

## End-Times pt 3 Post Trib. View of the Rapture

*End-Times 2020*

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That pastor did anywhere near as good a job as Pat did. I think Pat did a phenomenal job. I agree with most of what he says, but I still don't see the case for pre-trib. So we'll be talking about that. Now if you're, we've got a lot of pre-tribbers here, I'm sure. God bless you. And it's not even my goal. I'm the pastor of the church. I'm post-trib. I don't demand anybody be post-trib. As long as you believe Jesus is returning, fine. At the same time, we're probably the only church in the county that will allow both views to be taught from the pulpit. If you're sitting down and you're listening to what I'm saying and you're thinking, "Man, Pastor Phil's out to lunch." Good. Go home and re-listen to Pat's message from last week. In fact, we're going to try to get that out to people as a package deal so you can listen to both sides of the issue. Now, it'd be nice if we can get all the different perspectives, but there's about eight or nine of them so that would be kind of worrisome. But whatever the case, I'll be talking about the post-trib rapture. Love you all. If you disagree with me, fine. I actually hope I'm wrong on this. I don't like pain, and so I hope I'm wrong on this.

So let's go to the Lord in a word of prayer.

*Father, in Jesus' precious name, we just love You, Lord, and we just want to be with You, Lord. And as I preach a controversial message today, a message that even some of the people in this church disagree with me on, I pray that we could still love each other and agree to disagree, and we can rejoice in the fact that Jesus is coming back and whether we go through the tribulation or not, in the end we're going to be with Jesus. As long as we trust in Jesus for salvation and commit to Him and persevere in the faith through the power of the Holy Spirit, we'll be with Jesus forever and ever. And so I just pray, Lord, that that we would just be kind to one another, even if we disagree. I thank You, Lord, for the great job Pat did representing the pre-trib rapture last week but I pray that You would anoint me to proclaim Your truth today. Obviously, we can't both be right on certain issues here, but I just pray, Lord, that as I preach passages from Your Word, that it will cause people to think and apply these passages. But whether pre-, mid-, post-, pre-wrath, on the trib, whether amillennialists or postmillennialists, whatever it may be, Lord, I just pray that You prepare our hearts for suffering because You've called Christians. It comes with the turf. You've called us to suffer for the cause of the gospel. So please, Lord, anoint me to proclaim Your truth. I pray that I would not lead anyone astray. Open hearts and minds, including my own, to receive truth from Your word and*

*empower us to apply these truths to our lives and empower us to be willing to suffer for You and for Your gospel message. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.*

Okay, a little bit about my story. I'm going to be teaching on reasons that support the post-tribulational rapture. I'm probably not gonna get through this message. That's why I gave you the notes. Pat didn't get through his message. So if you think you heard Pat's entire case, no, you heard a portion of it. Okay, today you're gonna hear a portion of my case and with my breathing issues, I don't think I could talk fast enough to get through all of it but I'll do the best I can. But here's my story. I've actually been studying end-time prophecies for 40 years which is kind of crazy because I've only been saved for 39 years. But it was reading Old Testament, it was reading end-time prophecies that eventually led me to the Lord. So in 1980 in the United States Marine Corps at Parris Island, I was out of my comfort zone, drill instructors chewing me out and this and that and I wasn't, obviously I wasn't going to hit them. I knew that wasn't going to be the smart thing to do. The first time in my life, I was having to turn the other cheek and I wasn't even a Christian yet. And they gave us these little tiny green Gideon Bibles. So, what does a Marine do when he says, I'm looking for meaning now, I'm looking for answers. They took me out of my comfort zone in New Jersey. I'm looking for answers. So, what does a Marine do? Does he go to the Gospel of John? No, he's going to read the Book of Revelation. So, I just kept reading the Book of Revelation over and over again. Then I remember my godfather, my uncle Rocco Minachino, didn't have a spiritual bone in his body, but they had a sale on Hal Lindsey's 1980's "Countdown to Armageddon," and the book and the audio cassette. So being my godfather, he decided to get that, because it was a discount, for my gift. I remember when he gave it to me for my birthday gift, I was like, what is this? This guy's like foul-mouthed and, you know, not the nicest guy on the planet. I loved him, but he was rough around the edges. So I just kind of just stuck it on my dresser and stuff. Well, I wrote a letter to my mom and said, "Send me that Hal Lindsey book." And so I was studying the end-time prophecies even before I got saved, and that's what led me to be saved.

