



'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' Titus 2:13

Calvary Chapel Distinctives: The Rapture of the Church, Part 6

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:29-31).

We see here that immediately after the tribulation of those days, Jesus appears to the whole world. Then He gathers together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. But some say, "Isn't the church the elect?" Yes. The church is the elect, but Israel is also the elect. This is a reference to Israel, and you can cross-reference it with several passages of the Old Testament where the same thing is declared. God will gather together the Jews from all over the world. In this passage, Jesus is speaking about His elect, the Jewish nation, not the church. Isaiah said, "And he shall set up

one of the main figures on the world scene. But I do not believe the church will see the Antichrist display his full power on the earth.

In 2 Thessalonians, as Paul is talking about this man of sin, the son of perdition, he declares, "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2:6-8).

I do not believe that the Antichrist can take over the rule and authority of the earth while the church is still here. I believe that the Holy Spirit within the church is the restraining force that is holding back the powers of darkness from completely engulfing and overwhelming the world right now. But the moment the church is removed, there will be nothing to hinder or hold back the powers of darkness from taking total control. That which restrains shall restrain until He is taken out of the way. Then shall the man of sin, the son of

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an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (11:12). Israel will be re-gathered.

What about the Scriptures that speak about the Antichrist making war against the saints? Daniel tells us, "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them" (7:21). In Revelation 13:7, we read, "And it was given unto him [the Antichrist] to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." Who are the saints? They can't be the church because Jesus said to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). The fact that he makes war on the saints and prevails against them means that they are the Jewish saints, not the church.

I do not believe that the church will see the Antichrist empowered upon the earth. I would not be surprised if the Antichrist is already

perdition, be revealed. This is the reason why I'm not looking for the Antichrist. This is just another subtle and deceitful device of Satan that leads people to be looking for the Antichrist rather than looking for Jesus Christ.

The reason some people get their prophetic scenarios confused is because they spiritualize the Scriptures and make the church Israel. They say that God is through with the nation of Israel because they rejected the Messiah. They believe that God has discarded Israel and replaced it with the church, and the church is now "the Israel of God." They take those prophecies that refer to Israel as a nation and make them apply to the church. When you do that, it confuses the whole prophetic picture!

If the sun came up this morning, then God's covenant with Israel still stands (Jeremiah 31:35-36). God is not through with Israel. Praise the Lord for His faithfulness throughout all generations! ☺