

# The Hour of Trial

by Brian Brodersen

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*The rapture is a miraculous and instantaneous event where every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is taken to heaven without experiencing death, and it is a fulfillment of God's promise to deliver his people from the hour of trial.*

**Duration:** 37:10

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:51

**Topics:** "Rapture Theology", "Eschatology"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the topic of the rapture, focusing on the belief that believers will be taken to heaven before the great tribulation. It emphasizes the comfort, incentive for holiness, and urgency that understanding the doctrine of the rapture brings. The sermon highlights the practical implications of being prepared for Christ's imminent return and living a life dedicated to God.

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## Transcript

Good morning. Our text this morning is taken from the third chapter that we just read, and we're going to be looking specifically at verse 10. So, Revelation chapter 3, verse 10, let me read it to you again.

Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation or trial, which shall come upon all the world to test them that dwell upon the earth. This hour of trial or testing that Jesus is referring to here is what we would call the great tribulation. And, of course, we get that term, the great tribulation, also from Jesus.

We've heard about the great tribulation, no doubt. But let me remind you a little bit about this period of time. The tribulation will be a time of unprecedented death and destruction.

Based upon the present population of the world and the numbers given in the book of Revelation, somewhere, perhaps above 5 billion people will die in the tribulation period. That is an inconceivable number. But if you think of the current population of the earth, which is approximately 7 billion, not quite, but approaching that.

And then as you look at the breakdown in Revelation of the judgments being a fourth of the population, then a third, and then a third again, we're talking about an unimaginable number of people perishing in the great tribulation. Jesus himself said, For then there will be great tribulation such as has not been since the

beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved.

For any thinking person, the prospect of having to endure such a time of death and destruction is terrifying to say the least. But the good news is that we, as God's children, will not go through the tribulation period. And that is the promise that Jesus gave here to the church of Philadelphia, a church that was marked by faithfulness to the word of God.

Look at the passage again. Because you have kept the word of my patience, I will keep you from the hour of trial which will come upon the whole world. Now, the event we call the rapture is the means by which the Lord will deliver his people from this time of death and destruction.

Now, I would assume that most of you in here today have at least heard the term the rapture. I think many of you are probably quite familiar with it. Perhaps some of you are not as familiar.

But what is the rapture? Well, the rapture is a unique event in history where every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is miraculously and instantly taken to heaven without experiencing death. When we talk about the rapture, that's what we're talking about. We're talking about an instantaneous thing where every living believer is transported to heaven without going the usual route of death.

The rapture is also, it is also a fulfillment of God's promise through both Isaiah the prophet and Hosea the prophet that he would swallow up death in victory. And it is the ultimate demonstration of Christ's victory over the grave. Now, of course, we believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We believe that he rose again from the dead. We are a minority. Most people in the world don't believe that.

And most people throughout history haven't believed that. But the rapture is going to be the demonstration that the resurrection of Christ was indeed a reality. That he was the first fruits of those who rise from the dead.

And a whole generation of living believers will not experience death. Showing, demonstrating that victory of Christ over the grave. The rapture is, in a sense, part one of the second coming.

It's part one of the second coming. Now, at the second coming, Christ will return to the earth with his people and he will set up his kingdom. At the rapture, the Lord doesn't return to the earth, but he comes into the earth's atmosphere.

And he calls his people out of the world to meet him in the air. The rapture precedes the second coming. It is, as I said, in a sense, part one of the second coming.

Now, this doctrine of the rapture is surrounded to some extent by controversy. And interestingly, even more so in the present day than maybe in the past 30, 50 years or so. There's sort of a bit of a hostile attitude coming from some, even in the church, toward the doctrine of the rapture.

They speak with derision in regard to the rapture. They refer to it sort of, you know, mockingly as, well, left behind Christianity. And that's a negative thing in the minds of some.

It is a hotly disputed doctrine in some circles today. Some going so far as to say that there is no such doctrine found in the scriptures. They say that the Bible doesn't teach this idea of a rapture.

