

# The Truth of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture (2)

by David Guzik

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*The pre-tribulation rapture is a biblical teaching that describes the catching away of God's people from the earth to meet the Lord in the air before the Great Tribulation.*

**Duration:** 44:02

**Scripture:** Matthew 24:29, Luke 21:28, 1 Thessalonians 4:17

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

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the different theories surrounding the timing of the rapture, specifically focusing on the post-tribulation rapture theory as a competitor to the pre-tribulation rapture explanation. The preacher argues that passages such as Matthew 24:37-42, which describe Jesus coming to a world living normally, cannot reconcile with the idea of Jesus' return only happening at the end of a seven-year period of catastrophe and calamity. The preacher also challenges the distinction made in the pre-wrath rapture theory between the great tribulation and the day of the Lord, arguing that this distinction is not supported by scripture. The sermon references Matthew 24:29-31, which states that Jesus will gather his people after the tribulation of those days, as a scriptural reason for believing in a post-tribulation rapture.

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## Transcript

Tonight, we're continuing to speak about topics regarding prophecy. We're taking a bit of a break from our verse by verse study through books of the Bible. On Wednesday night, we just finished up going through all the minor prophets.

And now tonight, we're considering the rapture of the church. This great catching away of God's people that's described for us very plainly in First Thessalonians, chapter four, where it says that 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.

We spoke about that at some length last Wednesday night. Tonight, I'm going to address the topic in developing it a little bit different way, talking about the different theories or the different ideas there are regarding the timing of the rapture. Now, let me say again that, though you won't find the word rapture in the New Testament, the idea is plainly there and we get the word rapture from the old Latin version of the New Testament.

But the idea of this catching away of the church, this idea that when I say church, of course, I don't mean buildings, I mean people, that the people of God, those who are saved are born again by God's spirit, that they will be taken up from this earth as the Bible says to meet the Lord in the air. It's a it's a fantastic idea that that we honestly wouldn't believe unless the Bible told it to us so clearly and so plainly. Well, the whole idea that Christians will be taken up from the earth and that they will meet Jesus in the air is so plain and is so straightforwardly presented here in the pages of the New Testament.

There's very little debate about that among Christians where the debate comes in is regarding the timing of this event and the timing of the event in regard to this final seven year period of human history as we know it on this earth before the triumphant return of Jesus, this seven year period that we call the 70th week of Daniel from Daniel, chapter nine, Daniel, chapter nine, the book of Revelation, Jesus and the Olivet Discourse of Paul in First Thessalonians and Second Thessalonians, many, many passages of scripture described to us aspects of this final seven year period of human history. Some people call the seven year period the Great Tribulation, though the real outpouring of God's wrath is concentrated in the second half of the seven years. Oftentimes, the entire seven year period is generically referred to as the Great Tribulation.

And the debate among many Christians is when does this catching away the rapture of the church happen in relation to this final seven year period that is often called the Great Tribulation? Well, some Christians believe that it happens at the beginning of the seven year period or actually right before it. That group is called the pre-tribulation rapture camp or school of thought. A second group, you might say, if you want to go chronologically, believes that this rapture, this catching away of the church will happen in the middle of the seven year period.

This actually is a fairly minority position. Most people are fairly polarized, either believing that it happens before the seven year period begins or at the very end. And then, of course, you do have the position that believes that the rapture of the church happens at the very end of the seven year period where the saints are caught up, that they meet Jesus in the air and they basically do a great big U-turn and come back to the earth.

There's also been a fourth suggestion offered in the past several years known as the pre-wrath rapture, and I'll explain a little bit more about that. Now, I need to lay my cards out on the table right away and say that I believe very decidedly in the teaching that's known as the pre-tribulation rapture. I believe that before Daniel's 70th week, before the Antichrist is decisively revealed as the one who makes this covenant with Israel for the seven year period, of course, before the abomination of desolation, before God pours out his wrath, as described in the seal and the bowl and the trumpet judgments of the book of Revelation, that God will catch away his saints and Jesus will meet them in the air and take them to heaven to be with him.

And I believe that in that seven year period that will follow after the great catching away that many people will come to faith in Jesus Christ, but they will be persecuted. Many of them will be martyred. They will live in a world that is greatly affected by this outpouring of God's judgment that will happen not just on individuals, but on the ecology itself.

