



Opposing Views On The Rapture

By Pastor Mike Taylor

Revelation 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: **and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.**

There are many diverse religious convictions about how the times we live in, called by Christians, the End of Days will be fulfilled. Concerning the doctrine of the second coming of Jesus Christ, you have many denominations who feel they have figured out the time sequence of Biblical eschatology and staunchly defend their concept and their interpretation of what scripture says concerning the greatest event, apart from the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the whole history of mankind. Fact is that the major religions of the Western world believe in a "catching away of the saints" referred to as the Rapture. They just differ on its timing.

The purpose of this sermon is to take a brief look at two theories and decide which follows the context of the whole of scripture and doesn't allow proof texting or pulling certain scripture text to fulfill a preconceived notion of a denomination's stance on this coming, most certain event or the second coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

There are two different beliefs with different subsets in one belief. These two beliefs are the Second Coming of Jesus Christ VS. the Rapture of the Church. Is there a difference between the two? Let's see what each belief embraces and how they line up with the bible. Within the Return of Jesus Christ view, it encompasses post Millennium, Pre Wrath, and Preterits' view of the End Time return of Jesus Christ. But for this sermon we will deal mostly with Post vs. Pre-Tribulation "catching away of the church".

POST TRIBULATION VIEW vs. PRE-TRIBULATION VIEW

According to the proponents of a post Tribulation view of the subset belief of the second coming of Jesus, we must all go through the horrors of the coming Tribulation. What scriptures do they point to?

1st. Corinthians 15:

*I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet.** For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*

They take this verse and couple it with the 7th angel who blows the last trumpet for the beginning of the final stages of God's wrath upon this earth: Revelation chapter 11:

11:15 And the seventh angel sounded (blows his trumpet); and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever.

Since this is near the end of the tribulation, they surmise that this trumpet in 1st Corinthians and Revelation 11, are the same trumpet. As I have mentioned in past sermons, Paul was speaking of the ceremony known to Jewish people of the Feast of Trumpets and the blowing of the Last Trumpet as a signal to move out, as used in the wilderness during the Exodus and the fight for the Land of Canaan. It

was also used as a sign of the “Return of the King” and was not referring to the trumpet blown in Revelation, as Paul wrote his epistle before John the Beloved wrote Revelation under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and they have no connection. But beyond that error what is the difference between Post Tribulation view and the Pre-Tribulation view?

The most debated issue is the view of “meeting Him in the air”, vs. “Returning with Him”. In the first view most post Tribulation religions that I have studied believe that we will be changed and are lifted to meet the Lord in the air and make a U-turn and come down with Him to Jerusalem, to witness His defeat of the armies at Armageddon. This will happen at the end of the Tribulation.

• **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Obviously, this verse does not say what happens after we meet Him in the air, but the view interjects their own interpretation that we will immediately come down riding on white horses? I had to ask one adherent to this view, if we are meeting Him in the air are we going to Him just to saddle up? He had no answer, as it doesn't make sense, now does it? It appears he is missing something.

I feel he and they are missing what is right in front of their face, The Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Revelation 19:

19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

*19:8 And to her was granted that **she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.***

19:9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

And in the very same verse we see the Church coming back with the Lord in the battle, Revelation

19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

John just got through writing that the sign of the saints are fine linen, clean and white. How did we get to this point? Where have we been and what transpired during this interval between verses 7 and 14? The answer is the marriage supper of the lamb.

Understand one thing, my brethren, to interpret scripture is to take pieces of a large puzzle and put the pieces into their proper place and perspective. You will never find the strict description of a pre Tribulation removal of the church, but must take a little from here, and a little from there to make the puzzle come into view.

Let's look at another piece of the puzzle. The removal of the church before the tribulation vs. after the tribulation:

BEFORE TRIBULATION VS. AFTER TRIBULATION

Before:

5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

5:10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Again in Revelation chapter 3:

*3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, **I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world,** to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

After:

Post Tribulation view starts at chapter 6 and the beginning of the wrath of God and fails to notice the scriptures I just presented, then they end beginning with these verses:

Revelation 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

11:16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

11:17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth.

DELIVERANCE VS. JUDGMENT

Another piece of this grand puzzle is the concept of deliverance verses judgment. I believe in a deliverance of the church from wrath as plainly said in Revelation 3:10, but the alternate view believes in judgment.

DELIVERANCE:

*1st Thessalonians 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, **even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.***

4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

4:16 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:

4:17 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.

Paul speaks in the following verses, of our deliverance from wrath, which again supports a removal of the church.

5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

5:10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

What would be the point of comfort, if we knew that God would subject us to His righteous wrath and we would endure the great tribulation when 2/3 of the population will be wiped out by divine judgment?

