

How Soon the Rapture?

Signs of the times

By Pete Rose

Jesus' disciples on the Mount of Olives when He told them of the coming destruction of the temple shortly before His passion and crucifixion, asked Him, "When will these things happen, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3). Jesus answered them with a list of signs that would mark the time of His coming, but stated, "Of that day and hour no man knows, not even the angels of Heaven nor even the Son, but the Father only." (Matthew 24:20). But though no man knows the exact time, Jesus did indicate that those living at the time would know when it is near. There are other clues scattered about the Holy Scriptures which, when all put together, can give us a pretty good idea of when it will happen.

Number one sign: The fig tree. When it buds and brings forth leaves, Jesus said you know summer is near at hand. "*Likewise, when you see all these things begin to come to pass, know that it is near, even at the door.*" (Matthew 24:33] The fig tree is a symbol of Israel. The number one sign of all these signs is the regathering of Israel as a nation. Virtually the entirety of end time prophecy concerns Israel as a nation, in the land God gave them. From 70 AD when Titus overran Jerusalem and the Jews were dispersed across all the known world until 1948, there was no nation of Israel. During that interval none of these prophecies could have been fulfilled. With Israel back in the land, we are seeing increasingly rapid fulfillment of these signs Jesus gave. Everything hinges on Israel as a nation in the land God gave them.

Birth pangs. Jesus likened the signs of the approaching end to birth pains. They start subtly at first, and increase in frequency and intensity as the hour to give birth approaches, becoming most intense and most frequent just before the mother gives birth to her baby. Like birth pains, so shall these signs of the end increase in frequency and intensity as the end approaches.

The days of Noah and Lot. As it was in the days of Noah so shall it be when the Son of man returns. (Matthew 24:37) "In the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, building and planting, and paid no heed to what was coming until the flood came and took them all away. (Matthew 37-39, Luke 17:26-27). Two things characterized the days of Noah and Lot, (1) an overflow of violence and wickedness (Genesis 6:11-12), and (2) everything was business as usual right up until disaster overtook the people affected (Luke 27:27-30). In both cases those involved were warned beforehand, and chose to ignore the warnings. So will it be with the world when Jesus returns.

Violence. Just 20 years ago it was rare that you heard of multiple murders. Then there was Columbine, some 20 or more students murdered in cold blood by a pair of crazies. Then there was the massacre at a university in Virginia, over 30 students murdered by a fellow student gone mad, who even locked the doors shut so no one could get out. Today, such mass killings have become so commonplace they don't even make front page news any more. Not to mention the massacres that take place routinely in some third world countries, and women raped and killed just because they disagree with those ruling them. The world is rapidly becoming as it was in the days of Noah.

Wickedness and immorality. In the past few years, morals have been thrown to the wind. Homosexual conduct, condemned by God, is now glorified and defended by the world. And so is promiscuous sex of any kind. Gays march in the streets, proud of their sin, and demanding not just their rights, but that they be made a special privileged class. Greed is pandemic. Trafficking and use of illicit drugs is on the rise, and with it crimes committed by addicts to support their habit, and violence and killing among those who

are selling the stuff. Senseless murders have become common place. Good is being called evil, and evil is being called good. The world is heading in the same direction as Sodom and Gomorrah in their day.. False messiahs and false prophets. Many will come in that day saying, *“I am Christ,” and will deceive many* (Matthew 24:4-5). We just recently recently elected a president whom some people in the world are calling a “messiah”. I have not heard him disclaim it. And it appears he is leading this country straight down the road to socialism and ruin. One day soon one will come in his own name, claiming to be the Christ, and the world will follow him and proclaim him God, but he will be the devil incarnate instead.

Wars and rumors of wars. It has been said that there have been more wars in the 20th century alone than in all of history past. There is warfare going on between tribes and ethnic groups today, and there will be more wars with increasing intensity as the end approaches.

Earthquakes. While there have been earthquakes all down through history, there has been a steady increase in the frequency and intensity of quakes in recent years. A magnitude 9 quake in Indonesia in 2004 generated a huge tsunami with waves up to 100 feet high which flooded coastlands as far away as the east coast of Africa. Between the quake and the tsunami over 230,000 people died. It was the longest quake in history, lasting nearly 10 minutes. ([Wikipedia-Indian Ocean Earthquake](#)) Earthquakes in China, Pakistan, Italy and elsewhere have killed thousands and caused widespread destruction in recent years.

Famines. While there has been no famine in the US as yet, there are famines in other parts of the world, and it would only take a few bad harvests before there would be famine here.

Pestilences: AIDS is rampant over the world, and there is no known cure for it. An outbreak of swine flu in Mexico at this moment has disease control experts worried that it could turn into a worldwide pandemic. The virus is said to be like none seen before, a hybrid of bird, swine and human flu, all rolled into one virus. Some are saying it was deliberate and the virus was genetically engineered, not natural.

The sea roaring and men's hearts failing them for fear. Hurricanes have become more frequent and more intense in recent years. Just a few years ago there were three category 5 hurricanes in a single season, two of them making landfall in very close to the same area, along the Gulf coast. Katrina hit New Orleans causing tremendous damage, with even more when levees failed, flooding much of the city. Rita hit further west only a short time later, again causing extensive damage. Tornadoes have been on the rise. In just the first quarter of 2009 there were more tornadoes and tornado outbreaks than in a normal year.

The kicker: Jesus told His disciples, This generation (the generation that sees the beginnings of these signs) will not pass until all is fulfilled. In other words, the generation born when these signs began will still be alive when everything prophesied has come to pass. All this is prophesied in Jesus' Olivet discourse with His disciples, found in Matthew 24 and Luke 17, shortly before He was crucified.