And they will have to suffer greatly during those seven years. But as they endure to the end or are martyred for Christ, they will, in fact, be saved. Now, I spoke at some length last week as for the reasons why I believe in the pre-tribulation rapture.

And if I could just summarize those four points, the first reason was because I believe that the scriptures do not contradict themselves. And I believe that as you take a look at the Bible and the different passages regarding the second coming of Jesus Christ, you find that sometimes world conditions are described one way and another time world description conditions are described another way. And I believe that you can only reconcile that by having two different aspects of the return of Jesus separated by an appreciable period of time.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'll probably be focusing most of my remarks this evening regarding the post-tribulation rapture theory, because that is the the if you want to say the main competitor, if you will, to the pre-tribulation rapture explanation. And I just cannot see how passages such as Matthew, chapter 24, verses 37 through 42, which describe Jesus coming to a world that's living business as usual. I cannot possibly see how that can reconcile if Jesus's return is only understood to be at the end of this seven year period, because it's going to be absolutely catastrophe and calamity on Earth.

The last thing in the world people will be thinking about is eating and drinking and giving in marriage. So, again, there must be an appreciable period of time between the two aspects of Jesus's coming, different approaches of Jesus to the Earth are described, different positions of the people of God are described, different scenarios regarding the predictability of the date of Jesus's return are established. And unless the scriptures contradict themselves, which, of course, I believe they do not.

I believe that there has to be not only two different aspects of the return of Jesus, but that they have to be separated by an appreciable period of time and completely different world conditions. Secondly, I believe that the purpose of the Great Tribulation argues against the post tribulation rapture theory and argues for the pre-tribulation rapture theory, because the purpose of the Great Tribulation is the outpouring of God's wrath upon a Christ rejecting world. And certainly it's within the heart of God to deliver as many of his people as possible from such a fate.

You know, the two Old Testament analogies that Jesus drew to his coming regarding the rapture was the escape of Lot and his family from the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and Noah and the Ark. And in each one of those, God delivered his people and then the destruction came. And friends, I believe that Jesus drew on those two analogies for a reason, because that's how it's going to happen.

God's going to catch away his church from this earth. He's going to deliver his people and then the destruction will come. A third reason, I believe, in the pre-tribulation rapture is because it is the only way that we can say Jesus can come today and that we should be ready.

Friends, let's never, ever forget this. That if you believe in a mid-tribulation rapture or a pre-wrath rapture or a post- tribulation rapture, you have automatically said that Jesus cannot return for his church today or in the next several weeks or months or really in the next three and a half years. And so since I believe that the Bible teaches and that we should be very committed to the teaching of the imminent return of Jesus Christ, that Christ can come for his church at any time, at an hour you do not know, and that you should be ready for that return.

I believe the teaching of the pre-tribulation rapture is very important. And then fourthly, it makes sense to me that God would take away this unique institution called the church before putting his focus back upon Israel for this final seven year period, which we call the 70th week of Daniel from Daniel chapter nine. This seven year period is very well defined for us in the scriptures.

And since this is a time when God will turn his redemptive focus back upon Israel. Friends, not to say that people cannot, that Gentiles cannot be saved in that time. Of course not.

Of course they can be saved. Thousands, if not millions of people will come to faith in Jesus Christ during that seven year time of calamity and catastrophe. They will undergo great pain and great suffering for their faith in Christ, but they will still come.

And it's not to say that God will ignore the Gentile nations during that seven year. Of course not. He will turn his redemptive focus back upon Israel to complete the 70 weeks of Daniel chapter nine.

And it just makes sense that God would take away his church before that redemptive focus is put back upon Israel. Now, if it's this plain, if it's this evident and you know, you may find yourself quite persuaded by these four arguments that I spoke about in some depth last week, or you may not be persuaded at all, but you may wonder, well, why is there a controversy at all? Why do some people object to the teaching of the pre-tribulation rapture? Why is there objection to it? I need to develop this point at some length. Friends, I believe that as I've studied the issue, most of the reasons why people object to the pre-tribulation rapture theory are not reasons based in scripture.

There are reasons based in emotion, there are reasons based on history, but they are not reasons based on scripture. Almost every time when you hear somebody teach on the post-tribulation rapture and teach against the pre-tribulation rapture, they will bring up the issues that I'm going to talk about right now. They will invariably do so because I believe that the real meat to their reasons are these issues that I'm going to bring up right now.

