

The Pre-Trib Rapture: An Essential Doctrine

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End Times Bible Prophecy

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Bible Text: Titus 2:13; 1 John 3:2-3

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Matthew 7. Tonight, we're going to go over something regarding the rapture. There is an idea out there that the rapture is a nonessential, the rapture is a take-it or leave-it and with that thought in mind, most churches today that I know of who used to teach the rapture either don't take a strong stand for it or they have abandoned the whole idea and it has a lot to do with get-alongism but it has a lot to do with the underlying false idea that the rapture is a nonessential doctrine. Tonight, just looking at the Scripture, I want us to see whether the Scripture itself would have us believe it's a nonessential doctrine.

Matthew 7, I want to look at the story that Jesus tells about the wise man building on the rock as kind of our principle and our basis of looking at this doctrine tonight. I'll start in verse 24, Matthew 7:24, and I'd like to open with prayer.

Father, we thank you, Lord, for the time to open your word and to study. We pray that we can keep things simple but correct and biblical, that the Holy Spirit would lead us and that you would be glorified in all that we say and do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

In verse 24 it says, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Amen. That's what we've got in the church today is an infection of scribalism and if you stand in the pulpit and say you know what you believe and believe what you know, then you get made fun of. I mean, there is a joke that goes around that says, they like to say it about Baptist preachers and say, "He may not be right but he's sure of himself." You know, there is a danger of being sure and being wrong but when the Bible says something clearly, why in the world do we doubt? Why don't we take a strong stand? And why do we waver? And why do we teach as the scribes who had no authority? We have the authority of the word of God. We're not debating

whether or not or how many angels can sit on the head of a pin. You know, we're not discussing, believe it or not, that was a big discussion a few hundred years ago among theologians. And we're not talking about matters of question. We're talking about something that God says in his word and so when God lays it out that clearly, how dare us be wishy-washy. We should be strong and sure.

When you hear what these guys who deny the pre-trib rapture, what they say, you have to go to school and have your head screwed up before you could believe that nonsense and that's why I used to say the same things I've heard other people say, "Well, you know, I'm not going to make it a big deal. It may be pre-trib, mid-trib, pre-wrath, post-trib, whatever. It might be amillennial, post-millennial. We can all disagree agreeably on those things and it's not a big...." I don't feel that way anymore because I went and read those guys and I saw what they're actually teaching and they're not teaching you to believe the word of God. If you're amillennial, you reject the clear Bible teaching that Jesus Christ is going to return and set up his kingdom on earth. I will not reject that Scripture teaching. It's plain and simple throughout the Old Testament. The prophesies in Isaiah especially are constantly referring to the kingdom age. The book of Revelation at the very end there establishing the kingdom and saying in no uncertain terms, "A thousand years," and they want to say, "Well, that's symbolic." And then the post-millennialists, they want you to believe that we, Christians in the church, are going to conquer the world and rule for a thousand years and at the end of it Jesus is going to come back and say, "Good job." I mean, how you can read the Bible and come to that conclusion, you only come to that conclusion by deciding you're not going to believe the Bible.

On the rapture, you know, we've talked about how there are so many reasons why we know that the church is not going through the tribulation period but one of the big reasons is that if you believe in the seven year period of tribulation before the kingdom, you have to believe that the rapture is pre-tribulation because, as we're going to see, the Bible teaches that the rapture could happen at any moment. It can't if it's not before the tribulation. It cannot happen at any moment if it's mid-trib. "We're not halfway through the tribulation yet so we know there's no rapture." Wait a minute, the Bible says it could happen any moment. Not this moment and not for the next 3 ½ years of moments. Pre-wrath, right, toward the end before...so, you still know that hasn't happened so there is no chance of the rapture now. Post-trib, well, we've got at least seven years.

So think about how clear that is. The Bible says it could happen at any moment. It's either pre-trib or these jokers who do away with the millennium altogether are right and that's really how it comes down. That's why you know it's pre-trib. The only two it can be is it's either going to happen at any moment before the tribulation or happen at any moment and it's all over with and the kingdom was just a joke. Now, I can't believe the kingdom is just a joke and that's why we hold to the pre-trib rapture.

Let's look at Matthew 24. We're in Matthew. We're going to start and we're going to look at a few of these passages. We're going to see another thing that I want to emphasize is that if you don't believe in the pre-trib rapture, it will begin to destroy your walk with God and you want to look at these denominations like the main Episcopal denomination

ordaining homosexuals. A bunch of those churches left and so they responded by now deciding they're going to ordain lesbians, go even further out into left field. And you have all these churches that are going down this user friendly, purpose driven, best life now route. Every one of them, look, read Rick Warren, read Joel Osteen. They tell you Rick Warren flat out says, "Forget about the Second Coming. That's not any of your concern."

