' return, the church is to remain faithful, patient, and grounded in scripture.

Participant Q&A Highlights

- **Is there scripture about the rebuilding of the temple?** No specific prophecy describes when or how the temple will be rebuilt, but its existence is implied in end-times passages.
- **How do Jewish expectations of Messiah relate to Christian beliefs?** The leader noted that some Jewish people see the rebuilding of the temple as a sign of Messiah's arrival—cautioning that discernment is needed.

Prayer

The meeting concluded with a prayer, thanking God for his word, asking for understanding, patience, and readiness for Christ's return, and expressing trust in God's timing and faithfulness.