Now as I was reading, searching for meaning and reading the Hal Lindsey books, he would come to the point, he'd be talking about the tribulation and everything, but he said, but don't worry, Christians aren't going to go through this. And then he'd give the passages, and I'd think, this is great, and I'd read the passages, and I was never, ever convinced of it. Even as a new believer, I was convinced that maybe I was weird, maybe I was the only guy who didn't get it. I didn't know there was such a thing called the post-tribulational rapture. Bill Gregory, my old Bible teacher, I took him aside one night after a Bible study and said, "I believe that the church is going to be gathered at the second coming of Christ. I don't believe there's two separate events. Am I a heretic?" He said, "No, you're not a heretic." He said, "Listen to Bible Answer Man, Walter Martin. He's post-trib." Then I found out Francis Schaeffer's post-trib. You know, Corrie Ten Boom's post-trib. I found out there's lots of post-tribbers out there. But all the literature and the movies back then in the '70s and '80s, it was all pre-trib stuff. There was a lot more marketing with the pre-trib than the post-trib, so I thought I was all alone. So that's when I found out, okay, look, there's still hope for me.

I went to Liberty University, one of the biggest pre-trib schools in the country, all my professors, and even though I did really well, I knew I wasn't going to get an offer for a teaching position because I wasn't pre-trib. I went on from there to Southern Evangelical Seminary, Veritas International University, now I had their doctor of ministry program, and I signed their statement of faith. Our statement of faith, just do you believe in the second coming of Christ, their statement of faith is pre-trib. So when I signed it, I list what I disagree with and so they give me a waiver. Now, they're not going to let me teach eschatology, the end-times, but I get a waiver. And I love those guys, and they love me. So if they're listening right now, don't fire me. I love you, okay? But when I went to Bremen and Bible Church, it was a dispensational church, pre-trib. So when it came time to plant Trinity Bible Fellowship, he decided not to ordain me because I wasn't pre-trib. And I never held it against him at all. He did hand his church off to a guy he didn't know well and that's a big story but the church ended up collapsing. But whatever the case, I really didn't have any hard feelings.

But basically what I'm saying is, I've had every possible incentive to want to be pre-trib, plus the factor that I don't like to suffer. I don't like pain. My doctor told me it's bad for me, avoid it. And so I hope, you know, I'm wrong. If I'm wrong, on the way up, I'm going to be hugging Pat and Alan, and we're going to be celebrating and you can say, y" You were wrong, you were wrong," and I'm going to say, "Amen, praise God, I'm glad I was wrong." Now, if I'm right, I'm going to be stuck in a prison cell with a bunch of my preacher buddies who are going to try to keep me up all night convincing me that the demon-possessed guy who's ruling the world is only a type of the Antichrist, you know? And then one of them is going to say, "Wait, wait. Pastor Phil, let me get out my end-time prophecy chart." And I'm just going to say, "Dude, let me get some sleep, okay?" But either way, I hope I'm wrong, okay? But as the pastor, if I understand it one way, I've just got to send out the warning. So let it go in one ear and out the other if what you're hearing today, if you think, "No, I think this guy's out to lunch," and then don't get mad, go home and watch or listen to Pat's sermon. Okay? And then you'll feel better. But Pat would agree with me 100%, as do most of the leading pre-tribbers, even if we're not going through the tribulation, it does not exempt us from sufferings. Okay? If God has called you to salvation, that's almost synonymous with God has called you to suffering for the Gospel. Okay?

So let's pick it up there. If anybody gets offended by anything I say, hopefully you'll see that I'm not intending that, but I do try to preach what I believe God's Word is saying with passion. So it might come out that way. And I hope not. But first passage, I want to look at it and we're not going to be able to look at too many passages, that's why I've got them listed down, but in Matthew 24, starting at 23, Jesus is talking here to his disciples. The disciples were Jewish, so the pre-tribbers will tell us, okay, he's speaking to them as Jews, but they're also believers. So if he came in their lifetime, they would be raptured. But he's talking to them as Jews? Well, two days later, he says, "This is my body, this is my blood." He talks to them as the bride of Christ and the church. So I think he's talking to them as the church here because two days later he's talking to them as a church.

Matthew 24 starting at verse 23, "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!'" He gives all these things that are going on in the end-times then he says,

23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand. 26 Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. [He's saying it's going to be obvious.] 28 For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. 29 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."