("Does he really?") Absolutely. It's in "The Purpose Drive Life" book. He says that you're wasting your time. That's none of our business. We're to be about basically socially engineering the world.

Well, that's what you end up with. Once you take your eyes off of Christ and looking for him, then you become worldly. You lose the Gospel initiative and you lose your focus.

Matthew 24 is where we're going to start in looking at the essential doctrine. If you look at verse 42, Jesus says, let me ask you a question: what does he say here? I read it, it says, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." He did not say, "Watch therefore, I'm coming at the end of the tribulation." You don't know what hour. But look what he says in verse 43,

"But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Again, mid-trib, pre-wrath, post-trib, it will not be in an hour I think not. It will not be an hour that I think not because the seven year countdown starts when the antichrist signs that seven year treaty, Daniel 9:27. So if I am left here for the tribulation, I'm not going to be but I'm just saying for the sake of argument, give them that. Okay, it's not pre-trib. When I see the antichrist sign a seven year peace treaty and that starts the seven year tribulation clock, 3 ½ years in, be ready. It doesn't come then? Okay, well, it's pre-wrath. And if it isn't pre-wrath, oh well, we've just to ride this thing out to the end. Either way, we're going to know, we're going to be looking.

None of those work if you believe what you just read. Only the pre-trib rapture is imminent. It's an important word, i-m-m-i-n-e-n-t. Imminent. That is a fundamental Christian doctrine. People in the last days, they're throwing it out the window but for 2,000 years Christians have always looked for Jesus to return at any moment. Why in the end is that changing? Well, we're going to look at that in a minute, too, which is predicted.

Turn over to 1 Corinthians 15, if you would, please. Paul is talking about the rapture and the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15, beginning in verse 51, it says, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep," that means we're not all going to die, "but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." When that says "in a moment," that means at any moment. It means it could happen now. The imminent return...Michael is waiting. I paused. I paused.

Look at one more, 1 Thessalonians. These are some of the, I just picked out three here that we're going to look at but how anybody can read Paul and not see that Paul expected Jesus to come even in his lifetime at any moment. Here's one that Paul gave us in 1 Thessalonians 5:1, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 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. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 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. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Well, what's the purpose of the great tribulation period? Wrath. God's wrath. We're not appointed to wrath and what did he say? We started out in verse 2, does a thief in the night call you up and leave you a message? Brrrrng, "Ah yeah, I'm gonna be stopping by and breaking in your house tonight probably about 10." The whole idea is that when Jesus returns, the world is not going to be prepared for this thing and Christians, the only ones who are going to be prepared are the ones who are looking for it to happen at any moment. This is true of Christians throughout the 2,000 years, going on 2,000 years since Jesus ascended into heaven is that he could return at any moment.

The last one we're going to look at is in the book of Acts. Look at Acts 1. Jesus has told them, verse 8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Then verse 9 says, "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight," that's a rapture, by the way. Verse 10, "And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Now, I don't know if you see it but what I see is that they watched him go up and they were waiting for him to come back down. They had just asked him if he would at this time restore the kingdom. They expected this to happen right now and he said, "It's not for you to know the times or the seasons but you will receive power," and then he goes up and they waited for him to come back down. From the very first moments of Jesus ascending into heaven Christians have expected him to come back and if you don't expect him to come back at any moment, you are not following fundamental Bible doctrine. It's the essential fundamental doctrine, 1. because it's taught so clearly.

Let's go back to 2 Thessalonians 2 and we're going to find out that this is not only essential simply because it's taught but we're going to see that it's essential, it's necessary for the good of your spiritual walk, your spiritual growth, your life in Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:1, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." He's talking about the rapture. "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as

from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." At this point, they are actually being taught that they were going through the tribulation period and Paul says, "No, Christians aren't in it." Now, how can you miss this? First he says, "I beseech you by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto him that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." He says, "You're here. The gathering together has not happened yet so you can't be in the tribulation." And he continues,

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day," talking about the tribulation, "shall not come, except there come a falling away first," meaning that the world is completely void of the church, that the rapture takes the true Christians and what's left is a great apostasy, the false church. He says, "and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." In other words, "You aren't going to be here when the son of perdition is revealed. You're going to be gone."

