

"The Rapture "



Day 1

Sermon Sentence: Don't get caught up in the many differences of opinions about the Rapture. Just make sure you and everyone around you is ready!

To gain an understanding of what the Rapture is, it is important to understand the prophetic framework taking place at that time.

2 Peter 3:10

The Day of the Lord - A period of time beginning at an unknown point and typically considered to be 7 years in length. Other names for this period are the Tribulation, Armageddon, Apocalypse, and "The time of Jacob's trouble". This period of time is outlined by the book of Revelation and is generally broken down into two 3.5 year periods with the first being called the Tribulation and the second half being called the Great Tribulation. The second half starts with the Antichrist's appearing and ends with the Second Coming of Christ. The second half is also the time of God's wrath and judgements being poured out on the Earth. The "Day of the Lord" ends with the Lord ushering in the Millennial Kingdom and reigning on Earth for 1000 years.

The Rapture is an event that takes place within this period of time known as the "Day of the Lord", however the timing of the Rapture is a hotly contested idea within the Church.

- 1.) What is the purpose of the "Day of the Lord"?
- 2.) Is the Rapture the same as the Second Coming of Christ? If not, what is different?
- 3.) Why is the "Day of the Lord" said to come "As a thief in the night"?
- 4.) Can you identify prophecies concerning the "Day of the Lord" in the OT prophet books?
- 5.) What book in the NT breaks down the events of the "Day of the Lord"?

(Question #2 - Answer): One of the prophesied events of the Second Coming is that when Jesus' feet touch the Mount of Olives it is actually split in two! (Zechariah 14:4) In contrast to the Rapture, believers are called **up to meet the Lord in the air. (Revelations 4:1) Another difference is the Second Coming is describe as an event that everyone in the world witnesses. (Matthew 24:27) The Rapture on the other hand is quick and is experienced by only believers. (1 Corinthians 15:52) There are other striking contrasts in scripture that prove that these two are very different events see if you can find more!**

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Day 2

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1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1 Corinthians 15:50-54

Would it surprise you to know that the word rapture is not even found in the Bible? The term is an English word used to describe an event but in the original Greek the word used is "harpazo" which literally means to catch up or seize away. The event known as the Rapture was a new "mystery" revealed to Paul by the Lord and Paul was teaching how the Church would be whisked away at the blink of an eye to be with the Lord. To the Jewish people the idea of the Lord taking for Himself a people called the Church who were granted His unmerited grace and favor and then removed prior to the final judgment of Earth was a "mystery" at best! They could not reconcile this with previous prophecies about the coming of the Lord, of course neither could they explain the Lord's death as a perfect sacrifice and His return a second time as a conquering king!

- 1.) Do you believe in a literal Rapture of the Church?
- 2.) Why would the Lord remove His Church from Earth during the Tribulation?
- 3.) Where will the Church be during the "Day of the Lord" or Tribulation period?
- 4.) What will the Church be participating in during this time? (Hint: Revelation 19:9)

Rev 19:11-14

- 5.) Who makes up the army in white linen returning with Jesus?

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Day 3

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Timing of the Rapture

Revelations 3:10

Pre Tribulation Rapture: Believers in this view hold that the "Day of the Lord" begins with the Rapture of the Church at an unknown point in time. During the seven years of the Tribulation, the Church is in Heaven and is participating in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The Church returns with Christ at the end of the seven years, and governs with Christ during the Millennial Kingdom. Paul's instructions to the Thessalonians was in response to false teachings that had infiltrated the Church and they were convinced that they had entered into the "Day of the Lord" and missed the Rapture. It can be inferred by their question that they were already taught to watch for the signs of the end times and were worried that they had entered into them unawares and they were under the understanding that they would be removed before the Tribulation period started. You can understand the panic this caused as they believed that they had missed their chance to be raptured home to the Lord.

Pauls reassured them that the "Day of the Lord" had not started because of specific signs that must present before it can happen and they were not passed over for any reason.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2

Holders of this view will often quote scripture such as the Lord's words above in Revelation as proof that the Church, already redeemed has no need to be present for the final judgments that are being poured out on the world during this time.

2 Thessalonians 2:7

They will also contend that the Antichrist can not present himself to the world until the Holy Spirit is removed and since the Holy Spirit is the seal of believers, the believers will be removed when the Holy Spirit is removed from Earth. Thus the Rapture.

- 1.) What do you think about the pre-tribulation Rapture theory?
- 2.) Would the "thief in the night" description of the "Day of the Lord" be because the timing of the Rapture is the unknown?
- 3.) What happens to the world once the Holy Spirit is removed?

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Timing of the Rapture cont.

1 Thessalonians 5:9

Mid Tribulation Rapture - Believers that hold this view say that the Church must endure the first 3.5 years of the Tribulation and are Raptured when the Antichrist arrives just before the Great Tribulation starts. The remainder of the events are the same as the Pre Trib view.

This view is based largely on scriptures like above that refer to the Church being saved out of God's wrath and since Revelations draws a clear picture of the "Bowl Judgments" being God's Wrath poured out upon Earth, the timing is placed at that point in the Revelation story of events.

- 1.) What are your views on this version of the Rapture timing?
- 2.) How does this viewpoint make the Rapture a known point in time?
- 3.) Can we know the exact timing of the Rapture according to scripture?
- 4.) If we did know the exact timing of the Rapture how would that affect the behavior of believers?
- 5.) What would you be doing if you knew exactly when Jesus would call believers home?

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Day 5

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Timing of the Rapture cont.

Post Tribulation Rapture - Holders of this view believe that the Church must endure till the end and are not Raptured until Christ actually returns. In this view we see the Church "Caught Up" in the sky as Jesus returns in His Second Coming. This view is widely seen as causing many scriptural timeline issues.

No Rapture - The belief that the Rapture is a modern heretical doctrine and that the scriptures referenced are really referring to the Second Coming not a separate event known as the Rapture.

- 1.) Can you see why the post tribulation view is considered not well supported in scripture when comparing it to the other two views?
- 2.) Can you see the differences between the "Rapture" event and the event known as "The Second Coming"?

In the meantime it is OK for Christians to be excited about this incredible event that could happen at any time and the wonderful promises that being with the Lord will bring. However, we can not forget what the Church should be doing while we wait on the Rapture.

Matthew 25:1-13

- 1.) While we wait on the return of the Lord what should a Christian be doing?
- 2.) If we understand the imminency of the Lord's return, what should we have a sense of urgency about?
- 3.) Does the timing of the Rapture change the job of the Church?
- 4.) What is the danger of becoming too "caught up" (I know bad pun but I couldn't help it!) in the details of the Rapture among believers?