

## 7. The 12 reasons for Pre-Tribulation Rapture

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The Rapture refers to that time when Jesus is going to come, without warning, and take away His born-again Christians from this earth. After the Rapture, the Lord will unleash His wrath upon this sinful unbelieving world for 7 years. That is the time we know as the Great Tribulation.

There are many pastors who choose not to acknowledge the Rapture or say that they are not certain whether it will come before the Tribulation. I believe that your view of the Rapture will have a significant impact on the proper understanding of the end-time prophecies, a.k.a. eschatology.

According to a survey by Lifeway Research group in 2016, mainline Protestant pastors (36%) are more likely to say the rapture isn't literal. Pastors who hold this view include about half of Lutherans (60%), Methodists (48%), and Presbyterian/Reformed pastors (49%). Few Baptist (6%) or Pentecostal pastors (less than 1%) hold that view. Evangelicals overall (43%) are more likely to believe in a pretribulation rapture. It is no wonder that Christians in general don't have a clear view and understanding of the rapture's meaning and timeline.

This is one of those main doctrines Calvary Chapels stand very firm because we don't want any confusion in understanding God's Word, especially for the end-time prophecy. I am not saying that those who believe differently than we do are not Christian and will not be able to go to heaven. But I am saying that those who don't subscribe to the Pre-tribulation theology will never be in the position of teaching in any capacity in our church or other Calvary Chapels because they will confuse others.

### A. THE DATE OR HOUR OF THE RAPTURE

The Scripture clearly tells us that no human can possibly know when the rapture is going to happen.

*Matt 24:36-39 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."*

Jesus told us that His Word is final and there cannot be anyone who can reverse His Word. However, we find many people come up with their own formula to tell the date of the Rapture.

When Jesus said, "No-one-knows," means exactly "No-one-knows." I don't know which part of this "No-one-knows" people don't understand. Whenever some la la land theologians come up with fancy formulas or some personal revelation they supposedly have received from Jesus for the date and time of the Rapture, a large flock of people go for it hook, line, and sinker all the way down. They'd rather believe what mere men say more than what Jesus did in the Bible.

### B. THE REASONS FOR THE CONTROVERSY

Generally, there are four different concepts for the time of the Rapture:

Those who believe that the Rapture will happen before the Tribulation are known as "Pre-Tribulation." Those who believe that the Rapture will happen sometime in the middle of the Tribulation are known as "Mid-Tribulation." In most cases, they tend to believe that the Rapture will happen right in the middle of the tribulation, between the first and second half of the Tribulation. The third camp is for those who believe that the Rapture will happen after the Tribulation. They are known as "Post-Tribulation." Lastly, there is a group of people who believe it will pan out somehow. We call them Pan-Tribulation. Usually, they don't have any biblical references to show their theory.

Why does the debate continue concerning the timing of this event? I believe it is due to misunderstanding in two areas:

### 1) The Elect

*Matthew 24:21-22 For then shall be great Tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

Based on this verse, people say, "Aha! Here we see the elect in the Tribulation." However, they are failing to realize that the term "elect" can be referred to three groups of people: Christians (Colossians 3:12), Israel in general (Isaiah 45:4), and those who will be saved during the Tribulation.

So, to which of the elect does Jesus refer in Matthew 24:21? I believe the answer lies in the verse preceding it.

*Matthew 24:20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.*

Even to this day, transportation in Israel is shut down on the Sabbath. Since the Sabbath means nothing to Gentile nations, the application is for Israel in general.

I had an occasion to talk with someone who was a staunch believer for the Mid-Tribulation. He made a good argument for how we can draw parallel lines between Matthew 24 and Revelation 6. So he firmly argued with me that the church would go through the Tribulation. The one very important thing he didn't include in his equation was that the 'elect' was not the church by the context from Matthew 24:20. It is the people of Israel.

You don't find anywhere, from Revelation chapters 6 to 19, referring to the church. Some people also argue that those who get saved during the Tribulation are the church. No, they are not. They are the ones who get to heaven after they get killed by the antichrist.

### 2) The Trumpets

*1 Corinthians 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

Based on this verse, people say, "See, according to Revelation 11, the seventh, or the last trump signaling the Rapture, will take place midway through the Tribulation." But wait a minute. Each trumpet of Revelation 8-11 is sounded by an angel, whereas 1 Thessalonians 4:16 makes it clear that the trump is sounded by God.

*1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 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.*

## C. 12 REASONS FOR PRE-TRIBULATION

### 1) The Rapture doctrine is to be a comforting one.

*1 Thessalonians 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

The belief that the Rapture happens after or in the middle of the Tribulation is anything but comforting because it means believers must endure unbelievable agony before they are taken to heaven.

### 2) The Tribulation is the outpouring of the wrath of the Lamb.

*1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ*

God has not appointed us to wrath. The wrath that should have been hurled at you and poured out on me was absorbed by our Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary.

### 3) Pre-Tribulation Rapture is illustrated in Genesis 19, where we see angels delivering Lot and his family before the destruction of Sodom.