And they claim that the rapture is a recent invention by certain persons of dubious character. And quite often, this question will arise. If you listen to the Pastor's Perspective program, people will call up and say, Now we heard that the rapture is a relatively new idea.

You know, it's sort of like back in the 70s with Born Again. I remember when I first became a Christian, I said to somebody, you know, that I'd become a Christian. I was born again and asked them if they'd ever heard of the term born again.

They literally said, yeah, didn't Chuck Smith come up with that? So, you know, it did predate Chuck by a few years. It was actually Jesus Christ who said you must be born again. And so there is this idea that the rapture is a relatively recent invention.

I couldn't disagree more with those claims. The doctrine of the rapture of the church was set forth in the pages of the New Testament by none other than Paul the Apostle himself. The two clearest descriptions of the rapture of the church are given to us by Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians and in his first epistle to the Thessalonians.

Let me read those passages to you beginning with 1 Corinthians 15 verses 51 through 55. Listen to what Paul says. He said, Behold, I tell you a mystery.

We shall not all sleep. Now the word sleep here is Paul's substitute for death. We shall not all die is what he's actually saying.

But we shall 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 incorruptible and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality.

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. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? And then to the Thessalonians in the fourth chapter of the first epistle verses 13 through 18. Paul said, 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.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say 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. 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.

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. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

These statements seem to indisputably declare that a generation of believers will not die, but be instantly transported to heaven. I don't know how you could get anything else out of these statements of the Apostle Paul. And I think a straightforward reading of the text and an unbiased perspective on it would lead one to conclude that what is being taught here is that there is an event that's going to transpire where every living believer in Christ is going to be miraculously transported to heaven.

That I think is what is clearly stated in the text. So those who claim that the Bible doesn't even teach a rapture, which there have been many who have taught that historically, and it's, you know, as a matter of

fact, that perspective is kind of gaining some momentum again. They're hard-pressed to come up with a good interpretation of what these verses are saying if it's not indeed saying that.

But there's another aspect of controversy in regard to the doctrine of the rapture. And this is the controversy that exists amongst people who believe that the Scriptures do teach that there is a rapture. And the controversy there is in regard to the timing of the rapture in relation to the Great Tribulation.

And perhaps you've heard references to those who are pre-tribulational or mid-tribulational or post-tribulational. These are references to the different views that are held by people who believe in the rapture. Some believe that the rapture will occur before the tribulation.

Some people believe that it will occur during the tribulation. And some believe that it will occur after the tribulation. I believe the New Testament overwhelmingly teaches that the rapture will occur before the tribulation.

So maybe you've heard us sometimes refer to being pre-tribulational. That's what it means. We believe that the rapture is going to happen before the tribulation period.

And it seems to me that that is clearly what Jesus is saying in the text that we looked at here this morning. Let's read it again. Now, this is an interesting point to me.

Jesus says, I will keep you from... But the word there, the Greek word, is the preposition ek, E-K. And it literally means out of. So what Jesus actually said was, because you have kept the word of my promise, I will keep you out of the hour of trial, which will come upon the whole world.

Now, you see, those who hold to the idea that the rapture might take place during the tribulation or after the tribulation, they would say, well, the Lord's going to keep us through this difficult season. There's going to be some sort of a protective kind of a hedge about God's people. He's going to, you know, in some way, shape or form, he's going to, you know, guard us through it.

So they have the church going through the tribulation. But yet Jesus said, specifically, I will keep you out of the tribulation period. And I think that the word here is significant.

I will keep you out of the tribulation. But Jesus said something similar to this in another place as well. In Luke's gospel, chapter 21, in verses 34 through 36, Jesus said these words.

He said, but take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the cares of this life. And that day, the tribulation period, that day come on you unexpectedly, for it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch, therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man.

Remember the Thessalonian passage that we shall be caught up together with them in the clouds. We will meet the Lord in the air. And it seems that, in some ways, Paul is almost reflecting back on the words of Jesus.

