The Rapture Sermon — Delivery Transcript

Revelation 6–8 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, September 19, 2021 · *Birth Pains*

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If you have your Bible, you can open it to Revelation chapter 7. We're going to be in Revelation chapter 7 this morning. You might put a thumb there and also bookmark Matthew chapter 24. We're going to be in both of those books. If you're new to our church or if this is your first time to Broadview, you kind of showed up right in the middle of a two-week discussion about the end of the world. The last couple of months and really last year or two with COVID and 2020 and all the things that have happened to us.

Post those big events, there's been a piqued interest in what the Bible says about the end of the world. That's one of the reasons as a church we're going through the book of Revelation, not just here and there in the book, but working our way all the way through from the beginning to the end. And we got to a place in the book of Revelation where it talks about how the end of the world is going to happen and we've been looking at these six different seals that are in Revelation chapter 6, and we've been paralleling them with the discussion that Jesus has in Matthew 24 about the end of days.

And we finally gotten to that point in the book of Revelation where we need to have a discussion about a much-discussed topic called the rapture of the church. How many of you have ever heard that term rapture of the church? Maybe you read a book on it. You've maybe heard different teachers teach different things about the rapture of the church. And a lot of people want to know, well, Pastor Wes, what do you think about the rapture? And today I want to try to show you the view that I hold and why I hold it.

And so again, if you're new to Broadview, this is not our typical diet. This is not what a typical Sunday morning looks like. The same was true last week. Last week was like drinking from a fire hydrant, and I am so sorry about that. I know it was a ton of Scripture really fast. Some of you love it and you can't wait to do it again. Some of you are like, I can't take it

anymore, please. And I understand. It's trying to do something in between those two things. I want to challenge you, I want to help you to learn.

But we got one more week of fire hydrant, baby. So get ready. If you don't take notes, today's the day to take notes. If you don't have a copy of the notes, you can get them online at broadview.church/notes. Broadview.church/notes. Some of the greatest gifts that God has given to us seem to be the same areas where Satan attacks most strongly. When it comes to God's good gift of creation, Satan sometimes causes us to use the creation to worship the creation over the Creator. So God gives a good gift, Satan perverts it, attacks it, causes it to be something that's a curse more than it is a gift.

Same is true when it comes to marriage. God's given us the gift of marriage to portray the love that Jesus has for his people, the church. It's a beautiful picture of that. It's a foundation for the family, the family a foundation for the thing we call civilization and society. But Satan attacks marriages, he attacks families, he ruins societies and civilizations through that means. And so one of God's greatest gifts, Satan uses to destroy. Well, I think a similar kind of dynamic is true when it comes to the second coming of Christ and discussions around the second coming of Christ.

Really, that discussion should be the greatest event on your calendar. Not that you've picked a time or a date, but the best thing on your calendar should be the fact that Jesus is going to come. When he does, he's going to renew the earth. Every injustice will be made just, every wrong will be righted. There is so much hope in that promise that God has given to us. But what happens a lot of times in the church is that we get divided and angry with one another over discussions about the particulars of that end times event.

And I tried to expose you to some of that discussion last week about, will the world end in seven years, or does that prophecy in Daniel 9 talk about the first century? Or if it is ending in seven years, the events that take place in those seven years, does it look like this or does it look like that? And those are disagreements that the Bible just does not address clearly, but even so, some people think, well, I understand it clearly, and since I understand it this way, if you disagree with me, it's my way or the highway.

If you don't believe like I believe, you don't love Jesus, you don't love the Bible, maybe you might be going to hell. I mean it gets bad sometimes in certain sectors of the church. And I do not want our church to be like that. I do not want Broadview to be the kind of church where you've got to toe the line on the secondary issues, on all these kinds of different things. In your notes, there's a difference between open-handed issues and closed-handed issues. Open-handed issues and close-fisted issues. Close-fisted issues, we just sang about.

I believe in the resurrection. I believe in Christ the Son. I believe in the deity of Jesus. I believe in the Trinity. We do not have open-handed discussions about those issues. You

believe them or you don't, and if you don't, you're not a Christian. But there are other issues in the realm of theology that are open-handed. For example, when it comes to baptism, do you immerse or do you sprinkle? Is it a sign of the covenant or is it believer's baptism only? That's a secondary issue. People disagree. I would think to be a member of this church you probably believe in baptism by immersion, but we're not going to throw shade at other denominations who don't agree with us.

It's just not what we do in this church. When it comes to the sign gifts, the miraculous, do you believe you can still speak in tongues? Do you believe prophecy is still a thing? Can you have divine healings and things of that nature— revelatory, supernatural gifts? Some people say, yeah, they're still active today. Some people say no, they've ceased to function the way that they did in the first century. That's an open-handed issue. I have strong convictions about that issue. And it's the right of all of my friends who disagree with me to be wrong.

But it's okay. It doesn't hurt our friendship on those matters. I'm totally joking. But same is true when it comes to women in ministry, Calvinism and Arminianism. This is not going to be a church where we get super dogmatic about those kinds of issues. It's not my personality and I don't think it's helpful in the body of Christ. We want to be charitable about the secondary kinds of matters. And listen, when it comes to the rapture of the church, it is a secondary matter. We need to be charitable in our discussion about these things.