And they're not essentially scriptural issues. So let me speak to you about some of what I believe are bad reasons to object to the teaching of the pre-tribulation. Friends, if you want to object to the pre-tribulation rapture teaching, of course you're free to.

I have no desire to govern over your conscience, but please do it for the right reasons. And let me give you some wrong reasons to object to the teaching of the pre-tribulation rapture. Here's a reason that comes up often.

People say, well, that pre-tribulation rapture, it's just teaching escapism. You know, those folks, they just think that somehow they're worthy to escape all the difficulty and sail into heaven before time gets tough. And that's what it's all about.

It's just escapism. Now, let me say this in response to that objection, first of all, I do not deny for a time a terrible calamity which he pours out upon the world, but I don't believe it's because we're worthy. I don't believe it's because we're better than Christians in past centuries.

I don't believe it's because we're better than Christians who will come to pay during the great tribulation. Simply because God has not appointed his people to wrath, should we remind ourselves what First Thessalonians chapter five, verse nine says, for God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Ladies and gentlemen, I just cannot see how God, who has not appointed his people to wrath, would have him be the targets of his wrath on this earth during the time of the great tribulation.

Now, if you think that it's escapism to want to escape the wrath of God, then count me an escapist. You better believe I want to escape the wrath of God and you should, too. Remember what Jesus said in Luke

chapter twenty one, verse thirty six, he said, 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.

Jesus said that it was an admirable thing that we should pray that we would escape these terrible things that will come upon the earth. By the way, why would Jesus tell us to pray that we would be counted worthy to escape unless an escape was offered? And friends, the escape is offered. It's called the blessed hope, the glorious return of Jesus Christ for his church to meet them in the air.

We also remember what Jesus said to one of the churches in the book of Revelation, Revelation chapter three, verse 10. He said, Because you've kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. The purpose of the great tribulation is not to test the saints.

It's to test those who have their hearts and minds here on the earth. And God promised to his faithful ones to keep them from the very hour of trial. Now, again, let me emphasize that we are not worthy to escape such judgment.

But if we're talking about what we all deserve from God, then we're all in a lot of trouble, aren't we? So, friends, it's not just escapism. It's not just feeling that we are superior to Christians of ages past and that we should somehow skate into heaven. Either way, I object completely to this idea that Christians who believe and teach the pre-tribulation rapture theory believe that Christians will just somehow skate into heaven.

We recognize that Christians will have tribulation in this world and that Christians will face persecution. And friends, just because the church in America, just because the church in the Western world does not face the suffering and persecution that it has in ages past, don't think that Christians aren't suffering it today. There is evidence to believe that the church in the 20th century has not been short on persecution at all.

Reliable statistics say that more Christians have been martyred for Christ in the 20th century than in all previous centuries combined. The idea that the church is somehow just sort of cruising into the rapture, it's definitely false. So, friends, this isn't escapism.

This isn't taught out of some desire to avoid all suffering. It's taught, yes, out of a desire to avoid the wrath of God. And that's what the great tribulation is all about.

Now, again, if you're going to object to the pre-tribulation rapture theory, you're fine. Find a scriptural ground to do it, but do not object to it because it's just teaching escapism. Secondly, some people object to the pre-tribulation rapture theory because they say something like this.

The pre-tribulation rapture teaching is a deception that will be exploited by the Antichrist. Christians who believe that they would never face the great tribulation will fall away in droves once they find themselves in it. You see, there are some people who believe and they believe this very strongly that not only is it incorrect to teach the pre-tribulation rapture theory, they would say that it's dangerous for the church.

I've heard some people say that it's a satanic deception being put upon the church today. The idea of the pre-tribulation rapture and their theory goes like this. Well, they know that the rapture isn't going to happen till the end of the tribulation, that all Christians are going to have to go through the tribulation.

And then when we find ourselves in the midst of the tribulation, we're going to be so disillusioned because we were wrong in our prophetic understanding that we're going to reject Jesus Christ because he didn't come for us like we thought he would. And then we're going to forsake Christ and fall away. And then we've been influenced by this dangerous teaching of the pre-tribulation rapture.

