

9/11 and the Rapture (Part 3)

By PAUL J. SCHARF

As we have seen, the events of September 11, 2001, can illustrate important truths about the rapture of the church and the coming seven-year period of tribulation that will follow it. Here is the last one of them that we will consider, in follow-up to last week's remembrance of this somber day:

- Finally, 9/11, like the rapture, had *infinite implications* for *immortal* souls.

All believers in Christ who died on 9/11 were immediately “present with the Lord” once they became “absent from the body” (2 Cor. 5:8). For others who did not know the Lord, however, this became a day of terror that went far beyond the earthly tragedy they had suffered. Before our eyes we witnessed the eternal consequences of life and death—heaven and hell.

So it will be on the day of the rapture. For those who know Christ, this will be the moment when they will realize the enjoyment of their eternal destinies. “Thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17). Those who do not believe—unless they yet come to know Him during the awful days of the tribulation—will be left to descend toward their ultimate, eternal doom.

But the terror of 9/11 did not merely give us a glimpse into what tribulation events will be like, they also moved the world toward them.

In fact, 9/11 should have prepared the country and the culture—to say nothing of the church—spiritually for the fulfillment of prophetic events. It seemed to at first—but this lasted only a few short weeks or months. Instead, these 19 years past 9/11, many seem as if they have been lulled to sleep. But the Apostle Paul counsels us:

Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. (1 Thess. 5:6-10)

As we move into fall in this extraordinarily strange year of 2020, one wonders: Will the COVID-19 pandemic—and all of the traumatic events that have followed over the course of the last seven months in our nation, our economy and our culture—finally wake us from spiritual slumber? Will we learn more from this earth-shattering tragedy than we did from the previous one?

If it cannot, and if we do not, then it would seem there is simply nothing that will move us. It appears that the Lord is now setting the stage for the unfolding of tribulation events, and that He is doing so in a way that we have never seen before. Frankly, it is happening to such an extent that none of us ever thought that we would see such

things—at least on this earth, in our own country, in our own lifetimes, before the rapture.

One wonders what the great Bible prophecy teachers of the past—up to and including my mentor Dr. John Whitcomb, who went to be with the Lord in early February of this year—would think and say of the events we are living through right now.

Such events may well be a practice-run for the judgments of the tribulation. As such, they offer a not-so-gentle wake-up call to us “upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor. 10:11).

May God help us to learn from the horrible tragedy of 9/11, as well as from our current crisis, for His glory, until Christ returns.

Paul J. Scharf (M.A., M.Div., Faith Baptist Theological Seminary) is a church ministries representative for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, based in Columbus, WI, and serving in the Midwest. For more information on his ministry, visit sermonaudio.com/pscharf or foi.org/scharf, or email pscharf@foi.org.

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