

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH AT THE END OF THE AGE AND THE TIMING OF THE RAPTURE

- I. The Bible declares that Jesus will receive 2 foundations of inheritance at the End of The Age: A Bride that is the Church and the physical “kingdoms” of the earth. The Bible gives us extraordinary information about these topics. God is focused on the restoration of all things.
 - A. **Acts 3:19-21 — “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.”**
- II. There is vigorous debate over the role of the church at the End of the Age. The dominant position is that the Church will not be here to see the antichrist or the Great Tribulation (Pre-tribulation rapture). The older position is that the Church will be present all the way through the Great Tribulation and will be raptured at the same time of the Second Coming. What we must do is look at God’s plan portrayed in Scripture and understand His heart for the church. If the church will be here during the Tribulation period what is God planning?
- III. **God’s Ultimate Restoration Plan:** Which rapture theory fits into it? The Pre-trib rapture theory is based on two main components; That it is imminent AND secret. This means it could happen at any time and that all the Christians will suddenly disappear. Let’s look at God’s restoration plan for the Body of Christ to determine if this is possible.
- IV. **God’s Restoration plan for the Body of Christ:** Jesus prayed this just before the Garden of Gethsemane: **John 17:20-21 — “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”**
 - A. He is asking that the Body of Christ would dwell in unity based on love like He and the Father are one. This prayer will be answered!
 - B. Paul declared why God gave gifts to men.
 1. **Ephesians 4:11-14 — “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of**

the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming."

2. The reason for ANY type of ministry is to win the lost AND make disciples of ALL nations UNTIL we all come into the unity of the faith. This is exactly what Jesus cried out for.
- C. Jesus will "wash" the Body of Christ with the water of the Word: He will not return for her until He has a Bride with spot our wrinkle or no blemish. Once again we are talking about unity and maturity for the Body of Christ.
Ephesians 5:26-27 — "That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."
- D. We have evidence of this unified "Bride" that Jesus came back for. Again, this is what Jesus prayed for. The unified Body of Christ is part of the Restoration of all things that Jesus talked about.
Revelation 19:7-8 — "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."
- E. At the end of the book of Revelation, There is evidence of Holy Spirit and The Bride being in perfect unity which indicates a unified, mature bride.
Revelation 22:17a — "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come."
- F. The reason God's plan for the church is foundational to His plan at the End of the Age, The only rapture theory that fits into it is the post-trib or pre-wrath position.
Acts 3:21 — "Whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time."
- G. The Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to the whole world and then the end will come: Another sign of the unity and maturity in the global church.
- H. We are to look for and hasten the DAY!
2 Peter 3:12a — "Looking for and "hastening" the coming of the day of God."

V. The Discussion of Jesus Inheriting the Nations: Jesus Teaches Us When the Rapture Will Be.

This should settle any debate because the Son of God always has perfect theology. Jesus is saying that when He returns at the Second Coming and is descending to the earth (1 Thessalonians 4) the elect/saints will be raptured to Him in the sky. This is **AFTER** the tribulation that He just talked about:

- A. Matthew 24:29-31 — “But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.**
- B. Mark 13:24-27 — “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.**
- C. Luke 21:20-28 — “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near... There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”**
 - 1. The counter argument to these passages is that the “elect” are Jews and Israel and not believers. We have to let the Bible define the Bible. Let’s let the bible Bible define who the elect are:
 - a) 1 Thessalonians 1:4 — “knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.”**
 - b) Romans 8:33 — “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.”**

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- c) **Romans 11:7** — “What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”
 - d) **2 Timothy 2:10** — “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”
 - e) **Titus 1:1** — “Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness.”
 - f) **1 Peter 1:1** — “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen (elect).”
2. The LAST verse of Mark 13 (parallel passage to Matthew 24), Jesus says “**And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!**”
 3. Saints are also mentioned in Daniel and Revelation: Are we Saints or is this just the Jewish people? Once again we let the Bible define it for us.
 - a) **Romans 1:7** — “To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - b) **1 Corinthians 6:1-2** — “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?”
 - c) **Romans 16:1-2** — “I Commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.”
- D. **The Doctrine of Imminence:** Being “secret” raptured at any time. What does the Bible say about this? Pre-Trib theorists say that because Jesus said this that it this way that it has to be before the tribulation. **Matthew 24:36** — “**But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.**” Remember, they say that Matthew 24 is only to the Jews; they then cherry pick this one thing Jesus said to establish their theory.