But this is not all. There are other clues as to the timing of the rapture elsewhere in the Bible.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 tells us God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord, Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 tells us the antichrist cannot be revealed until there be a falling away (the literal meaning of the Greek actually speaks of a departure, a moving away-the rapture of the saints) first. Verses 7 and 8 speak of a restrainer Who must be taken out of the way before the antichrist can be revealed. Would this not be the Holy Spirit, living in the saints, restraining evil? When the church is removed in the rapture, this restrainer will be taken out of the way leaving the way clear for the antichrist to reveal himself, not before.

The book of the Revelation is divided into three parts. Jesus instructs John to “write the things you have seen, the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter” (Revelation 1:19). The things you have seen—the vision of the seven candlesticks, the vision of Jesus and His appearance, and holding

seven stars and a sharp two edged sword going out of His mouth. The things which are—the seven churches John was instructed to send letters to. The things which are to come—all John saw after he was caught up to heaven in Revelation 4:1.

In the message to the church of Philadelphia, a picture of the believing church of today (Revelation 3:7-12) Jesus promises them, “Because you have kept the word of My patience, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is to come upon all the world, to try those who dwell on the earth.” (V 10). This “hour” can be none other than the great tribulation, and Jesus has promised those who have faith in Him that He will keep them (us) from that hour.

In Revelation 4:1 John sees a door opened in heaven and hears a voice telling him, “Come up here, and I will show you the things that must be hereafter.” Immediately John is in the spirit and sees the throne of God and 24 elders seated around the throne. These 24 elders speak of Israel and the church, 12 of them representing the 12 tribes of Israel, and 12 representing the 12 apostles of Jesus. There is no further mention of the church on earth until we see them coming with Jesus on white horses at the battle of Armageddon, strongly suggesting that the church is no longer present on earth during this interval.

Revelation 11:7-10 tells of the killing of the two witnesses who have brought plagues upon the earth for the past three and a half years, and states that all the world will see their dead bodies lying in the street for three and a half days. Just 50 years ago this would have been impossible. Now with satellite TV anything can be broadcast from anywhere in the world and picked up and the images transmitted worldwide in just a matter of seconds.

In Revelation chapter 13 we have the vision of the antichrist and his system, in which there will be one world government and one monetary system, the latter requiring one to receive a mark in his hand or on his forehead, without which no one will be able to buy or sell. There has been within just the past six months or so an exponential speedup of movement toward a one world government and a one world monetary system, and the technology is already in place to make the mark of the beast enforceable—RFID chips and electronic funds transfer. All that is needed is for someone to design the infrastructure to put the two together, and with the technology already at hand it would take only a short time to do that. Without the mark (or RFID chip, as the case may be) on your person the machinery won't work, and there will be no way to carry out any kind of monetary transaction.

In Daniel 12:4 the angel speaking to Daniel after telling him to seal up the book till the time of the end, tells him in that day many will run to an fro, and knowledge will increase. Just 200 years ago the fastest means of travel was horseback, top speed maybe 40 miles per hour, and that only for a relatively short time. Computers, telephones, television and many other things we depend on today weren't even dreamed of just 100 years ago. Commercial airliners can whisk people around the world in hours on trips that would have taken months just a century or two ago, and astronauts are whirling around the globe every 90 minutes at some 17,000 miles an hour. And the prophecies Daniel was told to seal up until the time of the end are now being understood.

From all of the above it appears certain that we are in the hour prophesied by Daniel, Jesus and others. It is the end of the age of grace, the end of time for the church on earth. It appears that everything is setting up for the political and monetary system that will be in force during the great tribulation, and everything could be put in place very quickly. With modern construction techniques, even the tribulation temple could be built probably in a matter of months.

When Jesus gave the sign of the fig tree, he stated that the generation seeing the start of all these things, the regathering of Israel, will not pass away until all He prophesied is fulfilled. It has been 61 years since Israel was re-established as a nation in modern times. The great tribulation will run for seven years. If 70 years is the lifetime of a generation, and all must be fulfilled in that time frame, and it has already been 61

years, that leaves only two years to the start of the great tribulation. The rapture is imminent. There is no other prophetic event that has to precede the rapture, though some may, such as the war of Psalm 83 and/or Ezekiel 38-39. And since it is apparent that the rapture must precede the tribulation, how much sooner must our exit be?

Just a quick disclaimer here. I am not trying to set a date for the rapture. Only a fool would do that. Jesus said no man knows the day nor the hour, and neither do I. But He did say we would know when the time was at hand, and based on the Scriptures and current events and trends I believe that time is here.

Jesus warned us to be ready. To those who are not watching, He will come as a thief in the night to steal away his jewels, the church. Those of us who are His are not of the darkness and will not be caught by surprise, we will know when the time is at hand.

If you have received Jesus into your life as your Lord and Savior, you are ready. When that day comes, you will be among the missing on Earth, gone to be with Jesus where He is. If you have procrastinated or refused to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, that day *will* catch you as a thief, and you will be left behind in a world of total chaos, to go through the great tribulation. It will be a time of strong delusion and many will be deceived into irreversible damnation. While it will be possible to be saved during the tribulation it will probably be at the cost of your life. Even so, better to be saved, get your head chopped off and spend eternity with Jesus, than to keep your life for a time, and in the end burn in the lake of fire for eternity. The Gospel in a nutshell:

All have sinned, and the punishment for sin is death and eternal torment in hell.

Jesus took your hell for you on the cross, in your place, to keep you out of hell.

You must receive Him to receive His salvation. Just invite Him into your life, and walk with Him.

Bible verse to think about: "Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." (Matthew 24:44.)

Don't miss it!