

UPDATE: 2006

I. THE RAPTURE – 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

A. *Is Coming!*

1. One day, *any* day now, something *wild* is going to happen all across the globe.
 2. Without warning, *instantaneously*, millions of people will *vanish*.
 3. People in Los Angeles will be standing in line at Starbucks; one of them will blink, & just like that the person standing ahead of them will be gone.
 4. In Chicago, a woman giving a business presentation will reach down to press the spacebar on her laptop, but the PowerPoint slide won't advance because her finger will never hit the key – she too will disappear.
 5. In London, commuters will be on the train going home after a long day at the office, when instantly, several seats are empty.
 6. In Moscow, a wife will be lying in bed unable to sleep when her husband's side of the bed will lighten. She'll turn over to find he hasn't just *gotten up*; he's gone!
 7. In Beijing, a bus taking the graveyard shift to work will run off the road & slam into a pole because the driver will vanished!
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8. As far-fetched as this may seem—it's going to occur.
 9. It's called "The Rapture" & is referred to several times in the Bible, most notably, in 1 Thess. 4.

¹³ But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

10. The Apostle Paul was answering questions the Christians of Thessalonica had sent him.
 - a. False teachers had been spreading goofy ideas about the Return of Christ.
 - b. They'd said the Tribulation had already come & that the only believers who would make it to heaven were those who managed to *stay alive* until Jesus came again. Paul says this is nonsense!

- c. When a believer dies, while their body goes into the grave, their spirit goes to God.
- d. When Jesus returns, their spirits will come *with Him* so they can be reunited with their resurrected bodies.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede [go before, or have an advantage over] those who are asleep [those who've died in faith]. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be **CAUGHT UP together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.**

- 11. This catching up & transformation of believers is called “The Rapture.”
 - a. The word comes from the *Latin translation* of v. 17, which uses the Latin word “*rapturo*” for the Greek “*harpadzo*” – translated in English as ‘*caught up*.’
 - b. It means a *sudden, irresistible seizure*.
- 12. In 1 Cor. 15 we find another description of the Rapture in vs. 50-53 . . .

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

- a. These fallen physical bodies are neither proper nor adequate for the glory of heaven.

51 Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

B. Difficult To Accept

- 1. The Rapture is hard for many to accept.

- a. The idea that millions of believers all over the world would suddenly vanish seems pretty far-fetched.
 - b. We've grown accustomed to history flowing along at a nice steady pace with nothing so dramatic or unusual happening.
 - c. So for many, the Rapture sounds more like *science fiction* than reality.
2. Interesting - that very reaction was *foretold* in 2 Peter 3:3-36 –
- ³ Know this as a fundamental truth: scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴ 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." ⁵ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶ by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water.**
3. While God mercifully allows rebellion against Him to go on for centuries, His patience *isn't inexhaustible*.
- a. The Flood is a reminder that God *will* intervene in history when humanity becomes *too* corrupt, too far gone.
 - b. Peter says in v. 3 that one of our *most basic beliefs* must be the awareness that history has a goal, a climax = The Return of Christ.
4. The very same Jesus who was brutally beaten & mocked, then executed on a Roman cross outside the walls of Jerusalem to pay for our sins, will one day Return to Earth as its glorious King **to lay claim to what His blood bought.**
5. Several years ago, Lynn & I were able to buy a house.
- a. We went through all the rigmarole of signing mortgage & escrow papers.
 - b. Escrow was 30 days. The house would be officially ours on March 7th.
 - c. It needed quite a bit of work before we'd be able to move in, so we started getting paint & supplies.
 - d. As the first days of March arrived, our excitement grew.
 - e. On the morning of the 7th, I drove to the house early in the morning & parked on the street, waiting for 8 a.m. to arrive.

- As soon as it was 8, I walked in the front door.
- f. Nothing was going to keep me from laying claim to what **legally** belonged to me.
 - g. I'd paid the price & observed the forms & now it was time to take possession!
6. Jesus paid the price & observed the forms of Earth's redemption.
 7. We can be assured that He's ready to take possession of what legally belongs to Him.
 8. What day that will be, no one but the Father knows.
 9. **But** – He's given us ample warning in the Bible about what the world will be like as Escrow gets ready to close on this world & His return is imminent.

