

# **“Unbelief - The Point of Reckoning”**

## **Part 5**

In this segment we transition back to aspects pertaining to the sin of “unbelief”. The focus in the last two issues illustrated how God revealed the Second Coming of Christ as well as the Rapture by the use of “types”, “patterns”, “themes”, and “parallels”. Biblical doctrine is derived from the principle of **“here a little, there a little”**. The reference to **“precept upon precept”** and **“line upon line”** is noted twice in Isaiah 28:10 and 13. There is a method behind what man might think as simply God’s madness, and the chief reason for God’s method to communicate truth and doctrine comes from the need to preserve the integrity of the Written Word while assisting to gradually and systematically grasp the deeper meanings found in God’s Holy Word so that one’s memory slowly becomes equipped in retaining Biblical truths accurately.

God, in His omniscient knowledge foresaw that man would be manipulated by Lucifer to make attempts to adulterate and corrupt the Word of God. This is amply and easily seen in many passages that have been watered down to either dilute or flat out distort the original text’s meaning. The name of Lucifer appears only once in the KJV Bible, namely Isaiah 14:12. A clear example of the perversion of modern translations can be seen in the many corrupted versions that are based upon the New Greek Text of Westcott and Hort which has changed the word “Lucifer” to the “Morning Star”. **The term “Morning Star” is unquestionably a reference to Jesus Christ Himself** in Revelation 2:28 and Revelation 22:16.

**The important point** is that doctrinal truth is revealed in the progressive unfolding of the Biblical text through the use of literary forms, such as “types”, “themes”, “patterns”, and “parallels”. Understanding this practice becomes vital to our ability to grasp how the sin of “unbelief” will disqualify a Christian from the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. **To state matters plainly, if one does not believe in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture, they cannot conclude they will be raptured simply because they call themselves Christian, or are a Christian in name only!**

Christian doctrine believed and taught varies by the church, denomination, and theological seminaries. They can be as few as 10 and as many as 40. What follows is a short-list:

- Doctrine of God
- Doctrine of Christ
- Doctrine of Holy Spirit
- Doctrine of the Bible

- Doctrine of Man
- Doctrine of Salvation
- Doctrine of the Church
- Doctrine of Angels
- Doctrine of End Times
- Doctrine of Prayer

From my theological education and studies, this short list would therefore, have to be the bare essentials. Over the years, I have read many different doctrinal statements held by different denominations, and academic institutions. The importance of this quantification process is that all are derived from a comprehensive study of the 66 books of the Bible known as the “Canon”.

People who read the Bible are not necessarily studying the Bible from a theological construct or a standard frame of reference using a set of terms which define a particular positional belief. In this series we are examining the subject of the “Pre-Tribulation Rapture” which falls under the category of the “Doctrine of End Times”, or the “Doctrine of Eschatology”. The process whereby we arrive at a set of assumptions forming a doctrine is derived after a thorough study of the total corpus, or text of the whole Bible. This is also known or expression, “the whole counsel of God”.

I prefer to use the basic Greek word for the Rapture or **“Harpazo”**, which is found **15X** in the New Testament. There are at least seven or eight other words some might use to illustrate this future event. My preference rests on the fact that this is the strongest term of those available word choices plus it is directly related to its Greek root meaning.

In the case of the word “unbelief” we find it used **16X** times in the New Testament. At least five of those occurrences **explicitly relate to being cut off from God’s promises**, in this case the promise of God’s blessing. I will note them here but discuss them later:

- ***“Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear:”*** -(Romans 11:20).
- ***“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God”.*** -(Hebrews 3:12).
- ***“So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief”.*** - (Hebrews 3:19).
- ***“Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief”.*** -(Hebrews 4:6).

- **“Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief”**. -(Hebrews 4:11).

At this precise point, these five passages alone formulate a temporary foundational basis that is adequate for making the assumption that those in “unbelief” will forfeit their blessing, or reward for active enrollment in the coming great event of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. At the very least, they reaffirm that “unbelief” is a sin. How do we determine that “unbelief” is a sin? In the Gospel of John 16:9 we find that **because they did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it was a sin! The world’s sin is unbelief in Jesus.** The greatest sin is the refusal to believe in Jesus -(John 3:18). **Those who reject Jesus are in danger of eternal separation from God. This is precisely why it is considered the “unpardonable sin”.**

Righteousness is available to people because Jesus goes to the Father. The Spirit’s function will be to show all people that **Christ alone provides the standard of God’s righteousness.** The Holy Spirit must make unbelievers recognize God’s perfect standard before they will admit their own deficiency. This can also mean that the Spirit will show the world the futility of religious self-righteousness. The Holy Spirit will show the **inadequacy of ceremony and ritual in making one right with God** - (see Matthew 5:20; Romans 10:3; Philippians 3:6-9).<sup>(a)</sup> Sin is defilement and inseparable from sin.

