

Rapture Anxiety

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman explores the complexities of the rapture and encourages believers to focus on spiritual readiness amidst varying interpretations and societal challenges.

Duration: 1:07:19

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:13

Topics: "Spiritual Readiness", "Rapture"

Description

Shane Idleman addresses the complexities of 'Rapture Anxiety,' emphasizing the various interpretations of the rapture and the tribulation. He uses the analogy of a puzzle to illustrate how different theological views can lead to confusion, yet he encourages believers to focus on practical applications of faith in their daily lives. Idleman stresses the importance of being prepared spiritually, regardless of differing eschatological views, and highlights the need for a genuine relationship with God to alleviate anxiety about the future. He calls for believers to engage in prayer and remain humble and teachable as they navigate these challenging times.

Transcript

Very biblical, and we're going to look at that here, and I had to take out some pages because it's like, how big do you, I mean, there's pre-trib, there's post-trib, there's mid-trib, I mean, you're out of here before the tribulation, the middle of the tribulation, after the tribulation, then there's the preterist view, there's the partial preterist view, there's the all-millennial view, it's like, whoosh, boom, and I've been studying this, like many of you, for 23 years now, I've read books on it, up to here, and the issue is, the best illustration I can give, my daughter, my daughter, Gracie, loves to do puzzles, and she does them quickly, and she'll pour out, you know, let's say a thousand piece puzzle, and you know, a couple days, she's, you know, she's, it's kind of coming together, but without the view of that photo, or the puzzle on the box, we're all guessing, I think it's mountains with, I don't know, and then so, no, I think that's maybe the beach, and the sun, and so that's kind of why this is a difficult topic, because we know there's a catching away, we know Jesus is coming again, but how people use different pieces of the puzzle, you know, from Daniel 9, for example, or in Matthew, the sign of the times, and some of the things already did happen in 70 AD, and some of them are coming, and but this is how I view it, and then we read Revelation through the lens of maybe Old Testament imagery, and maybe too much with that lens, but then some people don't read it at all, and it becomes an actual literal, the devil is literally bound by a chain, or a literal thousand years, and so that's why there's a lot of nuances, and a lot of puzzle pieces, and I do believe, though, as we progress,

more puzzle pieces are added to the picture, because we definitely have a much bigger view, or I should say, a much clearer view than Christians did 100 years ago.

I mean, to me, the biggie, when Israel became a nation again, wow, and 100 years ago, they're like, how is the whole world gonna see this, or how's the whole world, that's impossible, well, now we see it's not impossible, and I just came across a picture from a revival book I was reading, I want to put that up there, 120 years ago, Jesus is coming soon, and we're still saying Jesus is coming soon, and they talked about the rapture 120 years ago, some of these people actually sold everything, and downscaled, and lived in little huts, and in communities on the mountains, waiting for the rapture, and here we are, 120 years later, and so not poking fun, I'm just saying there's always been that sense of immediacy, you know, even in Paul's day, and here we are, 2,000 years later, so, and you've heard me say this, any time great men of God are divided on a non-essential, I kind of hold my opinions loosely, because they all have great points, some have better points than the others, some are a far stretch for me, preterism, or post, or not, I'm sorry, I just said both of them, preterism, and amillennialism, and again, I don't know, part of me, you know, I can go through all these, we can take hours, but then I've got this person on the front row, their marriage is falling apart, we've got this person committing suicide, we've got this person, and if there's not practical application to what we're going through today, and a lot of it, quite frankly, is over the heads of many people, it's like, well, that sounds impressive, what does it mean?

Well, I don't really know what it means for us today, I just know what they believed at this time, so I'm trying to bring in a lot of practical application, but give you, you know, kind of the biblical sense, and I get a little frustrated, even on our own radio network, when they say, you know, this is exactly how it's going to happen, I don't know about that, because we don't know for certain, that's why there are different views, and how you read the scripture, if you're a Greek scholar, and you can actually read the Greek language, you're going to understand things a little bit better, or Hebrew, and you understand the Hebrew, and the Daniel 9s, and the nuances, Ezekiel, and the Magogs, and the Gogs, and see where Russia and China, you know, is, and there's a lot of things there that you can kind of speculate, people speculate who the Antichrist is, and that word Antichrist actually isn't in the book of Revelation, and I don't even know if it's for a one person, it's the mini Antichrist, the Antichrist spirit, and then you get into Revelation, the beast, and the man of sin, and perdition, and all these different terms for possibly the same person, but let me just clarify a few things for you, pre-tribulation means after Christians are raptured with the Lord in the air, we will go to heaven for seven years, after seven years, Christ will come down to earth to defeat the Antichrist, that's what most people are, pre-tribulation, and it started, you know, and as best as I can, I've tried to look at both sides, I don't have any axe to grind either way, honestly, but it did start, a lot of it started with the Schofield Reference Bible, talking about the rapture, there is an earlier church father who mentioned, you know, this view, but for the most part, up until the 1800s, people would hold to, in the church, a post-tribulation view, that Jesus is coming back after the tribulation, now there's problems with that, there, again, that's why we have different views, and then, of course, you have the mid-tribulation, I didn't put that in there, but it's where we will be taken out about halfway through this seven-year period, what's a seven-year period?