C. To Those Left Behind

1. This message has **two intended audiences**.
 - a. It's being given on New Year's Day, 2006 – a Sunday. So it's 1st audience is those here today who are hearing it live.
 - b. The 2nd audience this message is intended for are those who are **left behind** after the Rapture. You're probably listening to a CD or some other media format; maybe the Internet.
2. Here's my plan with today's message . . .
 - a. The Bible contains a lot of prophecy. In fact, 1/3rd of it was prophecy when it was originally penned.
 - 1) Of course a lot of what was foretold has already taken place.
 - 2) Much of what the OT prophets had to say about the Messiah was fulfilled in the **first coming** of Christ.
 - 3) It's this record of fulfilled prophecy that helps **validate** the Bible's claim to being the inspired Word of God.
 - 4) But there's quite a bit of prophecy that is **yet to be fulfilled**.
 - 5) It's speaks of world conditions & events **leading up to** the Return of Christ.
 - b. So what we're going to do today is to take a look at just a few of the trends in the world today that point to the imminent return of Christ.
 - c. For those listening to this **after** the Rapture of the Church, please listen all the way to the end because while you've missed the Rapture, it's not too late for you to come to faith in Christ & gain the promise of eternal life.

d. But there are some things you need to be *warned* about.

II. WHY THE RAPTURE?

A. Two-Fold

1. Why the Rapture? *Why* will God remove believers from the Earth?
2. The answer to that is *two-fold*. And the first part has to do with *Israel*.

B. Israel's Last Week

1. In Daniel 9, we find a prophecy that a total of 490 years have been assigned by God to the Jews & their Holy City of Jerusalem.
 - a. During this time, Messiah would come to Israel & be welcomed by them, but then in a bizarre turn of events would be rejected & killed. Following that, He would eventually come again in glory.
 - b. Between the time He was killed & returned, *another ruler* would rise who would bring about utter destruction & ruin – the Bible refers to his reign of terror as the “abomination of desolation.”
 - c. What’s fascinating to see is how history has literally fulfilled nearly all of this prophecy.
 - 1) The angel told Daniel the 490 year countdown would start with the Command to rebuild Jerusalem.
 - 2) That command was given by King Artaxerxes of the Persian Empire on March 14, 445 BC, & 483 years later – 173,880 days to the very day, Jesus rode into the City of Jerusalem in the Triumphal entry as foretold in Daniel.
 - 3) But what happened? As Daniel foretold, He was then rejected & killed. And the prophetic clock *stopped*.
 - 4) It stopped because the prophecy applies to Israel, & with Jesus’ death & resurrection God turned His attention *away from Israel to the Church*.
 - 5) So there are 7 years left in which God must once again return His attention to the Jews & Jerusalem & complete the prophecy.
 - 6) If the first 483 years were *literally fulfilled* to the very day – won’t the last 7 years be literal as well? Of Course!
2. This is one reason *why the Rapture is necessary*; because for the

- last 2,000 years God has kept His redemptive focus on the Church.
3. In order to shift His redemptive focus *back to Israel* so that Daniel 9 can be fulfilled, the Church *has* to be *removed*.
 - a. God can't just leave believers here while He turns His attention back to Israel because He's promised to never leave nor forsake us.
 - b. The solution is to remove us from Earth & take us to our eternal home in heaven where Jesus has made a place for us, as He said in John 14.

¹ “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there you may be also*.

- c. These words referred to the Jewish wedding ceremony.
 - 1) Once betrothed, the groom went back to his father’s house to add on the room where he & his bride would live.
 - 2) While he built, she waited at her home, preparing her wedding dress.
 - 3) The NT says that the Church is like a bride getting ready for her wedding.
 - 4) As the room neared completion the groom’s friends would go to the bride to announce that the wedding was approaching, but the precise day of the groom’s arrival remained unknown.
 - 5) In the same way, God has sent prophets to announce the good news of His coming, but we don’t know the day.
 - 6) When all was ready, the father of the groom made a final inspection of the newly built room & on His consent, he’d tell the son *to go get his bride*.
 - 8) On the way to her village the groom’s friends would blow trumpets & shout the good news of the coming wedding.
 - 9) In 1 Thess. 4 we’re told when Jesus comes in the Rapture, trumpets will sound & the angels will shout.
 - 10) Arriving at her village the groom would gather her up in his arms & return to his father’s house where they would be

wed.