Pray that you may be counted worthy to escape these things. But not only to escape them, but to stand before the Son of Man. To stand before Him where? To stand before Him there in heaven as He descends into the earth's atmosphere and calls us up to be with Him.

Now, there are many passages that I think, if, you know, again, an honest evaluation of the passage, I think they definitely support this understanding of the rapture as being pre-tribulational. But there are other things as well, not necessarily, you know, just a straightforward text. But as you look at the bigger picture of all that's going on and as you look at a number of different scriptures put together, I think the case is even made stronger.

Let me give you five reasons why the rapture must take place before the tribulation. Five reasons. Reason number one is the very nature and purpose of the tribulation.

You see, if we understand the nature and purpose of the tribulation, it becomes obvious the church doesn't really have a place in the tribulation. What is the purpose of the tribulation? Well, according to Daniel chapter 12 verse 7, it is a time in which Israel will be broken. The tribulation period is also referred to by Jeremiah the prophet as the time of Jacob's trouble.

So there's a specific purpose for Israel during the tribulation period, and it is to break them. Daniel 12 verse 7 says, when the power of the holy people is completely shattered. You see, Israel has been obstinate.

They've been resisting God for centuries. They've been seeking to establish their own righteousness. They've been doing it their own way.

They've been in this place of pride and rebellion. The tribulation is going to be the time when all of that is dealt with and all of that is broken. And it's when the power of the holy people is completely shattered.

That's when God will send that deliverer to them. So the first purpose of the tribulation is to break the pride of Israel, humble them so that they might cry out to the Lord. Secondly, the tribulation period is a time of God's judgment upon the wicked.

Isaiah 13 verses 10 and 11, behold, the day of the Lord comes. The day of the Lord is the Old Testament word for the great tribulation. The day of the Lord comes cruel with both wrath and fierce anger to lay the land desolate.

And he will destroy sinners from it. I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity. So you see, if you understand the purpose of the tribulation, a judgment upon the wicked Christ rejecting world and the humbling and breaking of Israel.

You see, the church really doesn't have any place in that tribulation period. Because we have embraced the Lord. We're his people.

We received him. The second point is that there's a principle that runs all the way from beginning to the end of the scripture. And that is the principle that God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked.

Do you remember Abraham posed that question regarding God? He said, Lord, when the Lord was on his way to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham said, would you destroy the righteous with the wicked? And then he said, far be it from you, the judge of all the earth, to do such a thing. And as we look in the scriptures, we see that Abraham was right. God does not destroy the righteous with the wicked.

As a matter of fact, Peter reflecting on that very thing, when he's talking about this event later on, he talks about how the Lord delivered righteous lot and then he brought the judgment. Just like he will deliver his

people before the judgment comes. So it is not in God's character to judge the righteous with the wicked.

And we have to understand the tribulation period is a time of God's judgment. Now, some people who argue against this deliverance that we're talking about from the tribulation period, they say, well, Christians have gone through tribulation all throughout the ages. That's true.

But the source of that tribulation was not God. The source of that tribulation has been Satan and wicked men. But the source of judgment and trouble on the earth at this time will ultimately be God judging the world.

The third reason why the rapture must take place before the tribulation is because the church is not part of the 77s that were determined upon Israel. Again, this period has much to do with Israel. God in the ninth chapter of Daniel, the Lord declared to Daniel that there were 77 year periods that were yet to be fulfilled.

And when they were completed, all of God's work regarding Israel would be accomplished. And that those 77 year periods were divided into two separate parts. There were the first 69 seven year periods or 483 years.

They would make up the first part and then there would be one remaining seven year period. Some people wonder, well, how do we get a seven year period for the tribulation? It's because of the 77 year period determined upon Israel. Now in the first 483 years, the church was not even in existence.

And so there's no reason to believe that in the final seven year period that will make up 490 years in total. In that final seven year period, again, there's no place for the church in that. The church didn't exist in the first part.