Well, friends, let me just say categorically that we should never accept or reject a doctrine based upon how warped people will use it to wrong ends. Let me say this. I will allow for the fact that I might be incorrect on my understanding of the rapture.

It is possible, though I think extremely unlikely, I will allow for the possibility that Christians will go through the tribulation again, though I do not believe that's a teaching of scripture. I believe it's highly unlikely. I believe that the scriptures teach this, but I want to allow for the possibility that I could be wrong, though I do not think I am.

Well, friends, if I found myself in the tribulation, I cannot conceive of myself for a moment thinking that I would forsake Jesus Christ and anybody who would, you'd have to question their salvation to begin with. Friends, this isn't an idea that that somehow a warped person could do this to take this and twist it and they'll make people fall away. You see, I would say that even if you could assert that the pre-tribulation rapture teaching sows the seeds of deception, couldn't you say that of other theories as well? You know, every other theory about the rapture, mid-trib, pre-wrath, post-trib, each one of them explicitly teaches that Jesus is not coming today or at any time in the immediate future.

Let me tell you what my personal observation has been. It's that when Christians are excited and anticipating the soon return of Jesus Christ, it makes them live holier. It makes them more passionate about Jesus.

It makes them more likely to walk with God. I would be more concerned about the person who says, my master delays his coming and feels no urgency to get right with God because they know very well that Jesus Christ will not come for his church any time in the next few years. That's where the teaching of the mid, post or pre-wrath rapture could lead you to think.

Now, the third objection that I'm going to bring up here right now is one that I think I hear more than anyone else. And I think it's usually presented with a lot of arrogance and superiority. The third objection that I hear all the time to the pre-tribulation rapture teaching is they say the pre-tribulation rapture teaching is a late one in the body of Christ.

It didn't even come up until the mid-1800s. The post-tribulation rapture is what the church has historically believed and therefore it's correct. Let me say that I was just listening to the radio the other day and there was a fellow who believes in the post-tribulation rapture and he was speaking on the radio and he said this when asked about the issue, he said, well, and I sensed such a note of arrogance in his voice when he said this.

He said, well, I believe in historic pre-millennialism. In other words, pre-millennialism, meaning that Jesus Christ will return before he rules and reigns for a thousand years. But what he meant by historic pre-millennialism is the post-tribulation rapture theory.

The idea that Jesus will not return for his church until right before the return in glory. Well, and he said it was such arrogance. You know, wow, this is historic.

We all know that it's true because it's historic. Ladies and gentlemen, do we take the Bible seriously or not? Now, oftentimes when people say this, they'll say things like, well, we know that we have to take the Bible as our judge, et cetera, et cetera. But we should make a great deal of the fact that for the majority of church history, that this idea of the post-tribulation rapture has been taught.

Well, I think that's a lot of nonsense. If we take the Bible as our authority, if we take the Bible as our teacher, if we will not make ourselves slaves to the interpretations of men, even the great men of church history, then we should understand that we're looking to the Bible for what it says and not even the teachings of great men that we respect in the past. Let me ask you a question.

Do you believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary? Do you believe in the idea that Mary should receive special veneration from the church? Well, those are historic doctrines. For most of the history of Christianity, people who believe those things, even Calvin and Luther taught those things. Ladies and gentlemen, let me say very plainly that just because a doctrine has been historically believed by the church, it does not mean that it's correct.

Secondly, I think this approach neglects an understanding of how God has chosen to develop doctrinal understanding in the church. You know, when you take a look at church history, you see that God has successively had the church focus on specific areas of doctrine at different periods. We also see that our present understanding of many areas of biblical teaching were only most carefully and precisely defined after God appointed the church to focus on that particular doctrinal area.

For example, in the second through the fourth centuries, the church focused on the doctrine of scripture. In the fourth century, the church focused on the doctrine of God. In the fifth century, the church focused on the doctrine of who Jesus is.

In the fifth through the seventh centuries, the church focused on the doctrine of man. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the doctrine of salvation. In the 16th and 17th centuries, in the doctrine of the church.

And in the 19th and 20th centuries, the focus has been on the doctrine of the last things and Christ's return. And there is a definite pattern of doctrinal development through the history of the church, as if God knows that we can't take everything at once. And so he has the church grapple, as it were, with issues regarding different aspects of theology at different times.

