

Ask Jeff – The Rapture Question

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Bible Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15

Preached On: Wednesday, October 16, 2013

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You can go to Facebook to Ask Jeff and you can submit whatever question you want, whenever you want, however you want. If you're here in person, we do have the cards sporadically scattered about. Feel free at some point to put that card in the box. Let me address a couple of things that people have asked me in advance. People have come up to me and said, "Do you go and study the questions before you pull them?" No. I'm honest when I say I have really no idea what's going to come out of this box in a moment. We do have a pair of eyes that looks over the questions just to make sure they are legitimate questions to be put in the box.

The second thing is this: do I have them in a particular order? No. They are just randomly enough. I've had people come and say, "When are you going to get to my question?" I say, "1. I don't know what your question is. 2. I don't know." So it is completely chosen at random so if you submit a question late tonight, it might be the first one answered next week and you may have submitted one weeks ago and said, "When are we going to get to it?" My answer is: I don't know. It will be there eventually sometime.

So, that being said, we'll go ahead and get started. I'm going to shake it up a little bit and get things rolling. Question 1: this is really funny because I've had people asking me to answer this question and I'm like, "You're just going to have to wait until it comes out of the box." And they say, "Well, could you put it at the top of the box?" And I said, "No, you'll just have to pray about it." And whoever you are, you've been praying because it got pulled out of the box. Here it is: do you feel that the rapture of the church will be pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation or post-tribulation? And what Scripture do you use for your claim?

Alright, are y'all ready? I will be surprised if we get to a second question tonight, just saying that. So, here's what we've got to do to answer this question. The first thing that we've got to do is this question regards to an event that is spoken of many times in Christian circles and Bible studies, an event known as the rapture. Now, let me go ahead and share something very honest with you: the term "rapture" in terminology is not found in your Bible. You cannot go to a concordance and find "rapture" listed in the R's, but you cannot find the word "Trinity" either. So just because a specific word is not found does not mean a specific concept cannot be found. So understand that the word that is

being asked about, this word "rapture," I know you want to know about chronology and we'll get there in just a moment but let's talk about the concept.

I want you to go to the book of Acts 8. The book of Acts 8, we have a story, it's a very well known story of a man by the name of Philip. Remember Philip goes down and he meets a man by the name of an Ethiopian eunuch. Remember the Ethiopian eunuch and him have a conversation and in the process of the conversation this eunuch has a scroll of Isaiah and he's saying, "I don't know what it's saying. I can't understand it. Would somebody help me?" And Philip began at that scroll and preached unto him Christ and this Ethiopian eunuch is the first example in the book of Acts in the early church that we have of what we would call personal evangelism. Alright, so as soon as this encounter happens, this young man, I'm presuming he's young, I don't know if he is or not, this Ethiopian eunuch, he is saved, he is baptized and as soon after something happens to Philip. And in Acts 8 as soon as this is over, in verse 39, it says, "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." In that passage of Scripture it says that Philip was there with the Ethiopian eunuch and then all of a sudden he was caught up and he was in a completely different geographical location instantaneously. You say, "Why did you go to Acts 8 to answer this question about the rapture?" Because that terminology, that concept where it says he was "caught up" is the same verbiage, that's the same word where we get this idea or what we would call the term "rapture." It means to be taken from one location to another location in an instantaneous moment. That's what the word means.

You say, "Well, why would we apply that word to this rapture concept of believers on planet earth all of a sudden being taken out of the middle of nowhere?" Let me take you to the book of 1 Thessalonians 4. I promise we're going to get to chronology in just a moment but we've got to deal with the concept of what this event or what this idea may be. 1 Thessalonians 4. As you're turning there, let me remind you that chronologically speaking, 1 Thessalonians is the first book that the Apostle Paul gives us in the New Testament. We're about 30 years after the initiation or at least the formal initiation of the church of Jesus Christ. It's been 30 years since the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus. If you were to go back to the book of Acts, we're in chapters 17 and 18 chronologically. So 1 Thessalonians, the first communication to believers and in the fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians there is this famous "rapture passage," okay? Beginning in verse 13, those of you who are here faithfully at Greenwell Springs, do you notice it begins with my favorite word? But. Now, if you have a "but" there is something that comes before it, right? What was taking place in the context of the church at Thessalonica is the struggle that many believers have: what about those who have died in the Lord? What about those who have passed being believers? What happens to me? If Jesus doesn't come back before I breathe my last breath, hello, what happens here?" So he's been addressing those issues, verse 13, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep," that's a biblical reference to those who are passed in Christ, "that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and

remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with 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: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Verse 17, it says in this event where the Lord descends and makes the shout of an archangel, those who are believers in Christ who are alive in Christ have not died in Christ, that they will be caught up in the air. That phrase, that word "caught up" is the same word that is used in Acts 8 where Philip is with the Ethiopian eunuch, he's in one location at one point and instantaneously he's at another location. However, in this passage, unlike Philip, it doesn't say he went from one place on planet earth to another place on planet earth, it says they are caught up in the clouds in the air with him. So the term "rapture" though that word in English is not actually technically used in Scripture, that phrase "caught up" is where we get that term "rapture," okay? So this is a concept that's used in the Bible both for supernatural transportation on earth and supernatural transportation from the earth.