- 11) After the marriage supper, bride & groom would retire to their room where they would stay sequestered for the next, guess how many days – 7!
4. While Jesus & the Church are celebrating their union in heaven, the Father returns His redemptive focus to the Jews & fulfills His promises to them as a nation.
5. We can see the world stage is well set for this shift in God's redemptive focus in that, against all odds, the Nation of Israel is ***back in her land***.
 - a. Thinking historically, as well as using any kind of common sense, you'd **HAVE** to say the ***existence*** of the modern state of Israel is **IMPOSSIBLE!!!!**
 - b. Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD & in the mid-second century completed the annihilation of Israel by banning all Jews from the land, renaming Jerusalem *Aelia Capitolina*, & Israel - *Palestine*, after her age-old nemesis, the Philistines.
 - c. The Jews were without a homeland for ***nearly 1900 years***.
 - d. Then, miraculously, in May of 1948, the modern State of Israel was reborn.
 - e. ***Never*** has such a thing happened.
 - 1) The Jews maintained their unique identity for nearly 2,000 years without being assimilated into other ethnic groups.
 - 2) And this despite the fact that there has been ***no group more persecuted*** or harassed! ***Anti-Semitism*** is a well-known phenomenon.
 - f. While the existence of Modern Israel might be counted an historical absurdity, believers consider it the most expected thing in the world --
 - g. Because the Prophet Ezekiel ***said it would happen*** in ch. 37.
 - 1) He had a vision of a desert littered with dried, scattered bones.
 - 2) As he watched, the bones came together to form skeletons. Then flesh appeared. Breath returned & soon ***living people*** were standing in a ***lush valley***.
 - 4) God told Ezekiel the bones represented the Jews scattered to the four corners of the Earth.
 - 5) But in the last days, He would bring them back into their

land & restore life to Israel.

- 6) On our first day of touring Israel in September, as we drove up the coast our guide pointed out all the industry & commerce along the way.
 - a) Many of the world largest companies have *major* headquarters & production centers in Israel.
 - b) Tel Aviv is the largest computer center in the world outside Silicon Valley.
 - c) Most of the Windows XP operating system was written at Microsoft's headquarters in Israel.
 - d) Intel, IBM, Motorola, Sun, National Semiconductor, Texas Instruments, Cisco, & 3Com, to name just a few, all have major factories there.
 - e) The cell phone was developed at Motorola in Israel.
 - f) Voice mail technology was developed in Israel.
 - g) The AOL Instant Messenger was developed by 4 young Israelis.
 - h) Israel has the highest percentage of home computers.
 - i) She has the highest ratio of university degrees.
 - j) Israel produces more scientific papers per capita than any other nation by a large margin.
 - k) Her standard of living exceeds that of the England! [I could go on . . .]
- 7) But chs. 38 & 39 of Ezekiel tell us that when Israel is regathered in her land & enjoying God's blessing, she will be *attacked* by a confederation of nations comprised of Russia & her Muslim allies.
 - a) Every week for the last few months Russia has made an arms deal with one of Israel's many enemies.
 - b) Muslim leaders have recently *renewed their call* for the *eradication* of Israel.
 - c) In following the *Roadmap to Peace*, Israel has handed over the Gaza Strip & portions of the West Bank to Palestinian control in the hopes this will buy peace.
 - d) Has this satisfied the Palestinians? Have they backed off on their hostility toward Israel?
 - e) Not one bit! The hand over of land has only encouraged *more* attacks.

- f) This past week *new rocket* attacks were launched on Israeli homes from Gaza.
6. The point is this – In order for God to shift His attention back to Israel, *there has to be an Israel* for Him to show attention to.
 - a. May 14, 1948 saw the beginning of the Modern State of Israel. And the last 50 years has seen the fulfillment of Ezekiel 37 in her burgeoning prosperity.
 - b. The hostility of the nations listed in Ezekiel 38 & 39 toward Israel along with their close alliance with Russia sets the stage for the war prophesied there.
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7. So, *the first reason* why God will remove believers from the Earth to heaven in the Rapture is so that He can turn His redemptive attention back on Israel & fulfill His remaining promises to her.
 8. The *second reason* God will remove believers is to deliver them from His wrath which is about to fall on the Earth in what is known as “The Tribulation.”