And so it shouldn't surprise us that late at the end of time, God has said to the church, so to speak. Now, I want you to focus on the things of the end times and just as it has been in other periods of church history, we would expect that greater clarity, that greater evidence would come up during those times that would help clarify and bring a more definitive understanding of these aspects of church history. We shouldn't be surprised that as God chose to have the church focus on the area of doctrine and last things and Christ's return in the 19th and 20th century, we should expect that there would arise a greater clarity from the scriptures and a new understanding of apostolic teachings.

And let me say this, in addition, there can be no doubt that the early church, it did not have a carefully developed doctrine of last things, but they did live with the idea of Jesus's imminent return. And that's a concept that's only compatible with the teaching of the pre-tribulation rapture. The friends, some people like to throw that on, they like to say, well, you know, it was only 150 years ago that this doctrine was invented.

My response is, who cares? Let's talk about the Bible. It doesn't matter to me that if generally speaking, Christians through the centuries got it wrong, what does the Bible teach? What did the apostles teach? I regard what we have, the holy record of the apostles from the New Testament, is far more important to me than any teaching of man. And I just refuse to be drawn into that criticism, that criticism that the pre-millennial doctrine, excuse me, that the pre-tribulation teaching of the rapture is not historic Christianity.

Well, listen, you can take a lot of historic Christianity and just shut it up in a room because it's no good to anybody. What's most valuable is what the scriptures teach, and we thank God for the godly men and women throughout history who have made a stand for Jesus Christ and who have proudly and with integrity carried the banner of Jesus Christ. But it has not always been that way through the history of the church.

Therefore, we do not primarily look to whether or not a doctrine is historical. We look to whether or not it is biblical. Well, as I said before, when I find people objecting to the pre-tribulation rapture, those are usually the reasons why I find them objecting.

And the two biggest reasons is they think that Christians are just teaching escapism or they teach, they think that because it's a fairly new doctrinal development, that it must somehow be wrong. But you might ask yourself, why do people even teach the pre-trib, the post-tribulation idea at all? Well, let me give you some scriptural reasons why some people believe in a post-tribulation rapture. For example, one verse that they often turn to is Matthew, chapter 24, verses twenty nine to thirty one.

It says in that passage that Jesus comes to gather his people to him after the tribulation of those days. Again, let me make it very clear to you here, it's Matthew, chapter 24, beginning at verse twenty nine, where Jesus says immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. The stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other. Well, let me say that if verse thirty one describes the rapture, then there is no doubt that verse that that the rapture is at the end of the tribulation, because what happens in verses twenty nine, thirty and thirty one definitely happens at the end of the great tribulation.

But it is not necessary at all to identify the elect of verse thirty one as all Christians or as the church. They can simply be those who follow Jesus and who are on the earth during the great tribulation. These are post rapture converts.

In other words, Jesus is going to come with his saints at this glorious coming. And when he comes, he will gather all the Christians who have survived through the great tribulation. He will gather them to himself.

So, again, I would say that if this was the only verse we had on the rapture, on the second coming, you might conclude that. But from the wealth of other biblical information, you can say, well, it's not necessary to understand the elect as being the church or as all Christians. These are Christians who are on the earth at that time.

The rapture having had happened before the great tribulation begins. Another passage that people often point to is in Luke chapter twenty one, verse twenty eight. This is another example of Jesus teaching on the end times.

And in Luke chapter twenty eight, excuse me, twenty one, I'll begin at verse twenty five. He says, Then there will be signs in the sun, in the moon and in the stars and on the earth, distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring men's heart, failing them for fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth for the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then they will see the son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Now, when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads because your redemption draws near. And here people say, look, Jesus is telling his followers, you're going to be on the earth during this great calamity and when it happens, look up because your redemption draws near. Well, again, folks, the application can simply be made that these are, in fact, followers of Jesus.

Of course they are. But they're post rapture converts. In no way does this passage say that the church isn't taken up before the tribulation.

This just speaks to every person who comes to Christ after the rapture, who is on the earth during the great tribulation to look up because the redemption will draw near at this very end point. Now, the final scripture that I find that people use to support the pre-tribulation rapture, and again, I'm sure that you could find somebody who believes in this doctrine to teach it much more convincingly. I don't believe in the post-tribulation rapture.