Now, the big debate is when. Now, you know I've joked with you that if you get 2 Baptists together you're going to get 3 opinions, right? On this subject matter, if you get 2 Baptists together you're going to get about 14 different opinions. There have been books written. There have been conferences that have been held. There have been videos that are made. We are not running out of opinions on this subject matter and one of the things that bothers me about that discussion is this and I want to share this at the beginning before we deal with chronological options: please understand that Jesus is the only way to heaven, everything else is negotiable. I do not believe that one's doctrine of the rapture is the litmus test for their eternal salvation so we should not make it that as well. There have been people who have ceased talking to one another over this subject matter. There are those in ministry who have lost their jobs over this subject matter. There have been some extreme responses to it.

Now, do I think you ought to hold your belief firmly? Absolutely, but I think we also can all act maturely and say, "You know, at times, it is okay to agree to disagree." And so on this subject matter in a room this size and with a television audience, there is no way based on historical referencing of the subject matter that everybody here is going to all see it the same way. So as we discuss this and as follow-up questions come up, please be mature. Please be cordial. And remember that your thought on this subject matter is not determinative of yours or somebody else's eternal destination. One's belief and understanding that they are a sinner in need of saving through Jesus Christ, that is salvation. This passage is talking about when those who are alive in Christ at the return of Christ, when is it that they get "translated" when they get caught up. In fact, the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 in referring to this "event" called it a prize that somebody wins and that when somebody wins that prize, whom that generation is that will experience this event, that they have kind of cheated death. They did not have to experience it. I know I've heard this from many others and I'll say the same: I'm really excited about where I'm going when I die, I'm just not looking forward to the journey. If the Lord

would allow me to be a part of that group that would miss out on the journey of death, I'd be thrilled and I would call it a prize. So it will occur at some point. The big debate is not if it will occur, the debate is when it will occur.

Now, the question, whomever wrote the question, I want to say thank you because you worded it wonderfully because you asked my opinion or what I thought, if it was going to be pre, mid or post tribulational. Now, for those of you who say, "What is that?" Let me help you out. I'm going to my little trusty board here. I want to, for lack of better terms, I want to sketch out kind of a chronology of probably the most famous book in all of the Bible and that is the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation deals with a time period beginning in chapter 6 and ending in chapter 19, this time period is one that we have called the great tribulation. This is what Jesus Christ referred to in Matthew 24 when he spoke that one time there would be this horrific event that would take place on the earth, that it would be the great tribulation, greater than any traumatic event, any horrific event that's ever occurred to man. In fact, the Old Testament refers to this prophetically as Jacob's trouble. The book of Daniel refers to this as Daniel's 70 week. It is a time period. It is a scope of time that when taken literally comprises of 7 years and forgive me for saying it but it's the best way I can describe it, 7 years of just hell on earth is what it is.

It begins in chapter 6, now, this is the tribulation we're speaking of, okay? I've kind of jumped from the rapture concept. We'll get back to it to see how it relates to it. It begins in chapter 6, verse 1, when there is the book with the 7 seals that is opened. I want you to notice that in chapter 6, verse 1, the one who opens the book with the 7 seals is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the one who opens the book and beginning in chapter 6 of the book of Revelation we have the famous, you know, the 4 horseman that come out? We have the 7 seals. We have the 7 vials. We have the 7 trumpets. We have all of these judgments that are taking place. All these horrific events. I mean, it is literally hellacious to read these sections of the book of Revelation.

Now, if I were to back up just a little bit, in chapters 4 and 5, we're given a vision of heaven. This is where you've got the angels and the cherubim and the saints of God around the throne of God and they are singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who is, was, who is to come," and by the way, this is also where in chapter 5:9 it says, "they sing a new song." I know some of us debate what that song is going to be but none of us know because it's new. There's a new song that's going to be sung. Earlier in the book of Revelation in chapters 1 through 3, we have the description of these famous 7 churches beginning with Ephesus and ending with Laodicea.

So that kind of gives you an idea of what leads up to this discussion on the tribulation. On the backside of it when you get to chapter 19, verse 11, this is where we have the actual literal second coming of Jesus. This is where Jesus literally steps out of the heaven, it says he's upon a white horse. He steps onto the earth and a battle known as Armageddon takes place. This is the one, you may have seen the bumper sticker, "Jesus is coming back and boy is he mad." This is it. Right here. So in chapter 19, verse 11, we have the literal second coming followed by Armageddon, followed by the question didn't ask and I'm

sure it will come up at some point later, chapter 20, this famous millennial event. Then we have judgment and then we have eternity.

Now, that's a summary on the ends of the book of Revelation but the question in relationship to this rapture event, the big debate is this: does this rapture event, who does it involve and when does it occur? The question was asked: does it occur pre-tribulation which would mean everybody is going along just like you and I are and before this event ever occurs, before the tribulation begins, before the seals are broken, before the first horse rider rides, then the "rapture event" takes place. That's the pre-tribulation view. The mid-tribulation view is the view that halfway in between, hence the term mid, this event occurs. You say, "Well, why would that be even a concept?" Because in the book of Daniel 9, particularly verses 24 through 27, it deals with this 70th week and it says during this last week, this 7 year time period, in the middle of this week there will be a contract that is broken by the character that we know as the antichrist and basically it segments this into the first half not being great but not being horrible and the second half being just awful. So the idea of a mid-tribulation rapture is that the "church of Jesus Christ" goes through the first half of the tribulation even though there are judgments and such, it's not too horrific but misses out or is not a part of the worst part of what we know as the tribulation. The post tribulation rapturist believes that the rapture occurs immediately before the literal second coming of Jesus and the "church of Jesus Christ" that is alive at that time will have to endure every single aspect known as the great tribulation.