Verse 4, describing the antichrist, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time." In other words, "You know what's in the way. You know why the antichrist hasn't shown up yet."

Verse 7, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let." The word "letteth" in this context means "hinder." You could say, "Now only he who hindereth will hinder until he be taken out of the way." "He" I believe is clearly a reference to the Holy Spirit and when the Holy Spirit is removed, you are removed and until the Holy Spirit is removed and you, the church, are removed, he is not going to be revealed but when you are removed, taken out of the way,

Verse 8, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." In other words, we're in the way. God will not begin the tribulation period until the Holy Spirit is removed in his work of indwelling believers. So he has to be removed, which means all those he is indwelling are removed, and then once that happens, then the antichrist will step forward and Daniel 9:27, he'll sign that seven year treaty.

Go back to verse 1, what's his whole basis? His call is for you "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto him." In other words, he's saying that if you get it, if you understand the imminent return, the imminent rapture of Jesus Christ, then you can't be messed up by false teachers. It's a guard against you being swallowed up in one of these David Koresh, Jim Jones, apocalyptic cults. None of these people being swallowed up in Heaven's Gate would have been swallowed up and ended up dead if they had been solid on the rapture. Spaceship? I mean, the Nike shoes are cool and everything but I'm not looking for a spaceship, I'm looking for the rapture. Amen? I mean, that's the cure. You won't get sucked into these false cults if you're solid on biblical doctrine.

(???) It's like the 30th anniversary of it. Guyana. South America. ("It's like, by then those people should have realized.") By then it was too late. You see, they should have known it when he was first teaching the heresy and everything. They should have known their Bible and especially when he started saying, "I am God." Okay, nice to meet you. No, see you later. I wouldn't have ended up in Guyana, I can tell you that. Not because of me but because of knowing the word, I wouldn't have been game.

Let's look at another reference here in Titus 2, just over a few more pages. Titus 2. We saw just in the last passage they were motivated by the fact that we know that we're going to be gathered together to him before the antichrist, the tribulation and all that starts and then in Titus 2:13, we are told, let's start in verse 12, "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Now, I say this, I don't say it to be mean, I just think we need to get a point across: if you're not pre-trib, you're not looking for the blessed hope, you're looking for the antichrist. Not me. I don't want to meet the dude. I'm looking for the blessed hope. If you are mid-trib, pre-wrath, post-trib, you're looking for the false Christ. I'm pre-trib, I'm looking for the real thing. I'm going up with the trumpet blast, the voice of the archangel and I'm going to be with the saints, the dead in Christ get a head start on me but I'm right behind them and I'm going to be right there with Jesus and going off and all these other people can have the antichrist and tribulation period if they want it.

But I am motivated to live by that theme that I'm looking for the blessed hope and I'm here to tell you: if someone is not pre-trib and they tell you that they are motivated by that, they are being dishonest probably with themselves and with you because they're not looking for the blessed hope, they're looking for the antichrist, they're building bunkers, they're saving up canned goods and gas masks and weapons. They are. I mean, there are people all over the world right now. Christians, I believe, you know, I'm not going to judge men's hearts but I think it's very strange these Christians are gearing up for survivalism and that ain't no joke. I'm not kidding you one bit. You can go to the websites and find. You go to these Christian websites and you expect to see, you know, teaching about the Bible and all that and you see a little bit of that but along with that, get your food rations like they give to the troops when they go in combat. The ability to make your own water and all these things right on these Christian websites. And I'm not motivated to try to survive the tribulation period. I'm not motivated to look and find out who the antichrist is so that I can try to shoot him. I'm looking for the blessed hope.

("But people like that, that's why you had a Jim Jones.") That's exactly right. ("That's why it will happen again, probably.") It will. The FBI's got a list of hundreds of apocalyptic groups right now that have anywhere from 10 to 2,000 members all over the country.

Well, in 1 John 3, we'll see that this teaching of the imminent return of Jesus Christ is what God has given to the church to motivate us to live pure lives totally dedicated to him. In verse 2, 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet

appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." In other words, we're looking not for the antichrist but for Christ and when we see him, we become as he is.

Verse 3, "And every man that hath this hope," the blessed hope, "in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." In other words, this doctrine, this essential Christian doctrine of the imminent rapture of the saints, purifies your life when you believe it and live by it. I would not be doing a lot of things if I'm thinking Jesus could come at any moment. I'm not going to be cheating on my wife thinking that while I'm in bed committing adultery Jesus could come back. I'm not going to be out robbing banks. I'm not going to be watching porn on the internet which is big these days among "Christian" men evidently, I hear all the time. I don't get that but that's what they say. And I'm not going to be doing that if I think that at any moment Jesus is going to take me out of here.

