Two weeks ago I provided an answer for the person who asked the question; “What is the origin of the rapture?” God has great plans for you, His church!

We found the Greek word used in the Bible for this “Harpazo” (caught up, taken, snatched away).

We also discovered that in the 4th century the Greek language was replaced with Latin.

God’s Word was the translated into Latin (the Latin Vulgate Bible) and the Greek word Harpazo was translated “Rapio”, which when translated into our english language became our word “Rapture”.

We read the clearest passages in the Bible about this concept of “Rapture” (catching away) in 1 Thess 4:13-18 and also 1 Corinthians 15.

I praise God that He makes this so clear for His church, He clearly (as Paul wrote) does not want us to be uniformed about our Home-going!

* Loud (the Trumpet call of God)
* Resurrection of all our Christian brothers and sisters who have tasted death.
* It’s an instantaneous resurrection for the faithful follower of Christ who is still alive.
* It’s a meeting in the air where we receive our Spirit receives the Immortal Bodies that we have longed for throughout much of this life.

So today, God has led me to explore with you, “when & who” takes part in the Rapture.

And as with everything concerning the “End Times” we have four options.

**Option #1 – The Partial Rapture (Luke 21:34-36)**

This is the Olivet Discourse where Jesus is talking with His disciples about Israel’s future, the “Destruction of the Temple and the signs of the End Times”.

Some of you may have heard the names “Watchman Nee” & “Witness Lee”.

They were two popular advocates for the “Partial Rapture” of the church in the mid 1900’s, who led many to Christ in China and then later in the U.S.

Believers in the “Partial Rapture” say Jesus is talking to the church here in Luke 21:34-36, but if you read the passage in context, it’s easy to see that He is not.

In V6 The time will come when not one stone is left on another.

In V20 He mentions Jerusalem specifically being surrounded by it’s enemies.

**V34-36**

Partial rapture believers say that you must be found watching and praying when Jesus returns, to be “taken” and avoid the Tribulation.

And if you’re not watching and praying, you may still go to heaven in the end, but you will have to suffer through the Tribulation.

Hence, the partial rapture.

They say that in order to be “righteous” and be on the first bus that escapes the Tribulation, you must not be found;

* Carousing
* Drunk
* Weighed down with the anxieties of life.

No wonder so many people take anti-anxiety meds…

You can probably see why “cult groups” love this sort of doctrine, because they say; “come join our group”

* We know the truth.
* We’re the “holy” ones.
* We’re not judging… or saying those other people are “damned”, they may make it heaven some day… after they suffer.
* But we get to avoid the Tribulation and they don’t.

**There are a couple of issues with this belief, starting with the relationship between Justification and Sanctification.**

When someone genuinely gives their life to Jesus the Bible says they are justified (made just as if they had never sinned before God. Clothed in the righteousness of Christ).

The proof of one’s justification is in their transformed lifestyle (2 Cor 5:17 – and living by the Spirit).

In other words, if your genuinely saved, you will be making progress in Sanctification (watching & praying - intentionally setting yourself apart and doing whatever it takes to grow Spiritual and faithfully serving Christ) unlit He takes you home.

But no one can or should say to another Christian; “hey you’re only justified because you still drink, you’re a worrier, a liar, a gossiper or what have you, so because you’re not sanctified, you won’t be going on the first bus!

Theologically that doesn’t work! No where did Jesus never said that we all will bear fruit at the same level, but everyone who is Justified and/or going thru the life long process of Sanctification **will bear Kingdom fruit!**

He didn’t say all Christian will be as Holy as the next, but He did say that saved people **will grow in Holiness unto the Lord.**

Also, if the Tribulation is viewed as the out pouring of God’s wrath upon sin (which I believe it is)…

But if partial rapturist believe someone not living a righteous & holy life won’t make the first bus to heaven… so then they will have to incur some of God’s wrath during the Tribulation…

Then I believe they have the makings for what sounds a lot like Purgatory.