By the way, does that sound like an event that's going to happen numerous times? No. So use those signs. Sun being darkened, moon not giving its light, stars falling from the sky, powers of the heavens shaken. That can lock you into a lot of the chronology of the end times. You're going to find out that the tribulation comes first, then these signs in the sky, then Jesus is returned to gather the elect. The day of the Lord follows these signs as well. Joel, chapter 2, verse 32. And so you have these signs in the sky and then Jesus says,

30 "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. 31 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 one end of heaven to the other."

And so Jesus said he would return for his people, the elect, immediately after the tribulation of those days. Now, he's even going to go on further and say that you've got to be ready. Listen to these signs, because I come at a day and an hour that you're not going to know. I come like a thief in the night. Even leading, probably one of the leading pre-trib scholars of all time, John Walvoord, Dallas Theological Prof when he was alive, even he says that with all the thief in the night coming to break in and stuff and be ready for, that it's all talking about the second coming of Christ here. So the idea he comes as a thief in the night and that's to rapture the church and then he comes, obviously, afterwards, the thief in the night passages deal with this as well.

So Jesus said he would return for his people, the elect, immediately after the tribulation. He said his return would not be in secret. Now, if he's talking to the apostles, why not tell them, "Okay, if they say, I'm in a desert, don't go to this and that. In the inner rooms, don't go to there. Now, there is a secret coming that I've got for the believers before the tribulation." He had no mention of it. He just says immediately after the tribulation of those days. Some obvious signs and then the blast of a trumpet and Jesus returning amidst

the clouds with all his power and glory. So he said he would return for his people, the elect, immediately after the tribulation and his return would not be in secret.

Now, because of this, the post-trib view was held by the earliest successors of the apostles, Papias, the Apostolic Fathers, the pupils of the apostles, selected by the apostles to lead in the early church. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Cyprian. I mean, the list goes on and on and we're talking about guys before even like 350 AD. Some of these guys, Papias and the Apostolic Fathers, were first century guys. that knew the apostles and then started writing in the second century. Justin Martyr, 150 AD, Irenaeus, 180 AD. And so it was just considered, look, there's one return of Christ and it's immediately after the tribulation of those days. Why? Because Jesus said so.

Now there's absolutely no evidence. I know some pre-tribbers are debating this, but the fact of the matter is there's no evidence for anyone advocating the pre-trib or mid-trib or pre-wrath, by the way, those are offshoots. They found problems with pre-tribulationism, and so some became mid-tribbers, some became pre-wrath, some became post-trib. But there's no evidence for anyone advocating the pre-trib position until about 1830 and it seems to be traced back to the prophecy of a teenage girl named Margaret MacDonald in Scotland. It was picked up by a teacher, a powerful teacher, though he was eventually nailed for heresy on, I think, his view of Christ, Edward Irving, but then it was picked up by a more respectable guy, J. N. Darby, and that started Darbyism, and Darbyism is now called Dispensationalism. And the Plymouth Brethren And C. I. Scofield eventually accepted this. So this is all in the 1830s, '40s, '50s, '60s. Irving died younger, but Darby lived into the '70s and '80s of the 1800s. But then C. I. Scofield, Scofield Referenced Bible, all of a sudden, this teaching started spreading. And then they had many people who would attend Bible prophecy conferences. And so by the time with the Scofield Reference Bible, this is becoming an accepted position in a large portion of the church, I would say a large portion of the premillennial church. Amillennialists and postmillennialists never went this route. And then Hal Lindsey in the late 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and that's how I came to Christ, started writing books. "Late Great Planet Earth," I think something like 45 million copies.

So this became kind of almost the standard, the default position so when a Marine named Phil Fernandes gets saved, you know, it's like there's almost like no place for the guy. Because I'm premillennial, I believe Jesus literally reigned on the earth but I wasn't pre-trib. And you had movies like "Thief in the Night" and things of that sort. So it began to become more and more popular but again, before 1830, we don't see evidence of it, and so throughout the history of the church, what I am teaching you today, that is what the church taught. Even if they were a-mill, no earthly reign of Christ, or post-mill, Jesus will return after the church reigns on earth, or pre-mill like me where there will be a literal reign of Christ on earth, it was still accepted that there's only one phase to Christ's return. There are not two separate phases, a secret phase to snatch away the church, and then the second phase when Christ comes to earth at the end, okay? It's a new view. And so I don't see any hint, you know, pre-tribbers, mid-tribbers, pre-wrath guys, but I don't see any hint of any secret snatching away of believers either before the tribulation or during the

tribulation or whatever but I believe the burden of proof is on the pre-tribber because we already know that Jesus said immediately after the tribulation of those days he's going to gather his elect. So if there is a second phase, then the burden of proof is going to be on the pre-tribber.

