

BONUS CONTENT 13 - A Pre-Tribulation Rapture View (Jon Courson)

Jon Courson said, "Whether or not you believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture 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 told us that no one knows the day or the hour when He will return.

- There are many places in the bible that reference how Jesus will return for His church like a thief in the night...it will be sudden and unexpected. **1 Thes 5:1-2** *Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.*
- Predictions as to the date of Jesus' return are wrong because the Word of God automatically tells us that no one knows the day or hour.
- This episode is NOT about a specific date of when Jesus is coming back but the debate is about whether Jesus will come back before the great 7 year tribulation, during the middle of the tribulation or just after the tribulation period.
- These views are known as Pre-Trib, Mid-Trip & Post-Trib and are pertaining to the time of the rapture.

(For details on The Rapture please refer to the message from **Rev 4:1-2**)

Recap on The Rapture:

The word Rapture is from the word CAUGHT UP

- The Greek word is HARPAZO (HAR-PAW-ZO) and it occurs 14 times in the NT.
- Typically when people reference The Rapture they are referring to those believers that are alive and remaining on earth who will be delivered and caught up in the sky to be with Jesus, (**1 Thes 4**) and we (together with those believers in Jesus that have already died) will be risen & given resurrected bodies.
- I also believe the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ are distinct and different events.(12 different reasons WHY they are different on Sunday's message)
- The Rapture is Jesus coming FOR believers in the air BUT the Second Coming of Christ is Jesus coming WITH believers to earth.

The Seven Year Period

- Many Christians believe the Bible teaches that there will be an important seven-year period of history before the Battle of Armageddon and the triumphant return of Jesus.
- The debate about this catching away (Rapture) centers on where it fits in with this final seven-year period, popularly known as the Great Tribulation, with reference to **Matthew 24:21**.
- The pre-tribulation rapture position believes believers are caught up before this final seven-year period.
- The mid-tribulation rapture position believes believers are caught up in the midst of this final seven-year period.
- The post-tribulation rapture position believes believers are caught up at the end of this final seven-year period.

Believers have been debating these three positions for quite a while.

- PAN-TRIBULATION VIEW...it's all going to pan out!!! :)
Though this is true, we do need to study and not ignore it because what you believe about this view will affect your behavior because our faith affects our behavior! (**James 2**)
- Pre-Trib, Mid-Trib, or Post-Trib is a secondary issue and many God-fearing, Jesus-loving people have different views regarding when the rapture will take place.
- Whatever your view is, I think we should always be loving in discussing the issue and not let it divide us.

Eph 4:1-3 *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

We should focus on our calling and worship of Jesus!!!

- Others believe different things in the body of Christ BUT we can all walk in love and be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit when it comes to this debate.
- The reality is we all have the same mission to make disciples & the enemy wants us to be divided so we aren't powerful...because in unity the Lord commands a blessing (**Psalm 133**)

WHY I believe in a PRE-TRIBULATION view of the Rapture:

- I am in agreement with a Pre-Tribulation view after a lot of prayer and study.
- The 10 points from Jon Courson's commentary will present why someone would believe in the Pre-Tribulation view.
- As we go through the book, I will give you a mid-tribulation viewpoint as well.
- COULD I BE WRONG...YES:) But I think it is a healthy view to live by after studying, and you have to decide for yourself what position you take and pray on it.
- Whatever your stance on the issue...you can and should be a part of our Church.
- These issues shouldn't divide us!

10 points regarding belief in a PRE-TRIBULATION view of the Rapture: (These points are from Jon Courson's commentary of Revelation in an article he called: *The Rapture Controversy*)

1. The doctrine of Pre-Tribulation is to be a comforting one (1 Thes 4:18)

- As Paul brings up the idea of The Rapture in **1 This 4:13-17** and reassures the believers about this CATCHING UP, he then goes on to say in the very next verse: *"Therefore encourage one another with these words"* thereby implying that we should be comforted by The Rapture and when it will take place.
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. JC
- Belief in a PRE-TRIB view does not mean we won't go through trials!
1 Pet 4:12-13, 2 Tim 3:12; or John 15:20 clearly teach us that we will have trials.
- **In Rev 3:10** Jesus told the church: *"Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth."*
- I think the hour of trial is referring to this **7-year tribulation of God's Wrath (Daniel 9:24-27)**
 - This is also known as 'Jacob's time of trouble' (**Jer 30:7**) or 'the great tribulation'. (**Rev 7:14**)
 - Jesus also said in **Matt 24:21** *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be."*
 - This outpouring of the wrath of God upon the Earth is something distinct and different that the world has never seen.