Now, your view on this determines a lot on how you see life. If you initially say that I believe in a pre-tribulation rapture, what you're saying is this: that as we get closer and closer and closer to the tribulation, things may get horrible, things may get bad but at some point before it gets as bad as it's going to get, the church of Jesus Christ is spared and taken away. If you believe in a mid-tribulation rapture, you believe that the church of Jesus Christ will most likely understand and know and be able to identify the character known as the antichrist. There are possibilities of seeing events that are prophesied about Jerusalem and Israel and the temple that may be seen with one's own eyes but before the abomination of desolation that's mentioned in Matthew 24:15 and in Daniel 9, before it just gets horrific, before the antichrist reveals himself and commits that atrocity there in Jerusalem, there will be the sparing of the church of the worst of the worst. If one is a post tribulation rapturist, you've got to go through it all and you just were born in that generation and you're going to have to deal with it until the bitter end.

Now, please understand: I can go out and find people that will advocate each and every one of these positions with absolute passion and with verses from the Bible. So the next question is, "Okay, so if you've got people with all sides and they all have the same Bible, why can't y'all just get along?" My opinion or my answer to this question is: I believe one of the problems in studying this question is that we've not heeded a verse of Scripture that should be applied to all Scripture and not just this subject matter which states this: that a workman of God or a work woman of God ought to rightly divide the word of God. In other words, we ought to look at passages of Scripture, see where they are in the Bible, where they are in context and what they are applying to. In other words, I don't think we

can just take any Scripture that somehow we like what it says and put it into our box and say, "That says that about what I wanted to say about so therefore it is." Because if you get in a real discussion, a real debate of "prophecy experts," it's amazing these individuals will use the same Scripture to verify different positions and then you and I are left going, "What are we to do? What do we say?" Because how we view this position determines on how we view life. If we are possibly going to go through the tribulation, we should prepare our life much differently than if we will not go through it at all. It changes everything on how we view not only this world but our relationship with the Lord.

So, that being said, allow me just to begin to share some evidences in Scripture and some ideas in Scripture so that hopefully we can come to a consensus. I know there are going to be some follow up questions. I know there are going to be some different ideas. Please if you have one of those, raise your hand. We want to chase the rabbit. We want to help you out the best we can make clear because I realize the subject matter is difficult at best and I do not want anybody leaving or turning off the TV more confused than when you came.

So, the idea or their concept of the post-tribulation rapture, the one that states that the believer must endure the entirety of what we know as the great tribulation is based on a simple, well, it's based on some Scriptures we'll get to in a moment but it's also based on the concept that all throughout the history of mankind, in particular the Old Testament and the early church, you never see the people of God being spared completely from the wrath of God. You never see it. Think about the plagues with Pharaoh. Now, there was a point where the Israelites were allowed to go into the land of Goshen but all of Egypt was destroyed. When all the things happened, everything was affected around them. The early church, the early apostles with the exception of the Apostle John, they were martyred for their faith. They were not spared. They had to endure not just the good times, they had to endure the bad times. So the idea is or the concept is that if the people of God have never been spared during those events, then why would we select the great tribulation to say they would be spared from this as well.

Now, the counter to that argument is: this event is very different. In fact, this event in Matthew 24, Jesus said was different than any other event. This is an event that was prophesied in Daniel, spoken of in the Old Testament, and the one counter argument to a post tribulation perspective is this: who is it that opens up the judgment? Jesus. The same Jesus who said, "I'll never leave you and I'll never forsake you. I'll just turn the antichrist out on you." Think about that for a moment. Jesus said he would never leave us, he would never forsake us, does that mean we may be martyred for our faith? Absolutely. Does that mean we may go through horrific times? Absolutely. He'll never leave us. He'll never forsake us. But understand that the event we're talking about, Jesus Christ himself opens the seals and the first rider is the antichrist himself unloading just a load of wrath on all of humanity.

So just in a discussion, we'll get to the Scriptures in a moment, you see the argument for going through the tribulation and then you also see the argument of not going through. Obviously the mid-tribulation point is kind of the hybrid there in between. So the

following think that we've got to do is this: we have got to go to the Scriptures and just read these rapture passages and see what they say, let the evidence fall, rightly divide them and see where we come out. And I would be willing to say there is a good chance tonight you may leave with an ah-ha moment and what I mean by an ah-ha moment is, it is my hope that seeing the word of God divided as we are tonight, you may see the rapture from a completely different perspective than you've ever seen it before.

So let's begin with 1 Thessalonians 4. Hopefully you still have it open. 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 13 through 17. Then we'll need somebody to turn over to 1 Corinthians 15, verses 50 through 55. Then Matthew 24, beginning in verse 37 through about verse 44. That will get us started for now but later on, we're going to go to Matthew 27, verses 51 through 53 just so you can have those in reference.