Now, we just looked at Matthew 24. Look at 1 Thessalonians 4. 1 Thessalonians 4. I could really relate to Pat right now because he mentioned numerous times there was no way he was going to get through all his stuff, and that's why Pat and I have talked about starting maybe, if we do get the art building, you know, one night a month maybe, because everybody's so busy, but our own Prophecy Research Center where we can share notes and things like that. We've just got a few things to iron out right now. We're just debating about, I'm thinking like the president of the Prophecy Research Center should be a post-tribber and maybe the Vice President a pre-tribber. So we've got to just handle that. Once we figure that out, we'll get moving on that and then he and I can take our times and bore you with this stuff for like the next 10 years, unless Jesus comes back before then and when he comes back, the debate will be settled.

Okay, but look at 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4, verses 13 to 18. This is one of the most important and most cited of the preacher passages, because here they're saying this is different than the return that Jesus talked about in Matthew 24. So 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 18, so this is where pre-tribbers would say this is the preacher of rapture.

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep [those who have died], lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. [So those who died the Lord's going to gather first.] 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Now, I haven't heard it in about a decade, but pre-tribbers used to tell me there'd be no comfort here if we were going through the tribulation. No, the comfort there is people who've lost their loved ones, their loved ones have died, and what Paul is saying is, don't worry, when Jesus comes back, if your loved ones are believers, he's going to bring your loved ones with you. And you'll see them again. And that's where the comfort is. But the things I want to point out here though, the same exact, as you go throughout these, the same exact Greek words are used of passages that are supposed to be pre-trib passages, plus post-trib, second coming passages. Like parousia, the Greek word for "coming." It's used of both. Apocalypsis, the unveiling, the revealing of Christ. Epiphaneia, the manifestation of Christ, the appearing of Christ. Those same words are used in the

descriptions of what I think are the same event otherwise I think different words would be used.

So the same Greek words are used to describe both Jesus' second coming and the gathering of the saints and so the rapture and the second coming are described in the same way, coming in the clouds with angels, a trumpet blast. To me, that doesn't sound like a secret thing when you have the Lord's going to descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the church has historically agreed with me on that until the 1800s. But the same words are describing the rapture, gathering of the saints, and the second coming, the coming in the clouds, the angels, the trumpet blast, believers gathered in the air. Hence, I think they are most likely the same event. And, you know, preachers might say, "No, that's not a reasonable thing to say." Well, it was a reasonable thing to say for 1,830 years in the history of the church, and a big chunk of the church still believes it's a reasonable thing to say. So keep in mind, those are probably evenly divided among scholars between pre-trib, post-trib, mid-trib and pre-wrath. Then you still have amillennialists and post-millennialists and they believe it's all just one event.

So Revelation 1:7, "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him." That same coming amidst the clouds that Daniel chapter 7 talks about one like the Son of Man coming amidst the clouds. But it seems to be describing the same event. Revelation 19:11 and 16. Jesus is riding a white stallion amidst the clouds. He's going to shepherd the nations with an iron rod. It seems to me that the same event is being described and I think that those who disagree, the burden of proof, rests with them. And we learn from the Scriptures that passages like John chapter 6, verses 39 and 40, when is Jesus going to raise the church? He says he's going to raise the church on the last day. Why would he call it the last day if it's seven years before the last day of that age? Jesus will divide the saved from the unsaved at the end of the age and he even says in Matthew 13, in his parables, that they will live together until then, until he divides them, the saved from the unsaved, at the end of the age, not seven years before the end of the age. So we start to see God's Word using terms like last, which really doesn't mean last, and end really doesn't mean end.

Look at 2 Thessalonians, chapter 1. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, and verses 6 to 10, and it was picking up right in the middle of the sentence, but 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 6 to 10,

5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; 6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you [God's going to punish those who persecute the church], 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, [so when Jesus is revealed with His mighty angels, that's when he punishes those who oppose the church, he's judging them but he's giving rest to the church] 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey

the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

And so he's talking about Jesus is going to come and he's going to provide relief for the church and rest for the church at the same event in which he brings down vengeance upon those who persecute the church. So again, I see this as only one event. I think this is also why King David could say in Psalm 110 verse 1, "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till,' what? "Till Your enemies are made a footstool for Your feet." Jesus won't leave his throne until it's time to defeat his enemies and so I see with the second coming of Christ, it is to rescue the church, but it is also to bring judgment upon those who oppose the church and oppose Israel at that point as well.

