

Major Bible Themes

52 Vital Doctrines of the Scriptures Simplified and Explained

Adapted from the book *Major Bible Themes*
written by Lewis Sperry Chafer and revised by John f. Walvoord

Events Preceding the Second Coming of Christ

- Introduction
 - After the offer of the kingdom had been rejected (Matt 11-12), Jesus begins to speak to his disciples about the kingdom of heaven in parables (Matt 13).
 - These parables describe the conditions of the inter-advent period which encompasses the stewardship of the Church as well as the stewardship of Israel during the Tribulation.
 - ✦ Once rejected, the kingdom of heaven is no longer “at hand” (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7), but is “not of this world/realm” (John 18:36).
 - ✦ The kingdom on Earth was thus limited to a “mystery state” until it will be physically manifest when Jesus Christ returns at the Second Advent and the kingdom is accepted.
 - The parable of the sower teaches various ways that the truth of God’s word will be received (Matt 13:3-8; 18-23).
 - ✦ The sower teaches the word regardless of how it will be received.
 - ✦ The seed beside the road is the word that is snatched away by the adversary before it could lead to belief (no salvation).
 - ✦ The seed on the rocky places is the word that is received and believed (salvation), but the believer does not establish a base of stability and is knocked off course by affliction and persecution.
 - ✦ The seed among the thorns is the word that is received and believed (salvation) leading to spiritual growth, but worldly distractions prevent the believer from bearing any fruit.
 - ✦ The seed on the good soil is the word that is received and believed (salvation) leading to spiritual growth and a life of abundant spiritual production.
 - The parable of the tares among the wheat teaches that Satan will intersperse unbelievers among believers until unbelievers are separated out at the “harvest” (Matt 13:24-30; 36-43).
 - The parable of the mustard seed teaches that there will be phenomenal growth of the redeemed and that Satan and his minions will be paying attention (Matt 13:31-32).
 - The parable of the leaven teaches that sin will be pervasive and will spread unabated (Matt 13:33).
 - The parable of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value represent two very expensive purchases (Matt 13:44-46).
 - ✦ The first is purchased (redeemed) and kept hidden in the field which represents Christ redeeming Israel (the blood of the covenant) and preserving them for their future stewardship.

- ✦ The second is purchased (redeemed) for immediate use and represents Christ redeeming His Church.
- The parable of the dragnet teaches that Jews and Gentiles (fish of every kind) will be gathered (Matt 13:47-50).
- Another picture of the inter-advent period can be found in Matt 24:4-14.
 - ✦ There will be people falsely claiming to be the Christ.
 - ✦ There will be wars and rumors of wars.
 - ✦ There will be famines and earthquakes.
 - ✦ These are all birth pangs which precede the Tribulation.
 - ✦ In the Tribulation...
 - there will be hatred and martyrdom, false prophets, increasing iniquity and a diminishing love for Christ.
 - the gospel of the kingdom will be preached worldwide.
- God's present purpose during the inter-advent period is the building up of the Body of Christ which will come to a dramatic end when Christ comes to gather His Church at the Rapture.
- The Rapture event – in which the dead in Christ rise first and living Christians are caught up to heaven without experiencing physical death – is never mentioned in the Old Testament.
- The departure of the Church from Earth will set the stage for the events leading up to the Second Advent of Christ.
- These events are encompassed in three major periods which are (a) preparation, (b) peace and (c) persecution.
- The Period of Preparation Following the Rapture
 - The events of the period of preparation immediately after the Rapture relate to three major people groups – unbelievers who professed to be Christians, Israel and the Gentiles.
 - The unbelievers who professed to be Christians will be left behind after the Rapture of the true Church and will form a worldwide church promoting a worldwide religion totally devoid of the redeeming features of true Christian doctrine.
 - This worldwide church will be the harlot of Rev 17 sitting on the scarlet-covered beast symbolizing its cooperation with the political power of the time.
 - For Israel, the period immediately following the Rapture will be a time of spiritual revival.
 - The partial hardening of their hearts (Rom 11:25) will come to an end and many will recognize that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah they were looking for and will be saved.
 - As in the first century, these saved Israelites will become the ambassadors for the gospel, winning both their own as well as many Gentiles to Christ.
 - This evangelism will be worldwide as the people of Israel are scattered around the world speaking many different languages.
 - For the Gentiles, the period immediately following the Rapture will be a time of political revival of the ancient Roman Empire.