Well, welcome to my world of trying to figure out what we're going to talk about this morning, because we can go to Daniel 9 and hang out there for an hour and a half, or we can, you know, so, and as we go through, I'm going to try to bring in things that are applicable as we're going through the book of Revelation, because Revelation isn't necessarily in chronological order perfectly, it talks about different things in different seasons, and then post-tribulation, the rapture, meaning when the church is taken up,

occurs at the end of the tribulation, when the church meets Christ in the air, and here's the hard part about a post-trib, is we meet Christ in the air, and then we come right back down to usher in his kingdom, that doesn't make a lot of sense to me, however, I think I shared on

Facebook, Luke did a video on it before, I've heard it before, where being caught up in the clouds is not necessarily physical clouds, it's imagery, in other words, we're going to be caught up with Jesus somehow, and we're going to conquer with him and stay here, we're not going up at the tribulation, and I can show you lots of verses on either side, and people, what they do is they weigh all the different verses, and they come up with their conclusion, and what they think is going to happen, and I'm all for that, I just can't for certain say exactly, here's how it's going to happen, personally, I'm just talking about personally, anytime I read the Bible, and I just, you know, the verses in context, I see it, again, personally, as this cataclysmic event, rapture, Jesus coming, it's one

event, it's hard for me to see he's coming, we go up for seven years, and then he comes back again, however, if you understand that God has to deal with the nation of Israel, depending on if you're a dispensationalist or not, replacement theology, and the churches replace Israel, God doesn't have a plan for Israel anymore, there's another view, I mean, how many skins of the onion here are we going to unravel, because I found that the majority of us, 90% of you, just need some practical application, I need some help paying the bills, I need my marriage to come back together, I need to be filled with God's spirit, I need to know him better, and so that's why it was hard to choose what to talk about, and I don't want to promote one view over the other, I want to share all of what the

scripture teaches, and that's kind of where I, just when I read the Bible, I see this, we're waiting for this one cataclysmic event, however, there are problems with that view as well, and so I'm just here, like many of you, are you ready, is the question, I mean, that is a big question, are you ready, and while you're waiting, are you humble, and teachable, and broken, and contrite, and being used of God, I kid you not, I've been in two, three hour meetings, I won't call them meetings, arguments on this topic, anybody else, come on, I know you're not being honest, and I leave this person's house, I'm like, I am so frustrated, why did I even waste three hours, now you might say, well, it's not wasting, true, if there's healthy dialogue, iron sharpens iron, and you truly, but at some

point, it gets exhausting, because they have their view, I don't quite agree with it, or you, and then at what point do you say, you know what, let's see how it all pans out, pan tribulationist, let's see how it pans out, and one thing I've heard over the years, is for the rapture view, before the tribulation, and that might happen, I'm praying for that, amen, amen, and the reason is, because when God pours out the bold judgments, the seals are broken, the trumpet, and all these things happen, we're like, there's no way we're here, which if God doesn't preserve us, of course we're not, because we're not, and people say, we're not appointed unto wrath, but I think that scripture is out of context, because appointed unto wrath, if you read it in the verse, has to deal with the judgment of

God at the end, but we're not going to be reaping God's judgment either, God can preserve us, nevertheless, Jeremiah suffered through God's judgment of the nation, Daniel suffered through God's judgment of the nation, Ezekiel suffered through God's judgment of the nation, but he will preserve his people, and my view has always been, and I did change it up, I told you guys last week, you know, I don't want to tell my kids that, and I used to say, you know, I don't want to tell my kids you'll be out of here before it gets bad, and because many of you who believe in the rapture, you are also teaching your kids to get through trials, and get through difficulties, you might even lose your life for your faith, so what I meant

to say, and what I'm saying now is, I don't want to tell people, this

church, or my kids, you will not see the antichrist, you will not see this one world system, you will not have experienced these bold judgments, or the trial, you will not, because I can't say that with all certainty, now I know God will preserve you, I know that God's got your back, I know that all these incredible things throughout Revelation, if you read it, are for unbelievers, they will cry out, they will try to hide even in the clefts of the rock, oh Babylon, that great, would you come out of for my people, what does that have to do with, if we're not here, maybe it has to do with Israel, so there's so many nuances, but people used to say, you know Shane, the church has to be removed, then the world will finally be ready for a one world leader, and I said no, I just went through

COVID with many of you, and the world is ready now for a one world leader, we don't have to wait, give me a break, give me a break, the world is ready now, you have one more pandemic, and you all, and people are gonna, are gonna be ready for one world leader, did you guys catch that word?

Okay, so it's just gonna take one more, whether it's radiation, whether it's some other virus, and now they're screaming for a one world leader, so I don't think the church has to be out of here at all, now they may, but you can see now, where there's, there's challenges in, in all of these things, and I think God allows us some variant, and not variances, but allows us, like Paul said, we see through things dimly now, you know, we don't, we don't quite understand everything fully, and that's, but we do see things going to that one world system, and that mark of the beast that I'll be going through as we continue through Revelation, and I think I tried to explain it well, or try to explain a while back, but I didn't explain too well, what's happening with Target, Budweiser, I mean, how many other places?

Who else?

Kohl's, I mean, and there's something, the ESG number is what I was missing last time, it's, it's the, it's your, it's your score on the environment, how a corporation treats the environment, how a corporation treats the social issues of the day, LGBTQ, and then the last one is governmental compliance, and so you've got these big, huge, trillion dollar companies that were really overseeing, hey, Target, we're not going to invest in you, hey, Budweiser, we're not going to invest in you, because your score is really low here, you're not doing what we want you to do, Dodgers, we will, and so that's where you hear, I think it's Blackstone, or Vanguard, these huge funds, they're actually in control, and so Target says, hey, we'll take a hit, or Budweiser will take a hit, if after the course of

a year or so, we're higher up on the credit score, yes, we might have lost money, but now we've got these multi-trillion dollar companies investing into us, and that's how it's working, that's what's going on, and also the world economic forum, and Charles Schwab, what's his name, Klaus Schwab, and dangerous things these people are saying, George Soros, just saying these words might ban this YouTube video, I don't know, so that's why we're on Rumble now, by the way, hello, Rumble, for now, anyway, right, but that's what, and the great reset, Charlie Kirk has talked about this, Jack Hibbs has talked about this, one of the things, I'll be at Turning Point USA in September in San Diego, and they'll be talking about this, and it's all, it's all legitimate, it's all, it's not conspiracy