And so what I wanted to do last week was to expose you to all of the different views. And I said last week and I believe that each of those views can be supported by Scripture. But which one is most supported by Scripture is what I want to talk about today. And you need to know if you disagree with my view, that's perfectly fine. I'm not trying to convince you to believe something different. In fact, it's kind of funny. The view I hold today, I did not hold when we started this study.

I talked myself out of my view into a different view. And in fact, the Wes of 2019— not only does he disagree with the Wes of 2020, the 2019 Wes also disagrees with the 2015 Wes, because I had a different view in 2015. And the 2015 Wes disagreed with the 2009 Wes. In fact, I have held all of these four views that we're about to talk about. And right now I hold this view that we're going to be discussing today, but I want you to know it's not settled science in the Scripture.

I'm not being dogmatic about it today. I don't want you to be dogmatic about your view. And if you want to try to persuade me back to the other side, to the dog side or whatever your view is, hey man, I love free lunches, and so just call me up and we'll talk about it. All right. So with that— that's the background, okay, I want to talk about the four views. Remember last week all four of the views revolve around four events that I think everybody agrees are going to happen before Jesus comes back.

Now I'm what's called a premillennialist, so that means I believe that these four events did not take place in the first century— that's a view called preterism. I'm not a historicist, which believes that these four events have been happening throughout history up until this point. I'm called a futurist, which means I believe these four events are yet future. These things will happen at some point in the future, and I'm premillennial in my understanding. But within the premillennial camp, which is a big camp, there are four different views of this event called the rapture.

Now this thing right here, this block called the rapture, is not spoken of in the main prophecy that forms people's opinion about the final seven years. That prophecy is located in Daniel chapter nine. If you want to go back and study it or look at last week's message, you can. But Daniel chapter 9, verse 27 says that in the final seven years before Jesus comes back, there's going to be an Antichrist who comes to power. That Antichrist is going to sign a covenant with Israel for seven years. And at the middle point of that covenant for seven years, he is going to break it.

And that breaking of the covenant is what Jesus calls, and Daniel 9 calls, the abomination that leads to desolation. It's an abomination in that he defiles the temple. He demands to be worshiped as God or something along those lines. He blasphemes God in some way. And that act brings about his desolation. So abomination that leads to desolation. The desolation is spoken of at the very end there, the second coming of Jesus Christ. That's what this block represents. It's called the day of the Lord. Now what isn't mentioned in Daniel chapter 9, but is mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24— it's mentioned by Paul in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4— is this event called the rapture.

This idea of the rapture is basically this view taught in the Scriptures that when Jesus comes, the church is going to be caught up together. The dead in Christ are going to rise first, and then anybody, any Christian who's alive is going to be caught up together with the dead in Christ. We're going to receive resurrection bodies, so not mortal bodies like we have now, but new bodies that are incorruptible. We're going to meet the Lord in the air, and the Bible says we will always be with the Lord. So the rapture is this idea that we come from earth to heaven.

Just like Jesus came from heaven to earth. When he comes again, we're going to come from earth to heaven. We're going to meet the Lord in the air. And then at some point we're going to come back down with the Lord as he establishes his kingdom on the earth, which you'll have for a certain definite period of time. That's what the premillennial position says. What is not clear though is when does this rapture take place? We said last week there's four main views about this question. Some people put the rapture up here at the front.

This is a thing called the pre-tribulation rapture view. Okay, so they think before the Antichrist comes to power, before he signs the covenant with Israel for seven years, the

church is out of here. And so we do not see the Antichrist. We do not see the abomination of desolation. We certainly do not go through the Great Tribulation period, which they don't separate. They think the whole seven years is the great Tribulation. They would actually put the day of the Lord right here with the rapture, and they would think of all of this— Antichrist, abomination of desolation, Great Tribulation— all of that is the day of the Lord.

This is called pre-tribulationalism. This is the most popular view in conservative evangelical circles. Famous preachers like David Jeremiah, John MacArthur, the list could go on and on of names that hold this view. This is the view that many of you probably hold. And the view you got taught growing up. This is the view that I inherited as a young person growing up in a conservative Southern Baptist church. I was premillennial in my understanding. When I went to seminary, I learned eschatology under a guy named Craig Blaising, who is one of the preeminent pre-tribulation scholars.

And that's this view. The second view is called mid-tribulationalism, and they put the day of the Lord back down here, and they put the rapture at the same time as the abomination of desolation. Now again, if you're new today, you're like, what's that again? The abomination of desolation, that's when the Antichrist, not only does he come to power and make a covenant, but he breaks it. So think of it this way: Antichrist comes on the scene promising peace and prosperity. If you'll just follow me, let me be in charge. I'll make everything better.

But it doesn't. Seals 2 and 3 of Revelation 6, you've got war and famine and poverty. And so I think he points the finger to the Christians, he breaks the covenant with the Jews, and he does some abominable act in the temple. The mid-tribulation rapture says that's when the church goes. Because as soon as the Antichrist does that, it's going to get really bad on the earth. The Christians do not go through the great Tribulation. So the rapture is there. Others, though, would say, no, no, no. The Bible never anywhere says that we're going to be raptured at the abomination of desolation.