C. The Time of God's Wrath - 1 Thess. 5

1. 1 Thess. 5:9-11 holds an important promise – **God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. ¹¹ Therefore comfort each other . . .**
2. This is the conclusion to what Paul had said about the Rapture in ch. 4.
 - a. Here he's concerned with letting his readers know that they will not be the subjects of God's wrath.
 - b. The problem was this; they'd been told by false teachers that the Tribulation had *already begun* because they were being persecuted for their faith.
 - c. What concerned them was that *Paul had taught them* the Rapture occurs **BEFORE** the Tribulation, so if they were *already* in the Tribulation, then that meant they'd *missed* the Rapture.
 - d. Paul tells them that what they're experiencing in persecution may be tough, but it's not THE Tribulation.
 - e. What makes The Tribulation different from all other periods in history is that it's the time of *God's wrath* poured out on a

- Christ-rejecting Earth.
- f. Therefore, the Church CAN'T be around for the Tribulation because believers don't reject Christ; we **embrace** Him, & we count His death on the cross as payment for our sins. He took God's holy wrath so that we wouldn't have to!
 - g. So, if the Church was here for the time of God's wrath, then Jesus' work on the cross would be of no effect.
 - h. This is what Paul means when He says we are not appointed to wrath but to salvation.
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3. The Bible has a lot to say about this period of 7years known as The Tribulation.
 4. In Daniel chs. 2 & 7 we're given an overview of history & the main empires that will rule the world.
 - a. Just as foretold, the Babylon Empire of Daniel's day gave way to the Persians, who were conquered by the Greeks, who were in turn dominated by the Romans.
 - b. But then something interesting happens in the prophecy; Rome isn't defeated by another empire. Instead it **morphs into something bizarre**.
 - c. It's during this last Empire that Christ comes again & ends the rebellious kingdoms of man & brings to Earth the glorious Kingdom of God.
 5. For decades, students of the Bible looked for some kind of **revival** of the Roman Empire as a fulfillment of the prophecies in Daniel.
 - a. Throughout the Middle Ages European kings tried revive Rome's glory, but all failed.
 - b. WW's I & II seemed to put the final nails in the coffin of a revived Roman Empire.
 - c. But the emergence of the **European Union** has stunned observers.
 - f. Within a single generation of the horrors of WWII, the nations that at one time comprised the heart of the Roman Empire are in league, with a central government & currency.
 - g. This last year it looked like the European constitution would be easily ratified, when to the surprise of nearly all, it was defeated in **France**, of all places!
 - h. Personally, I see France's failure to ratify the European constitution as the grace of God **slowing down** the world's

headlong race toward the Tribulation!

- i. It's God's way of giving people more time to repent *before it's too late*.
6. You see, Daniel chs. 2, 7 & 9 tells us that over this union of European nations will rise a ruler who will be -- not God's, but the World's idea of the Messiah.
 - a. He will have all the answers to the most important questions & perplexing problems facing mankind.
 - b. He'll have the answer for peace in the Middle East.
 - c. He'll know how to put the world back together after the Muslim world's catastrophic attack on Israel.
 - d. He'll solve the world's economic crisis.
 - e. And to cap it off, not only will he seem to have unending wisdom, he'll possess supernatural power so that he can perform miracles.
 - f. While many will embrace him as the Savior – He isn't; He's the one we call the *antichrist*.
 - g. Listen to how he's described in 2 Thess. 2: 3-12

³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day* [meaning The Return of Christ] *will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴ *who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.* ⁵ *Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?* ⁶ *And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.* ⁷ *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.**

7. Paul means the Holy Spirit Who's at work in the world through believers to resist evil.
 - a. Jesus said that as His disciples faithfully follow Him they are the salt & light of the world.
 - b. We *resist evil & hold back the darkness*.
 - c. The antichrist cannot launch his diabolical plans until the salt & light of the Church is removed.

- d. But when the Rapture takes place, the levee breaks & evil will pour forth across the earth like the Gulf of Mexico over New Orleans.

⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. ⁹ The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, [note that; we'll come back to it] ¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

8. Speculation on the identity of the anti-christ has not been in short supply.
 - a. Throughout history people have branded their enemies as “anti-christ.”
 - b. Martin Luther called the Pope the anti-christ & the Pope promptly returned the favor.
 - c. There’s no end to modern day attempts to identify who he is.
 - d. But all such speculation is pointless because of what Paul says here – He won’t be revealed until *after* the Rapture.
 - e. Christians ought not be looking for anti-christ; they ought to be looking for *Jesus Christ!*
9. But as a *trend*, it’s not difficult to see how the world is being primed to welcome someone who can provide leadership.
 - a. People everywhere are decrying the lack of good leadership
 - b. Corporate scandals have tarnished the once bright image of business leaders.
 - c. As governments have grown into obese bureaucracies, government officials are despised as little more than ineffective office holders.
 - d. The European Union is governed by a Parliament which is in turn led by a president.
 - e. The presidency rotates among the various member countries.

- f. But they've made it clear they're only serving until they find someone who can fill the office more effectively. That day isn't far off.
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10. If you're hearing this *after* the Rapture, understand that while we refer to this dynamic world ruler as the "anti-christ" & the epitome of evil, don't assume that he'll *look* sinister & evil. Far from it!
- Part of his deception will be how good he looks & wise he sounds.
 - He'll have awesome solutions to impossible problems.
 - He'll appear to be a man of peace.
 - The world will fall all over itself to follow him.
11. As I said earlier, what will clinch their whole-hearted support will be his demonstration of supernatural power.
- Paul says in 2 Thess. 2 that he's imbued with satanic power so that he can perform signs & wonders.
 - Why? To what purpose?
 - Jesus worked signs to *reveal His identity* as God & bring people to faith in Him.
 - The anti-christ will work miracles for the *same purpose*; to make people think he's god.
 - Listen again to what Paul said in 2 Thess. 2 –
- [He] opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**
- In v. 11 he says that because the people of the world reject the truth of *Jesus Christ*, God will turn them over to the deceit of *anti-christ* & they will believe **THE** Lie.
13. **What lie?** What deceit will they swallow hook, line, & stinker?
- The lie that the anti-christ is god.
 - But there's more to it than that. As the devil's agent, the anti-christ will repeat the *old lie*, the *first* lie – the one he whispered to Eve in the Garden of Eden – "**YOU** can be as God."
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14. Stay with me while we take a little side trip now . . .
15. A couple weeks ago, an appeals court ruled against a Pennsylvania School Board which had said Intelligent Design was to be taught alongside evolution in science classes.
- The judge was harshly critical of the school board for trying to

- insert religion into the schools.
- b. He said that Intelligent Design is nothing but *religious creationism* wrapped up in pseudo-scientific clothes & has no place in a *science* class.
 - c. He also said that *evolution was an accepted fact* & that there was no room for questioning it's validity as the explanation for the origin of life.
16. The press & secular humanists across the country were ecstatic & now a campaign has been launched to systematically erase all inroads Creationism & Intelligent Design have made into the public schools.
17. The ruling had a chilling effect on proponents of ID. Several of them have retreated altogether & said the Creationist cause is lost.
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18. Intelligent Design is far more solid as science than evolution.
- a. The fact of the matter is, Intelligent Design spells the end of evolution as far as science is concerned.
 - b. Evolution has **NO ANSWER** for the arguments of Intelligent Design.
 - c. So rather than deal with the *facts* of ID, the court dispensed with it on the basis of its *connection to religion*, to the belief that the design seen in even the simplest forms of life requires an intelligence behind their genesis!
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19. What does this have to do with the anti-christ & The Lie people will believe in the Last Days? Just this . . .
- a. By a wave of his judicial wand, U.S. District Judge John Jones declared evolution a *fact*.
 - b. The long battle between evolution & creation that began with the Scopes trial 80 years ago appears to be over.
 - c. Actually, it's been over in Europe & most of Asia for a long time.
20. The anti-christ will use the dogma of Evolution to his advantage.
- a. He might say something like,

“As humanity has now encircled the Earth & modern communications link us into a global community, we've come to a *new age*, a bright new future for those willing to take the next daring step.

“We've progressed along this evolutionary step as far as we can

go. If we're to survive, if we're to overcome the problems that lie before us, as you've seen me do over the last few months, then humanity must make a quantum step forward in it's evolution.