The reverse is that if I know in my mind anyway, I've convinced myself that he's not coming until the antichrist and at least 3 ½ years or later, I'm sure, in my mind, I'm sure he's not coming right now and I don't have anything to worry about. I'll just go ahead and do whatever I want.

("If you think that you can get by doing stuff like that now and then during the tribulation when things are going to be a zillion times worse, you're going to be able to control yourself?") Right. They do think that, though. I mean, people really do talk like that. They say, "Well, when the time comes down to it, I'll get serious." No you won't.

Anyway, we talked about how if you adopt the allegorical, the Augustinian view of Scripture, then you allegorize the Bible and that means you don't believe what it says and that's how they end up with the amillennial view which they throw the kingdom out and that's how they end up with post-mil. That's all from the Augustinian influence which goes hand-in-hand with the Alexandrian Bibles, the new translations.

("So okay, how do they get the kingdom on earth thing then?") They believe that the church is the kingdom on earth. They believe the church represents the kingdom on earth. They actually teach that Satan is bound and that we are in the kingdom. Pretty sad. I mean, but that's how...it's insane. It's hard. That's why I said, when you read this stuff, when you first get saved or if you've never read that stuff, it sounds good to say, "Oh well, you know. We should just get along." Then you read it and you're like, "This is absolutely Satanic." This is blasphemous to blame this on Jesus Christ? This is his kingdom? That's a pathetic kingdom. I wouldn't blame Jesus for this mess. I mean, this world is not my home. If this is the kingdom, this is my home. Heaven help us literally. Yeah, man, I got robbed.

("What about these people like this David Cerullo?") Oh yeah. ("You've got these people that are building this idea of a city of light. You know, they're thinking like they're being entrusted to build this kingdom themselves.") Yeah. They call their brand dominion theology.

Well, we've read 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Once you get off from rightly dividing which means that the Bible is divided. It's not divided against itself, it's divided in a unit, it functions as a unit but you have to take it in the context and where it is and context, context, context is the rule. That's another problem is that people don't recognize the different dispensations and they don't go to Daniel 9 and see the 70 weeks. They don't understand the mystery of the church. They don't understand the purpose of that 70th week and why the church isn't here. They don't understand these things. I just won't allow that, hey, not in my presence. I'm not going to allow people to cast doubt on the word of God in my presence. If you understand the 70 weeks and you understand the mystery of the church and you understand the purpose of the 70th week and you understand the word of God rightly dividing and all the passages that say it could happen at any moment, then the only reason for you to doubt it is ignorance or unbelief. The only reason to doubt the pre-trib rapture is ignorance or unbelief. I mean, God gave you his word on it. I'm not going to trust his word but I'm going to trust them? That doesn't work. God gives you his word on it and if you trust in God, you're trusting this book.

2 Peter is the last place we'll read. 2 Peter 3. And all this unbelief, I'm dealing with people emailing through our website and everything and they're all saying this kind of stuff. It's funny because I'll confront them with this and a lot of them don't reply and I'll say, "Did you know that our conversation that we've been having about this topic of Jesus coming back and you saying, 'Well, you know, we've been hearing about this for years and he hasn't come back yet,'" and I respond and I say, "Did you know that God predicted you would say that?" He did right here, 2 Peter 3, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." And I respond to these people and I say, "You are just a fulfillment of prophesy. God said in the last days that people like you would come out of the woodwork in droves saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming?'" And I, for one, will not be a part of this last days, weak-kneed, limp-wristed Christianity that will not take God's word as it stands and believe God's word and look for the blessed hope at any moment. I won't have anything to do with it. And the rapture is essential and if you reject that, you reject it to your own peril because it will ruin your walk and it will ruin your life.

("The pre-trib rapture.") The pre-trib rapture of the church. I mean, in these places where these churches don't teach this, go there, look at the people, look at the condition. There is no motivation to live for the Lord. They think you're crazy if you're out handing out tracts, if you're driving around with the Gospel bumper sticker or if you're out handing out cds or you're sharing the Gospel with people. You're nuts. They have no motivation. That's the way it out to be: if you're right with God and you're living for God, you ought to be thought of by the world as being a crackpot.

Mariah, close and say a word of prayer, would you please?