The church will not be here during the second part. Fourthly, the thief passages in the New Testament make no sense whatsoever if the rapture comes after the tribulation period. Now six times in the New Testament, the Lord's coming is likened to a thief on six different occasions.

Jesus referred to it in Matthew 24 and Luke 12. Paul referred to it in 1 Thessalonians 5. Peter in 1 Peter, 2 Peter 3.10. And then Jesus in Revelation 3.5. And Jesus in Revelation 16.15. Now the thing about a thief is that the thief comes without any advance notice. The tribulation period is going to be the greatest advance notice ever given to the planet that all wickedness is in the process of being evicted.

So if there's a single person at the end of the tribulation who says, when Jesus returns, says, Wow, what's he doing here? I had no idea he was coming. You know, by the time the thing, I mean, think about it. You know what's been going on? The judgments of God have been being poured out upon the earth.

Two witnesses are in the streets of Jerusalem prophesying and the whole world is viewing their prophecy. Angels are flying through the midst of heaven with the everlasting gospel. Angels are warning people about taking the mark.

So, you know, it's not going to be any big surprise at the end of the tribulation when the Lord comes back. But Jesus said he's coming as a thief. There's going to be the element of surprise.

So it must be in reference to his coming in the rapture, not at the second coming. And so if we take those thief passages seriously, we realize that they can't really apply to the second coming. They must apply to part one of the second coming, which, as we've seen, is the rapture of the church.

But the fifth and the final reason, and there are many others, but we don't have time to go through that whole list. But the fifth and the final reason that I will give you is because of the biblical doctrine of the imminency of Christ's return. Now, the imminency of Christ's return simply means this.

That the picture that's painted for us in the Bible is that Jesus could come back at any given moment. There are no events that need to transpire for the Lord to return. Now, we often talk about the signs of the times and everything looks like we're getting close to the Lord's coming.

When we're saying that, in one sense, we're really talking about the second coming. And the signs are signs that would indicate the second coming. But there's no sign in Scripture regarding the rapture because the picture that's left to us by the apostles and Jesus himself is that he could come at any instant.

Therefore, we're to watch and be ready always. So, you see, if I say that the rapture cannot come till the Antichrist comes to power, then, or the Lord won't return until the Antichrist comes to power, then I'm right there, I'm putting up something that takes away the imminency of the return of Christ. I'm saying that, well, this has to happen or the tribulation has to be completed.

You see, in doing that, I'm taking away the imminency, but I can't take away imminency because that's what the Bible teaches. So, the rapture is this event that's really not preceded by any sign. And all throughout the Scriptures, we're told to watch, to be ready, knowing that the Lord could come for us at any moment.

So, these five reasons are some among many that I believe the rapture has to be before the tribulation period. Now, what are the practical implications of the doctrine of the rapture? What is God's intention in communicating this to us? Well, I think there are three things. And the first is comfort.

God wants us to have the comfort of knowing that before that unthinkable judgment comes upon the world, that He is going to deliver us out of it. And isn't that what Paul said there in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4? We who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus, we shall always be with the Lord.

Therefore, comfort one another with these words. These are comforting words. When I was living and pastoring in Britain, the theological perspective, generally speaking, in Britain is either all millennial, where they don't believe in any of the things that we're talking about today, or it's post-tribulation.

So, most Christians in Britain are taught that you're going through the tribulation. I can't tell you how many people I met that lived in anxiety over that possibility. They were scared to death.

And I don't blame them. I would be scared to death too at the prospect of billions of people dying from these plagues and these judgments and things. But Paul says, comfort one another with these words.

This is comforting. To know that God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation. Some people say, oh, that's just pure escapism.

Well, if that's what it is, it's okay with me. You want to go through it? That's your business. I would prefer to escape the hour of trial which is coming upon all the earth.

That's what Jesus said, to pray for. So, there's comfort. But secondly, I think understanding this gives an incentive for holiness.