Titus 1:15 teaches that **“Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.”** Phrases like this one must be understood in both their immediate and wider contexts. Paul was not teaching moral relativism (“As long as I can call myself pure, whatever I choose to do is therefore pure”), but he was speaking against superficial, external legalism. Dietary restrictions or food laws presented a form of religion that people thought provided spiritual substance, but which proved to be empty and void of real spiritual help. Those who believe sound doctrine and live their faith do not need to worry about rules and rituals regarding what is clean or unclean. No stronger denunciation could be made to these false teachers who taught the need for following rules and rituals in order to be clean and pure. Because of their inner corruption, nothing is pure—nothing they do, say, give, or teach could be pure because their minds and consciences were defiled. Echoing Jesus’ teaching in Mark 7:15-19 and Luke 11:39-41, Paul explained that a person who is pure on the inside cannot be corrupted by outside influences; but **a person who is corrupt on the inside corrupts everything around him.** There can be no purity for such a person.<sup>(a)</sup>

Paul writes in Romans 11:32 that **“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.”** When people choose

to follow their own passion and desires, they are imprisoned in their disobedience. People who deliberately choose to disobey God imprison themselves. It is those who understand that they have been saying no to God who are in the best position to say yes to him. God then is willing to have mercy on all who come to him. For a beautiful picture of Jews and Gentiles experiencing rich blessings, see Isaiah 60.<sup>(a)</sup>

Hebrews 3:12 teaches that “unbelief” comes from an evil heart. An evil heart leads to hardness of heart. The lesson from Israel’s experience applies to all believers. The readers had not yet revolted against Christ or drifted away from him, but they were in danger of emulating Israel’s rebellion. The Israelites, who, with their own eyes, had seen great miracles from God’s hand, had fallen away from God. Christians must be careful not to fall into the same snare. **No Christian is immune from turning away from or rejecting God.** Sometimes people gradually drift (as in Hebrews 2:1-4); sometimes they simply rebel. We as believers should carefully watch our Christian lives.

An evil and unbelieving heart leads to dire consequences; it causes a person to turn away from the living God. As illustrated by the Israelites, **hard hearts can cause rebellion.** Turning away from Christianity implies more than turning away from a system of beliefs or a set of doctrines; **it literally means turning away from God.**<sup>(a)</sup> Mark 16:14 and Acts 19:9 notes that precise point.

Jesus makes a point in John 8:45-46 that **those inclined towards unbelief are destined to judicial blindness.** In contrast to the Devil, who habitually lies, Jesus speaks only the truth—and for that reason was not believed. In the end, Jesus was rejected not only because the Jews judged Him to be a Sabbath breaker and blasphemer -(John 5:18), but also because His words to them were very harsh and exposing. In light of His character and words, **they could not stand to see and hear the truth about themselves.**

If there was a chink in Jesus’ armor, His next question would have been their golden opportunity to destroy Him. Jesus left Himself completely open for a direct attack, **“Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin?”** Of course, no one could. People who hated Him and wanted Him dead scrutinized His behavior but could find nothing wrong. And they were grasping at straws trying to make Him anything but what He claimed to be. Jesus proved He was God in the flesh by His sinless life. **He was speaking the truth, but they refused to believe.**<sup>(a)</sup>

This issue is noted in John 12:39-40. It is because they are blinded by a veil of judicial blindness, and because of this they will neither see with their eyes nor understand with the heart. Jesus had performed enough miraculous signs to cause people to believe in Him. The greatest of all signs—raising

Lazarus from the dead—should have been enough to elicit faith from all those who saw it and even heard about it. Yet most of the people still did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

This unbelief had been predicted by Isaiah. In the opening of this chapter on the suffering Savior, Isaiah asked, ***“Who has believed our message? To whom will the Lord reveal his saving power?”*** -(Isaiah 53:1). It took revelation from God to know that Jesus was the one through whom God demonstrated His saving power. Isaiah was referring to Jesus when he made this prediction, because he was given a vision of the Messiah’s glory. But the Jews lacked this understanding. Why? Because it was prophesied. Isaiah wrote: ***“The Lord has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts.”***<sup>(a)</sup>

This judicial blindness results in a separation from being Christ’s sheep. John 10:26 makes this point in parting when he refers to the illustration Jesus used months earlier regarding Jesus as the ***“good shepherd”*** -(John 10:3-9; John 10:16). Here, Jesus told the Jewish leaders surrounding Him, ***“You don’t believe me because you are not part of My flock.”*** Only those who were given to Jesus by the Father -(John 10:29) were His sheep. ***“...the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”*** -(2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:4). Similarly, Jesus relates this same problem in the parable of the sower in Luke 8:12 and warns that ***“...the Devil comes and takes the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.”***

1<sup>st</sup> John 5:10 notes ***“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.”*** This is exhibited in John 16:9; Psalm 106:24; Isaiah 53:1; John 12:38; John 12:37; Hebrews 3:12; 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 7:2; Psalms 78:19-20; Psalms 78:32; Romans 4:20. Jesus Christ rebuked such examples of unbelief in Matthew 17:17, 20; John 20:27; Mark 6:5.

