

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture - Grant Jeffrey

by From the Pulpit & Classic Sermons

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the pre-tribulation rapture, explaining its purpose, significance, and promise, and providing evidence from scripture to support its timing.

Duration: 25:42

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 1:9

Topics: "Radio"

Description

In this sermon, Grant Jeffrey discusses the concept of the pre-tribulation rapture of the church. He explains that according to the Bible, the resurrection and rapture are central doctrines of Jesus Christ's teachings. Jeffrey also mentions the vastness of the universe and suggests that it is unlikely that God created it without other viable planets. He emphasizes that believers will have glorified bodies like Jesus when he rose from the dead. Additionally, Jeffrey mentions the judgment seat of Christ where believers will receive rewards and crowns based on their faithful service.

Transcript

Welcome to From the Pulpit and Classic Sermons. Each week we bring you a different message from some of history's greatest speakers and the Christian faith, and powerful sermons from modern preachers too. This week we have Grant Jeffery with his message, The Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church.

Did you know that the Bible presents the resurrection, the rapture, as a central doctrine of the teaching of Jesus Christ? Saint Paul says that if Jesus Christ is not physically risen from the dead, then we are all in our sins and we are fools to be Christians. The physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is attested by many witnesses, over 500 of which were alive when Paul was writing around 62 A.D. The resurrection is critical to our beliefs as Christian, and it is critical to our hope for the future. Hi, I'm Grant Jeffery, and I'm proud to introduce Bible Prophecy Revealed.

I am excited about this topic, dealing with the rapture. Many people have questions about the rapture and wonder about whether the rapture is truly taught in the Bible. I've even had individuals say to me, I don't believe in the rapture.

I say, well, what do you say? Are you saying that you don't believe in the resurrection of the body? Do you believe that you're going to be a disembodied spirit or ghost throughout eternity? Is that what you think the Bible teaches? And they usually smile and say, no, that's not what I'm saying. I don't believe in the rapture.

What they're really saying when I get to the bottom of it is, they're wondering or disbelieve in the pre-tribulation rapture.

It's the timing of the rapture that is the area of controversy. Well, first of all, I think it's important that we understand the purpose of the rapture. And in this program, we're going to examine why we must be raptured.

Then we'll also look at the indications of what the timing is, whether it will be before the Antichrist, during his reign, or at the end of his reign at the Battle of Armageddon. But believe me, the subject of the rapture is critical because it is the promise of Jesus Christ that our bodies will not remain in the grave, will not remain in the dust, but will be transformed into a body that is fit for eternity. That's the promise of the gospel.

That is the unique promise of Jesus Christ. Do you know that when we bury an individual in the ground, we say that by saying dust to dust, we are proclaiming our belief that death and burial in the ground is not the end. That's why Christians called it a cemetery.

It was a sleeping place for the body. The spirit was with Jesus, but the body rested in the ground, not forever, but until the day of the glorious rapture, the resurrection. One of my favorite topics in Bible prophecy is the subject of the rapture, the resurrection of the saints.

You know, Jesus' resurrection was central to his life and ministry, and yet there are many people today in the church who misunderstand the resurrection and misunderstand the timing of the resurrection and why it would be timed the way it is. We find in 1 Thessalonians 2.19, a wonderful phrase in which Paul writes, for what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? Paul says the rapture, the resurrection is our joy. He says it's our rejoicing, it's our hope, it's our crown of rejoicing.

So, do you rejoice in the hope of resurrection? You should, because while other generations of Christians died in faith without having participated in the rapture before their death, they will ultimately participate in the rapture when you and I are raptured. But for those of us living, we have the promise that if we are alive when Christ comes, we'll not have to pass through the portals of death, but we'll pass from life to life eternal. In 1 Thessalonians 4.16 and 17, here's what Paul has to say.

He tells us, for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. So shall we ever be with the Lord.

In this famous passage, a tremendous amount of excellent teaching about the rapture is found. For example, the Lord himself is going to come at the revelation when he comes down to the earth, and he comes down to the earth to defeat the armies of Antichrist and the armies of the kings of the east to defend Israel from what would otherwise be certain destruction. And when he comes down, according to Revelation 19, he comes with the millions of saints.

If we come down from heaven with Jesus riding on white horses, and we are in our resurrection body, and we're wearing robes of white representing the righteousness of the saints, then obviously, logically, at some point previous to Armageddon, we have received a resurrection body. Because all Christians, those

who are in heaven now in their spirit, and those who are alive at the time Christ comes in the air, are going to have a resurrection body. One of the things that's misunderstood by a lot of people is the purpose of the rapture.