So now, the question we've got to ask ourselves when we read these passages that are what we call rapture passages, what is going on around? What is the context? What is happening? In the book of 1 Thessalonians, we do not have the time tonight to read the first 3 1/2 chapters but what you will see is you've got the first church, so to speak, the church at Thessalonica, it's the early church and they are struggling with their beliefs. They are struggling with the basics of life. There is no reference whatsoever to anything that we would call apocalyptic. They are not talking about stars falling out of the sky. They are not talking about the abomination of desolation. They're not talking about people betraying one another and all these horrific events. They're just going about in life but they are struggling with something: what happens to believers who die before Jesus comes back? What happens? And in 1 Thessalonians which we've already somewhat read, beginning in verse 13, it says, "Do not be ignorant, brethren," don't be concerned, "for those who are dead in Christ," or asleep in Christ, "and those who are alive in Christ will one day meet together in the air when the Lord descends with the voice of an archangel at the last trump and shouts." The thing that is critical about 1 Thessalonians 4, written to the church at Thessalonica, is you can read the first 3 1/2 chapters, you can read the last chapter and a half, there is nothing anywhere close to tribulational language anywhere. No concept. No idea. No running for the hills. None of this horrific stuff. In the idea of 1 Thessalonians, the picture that we get here is that this event does not happen in the context of the tribulation which would advocate, just for the sake of going through these Scriptures, the "pre-tribulational" perspective.

Now, go over to 1 Corinthians 15. 1 Corinthians 15 written to the church at Corinth. I've told you before but I need to tell you again, if you ever are upset with your church and you think it's got problems, read this church. They are worse than any of yours, I promise. They've got all kinds of issues, all kinds of problems but when we get to chapter 15, chapter 16 is kind of a business meeting. Chapters 15 is the climax theologically and all of chapter 15 is about the resurrection. If Jesus Christ did not raise from the dead, our life is in vain. Everything we do is in vain. And in 1 Corinthians 15, beginning in verse 50 it makes this statement, it says, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery." Now, I'm going to pause there for just a moment and the question didn't allude to this but the Bible in the New Testament actually speaks to 7 different mysteries.

It speaks of the mystery of the fact that those who were Jewish and those who were Gentile, the partition would be torn down and we could become of one faith. It talks about the mystery of the antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2. These mysteries are these ideas, these concepts that may not have been completely clear up to this point but are being made clear through God in what we know as the New Testament.

He says, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must," become '5", and this mortal." Oh, I'm sorry, "corruptible becomes incorruption, mortal must put on immortality." Those of you that are watching on television, the camera is very deceptive. I'm not near as short as I look.

Verse 54, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Do you notice the parallels between 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4? You've got the last trump, you've got the idea of being changed, it's the concept, in the moment in the twinkling of an eye. The other thing that 1 Corinthians 15 has in common with 1 Thessalonians 4 is this: that even though this church and even though the people of God had some struggles in life, there is no apocalyptic language anywhere. There is no idea or concept of the antichrist. There is no speaking of the seals being opened. There is no horrific heavenly events taking place. They are just going through life. They are celebrating the fact in chapter 15 that, "Because Jesus rose from the dead we can rise too an oh, by the way, let me show you this ministry, if by chance someone you love passes before Jesus come back and you don't, guess what? Both of you are still okay." This passage of Scripture, much like 1 Thessalonians 4, because it has no tribulational language whatsoever, gives us a very clear perspective that we would call pre-tribulational. Why? Because there's nothing around it that's apocalyptic or end timesish at all.

So, turn to Matthew 24. We're about to change the story. Matthew 24 is oftentimes disclosed is the most difficult chapter in all the Bible and I will not argue with that fact. Jesus is there. It is literally days before his crucifixion. He is there, not necessarily in the garden of Gethsemane as we think of praying the night before, but he's in that area geographically compared to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and they're on the hill and he's looking down at the Temple Mount and he's looking down at the temple and the disciples and him are having all these kinds of questions. There in chapter 24 of Matthew, the disciples ask him some very important questions. They basically ask him: when is the end of the world going to occur? And what's the sign of your coming? Those are critical questions, right? Those are important questions. We want to know, "Jesus, when is this all going to wrap up? And how do we know that the second coming without a shadow of a doubt is about to happen?" And in Matthew chapter 24 Jesus begins to disclose all of this verbiage, all these teachings, all this language, that you cannot deny is apocalyptic in nature. I mean, we're going to see all kinds of wild things taking place.

We're not going to read all of Matthew 24 but just kind of pick up on some of the ideas or concepts. Verse 6 is wars and rumors of wars. Verse 7 is nations shall rise up against nation. Verse 9, they shall deliver you up to be afflicted. There will be false prophets, verse 11. Now, you may be thinking to yourself, "Well, that kind of sounds like today." Maybe we are in the tribulation? But read verse 15, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place," where is that? The temple in Jerusalem, "(whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." Guess what? It just got bad. The abomination of desolation. This is an event that was prophesied by Daniel. In fact, if you want kind of a picture of it, now, it's not the fulfillment of it but a picture of it is what we know as the Maccabean revolt what we know as the celebration of Hanukkah every year by the Jewish people. As you may remember, there was a secular entity who went into the temple, went into the holy place and literally offered a pig on the altar. Could there be anything more desecrating to a Jewish altar than that? And the Jewish people rose up and they had one day worth of oil in their lamps but how long did it last? It lasted 8, therefore we have what we know as as the Hanukkah celebration. It's the celebration of lights. Why? Because the Lord gave them the light they didn't think they could have to win the battle.