The Bible never says we're going to be prevented from tribulation. And we are going to be protected from the wrath of God, but that doesn't mean that we're going to be in heaven. We're going to be on the earth during the day of the Lord, protected from the wrath of God, just like the Israelites were protected from the wrath poured out on Pharaoh.[1] And it's not until the very end of the seven years that we have the rapture. So this is called the post-tribulation rapture view. Antichrist signs the covenant. Three and a half years he breaks it.

After he breaks it, there's three and a half years of great tribulation. At the end of the seven years, Jesus comes back. And the church is raptured only to come back down with Jesus to establish his kingdom. Some pejoratively call this view the yo-yo view of the rapture because the church comes up only to come back down. If you're post-tribulational in your understanding, you don't like when people talk about it that way, but it is what it is. You

come up, come right back down. So the fourth view, and the view that I'm going to try to argue for today is what's called the pre-wrath view of the rapture.

So the pre-wrath view of the rapture says we're on the earth during the rise of Antichrist. We're on the earth during the abomination of desolation. We do go through the great Tribulation, but we do not go through the wrath of God. So somewhere between the great Tribulation and the wrath of God is the rapture of the church. So you see it on this chart here, Antichrist signs the covenant. After three and a half years, he breaks it. Notice that pre-wrath distinguishes between the wrath of God over here and these two things.

They call this the beginning of birth pains. That's from Jesus in Matthew 24. And this is called the great Tribulation. They would say that these things are not the wrath of God. The wrath of God is over here. These things are the wrath of Satan, or the wrath of Antichrist. And so they would say we're protected from the wrath of God, but we're not protected from the wrath of Satan. And the church is raptured before the wrath of God is poured out in Revelation chapter 8 and following. Alright, now I know that was super quick review.

If you want to go deeper into that, look at last week's messages— one message. It felt like more than one. But listen to last week's sermon. Has everybody got a brief overview of the four main views? All right. So what I want to do is I want to argue for the fourth and final view, and that is the pre-wrath view. And the pre-wrath view, if you're taking notes, puts the rapture somewhere after the great Tribulation and before the wrath of God, and I think it makes the most sense out of everything Scripture says.

Now I want to be careful how I put that. I don't think these other views are not supported by Scripture. I think you can make a biblical case Personally, though, I think the pre-wrath view solves the most problems and has the least amount of difficulties when you take all of what Scripture has to say about the end times. And I want to try to show you why I believe that. And again, my goal is not to make you believe what I believe. You don't have to do that. I've told people who are pre-trib, I reserve the right to change my mind, mid-air.

You know, that's perfectly fine with me. And while we're going up, I'll say, God, I got it wrong. Jesus, please still take me, okay? Maybe he will. But I've studied the issue. I've really tried hard to be sincere and honest about this thing, and this is just where I land, you know. So here I stand, I can do no other. Alright, so if you're new, let me show you the context. If you have not had any exposure to the book of Revelation or Matthew 24, when you get to Revelation chapter 6, it has this picture of Jesus, who is the Lamb that was slain, breaking these seals to a scroll.

The scroll is the future plan of God for the rest of the world. It's like the end-times culmination of everything. But every time Jesus breaks the seal on that scroll, there's a corresponding act or event that takes place on the earth. The events that are described by

John with each seal are paralleled with Jesus' description in Matthew 24. So think of Matthew 24 and Revelation chapter 6 as two tracks that the train of the end times kind of runs on because they parallel one another very, very closely. The first seal mentioned by John is the rider on a white horse.

This is not Jesus Christ, although some think that he is. But it looks like Jesus, talks like Jesus, acts like Jesus, but he's not Jesus. It's a false Christ or the Antichrist. Jesus in Matthew 24 says, see to it that nobody misleads you. There are going to be many who come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and they're going to lead many people astray. I think that ultimately that culminates with this individual known as the Antichrist. He's going to come on the scene promising peace, promising prosperity. But instead of peace and prosperity, it's going to culminate in war and poverty and famine.

And that's what seals two and three talk about. Seal number two is a red horse with a rider who has a sword, he goes out to conquer through war. Jesus talks about it in Matthew 24. You're going to hear of wars and rumors of wars. Don't be frightened. This has to take place. The end is not yet. Nation will rise up against nation and kingdom against kingdom. The third seal is a famine caused by economic inflation, which oftentimes happens after a war. The third horse is a black horse. It has a set of scales in its hand.

He essentially says you've got to work a full day's wage for one serving of bread. You work a full day's wage for three servings of cheap bread. Jesus describes it very shortly in Matthew 24: In various places there are going to be famines and earthquakes. These things are the beginnings of birth pains. And so I think of this, the Antichrist has come on the scene. He's promised peace and prosperity. But he did not deliver. He delivered war and poverty and famine. And like most politicians, instead of taking responsibility for his actions, he's going to point the finger to another responsible party.