Therefore, I'm probably not the most convincing present presenter of it. But these are the passages that I have heard them most commonly quoted in defense of their teaching. The Matthew 24 passage, the Luke 21 passage.

And then now, 2 Thessalonians chapter two, beginning of verse one, where we read 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 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. Well, the idea there is that they think that you can take this passage to say you can know that the rapture hasn't happened yet because the Antichrist hasn't been revealed yet.

We're not in the tribulation yet. But I discussed this last week, and I believe that a better way of understanding this passage is to see it exactly what it was or to see what it exactly was that the Thessalonians had been deceived regarding the false teachers who came to them. They had been told that they were in the great tribulation and that distressed them.

It distressed them because Paul had taught them that the rapture would happen before the great tribulation. And their fear was that they had missed the rapture. No wonder they were so troubled.

If Paul had taught them that the great tribulation came before the rapture, then the Thessalonians would be happy to think that they were in the great tribulation because that would guarantee the soon return of Jesus. Paul assures them that they're not in the great tribulation because they don't see the things that clearly mark the great tribulation. Two of those things that he mentioned are the emergence of the man of

sin, this man that's popularly called the Antichrist, this man who will form a political and spiritual and economic rulership over the entire earth.

This man has not signed the covenant with Israel yet, Paul says. He hasn't been revealed. So, you know, you're not in the great tribulation.

Therefore, you know, you haven't missed the rapture. You haven't seen the abomination of desolation. You haven't seen this great apostasy or falling away or some people call it the departure, referring to the rapture.

You haven't seen those things yet. So, you know, the rapture hasn't happened. Well, again, I believe that there are valid explanations for these passages that some people take to put forth the post-tribulation rapture theory.

Therefore, I don't have any problem believing in the pre-tribulation rapture understanding. Now, let me sort of conclude with one last idea. And it's an idea that has come up in the past several years, this idea of the pre-wrath rapture.

And it's a little bit difficult to explain. It's kind of a complicated idea. But the pre-wrath rapture, in some ways, tries to have the best of both worlds.

And that's why it's attractive to some people. The pre-wrath rapture says that Christians will go through the great tribulation, but that they will be delivered before God pours out his wrath on this Christ rejecting world. And so their idea is that Christians will be in for the time when the Antichrist makes the covenant with Israel.

They'll be in for the first part of Daniel's 70th week. They will see the abomination of desolation. They will be in that second part of the great tribulation, the second half.

But right before God pours out his wrath on this earth, then God will take away believers and take them up from this earth. Now, obviously, I would say that that is closer to the truth than the post-tribulation rapture theory. But it's still wrong.

And it's wrong for several reasons. Let me point out to you the first and the greatest reason why I believe that the pre-wrath rapture is incorrect. And it's simply this.

It's that they make a distinction between the great tribulation and the day of the Lord. You need to understand that this distinction is absolutely critical to the pre-wrath rapture teaching. They teach that Christians will go through the great tribulation.

But notice how they define the great tribulation. They define the great tribulation as man's persecution of Christian. In other words, they believe that the great tribulation is basically man's thing.

But the day of the Lord is God's thing. Now, here's the difficulty with that. And there's just one very simple scriptural passage that you can turn to.

I'll ask you to turn to it right now. Turn to Matthew, chapter 24, verse 21. This one verse, this one simple principle, if you understand, if you take it seriously, then it just totally destroys, it defeats, so to speak, this whole foundation for the pre-wrath rapture.

Again, the idea in the pre-wrath rapture is that there's a distinction between the great tribulation and the day of the Lord, which they define as the outpouring of God's wrath upon the earth. Here's the simple question that I have for you. When God, OK, so you have these two things.

Let me backtrack just a little bit here. You have this period that they call the great tribulation when the Antichrist will persecute Christians and they believe Christians will go through that, that the rapture will not happen before that. OK, you have that period in your mind, a period of time when the Antichrist viciously persecutes Christians.

Then you have another time in your mind when God pours out his wrath on a Christ rejecting world. OK, you have those two periods of time in your mind. Let me ask you, which one of those two will be worse for planet Earth? Which one of those two would you rather live through on this planet? Well, there's only one answer to that question, isn't there? As bad as it will be for Christians persecuted by the Antichrist, that will be far better than the time when God pours out his wrath on this world through the plagues and the bowls and the seals and the trumpets and all of those things described in horrific detail in the book of Revelation.