1. The Thief in the Night Motif: Pre-trib rapture theorists also say that because Jesus said that He would come as a thief in the Night that this instantly proves the pre-tribulation rapture.
 - a) Jesus says that He is coming as a thief, however, He tells His people to watch so that BELIEVERS will not be surprised. If you know a thief is coming you will be ready.
Matthew 24:42-44 — "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."
 - b) Paul teaches the exact same thing. He says that Jesus is coming as a thief to the world but not to the elect/saints. We are to watch and be sober concerning His coming.
1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 — "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 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. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober."
 - c) As Paul continued to teach the Thessalonica Church he told them not to be deceived concerning our gathering unto Him and the Day of the Lord. He spoke of two distinct things to look for first:
2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 — "Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

(1) First, the Second Coming of Jesus is mentioned at the same time as our gathering together unto Him. These are then tied to the 24 hr Day of the Lord! 2. He then says "do not be deceived" because that day cannot come until a great falling away occurs AND the Antichrist is revealed at the abomination of desolation.

(2) Jesus said it would be just as in the days of Noah: People ate, drank and were given in marriage until up to that day. On the same day it started to rain Noah and His family was delivered.

Matthew 24:36-41 — "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left."

(3) Jesus said it would also be as in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah: On the same day that the wrath of God is poured out, His people are delivered:

Luke 17:24-30 — "For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed."

(4) Both passages declare that on the same day of the completion of God's Wrath (Bowls of Revelation), God's people will be delivered (raptured). Paul said we would be raptured at the last trumpet.

(a) **1 Corinthians 15:51-52** — “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

(b) This is the last trumpet in the Book of Revelation.

Revelation 10:7 — “In the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His... prophets.”

(5) Something to consider: Noah did not know the day or hour of the great flood. He was busy building an ark for over 100 years. He did not know the day or hr UNTIL one week before;

(a) **Genesis 7:1-4** — “Then the Lord said to Noah, “Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time. You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female; also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth. For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made.”

(b) Is it possible God's people will not know the day nor the hr until he covenant with many is signed by the Antichrist triggering the last seven years (Daniel's 70th week)? Ifs we are here, we will know the general time period of the Second Coming, but possibly not exactly the day nor hour.

2. Patterns in Scripture: Moses and Pharaoh. God's people were in the land of Goshen hidden from the plagues that came upon Egypt and Pharaoh. The Goshen principle.

E. The Resurrection: A very powerful passage in Revelation 20 puts God's people in the tribulation period: **Revelation 20:1-6** — “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be

released for a short time. Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

1. Pre-trib theorists say that the first resurrection happens BEFORE the Tribulation period because 1 Thessalonians 4 says the dead in Christ will arise FIRST. Yet, this passage says the first resurrection are all the saints that faced the antichrist and who lived before that.

F. The Role of the Church if we Face the Antichrist:

1. The End-time Church will be a praying church.

a) **Revelation 5:1-10** — “I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.” And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

b) **Revelation 8:3-5** — “Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all

the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake."

2. The unified, and mature church will stand in great authority: The gates of Hell will not prevail against this church. Whatever they bind on earth will be bound in Heaven. The church will be walking in agreement with the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 16:15-19 — "He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."
3. The Church will stand with the Jews in their persecution: The Body of Christ will mystify Jews because we will be standing with them against the antichrist and walking in power at the same time. The Gentile Church will preach the gospel of the kingdom to the whole world. The Jews will be provoked to know God this way.
 - a) **Romans 11:11 — "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles."**
 - b) **Romans 11:25 — "For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."**
4. Jesus said greater works will you do.

John 14:12 — "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father."
5. The Body of Christ will be strong and do exploits because they know God! The wise will also understand the times and instruct many:

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- a) **Daniel 11:32 — “Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.”**
 - b) **Daniel 12:10 — “Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.”**
6. What does the Bible say about truth and tribulation:
- a) **John 16:33 — “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”**
 - b) **Acts 14:22 — “Strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”**
 - c) **John 16:33 — “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”**
 - d) **Romans 12:12 — “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”**
 - e) **James 1:2 — “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.”**
 - f) **John 17:15 — “I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.”**