Don't you love how politicians point the finger at somebody else instead of taking responsibility? Well the Antichrist is going to be the greatest politician who's ever lived, and he's going to point the finger at God's people, in my view. He's going to point to Christians, maybe point to Jews, and that's going to culminate in the fourth seal, which is mass death. And it says in the fourth seal that it was an ashen horse or kind of a pale green horse that looks like rotting meat. It is death. It's followed by Hades, and they're given authority to kill one fourth of the earth.

I do not think that this is one fourth of the earth geographically. I think this is one-fourth of the earth demographically. In other words, they're given authority to kill Christians or Jews or both. I'm not sure. This is how Jesus describes it in Matthew 24. They are going to deliver you, my disciples, over to tribulation, and they're going to kill you, and you'll be hated by all nations because of my name. And at that time, many will fall away and betray one another

and hate one another. You talk about division in the church today, it's pretty bad, but on that day it's going to be even worse.

You're going to have brothers and sisters in Christ selling one another out because well, I don't want to be one of those Christians. Those are the weird Christians. Those are the Christians that are going to take in the mark of the beast. Those are the Christians who are sold out about their faith. I want to be a culturally sensitive Christian. I think all that kind of stuff's going to take place during this fourth seal. You're going to see Christians killed like you've never seen before. You've seen the videos of martyrs in the Middle East having their heads chopped off by ISIS.

It's going to be that times a hundredfold. That culminates in the fifth seal that John sees in Revelation chapter six. He says that there were a group of martyrs who were in heaven under the altar of God, and they were crying out, how long, O Lord? How long are we going to have to endure this persecution and martyrdom? And the Lord tells them, until the last martyr comes in. So I think you're going to see this mass revival as persecution cracks down on the church, just like it always does, persecution is going to make the church stronger, more radiant.

They're going to be making disciples of every nation on the earth. The whole world will know, the Great Commission will be accomplished, the last martyr will come in, and then you have the sixth seal. Before we get to the sixth, though, look at the Lord's teaching in Matthew 24. There will be great tribulation. Such has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will again. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved. Key phrase, but for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short.

Cut short by what? I think that's the sixth seal. The sixth seal, according to John, is cosmic signs and disturbances. You have the sun turning black like sackcloth. The moon becomes like blood. The stars of the sky fall to the earth as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. Jesus says it this way in Matthew 24:29, immediately after the distress of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not shed its light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

If you're running the ProPresenter, will you skip down two verses to Revelation chapter 6, verses 16 to 17? The way that John describes this event, everybody on the earth sees the cosmic signs and wonders. I mean there's no second guessing. The Lord is coming, he's angry, and he's going to judge us. But nobody wants to repent. I think this shows you just how bad off the world will be during this time. There will be believers who are on the earth, but those who know that the wrath of God is coming, those who are outside of Christ, nobody's going to want to repent.

Instead they call out to the mountains and the rocks to hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand? So I think of seal 5 as promising God's wrath. Seal 6, which is this one, announces or portends God's wrath. In Revelation chapter 7, I think we see the church protected from God's wrath, which is this rapture thing. And then in seal 7,[2] we have God's wrath poured out on the earth through the trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments.

Now what I want us to do today with the rest of our time is try to show you biblically why I put the rapture between the sixth seal and the seventh seal. I put it after the great Tribulation and before the outpouring of God's wrath. Pre-wrath places the rapture after the great Tribulation described by Jesus in Matthew 24, but before the day of the Lord. The first reason is really a reason I always had, even when I was pre-trib, I always had this unsettled conviction— what in Scripture says that the church is not going to go through tribulation?

A lot of the pre-trib preachers I listened to or the books that I would read would say God has promised to not let the church go through tribulation. And maybe that was just them being careless in their vocabulary, but the Scripture teaches plainly, not that we will be spared from tribulation, but that we will go through tribulation. Jesus in John 16:33: In the world you will have tribulation. Thlipsis, it's the same word: you're going to have trouble. But take heart because I've overcome the world. I agree with pre-tribulationalism that we will be protected from God's wrath.

1 Thessalonians chapter 1 verses 9 and 10 make it plain as day. We will be protected from the wrath that is to come. I don't think that's the wrath of hell. I think that's the wrath of the end times. And I agree with pre-tribulationism, we're protected from God's wrath, but I do not believe we will be spared from tribulation. So reason number one, I believe we're spared from God's wrath, but we're not spared from tribulation. The key question is when does the wrath of God begin? Does the wrath of God begin here with the first seal?

Or does the wrath of God begin after the sixth seal? Well, that's a good question. How do you know the answer to that question? The pre-trib view would say the wrath of God happens at the first seal. Because Jesus is the one breaking the seals. The judgments are coming from heaven. Therefore it's the judgment of God. Therefore the church is absent. I disagree with that. I think that the judgments are coming from heaven. Jesus is breaking the seals, but the persecution is coming not from God, but from the Antichrist. The wrath that they're experiencing is not the wrath of God, it's the wrath of the Antichrist.

