

November 9, 2014 - Pentecost 22

End Times Series

The Great Day of the Lord - Why we don't believe in the Rapture

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 - Zephaniah 1:7–16



Dear friends in Christ

If we see a man on the street holding a sign that says “The end is near!” We might think he’s a lunatic. He might make us feel uneasy and uncomfortable, and we don’t like to feel that way. But what are we to do when we come to church today and hear in the Old Testament Reading that “the day of the Lord is near”? In the description of this “day of wrath” by the prophet Zephaniah, there is plenty to distress and trouble us.

Destruction and devastation. Anguish and wailing. Darkness and death. What’s even more unnerving is that God himself will bring this punishment. The Day of the Lord is not a crazy idea, but a day that is approaching. But how is that day going to be, the signs, the steps, the progress of it? That’s what we are going to be exploring during the following Sunday, as we learn, ponder and mediate on the final days prior the Day of the Lord.

So we begin by looking at something that has been even in the movies lately. I would like to show you this movie trailer, that movie goers has probably seen, and even seen the movie already.

Let’s watch (video)

“Left Behind” it is a remake of the “left behind” series popular the year 2000, but based on the books written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenking. These series focus on the so called Rapture of the Church. The Rapture is a theory about the end of the world, and although the word rapture is not in the Scriptures, those who preach it, say that true believers will one day be taken to heaven, before everybody else. They will just disappear, caught up to heaven. And use several Bible verses to back it up.

The idea of the rapture is a crucial part of a Biblical understanding called Dispensationalism which says that God relates to human kind in various forms or eras, 8 in total, one of those is grace and that will finish at the rapture of the church, and the last two are the Millennial Kingdom which some say will last for a 1000 years. And for that time those who are left behind will go through the great tribulation. Then after that time the last era will come, that is the final coming of Christ and bring all, the raptured and left behind to his eternal dwellings.

Now, this dispensationalist biblical understanding was promoted first by John Nelson Darby a Presbyterian minister who later formed his own group and founded the Plymouth Brethren, who to this day hold on to the idea of dispensation. Today there is a Seminary in the US, the Dallas theological Seminary and the Scofield Bible who hold on to that teaching, and of course being promoted strongly by the left behind series promoting the idea of the rapture.

Among some of the verses that the rapture proponents use are the epistle reading for this morning, especially verses: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 “For the Lord

himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

But they also use others like: Matthew 25:13 “ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

Matthew 24:40-4: “Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.”

1 Corinthians 15:51-52: “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

Philippians 3:20-21: “ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 which deals with the antichrist, or the man of lawlessness.

For those who believe in a future Rapture, it is regarded to be a sudden and cataclysmic event that will be unlike any other phenomenon in history. Millions of people will disappear from the Earth without warning. As a result, tragic and unexplained accidents will occur on a wide scale basis, ushering in the tribulation period. Many speculate that the non-believers left behind who may have known of the Rapture theory, yet previously rejected it, will finally come to belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as a result of the Rapture. Others left behind will remain in unbelief, finding theories to "explain away" the bizarre event.

But we Lutherans who hold on to the corrects understanding of Scriptures, we do not submit the dispensationalism understanding, therefore we do not believe there will be such a thing as the rapture the way dispensationalists say it is going to be. Unless the rapture is either your baptism the rapture is that moment in the only and definite second coming of Christ, the great day of the Lord when He will take his people to Heaven, and one will left behind. If that is the case then we can say, yes we believe in the rapture. But so we don't confuse ourselves, once more let us be reminded that there will be no other rapture in the way of the “left behind series”

Now, why is it that we are to talk about these things in church, in today's Sermon?

What are the implications?

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Let's look at our epistle reading for today once more...

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we

who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

And now let's look at Zephaniah 1:12:

“At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, ‘The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.’