

COUNTDOWN TO THE RAPTURE

Throughout the centuries, there have been fearful times and anxious individuals have set a particular date for the coming of the Lord:

1. In 1843 a man named William Miller announced to his followers that Jesus would return to the earth March 21, 1843. But the day came and went and the Lord did not return.
2. In 1988, quite a few persons predicated the Lord would return that year, because it marked a generation since the founding of Israel (Matt. 24:32-34).
3. In 1988, Edgar Whitsenent published a book 88 Reasons Why the Rapture will occur in 1988.
4. When the Lord did not come in 1988 Whitsenent said he had made a little error and published a second book, Final Shout, saying Jesus would return in 1989.
5. In 1992 Harold Camping published a book titled 1994 stating that Jesus would come in September of that year.
6. In AD 2000 many were predicting that the year 2000 would mark the coming of the Lord. Time Magazine wrote an article, "The End of the World as We Know It." Remember the Y2K madness. Y2K means "The Year 2000."

I am not one of those who would dare set a date for Christ coming (Matthew 24:36). But I am one who will say, "We who live in this generation have more reason to believe Jesus will come in our generation than any generation in history." The world authority on prophecy, Dr. John Walvoord, made this statement.

With so many voices predicting the future, there is but one voice we need to hear – the Word of God. So today I want to point out the Big Signs which will precede the coming of the Lord.

1. The first event will be **The Rebellion**. In 2 Thess. 2:3, Paul says the Lord will not come until after "a falling away" or "Rebellion." (Apostasis in Greek). Paul reiterates the same truth in 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5 and 2 Tim. 4:3-4.

Listen carefully, my friend, what Paul predicted to Timothy has already occurred and continues to happen in our lifetime.

The Rebellion Paul predicts will not just be in the world but in the church. There has never been such a conglomerate mess as there is today in the church, etc.¹

It used to be that all evangelical churches, while different in some ways, were all agreed that Jesus is the only way to God and heaven. No more. The major debate in evangelical circles today is over the question: Is there more than one way to God? One major denomination, so I read, studied this question for several years, concluding that Jesus is the best way to God but not the only way. Moreover, there is a growing denial of the reality of a real hell and a growing acceptance of universality – all men will be eventually saved. The secular world has been making a determined effort to destroy the family and now the church has become a powerful aid in this effort by first approving homo-sexuality and now same sex marriage. David Jeremiah has written, “In pulpits where the truth used to be proclaimed with power, you now find pastors and teachers questioning both the miracles and the historicity of the Bible itself.”² It is becoming increasingly clear that we are experiencing the Great Rebellion – a big sign on the road to the end times.

2. **The Removal.** 2 Thess. 2:7 says that at the present there is one in the world who restrains the evil but He will be taken away.³ Who is the Restrainer? It is God Himself in the Person of the Holy Spirit. But Paul says that just prior to the coming of the Lord, the Holy Spirit will be removed. How can that be? Simply because the children of God are taken from this world (at the Rapture), the Holy Spirit will no longer have a resident ministry on this earth. His role will revert to what it was in the Old Testament.

Considering the darkness and incredible evil in our world today, can you imagine what conditions will be like when the Holy Spirit is suddenly removed. Illus.: It will be like removing all the dikes that surround the Netherlands. Unprecedented corruption will suddenly overflow the world. Jesus said that just prior to His return, society would be “as it were in the days of Noah” (Matthew 24:37). How were the days of Noah? Genesis 6:11 says, “The earth was filled with violence.” Are we not witnessing a replay of the days of Noah? Another sign on the road to the end time.

3. **The Revelation**⁴ Paul says, in the third place, that just before the Rapture, a “lawless one” will appear. Who is the “lawless one”? He is none other than the Anti-Christ, to whom God will turn over the rule of

¹ See David Jeremiah, Jesus’ Final Warning, p. 56

² Ibid, Jeremiah, p. 56.

³ Ibid. p. 57-58

⁴ Ibid. p. 58-59.

the whole world. His person, power, and plan are described in Revelation 13, and he will rule over a lawless or rebellious world until Jesus consigns him to the lake of fire to end the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:20). Is not the unprecedented rebellion and lawlessness of our age another sign on the road to the coming of the Lord?

4. **The Rapture.** When conditions on the earth become unbearable for God's children, Jesus will suddenly "descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Comfort you one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

What a glorious day this will be. Such is called the "Blessed Hope" of the redeemed church (1 Thess. 2:13). Jesus said that prior to His coming that there would be "distress of nations with perplexity" (Luke 21:25b). The word translated "perplexity" is the Greek word *apopia*, meaning "no way out." Winston Churchill observed fifty years ago, "Our problems are beyond us." What do you think Churchill would say if he were living today – with the destruction of the World Trade Center, the threat of radical Jihadism, the destruction of the family, the demasculization of manhood, etc? The Bible plainly teaches that the day is coming when there will be "no way out." Could it not be here now? Another sign on the road to the coming of the Lord.

5. **The Re-Union.** There will be two-fold re-union at the Rapture. The children of God will be reunited with their "loved one" who have preceded them in death. "Those of us who are alive when Jesus comes will be "caught up together with them (our loved ones who died before) in the air..." At the same time the great family of God will "meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be forever with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17-18). What will this mean?
6. **Rejoicing** exceeding any joy, comfort, healing, etc., that God's people have ever known.
7. **The Retribution upon the earth.** But while God's people are rejoicing in the presence of their loved ones and Jesus Himself, God will be pouring His wrath upon an unrepentant, unbelieving world. All of God's people experience "tribulations" in this life (John 16:33) with a small "t," but the tribulation which shall descend upon human kind after the Rapture is called the "Great Tribulation" (Revelation 7:14) *tes thlipseos tes megales*. Of this time Jesus said "For then shall be Great Tribulation, such was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). This will be a time when "ALL

HELL” will break loose out on the earth, when demons will flood the globe like “locusts” and indescribable misery will be the experience of the inhabitants of the earth until men shall cry out, “The great day of His wrath has come and who will be able to stand?” (Revelation 6:17; Revelation 8:18).

Conclusion: Who will hear the call of Jesus and go with Him in the Rapture? Only those “who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14). The rest of humankind will be left on earth to undergo the Great Tribulation, and there will be no chance to be saved (2 Thess. 2:11-12) Who will be left? The out and out sinner, the moral man without church, lost church members, the self-righteous, and the procrastinators.

Yes, Jesus is coming for His people and the signs would cause us to believe that we have more reason to believe He will come in our generation than any generation in history. Jesus is coming – the question is: Are you going? If not I urge you to do two things:

1. Turn from your sins – this is repentance.
2. Trust Jesus with all your heart – this is surrender. Will you do so today?