He's the reason for the wars and the famines and the persecution and the martyrdom. All that's coming from the Antichrist. So reason number one, I think we're spared from wrath, but not tribulation. Reason number two is the martyrs in the fifth seal. The fact that there are Christians on the earth during this great tribulation makes me wonder, how can there be

so many Christians on the earth if the church has been raptured up to heaven? Now if you're a pre-tribulationalist, you will say, well, there's going to be a great revival.

When the church is raptured, everyone's going to know that the Christians, those crazy Christians, were right, and they're going to try to get their hands on the book of Revelation and Pastor Wes's series on Revelation. Of course, they probably wouldn't want to listen to what I have to say if I'm wrong, but they're going to get their hands on all these great resources from pre-trib preachers, and they're going to realize Jesus is the Messiah and they're going to become believers and there's going to be this mass revival and the 144,000 Jews in Revelation 7 are going to be part of that mass revival.

And it's a very interesting way to solve the problem. The problem I have is the scripture doesn't say that. The scripture doesn't say there's going to be a church raptured to heaven before the tribulation, and there's going to be tribulation saints after the tribulation that are going to create this great revival. It's a solution that you have to come up with when you pre-assume a pre-tribulational rapture. There's no explicit teaching of Scripture that says there's such a thing as tribulation saints. And in my view, even if there are tribulation saints, why are they not protected from the wrath of God like the church?

That seems a little bit inconsistent to me. So the second reason is the presence of martyrs in the fifth seal. And the question that they ask, look at verse 10 of Revelation chapter 6, verse 10. They cried out with a loud voice, Lord, one who is holy and true, how long until you what? How long until you judge those who live on the earth and avenge our blood? So if they're waiting for the judgment of God to fall, how can the judgment of God already be on the earth in seals 1 to 4?

To me, seals one to four are not the judgment of God, it's the wrath of Satan, and the martyrs are crying out, when are you going to pour out your wrath? Now pre-tribers will say, no, this is just saying how long until you finish your wrath? The judgment's already started. And maybe they're right, maybe I'm wrong, but that's always been a sticking point for me. The third reason— number one, I don't think we're spared from tribulation. Reason number two, martyrs in seal number five. Reason number three, this is provocative and I don't want to overplay my hand here, but I don't see one single passage where the pre-tribulational rapture is explicitly taught.

There is not a single passage in Scripture that explicitly teaches a pre-tribulational rapture. Now, before you stone me, I'm not saying there's not biblical evidence for a pre-tribulational rapture. I'm not saying there's not biblical arguments that can be made for a pre-tribulational rapture. The problem is there's just no plain teaching of Scripture. There's no Bible verse where you could say, see, it says plain as day, the rapture happens before the tribulation. You've got to assume a pre-tribulational rapture or you have to interpret certain passages with that understanding. And it's not to say that you can't do that and that they

don't make sense and that there's not a neat package where you can create a pre-trib rapture, but there's just no explicit passage.

And that troubles me. I'm not the only one who believes this. In fact, one of the most famous pre-tribulational scholars, John Walvoord, who was the president of Dallas Theological Seminary, a gentle spiritual giant of a man. Somebody I learned from so much when it comes to the book of Revelation. But he says in his book on the rapture this statement: neither post-tribulationalism nor pre-tribulationalism is an explicit teaching of Scripture. This is the king of pre-trib right here. And he says there's no explicit teaching of Scripture that proves post-trib or pre-trib.

Look at this: The Bible does not in so many words state either. He goes on to say, your view of the rapture has more to do not with how you see the end times playing out, but with how you see the relationship between Israel and the church. It has more to do with your ecclesiology to use a fancy term than it does your eschatology. And when I read that, I just thought, that's a powerful statement. So there's no explicit teaching of a pre-trib rapture. Not only that, reasons four and five, not only is there no clear, explicit teaching of pre-trib, in my view, there are clear, explicit passages that go against the pre-trib view.

They don't prove post-trib, mid-trib, or pre-wrath, but they do seem to go against the pre-trib view. We looked at one of these last week. And it was the book of 2 Thessalonians. Do you remember the Christians in the church at Thessalonica? They were worried that the day of the Lord had already come. They were worried that the rapture had already happened and that they missed it. Have you ever had that feeling? You know, you try to call your wife, she doesn't answer. I call again, she still doesn't answer. You go by the house, the car's there, she's not in the house.

You call one more time, no answer. Oh Lord, I've been left behind. You think I've missed the rapture? I should have been living better, I should have been nicer to my wife, should have been nicer to my kids. I'm not going to lie, I have had that feeling. That's exactly what the feeling was at Thessalonica. And Paul writes to them to basically say, calm down. Do not let anybody worry you saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Look at what he says. Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him.

That's a reference to the rapture. So concerning this thing, the day of the Lord, and this thing, the rapture. Do not be easily upset or troubled, either by a prophecy or by a message or by a letter supposedly from us saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. Why? Because that day will not come unless— what?— the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed. So that seems to explicitly state that the day of the Lord and the rapture will not happen until after this event, called the abomination of desolation.