theories, isn't it funny, everything I was labeled for as a conspiracy theory, this theory was three years ago, is now true, come on, I mean, think about it, all of us, everything, Russia, and Trump, and Biden's laptop, and the vaccine, it's all, well, I don't think so, because that's how they have to silence the truth, they, you cannot have opposing views, they won't allow you to have opposing views, silencing, so you can definitely

see, and it's going quickly, where we can easily see where we'll be under a one-world type of, that's what it's moving towards, have you seen in China, the social credit score, you have your little phone, and if you comply with the government, you have a high score, and if you don't, you get a low score, and even in America now, I think they're wanting to

charge you more for your energy, if you have a better credit score, what, it's just, it's just everything is being, being just totally conformed to this antichrist one-world system, and so we need to be prepared, and not like an ostrich, what does an ostrich do, sticks its head in the sand, and I've literally, you, I would love to show the email sometimes, but I don't want to give these people any props, but you know, brother man, you need to stop wasting your time talking about this, revelation, we're almost out of here, we just need to prepare, we're just, any day now, Jesus is going to suck us up in the air, they were saying that 120 years ago, in the books I read, it's amazing, any day now, any day, even Chuck Smith, I think he changed his view, and I love these people, but they said

he will come by 1982, because the rebuilding of Jerusalem, or Israel, becoming a nation again, one generation, 40 years, and that didn't happen, but then you read people like D.A.

Carson, incredible theologian, and when Jesus is talking about this generation, this generation, he said if it applies to us, then it's the only place in all of the New Testament where it's an audience shift, Jesus is talking to that generation, not to us 2,000 years later, and so man, I've thrown books, I'll confess, I'm reading, I'm like just what, this guy says this, this guy says this, but when I read it, I can see how Jesus said this generation shall see these signs, not one stone will be left upon another, and that's clearly Titus conquering Jerusalem in 70 AD, nobody will dispute that, but then you read a different gospel account, and it looks like he's asking Jesus three different questions, and when will be the sign of your coming?

Oh, that could be 2,000 years later, okay, but if you read in Luke, it sounds like it's one question, but Matthew makes it sound, so hmm, that's interesting, so I got to a point where, you know what, are you ready? I'm preparing the church for battle, spiritual battle, whether you're out of here or you're not, are you ready? Because that's what matters, as things get more difficult, answering, because maybe in the church I was raised in, it was very pre-trib, dispensational, I can cover those terms later, and it was always, it was kind of like, don't worry about tomorrow, we're out of here pretty soon, so no need to get politically active, no need to run for school boards, no need to, you know, let's just, any day now, any day now, and that will make you a little lazy, but can we just be frank?

And I don't want to have that type of atmosphere, or I don't think it's healthy, I don't think it's biblical, and we're supposed to continually be vigilant, and there are people here with different views, even our eldership team would disagree with my view, but we have cordial conversations, and they've got great points, and they understand that we just don't know for certain, and maybe they take a stronger stance on their view, and again, I'm just like you, I'm ready for whatever God wants to do, I see the pitfalls in some of these views, and I see the strength in some of the other views, so we can't say with certainty, so hopefully that makes it clear, but let's talk about the rapture, the comfort of Christ's coming, 1st Thessalonians 4, 13 through 18, so Paul is saying, I do not want

you to be ignorant, brethren, which tells me there's, they were having a dialogue about this topic in the church, and I think it's three or four other places Paul says, I don't want you to be ignorant, definitely about spiritual gifts, for sure, and then also on this point, now don't worry about those who have fallen asleep, which means they have passed away, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope, so oh, so they're

actually waiting for Christ's return, people have died, and they're like, did they miss it, and they're really getting worked up over this, so Paul says, no, don't fret like others who have no hope, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus, so whether we're alive or whether they are dead, it doesn't matter

to God, they will be taken up, the Bible never says the death of the unbeliever is sleep, think about this, you hear soul sleep, I'm just going to go to sleep, all these actors, oh, just when I go to sleep forever, anytime the Bible talks about this kind of sleep is for a believer, why, because what often is sleep is rest, correct, when we rest, we have peace, there's comfort there, but when it comes to an unbeliever, you'll never find where it talks about them sleeping, they actually will, there's judgment, or there's the abyss, or hell, again, Gehenna, Sheol, and all these terms that maybe at some point we'll get to, but there's a place where the unbelieving go to wait their judgment, for the believer though, it is rest, and peace, and comfort, for this we say to you by the word of the

Lord, now, this is interesting, he's not saying, you know, Paul says this, and he's saying, we say this to you by the word of the Lord, which makes us think that Jesus might have actually said these words, that he who, that he who are, oh, I'm sorry, that we who are alive, and we remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep, now, Paul said this 2,000 years ago, he said, we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep, for the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, and this is another, this is the reason why I have a problem with the secret rapture idea, this is not very secret, this is like Paul and the brother of Damascus, all of them heard the voice, maybe not specifically, Paul

heard the specific, but it was this wake-up call, and he will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and with a trumpet, in this sense, the enemy panics, but we rejoice, big difference, that's why the world does not, that's why the world has rapture anxiety, that's why they fear, and they have this pending doom on their lives, and that last trumpet, they panic, but we rejoice, all three, the shout, the voice, the trumpet, and may refer to the same sound, other people say it refers to different things, I don't know, I just have to read what's in front of me, but it sounds like it will be pretty obvious that he is returning, but then some people say, no, only the believers hear the shout, and the trumpet, I don't know how you would

come up with that one, contextually it says that this, it appears to be this incredible cataclysmic event, where Jesus is coming, the trumpet descending from heaven, with the shout that the whole world can hear, and the dead in Christ will rise first, that's interesting, then we who are alive, remember 2,000 years ago this was written, we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them, and I think a lot of us, the reason I like this view, and still do, I love the view, I hope it's true, man, if I can just be caught up, no pain and death, no cancer, no going through hospice for a year, I'm just like, hey, here we are, I'm up there, wow, that's a way to go, I like this, and I'm out of here before the bull judgment, and the seals are broken, and the trumpet judge, oh man, I