We know that Jesus Christ performed miracles to convince those experiencing unbelief: John 10:37-38; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:22; yet the Jews rejected these miracles and gifts because of their “unbelief”.

Paul wrote in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:14 not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. So what did it mean to avoid being “unequally yoked”? The picture illustrated here is that of teaming up two animals, such as an ox and a mule, to plow a field. However, because the plow would be pulled unevenly or the weight being carried would be spilled, it wouldn’t work out -(see Deuteronomy 22:10). In the same way, a believer and an unbeliever are categorically different. Teaming up with unbelievers would lead to disaster. The Corinthian church was having a difficult time separating themselves from

the immoral practices of their unbelieving neighbors. Paul was telling the Corinthians to avoid any situation that would compromise their faith or their Christian morals. Why? Because **goodness cannot partner with wickedness; light cannot live with darkness; Christ and the Devil cannot live in harmony.** Therefore, how can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? While this verse applies to all partnerships and alliances, marriage certainly comes under this teaching.<sup>(a)</sup>

Those guilty of “unbelief” do not have the Word of God in their lives. This is a clear proof they will not receive the “blessing” reserved for those who believe in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Read John 5:38; Hebrews 11:6; Acts 19:9; Romans 15:31; Acts 14:2; John 12:37; 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 17:14; John 3:18; Isaiah 7:9; 8:14.

Scripture makes it very clear that those in “unbelief” will die in their sins and they will not enter into their “rest”. ***“He who believes on the Son has everlasting life, and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him.”*** -(John 3:36). God has given Christ Jesus the power to grant everlasting life to all who believe on Him. **This is one of the clearest verses in all the Bible on how a person can be saved.** It is simply by believing in the Son. As we read this verse, we should realize that God is speaking. **He is making a promise that can never be broken.** He says, clearly and distinctly, that anyone who believes in His Son has everlasting life. To accept this promise is not a leap in the dark. **It is believing what could not possibly be false.** Those who do not obey the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on them already. From this verse we learn that **our eternal destiny depends on what we do with the Son of God in life now.** If we receive Him, God gives us eternal life as a free gift. If we reject Him, we will never enjoy everlasting life, and not only so, but God's wrath already hangs over us, ready to fall at any moment.

Notice that there is **nothing in this verse about keeping the law, obeying the Golden Rule, going to church, doing the best we can, or working our way to heaven.**<sup>(b)</sup>

***“And to whom did He swear that they should not enter into His rest, but to those who did not believe? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”*** -(Hebrews 3:18-19) The rebellious generation of Israelites could not enter his place of rest (the Promised Land) because of their unbelief. But this “unbelief” was more than just a mental process; their unbelief caused them to disobey. There is a strong connection between unbelief (the underlying attitude) and disobedience (the resulting action). Both their actions and their beliefs condemned them.

The nation had been rescued from Egypt, had seen God’s salvation, and had been given the hope of a new land. Yet they had disobeyed.

Christians have been rescued from sin, have seen God's salvation, and have been given the hope of eternal life. **For those who reject Christ, the penalty is greater than it was for the Israelites.** The penalty is God's rejection. **Just as Christ was greater than Moses, so those rejecting Christ will receive greater punishment than those who rejected Moses.**<sup>(a)</sup> See John 8:24; Hebrews 4:11. They will be condemned as Mark 16:16; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:12; Jude 1:5. They will be cast into the lake of fire: Revelation 21:8; Hebrews 3:12.

Initially, in this segment, I named five specific verses making a case for the cutting off of those in "unbelief"; what followed was a quick overview of just a scattering of passages that address the dangerous issue of "unbelief" and paints a larger image of the consequences resulting from the sin of "unbelief". It would be possible to draw assumptions for a clear doctrine at this point, but I will take the reader to another level revealing how God foretells the general concept of "unbelief" in the use of "types", "themes", "patterns", and "parallels" and even through the use of "parables", which are unique to Jesus' words.

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***Commentaries:***

- a. Life Application New Testament Commentary
- b. Believer's Bible Commentary