It was a picture of this event. Why? Because it was a desecration. It was a vile picture to a very holy place. But here the abomination of desolation according to the book of Daniel 9 and for the second time, we're not going to go all the way back in there, the idea that you get according to Daniel 9 is that the antichrist figure who in the book of Revelation is called the beast, will go into the Holy of Holies in the Temple Mount, he will stand there and declare he is God. There is no worse desecration of the temple of God than the antichrist declaring he is God in that place. When that occurs, what does it say to do? Run to the hills, run here, run there. And beginning in that passage of Scripture, Matthew 24, I mean, it goes everywhere. You've got all kinds of horrible things, verse 27, you've got lightning coming out of the sky. You've got all these things happening.

Verse 36 of Matthew 24, do you notice how this starts? "But." "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Here we go, "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." You cannot deny that in that which I read, that's a pretty good rapture passage. It says there will be 2 in one location, one is gone, one is left. In another location, one is gone, one is left. The idea in Matthew 24 is that there is this rapture style or type event but unlike 1 Thessalonians and unlike 1 Corinthians, there is apocalyptic

literature all around it. I mean, the abomination of desolation, you can't get any more apocalyptic than that. I mean, that's like the event of the tribulation.

So in that light, Matthew 24 speaks of an event such as a rapture event in somewhat of a post-tribulational concept. Now folks, let me be honest with you: 2 opposing truths cannot both be right. There is no such thing. You cannot have a tall midget. No offense to people such as me. You cannot have it. You cannot have, it's impossible to have a married bachelor, right? How about a short giant, can you have it? No. You cannot have both of these passages speaking of these events when we talk about this rapture, they cannot both be true if they are both describing 2 different things. So how do we reconcile them? I'm going to give you a phrase that's very near and dear to my heart and then I want you to work with me. Are you ready for it? Could it be. Could it be. Could it be that it's not that either/or is right but both are right?

Now, I know what some of you are thinking, "But they both can't be right." Work with me for just a moment. Flip a few pages over to Matthew 27. In Matthew 27, we have the finalization of the crucifixion of Jesus, he raises in chapter 28. In Matthew 27, beginning in verse 51 it says, "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent." I know the question isn't about this but, by the way, the veil doesn't rip because the rocks quake, the rocks quake because the veil rips. Just an interesting thought there. Verse 52, this is where it's going to get fun, "And the graves were opened," not will be opened, were opened, "and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Now, I don't know about you but that sounds like a rapture event. You've got those who are dead in Christ who are now alive in Christ. You've got those of the Old Testament, what we would call saints, who are now walking around the holy city. I mean, can you imagine this event?

Now, it's a big deal. It's Passover week. I mean, this is the time. This is like the celebration of celebrations and Jesus of Nazareth has come. He has overturned the tables. He has made everybody mad. They have crucified him on Golgotha. We've had 3 hours of darkness. The ground has shook. The temple has quaked. I mean, it's been really rough, right? You're like, "I'll tell you what, I'm tired, I'm hungry. I'm going to go to Denny's tonight," like they had Denny's back then, just work with me. You go to Denny's and you see somebody you've never seen before you say, "Hey buddy, I'm glad you're in town. Who are you?" "I'm David." "Who is your buddy?" "That's Noah." "What!" Does it not say many saints of old rose and they walked around the holy city? Folks, that's one of those verses of Scripture that when it comes to Easter time, we don't usually read. We get Jesus buried, we get him raised but we don't realize that when he rose not only did he raise, it says many saints of old came out of the graves at his resurrection. I'm going to tell you what, that's what we read about in these passages, those who were dead in Christ, what happened? They were raised. That was somebody who was in one location who is instantly in another location. This is a rapture style event.

Well, do you know what? That doesn't fit with any of that. You know, when we look at the New Testament in particular but even the whole Bible, the Lord loves to give us truth

in agricultural terms. Now, I did not grow up on a farm but I grew up in Texas and, well, that's not close enough but it will work for this illustration. You know and I know even with the most rudimentary of agricultural knowledge that when a crop is planted that it is harvested in 3 phases. There are the firstfruits, there is the harvest and there is the gleanings. Now, if you need biblical verification, read the book of Ruth. Remember Ruth and Boaz? And remember they talked about that some of the servants were allowed to go out and get the firstfruits and then they had this huge harvest, but what did Ruth get? The gleanings. There was that little bit that was left over that they were allowed to pick up at the end and you see this analogy, even the Apostle Paul talks about the firstfruits and the harvest and the gleanings. So in agricultural terms which is the idea even at judgment it talks about the Lord taking the sickle to the fields. Remember in John 4, Jesus is speaking of souls and he says the fields are white as snow. This is language that is used all throughout the Scriptures.