- This is prophesied in Dan 2 with the feet of iron and clay and again in Rev 7 with the ten-horned beast.
- Rev 13 indicates that the Roman Empire will be revived in the form of a ten nation union.
- When these ten nations are banded together, a ruler will emerge as described by the little horn of Dan 7:8.
- This ruler will take control of the empire and will work together with the worldwide church to gain world power.
- The Period of Peace
 - According to Dan 9:27, this Roman “prince” will make a covenant with Israel for a seven year period.
 - The details of this covenant are not given in Scripture, but it is implied that it will provide protection for Israel.
 - During this time of peace the apostate church will continue to grow in power and will attain worldwide religious domination.
 - At the same time, Jewish evangelists will continue to win many people to Christ around the world.
 - Some Hebrews, however, will not believe in Jesus and will return to Orthodox Judaism.
 - As is implied by Dan 9:27 and 12:11, these Orthodox Jews will resume the Levitical sacrificial system in the third temple which will have been rebuilt in Jerusalem.
 - This period of peace will be rudely interrupted when Israel is attacked by a coalition of armies from areas we now know as Russia, Turkey, Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia and Libya (Ezek 38-39).
 - Israel, apparently lulled into a false sense of security by the covenant, is caught off guard by the attack.
 - God Himself secures the victory for Israel over the invading armies (Ezek 38:18-23).
- The Period of Persecution
 - The destruction of these armies brings about a dramatic change in the balance of power in the world.
 - The Roman prince (Antichrist) seizes this opportunity to declare himself a world dictator.
 - He seizes control...
 - ✦ Politically (Rev 13:7).
 - ✦ Economically (Rev 13:16-17).
 - ✦ Religiously (Rev 13:8, 12; 2 Thess 2:4).
 - This begins the portion of the Tribulation which is known as the Great Tribulation (Matt 24:21; Rev 7:14).
 - Jesus warned Israel that when Antichrist displays himself as being God and puts an end to sacrifice, they should flee to the mountains to avoid the coming tribulation (Matt 24:15-21).
 - This period of persecution will last for 3 ½ years and will be time when Israel will be under intense persecution.

- Because of this persecution, God will put His seal upon the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev 7:4), thus protecting them from physical harm.
- During the Great Tribulation God intensifies His wrath upon the earth to punish the nations and bring Israel to repentance.
- There will be wars, pestilence, famines, stars falling from heaven, earthquakes, demon possessions, natural disruptions resulting in large numbers of fatalities, etc.
- Jesus declared that this period will be so severe that were it not cut short, mankind would be destroyed (Matt 24:21-22).
- When Jesus comes at the 2nd Advent armies from around the world will be gathered together at Armageddon to make war against Him and His army (Rev 16:16; 19:19).
- Jesus Christ will achieve the greatest military victory in history when He crushes Antichrist and his armies (Rev 19:20-21).
- Questions
 - What does the parable of the tares teach about the general character of the period between the first and second comings of Christ?

 - Name the other six parables in Matthew 13 and indicate their general teachings.

 - Taken as a whole, what does Matthew 13 teach concerning the entire period between the first and second comings of Christ?

 - Does Matthew 13 give any justification for teaching postmillennialism?

 - What are the signs of the end of the age in Matthew 24?

- After the Rapture occurs, what three major periods follow which lead up to the second coming of Christ to set up His kingdom?

- In what sense will the “church” be on the earth after the Rapture?

- What will be the situation for the unbelieving “church”, Israel and the Gentiles in the period of preparation which follows the Rapture?

- What will be Israel’s important role in the period of preparation?

- What important political events will take place in the period of preparation?

- Describe the situation for Israel and the “world church” during the period of peace following the signing of the covenant.

- What will disrupt the relative tranquility at the end of the period of peace?

- Describe the sudden change as the period of persecution begins in relation to Israel, the world and the “world church”.

- What judgments will God pour out on the world during the period of persecution?

- Describe the final, gigantic world war.

- In light of the world preparation for these events, what is indicated about the imminence of the Rapture?