

STUDY SIXTEEN – MOCKERS IN THE LAST DAYS!

INTRODUCTION

In Second Peter, the apostle Peter wrote about aspects of what will be experienced in the very last of the last days. In Second Peter 3:3 and 4, Peter wrote, *"knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.'"*

The fact that Peter began this passage in this way *"knowing this first..."* alerts us that he was raising his voice to draw attention to something so important that those who read his message would soberly and deliberately pay heed to it and never forget it. The purpose was not to stir fear, but to prepare God's people for something of the inevitable that would unfortunately occur within the Church in the very end of the age — that there would arise scoffers and mockers who would ridicule end-time warnings as dramatic and completely groundless.

He wrote about scoffers in the last days. This single word scoffers depicts those who make fun of something through mockery. The same word is used in Luke 23:11 to describe how Herod Antipas' men "mocked" Jesus when He stood before them, which means his bodyguards played charades in front of Jesus, perhaps falling as if touched by His power or acting as if their blind eyes or deaf ears had been suddenly opened. It was pure mockery.

SCOFFERS SCOFFING IN THE LAST DAYS

Peter wasn't done giving prophetic insight into the characteristics of this mocking last-days generation that will arise to jeer at the precious Body of Christ that Jesus longs to draw close to His heart in the Rapture. Peter added that these scoffers will be those who are *"walking after their own lusts"* (see 2 Peter 3:3). The word "lusts" is an interpretation of the word which depicts desire and passion and, often, the uncontrolled release of desire and passion.

WHAT ARE LAST-DAYS SCOFFERS MOCKING IN PARTICULAR?

Peter went on in verse 4 to communicate that these scoffing scoffers will be saying, *"Where is the promise of his coming?"* The word "promise" is the Greek word for an announcement, declaration, or guaranteed promise, and this word was used to describe what has been legally promised and is expected to come to pass. Peter used the definite article here to state that the promise of Christ's return is a very specific promise that God has announced, declared, guaranteed, and promised to come to pass.

Peter said mockers will scoffingly ask, *"Where is the promise of Christ's coming."* As we have seen, in Paul's writings, this word "coming" is used interchangeably to describe both the rapture of the Church and the Second Coming (or Second Advent) of Christ. To know how the word "Parousia" or "coming" is being used depends on the context of the surrounding verses. Here, Peter used this word to refer to the long-promised rapture of the Church - and that is precisely what last-days scoffers will increasingly ridicule and mock: Christ's catching away of His Church.

Peter stated further that these last-days scoffers will allege and argue thus saying.

"... For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:4). Therefore, according to the Holy Spirit, they'll say:

- "All this time has passed, and He hasn't returned yet."

- "Nothing has changed since people first began proclaiming it"
- "What makes you think this is ever going to happen?"

WHAT EXACTLY ARE THE 'LAST DAYS'?

But these "dissenters" will argue that Christ's return is fictitious and has no basis in reality. One of their main arguments is that people have been talking about the last days and the Rapture for about 2,000 years. Since it's always important to define terms when such discussions arise, we must ask the question: What are the last days?

Ironically, these mockers are exactly right when they say people have been talking about the last days for approximately 2,000 years. But what most don't understand is that the last days actually began on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out (see Acts 2:16-20). Therefore, this past 2,000-year period is what is theologically called: "the last days."

"But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.'" (Acts 2:16-17)

In Acts 2:17, Peter responded to the outpouring of the Spirit by quoting Joel 2:28 which the prophet Joel prophesied about the supernatural happenings in the last days. Truly, it had been over 2000 years.

Hence, when scoffers say, "If Christ was going to come, surely He would have come by now...people have been saying it is the 'last days' for 2,000 years," they are not only correct about the timetable of the last-days season, but they are also prophetically telling us by their scoffing arguments that we are there — in the very last days - on God's amazing timeline.

In his second epistle, Peter was not describing the entire 2,000-year time frame - rather, he was pointing to the final moments of that age and stating that one of the screaming signs we have sailed to the very end of this age is that scoffers will arise to mock those of us who believe the rapture of the Church is near.

Friend, no matter what you believe "near" means — whether it's five months, five years, or fifty years — nothing remains to be fulfilled for Christ's coming to occur. He could come today for a remnant that is busy about the Father's business reaping the precious fruit of the earth — men's souls — that He longs to gather into His Kingdom and family (see James 5:7).

IS THE EARTH REALLY 'RESERVED UNTO FIRE'?

"But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:7)

The word "reserved" is from a Greek word that historically depicted the uninterrupted vigilance of soldiers who were positioned to protect something of great importance. Peter used this word to depict God as the One who stands attentively on guard over the heavens and the physical earth and over all the affairs within these spheres.

