

The doctrine about the rapture of the church is one of most divisive principles in all of Scripture. Why? Because everyone wants to be right. Not everyone can be right about all things. This is one of those Biblical topics that some Pastors would like to leave un-taught because of the fear of dissensions and even splits in the Body. That's why my Rabbi was "pan-trib" – it'll all pan-out in the end.

Over the years, I have met those who have held one of the common positions:

1. Pre-tribulation rapture – at some unknown time before the seven-year Tribulation begins. Some believe that there are specific events that must take place before going (like the revealing of Satan; the 3rd Temple; or even a Jewish Feast (most think Trumpets; some believe Booths). All of these, according to the adherents, have Scriptural support. Some use the "picture" of Noah being saved out of the world before the flood to support this position;
2. Mid-tribulation rapture – sometime right before or on the exact mid-point of the tribulation (1260 days) the rapture will occur because we were not appointed to wrath...which begins at the mid-7-year period.
3. Pre-wrath rapture – same as above but it could occur anytime in the first 3.5 years. This is relatively new idea; Essentially, the idea that the first part of the tribulation is "judgment" and the 2nd-half is all wrath (aka, the Great Tribulation). Some use the "picture" of Noah being saved out of the world before the flood (wrath, not judgment) to support this position;
4. Post-tribulation rapture – these folks seem to combine the rapture of the church and the 2nd Coming of Jesus as the same event; But, why have a rapture at all if Christ is coming to earth? It'd be a very short round-trip – just enough time to get into your new body?
5. No rapture – Some people are stubborn and reject all Scripture concerning this event; Some ignorantly say "there's no rapture because there's no such word in the Bible. This bit of ignorance can be dispelled by understanding that the word "rapture" comes from the Latin word "rapturo" is a translation of the Greek word "Harpazo" which means "snatching away" or "caught up"; this is the same word to describe how Philip travels from Gaza to Azotus (Ashdod; about 47 miles).

Calvary Chapel lists the pre-tribulation rapture as one of its distinctives.

The Rapture refers to that time when Jesus is going to come, without warning, and take away His church from this earth. After the Rapture, the Lord will pour out His wrath upon this sinful world. There are many pastors who claim an ignorance of the Rapture or say that they are not certain whether it will precede the Tribulation. They say they don't really know where they stand on this issue. I don't believe there is any excuse for not having a position on this issue. We have our Bibles and we're capable of studying this subject thoroughly. I believe that your view of the Rapture will have a significant impact on the success of your ministry.

I can give you a lot of Scriptures to support this position. If you want a copy of the Calvary Chapel Distinctives, I can send you a pdf copy.

So, why don't I give Scriptural evidence? Because I've seen all sides of the issue use the very same scriptures to prove their point. All of us have "presuppositions" which is a fancy way of saying we make assumptions about Scriptures based on what we believe. AND everyone will tell you the same thing: "the scriptures demand that you interpret them this way and this way only"; the greatest example of this is Calvinism vs Arminianism. While the word "elect" or "election" is used 27 times in the Old and New Covenant scriptures, there are many verses that say "choose" or some synonym.

So, what do I use to support my pre-tribulation position? I choose the character of God and the special relationship we have with Him. While I can use many Scriptures, ultimately, I know that I am a child of God and the Bride of Christ; My Father and my Bridegroom would not allow me to suffer in His wrath appointed to those who are rebellious and live only to satisfy the lusts of their flesh (that is, unbelievers). As Chuck Missler used to say "God would never beat up His bride (or sons and daughters) and then bring them home!

There are Scriptures, as I have said and in the final part of chapter 4 and the first part of chapter 5 of 1st Thessalonians, we get a Paul's instructions and encouragement.

(1 Thessalonians 4:13) But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

After Paul left and before Timothy arrived, the new believers, who were evidently taught about the end-times and the bodily resurrection, became confused. First, some people had died and therefore concluded that they missed the LORD's return for His bride; Secondly, because of the persecution they endured, some thought that they had entered the "day of the LORD", aka, the Tribulation.

These misunderstandings caused them much anxiety! The doctrine of immanency (that Christ's coming could happen at anytime without any required preceding events) was evidently taught by Paul because otherwise they would have been looking for those events that that Paul taught them.

The affect was as Paul put it "sorrowing as those who have no hope". That's a ton of sorrow! We know that those who lose all hope often commit suicide...

NOTE: Paul often uses the word "sleep" to describe death; it was a typical middle eastern idea. In no way does this imply what some call "soul-sleep" whereby a believer "sleeps" until Christ returns; The body "sleeps", that is, is dead; the soul/spirit goes immediately upon death to be with the LORD; At the Rapture, the soul and the glorified body are reunited forever!

(1 Thessalonians 4:14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

Based on the fact of the resurrection of Jesus, Paul taught them that the same thing would happen to them and would NOT forgot those who died!

AND...

(1 Thessalonians 4:15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

Paul is saying that Jesus could return even for him while he is alive! But when He does come, those who are alive will meet Him right after the dead in Messiah are raised up first!

