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## The Rapture & The Great Commission

by Lonnie Lane

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I was filled with images of the Lord's return to earth in holy splendor while contemplating the contents of this article with the Lord, when a friend called. We had a discussion about my previous article related to the soon anticipated rapture. She confessed to me what I have heard from others, that there is a prevailing expectation that the onset of "tribulation" will trigger the rapture. So when trouble arises, hope also rises within us for Yeshua's imminent return.

Who wouldn't want to be far from what Yeshua described as tribulation?: *"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened"* (Matthew 24:22). Yikes.

There's a Yiddish expression that gets used in our family a lot in various applications: *"Nisht fer mere,"* meaning "not for me," said when you choose to opt out of something unpleasant to you. I'd like to opt out of being here for the tribulation. I'm sure we all would. Yeshua further said it would be a time when there would be *"wars and rumors of wars... nations rising against nations, and of famine and earthquakes"* (Matthew 24: 6-7). As a counter-balance to that, He also told His disciples, *"...when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near"* (Luke 21:27,28). Well, thank God for that.

We're pretty sure His words were meant for us today, aren't we? Let's remember that many centuries and historic events have transpired since He said those words. In fact,

**"We could be the generation that will actually welcome His return."**

those who heard Him say those words would likely never have considered that He was speaking about events that would impact people on the other side of a world they couldn't imagine existing, let alone outside of Israel. Could they even have imagined that He meant two millennia later? Doubt it. I expect that many other people at many different times in history thought those words were meant for their times too. Indeed every

generation has longed for the return of Yeshua, and that is as it should be. Ours is just more likely to be the actual for-real last generation than any generation before us, considering all that is being fulfilled with regard to Israel. The restoration of Israel as a nation wasn't taken into account as even a possibility until 1948. But now it goes without saying that end-time prophecy is related to Israel. We could be the generation that will actually welcome His return. Wow! Hallelujah!

Upon considering these words of Yeshua about tribulation and His return and how we should interpret them for our own time, I got to wondering: How did the disciples to whom He said those words respond to such a warning of events to come? How did such a prophetic expectation affect how they functioned while anticipating what they must have expected would take place in their life time?

Those words, of course, weren't the only words that factored into how those first Believers lived out their lives in God after He ascended into heaven. They had heard all He had said about the Kingdom of God. They had seen the healings and those raised from

the dead. They had witnessed the power of God over demonic forces. They had also seen Yeshua Himself suffer and die and then saw Him fully alive as He gave them understanding that the Kingdom of God had fully come to earth. He brought them to understand that His resurrection inaugurated eternal life for all who accepted His atonement for their sins and pledged to live their lives unto God. The resurrection was a reality to them. They saw it happen! And so the new Kingdom was a reality to them as well. For the forty days after His resurrection, Yeshua was fully present with them in "*newness of life*" (Romans 6:4) and now it was theirs as well through faith in Him.

So how did all that fit together in the puzzle with the anticipation of "tribulation?" Did they see it as we do? Is it possible that their understanding and expectation of His soon return, considering how much more powerfully and society changing they lived than we do, had a somewhat different significance to them than it does to us? They faced troubles and persecution all around them bravely and with great faith and victory. Even those who died for their faith did so in overcoming victory in the Lord. If those folks had expected to be "raptured" before trouble came, they sure handled it well by God's great grace when they had to face it, didn't they?

How about these words of Yeshua in talking about things being shaken as many are saying we are beginning to experience now: "*...those things which are coming on the earth...will be shaken, then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*" (Luke 21:26-28). What we read about in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles surely is about people who walked with their heads held high, assured not only of their own personal redemption but of the redemption of those whom they led to the Lord -- and it would appear, the redemption of the whole world!

Why, I wonder, when He said those things mentioned earlier about tribulation to the early church, were they so fearless? It is obvious that their fearlessness was a key to their effectiveness. Did Yeshua's own fearlessness and Kingdom reality cause them to live entirely above the threats and fears of this world system? They now had the same power of the Holy Spirit in them that He did. It seems apparent that therefore they too were able to live above any fear of death. They knew first hand about Yeshua that "*He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil*" (Heb 2:14).

As we meditate on what He really accomplished through His death and resurrection, and allow the Holy Spirit to make it real to us in our inner-most being, it will take on a reality to us personally that just reading it as information, even from our Bible's, will not do. It's revelation that will transform us by His Spirit, it's intimate loving yielded interaction in relationship with Him that will empower us, not just information, even when it's about Him.

Did the early Believers love Him so much that their expectation of His return stirred them to want to bring to Him as many as would be saved when He came? Are we lacking that same motivation? If the idea that the rapture means we are removed from the earth when He comes for us in the clouds when real trouble comes, and we interpret His words to "*straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near*" (Luke 21:27,28) to mean that we should be looking up into the clouds for His return, did He mean we are to turn our attention toward heaven, expecting to no longer to be concerned with the cares of this world?

Does our interpretation of what we believe He meant cause us to detach ourselves from this world, while longing for the world to come? That is, incidentally, a very un-Jewish mindset. The church is affected by some rather Pagan (mostly Greek) and non-Hebrew interpretations, not the least of which is that real spirituality is not of this earth, but of a heavenly realm somewhere other than on earth. God's instructions and paradigm for Israel was a very earthy and natural way so that every part of the life He has given us is to be lived as holy and with concern for one another and for the community around us, beginning with "*the household of God*" (1 Tim 3:15; 1 Peter 4:17). To disregard the plight of others for our own well-being is antithetic to Torah, and to the ways God taught Israel to be, and consequently to the ways of the first followers of Yeshua who were, of course, Hebrew.