So let me ask you a question: could it be that in Matthew 27 we had what we might call the firstfruits? We had a raising of the dead. We had the graves opened. Now, I know what some of you are thinking: what happened to them? It says they walked around in the holy city. Do you remember Acts 1 where Jesus takes the apostles out on the hill and he's about to ascend and remember what it says? It says, "Don't be fearful. Don't be scared. As he left so shall he return." He went into the clouds, he's coming out of the clouds, right? But do y'all remember in Revelation 19 what he comes back with? A whole group of people? So could it be he also left with a whole group of people? Now, the Bible doesn't give us that specifics but it does tell us there is a significant group of people that upon his resurrection that are from what we call the Old Testament who raised out of their graves and walked around the holy city. Could it be that they are the firstfruits?

Now, the harvest, isn't that in agricultural terms, isn't that the big one, right? That's where you get the most of whatever crop. Do you know it's been about 2,000 years since Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and you can have a lot of debates about the numbers but can we just say millions and hopefully billions of people have come to know Jesus as their personal Savior? Now, in 1 Thessalonians and in 1 Corinthians, speaking to churches, it says that there is going to come a time when those who are alive in Christ and those who are dead in Christ shall raise together to meet the Lord in the air and so they shall ever be with him. Could it be that because there is no apocalyptic language, could it be because there is no end times scenario, that these passages are talking of the harvest?

You know, one day the book sealed with 7 seals is going to be opened. One day Jesus Christ is going to open those books and one day the wrath of God is going to pour out. Yes, there are 7 seals. Yes, there are 7 vials. Yes, there are 7 trumpets. Yes, there are all these horrific events. But you know, tucked in the middle of the book of Revelation right here in chapter 7, it speaks of a multitude that will be saved. It says that they will come from every nation. It says that they will come from every kindred. It even speaks of the 12 tribes of Israel and representatives from there. In other words, even during this horrific time period known as the tribulation, there will be those who will come to believe. There will be those who we could use the language, will be saved. You know, Matthew 24 and, by the way, there's a parallel passage in Mark 13 and in Luke 21, we just went to one

tonight. Could it be that in the midst of all this tribulational language, in the midst of the abomination of desolation, in the midst of people running for the hills, in the midst of the mark of the beast, in the midst of all that stuff, there is this passage that speaks of a time where there will be 2 in the field and one is taken and one is left. Could it be that during that great tribulational period that these are the gleanings?

So it's possible that when we discuss the rapture event, they're all not talking about one specific time period but they are speaking of all specific time periods. You have a rapture type event at the resurrection of Jesus. You have 2 very definitive passages with no apocalyptic literature. Then you have passages with very clear tribulational context around them. What that would do is this: it would state that for every age and for every time at a specific time, the Lord calls his own home, not just during one time. Does that make sense?

Okay, growing up in Texas, I see a bunch of cows looking at a new gate so raise your hands and let's go for it. I've told you we're only going to have one question tonight. Yes ma'am. So what's my view? My view is that what we know as the church of Jesus Christ, you and I, that's who we are right now, right? Are we in the tribulation? No, it hasn't happened yet. The 7 seals haven't opened. The antichrist is not reigning in the world. Now, some people will argue with that but it's not happening, okay? It's not occurring. There are not stars falling out of the sky. I do believe that these passages describe that at some point in the time of the church age which we're living in and yes I do believe before those 7 seals are opened, this harvest event will take place. I believe that you and I living today as believers in Jesus Christ if this event were to occur tonight, that those who are dead in Christ since the time of Christ and those who are alive in Christ will be caught up together in the air so you could say that as a whole for me I am a pre-tribulational rapturist. However, I also believe according to Scripture that in the tribulation there will also be another rapture event that I will not be a part of but believers in that time period will be.

So when people ask me this question: do you believe in the pre-tribulational rapture or the post, I say yes. The question isn't: does it occur? It's: whom does it affect? That's the big question and I think the, if I can use the word error, I know that sounds strong, I think the misunderstanding comes when people will take this passage, by the way, I've got some very dear, dear, dear friends of mine that are so pre-tribulational rapturists they can't see anything else and they will take Matthew 24 and try to shove it into that position. I don't think you can. I've got friends of mine that are post-tribulational rapturists and they'll look at 1 Thessalonians and say, "Well, the antichrist is there, he's just not talking about him." In other words, we really do have bad habits of taking the position that we hold to and making everything fit into it where the Bible says to rightly divide them. So for you and I today living and breathing, I would say the position for office as believers is what we would call pre-tribulational but that does not deny a rapture event during that time period.

Now, some years ago, there was an individual that was in the church that I was serving who taught a very large Sunday school class, a very impactful Sunday school class, a

great Sunday school class. You know, just one of those great wonderful core people of a church. The issue was he knew that I personally for today was a pre-tribulational rapturist. He was a post-tribulational rapturist. He came to me and he said, "You know we disagree on this." I said, "We can but we can do it cordially, correct?" He said, "Yes we can." Well, he was teaching through books of the Bible just like you do as a Sunday school teacher and they came across Matthew 24, this rapture type passage. He came to me and he said, "Pastor Jeff, I know we disagree but I also believe in being fair." He said, "During Sunday school," where I was Sunday school hour and the worship service were 2 different hours, he said, "During the Sunday school hour, would you come and for 30 minutes present the pre-tribulational view and I'll present the post tribulational view and we'll just be fair and just let the class decide?" I said, "That's fair." So when I came and I gave my 30 minutes, instead of teaching the pre-tribulational rapture, I taught the post-tribulational rapture for saints during the tribulation and when it got done, this man who was very learned, very intelligent and a fabulous Sunday school teacher looked up at me and went, "Huh, I never thought of it that way." Years later I'm proud to say we shook hands on a golf course and he said, "Do you know what? I am so glad we didn't get upset with each other." He said, "Now, we both see it the same way just for different people at different times." And the way we could come to that agreement is because we did not shoot each other over our differences. We were willing to sit and talk with one another and my joke with him is, "Would you have ever thought we both were right?" But we were right about different people at different times.