Look at 1 Corinthians 15, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 51 and 52. See, I believe pre-millennialists ought to be really, really united, whether you're pre-, mid-, or post-trib, yet it actually has become such a divisive doctrine. That's one of the reasons why I want me and Pat's sermons to go out, to show people you don't have to divide over this. But it's amazing how divisive it has become in some circles, but it's so divisive, I think this is the third time that I spoke a sermon totally dedicated to the post-trib rapture. since I started pastoring the church 32 years ago, and one of those times was at an Awana conference. So this is probably only the second time I spoke at Trinity Bible Fellowship. I just feel led as your pastor to help equip you to suffer because God's called us to suffer. Now, if the pre-trib is right, I'm going to be happy.

Okay, so 1 Corinthians 15, verses 51 and 52. When are we going to be changed? In the twinkling of an eye. When is Jesus going to rescue us?

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

And, you know, pre-tribbers disagree on this point, but I think the last trumpet, I see no reason why God would call that the last trumpet and then have seven trumpets following it in the book of Revelation.

So look at the seventh of the seven trumpets in the book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 11, Revelation chapter 11, and verse 15, "Then the seventh angel sounded," so the seventh angel is sounding his trumpet and that would be the seventh trumpet, that would be the last of the seven trumpets.

15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"



The seventh trumpet announces the second coming of Jesus Christ to the planet Earth to take over, to defeat the kingdoms of this world, and I don't think they're two different trumpets. I don't think you have seven trumpets following after what Jesus called the last trumpet.

In Revelation chapter 20, we don't really have time to look at it, but it's right after chapter 19, the second coming of Christ, okay? And then Satan gets bound in the bottomless pit for a thousand years but believers are raised, and that's called, what? The first resurrection. So the resurrection that occurs at the time of Jesus' second coming after the tribulation is called the first resurrection. Why would it be called the first resurrection if there was a resurrection of believers seven years earlier? So I don't know why God would say, look, I'm going to gather the church, change them in a twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet if there's seven trumpets after it. I don't know why God would say, when I return at the second coming, it's going to be the first resurrection if there was a resurrection of believers seven years earlier.

Okay, then the coming of the Lord, our gathering to him, and the day of the Lord, I think the Scriptures teach they're all the same event. Look at 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. This is another key passage used by pre-tribbers. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, in fact, I'll try to read the entire passage so we can answer another objection that is often used, but 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 1 to 12 says, "Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him," so those are the same event, 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 from us, as though the day of Christ [often called the day of the Lord] had come." Basically what I'm saying there is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, our gathering to him, and the day of Christ are all the same event. They're being used synonymously. This makes no sense if they're different events. So the coming of our Lord, our gathering to him, believers being gathered to him, and the day of Christ or the day of the Lord is all the same event.

Then he says, verse 3, "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless," what comes first, "unless the falling away comes first," that falling away of the church." So, organized Christianity will someday be apostate, will be false. That's why I talk about we need to start getting involved with home churches and home Bible studies. Those are the only churches we're going to have in the future. The day of the Lord, when he gathers the saints, that's not going to occur "unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed," the Antichrist, "the son of perdition." So the Antichrist and the falling away of the church, then Jesus will come.

And it talks about the Antichrist, "who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." I'm going to be talking about this in weeks to come, about the Antichrist going to the temple claiming to be God.

"Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way." Now, some pre-tribbers say, well, that's the Holy Spirit and for the Holy Spirit to be taken out of the way, all the Christians got to be removed from the planet Earth. Some pre-tribbers don't go so far as that. I don't think that's biblical. I think it could be the Holy Spirit. All it's saying is the Holy Spirit's blocking the Antichrist from being revealed, and the Holy Spirit will step aside and allow, when in God's timing, him to be revealed. The early church almost unanimously, even Ron Rhodes, who also teaches at Veritas International University where I mentor students online, even he states that the most common view of ancient Christians, very early Christians, for the first 300 years of Christianity was that the Roman Empire was the restrainer and that the Roman Empire, once that's removed, then you enter into the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's statue and the end-times. So the Roman Empire had to be removed. Well, what does that do to the pre-trib doctrine of imminency? Jesus can't, they didn't think he could return any minute. They thought first Rome's got to fold. Now things went crazy with their interpretation there when the Roman Empire, Constantine, converted to Christianity, and they started thinking the Roman Empire was embracing Christianity, and so they started changing their ideas there but whatever the case, even if it is the Holy Spirit who restrains the Antichrist, this does not necessitate that the church be removed from the planet Earth before the Antichrist can be revealed. I don't know why God would warn us so much about the Antichrist if we weren't going to see him.