“That step is to now move into a realm that some *used* to call ‘deity’ – a place where we tap our inner abilities to alter reality. *I have already made* that evolutionary step. Watch.”

- d. Then he will perform some miracle before the eyes of millions.
 - e. He'll follow it up with a *condition*, a test of people's allegiance – they must put their faith in him, which they will have to demonstrate by performing some act of *devotion* toward him.
 - f. Paul says that he will sit as God in the temple of God, showing himself to be God & demanding people worship him.
21. So as another trend we look to see if there's any movement to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.
- a. *World Net Daily* – June 9th, 2005 – Israel's newly reconstituted Sanhedrin has called for all Temple Mount groups to submit architectural plans for the reconstruction of the Temple.
 - b. The building materials have already been purchased & warehoused.
 - c. The *Temple Institute* in Jerusalem has remade the furniture, priests' clothes, & implements needed to renew the temple services.
 - d. Priests are being trained to offer sacrifices & perform the daily temple rituals.
 - e. And rumors are rampant about the location of the Ark of the Covenant being in a room *under* the Mount.
22. Another trend we look for is *the anti-christ's demand for devotion*.
- a. This is spelled out in Revelation 13 where we read of the mark the anti-christ's assistant requires all to take in their right hand or forehead.
 - b. V. 17 says that without it, a person cannot buy or sell; they will be locked out of the marketplace.
 - c. Just 30 years ago when I shared this with my non-christian friends they laughed at the idea of a cash-less society where all exchange would be done electronically.
 - d. But ATM's and EFT have changed all that.

- e. And now the technology of RFID's & smart chips the size of a grain of rice make the implantation of such things into our hands or foreheads highly feasible.
 - f. But not just feasible – likely; people are *already* doing it.
 - 1) To date, over a thousand people have been implanted.
 - 2) Including the entire Attorney General's department of Mexico.
 - g. What makes this all the more interesting is to take a closer look at the word translated as 'mark' in Revelation 13:6.
 - 1) It refers to an engraving *in* the skin.
 - 2) The word is *ideally* fulfilled by a hypodermically implanted microchip.
 - h. I often wonder how much of the tattoo & body piercing craze is a part of preparing people for the Mark of the Beast?
23. And how far-fetched is it to think of the anti-christ saying that all people have to do to show their unity with him & his agenda of global peace & the next wave of human evolution is to be implanted with one of his chips
24. "That chip will be the key that ushers you into a new economic system that brings an end to crime & poverty & hunger. The dawn of Earth's greatest Golden Age awaits – just take the chip – pledge yourself to me!"
25. Hold on – Revelation 14:11 says that anyone who takes the mark is eternally lost.
26. So, if you're listening to this after the Rapture – whatever you do don't align yourself with the anti-christ, no matter how good he looks or appealing his offer.
27. It's all a lie – He's a liar who's after one thing – your soul.

III. THE END

A. More

1. There is so much more we could look at but we're out of time.
2. The Bible has a lot more to say about what the world will be like prior to the return of Christ.
3. But what we've looked at today ought to be enough to convince a reasonable person that the Bible nails it as far as prophecy is concerned & we *are* living in the last days.
4. After spending many, many hours studying prophecy, I can say

with all confidence that the world stage is well set for the Return of Christ.

- a. Now, I know what some will say – “Yeah, people have been saying that for hundreds of years, & He’s still hasn’t come.”
 - b. That’s true – but there’s a major difference between past projections of Christ’s return & today.
 - c. In the past, people had to interpret prophecy *spiritually & symbolically*.
 - d. They had to twist & bend things to make them fit the events of their day.
 - e. What’s dramatically different about today is that there’s no need whatever to do that.
 - f. What we read in the Bible is coming to pass in our newspapers; secular journalists are chronicling the fulfillment of prophecy & they don’t even know it.
5. After a lot of careful study of these things, I can say with all certainty that the stage is well set for The Return of Christ.
- a. All the pieces are in place for the Tribulation & rise of anti-christ.
 - b. Israel is back in her land & prospering while surrounded by enemies just itching to wipe her off the map.
 - c. The next thing slated to take place on the prophetic calendar is the Rapture of the Church – it could happen at ANY TIME!
6. So – what about you? If the Rapture were to take place today, would you go up, or be left behind?