(1 Thessalonians 4:16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the

voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

This evokes the idea of the Jewish Wedding ceremony that Jesus alluded to in John 14:

John 14:1-3 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. (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. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

After the marriage covenant was established, the groom left his bride at her home and returned to his father's house, where he remained separated from his bride for **approximately 12 months**.⁸ This afforded the bride time to gather her trousseau and prepare for married life.⁹

During this period of separation, the groom prepared a dwelling place in his father's house to which he would later bring his bride. **At the end of the period of separation, the bridegroom came - usually at night - to take his bride to live with him. The groom, the best man, and other male escorts left the father's house and conducted a torch-light procession to the home of the bride.**¹⁰ Although the bride was expecting her groom to come for her, she did not know the time of his coming.¹¹ As a result, the groom's arrival was preceded by a shout,¹² which announced her imminent departure to be gathered with him.

(1 Thessalonians 4:17) Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Caught-up 'snatched up' to be with the LORD in the AIR not on earth when, at His second coming He will stand on the Mount of Olives.

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

The obvious question would be "if Jesus wasn't returning until either during or after the 7 year tribulation, why would He say "comfort one another with these words".

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. (51) Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. (54) So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY." (55) "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O HADES, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?" (56) The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. (57) But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

We aren't supposed to give up on this world in the sense "oh well, we'll be gone so what's the point?". The point is, there are a lot of people who do not know or understand the

Love of Christ and they need to be given the opportunity to choose whom they will serve...

(1 Thessalonians 5:1) But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

The times and seasons are those "appointed times" set by the LORD and as He told the disciples after the resurrection:

Acts 1:7-8 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. (8) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Many thought that this past year at the Feast of Trumpets, that the rapture would occur. They thought this because:

1. The Feast of Trumpets was an "appointed" time
2. The feast was with Trumpets (the last trumpet?)
3. There were other "signs" in the heavens like those 4 blood moons

But, once again, as it has occurred throughout Church history, you can't set a date, even using Scriptures!

(1 Thessalonians 5:2) For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

The "day of the LORD" is an OT reference to the end-times. 24 times in the OT and 5 times in the NT. While in the OT it normally referenced the destruction of Israel during the Babylonian siege, it has always been known to be an

Isa 13:6 Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

Isa 13:9 Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it.

Zep 1:18 Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the LORD's wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy, For He will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land.

It is a description of that period of time, in the end-of-days when God's wrath will once again be poured out on the earth; to the evil ones who reject their God, their LORD and their King. It's focus is on Israel to convince them (the hard way) that all of the Truth they rejected has consequences. And while we have been promised that we will not enter into this time, the tribulation saints have promises that they will be delivered through the Tribulation and many will be martyred during that terrible time.

Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

Matthew 11:13-15 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. (14)

And if you are willing to receive *it*, he is Elijah who is to come. (15) He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

2Pe 3:10 But the **day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

(1 Thessalonians 5:3) For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

This is reminiscent of the time before the Babylonian captivity when the false prophets cried out "They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When *there is* no peace." (Jeremiah 6:14)

(1 Thessalonians 5:4) But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

BUT!!!! We are not in the darkness;

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (John 3:19)

And we know that there is NO condemnation for those who are IN Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. And in the Spirit, we walk in the light as He is in the Light! (Romans 8:1; 1 John 1:7).

(1 Thessalonians 5:5) You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

This is who we are IN CHRIST!

(1 Thessalonians 5:6) Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. (1 Thessalonians 5:7) For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

Continuing the contrast of "day" and "night", "darkness" and "light"....

This is how we are to live: not "sleeping", that is, ignoring, denying the light of the truth;

Let us "watch" ourselves in our walks, resisting the devil, choosing truth over the lies of the world and not caught up in habitual sin which, beloved, if continually practiced, you may be given over to it!

Paul's exhortation to be "sober" goes beyond just drink, but to all facets of our lives which are to be lived in moderation because of Who is in us!

(1 Thessalonians 5:8) But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation.

Borrowing these pictures from Isaiah 59:17 and brought to fulness in Ephesians 6, Paul uses the breastplate for protection of our vital organs, that is, the heart!

[Proverbs 4:23](#) Guard your heart diligently, for from it flow the springs of life.

And, a helmet the hope of salvation; Protecting your mind by renewing it by the Word of God and not the lies and lusts of the world!

[\(1 Thessalonians 5:9\)](#) For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

We know there's a judgment coming as Paul wrote about in Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10; but that's not the wrath of God! Mid tribulation and pre-wrath tribulation folks seem to ignore Revelation 6 when the "seals" are opened which some call the Seal Judgements...but listen to the last 3 verses:

[Revelation 6:15-17](#) Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the military commanders and the rich and the mighty and everyone—slave and free—hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. [\(16\)](#) And they tell the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the **wrath** of the Lamb. [\(17\)](#) For the great day of their **wrath** has come, and who is able to stand?"

[\(1 Thessalonians 5:10\)](#) who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. [\(11\)](#) Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

More comforting words, dead or alive we will live together with Him!