Okay, verse 7, "the mystery of lawlessness," verse 8, "then the lawless one will be revealed," the Antichrist, "whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming." Now, this is a different, when he defeats the Antichrist, this is a different coming than verse 1. Why would he use the same word in the Greek? He said, "Look, the coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering to Him, and then as Jesus is coming, He's going to defeat the Antichrist." It says, "The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

And so all I'm saying here is the coming of the Lord, our gathering to him, and the day of the Lord are the same event, yet in this same passage, at Jesus' coming, is when what else happens? He defeats the Antichrist. So it's not just the revealing of the Antichrist in the rapture, it's the full revealing of the Antichrist to the point where he gets defeated by Christ and that's when the church will be gathered.

Now, take a look at Joel chapter 2, Old Testament book of Joel. You can do a study on the day of the Lord in the Old Testament. I mean, we even think Elijah and Moses may be coming back, Revelation chapter 11. So as you find Joel, also look at the last two verses of the Old Testament. Malachi chapter 4, verses 5 and 6, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet." When? "Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the

LORD." So the day of the Lord, which is the Lord's coming, which is the gathering of the saints, which is the feeding of the Antichrist, Elijah is going to come before that.

Joel 2 and verse 31, in fact, start at verse 30, "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood." Those are the signs that Jesus talked about in Matthew 24:29, which occur when? Immediately after the tribulation. "The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD."

So, you've got the tribulation, immediately after it, the signs in the sky, then the day of the Lord, and then Jesus coming for the elect, gathering the elect, and then, so basically, and this all comes down with Jesus' second coming to defeat the Antichrist. So the day of the Lord occurs after the tribulation, yet the coming of the Lord, our gathering to him, the day of the Lord, and Jesus defeating the Antichrist are all tied in with that same event.

Okay, the apostles did not believe in any moment return of Jesus. There are many pre-tribbers who will act like, if you don't believe in an any moment return of Jesus, you're not going to be focused on Jesus. Not all pre-tribbers use that argument but they put a big emphasis on imminency, so much so that the Evangelical Free Church, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, you had to believe in the imminent return of Christ for the church. But then what went wrong? What went wrong was guys started, scholars started rejecting the preaching of rapture. So they ended up redefining imminency as the any generation return of Christ, and they even made a book out of it, the first book on three views on the rapture are found there.

And so the apostles did not believe in an any moment of the return of Jesus. Jesus had told them Peter's got to become an old man and die before Jesus comes back. They knew that the temple had to be destroyed, the Gospel had to be preached to all nations. In fact, from 70 A.D. through 1948 A.D., you can read pre-trib works by pre-trib authors, M. R. DeHaan, Barnhouse, you can read works by pre-trib authors written in the 1940s, early 1940s, and they say Jesus can't come back until Israel's a nation. In 1948 it became a nation. So they weren't waiting for an any moment return of Jesus. It's only after Israel became a nation that pre-tribbers could talk about that but historically, the apostles and the church throughout the generations, at least till 1948, so even the early pre-tribbers for over 100 years, weren't waiting for an any moment return of Jesus because they knew Israel had to become a nation first. The rapture was not imminent.

I do believe believers are delivered from God's wrath. Not the tribulation. Look at Revelation. Revelation chapter 6. Revelation 6. This is the sixth seal and In fact, verses 12 through 17, "I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind." Allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. These are the same events that occur before the great and terrible day of the Lord, Joel 2. These are the same events that occur immediately after the tribulation of those days.

"Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains." Why? And this happens after the tribulation according to Jesus. Why? It says, "and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'" In other words, the wrath of God, the anger of God, God's wrath follows those signs, follows the tribulation. So we're rescued. God has not destined us for wrath but that means Jesus is going to return before God's wrath. Now, I'm not a pre-wrath guy, because pre-wrath guys still put God's wrath in the tribulation, which contradicts this passage, I believe, and they still have the last trumpet and the seventh trumpet as two different trumpets.