love this, so some of it does kind of, you know, we kind of tend to believe the things we like, now again, it could happen that way, and that would be great, but we do know that those who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, so again, some say clouds are not literal clouds, and if you could talk about a procession of the military, how they would wait outside of a city, and they would come and bring the military in after the people were prepared, and okay, maybe, and it could be literal clouds, reading the context, it seems like there is a, the word caught up means a catching

up, a strong action, so again, contextually, it looks like there's a catching up, and so he said, we will be with the Lord, therefore, comfort one

another with these words, comfort one another with these words, and so some would say, we are waiting for the return of Jesus, we're not waiting for a great tribulation, and that's a good point for the, forget all these views, for the pre-tribulation view, that you're out of here before the tribulation, that's a good point, because as Christians, we are believing, we're waiting for his return, we're not waiting for some tribulation, ah, for a while, and then his return, so hey, more points to you on that side, I like that side too, by the way, I just have nightmares of people going, you told me we wouldn't see the Antichrist, and clearly, this guy's ruling over the world, well, that's not the time to change your theology, folks, could that be part of the great falling away, that all these

people are trusting in this opinion, and not the absolute truth, maybe, could it be that God gave them up to a strong delusion, the Bible also talks about that, that's clearly happening now, I mean, delusional, DMV, you can't list all these genders, and I love it, I love it on Amazon, you know, have the shirt, you know, there's 21 genders, right, you can pick, pick, you know, large, extra large, small, and that says male or female, you want the male version of the female version of the shirt that says there's tons of genders, wait a minute, why not all the different, because see, they would sell no shirts, it's just, it's ludicrous, we're deluded, the Dodgers have lost their mind, I shared a video on Facebook inside of our state capitol in Sacramento last week, the same man dressed up as

a woman, none, whatever, and everybody of the senators just, oh, look at this wonderful, oh, this is so glorious, no, that's perverted, it's filthy, it's ungodly, you have, you have been taken away by a strong delusion, oh my goodness, and I know Scott Wilk, I'm going to email him the sermon, you say, I'm going to tell him, you send this to all those, those blue Democrats up there that are saying this kind of filthy stuff, brother, that's not tolerance, right, we're not supposed to tolerate evil, wake up, read the word of God, but then outside the capitol, praise God, there are Christians singing worship songs, what a contrast, what a contrast, and during word commentary said this, some believe that they now have temporary bodies and await this resurrection, oh, I should put this in

context, so people are wondering, you know, if they died, if they died already, what happened to their body, that's a good question, right, well, some believe there's temporary bodies and they await the resurrection, others believe that they are now disembodied spirits who wait for the resurrection, not sure about that one, just disembodied spirit sounds weird, still others think that dead in Christ experienced their resurrected bodies immediately, and I've had hour-long discussions on this topic, too, I say, I don't know, the Bible says when we're gone, we're in the presence of Christ, I don't know what we look like, don't worry about it, sometimes you ever think we just worry too much about it, we have to know exactly how it's all gonna pan out, pan tribulation, we gotta know how the

body, and then I get the question, what about if we're cremated, wow, that's a, yeah, I don't think God could work around that one, that's a good point, well, yeah, I would not worry about it, burial, cremation, and, but it's a legitimate question, right, we have to face that question, I think God can bring back all the particles and the atoms and reconstruct, plus, is it, you know, the body's one thing, but it's the actual spirit that lives forever, it's not the bodies that's important, it's the spirit man, and that doesn't die, that doesn't go away, that can't be evaporated in a big 1500 Fahrenheit stove, that stays, and there are, of course, I don't want to get into the pros and cons of the different ways, burial or cremation, but to me it seems, biblically speaking, people were

buried, but then now with all the chemicals they use, and the things getting crowded, and the urn is easier, you deal with that, you take it to the Lord, I don't, I haven't even thought about it yet, I really don't want to, but there will come a day when in God's eternal plan, again, reading from Enduring Word Commentary, I don't even know if I have this up there, because I just added this yesterday morning, this, there will come a day when in God's eternal plan, the dead in Christ will receive their resurrected bodies, yet until that day, we are confident that the dead in Christ are not in some kind of soul sleep or suspended animation.

Paul made it clear that to be absent from the body means to be present with the Lord, 2 Corinthians 5.8. So I, that's, that's pretty clear.

As soon as we're absent from the body, in some way or fashion, we are present with the Lord. There's no, like, medium spot where you're just, you know, floating over Jupiter for a while, or waiting, there's a, there's that immediate, thank God for that. The verb translated caught up means to seize or to carry off by force.

There's this notion of a, a sudden taking away, usually by force again. This passage is the basis for the New Testament doctrine of the rapture, the catching away of believers to be with Jesus. The word rapture is not in the ancient Greek, like I told you before.

It comes from the Latin vulgate, which translates into the phrase caught up with rapturus. So that's where we get our word rapture from. And you will run into those people.

You know, rapture is not even in the Bible. And you can tell them, neither is the word Bible in the Bible. Neither is the word trinity in the Bible.

There's a, there's a lot of words we use to understand theology that aren't necessarily in the Bible itself, that exact word. But here's, here's just four fundamental keys to remember about the rapture. This will help you.

Number one, say together, there is no fear on the winning side. You don't have to have rapture anxiety unless you're on the wrong side. How do I know? Do you have a lot of anxiety about it? Do you not know where you might be going? Do you not know if you really have a genuine relationship with Jesus? And we see this a lot.

See, the American church is different than the underground church in China or in the Middle East or, or, you know, and I follow certain people and groups and, and you see in the American church, a lot of people are in the church, in the church, a lot of them are kind of worried. They don't really know where they're going. In the underground church, you've already made that decision.

You're going to die, constantly die for your faith. Nine times out of 10, that's a solid, genuine, legitimate believer. I mean, there's no playing games with that.

