

Rapture Linked to Current Middle East Peace Process

Part 1:

Those who are watching for signs of the Lord's return for His saints, as commanded in Matthew 24:42-44, sense that the Rapture is quickly approaching. Although no sign is given in the Scriptures concerning "the day and hour" of the Rapture, some believe Hebrews 10:25 implies that we will be able to see the day of the Rapture approaching: "...Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is: but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching." Anticipation of the approaching Rapture of God's saints seems to be implied in Luke 10:28: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

We are admonished in Luke 21:34-36, concerning the Rapture, to "...take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it [i.e., that day– the Rapture] come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch you therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:4 that "...you brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." These verses teach that the Rapture (sometimes referred to as "the great escape") should not catch us off guard ("unawares") even though we don't know "the day or hour" that Christ will return for His bride, the Church.

Let's review one of the major Rapture passages before going further:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by

the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words”.

The timing of the Rapture, also called the “blessed hope” in Titus 2:13, will be as a thief in the night to those not watching, but the “times and seasons” of the Rapture will not be a surprise to those who are looking for His return (1 Thessalonians 5:4, Matthew 25:1-13). Christ told His apostles, as recorded in Acts 1:6-7, that it was not for them “...to know the times or the seasons...” for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Christ’s generation would not see the restoration of Israel; however, Paul, when writing nearly two decades later (51 A.D.) about “the times and seasons” of Christ’s return, gave a significant clue to the church of Thessalonica concerning the time of His coming, which would miraculously coincide with Israel’s restoration to its land almost 2,000 years later.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. ² For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. ³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. ⁴ But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. ⁸ But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. ¹¹ Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do”.

The Thessalonians passage just quoted (5:3) provides clear evidence that our generation is now living in the “times and seasons” of the Lord’s return. The specific wording Paul used to link the Rapture with a specific generation that would see Christ’s return is “peace and safety.” Some translations say “peace and security” (ESV, ISV, Douay-Rheims, et al.). Paul said: “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

In retrospect, the “peace and safety (security)” concept could not be understood properly until Israel had returned to its land during the 20th century and the current Middle East peace process had progressed to the point that Paul’s statement about “peace and security” was common usage among those who were promoting “peace and security.” The “they” and “them” in verse 3 refers to those who would be using the words “peace and security” frequently in “their” speeches when this prophecy was nearing fulfillment. The “peace and security” speeches “they” would be giving prior to the Rapture would also need to take place in a public setting (i.e., London, New York, Jerusalem, the White House, et al.) on numerous occasions so there would be no misunderstanding about whom the “they” referred to.

As students of Bible prophecy, we can now know and understand, based upon the context of the time in which we are living, that the “they” undoubtedly refers to all or part of the Quartet (or its successors) that is currently involved in the Middle East peace process. The “they” who will experience the “sudden destruction” does not refer to Israel, but rather to specific Gentile nations and their leaders, even though Israel is a primary participant in the “peace and security” negotiations. The Bible is very clear that Israel will never be destroyed, so the “they” in verse 3 who will experience “sudden destruction” and who “shall not escape” does not include Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-37). Frankly, this prophecy does not bode well for those nations currently trying to divide the land of Israel. The “sudden destruction” from which “they shall not escape” will be catastrophic and permanent.

It has been said by many who follow Bible prophecy that Israel is God’s timepiece, and Jerusalem is the minute hand. If you want to understand God’s

prophetic program and where we are on God's timetable, watch Israel and Jerusalem (Psalm 121:4). After nearly 2,000 years of absence from its land following dispersion by the Roman armies in 70 A.D., the nation of Israel was reborn at midnight on May 14, 1948. The model God used for the rebirth of Israel was built upon the return of the Jewish people to their homeland as predicted by the prophets in many Old Testament books (Isaiah 43:1-11; Jeremiah 16:14-21; Ezekiel 20:33-44, 36:8-12, 36:24-38, 37:12-21, 38:8; Micah 4:6-8; Zechariah 13:8-9, et al.).

The return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel began around the middle of the 19th century, was accelerated by the leadership of Theodor Herzl, "the father of Zionism," in the late 1800s, and publicly acknowledged by the Balfour Declaration in 1917. Israel's return was validated by the United Nations in November of 1947 and consummated on May 15, 1948, the first day of Israel's rebirth. The process for Israel's restoration (rebirth) required increasing numbers of Jews returning to the land of Israel (aliyahs) amidst much clamor and protest by its Islamic neighbors. The hostility involving Israel's return was reminiscent of the birth pangs associated with childbirth, as prophesied in Isaiah 66 and 43:

Isaiah 66:8 "Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." *43:5-6* "Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth."