The purpose of the rapture resurrection is this. God has to transform your mortal body, which either for dead Christians lies in ashes in the ground, or for those who are alive when Jesus comes, is a body that is not fit for eternity. It's mortal, it's corruptible.

And God tells us that he is going to take our body and transform it into a body fit for eternity. Now the word rapture actually was introduced by a great Christian teacher in 385 AD named Jerome. He was one of the fathers of the early church.

And in his writings and translation of the New Testament into Latin, he came to this passage in 1 Thessalonians, and he came to verse 17, and says that we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together. And he looked at that word caught up, and he used the best Latin word possible, which was *raptus*. *Raptus* is to snatch up by external force.

And what he was saying is, that's the best word. And in the Latin, of his version of the Bible that was very popular all the way from 385, all the way up until the King James Bible, *raptus* was used. That became the origin of the word rapture, used as a noun.

The snatching up of the bodies of both those who died in the grave, and those who were alive. The purpose of the rapture is to transform your body into a body fit for eternity. In 1 Corinthians 15, 53, you'll find that what God is saying is that for this corruptible, in other words, our natural body in verse 53, must put on incorruption.

And this mortal must put on immortality. Your body is corruptible. Your body is mortal.

It must put on incorruption. It must put on immortality. Right now, your body is not fit for heaven.

It's not fit to travel at the speed of thought from heaven to earth and back, so that you might rule and reign with Jesus Christ, as we are promised in several places. The Bible tells us that we're going to appear at the judgment seat of Christ. There we're going to receive crowns and awards that we might enjoy for eternity.

Well, if you are in disembodied spirit, which is what our fellow Christians in heaven are, they don't have a body. They're there in spirit. Remember Jesus said to the thief on the cross, today, you'll be with me in paradise.

Paul said to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. So the Bible does not teach soul sleep. No, those who die in the faith, believers in Christ, are instantly transformed.

Their body goes into the ground, their spirit goes to heaven, the new Jerusalem called paradise, and there it is joyfully, consciously in the presence of Jesus and the other saints. But you don't yet have a body. You can't eat and drink at the marriage supper of the Lamb unless you have a body.

And for those who think, well, that must just be a symbol. No, because we are told clearly that our body in the resurrection is going to be like Jesus' body when he rose from the dead. Well, what was his body like? In Luke 24, we're told that when Jesus was resurrected, he appeared in the middle of the upper room,

where his disciples were wondering what in the world is going on.

And Jesus looked at them, and they looked at him, and they thought they'd seen a spirit or a ghost. You see, it's very hard for people to get their minds around the idea that in the resurrection, our body is going to be as real as it is today, only now indestructible, immortal, incorruptible, not subject to disease or accident or death, but real. How real? Jesus said, do you have here any broiled fish or honeycomb? And he sat down with his disciples in his resurrection body and ate and drank with them.

Why? He obviously wouldn't have starved had he not eaten. But I believe he wanted to demonstrate that in heaven and in eternity, we're going to enjoy the good things of God's creation without sin. And we're going to be able to eat and drink if we want.

We know that even the angels eat. We're told, talking about the manna that God sent supernaturally from heaven in the exodus, that God sent them the corn of heaven, that he sent them angels' food. He fed them to the full.

In other words, manna was one of the foods that angels eat. So if angels eat and Jesus tells us we're going to eat at the marriage supper of the lamb, and he tells us our body is going to be like his in the resurrection, then we have the confidence that we're going to eat and drink. We're going to be able to enjoy all the good things of creation, both in heaven and in eternity of heaven that is so vast that we've already measured that there are at least 50 billion galaxies like our Milky Way, filled with trillions of stars.

And now we're finding that half the stars we've examined have planets. I doubt very much that God created all of this universe in its vast nature, and only planet Earth would be viable. In fact, I believe when man is sinless, that we will be allowed to travel through the glory of God's universe and see the beauty of his creation and rejoice with the angels at his creation.

How do I know your body is going to be like Jesus when he rose from the dead? Well, in 1 John chapter 3 verse 2, here's what John wrote, Beloved, now we are children of God, and it doth 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. The book of Philippians chapter 3 tells us the same thing. We're going to have a glorious resurrection body like the body Jesus had.