But the American church, we can kind of ride in on the coattails of others. We can come in and hear music, sing music, hear a message and leave thinking we have that relationship with God. But all we have is head knowledge.

All we have is religion. We have no relationship with him. And so that's why people are fearful.

Now be encouraged. Sometimes fear will grip the best of us. It's part of our fallen nature.

You know, I can be going great for a month or two and I'm like, oh man, that fear hits and, and doubt kind of hits. And you just take those thoughts captive. It's a fiery dart to the enemy.

And as soon as you take those thoughts captive and start to regain that, that spiritual strength, it all makes sense because we're not believing, just hocus pocus, made up stuff. Like I watched a documentary recently on Scientology. I'm like, how in the world? This book by L. Ron Hubbard.

And it's like, now that, yeah, let me just not go there. Or even if you read the book of Mormon and you see that it's either Joseph Smith or Jesus Christ, they both can't be right. And so you read, it's like, how do you believe these things? Where with the Bible historically, archeologically, prophetically, scientifically, there's so much truth in it because it's God's truth.

And it's a clear line of demarcation in the sand of what is true and what is not. So no fear on the winning side. Determine this morning that you are on the winning side.

The Bible never gives us any type of leeway for waiting, procrastination. Show me a verse that encourages procrastination. That has to do with following God.

There are some about, you know, not awakening love too soon before it's time and things like that. But trusting in God, there's no verses supporting procrastination. Number two, trust God regardless of the outcome.

Trust God regardless of the outcome. Boy, I didn't know it was going to work out like this. I remember in the 1980s, I think 90s, when I came back to the Lord late, 1999, you know, the big thing was, you don't hear too much about it, it could be true, the revived Roman Empire.

And they think the one world religion could be Roman Catholicism. But then that was challenged by, it could be, you know, Jihad Muslim because beheading. And so there's things that we just like, look, that isn't quite working out like I thought, or this has changed since then.

But the key is trust God regardless of the outcome, knowing that we don't see things clearly, we don't know how it's all going to work out at all. And there's another position out there where they actually believe that things are getting better. And we will usher in the millennial reign of Christ as things get better.

And that we're actually in the millennial now, all millennialism. It's not, doesn't mean there's no millennium, it means we're in it now. Sam Storm broke that down, Sam Storm's on the podcast I did with him a couple months ago.

I have some questions about it, not don't quite agree with a lot of things. But boy, these guys are smart, and they think it through. It's not some pie in the sky thing.

So listen to that podcast if you want to get more information on that. And that would be nice, wouldn't it? Christianizing the world, it's getting better. But now you see, and that's why they call it dominionism.

Because then there's those who believe that we have to be more involved in politics. We have to do all these things. We have to get so involved in the seven mountains of influence, because that will usher in God's kingdom.

So they're very active on getting God's Word out there. And then you have those who are very passive, and they don't want to, they just want to wait and don't want to do anything. And I'm hoping there's a

happy medium, you know, of doing business till he returns, exposing the unfruitful works of darkness, getting on the school boards and telling these clowns that this is a joke, this is perversion, how dare you allow this in our schools.

Would somebody please run for the Senate in California and try to make a difference? We need a lot more people up there wanting to actually make a difference. Oh, but Shane, we can't really do anything. Well, you plus God is the majority.

I don't want to listen to Debbie Doubters. I want to listen to those who believe God and His Word. And yes, it might get more challenging.

It might get more just chaotic. We don't know, but that's why number two, trust God regardless of the outcome. And isn't that true? Once we have, you know, I think it's going to happen exactly like this.

And then when my bubble is burst, we tend to get discouraged and defeated. This happened, it's still happening. You know, so many people that were counting on 2020 and that election and what happened.

It's like, oh, their whole world fell apart versus, hey, I think God knows. I don't think God was caught off guard. I don't know.

I don't think he was caught off guard on that one. I don't think he was. I think he allowed some things to happen and may continue to.

I don't know. 2024, don't even get me started. But we can't keep putting, I think it's teaching the church, stop putting your trust in men and in movements and in political parties, trusting God.

We are promised peace as well as, uh oh, I didn't want to put that word in there. Number three, we are promised peace as well as pain. Let's not forget that.

Help me remember who said in this world, you will have tribulation. Jesus. He didn't say in this world, you have your best life now.

He said, you will have peace and pain. Number four, be open, teachable, and humble. Oh man, I wish I could camp out there for a while.

Open, teachable, and humble when it comes to end times theology. You have to stay in this spot of being teachable and humble, especially as more things begin to develop. And I think the next slide we have up there, Thessalonians 2, but it was going to start getting a little confusing.

It wasn't really applicable right now. And so I'm going to fast forward, if you can, a few slides over to the one titled the throne room of heaven. The throne room of heaven, Revelation 4.1. There we go.

That was quick. So now, why am I talking about the rapture? Well, here's why. What have we been talking about for a few months? The churches.

The church, you know, my letter to the church, Jesus is speaking to the church in this area, this area, all up in Asia Minor. So now, chapters one, it was an introduction, chapter two, chapter three of the churches. Now chapter four, the churches are never ever mentioned again in the book of Revelation.

It's more written to a Jewish type of audience. The 144,000, and God dealing with Israel, the great harlot, the woman that's giving birth, and there's a lot. It's definitely Jewish in nature.

So what people say is because the church is no longer mentioned anymore, that means it's because they were raptured up. Now, okay, interesting, possibly, but to say that's why, I can't for the life of me say that. That's called eisegesis.

Speaking into the text, something that's not there. Now, what a person should say is, hey, this is interesting. This is a possibility.

Okay, I can go along with you on that, but to say this is the proof text, one of the proof texts for the rapture, I think we got to be very, very careful. Because if that's the case, where do we stop? I mean, we can say, oh, this is a proof text for this. This is a proof.

Now it's interesting, it's possible, but there's no way that I can come up with that conclusion. So the throne room now, after the letter to the churches, now in Revelation 4, the writer of Revelation, John, says, after these things, what things? After these things, obviously, these letters to the churches, behold, a door standing open in heaven. So he was taken up in the spirit.