**I choose to believe what God tells us in:**

**Romans 8:1**

**If your living faithfully for Christ, He is your ticket to heaven! There is only one bus for the church and you won’t miss it.**

He doesn’t say “there is now a possibility that you might have to face some condemnation, unless I find you watching and praying, living a chaste, sober and worry about life.”

But He transforms followers of Christ into that lifestyle… amen?

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52** – Who and when we get changed?

All believers **(dead or alive)**, in a flash/twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet…

Just those two Scriptures alone pretty well seal the deal, that there is no partial rapture. Yet many still follow the teachings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.

**Option #2 – Post Tribulation Rapture**

The popular view here is… **the church** has to go through this thing called the Tribulation, and that there is only one event, at the end of time where God **takes His church** and returns to the Mount of Olives and sets up his Kingdom to rule and reign for a thousand years (the Millennial reign).

This view has a few things going for it… but the one thing many Post Trib Rapture people use as a defense is – **It’s the oldest view of the church.**

**Which For the student of Scripture, shouldn’t be very convincing…** yet many who believe this will quote fathers of early church history.

**Just because something is old doesn’t necessarily make it right…**

Because throughout church history we’ve seen the church fathers wrestle with, and refine Spiritual truths.

I’ve had some people come to me recently and say they have friends who say they don’t believe in the doctrine (teaching) of the trinity…

Many of those folks say they don’t believe in the Trinity because it was created by Constantine in the 4th century.

When in fact it was at this time when the church was also having to fiercely defend the deity of Christ (Nicene Creed)… And for the first time in very solid terms they defined the concept of the Trinity.

It’s not that the church didn’t believe these things before, it was just a time in church history when they were forced to focus their attention on defining the Trinity in terms that followers of Christ could understand.

Just as the imputed righteousness of Christ **(justification by faith alone, not by works)** wasn’t really defined in solid terms until when? The Reformation in the 1500’s.

It’s not that the church didn’t believe we’re saved by faith and not works before, Martin Luther just hadn’t come along yet to nail his 95 thesis to the door of the church, spelling it out!

So just because End Times issues have been clarified more recently than the 4th century, it doesn’t mean it’s wrong.

The church has refined it’s view on various topics over very seasons of time.

I remember around the turn of the Century… 2000/2001 Dee and I were members of a Southern Baptist church when our Pastor announced one Sunday morning that based on Scripture, “the Baptist Church has changed it’s view on slavery… that they do not believe in slavery anymore.”

I looked at Dee and said; “talk about Johnny come lately!

Another defense “Post Tribulation Rapture” believers use to defend their position is that the Bible says **the church will go THROUGH the Tribulation.**

**They use passages such as:**

John 16:33 “In this world you will have “Thilipsis” (tribulation/trouble/suffering/difficulty) used 42 times in the New Testament.

The response to that however is, **there is a difference between THE TRIBULATION and tribulation.**

Matthew 24:21 – That TRIBULATION is different from **tribulations** the church will face just from living faithfully for Christ.

Revelation 7:14 – The “Great Tribulation” that is referred to here is much more than **our daily tribulation.**

The Tribulation talked about in the 70th week of Daniel, the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) is **THE TRIBULATION!** A time like no other! See you bulletin insert

Daniel closes his book in chapter 12:1 with this…

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.

The point is, if you run it down to the end, the “Post Trib Rapture” doesn’t fit what the Scripture says.

Another view that I’m mentioning because someone asked about yesterday is the Pre-wrath Rapture

Marvin Rosenthal popularized this around 1990.

The claim is the church will go though the Tribulation, but will be Raptured (taken) after the 6th seal is opened.

He argues that after the 6th seal God’s wrath begins. He believes the church will be delivered just before that because the church isn’t destined for God’s wrath.

Sometime between the 3-1/2 year mark and the beginning of the Battle of Armageddon.