Well, if that's true, and listen, pre-trib has a way of explaining this passage. I'm not saying that they don't. I just personally think it's kind of torturing the text to make it say what pre-tribulationalists think it says. And so it's at least arguing against pre-trib and maybe moving closer to mid-trib. But then reason number four, what Jesus says in Matthew 24 doesn't just put the— it doesn't just put the rapture after the Antichrist and the abomination of desolation. Matthew 24 puts the rapture after the great Tribulation. Can you throw that chart up there?

We've seen this play out over the last couple of weeks. I've tried to show you how Matthew 24 and Revelation chapter 6 are parallel texts. In Seals 1, 2, and 3, you've got the rise of the Antichrist, wars and rumors of wars, famines in various places. The Antichrist after that creates a persecution campaign on the Christians, so you have great martyrdom and tribulation, which is spoken of by the fourth and fifth seal. The cry of the martyrs, how long, O Lord, until you avenge our blood. It's not until after this great tribulation that Jesus talks about the celestial cosmic signs and wonders.

After the tribulation of those days, the sun will go black and the moon will turn to blood. And then it's not until after the celestial signs and wonders that Jesus talks about a rapture. Jesus says, the angels at the four corners of the earth will come and collect the elect. If you're pre-trib, you don't think that's a reference to the rapture, you think it's a reference to the gathering of Israel. I just disagree. I think it's a reference to the rapture because Jesus talks about the rapture right after that when he talks about the outpouring of God's wrath with the day of the Lord.

In fact, after Jesus talks about the outpouring of God's wrath and the day of the Lord, He goes into these parables or analogies for Christians to kind of understand: if this is the way it's going to work, then this is how I should live. He says in chapter 24, verse 32, learn this lesson from the fig tree. As soon as the branch becomes tender and sprouts its leaves, you know that the summer is near. And in the same way, when you see all these things, what's the "these things" he's talking about?

Well, he's talking about what he's just been talking about in Matthew 24. He's talking about the rise of the Antichrist. He's talking about wars and rumors of wars. He's talking about the great persecution and tribulation. He's talking about the cosmic signs and wonders. He's talking about all of those things. He says, when you see those things, you know that he is near— meaning the Son of Man, Jesus. So it doesn't happen before those things. It happens after those things. Jesus says when you see these things, then you know he's near.

Now a lot of pre-tribers will point to the next verse, Matthew 24, verse 36, where Jesus says, now concerning the day and the hour, nobody knows. Concerning the day and hour, there you go. Concerning the day and hour, nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, except the Father. Now if you're a pre-tribulationalist, you would say, well, right there,

Jesus says nobody knows the day or the hour. That means Jesus could come at any moment, that means the first thing to happen is the rapture because there's no signs that precede his coming because nobody knows the day or the hour.

And that's powerful and that'll preach, brother. Get your life right, because he can come at any moment. But that doesn't fit the context. The context is, Jesus is saying, when you see these signs, when you see the Antichrist and the abomination of desolation and the great tribulation, when you see all these things, then know, just like a fig tree is about to drop its figs, then you know he's near. Now concerning the day or the hour, nobody knows. But he's close. He goes on to give a parable. He says it's going to be like the days of Noah.

People will be eating and drinking, doing normal life, and suddenly judgment will come and sweep them away. Look at the way he describes it in verse 40 and 41. Two men will be in the field. One will be taken and the other one left. What does that sound like? Sounds like a rapture. One raptured up to heaven, one left on the earth in judgment. Two women will be grinding grain with a handmill. One will be taken, pfft, the other one left. Sounds like a rapture. Therefore be alert, since you do not know what day your Lord is coming.

Now again, pre-trib will say, well, this is clearly a reference to the rapture. Nobody knows the day or the hour. He could come at any moment. And again, that'll preach and sounds good, but the context is not any moment kind of rapture. The context is know the signs, like a fig tree. When you see these things, you know he's near. When you see the Antichrist, the abomination of desolation, the great tribulation, when all those things take place, you may not know the day or the hour, but he's close. It's like pregnancy really.

If a girl's three months pregnant, you don't go up to that girl and go, so when are you due? You don't even ask, because she might not be pregnant, you might get your foot in your mouth and do something silly. But if a girl is nine months pregnant— I'm not saying I've ever done that. But when a girl is nine months pregnant, you know it, right? There's no second guessing. And she's got that glow on her face and she's like waddling around. And she's having Braxton Hicks contractions when you're talking to her.

She's like, this. Well, you don't know the day or the hour, but it's close. And I think that's what Jesus is saying. It's like pregnancy. You may not know the day or the hour, but you know he's coming soon. He says in Luke chapter 21, when you see these signs start to take place and you're that last generation before Jesus comes, know that you will not— if you're on the earth when you see these signs, that generation will not pass away. So stand up, look up, and be full of joy because your redemption draws near.

So I don't think the rapture happens until after all that stuff. So no explicit passage teaching it. There are explicit passages that don't just put it after the Antichrist and the AOD, but put it after the great Tribulation in Matthew 24. So the rapture, in my view, has to be somewhere

between the great tribulation and the day of the Lord. Now two more reasons and then we'll be done. Reason number six: I don't see why God can't work with Israel and the church at the same time. This is really an academic discussion, so I don't want to spend too much time here.