After he wrote these things, now I'm going to write to you these things. There's a door open in heaven. It's like when they would have a vision.

And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, come up here. So John is coming up here. Is he literally coming up? Is he coming up in the spirit? Does it look like the vision, like he's coming up to the throne room of God? Who knows? That's why there's commentaries.

And that's why they all come up with different things. It's funny, one commentary I was looking at considering is the one in when, I think it's Thessalonians, where it talks about when that which is restrained is removed. There's like 15 different ideas of what that is.

And so that's what commentaries, they try to offer a little commentary and try to give us, and I love commentaries, but you just have to, you have to remember that's what they are. There's somebody commenting on their view of the Bible. It's not necessarily, it's not in par with scripture.

And so he said, come up here and I will show you things which must take place after this. So I don't know why he couldn't just show him now, or he had to come up, and then now I'm going to show you things that must take place after this. So what must take place after this? Does that mean now it's for us 2,000 years later? Or is John writing to his contemporaries? And what's going to happen here fairly soon? See, that's what I'm telling you.

It gets very challenging. But he says, come up here. So I don't know if he could resist it, or could he allow himself, or could he just shut it down? I don't know, but there, I do know this, there is always an invitation with God.

There is always an invitation. So for you this morning, practical application, is God distant? Then press in. Is your life falling apart? Then pursue him.

There's always an invitation. Come up here. If you want this to change in your life, come up here, make this decision, make this change, humble yourself and repent.

Do something about it. Have some practical application in this. And again, I just talked about what must take place after this.

How long is after this? Well, if we read it like most people do, we're still waiting for those things to happen. And that could possibly be Revelation 4, 2 through 5. So as soon as this call went out, immediately I was in the Spirit. Uh-oh, we're going to get charismatic.

Everybody, let's stop for a minute, put on your seatbelt. Put on your seatbelt, sit down, hold on, buckle up. Don't worry, I'm not going to get weird because I'm only going to tell you what the Scripture says.

Immediately I was in the Spirit. So he was not in the Spirit, and then he is in the Spirit. Anybody have kids? Have you ever been in the Spirit and out of the Spirit real quick? Let's be honest.

It happens, right? I leave church, man, I'm just so full, I'm singing hymns, I'm doing this, and then I get home and they didn't take out the trash, the dogs got into it, there's poopy diaper on the carpet, and this, and like, what happened? I was just in the Spirit, and now I'm in the flesh. So when I'm in the flesh, what comes out? Anger, pride, right? Get my phone, I'm going to text Morgan. Good job not putting the dogs out.

Did I have to do that? No. Pride, right? In the Spirit, out of the Spirit. Now, this could have a deeper meaning, I think, of course, and when, you know, when, especially when there's times of just fasting and prayer, and there's this powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit, you know, even like the day of Pentecost, that was something clearly profound.

So what is in the Spirit? Basically, it's, biblically speaking, if we took time, we could walk through the different mentions of it, but it's walking in the Spirit. It's walking in the Spirit and it produces the fruit of the Spirit. So we can have something happen, let's say, I'm on my way home, flat tire.

Oh, Lord, maybe you want me to meet somebody. Maybe you need me to do something. I just want the joy and love and peace.

No, I'm probably not going to get a flat tire. This is a good analogy for all of you, right? But it's that choice to make. Okay, things aren't going my way.

It's choosing to walk in the Spirit, love and joy and peace and contentment, gentleness, long-suffering, versus choosing to engage in the flesh. And in Galatians, Paul will talk about it. Read the book of Galatians, even 1 Corinthians, where Paul talks about, we have this war inside of us, and if we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

But this, obviously, it seems to be a little bit more. He was having this encounter with God. And I believe some people have had that, and some people continue to, where I've read stories, incredible stories of people after a long fast, and just, and the presence of Christ is there, and it's just this incredible experience that happened to them.

They were in the Spirit. Basically, the strength on the inside is greater than the pressure on the outside. We have a perfect example of this in the news recently, don't we? That's what happened with that submarine.

The strength on the inside was not greater than the pressure on the outside, and it imploded. And that's what a believer has to have in these times. You're seeing it, you're seeing things, many of you know, if you've been a believer for a while, these are some, the last, you know, five years has been pretty significant.

I mean, I remember even my mom, back in the 80s and 90s, or maybe let's say 80s, and just watching, you know, the Christian television, and you had Pat Robertson on, and you know, they had the moral majority, and Falwell, and you know, it was difficult times for sure, but nothing like the perversion, and the chaos, and the confusion that we're seeing today, and these major organizations, and what they're trying to do, and reset everything, and global currency, and digital currency, and what's that going to look like? So this is the time, and that's why what we do at Westside, is we want the strength in the inside to be greater than the pressure on the outside. That's the only way we are going to get through these difficult times, and he goes on to say, and he who sat there was like Jasper, and Sardis stone in appearance, and there was a rainbow around the throne in appearance like an emerald. So a good reminder, what is the real meaning of the rainbow? The real meaning of the rainbow is because of human pride, God had to judge the world, and then he gave that a sign in the sky, and said, I will no longer judge the nation because of their pride this way.

I will no longer flood the earth. It's a problem. I will do other things, but I will no longer flood the earth, and that's a reminder, and tell us maybe it doesn't make a lot of sense, but can you imagine the first rainfall after you got off the ark? Think like, is it raining, thundering, and the lightning, oh there's the rainbow, thank God.

I mean that probably for decades, or who knows hundreds of years, just a reminder. Okay, God's not going to do that again. That's what it is.

You're recapturing the rainbow. The rainbow is a wonderful symbol. It's just so ironic that it's a symbol of, I'm not going to judge in that way anymore because of your pride, and now because of our pride, we want to flaunt this rainbow.

I mean it's like, talk about calling good evil and evil good. That's exactly what is happening. I'm unapologetic of that.