JUDGMENT: or the 4 horses of the Apocalypse,

Revelation 6:2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

6:4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

6:5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6:6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

6:7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

6:8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

6:15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

*6:16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, **and from the wrath of the Lamb:***

When does God's wrath begin? From the very first seal that Jesus opens divine judgment begins and that is the beginning of chapter 6 not the middle of the book, but at near the beginning.

HIDDEN VS. SEEN BY ALL

Some come to me and ask why there is so little mention of the concept of rapture of the church found in the bible. It is true that the concept is sprinkled in the New Testament and was not spoken of much until

Paul addressed as the “Secret Wisdom of God.” 1st Corinthians chapter 2:

No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

The word for the modern interpretation of “rapture” is the Greek word “harpazo” which means to be snatched away or removed by force. From this we get the Latin form of rapturo, which evolved into the English word rapture.

The word translated is only mentioned once in scripture that I mentioned above in 1st Thessalonians 4:17:

4:17 Then we which are alive and remain **shall be caught up together** (harpazo, rapturo, rapture), with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Then how do we reconcile the seemed difference in scriptures that some say, point to “seen by all” second coming of our Lord and nothing hidden?

Revelation 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

And again in Mark, Jesus said:

13:27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

In my humble opinion, if we believe the first part, then the second part is easily understood. When Jesus comes back with His church, as quoted in Revelation 19, all of the earth will see Him. All who have accepted Jesus Christ during the tribulation will be gathered from the four winds. You have to decide from scripture, who are the saints at this point in time does Jesus speaks of? From scripture, it is my belief that Jesus is speaking of all who accepted Him in times of great peril and tribulation through martyrdom and environmental dangers.

AT ANY MOMENT, VS. ONLY AFTER CERTAIN EVENTS

Post Tribulation believers point to Revelation chapters 6-18 that all must be completed before Jesus comes to take unto Himself his church. They look to 2nd Thessalonians chapter 2:4,

He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Or this passage, Jesus said in Matthew 24:15-30

15 “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ [a] spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

17 Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house.

18 Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak.

19 *How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!*

20 *Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.*

21 *For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.*

22 *“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.*

23 *At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it.*

24 *For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*

25 *See, I have told you ahead of time.*

26 *“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.*

27 *For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*

28 *Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.*

29 *“Immediately after the distress of those days*

“the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light;

the stars will fall from the sky,

and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’[b]

30 *“Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth[c] will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.[d]*

In this passage, it is clear that Jesus is speaking to the Jewish people who live in Judea and Samaria or the center of Biblical Israel. He was not speaking of the Gentile Church, or as He described us, a people who were not His people.

Jesus explained what would be the events that lead to His appearing as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but it will be for all who have endured the time of His wrath, with rebellion against God will be extinguished by the Word of His mouth, as a sharp, two edged sword.

But on the flip side, the imminent return of our Lord is explained by Paul in *1st Thessalonians* as upon one that is unprepared for an invasion by a thief:

5:1 *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.*

5:2 *For yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.***

5:3 For when they shall say, *Peace and safety*; **then sudden destruction** cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5:5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

5:7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

5:8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Obviously, our Lord is not a thief, but the symbolism is that of someone who breaks into the history of mankind unannounced, without warning, and those that are unprepared will not escape His wrath.

The Jewish Wedding Feast

Another overlooked concept that my brethren in the faith fail to understand or accept is the analogy of the Jewish wedding feast. Though they hate to admit it, my Lord was born a Jew, from the tribe of Judah. He is the Lion of Judah when He returns and our betrothal to Him as the Bride of Christ will be completed as any Jew would take his own bride in Jesus day. Let us look at this wonderful promise.

THE BETROTHAL

Jesus came to establish a blood covenant and His blood was the ring, (so to speak) of our being joined to Him in marriage. He leaves, but promises to return for her.

Hebrews 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

*Luke 22:20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you., **

Ephesians 1:13:

1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The Bridegroom leaves His Father's house and goes to the house of the prospective bride:

So Jesus left His Father's house in heaven and traveled to the earth; the home of His prospective bride.

John 6:32-33., 6:32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

6:33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Jesus came to earth to obtain the church (bride) through the establishment of a covenant.