Following Israel's reestablishment as a nation in 1948, the nations surrounding this small country have ruthlessly and relentlessly tried to exterminate the Jewish people and destroy the nation of Israel (Psalm 83:4). This irrational hatred can be traced back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through the offspring of Ishmael and Esau. Former presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and now Barack Obama have committed their administrations and legacies to resolving this Middle East crisis, which threatens worldwide economic stability and has the potential to ignite World War III.

The primary motive and incentive for this unprecedented, diabolical alignment against Israel is the intense hatred of the Jewish people by the Islamic nations and the insatiable desire for oil that is located in the Mideastern, Islamic countries. This alignment of nations, which has grown in recent years to include all the nations of the world, is called the "Diplomatic Quartet" or "Madrid Quartet" or simply the "Quartet". The Quartet is composed of the United States, Russia, the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN). The Quartet group was established in Madrid in 2002 by the Spanish Prime Minister Aznar, as a result of the escalating conflict in the Middle East. Tony Blair is the Quartet's current Special Envoy.

The Quartet and its Representatives:

- United Nations – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
- European Union – High Representative Javier Solana
- Russian Federation – Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov
- United States of America – Secretary of State Hillary Clinton
- Special Envoy – Tony Blair

One can readily see that this involvement of all the nations of the world against one small nation, Israel, is highly unusual and unique in the history of the world. Such an alignment, which will eventually lead to a peace treaty or covenant (Daniel 9:24-27), was prophesied in the Bible thousands of years ago (Zechariah chapters 12-14). The accuracy of the Bible in predicting this alignment of nations against God's chosen nation, Israel, should serve as presumptive evidence to any reasonable person that the Bible is authoritative, and that the God of the Bible can be trusted (Isaiah 1:18-20, 42:5-9).

Part 2:

Due to the importance of crude oil to the economies of the world and other spiritual, economic, and political factors, the countries of the world have aligned themselves into a confederacy of nations that is determined to bring peace to the Middle East region through international diplomacy involving negotiations with Israel and the Palestinian people. This global confederacy of nations called

“the Quartet” (the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations) has a primary goal of dividing the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem in order to establish a viable, contiguous, Palestinian state inside the current borders of Israel. God made it clear in the Old Testament that He had given Israel temporary custody of His land, and He would take punitive action against those nations that divide His land (see Genesis 15:18, Joel 3:2).

The “Roadmap to Peace” plan, if implemented by the Quartet, will create a Northern and Southern Israel, with Israel’s enemies living in Gaza (Hamas) and the West Bank (Fatah). A narrow strip of land would connect the two land masses (Gaza and West Bank). The many statements made by the Quartet (and Israel under duress) in recent years concerning “peace and security” are numerous and uniquely qualify this group of nations or their successors as the object of Paul’s prophecy. The following quotes from members of the Quartet in recent months and years using “peace and security” terminology echo the prophecy Paul gave the Thessalonians, and link the Rapture to the “times and seasons” in which we are living.

Statement by Middle East Peace Quartet

March 1, 2005

London

“The Quartet commends the Israeli cabinet’s recent approval of the initiative to withdraw from Gaza and parts of the West Bank, and reiterates that withdrawal from Gaza should be full and complete and should be undertaken in a manner consistent with the Roadmap, as an important step toward the realization of the vision of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. ... The Quartet remains ready to engage, actively reaffirms its encouragement and support for both sides for the progress they have made in recent weeks, and reiterates its commitment to the fulfillment of the vision of two states, a safe and secure Israel and a sovereign, contiguous, democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security”
(http://www.un.org/news/dh/infocus/middle_east/quartet-1mar2005.htm).

Statement by Middle East Peace Quartet

December 15, 2008

New York

"The Quartet expressed its considered view that the bilateral negotiations process launched at Annapolis is irreversible and that these negotiations should be intensified in order to put an end to the conflict and to establish, as soon as possible, the State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. The Quartet affirmed that a final treaty and a lasting peace will be reached through simultaneous and mutually re-enforcing efforts on three tracks..."
(<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sg2147.doc.htm>).

President Obama's Press Conference Transcript

March 24, 2009

White House

At President Obama's press conference on March 24, 2009, he stated "...that it is critical for us to advance a two-state solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live side-by-side in their own states with peace and security"
(http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2009/03/president_obamas_press_confere.html).

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Statement

March 25, 2009

Jerusalem

"One day later, incoming Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Palestinians "should understand that they have in our government a partner for peace, for security, for the rapid development of the Palestinian economy"
(http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090325/ap_on_re_mi_ea/ml_israel_palestinians).