Shane, but you might offend people. Well, I'd rather not offend God. I don't know about you, because I truly believe we can, if we cater church to just not offending people, we will ultimately offend God.

Now, we are here for any type of person, any type of struggle, but we will not capitulate and bow down to the current woke-ism. It just, it won't happen. No matter how much your pressure is, the pressure on the inside has to be greater than the pressure on the outside that's coming on us.

Around the throne now, there were 24 thrones, and on the thrones I saw 24 elders sitting, clothed in white robes, and they had crowns of gold on their heads, and this could be a possible reflection of the rewards, the crowns. Have you heard of that band? Remember that band, Casting Crowns? That's where that comes from, this passage. They cast their crowns down before the Lord.

We're not worthy to, don't honor us, don't honor us, because there is rewards for following Jesus, and we're given these crowns, and we don't want these. Who deserves that? Can you imagine? So it's a possible reflection of the rewards, and from this throne proceed lightnings, and thunderings, and voices.

Man, the awesomeness of God.

And again, we don't really take these things too seriously, but can you imagine living out in the wilderness, and not even knowing what lightning was? Not even knowing what thunder was? You would say, God is mad, and the world is going to shake and crack. Have you ever heard the loud, you know, the loud, we don't really have that too much here, but sometimes that loud thundering, and the lightnings, and if you didn't know what that was, and so this is, how else would you explain the awesomeness of God? And seven lamps, a number of completion, a fire were burning before the throne. It could be resembling that of the Holy Spirit, and the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Do you have that fire this morning? Because that's how the pressure on the outside is not going to consume you. The fire of the Spirit that's holding you together, and holding everything together inside of you. And this is the seven spirits of God.

As I talked about before, God doesn't have, the Bible doesn't teach seven different spirits. One spirit of God, but seven is that number of completion, that number of wholeness. I don't know if you've ever studied the numbers of the Bible, but it's it's incredible.

And the Hebrew language, and how each verse begins with a certain numerical value, and spelling out names. It's just, it's mind-blowing. And so again, is the fire burning in your heart? This is a wonderful time to take inventory, because we could end 90% of the counseling appointments today at this church, if the fire was burning within you.

If the fire was burning within you. We could restore so many marriages, if the fire was burning within the person causing the problems. That's what fixes things, that's what restores things.

It doesn't mean things are perfect, but the fire, the pressure on the inside, it must be greater than that on the outside, pressing in. And then Revelation 4, 6 through 8, before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and back.

We had incredible vision, didn't he? And can people still have visions of heaven? Probably so. You know, I'm cautious, but open. Cautious, but open.

I, you know, God's never really given me this powerful vision of heaven. I'm not saying he can't do that, but I think we need to be very careful. Correct? Very careful, because people have some visions of heaven that are not good.

They're just weird and bizarre. And we can't just... See, the Christian community has become so gullible, in one sense. Either we're very standoffish, and we're not open to anything.

Man, brother, God just healed me. Oh, no, he didn't. No, he didn't.

We have the Bible. God doesn't do that anymore. We have the Bible, that's enough.

Or just, man, I was taking a hit. I saw this, really? Really? You saw that in heaven? You saw that that's in heaven? I won't get a lot of detail, but I showed a YouTube clip, and some people weren't happy with it. And, you know, I understand where they're coming from.

But Mario Murillo was talking about these people who talk about, they saw Steve Reeve, you know, the Superman guy flying in heaven, and mountains of jello, and it's like, what the heck? What? Now, they might be sincere, but you can't, we can't just, oh, yeah, and you just be gullible, and suck in all this stuff. Well, God has given us discernment, and wisdom for a reason. And they say all these things that are just so outlandish.

People say, but Shane, you don't know, is that possible? I guess it's possible, but where do we check our brains at the door? The Bible doesn't say anything like that. It says, actually, other things in there. These precious stones, and things, and the gold, and the glass, it's just like crystal, it's amazing.

And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures, full of eyes, and front, and back. The first living creature was like a lion. The second living creature like a calf.

And the third creature like a face, like a man. And the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. Pastor, can you break that down for us? Not really.

Nope. Nope, nope, nope. I cannot.

I can read you a lot of commentaries, and they didn't know quite what to say either. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they did not rest day or night.

What did they say? We are bored. We are bored. No, holy, holy, holy is our God.

Holy, holy, holy is our God. And I remember talking to a person, they called themselves a Christian, and they said, I don't want to just sit around saying, holy is God, and holy is God, and sitting on clouds, that's no fun. Well, I wonder then, where is your faith? Where is your faith? The heaven's going to be the best thing ever.

God knows what's best. But these creatures remind me instantly of Isaiah, I believe it was. And when he said it was in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the entire temple.

And the cherubim were there, and they were six wings, two covered their face. We cannot see the holiness of God, the glory of God. Two covered their feet in just shame and obedience and reverence.

And then with the other two, they flew, and they cried, holy, holy, holy is our God. And Jeremiah said, oh, I am an unclean man, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. And they came, and they touched his lips with the coals, and it took away his sin.

And they say, they see the same thing here. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. Let me drop a truth bomb, if you are ready for it.

Did you know that the number one attribute of God mentioned throughout all the scripture, more than any other, there's not even one in second place, is God's holiness. What about his love? Not even close. Now we know that God is not unequal.

He doesn't have more holiness and less love. All his attributes are evenly distributed. But holiness is mentioned throughout scripture more than any other attribute.

Isn't that interesting? Come out from among them and be holy. For I, your God, am holy. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

Set aside those holy utensils. Set aside the firstborn as holy unto me. The holiness of God.

It's a, that word is so wonderful and so profound. Don't let lukewarm churches discourage you from holiness. Oh, it's one of them holiness churches.

All those holy rollers. All those legalistic, rigid holiness people. Now, it's bad if you get rigid and legalistic and mean-spirited and demanding and forceful, of course, and critical spirit.