On the same night Jesus made His promise in John 14, He instituted communion. In this communion, he passed the cup of wine to the disciples saying: *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. (1st Corinthians 11:25)*

THE PAYMENT FOR THE BRIDE

The bridegroom negotiates with the father of the bride at her home, (earth) to establish the cost (mohar) which was the sacrifice of Himself in blood. *Acts 20:28: Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.,*

1st Corinthians 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

THE PAYMENT COMPLETED, THE BRIDE JUSTIFIED

The bride is set apart: From that moment on, the bride and bridegroom is considered as One. The bride is set apart and sanctified for the return of the bridegroom. *Ephesians 5:25-2 , Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

THE COVENANT

As a symbol of the covenant, the bride and groom would partake in a cup of wine together:

The cup of communion serves as the symbol of the covenant through which Christ has obtained the church (bride). Taken every time we remember His death at the Lord's supper. *(1st Corinthians 11:25)*

After the marriage covenant had been established, the groom would leave the bride's house and return to His Father's house waiting to return for her as He prepares her place with Him. As Jesus returned after His resurrection to His Father's house, the church is in the period of waiting for His return. *John 20:17, Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*

THE CHURCH AGE

During this time, the bride would be preparing her trousseau and the groom would be preparing a place for His bride to live with Him in His Father's house. *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.*

14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

THE GATHERING OF HIS BRIDE

At the proper time, usually at night, the groom and His best male escorts would take a lighted torch and make their way to the house of the bride. So Jesus along with His angels will come for His bride. Although the bride expects Him anxiously, she does not know the exact time of His arrival.

1st Thessalonians 4:16 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:

4:17 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.

INTO THE MARRIAGE SECRET CHAMBERS

Shortly after arrival, with guest at the wedding feast, the bride and bridegroom enter the marriage chamber, as in a Jewish wedding, the consummation of the marriage covenant is completed. Jesus and the church will spiritually join in unison to complete the marriage covenant.

MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

The groom would announce the consummation of the marriage and the wedding feast would commence, but the bride would be hidden away for 7 days sometimes called the 7 days of huppah. The bride would remain hidden in the house of the bridegroom's Father, until He presents her to the world, with veil removed to show who His bride is. So the church comes with the King of Kings on horses dressed in linen white and clean. *Colossians 3:4, When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* And again in Revelation ,

19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

Heralded in unison in the Old Testament describes the coming of our Lord for His church to be shielded away from the wrath to come and I feel they are sister verses of John 14:2 and Isaiah chapter 26:20 describing the same event:

Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain. (Isaiah 26:20)

I cannot express strongly enough the imminent return of our Lord and Savior, but as studied in the past, I believe it will be on a Feast Day appointed by God in a future year, namely the Feast of Trumpets. He will arrive and all who are prepared by accepting Him, Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will be gathered in the twinkling of an eye.

One final thought and question that only makes sense, after these verses, if we believe that Jesus will forcefully remove His bride according to Paul in 1st Thessalonians:

4:16 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:

4:17 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. THEN.....

THE CHALLENGING QUESTION OVER OPPOSING VIEWS

If we believe in any other teachings beside the pre trib removal of the church through rapture, then let me drop something on you to think about. If during the Great Tribulation all will be required to take the mark of the beast and all who do will be damned according to scripture. If you refuse the mark, you will be killed either by ruling beast power, or the followers of this power. If the post Tribulation view is correct, with all the environmental upheaval, the divine judgments, the loss of life of upward of 2/3 of the entire

planet destroyed leaving either the damned or the saved, then when Jesus Christ breaks through the clouds and the saved are transformed into spirit beings and the ones with the mark of the beast are destroyed, my question is: **Who will enter the Millennium in their mortal flesh?**

You see the problem? There will be no one left alive, or in mortal flesh that has not been changed to spirit to even populate the Kingdom of God and produce human beings of flesh as expressed in your bible. The only teaching that makes sense, is the coming of the Lord for His church, the Tribulation, then the Second Advent of Jesus Christ to set up His Kingdom for a thousand years in that order. God through the Holy Spirit has called a remnant that will believe unto salvation in this age of the Dispensation of the Church. When Jesus comes back He will come for one final battle of swift judgment and this verse caught my eye and further proves that when He comes back and it opened this sermon:

Revelation 17:14** These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are **called, and chosen, and faithful.

These are the saints who will be kings and priest and will reign with Jesus Christ in the family of God for a 1000 years leading into eternity. My reader, do not think that you have time to make the decision to be on the Lord's side when the days get really rough and think you have time. Remember Jesus said He would come as a thief in the night and when He does, for you if you have not made that decision for Jesus Christ, time will have run out. Make that decision today for your eternal destination to be in glory with Jesus and the Father in Heaven. To be otherwise will be literally "hell on earth" and a coming spiritual death.

This is Pastor Mike Taylor wishing the salvation of Jesus Christ in each of your lives. If there is anything I can help you with, pray with you about, or just listen, drop me a line atrealteam1999@sbcglobal.net, God bless you, until we meet at Jesus feet.