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Scientists at the Goddard Space Flight Center report that one of the largest stars in our galaxy is about to self-destruct.

Eta Carinae, which has a mass 100 times greater than that of our sun, is giving signs that its life is about over. Researchers say that it could become a supernova—a blazing, exploding star—within the next 10,000 years. What was especially interesting about the Science 81 report was the statement that since light from the star takes 9,000 years to reach the earth, the actual explosion could have already taken place.

This striking fact reminds me of the nature of biblical prophecy. For example, the predictions found in Revelation 8 are often written in the past tense. This is done because even though the prophet is writing of a future event, he has already “seen” it. Also, in the mind of God it’s as if the events have already happened.

Even though Christians differ on the interpretation of today’s Scripture, we can definitely say that God’s judgement those who continually resist Him is so sure that it has been written about in the past tense. This should cause us to reflect with the apostle Peter, who wrote so appropriately, “Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?” (2 Peter 3:11). As Christians, we know what’s ahead for this world, and that knowledge should keep us living close to God.

[Our Daily Bread, June 26](#)

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Lesson #6
Of Pews and Pulpits and Pistols
The Church, Israel, and the Tribulation

Focus Verse: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Memory Verse:

John 17:11 (NLT)

¹¹ Now I am departing the world; I am leaving them behind and coming to you. Holy Father, keep them and care for them—all those you have given me—so that they will be united just as we are.

What is the place of the church in the Tribulation?

What is the Rapture?

When does the Rapture occur?

Is this important?

We have already considered the Tribulation period – seven years of cleansing and judgment. While, as we will see, not all scholars agree, the church does not suffer any of the pains and trials of the Tribulation.

The church is not present during the Tribulation:

The church is raptured prior to the commencement of Daniel's seventieth week.
(1 Thess 4:13-18)

The church is a New Testament mystery (Eph 3:1-6; Col 1:25-37) so it was not in view when the prophecies of wrath were given.

The church does not fall within the purpose of Daniel's seventieth week – it is not

“thy people” (Dan 9:24; Rev 3:10).

The unity of the seventieth week prevents and speaks against a mid-tribulation position for the rapture (Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15; Rev 13).

There are three theological positions concerning the Rapture of the church – at least, among the groups that believe in the Rapture.

- Pre-Tribulation sees the Rapture as described above, as an event that must occur prior to the Tribulation. This is based on the concept that God will not allow the church to undergo the judgments of the Tribulation. This is Dispensational premillennialism.
- Mid-Tribulation sees the Church being part of the Tribulation, but not part of the terrible, final judgments. The Church is Raptured home midway through the Tribulation.
- Post-Tribulation views the Rapture as coming at the end of the Tribulation. This ushers in the Millennial Kingdom. This is basically a historical premillennial view.

Since postmillennialism and amillennialism do not view the Rapture in relation to an actual tribulation and millennial period, there is no need for them to be concerned with the timing of the Rapture. We will discuss the possible pre-, post-, and amillennial positions in our next lesson.

How does the rapture fit within the confines of the Tribulation?

What does it mean to you if the Rapture is pre-Trib as opposed to something else?

What is the church doing during the Tribulation?

The doctrine of imminence speaks to the church being ready, that is, not having signs that point to the rapture (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor 15:51,52; Phil 3:20; Col 3:4; 1 Thess 1:10; 5:6; 1 Tim 6:14; Titus 2:13; James 5:8; 1 Peter 3:3, 4; Rev 3:3). Thus, the Rapture could come at any moment. This means, in part, that the church in its earthly form may never know the identity of the antichrist.

The issue of the work of the Restrainer in 2 Thess 2 supports the pre-tribulation rapture.

The Restrainer is the

Holy Spirit

Church

The apostasy of the period supports the pre-trib position (2 Tim 3; Rev 2:22; 17:18)

Where is the Tribulation in Revelation?

Tribulation commences with the things “hereafter” (Rev 1:19)

Things “hereafter” is the unfolding prophecy commencing with Revelation 4

The 24 elders may represent the church (Rev 4:4)

New Testament elders rule or judge on behalf of God (Acts 15:2; 20:17)

Old Testament elders are also identified with judgment and worship (Exod 24:1, 2; Lev 4:13-15).

The elders are:

Crowned (4:4) with the *stephanos* or victor’s crowns, not the *diadema*, the crown of kings

Worshiping Jesus (4:10; 5:8, 14)

Holding the prayers of the saints (5:8)

Singing a new song (5:9; 14:13)

Comforting (John 5:5)

Worshiping God (11:16)

Celebrating the judgments of the fall of Babylon (19:4)

The church is judged for her works – on an individual, not a collective basis.

This is the Bema judgment seat (1 Cor 3:9-15; 2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10)

This must occur during the tribulation for the Bride has already been rewarded at the Second Advent (Rev 19:8)

This judgment occurs in “that day” (1 Cor 4:5; 2 Tim 4:8; Rev 22:2)

This judgment occurs in the air (2 Cor 5:1-8; 1 Thess 4:17)

Christ is the judge (John 5:22; 2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10)

This is not a judgment for sins (Rom 8:1; John 5:24; 1 John 4:17; Heb 10:17)

Rewards are won or lost (1 Cor 3:14-15)

Incorruptible crown (1 Cor 9:25)

Crown of rejoicing, sometimes called the soul winners crown (1 Thess 2:9)

Crown of life (James 1:12)

Crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)

Crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4)

These are all *stephanos* or victor's crowns as opposed to *diadem* or kingly crowns

The crowns are cast at the feet of Jesus showing the glory is all His (Rev 4:10)

The marriage of the church and the Lamb, Christ, must occur during this time period.

The bride and bridegroom are frequently described in the New Testament (John 3:29; Rom 7:4; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-33; Rev 19:7, 8; 21:1-22:7)

The marriage occurs after the bema seat judgment (Rev 19:8)

The marriage is in heaven (Rev 19:14; Phil 3:20)

The marriage supper takes place on earth (Matt 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Luke 14:16-24)

Saved Israel represents the "friends" invited to the wedding (Rev 19:9)

This follows the pattern of Jewish wedding customs

The church is, however, the recipient of many of the benefits of the covenants in a "now/not yet" approach to covenants and prophecy.

How does this fit with your understanding of Scripture?

Is it important for evangelism that the church does not participate in the Tribulation?

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The Danish philosopher, Kierkegaard, tells a parable of a theater where a variety show is proceeding. Each show is more fantastic than the last, and is applauded by the audience. Suddenly the manager comes forward. He apologizes for the interruption, but the theater is on fire, and he begs his patrons to leave in an orderly fashion. The audience thinks this is the most amusing turn of the evening, and cheer thunderously. The manager again implores them to leave the burning building, and he is again applauded vigorously. At last he can do no more. The fire raced through the whole building and the fun-loving audience with it.

“And so,” concluded Kierkegaard, “will our age, I sometimes think, go down in fiery destruction to the applause of a crowded house of cheering spectators.”

[Resource, July/August, 1990](#)

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