But holiness is a beautiful concept. It's, I want to look different than the world so I can be used by God. I'm going to look different and live differently so I have the fire of God burning within me.

Holiness is incredible. And it doesn't, it's not how you look. I see sometimes, you know, the most holy reverend of this some denomination with this hat on, you know, the spike, the big hat and the purple robe.

And oh, he is the most holy. He is the reverend such and such. That's not holiness.

That's weird. That's, that's, that's bizarre. That's, that's not holy.

Holiness is an internal movement of the heart set ablaze for the, with the fire of God. That's holiness. That's holiness.

Because a lot of times when we put it on these images, I don't even know if that person is saved, let alone you're calling them holy. Because how they look in this institutionalized religious system, E.M. Bowne said, holy living is essential preparation for prayer. Do you know you don't pray well because you don't live well? Holiness is essential to prevailing in prayer.

And whenever the living creature, creatures give glory and honor and thanks to God who sits on the throne and he lives forever and ever, the 24 elders fall down before him and they also sit on the throne and they worship him who lives forever and ever and ever. Giving God glory and honor and thanks is very important. Let me remind you what they are before I close.

Glory is the external manifestation of his being. Honor is to give weight or grant a person a position of respect. And thanks is appreciation.

That's how we should come in for worship many times. God, you are glorious. You are worthy.

Your manifest presence can be here with us. And then we want to honor you and give the weight due to your name. We want to come in with thanks and appreciation.

God, we are here because of you. We did not come in wanting to please ourselves. Lord, we want to honor you.

That's why church is about God, not about us. We don't tailor the service for an unbeliever. They come in and they fall down in the holy presence of God because his name is honored, his name is glorified, his name is set high and lifted up.

Are you a worshiper? Are you a worshiper? They fell down in the holy presence of God. They fell down before him and they worshiped him. A worshiper.

We've got a lot of workers in the church, but not a lot of worshipers. A lot of Bible teachers, Bible readers, but not a lot of worshipers. And they cast their crowns before the throne, saying, you are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things and by your will they exist and were created.

Just reminded as I read that sentence, something really stood out. One sign of a true believer, a true pastor, true preacher versus the false is giving God all the credit. They're not trying to build up their empire, their pocketbook.

They give the crown back to Jesus. Nobody is more painfully, painfully aware than me that I should not be up here. Nobody.

Every week people say, oh, your book helped me, your book changed my life. I shouldn't be writing books. I can't even spell well.

What are you talking about? Oh, your sermon. Listen, it's God and God alone. He took a broken, frail, little boy who didn't want to talk in front of people, who wanted to be a people pleaser.

And Jesus said, nope, I'm going to fill you with the fire of the spirit. Get out there, open your mouth and do what I've called you to do. So don't say, oh, Shane, oh great, this is great.

No, no, no. This is what God does. And a person who surrendered to him might not be what I do, but it's going to be what he's called you to do.

No different whatsoever. He gets all the glory and all the credit. The crowns go to his feet.

Absolutely. Casting their crowns is a step of humility, thankfulness, and appreciation. And I want to remind you with this closing statement, you will not find heaven on earth until you find grace.

Anybody recognize that lyric? Yes. Richard, it's part of his song. You will not find heaven on earth until you find grace.

So I will leave you with that. Are you truly ready? Are you truly ready? Guys, are you? We just found out this week as well. Billionaire's wealth couldn't save his life.

Nothing, nothing, our status, our money, nothing, nothing can save us except the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Are you ready? And I want to just spark your hunger for prayer like none other, because that is the pressure on the inside. This is how you build it up.

I see no better way than prayer. Do you? Oh, we can think positive thoughts. That was a great sermon.

But this sermon will fall on deaf ears if the heart isn't right. If you're not prayed up, as soon as you get over that hill and you go back, drift away from that prayerlessness, that prayerlessness will be a snare to you. The price of prayerlessness far exceeds the price of prayer.

So we're going to go in and we're going to pray during these next two songs. We're going to, the altar is going to be open. Let's get back to the heart of prayer because the price of prayerlessness far exceeds the price of prayer.

Yes, there is a price of pursuing God, but it far outweighs the decadence and depravity of man drifting from him. Andrew Murray said the coming revival must begin with a great revival of prayer. It is in the closet with the door shut that the sound of the abundance of rain will first be heard.

You want to be heard? You want to hear the voice of God? Shut yourself in that prayer closet. Leave the phone outside and just say, God, speak to your servant. I'm willing to listen.

That prayer closet is where God speaks to you. That prayer closet is where the sermon comes from. You think I'm going to hop on the computer in the afternoon and go on sermon index and find all these notes or sermon central? God speaks to his people in the prayer closet.

If the spirit of prayer departs, it is a sure indication of a backslidden heart. Shane, you're trying to tick me off this morning. Absolutely.

I'm trying to tick off people to repentance. When God has something very great to accomplish for his church, it is his will that there should precede it, the extraordinary prayers of his people. Isn't that Jonathan Edwards, part of the first great awakening? He said that when God has something very special to accomplish, what will he do? He will spark that life of prayer into his people.

And that's why many of us feel that desire and that draw. And then finally, prayer is not an exercise. It is life.

This was a breakthrough for me when I realized prayer is not just a discipline, a habit, an exercise. It's what we do. It is my life.

It is my heartbeat. Like Ian Bounds said, when faith ceases to pray, your faith actually ceases to live. When your heart lacks oxygen, you have a heart attack.

When your life as a believer lacks prayer, you have a spiritual heart attack and you begin to die spiritually. The things that used to alarm you don't. Do you ever see things like, why isn't this alarming Christians? They're like, oh, well, you know, whatever.

No, it's not healthy for a man dressed up as a woman to dance in front of your four-year-old. What if you've lost your mind? You've become desensitized. And that's how it happens.

Even believers, they become desensitized because the heartbeat of prayer is ceasing or it's fading away.

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