But there's a theology known as dispensationalism. I'm not trying to argue against it or for it. It's just basically a view that says God deals differently with people in different dispensations or different epochs of time. So the way he dealt with the Jews is the way he's going to deal with the Jews, and the way he deals with the church is the way he's going to deal with the church, and he doesn't deal with Israel and the church in the same way at the same time. Now that's true as far as that goes, but some, I think, incorrectly infer from that, because God's going to be dealing with the Jews during that final seven years, the church cannot be on the earth.

Therefore the church must be raptured up to heaven so that God can deal with the Jews. In fact I read a dispensational commentator on Daniel chapter 9, verse 27, who said the church was not present when Daniel nine was given, the church will not be present when Daniel nine is fulfilled. And I thought, wow, you know, I mean it fits the view, it's this nice neat tidy package. I just don't see any reason to assume that. I don't see any reason to think that God cannot deal with Israel and the church at the same time.

Now, I'm not what's called a replacement theology person. I'm not a supersessionist. I don't think the church replaces Israel. There are promises in the Old Testament that the Messiah gives to Israel that must be fulfilled literally and physically. They deal with things like land and stuff like that. So it seems to be given to Israel as a nation. But God dealt with the church in the nation of Israel from Acts 2 all the way up to AD 70, when the temple was destroyed. And he has been dealing with Israel as a nation and the church since 1948 when the nation of Israel was re-established.

And I think he will continue to deal with Israel and the church during the final seven years of the earth. So because of that, I'm not pre-trib. The last reason has nothing to do with pre-trib, has everything to do with post-trib and mid-trib, and the simple reason here is I just think pre-wrath harmonizes what Scripture says about the end better than mid-trib and post-trib views. For example, Jesus says nobody can know the day or the hour, but if you're mid-trib or post-trib, you literally know the day and the hour. All you got to do is go three and one half years if you're mid-trib, three and one-half years from the signing of the covenant to the middle.

You know exactly when Jesus is coming. If you're post-trib, you go seven years from the signing of the covenant, or three and one-half years from the abomination of desolation, and you know exactly when Jesus is coming. So I don't think it squares with Matthew 24. I don't think it squares with what Jesus says in Matthew 24 about those days being cut short for the

sake of the elect. If you're post-trib, you think the full seven years happens before Jesus comes, Jesus seems to say they're cut short. If you hold a classical post-trib view, you, I think, have trouble explaining certain events that are taking place in heaven between the rapture of the church and the second coming of Jesus down to the earth to establish his kingdom.

There seems to be teaching that we will give an account for our works while we're in heaven before we come back down. There's other events that take place in heaven. I think you need a little bit of time between those things to make sense of all the Bible says. And the last thing is I disagree with post-tribulationalism that the day of the Lord is a one 24-hour event. I don't think the Bible demands that. I think it's an extended season of time. Just like the first coming of Jesus was, what, thirty-three years, The second coming of Jesus will be longer than twenty-four hours.

I don't know if it's going to be five months or six or maybe a year, I don't know how long it'll be, but it'll be longer than twenty-four hours and post-trib doesn't seem to say that. We come right up, we come right back down in that view, and that doesn't make sense to me. So I see the second coming of Jesus as a complex series of events. He comes on the clouds, he gathers his church, takes them to heaven, and then Revelation chapter 8, 9 and following, he begins to pour out his judgments on the earth.

You've got the trumpet judgments. The seventh trumpet includes the bowls of God's wrath. We'll get to this later in our series. It looks like a scene from Braveheart. In fact, that's why when Jesus comes with his church back down to earth, that's why his robe is dipped in blood. If you're pre-trib or post-trib, you can't explain the blood. Where'd the blood come from? He didn't have blood when he got raised from the dead. And if you're a pre-trib, you think he's been in heaven the whole time. Why does he have blood on his robe when he comes back down?

And if you're post-trib, you think— I'm sorry, if he's post-trib, you think that he's been in heaven this whole time. So where's the blood come from? If you're pre-trib, you think that he's been in heaven with you the whole time. But Revelation chapter 19, he has blood on his robe when he brings the church back down. The only way to make sense of that, in my view, is pre-wrath. So he pours out his judgments, he comes back, he gets his church, and then he goes back down to the earth and establishes his eternal reign.

Now before we close, if this is true, if my view is the right view, then there should be when the scripture talks about the days between the great Tribulation and the day of the Lord, if Scripture talks about those days, it should resonate with what the Bible teaches about a rapture. So is there anywhere in the New Testament that talks about the days after the great Tribulation, but before the day of the Lord? And the answer is yes. And it talks about those days in Revelation chapter 7. Now look at what you see in Revelation chapter 7.

Okay, this is about to blow your mind, but we don't have time to blow it well. So we're just going to halfway blow your mind. Revelation chapter 7, you have three main events. In verses 1 to 3, you have these angels which are holding back judgment on the earth. Verse 1 says, after this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, restraining the four winds of the earth, so that no wind could blow on it, or the sea, or any tree. I saw another angel rise up from the east who had the seal of the living God, and he cried out in a loud voice to the four angels who were allowed to harm the earth and the sea, do not harm the earth or the sea, or the trees, until we seal the servants of our God on their foreheads.