How do I know this is a picture of the Rapture? Because in reference to this, Peter writes in 2 Peter 2:9, *"then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment."*

### 4) When the Great Tribulation occurs on earth, I expect to be in heaven standing before the Son of Man and singing of the worthiness of the Lamb.

*Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."*

Only the church can sing this song of redemption. Who else are going to be His kings and priest? No one else other than His church. We find that the church singing the song of redemption occurs in Revelation chapter 5, before the opening of the scroll in chapter 6, which shows the start of the Great Tribulation on the earth.

### 5) It simply isn't consistent with the nature of God to judge the righteous with the wicked.

*Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*

We, the church, are not "appointed unto wrath" during the Tribulation.

### 6) Jesus told us to pray that we would be raptured before the Tribulation.

*Luke 21:36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.*

In speaking of the Tribulation in His Olivet Discourse, Jesus said, *"Watch and pray always that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things."* How are we accounted worthy? The only one way: We are worthy because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross of Calvary.

### 7) Pre-Tribulation Rapture makes sense historically and scripturally.

*John 14:2 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.*

In accordance with Jewish custom, when a man came of age to marry, he would add a room on to his father's house for himself and his bride. When the addition was

complete, and when the father gave the go-ahead, a trumpet call by the father would sound, and the bridegroom would go to meet his bride.

Following the wedding ceremony, the bridegroom would take his bride to his father's house, where they would be tucked away for seven days in the newly completed "bridal suite." At the end of seven days, the bridegroom would come out with his bride and introduce her to the community.

That's exactly what's going to happen with us. Jesus, our Bridegroom, is preparing a place for us in heaven, our mansions in His Father's kingdom. At the appointed time known only by the Father, a trumpet will sound and Jesus will meet us, His bride, in the air to escort us up to the "Bridal Suite" He has prepared for us. We will remain with Him in heaven for seven years before we are presented to the world, where we will rule and reign with Him.

### **8) Pre-Tribulation Rapture follows the outline of the Book of Revelation.**

If you don't embrace a Pre-Tribulation view, your understanding of Revelation becomes as twisted as a pretzel. Because if you hold to a Mid-Tribulation stance, you've got to put chapters 4 and 5 after chapter 11. And if you take a Post-Tribulation point of view, you need to put chapter 4 and 5 after chapter 19. Only a Pre-Tribulation placement of the Rapture allows for a consistent flow of the Book of Revelation.

### **9) Pre-Tribulation Rapture allows for the conditional aspect of the Tribulation.**

*Revelation 2:22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.*

If the Rapture won't occur until after the Tribulation, what would be the reason for this warning of Jesus against the church of Thyatira? The "great tribulation" mentioned here is "megas thlipsis" in Greek. This is the exact same word that is used to describe the seven year Tribulation throughout Revelation 6-19.

"Well, didn't Jesus say in this world we would have tribulation?" you might ask. Yes, but that kind of tribulation which actually should be translated as 'trial' the believers go through in the world, is from satan. The Tribulation of chapters 6-19, on the other hand, is from God as He pours out His wrath to the Christ-rejecting world.

Folks, God will not allow us to get hit from both sides. If we experience tribulation in the world because of our faith, we will not experience the Great Tribulation of those who have no faith in Christ Jesus.

### **10) Pre-Tribulation Rapture squares with the prophecy of Daniel.**

According to Daniel's prophecy in chapter 9, three and a half biblical years – a Biblical year being 360 days – from the day the antichrist enters the temple and demands worship midway through the Tribulation which we know as the Abomination of Desolation, the Lord will return. That is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ with His people from heaven to claim the earth.

If it is post-tribulation rapture, what would it be the purpose of the Rapture right before the Second Coming? There is no reason for God to take His people away then turn around to bring them back down to the earth.

## 11) The Tribulation is unnecessary for the church.

*Romans 11:25-26 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*

*And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;*

Referred to as the time of "Jacob's Trouble", the Tribulation targets Israel, for through it she will be awakened and at last see Jesus as the Messiah according to Romans 11:25-26. The promises God made to Abraham and the Jewish people have not been forgotten in Deuteronomy 4:29-30. God will work with Israel in the days of the Tribulation. He will make Himself known to them and they shall indeed be saved.

*Deuteronomy 4:29-30 But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

*When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice*

## 12) Pre-Tribulation Rapture illustrated in Enoch who was taken to heaven prior to the Flood.

*Genesis 5:24 And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*

Some might say, "Wrong analogy. The correct picture is Noah who went through the tribulation of the Flood." But Noah is not a picture of the church, but Israel. God protected and sheltered Noah as His judgment Flood was unleashed. Noah was sealed by God and safely taken through the Flood, just as the 144,000 in Revelation ch 7.

But Enoch was taken up to heaven before the flood, the church will be taken before the Tribulation.

## D. WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?

Whether you believe in a pre-Tribulation Rapture or not, it will not affect where you'll ultimately end up. If you're a believer, you'll be in heaven no matter what position you hold. But your viewpoint concerning the Rapture very definitely affects how you live your life this side of eternity. Jesus tells us to watch and be ready and be in prayer.