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"See To It That No One Misleads You"



By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #127 ~

These are Jesus' words, spoken in the context of His comprehensive second coming message recorded in Matthew 24. Paul, in his end-times' epistle (2 Thessalonians 2:5), wrote something similar, *"Let no one in any way deceive you."* Isn't it instructive that in both of these passages you are warned about error? This means that the devil will lie about Christ's coming and events leading up to it, and many people will believe his lies. But God wants you to know the truth about the end times so you won't be deceived and misled by the devil. I hope you realize that a little error can really hurt you. It's like poison in your food, an infection in your body, or a wrong road on a map. And so too, you don't want to be led astray by any error in any subject, and that includes in this area of prophecy. My goal in this post is to share God's truth to correct six different errors, specifically with regards to Daniel's 70th week, the coming of Christ, and the rapture of the church.

1. The rapture of the church is not imminent. Many Christians believe that the rapture can take place at any time, at any moment, and that no signs or prophesied events need to take place before it can occur, but that is not true. Matthew 24:5-30 lists a number of events that need to happen before the church is raptured (verse 31). Knowing these events will help us to *"recognize that He is near"* (verse 33). 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9 tells us that we are not to be in darkness, surprised like the unbelievers, but we are to be awake and alert, which means we are to know what God's word says about conditions in the world before Christ's coming. Hebrews 10:25 further establishes this truth by saying that Christians *"are to see the day drawing near."*

2. Great tribulation is not God's wrath. Many think that the great tribulation spoken of in Matthew 24:9, 21 is God's wrath, but that's wrong thinking. Tribulation in the New Testament, also defined as affliction, distress, trouble and persecution, almost always refers to that which affects Christians (Romans 8:35, 2 Corinthians 4:17). Surely this distress and persecution is not God's wrath, but Satan's work, instigated by the Antichrist at the midpoint of Daniel's 70th week. You must understand that great tribulation is persecution brought on by the Antichrist, but wrath is punishment brought on by God. 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10 corroborates this, for it makes it clear that tribulation directed at Christians is distinct from God's wrath, and comes before His wrath.

3. Daniel's 70th week is not seven years of tribulation. Some people believe the entire 70th week is tribulation, and therefore, is all God's wrath, but that's error. Let me give you an overview of Daniel's 70th week to help you see what will be happening. First, tribulation will occur during the first 3½ years of the 70th week, for tribulation, believers being afflicted and persecuted, is a church-age and universal truth (Acts 14:22, John 16:33). Second, Matthew 24:15-22 informs us that great tribulation, initiated by the Antichrist, takes place during the 2nd half of Daniel's 70th week, starting at the midpoint of that 7-year period. This tribulation is then cut short, meaning it is stopped by God sometime during those last 3½ years, and then Christians are raptured

(verses 29-31). Third, God's wrath (Revelation 8-9) starts immediately after the rapture, and continues to the end of Daniel's 70th week. This 70th week then is comprised of tribulation and great tribulation affecting the Christians, and wrath directed at the non-Christians. (Many Jews, chosen by God to be saved, will be protected from this wrath – Revelation 7:1-8, 12:13-16).

4. The church will be on earth when the Antichrist is revealed. Many Christians think they will be raptured before the Antichrist's coming, but that is not true. 2 Thessalonian 2:1 tells us that at Christ's coming, Christians will be gathered to Him (this includes the rapture). But when is Christ's coming? 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9 makes it clear that His coming, and therefore, the rapture of the church, occurs after the Antichrist's coming. Thus, it is true that the church will be on earth when the Antichrist is revealed, and is ruling. Revelation 12:6-17 helps us to understand this, for the devil, failing to catch the Jews, goes *"to make war"* with the Christians, which is obviously after the midpoint of Daniel's 70th week. Revelation 13:7 elaborates on this, for it says that the Antichrist is making war with the saints, and saints are Christians, which means the church is still on earth at that time. This same sequence of events is given in Matthew 24:9-31, again proving that the church, the body of Christ, will indeed be on earth during the rule of the Antichrist.