Does that help at all with the follow-up question? So, let me make it real clear so nobody questions where I stand, at least. Do I believe that Jeff Meyers, do I believe that Tracy Myers, do I believe my children living today, do I believe that we personally or you will have to go through what we know as the tribulation? No I do not but I do believe that there is a rapture event for those that go through the tribulational event. Hopefully that's as clear as mud on a subject matter that has a lot of ideas.

Yes sir. I'm not going to repeat that on the microphone but it's a great illustration. Right. What he is saying is the illustration is: we as the church of Jesus Christ, we're called the bride of Christ. The bride of Christ which is pure, the bride of Christ which has been protected and therefore it would not have been through that position of the tribulation.

I saw a hand back here. Yes ma'am. Yes. Right. Right. What she brought up if you could not hear her and it was alluded to in Matthew 24, by the way, that the Noadic flood back in Genesis 6 is a picture of and when you say, when we say a picture, don't necessarily read theology into it, just allow it to color commentary your theology, it's a picture of the church being preserved through the wrath of God. You're absolutely right. It's a great picture of that because God spared them. Such is the land of Goshen with the judgment on Pharaoh and the Egyptians. God provided a separate place for the people of God not to be harmed by the wrath of God. So there are those pictures all throughout. But notice in both of those and, by the way, based on my could it be, whether it was Matthew 27, whether it's at the end of the church age or whether it's at the end of the tribulation, in all 3 of those times spectrums, the Christ-rejecting, Bible-rejecting humanity as in the days of Noah are just going about their business. They are minding their business and all of a

sudden, boom, it happens. That passage in 1 Corinthians 15 when it says in the twinkling of an eye, your eye blinks in one nanosecond. That's one one-millionth of a second. And one of the lessons that I want people to hear today, not speculating the when, the where and the how but today is this: some people think that when this event occurs, that when they see the light in the sky or they hear the sonic boom, that at that point they are going to hit their knees and repent, it is physically impossible to drop to your knees faster than one one-millionth of a second. It cannot be done and so one's decision must be determined now, not during this event if that makes sense. So I want to make that clear. The same thing happened in the story of Noah. Remember the idea, the picture that you get there is when the door closed there was a group going, "Uh-oh, missed out." What did Jesus say in Matthew 7? He said, "On that final day of judgment," basically he gives the illustration of the doors of heaven being close, "there will be those who come and knock on the door and say why didn't we get in?" And he says, "Because I never knew you."

So but thank you for the clarification in a very unclear subject matter at times. Anything else? Yes sir. Great question. What this man is referring to is Jesus makes some prophecies, some predictions. He makes some statements of what's going to occur and the question was: how do we parallel that with A.D. 70 when what we know as the Romans just, I mean, literally took out Jerusalem and took out the Jewish people, destroyed the Temple Mount. What of these prophecies were fulfilled? And I don't know if you're alluding to this per se but... Right. Matthew 24 is the chapter that says, "When you see these things happening this will be the last generation," but at the same time he said also that every one of the bricks of the temple will be torn down and so the question is: how do we reconcile? Now, there is a view of Scripture, there is a view, I don't personally hold to it, there are some very beloved authors and speakers that do, that is called the preterist position. I don't know if you're alluding to this. The preterist position is that all of the events in Matthew 24 have already been fulfilled, that when Titus and the boys from Rome went in and ransacked the Holy of Holies, that was the abomination of desolation. The problem with that perspective is: there has been more than one generation since then. Last I checked, we've got multiple generations just in this room. It's been almost 2,000 years. There are passages in Matthew 24 where it speaks of literally the stars falling out of the sky, the moon turning red, the sun turning black. The moon was white this evening when I looked at it and the sun was basically yellow when it wasn't raining today. So some of those events in Matthew 24 you could look back at A.D. 70 and say, "Wow, that really does give us," back to you ma'am, "a picture." I believe, to your point, I think A.D. 70 when the Romans came in and ransacked, I think again it was a picture of the events that are going to one day happen.

Does that help at all? Kinda, sorta? Well, help me clarify it. I want to help you clear it up. I'm good with that. Right. Right, but in that passage, isn't that in the context of the abomination of desolation? Right. That you've got the abomination of desolation, all these horrific events and this generation shall not pass before these things be fulfilled. What I hold to is that when the abomination of desolation occurs, time's out. It's over. This is it. Now, did the abomination of desolation happen in A.D. 70? No. Why? Because according to the Bible in Daniel 9, it says that the antichrist goes into the temple and declares himself as God, he does not just tear down the temple. But Jesus did tell them,

"Hey, every brick is going to be torn down," and guess what? They did a pretty good job of it in A.D. 70. I don't know if that helps at all.