Now, again, some will argue, those who don't hold to the view, they will say, oh, you don't need the doctrine of the rapture to be holy. That's true. There have been lots of people historically who haven't believed this doctrine, who have lived holy lives.

But I do think that it is an additional incentive. And I think the scriptures indicate that to some extent. 1 John 3, verses 2 and 3, Behold, now we are the children of God, John said, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be.

But we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure. You know, I think there's something to this.

You get up in the morning and just having a consciousness that, you know, today could be the day. I mean, actually, that's true in more ways than one, isn't it? I mean, none of us even know we're going to live throughout the day. We assume we are, but we don't know we are.

But, you know, if we get up each morning and we have in our minds this thought, Well, you know, the Lord might come today. That's an incentive to make sure that this is a day that's dedicated to the Lord. This is a day that I am going to be making sure that I'm following the Lord.

I'm seeking the Lord. I'm loving the Lord. I'm obeying the Lord.

Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself as he is pure. When I think of the fact that I'm going to stand before the Lord and it could happen at any moment, I want to be ready all the time. The third practical implication of the doctrine is it creates an urgency.

It creates an urgency. Paul, at the end of that passage there in 1 Corinthians that begins, I show you a mystery. We shall not all die, but we shall be changed.

At the end of it, he says this. He says, Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. You know, when we live with the consciousness that Christ could come back at any time, it creates an urgency in the sense that we realize, you know, we don't know how much time we have.

And there's still a lot of work to be done. So I don't want to be distracted with other things. I don't want to be carried away with the things that don't matter eternally.

I want to be about the Lord's business. I think it creates an urgency. And that's the intention.

So there are these very practical implications. And in closing, let me just turn over to 2 Peter. And let me read to you from Peter.

His word of admonition for us in relation to this event. Chapter 3, verse 9. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat.

The earth also and the works that are in it shall be burned up. Verse 11. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conduct and godliness? You see, as we think about this, the Lord is going to come as a thief in the night, Peter says here.

And ultimately the heavens are going to vanish, and everything is going to melt under this fervent heat. Since that's a reality, what kind of life am I to be living? I'm to be living a holy life. I'm to be living a godly life.

I'm to be living for the Lord and not for myself. And as we close today, that's the question that I would pose to you. Who are you living for? Are you living in light of the Lord's imminent return? Are you living with the consciousness that at any given moment Jesus could come back? Are you ready for that? Are you encouraged by that? Is it leading you to seek a deeper relationship with Him? Is it putting an urgency in your heart to be about the business of the Lord? That's the intention.

That's the purpose for which God revealed this beautiful truth to us. And I pray that that would be the impact that it would have upon you today. Let's pray.

Lord, we do pray that you would impact our hearts with this great truth of your imminent return. And Lord, that we would be living holy lives and fruitful lives as we encourage one another in the Spirit, awaiting the day that you will call us up to be with you. Lord, I would pray this morning for any that are among us that perhaps are drifting away or dabbling with the world or distracted and no longer pursuing holiness as they once were.

No longer urgent about the work of God. Lord, may you just touch and turn hearts today. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Let's stand together.

And perhaps you are one of those this morning that maybe you've lost focus. Maybe you've lost sight. It's astounding to me that with all that's going on in the world today, people would choose this time to start questioning these things.

It's all happening right before our eyes. If you need to get right with the Lord, I'll just put it as simple as that. You know where you're at.

You know what's going on in your life. But if things aren't in order today, if the Lord were to return this afternoon, are you ready to meet Him in the sense that everything's in order? If it's not, you need to get it in order. And the pastors are up front here and they would love to pray with you.

They would love to encourage you and send you out of here with a fresh commitment to go forward and to serve Christ until the day He calls us home to Himself. May God bless you and fill you to that end. Let the throne of grace The losers and winners The saints and sinners One day will see His face And they all bow down Kings will surrender their crowns And worship Jesus Worship Jesus Worship Jesus He is the love Unveiling love He is the love of God

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