That body is a body that is going to be fit that we can rule and reign and administer this earth with Jesus the Messiah. We're going to have a body that is like the body Jesus had. It's going to be a body without the limitations that were given to Adam and Eve and all of their descendants following the disobedience and sin.

In fact, the rapture is going to reveal a body that is so glorious. Paul wrote about it and said that we can hardly imagine the things that God has prepared for us. But one of the big questions about the rapture is the timing.

Is it going to take place before the seven-year tribulation period? In other words, pre-tribulation? Is it going to take place in the middle of the seven years, mid-tribulation? Or is it going to take place after the tribulation at Armageddon, the post-tribulation theory? Many who dislike the pre-tribulation theory have suggested that it's a Johnny-come-lately idea, invented only in the 1830s by John Darby and the Plymouth Brethren. However, I have discovered a book, a manuscript, written by Ephraim the Syrian. He was a great Christian saint, a deacon and bishop, and he wrote extensively in the early church.

And he wrote a book on the Antichrist and the end of the world in which he clearly says, in 373, he says that the Lord will descend from heaven and will take us to be with himself, that we might escape the confusion that overtakes the whole world. It is a clear pre-tribulation rapture statement that is made 15 centuries before most people thought it was ever discussed. Naturally, the Bible did not lay out precisely when the rapture would take place.

God wanted us to be on our tiptoes, in a sense, urgently expecting him. He tells us constantly to watch, for you know not when he comes. But at the same time, Jesus condemned the spiritual leaders of his day for being aware of the physical signs of the weather and not being aware of the signs of the coming of the Son of Man.

The prophecies are being fulfilled. Israel is back in the land. We're living in the last days.

There are some Christians who rather facetiously say, well, I'm not a pre-trib or post-trib or mid-trib. I'm a pan-tribulation. I believe it'll all pan out in the end.

Well, that may sound funny, but it's irresponsible. If you read Revelation seriously as I do, the seven-year tribulation will be the worst period of time in God's entire history of mankind. It will be a time of such unparalleled horror and judgment upon the earth that it's very doubtful that many Christians could live if that was God's purpose.

But I do not believe it is. It is a time when God is going to turn back to Israel with the church taken out at the rapture before the tribulation. God is going to cause the rising of the two Jewish witnesses, Elijah, probably Moses, and also the 144,000 Jewish witnesses.

There's going to be a rebuilt temple and animal sacrifice. With all of this going on, it would be confusion if the church was still on earth at that time. My friends, we're living in the last days.

All these prophecies are coming to pass. My friends, we're living in the last days. All these prophecies are coming to pass.

When we look at it, some people ask me a question and say, Grant, is there a particular one single verse that points to the fact that the rapture happens before the coming of the seven-year tribulation, the Antichrist? And I would point to this verse, Paul writing to the Christians. He says, we are to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. I want you to think about the timing and sequence of this.

He says Christians are to wait expectantly for his son from heaven, that's the rapture, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. So Jesus coming from heaven, the rapture, is going to deliver Christians from the wrath to come. Now there's only two possibilities for the wrath to come.

Either the wrath to come is the wrath of hell, or it is the wrath of the tribulation. Because from Revelation 6 to 19, the entire judgments poured out upon earth are the wrath of God poured on unrighteous sinners. Well, it can't be the wrath of hell, because his second coming doesn't deliver us from the wrath of hell.

It's his first coming, his death, his atonement on the cross. That's what allowed us to escape the wrath to come. What we know is the rapture is going to allow Christians to escape the wrath that will come in the tribulation.

Why? Not because we deserve it, but because it's God's purpose. From Genesis to Revelation, you will not find a single example of God judging indiscriminately between the righteous and the unrighteous. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5, 9, he says that God will deliver us from judgment.

He says he's delivered us under salvation, not under the wrath of God. Here's the promise. Wrath will come, but not for those who put their faith and trust in Jesus.

The promise of the rapture is surely one of the most intriguing and fascinating of all the prophecies that we could study. It is the hope of the church in this generation. When all the prophecies are pointing to Christ's return, because there is no specific time prophecy that points to the rapture, except we know that it's imminent, that it's going to happen before the Antichrist appears, then if the Antichrist is close, then the rapture, the resurrection of the church of Jesus Christ is even closer.