So I wonder, has our rapture-anticipation of being exempted from tribulation caused us to have an expectation that we need not be prepared or equipped to deal with such times, and that, contrary to the philanthropic tendency of Jews to help others in need we, as the church, have become apathetic about the plight of those who are suffering or lost? Indeed the very character of Judaism has been, and continues to be, largely defined by its relationship to *tzedakah*, the blessing of giving not just money but empathy and compassion. I know that the church has been God's vehicle to bring compassion and practical help and salvation where none else has even considered going.

**"...is it possible that many of us are more concerned about our comfort, our safety and our well-being than the safety, well-being and eternal salvation of those around us?"**

But on a personal basis, is it possible that many of us are more concerned about our comfort, our safety and our well-being than the safety, well-being and eternal salvation of those around us? In the natural, we could say that is quite understandable. But we are not people of the natural, we are of the Spirit of God. We are followers of our Jewish Messiah who "gave" Himself for us.

*"Now those who belong to Messiah Yeshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24), among which would be a self-concern and self-protection, and self-focus that keeps us from allowing God to do through us what He has done unto us -- He has saved us, healed us, delivered us, restored us, and sealed us for eternity to Himself! If this is true, then "if we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (:25).*

If we look at the power, faith and actions of the early church, there is anything but apathy in all they accomplished. They pursued even their enemies with love and turned the world around them to the Lord by bringing salvation to everyone they came in contact with. As Yeshua gave His life for the salvation of the world, quite often, so did they. Evidently they valued above their own lives, maintaining their *"righteousness for His name's sake"* (Psalm 23:3). It gives a whole new meaning to one of our favorite "Lord is my Shepherd" verses, doesn't it?

So how did Yeshua expect His "tribulation" predictions to be interpreted? It's unlikely that He meant for His people to be primarily focused on His evacuation of them to be with Him far above any trouble or tribulation, so that our focus is on the rapture and not on the needs all around us? More likely He meant, *"lift up your heads"* to mean stand tall and strong, fully confident that even though *"our citizenship is in heaven from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Yeshua Messiah"* (Phil 3:19, 20), we are adequately engaged in the business He gave us to do while here on earth when He charged us to:

*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Matt. 16:15-19).*

Evidently, His followers did just what He instructed them to do because we are told that *"they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed" (:20)*

**Why do we not take those same "great commission" instructions as being just as binding for us, expecting that He will work with us and confirm His word with signs following?** When we do, He does! I'll let you in on a little secret. He takes us to where we can no longer rely on our own ability so that we are forced to rely on Him. That's the only way we can find out what He can do through us that we can't possibly do on our own. It's the only way He can get done what is far beyond our ability or even thinking. Hasn't your faith in God increased when you found that *"out of weakness (you) were made strong"* (Hebrews 11:34)? Being "out on a limb" with God is the best place to get the view of how He sees what He wants to do in our lives. He once told me when I was feeling oh so helpless to follow what He commanded us to do, "You can't, I must, but if you don't, I won't."

My greatest sense of fulfillment and joy came in doing His will when I was stretched beyond my own ability, forcing me to walk it out in trust in His Spirit within me. Sid's show is called, *It's Supernatural* for a reason. Guest after guest testifies that the supernatural power of God is there when they have stepped out for God and trusted that He was with them and would confirm His own Word with signs and wonders, with miracles, and with bringing people to salvation when we present it to them. If we don't... well, it doesn't happen, does it? But the happy news is, that if we will, He will!

There's no way to be sure one way or the other when the return of Yeshua will come, before, during or after the time of tribulation. The only thing we can be entirely sure of is that He will come. We can all rest in Him that He will come again. But I would like to urge us to consider that the rapture shouldn't keep us from being fully involved in His work in the here and now. There is great joy to be had, just as the first disciples experienced in accomplishing His work, even day by day.

Think of the great joy in having those beside you whom you have led to the Lord, doing His work together as you teach them how. He did say to "make disciples" (Matthew 28:19), not just lead people to Him and then leave them on their own. What a fulfillment it is to see the fruit of your labor then go labor elsewhere and disciple others in the Lord. What even greater joy when all things are accomplished in our lives and we have fulfilled what He has give us each to do, when each of us can say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7). And what ultimate joy when together we see Him, "...coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Matthew 14:30b).

In the meantime, Yeshua told us to.... "occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13 KJV)!

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*Lonnie would enjoy hearing your response to this or her other articles. You may send them to [LLane@sidroth.org](mailto:LLane@sidroth.org) and she will be glad to respond to you. Use this same address to contact Lonnie about speaking engagements. For Lonnie's other articles, check out our [Exclusive Articles and Resources](#), especially the section on [One New Man](#).*

*Lonnie Lane comes from a family of four generations of Jewish believers, being the first one saved in 1975. Lonnie has been in church leadership for many years, and has planted two "one new man" house fellowships, one in Philadelphia suburbs and the other in Jacksonville, Florida, where she now lives near 6 of her 8 grandchildren. Lonnie is the author of "Because They Never Asked" and numerous articles on this website. She has been the Producer of Messianic Vision's radio and TV shows and the International Prayer Co-Coordinator for Messianic Vision's intercessors. [Click Here](#) to order Lonnie's book, "Because They Never Asked."*

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