Well, here's the problem, Jesus in Matthew 24, 21 says that the great tribulation will be the worst period of time on planet Earth. Let me read it to you. 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. Listen, you can talk all day long about the great tribulation, but one thing that this passage tells us about it is that it will be the worst period of human history. If there is a worse period of human history, then it's not the great tribulation.

The great tribulation will undeniably be the lips of our Lord himself told us this, that it will be the worst period of time. Therefore, it is absolute foolishness to make a distinction between the great tribulation and the day of the Lord. It's all the same thing, it's all the same broad period of time because the great tribulation is the ultimate in horror on this Earth, and that will be when God pours out his wrath upon a Christ rejecting world.

And friends, I don't have the time nor really do I have the expertise, might I say, of all these theories of the rapture. The one that I am the least familiar with is the pre-wrath rapture. But just even in my beginning study of it, I saw this hole big enough to drive a Mack truck through.

And once you take away their false distinction between the great tribulation and the seven and the and the day of the Lord, then there's nothing left to stand on when it comes to the pre-wrath rapture. Well, the bottom line is simply this. Friends, I don't think that these are issues to break fellowship over.

There are godly men and godly women whom I respect and have friendship and fellowship with who disagree with me on these issues of the rapture, the timing of the rapture. And I think they're wrong and say, God bless you to them. And they think I'm wrong and say, God bless you to me.

Although I will say that perhaps there needs to be more charity in this whole argument, I believe that those who teach different theories of the rapture do it out of goodwill and do it out of integrity. And I don't think that they are teaching a fatal doctrine to the Church of Jesus Christ. I just think they believe something incorrect.

Friends, what's important for us to understand from this is that we should never inherit our theology. You see, even if you agree with me, well, praise God, I hope you do agree with me, but get into the Bible for

yourself. I think we should also remind ourselves, and we've seen this tonight in our study, that if you will object to a doctrine, fine, but object to it for biblical reasons.

As I mentioned before, I find that most people who object to the teaching of the pre-tribulation rapture and who champion the post-tribulation rapture, when you get right down to it, the issues that they really get excited about are number one, the escapism issue, and number two, the historic Christian doctrine issue. And friends, as far as I'm concerned, neither of those are biblical issues. Take them right off the table.

They have nothing to do with what we're talking about. Most importantly, I say, my friend, be ready for the return of Jesus Christ. I would rather that a Christian believe in the post-tribulation rapture theory and live a life that's ready for Jesus's return than someone believe the correct teaching about the rapture, that it will be a pre-tribulation rapture, but not live as if they're ready for Jesus's return.

Friends, to me, you can boil down the whole message of Jesus's teaching on the rapture into one phrase. It's watch and be ready. Be ready.

Is your life ready right now to go home to God? If the rapture were to happen before we left this room here this evening, are you ready to meet with God? Let me ask you plainly, would you be taken? Maybe you've heard of elaborate pranks pulled in the past. I've heard of one at a Christian camp where there they were together for a camp during the week, and they got it all in their mind that when one of the head counselors went off into town to run a couple errands and come back, that they would totally make everybody leave the camp and they would make it look like the rapture had happened. And this particular head counselor had missed it.

And that's exactly how the counselor felt. He came back into the camp and he looked and, you know, there was there's bacon frying in the frying pan, but nobody's there. You know, there's a fire that looked like it had just been had fresh wood put on it, but nobody was there and all these different things.

And he had it pulled over on him pretty good. And he thought for a few moments there that he had really missed the rapture. Maybe you probably you have had that terrifying thought at some time or another.

Well, isn't tonight the night for you to make sure that you're ready for the return of Jesus Christ? That you're living your life with a passionate anticipation of his return, and I would hope that no matter what you believe. Midtrib, post-trib, pre-wrath, or if you believe the correct teaching from the scripture, and I'll say that without hesitation, the pre-tribulation rapture theory, that you would put it all into practice by being ready for the return of Jesus Christ. Lord God, that's our prayer.

Make us ready. We want to be ready and waiting for your return, and we anticipate that it'll be a glorious return. And we want you to prepare our hearts for this great event, the blessed hope and soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray this in Jesus name.

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