2. The Tribulation is the outpouring of the wrath of the Lamb (Rev 6) — and God has not appointed us to wrath.

(1 Thes 5:9-11) *9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*

- It is not that this viewpoint is saying we won't go through tribulation BUT we are specifically talking about THE WRATH OF GOD.
- The doctrine of propitiation is that Jesus bore our sin and the wrath of God was placed on Him in our place.**1 John 4:10** *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

- Full atonement at the cross means the church doesn't have to go through the punishment of the wrath of God. Jesus cried out from the cross: It is finished!!! (John 19:30)
- Jesus died for my past, present and future sin!!!! — I am now clean!!! **Psalm 103:12** *As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*
- Now as a believer I will not have to receive God's Wrath BUT His blessing. **2 Cor 5:21** *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

"The wrath that should have been hurled at you and poured out on me was absorbed by our Hero, our Lord, our Savior on the Cross of Calvary".JC

3. The Rapture happening before the wrath of God is poured out is illustrated in scripture.

- In **Rev 4:1-2** John's experience is a picture of the church being 'taken out' before God's Wrath is poured out on earth.(reviewed in last Sunday's message on **Rev.4:1-2**)
- This also appears in other places of scripture:
 - Enoch who 'was taken' to heaven before the flood. (**Gen 5:24**)
 - Lot and His Family 'taken out' before the destruction of Sodom. (**Gen 19**)
 - Some see Daniel's deliverance as a picture of the church being 'taken out' as his three amigos were sent into the furnace (**Dan 3**)
 - Some bible scholars believe that he was very likely on official business as an emissary. We do know that he was 'taken out' of that scene; Another picture of how God can specifically take His people out of tribulation.
- **2 Peter 2:9** *then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,*
 - This word trials can be translated temptations OR Tribulation.
 - God knows how to rescue those that are His from tribulation.... He is our savior!

4. Jesus told us to pray that we would be raptured before the Tribulation (Luke 21:36)

Luke 21:36 *But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."*

"How is one worthy? One Way: We are worthy because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross of Calvary."
JC

- Reminder that our prayers do matter. **Rom 10:9** *...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
- Our prayers can save us as we call out to God. **Rom 10:13** *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

5. Pre-Tribulation Rapture viewpoint makes sense historically and scripturally (John 14:2-3)

- The church as the bride and Jesus as our bridegroom historically and scripturally fits into this pre-trib viewpoint:
Eph 5:31-32 *31 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*
1 Cor 12:27 *Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

"In accordance with Jewish custom, when a man came of age to marry, he would add a room onto his father's house for himself and his bride. When the addition was complete, and when the father gave the go ahead, a trumpet would sound, and the bride groom would go to meet his bride. Following the wedding ceremony, the bride groom 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 bride groom would come out with his bride and introduce her to the community. That's exactly what's going to happen with us. Jesus, our bride groom, is preparing a place for us in heaven, His Father's house (**John 14:2**). 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 to the "bridal suite" that 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."JC

- What a beautiful picture it is if the rapture is to happen before the tribulation and how the Jewish customs of marriage are seen in Revelation:
 - **Rev 4**-As John is caught up to heaven, the church is there worshipping Jesus and the rest of the book is a scene of the church now in heaven and the earth being judged by God for 7 years. (known as the great tribulation)
 - At the end of those seven years, we come back with Jesus and rule and reign with Him on earth. (known as the second coming of Christ)
 - There is the marriage supper of the lamb here on earth celebrating God's consummated Kingdom here on earth. (**Rev 19**)
- We see another historical and scriptural illustration of a marriage celebration in **John 2** with Jesus' first miracle of turning water to wine.
 - Jesus made water into wine....wine is typically known for celebration BUT also scripturally known for wrath.
 - In heaven there is a great celebration as Jesus is united with His bride but at the great tribulation on earth there will be wrath as judgement is poured out.
 - Even in that story after 3 days (or 3 and a half days) Jesus made a greater wine. (**John 2:1,10**)
 - The first part of the tribulation will be seals BUT then there will be bowls of wrath. (even greater wrath poured out)

John 14:2-3 *2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*

- God is coming for His bride as promised and I believe it will be before this great tribulation.

6. Pre-Tribulation Rapture follows the outline of the Book of Revelation (Rev 1:19)

- Remember the divine outline in **Rev 1:19** *Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.*
- Using this outline, we can see a clear direction with past, present and future in the book.
- Laying out the book in this way, **chapters 4-22** are in the future.