President Obama Addresses Turkish Parliament

April 7, 2009

Ankara, Turkey

"Let me be clear," Obama said, "the United States strongly supports the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. That is a goal shared by Palestinians, Israelis, and people of good will around the world. That is a goal that the parties agreed to in the road map and at Annapolis. And that is a goal that I will actively pursue as president." Both Israel and the Palestinians, he said, "must overcome longstanding passions and the politics of the moment to make progress toward a secure and lasting peace" (<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/71058/-obama-we-are-committed-to-annapolis.html>).

The proliferation of speeches and statements from the Quartet concerning "peace and security," along with many other end-time prophecies (Daniel chapters 2, 7, 9, 12; Ezekiel chapters 38-39; Revelation Chapter 13, et al.) that are in the process of development, are compelling evidence that we are living during the "times and seasons" Paul talked about. The time of the Lord's return is not only linked to statements about "peace and security," the events encompassing the Rapture are also compared to the birth pangs (labor pains) of childbirth. *"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape"* (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

No one knows exactly when a son or daughter will be born, but everyone knows a child is on the way several months before the actual due date. After conception, the tiny baby grows and develops in the mother's womb with each passing day for a period of about 40 weeks (Psalm 139:13-18). When the time for delivery draws near, the labor pangs begin and everyone starts watching expectantly, knowing the day and hour of the birth are getting closer. Sometimes there is premature labor, false contractions (Braxton-Hicks) that occur before real labor begins. As the birth pangs increase in frequency and

intensity, the time of the birth can be anticipated and known with greater certainty as the moment of birth approaches.

The reason Christians should not be caught off guard by this unique event called the Rapture is due to the birth pangs (contractions, warning signs) that will be present before the event takes place. As the birth pangs foreshadowing the Rapture increase in frequency and intensity, we can “know” (*ginosko*- “to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of”) with greater certainty that the day of the Rapture is close at hand, just like we know when the birth of a child is near and certain.

Matthew 24:32-34 “Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: ³³ So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. ³⁴ Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled” .

The “day and hour” of the Rapture are not known, but when the birth pangs of Christ’s return begin to appear, we can “know” that the day of the Rapture is drawing near. What specific form these pre-Rapture birth pangs assume is not altogether clear at this time, but they will likely include economic, religious, political, and military turmoil as well as famines, earthquakes, and disease as described in Luke 21:7-28. Recent natural disasters in the United States and throughout the world such as droughts, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes (cyclones), earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis might be false birth pangs or they might be harbingers of things to come if we are close to the day of the Rapture, as the evidence suggests.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 “Behold, I shew 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ O

death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” .

For several decades, we have been hearing participants in the Mideast peace process talk about “peace and security.” In recent months, the negotiation process between the Quartet, Israel, and the Palestinians has increased in frequency and intensity as world leaders jockey to find a solution to the Middle East problem through implementation of their key document called the “Roadmap.”

Worldwide political, religious, and economic turmoil has also greatly increased in intensity during the past year, with the industrialized nations meeting regularly to resolve the financial crisis caused by an unsound monetary policy. The prospect of a new world order and new international currency looms on the horizon, as anticipated by many who follow the Bible prophecy signs associated with the end of the age.

The evidence is overwhelming that we are living during “the times and seasons” of the Lord’s return. Believers are admonished to “watch...and be ready,” as Matthew 24:42-51 tells us, and inform their family and loved ones about what is going on prophetically. All of the “signs of the times” we see appearing indicate that the day of the Rapture is imminent and that we are approaching the “day and hour” set by God the Father (Acts 1:7) when we will *“be caught up together... to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”*

Approaching prophetic events that are casting their shadows backward into our times serve as “an early warning system” reminding us that we should be getting our spiritual houses in order and taking care of the Master’s business (Mark 13:33-37). That involves making sure we have trusted in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior so that whether we go up at the Rapture or experience an untimely death, we will have made our “calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10, Philippians 2:12). Salvation in Christ also qualifies us to be part of the bride of

Christ at the marriage of the Lamb, and to be a participant at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Revelation 19:7-10 "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. ⁸And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. ⁹And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. ¹⁰ And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy".

As we see the day of the Rapture approaching, don't let anxiety, fear, and depression get you down and rob you of your impending joy and "Crown of Righteousness" that the Lord will personally give to all those "that love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). It is "high time" for the saints of God to "wake up," "comfort one another," "exhort and edify one another," and "lift up our heads" as we see the day of "our redemption" drawing near (Romans 13:11-14). Don't be left behind!

by Michael Hile