Christ comes and takes His church… and Israel continues to be converted to Messiah (by the two witnesses) and those people populate the Millennium.

It’s not a super popular view, but Marvin did make a splash with it and his followers seem to be growing in number.

The view, as with the others is off base Biblically. It seems arbitrary… and as good as it may sound, it shouldn’t attract true students of the word.

A more popular view, however is;

**Option #3 – The Mid Tribulation Rapture at least it has this going for it… The Tribulation is clearer broken up into two parts, which we can clearly see in Scripture.**

**Daniel 9:27**

He (powerful/not good leader) will confirm a covenant with many for one seven. And in the middle of the ‘seven’he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the templehe will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

**Middle of the 7 sounds like 3-1/2**

* Time (1 year), times (2 years) and ½ a time = 3-1/2
* 1260 days = 3-1/2 years
* Rev 13:5 says 42 months = 3-1/2 years

So something significant is taking place ½ way through the Tribulation…

**Ironically it occurs every Presidential election cycle in the month of June… last month…**

The problem with this view is there is no clear connection between the ½ way point and the Rapture of the church.

The ½ way point is clearly were the “Leader” (Anti-Christ) makes some kind of change with Israel. But there is no clear connection to the Rapture of the church… so it falls flat.

**Lastly**

**Option #4 – The Pre-Tribulation Rapture**

This is the one most Christians want to be true! Amen!

What a terrible time **the Tribulation and the Great Tribulation** are going to be!

Pre-trib rapture isn’t about escapism, or avoidance, it’s based on a few things.

My personal opinion is that this view makes the most sense from a Biblical perspective because;

#1 – The 70th week of Daniel, the time of Jacob’s trouble, **the last 7 years…** that’s what much of the book of Revelation is all about, amen!… that 7 year period… Is presented in Scripture as decreed for Israel and Jerusalem.

**That to me is a major point!**

If the whole point of the Tribulation is to prepare/purify Israel to **receive her Messiah** and it is decreed as the last 7 years before the second coming and the Millenial Reign of Christ…

Then I’m not seeing where the church even has a role in the Tribulation from a Biblical perspective…

As a matter of fact the church is no longer even mentioned after Rev 4… It’s as if she where suddenly “Taken”, “Snatched Away”, Harpazo’d!

Another significant reason why I believe the church will not go through **any** of the Tribulation **to receive her Messiah…** is because the church already has!

**Secondly**

I see a biblical expectation of imminence.

Israel is supposed to know when her Messiah is returning… they should be able to set their watch to it, God is so specific… 1260 days, etc…

But for the church we are told to live and serve Him faithfully, **and always EXPECT His return at any moment!** The parable of the 10 virgins, the talents, the minas…

**1 John 2:28**

Statements like that are found throughout the Epistles. If you want to be ready, you must live ready. Everyday.

That’s called the imminent rapture of the church!

The Pre-Trib rapture seems to harmonize **BEST** with the promises to the church in Scripture.

Yes, we are promised to go through **tribulation,** just not **THE TRIBULATION!**

Revelation 3:10

1 Thess 5:1-3

1 Thess 5:4-6

1 Thess 5:7-9

Does that describe you?

If it doesn’t, you’re not ready for the imminent rapture of the church!

You’re gambling with your eternity, hoping Jesus won’t take His church before you get serious about Jesus.

The problem with that gamble is that if you lose, you spend your eternity in a place of torment that the Bible calls hell.

But you can change that today…

I’m going to ask everyone to bow their heads and pray while some quite music plays.

If you’re already living a faithful, transformed life by God’s Holy Spirit, THEN PRAY FOR OTHERS IN THE ROOM WHO ARE NOT YET.

If you know you need a relationship with Christ to live that life and be ready for the rapture,

I encourage you to come and kneel at an altar and seek the Lord before it’s too late.

This is a safe place for you… the room is filled with people who either have or need to make the same decision that you know you need to make today.

We love you, we want to help you… if you will come.