Are we getting a little more clear? Not really? Kinda sorta? No, okay. How can we get more clear? Probably not, okay, great. That makes my job real easy. I don't have to answer it. No seriously. How can I help? Yes they do. Right. Right. Right. Great question. Now we're getting somewhere because he asked this very important question: what does, because the book of Revelation that talks about all these events, what did it mean to the first hearers? What did it mean to the early church? We talked about the church at Corinth, the church at Thessalonica, these churches were around in A.D. 70 so how did the book of Revelation, how did this content impact them? Great question and it boils down to when you date the book of Revelation. There are 2 views. View 1 is that it occurred prior to 70 A.D., that what we know as the Apostle John, that he was banished to the Isle of Patmos. Remember chapter 1 of Revelation says he was on the island of Patmos, that he was banished to the island of Patmos, at some point during probably the 60s of, not the 60s like the late 60s, we're not talking Woodstock and the Beatles, we're talking 60s first century, maybe just as rebellious but nonetheless. In the original 60s, that he was banished and that this vision of Revelation was given to him and in the subsequent years they saw it unfold before their very eyes.

The other view is that what we know as the book of Revelation was given to the Apostle John in the mid to late 90s of the first century and that actually the rulers, you see, Titus was the general that was ruthless. Nero may have been the ruler but Titus was his general that ransacked all this, that Titus and Nero would have been the rulers in the 60s. A man by the name of Domitian would have been the ruler in the 90s. Now, this is where Josephus helps us out. Josephus if you don't know who he is is probably one of the most respected first century historians in the world. He was a Jewish individual. His famous book is called "Antiquities." It is challenged by very few people both believers and non-on its accuracy. Josephus tells us that Titus and Nero killed and destroyed and maimed everybody they could get their hands on so why did John get a free pass to Patmos? Domitian was scared of his shadow and was scared that if he did something the people didn't like, he'd get in trouble by his people and so he was known for banishing people just to the nethers and saying, "See you later." Historically speaking, I believe the evidence vouches more for what we would call the late date than the early date. You say, "Why is that important?" Because what he's speaking of is the destruction of the temple and all those events had already occurred when God gave us this so rather than speaking to something that was about to happen, even though something horrific had already happened, it was speaking to something even worse that would occur in the future.

Does that help? He thinks it's good but does that help you? Yeah, I know. Now, I do have some friends of mine who when given this information and we're going to wrap it up because I know our heads are hurting here, they look at this information and they go, "I just don't know what to do." And we've talked about pre-millennial and post-millennial and they would call themselves, they are pan-tribulationists, it's all just going to pan out. That's the default position, if you want. But I think the thing that is most clear is this: we as human beings are simple people, the solution to our sin is Jesus Christ alone, there

is no other solution. We can't be good enough, can't be smart enough, we can't even answer every question, alright? I mean, if you've read the book of Job, God comes to Job in chapter 38 and he asks him 35 questions and he says, "I don't know," alright? So we're not going to answer all the questions but the thing we also need to hear is there is going to come a time whether we agree or we disagree on the actual time it will occur, there is going to be a time where the Lord steps out of heaven and he calls his bride home and you had better hope you are a part of the bride. You say, "Well, what makes the bride?" Just like an actual wedding ceremony, the person who was invited, given the offer. Guys, we're the ones who make the offer, right? I know the world is going upside down but that is the proper way of doing it. Guys, we do the asking and the bride does the responding. Jesus Christ is at the altar waiting for us. He has paid the price. He bought the ring. He rented the chapel. Do whatever analogy you want and he's waiting for us to walk the aisle and say yes. So in summary: I have friends of mine, particularly on the pre-tribulational part who tell me, "Jeff, I don't agree with you but I hope you're right." Please understand that in the big context it's Jesus alone.

Yes sir and we'll wrap it up. Yes sir. Okay, the perspective he's asking: why do some, okay, just blame the pastors. Okay, why do some pastors and he's right, he's absolutely right. I agree. Why do some of them not believe there's going to be one at all? Well, the position I mentioned earlier known as the preterist position, they believe all the events of Revelation have already taken place so therefore there would be none. There is another position, you see, we use the word tribulation a lot tonight, we haven't used the most often used word with the book of Revelation and it's the word millennium. You see, in the book of Revelation chapter 20, there is this thousand year time period that takes place and the view, you know, we've got pre-tribulational, mid-tribulational, post-tribulational, there is also what we call pre-millennial, post-millennial and that view is based on which view of Jesus actually stepping foot on the earth. Does he step foot on the earth and initiate this time period or does he step on earth at the conclusion of the time period? There is a position, I know you're shocked, in the middle. It's called amillennialism. "A" in Greek meaning "no." Which their position is that all the language of the book of Revelation is not literal but is figurative and it's allegorical and there is no 7 years, there is no 1,000 years. What there is is there is a time period of, you know, worse than other times followed by a time period better than others and just one day Jesus shows up. Scarily, that is the position of most academicians because most academicians and I'm going to be critical of them because I can because I'm up here, is they're so smart they're no good because they cannot take the literalness of Scripture so they make everything an allegory. They cannot literally believe that Jesus literally was sinless, literally born of a virgin, literally died and literally rose from the dead so why would he literally reign? And so what happens is when you cannot subscribe to the literalness of it, you default to the allegory of it or just kind of it tells a story of and that's what a lot of...so either A, they put it all in the past or B, say, "Oh yeah, it's in the future but it's just vague, it's not the specifics." Does that answer that question?