Peter argued that although scoffers may be ignorant of it, God and His Word are standing guard over the heavens and the earth and all the affairs within them unto *"fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."* The word "fire" portrays a consuming or engulfing fire and the word "judgment" is from the word krisis, which speaks of a damning verdict of the court that is carried out against the ungodly. This damning moment is so consequential that the word krisis is where we derive the English word "crisis.". It will be an unimaginable crisis for those who have lived ungodly lives.

ANSWER TO SCOFFERS WHO MOCK THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

We have seen that Peter warned at the end of the age, some scoffers will allege the Rapture is a fantasy. However, there have already been multiple “raptures”, and there are other additional rapture-type experiences described in Scripture. Those who know the Scriptures are well aware that the idea of a rapture-type event is not a new idea. From the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation, the Bible speaks of individuals who were supernaturally caught away, and we will look at those in the following paragraphs.

Unfortunately, there is a category of people — including some Christians — who have rejected the belief in the Rapture and who mock those who believe in the rapture or catching away of the Church. But if one considers the entire record of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, it becomes clear that the Bible speaks of nine rapture-type experiences.

As a matter of fact — get ready — the Church is next in line to be supernaturally snatched into Heaven! Friend, there really will come a time very soon when those who live for Jesus will be supernaturally, physically caught away, or snatched, in the “twinkling of an eye” as we have seen in First Corinthians 15:51-52.

But let's look at the following instances to see who in the Bible has already experienced a rapture, who has experienced a rapture-type experience, and who the Bible says will experience a catching away or rapture in the future.

1. ENOCH EXPERIENCED A RAPTURE

First, we find that Enoch was supernaturally and physically caught up into the presence of the Lord. He lived from approximately 3384 to 3019 BC, and he was the “seventh from Adam” (see Genesis 5:9-19; Jude 14). He was the son of Jared and the father of Methuselah (see Genesis 5:22), who was the longest-living person recorded in biblical history. Enoch walked so closely with God that “God took him” (see Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5), and he did not experience natural death. This is the first recorded rapture in Scripture!

2. ELIJAH EXPERIENCED A RAPTURE

Second, we find that Elijah was the second person in the Old Testament to be physically caught up into the presence of the Lord. Elijah lived in approximately the Ninth Century BC. He was supernaturally transported by a whirlwind of God's power and was finally lifted up into Heaven.

The account of Elijah being physically caught up into Heaven is found in Second Kings 2:11, *“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”* In that moment, the prophet Elijah was physically caught up into Heaven by the Spirit of God. He was translated from the natural realm into the dimension of the spirit via a flaming chariot of fire. Rather than taste death, Elijah was raptured from the earth into the very presence of God.

3. JESUS EXPERIENCED A RAPTURE

Third, we find that Jesus was physically caught up into the clouds as the disciples watched Him supernaturally ascend into Heaven.

We read about this amazing event in Acts 1:9-11: *“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of*

Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

This passage reveals Jesus Himself was raptured — or that He was "taken up"- into the clouds. While Jesus was blessing His closest, most devoted followers, they watched as He was physically caught up into Heaven and was translated from the earth to Heaven by the power of God.

4. PHILIP EXPERIENCED A RAPTURE-TYPE EVENT

Fourth, we find that Philip the evangelist experienced a rapture-type event. We were told in Acts 8:39 that after sharing the Gospel with a high-ranking official of Ethiopia and baptizing him in water, *"... the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing."*

The words "caught away" are translated from an identical word in First Thessalonians 4:17 that Paul used to describe the catching away or rapture of the Church. As fast as the twinkling of an eye, Philip was snatched by the Spirit of the Lord and he disappeared before the eyes of the Ethiopian leader, who saw him no more because Philip was physically caught away by the Spirit of the Lord.

5. PAUL EXPERIENCED A RAPTURE-TYPE EVENT

Fifth, we find that Paul experienced a rapture-type event. Speaking to the believers at Corinth, Paul said,

"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

Twice in these verses, Paul said that he was caught up. In both instances, he used the same Greek word he used to describe the catching away or rapture of the Church in First Thessalonians 4:17. Note that this is the same word used to describe Philip's supernatural catching away in Acts 8:39.

6. JOHN EXPERIENCED A RAPTURE-TYPE EVENT

Sixth, we find that John also experienced a rapture-type event. This event is described in Revelation 4:1 and 2, where John wrote, *"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne."*

In Revelation 4:1, these words in the original text are *"come up here or move upward —here."* Revelation 4:2 says, *"And immediately I was in the spirit..."* The word "immediately" is from the Greek word that means instantly. These words tell us that John had somehow passed from the natural realm into the realm of the spirit and was now "in spirit," or in a totally different realm.

7. BELIEVERS AT THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

Seventh, the Church is next to experience a catching away or rapture in the near future. Yes, the next rapture that is quickly approaching is the one that involves all authentic believers. This grand event is described in First Thessalonians 4:17, which says, *"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."*

Imagine...one day in the very near future, believers who are faithfully serving God will vanish and be supernaturally caught up or raptured into the very presence of the Lord Jesus.