Now, what is the tribulation if it's not the wrath of God? Look at Revelation chapter 12. Revelation chapter 12 and verse 12. This is when Satan and his angels get cast out of heaven by Michael the Archangel and his angels. "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." And then it says how long he's going to persecute the woman, the nation of Israel, and it's the 1,260 days, the three and a half years. By the way, the tribulation period, no one believed the tribulation period was seven years. There's a seven year peace treaty that gets signed, but it's only a three and a half year period, the tribulation itself, the second half, when the Antichrist institutes the mark of the beast, puts an end to temple sacrifices, and proclaims himself to be God. So believers are delivered from God's wrath, not the tribulation. God's wrath comes after the tribulation. The tribulation is Satan's wrath.

We're told in Revelation 13 that the Antichrist will persecute the saints, the hagios, the saints. Well, everywhere in the New Testament, except possibly one place, the saints mean the church. I think it's like used 48 times. And the one that's in question is the people who were raised by Jesus when he was on the cross. That's the only time the word for saints is used of non-church-age believers. And so, you know, Hebrews 9:28, the second coming is called the second advent. It doesn't mention, the Bible only talks about Jesus' second coming. No two phases to the second coming are mentioned. If you're going to come, Jesus is going to come for the church, and then seven years later, there should be a second coming and a third coming. Forget about two phases, okay?

Now, with the wedding feast, I think Pat did exceptional teaching on the wedding feast. I was encouraged by it and all, but I still hold to most of what he said about the wedding feast and it's perfectly consistent with a post-trib rapture. The wedding feast actually occurs after the tribulation at Christ's return, not before the tribulation. Just read Revelation chapter 19. The first three verses of Revelation chapter 19 you have God bringing down his judgment on the great harlot, the great prostitute, the false church. And then, after doing that, then God says later on in that same chapter, Revelation 19:7-9,

7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

And then it goes right into the second coming of Christ. So the wedding feast isn't earlier, and then there's this idea that we're going to be with Jesus for seven years because the groom is with his bride for seven days. Well, the tribulation period all through the Scriptures is 1,260 days. It's three and a half years. It's not seven years. Now when Jesus comes back, if he wants to spend seven days with his church before or after Armageddon, more power to him. There might be a seven-day wedding feast. Seven is also the universal number of completion. So the whole millennial kingdom might be the wedding feast with Jesus and his bride. If the wedding feast occurs before, you've got all those tribulation saints, Jews and Gentiles, that are not going to be at the wedding feast that are still the bride of Christ.

And so the tribulation period is only three and a half years, not seven years. So why exclude seven years of believers from being the bride of Christ? The bride of Christ, I believe, includes tribulation saints. Jesus said he would not drink wine again, and Pat so well pointed out to that being as the groom offering the wine to the bride at the Last Supper. But he said he will not drink wine again with the apostles until the kingdom of God comes, Luke 22:18. The kingdom of God comes at the last trumpet. The kingdom of God comes at the second coming of Christ to defeat his enemies and rescue the church.

Now, we'll talk about it in weeks to come, the seals, trumpet, and bowl judgments. I don't think they run consecutively because if the fourth trumpet, the trumpets come after the seals, it cannot follow the sixth seal because in the sixth seal, the sun is totally dark and the moon totally doesn't give its light and stars fall from the sky. The trumpet, it comes later in Revelation, but it can't come later chronologically because only one third of those things are darkened.

Just a few other points here. Major Don Bell, a good friend of ours, he basically stated, you know, these are just different things I want to touch on here, but a commander does not remove his greatest warriors when the battle gets the most fierce. Okay? Corrie Ten Boom, let me just read a quote from her. Now, she was angry at the pre-trib rapture. I'm not angry at pre-tribbers. I love pre-tribbers. But here, I think we need to take it to heart. This lady whose loved ones died, and she almost died, going to prison by the Nazis for protecting innocent Jews but she said this, "I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution. In China, the Christians were told, don't worry, before the tribulation comes, you will be translated," raptured. "Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a bishop from China say, sadly, we have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution rather than telling them Jesus would come first. Turning to me he said, 'You still have time. Tell the people how to be strong in times of persecution, how to stand when the

tribulation comes, to stand and not faint.' I feel I have a divine mandate to go and tell the people of this world that it is possible to be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in training for the tribulation. Since I have already gone through prison for Jesus' sake, and since I met that bishop from China, now every time I read a good Bible text, I think, hey, I can use that in the time of tribulation. Then I write it down and learn it by heart."