In other words, the cosmic signs and wonders have happened. Everybody knows Jesus is about to come, but then the angels say, stop. Before you bring the calamity, we got to do something. And the first thing that they do is they seal 144,000 Jews. Revelation chapter 7, verses 4 to 8 shows a remnant of Israel sealed and protected. Verse 4 says, I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000 sealed from every tribe of the Israelites. Now some people go, well, I think that's a reference to the church. My only problem with that is it says every tribe of the Israelites.

Seems like they're Jews to me. So 144,000 Jews are sealed, meaning they are protected by God. They are owned by God. He goes into detail. They're from Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher. We don't have time to get into all of this. But after he seals the 144,000, you see in verses 9 to 14 or 9 to 17 another group. And that second group is a vast great multitude from every tribe, tongue, and nation. So I believe Revelation 7:9–14 presents the church resurrected and raptured. Real quick, let me show you this. After this I looked, there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number.

John's pretty good at numbering things. He can't number this crew. It is billions of people standing before the throne and before the Lamb. Notice they are not in disembodied states. They are bodied people, which is why I think they are resurrected. They are clothed in white robes. They're not holding them, they're wearing them. They have palm branches in their hands. They cry out with a loud voice, Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb. Verses 11 to 12 talk about the angels and the 24 elders and the four living creatures.

Notice they are distinct from this great multitude. And so the church is not the 24 elders. The church is not the angels. The church is the church. The angels and elders are distinct. The angels fall down, they sing, Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom, and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Then look at verse 13. One of those 24 elders comes up to John and says, who are these people in white robes? Where did all of these people come from? And John says, well, I don't know.

You've been here, you tell me. Sir, you know, and then he told me, these are the ones coming out of the what? Coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes and made

them white in the blood of the Lamb. And for this reason they're before the throne of God, and they serve him night and day in his temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them. And he goes on and on to talk about the great privileges that the raptured church has before the throne of God.

It fits everything. It fits everything Jesus says, it fits everything Paul says, it fits everything that John says, and harmonizes with every other passage in Scripture that teaches a rapture of the church. So Jesus is coming back literally, physically, and when he comes, he's staying for good. When he comes back, everybody in heaven and on earth and under the earth is going to know that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Those who don't know him will mourn because it's too late, and those who do know him will rejoice because their blessed hope has arrived.

But the generation living on the earth during that day will be the same generation that sees the rise of the Antichrist, sees the great falling away of believers, experiences the most intense persecution of Christians that the world has ever seen, and witnesses cosmic signs and wonders that make clear Jesus is on the way. And as Jesus said in Luke chapter 21, verse 28, if you are on the earth when these signs start to surface, stand up, lift your heads— King James adds, with joy[3]— and know your redemption draws near. Now you say, well, why do I care?

I think you should care because if this view is right, you need to have the kind of faith that can weather that kind of persecution. And do you have the kind of love for Jesus that could weather an intense pressure campaign from the most powerful political person in the world? Will you cave and take the mark of the beast or will you stand fast and say, no, I will be faithful to Jesus no matter what? Do you have the kind of love for Jesus that says even if he lingers, even if I have to go through incredible trials and tribulation, even if I feel like he's delayed and won't ever come, I'm going to be faithful till the very end.

And if you don't have that kind of conviction, if you don't have that kind of faith, then today is a day where you can ask the Lord, I want to be someone who's ready. You need a church family, hopefully this kind of church family, who says, even if the worst comes and we get pressure campaigns from governments and we get pressure campaigns from our brothers and sisters who are not believers. We will not compromise on what we believe the Word of God teaches. We will not compromise on what the Word of God has us to do.

We will be faithful. And you're going to need a church family who's not bickering with you and fighting with you on the particulars of eschatology, but a church family who's going to strengthen you, encourage you, press you on in the faith once for all delivered to the saints. And we want to be that church. That's why this is important. And so as Taylor leads us in this time, I know we're late on time, so we're not going to have a public invitation, but I just want

to challenge you, if you're not a Christian, if you're not ready for this day, then let today be the day where you settle that in your heart.

And you can come up after the service and talk with me. But the vast majority of you are believers, and so I want to challenge you to be charitable in your disagreements on this issue. And even if you disagree with me, that's fine. But I want to challenge you to be prepared and not need it, instead of needing to be prepared and not being so. And so allow the Lord to search your heart and to minister to you these truths that I think are in the Word of God and let's respond as Taylor leads us.

Father, we thank you…

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "just like Egyptians were protected from the wrath of Pharaoh"; in Exodus it is the Israelites in Goshen whom God sets apart and protects from the plagues on Pharaoh and Egypt. Source: Exodus 8:22–23 (CSB). ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "seal 8"; Revelation has seven seals, and it is the seventh seal (Revelation 8:1–2) that opens onto the trumpet judgments. Source: Revelation 8:1–2 (CSB). ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "King James adds, with joy"; the King James Version of Luke 21:28 reads "look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh," with no "with joy." Source: Luke 21:28 (KJV). ↩