You know, over the years as I have taught this exciting topic of the rapture, I received many questions from individuals. A number of them naturally are about the timing of the rapture, what evidence exists in scripture that the rapture will be before the Antichrist, as opposed to being during the Antichrist rule, during the seven-year tribulation, or even at Armageddon itself, having endured the entire mark of the beast. These are valid, important questions that need to be answered by any serious student of the Bible.

One question I have received is, explain why you believe that the scriptures reveal that the rapture will occur before the seven-year tribulation period. Here's the sequence very clearly. We're to wait for a future event, Jesus coming from heaven, the rapture, and then that event is going to deliver us from the wrath to come.

Here I think is the clearest indication that what God is saying is that the deliverance of the church through the second coming of Jesus at the rapture when he comes in the air with the saints, the spirits of all those who died in faith, and then those who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the air. We then will escape the wrath to come. It's very clear from Revelation 6 to Revelation 19 that what is poured out from heaven upon unrepentant sinners during that entire seven-year period is the wrath of God.

Remember, it begins with the four horsemen of the apocalypse which are clearly representative of the wrath of God as shown over 12 other times in the Old Testament. The fact is, I think the scriptures clearly show that God has not appointed us unto wrath. Saint Paul said, 1 Thessalonians 1.9, he said that God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation.

Here are two contrasting destinies. One is that of unrepentant sinners who will endure the wrath of God poured out without mixture during the seven-year period, and then there are those who put their faith in Jesus as Christians, and their destiny is salvation. There's several other things that point clearly to the fact that the church is not on earth at this time.

In sequence, in Revelation 4, John has been lifted up to heaven, and he saw 24 elders with crowns upon their head. Now, Paul, in his writings, in his epistles, tells us, Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, and not only for me, but for all those that love his appearing. If you love the rapture, you're going to get a crown of righteousness, according to Paul.

But notice he sees these elders with crowns. These 24 elders represent the church resurrected to heaven. If they have crowns, then the rapture's already occurred, and the judgment seat of Christ, in which crowns

are given out, has already occurred.

Three chapters later, in Revelation 7, John receives a vision of a great multitude that no one could number of every tribe, nation, kindred, and tongue. He asks the question logically, Who are these guys? He's already seen the rapture church. Who are these people? They're in heaven, too.

And the angel says, These are they which come out of great tribulation, washed in the blood of the Lamb. Now, immediately, the angel's ready to pour out the judgment of God, the wrath. And the other angel says, Wait, we cannot do it until we seal the witnesses of God.

And they begin to seal, supernaturally, 144,000 righteous Jews, 12,000 from every tribe. Now, two chapters later, in chapter 9, God allows to be released from the satanic locusts that, as part of the judgment of God, they sting people so that everyone on earth is stung except the 144,000 servants of God who have been supernaturally sealed. And when we're told that for five months, people wish they could die, the pain is so great, but they can't die.

Here's logically follow this. There's 144,000 righteous Jews sealed for protection. Everyone else on earth is stung by these demonic locusts.

There's two groups that encompass the entire population of earth, 144,000 righteous Jews and everyone else, unrepentant sinners. Where is the church? The church is not there. The church is already in heaven.

That also explains why the Antichrist curses those who are in heaven, those who have escaped him, the Christians. A second question we're often asked is, why do so many Christians deny the pre-tribulation rapture so vehemently? I believe that some, in their lack of teaching, lack of study, somehow imagine the rapture is an escape clause for the American or worldwide church today, that somehow we will not go through persecution, whereas many other generations have. Well, my friends, if the Lord tarries much longer, we're going to have persecution even in America.

The truth of the matter is God has never promised us freedom from persecution. The truth is many millions of Christians have been persecuted in the past and are so today in many countries of the world, but persecution is not essential to purifying us as many imagine. Think about it.

All those Christians who come in the air with Jesus, millions of those did not go through persecution but died in their peaceful sleep. We also know that going through the tribulation is not something that will purify us and is necessary thereby. Again, all those who come in the air with Jesus at the rapture include both wonderful righteous Christians like Saint Paul and include Christians who had a kind of indifferent Christian following.

What we know is we are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ applied to our heart plus nothing else. It is the judgment seat of Christ where justice is handed out to us, where we receive rewards and crowns and mansions that reflect our faithful service. I pray that the teaching of the rapture will excite you as it does me.

It is a promise of God to the church that Jesus Christ is coming, first for his church and then seven or so years later with his church. God bless you. You've been listening to the From the Pulpit in Classic Sermons series.

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