"Only a Pre-tribulation placement of the Rapture allows for a consistent flow of Revelation." JC

7. Pre-Tribulation Rapture allows for the conditional aspect of tribulation (Rev 2:22)

Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works,

"If the Rapture doesn't occur until after the Tribulation, what would be the reason for the warning?...If we experience tribulation in the world because of our faith, we will not experience the Tribulation of those who have none." JC

8. Pre-Tribulation Rapture allows for the unknown time of the Lord's return (Matt 24:36)

"According to Daniel's prophecy, three and a half biblical years (a Biblical year being three hundred sixty days) from the day Antichrist enters the temple and demands worship midway through the Tribulation, the Lord will return. Consequently, if believers were on earth during the Tribulation, they would be able to predict the exact time of the Second Coming — Three and a half biblical years, or forty-two months, or one thousand two hundred sixty days after the Antichrist enters the temple." JC

- This is known as the abomination of desolation found in Daniel **9:24-27** which I am sure I will do a bonus episode on that text because it is a pretty important biblical prophecy that brings clarity. Jesus referred to this Prophecy in **Matt 24:15-28**.
- The point is that if we have all these prophecies with numbers like three and a half years, then we would know when Jesus' second return is...and that would contradict **1 The 5:2 & Matt 24:36**.
- 'No one knowing the hour of the Lord's return' (**Matt 24:36**) is applicable only to the Rapture while the Second Coming has a biblical timeframe of events and prophecies associated with it.
- Pre-trib view and 'not knowing the hour of Christ's return' (the Rapture) puts our focus on Jesus and NOT on looking for the Antichrist and the temple and all these signs.(the Second Coming)

9. The Tribulation is unnecessary for the Church (Jer 30:7)

“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 Messiah (**Deut 4:29-30**). The promises God made to Abraham and to the Jewish people have not been forgotten. God will work with Israel in the days of the Tribulation. He will make Himself known to them and they shall indeed be saved.” JC

- I do not believe in replacement theology meaning that the Church has replaced the nation of Israel.
- I do believe that we are grafted together, and the Church includes both Jews and Gentiles...we are one in the faith.
- I don’t see the Church replacing Israel meaning that all the promises God gave the nation of Israel will still come true.
- People couldn’t see how God’s promises were to be fulfilled through Israel since it wasn’t even a nation, so they reasoned that all those covenantal promises were now just for the church.
- This theology was popular until the Nation of Israel became a nation on May 14, 1948 and fulfilled bible prophecy showing God will not take back the promises to Israel.
- This historic event that fulfilled biblical prophecy really got people thinking and even now the PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE has gained much popularity with theologians over the last few years.
 - Scripture hasn’t changed on the issue of the Rapture, just our interpretations. **1 Thes 4 & 1 Cor 15 & Matt 24-25 & Revelation** have always been there.
 - Another example of our interpretations changing is in Revelation regarding the ‘two witnesses’ that the whole world would see. (**Rev 11**) This would have once been interpreted as allegory before modern technology would make this scene possible.
- When you look at **Daniel 9** and other texts, we expect God to work in the Nation of Israel during these last seven year period called the great Tribulation as I believe the Church will be caught up to be with the Lord.

10. Pre-Tribulation Rapture viewpoint makes one seek first the Kingdom (Matt 24:45-46)

- **Matt 24:45-46** refers to this idea that we are blessed when we are expecting Christ’s return.
“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

- Jesus says we are blessed when we are living this way; living for Him and His return!

“Two factors kept the early Church on fire: the empowering of the Holy Ghost and the belief that Jesus would return during their lifetime.” JC

- This is known as The Imminent Return of Christ — living in expectation of Christ’s return, living for Him in wisdom and the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
- I believe scripture clearly teaches us to do this and we see the early church living this way as they were expecting Christ to return so much so that they were asking: Did we miss it? (**1 Thes 4**)

“ ‘But He didn’t come back in their day,’ you say. And you’re right — but do you think those early believers are in heaven now, saying ‘We didn’t get bogged down in materialism or trivial pursuits. We sought the Lord. We witnessed fervently. We lived for the Kingdom. If only we knew He was coming, we could have played more racquetball’”? No! They’re ecstatic that they chose to do what Jesus says to do in every generation — to watch, to be ready, to live for His coming.” JC

- I believe God wants us to live in such a way that we will meet Him face to face at any moment — **Matt 6:33** *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

“Whether or not you believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture 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.” JC

I really hope this lesson has helped you see the perspective of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture viewpoint...

BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY I hope that it helps you want to live for Jesus and His Return!