5. The church is raptured at the coming of Christ, and is the initial event at His coming. 1 Thessalonians 4:15 says, *"we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord."* 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says, *"we who are alive and remain will be caught up (raptured)."* These are equivalent phrases, instructing us that Christians will be caught up (raptured) at the coming of the Lord. 2 Thessalonians 2:1 confirms this truth when it says, *"with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him."* This gathering includes believers who have already gone to heaven, and those still living on earth, who are raptured at Christ's coming. 1 Corinthians 15:22-23 also establishes this fact, for it says, *"… all will be made alive. But each in His own*

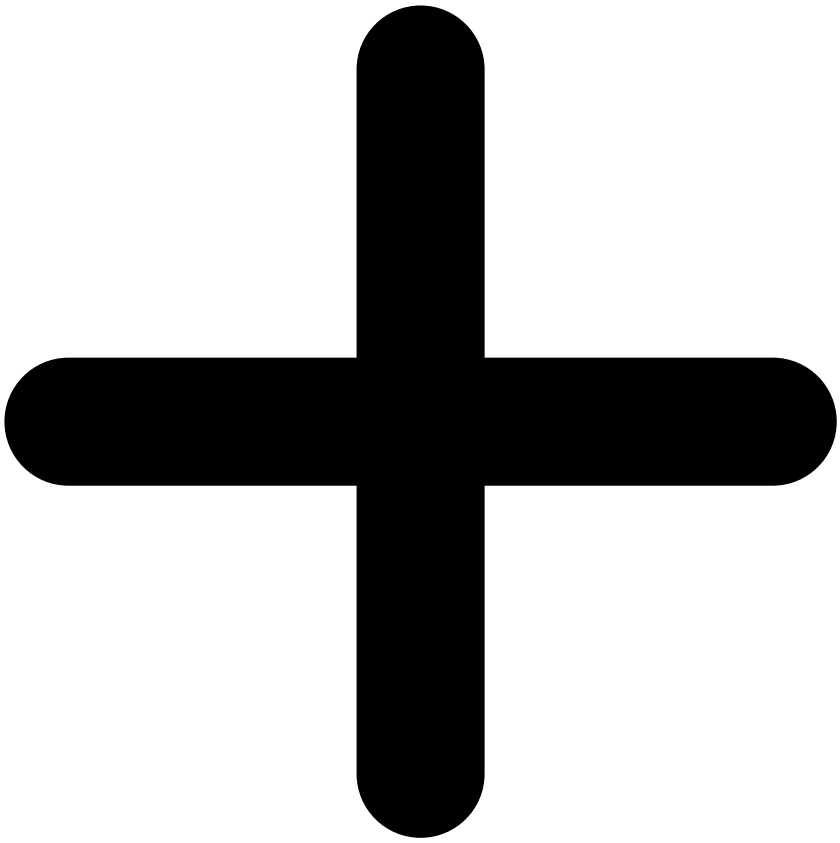
order: Christ, the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming."

6. The rapture of the church does not occur at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week. That the rapture happens at the beginning of this 70th week is never stated in the Bible. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8 explains to us that Christ's coming and the rapture occur after the Antichrist's coming and desecration of the temple. Since the Antichrist is revealed at the midpoint of Daniel's 70th week (Daniel 9:27), then the rapture has to take place after that point in time. Matthew 24:15-31 tells us the same thing as 2 Thessalonians 2, that the abomination of desolation, the desecration of the temple (verse 15), caused by the Antichrist, comes before the rapture of the church (verse 31), caused by Jesus Christ. We do not know the specific time of the rapture, the day or the hour, but we do know the general time, that it will happen after the midpoint of Daniel's 70th week, after the Antichrist is revealed, after great tribulation is cut short, and before the day of the Lord's wrath. Matthew 24:29-36

I have given you some arguments and summary statements regarding truths and errors with respect to end-times' prophecy. In particular, I have focused on pre-millennialism, which means Christ's coming and the rapture of the church occur before His 1000-year reign on earth. As you can see, I have not fully developed these arguments, but I wanted to introduce them to you, and give you sufficient information to help you see that they are from God's word, and are true. In the future, I plan to more fully explain them.

In the meantime, read and study the following prophecy passages, Matthew 24:3-41, 1 Thessalonians 4-5, 2 Thessalonians 2-3, and Revelation 6-9, 12-13. These will help you grow in your convictions about what God says will be taking place in the end times, and help you learn the truth, and discern the error. Don't forget what Jesus said, *"Watch out that no one deceives you… So be on your guard; I have told you everything in advance."* Mark 13:5, 23

P.S. There is one article that I believe is extremely important in helping you understand the truth of the end times, and that is *“Matthew 24 – The Most Important Prophecy Chapter in the Bible.”* I also suggest that you check out the “Charts.” Take time to go over them, for I am convinced they will give you a proper overview of the future that God has in store for us.



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