I'm not saying become a post-tribber like me, but I'm just saying, just be willing to suffer. If God's called you to salvation, he's called you to suffer as well. In fact, Jesus, we don't have time to look at it, but he promised in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, verses 10 to 12, that we're blessed if we suffer persecution. We are promised eternal rewards for suffering. If the pre-trib rapture is true, there's a missed opportunity for rewards there and I don't think of it that way in the natural man. I don't like suffering and pain. But we're promised eternal rewards for suffering. In fact, when the mark of the beast is issued, Revelation 14:9 to 13 says, "Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on." So if you're in the tribulation and suffering for Christ, God's Word says you're blessed. It doesn't say you would be blessed if God had removed you from that. And Jesus and Paul promised us suffering and persecution and tribulation, thlipsis, in the Greek thlipsis. Over and over again, they promised us persecution and suffering, and I just don't see why he would remove us from that.

The thief in the night passages read, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9. Jesus does not come like a thief to those who heed his warnings. He said, "Look, I'm going to come like a thief to those who are not sober, but if you're sober and you heed My warnings, you'll be ready." And we should always be ready. Pre-tribbers want us to be ready as well. The thief in the night warnings concern Jesus' return and exhortations to be ready for his return. They're warnings to escape eternal damnation, not the tribulation period. So Matthew 24 and 25 talk about Jesus coming as a thief, so you want to be ready? Well, if you're not ready, you don't get the tribulation, you get weeping and gnashing of teeth, you get outer darkness.

And then the yo-yo illustration of pre-tribbers, "Well, Jesus is going to come snatch up the church, bring us up, and then bring us right back down." Yeah, that's what the word in the Greek means. Meeting, the word for meeting, apantesin is also used in Acts 28:15. So when Jesus meets us in the air, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the Apostle Paul, when he's coming to Rome, the Roman Christians find out, they run out to meet him, they get behind him, and then they follow him into Rome. And so it's the official word for going out to meet and greet a dignitary, and then escorting him back to where you came from. So there's no problem with that whatsoever.

The two in the field, one's taken, one is left. Luke explains it. He said, well where? Where are they going to be taken? And where the corpse is, the vultures are going to gather. Luke 17:34, 37. They're taken in judgment. It's not the rapture. I don't think the church is going to be asked to abandon the Jews during their most difficult time. I think we're going to be there.

I do remember, I'm just closing with this now too, I do remember when I was debating this issue back in, I think, 1987 at Liberty University, Clyde was a great guy, a pastor,

young pastor from Canada, and his wife had his little baby in the stroller, and he kept hammering me on the pre-trib. I don't even like to debate the issue, to be honest with you, but he kept hammering me on the issue over and over again, and so finally I said, "That's a nice baby you've got over there." And he said, "Yeah." And I said, "Jesus could return at any moment, even right now." He said, "Yes." I said, "That's a nice baby you've got over there." And he said, "Yeah." And I said, "Aren't you worried about which non-believers God's going to choose to raise your baby if you get raptured?" And he just stood up. We were in the common area, and he just stood up and walked away because now all of a sudden he wanted Jesus to return at any moment, but now what about his baby? Well, pre-tribbers like Dave Hunt took care of that. They've heard that objection enough. So now I think it's just the babies of believers get raptured too. And I don't think, you know, there are a lot of babies that died in Noah's flood.

And so, but whatever the case, I believe God gave believers warning signs so we would be ready for his return yet the pre-trib position, there really are no signs before his return. He could just return any moment. Now I believe when we read our newspapers, we see it's getting close. I don't believe God, no pre-tribber would say this by the way, I don't believe God gave us all these details about the end-times to entertain us. He gave us all these details, not because we wouldn't go through it, but because we would go through it and he wouldn't want us to lose faith.

So in closing, if you came in here pre-trib and now you're leaving pre-trib, more power to you. I love you. Okay, sometimes when I'm hugging Alan, I don't even want to let go and he's probably a little uncomfortable with that, especially with COVID-19, the hugs are even more bothersome than before. But I just want you to know, I don't care if you're pre-trib or post-trib, I don't care if you're a-mill, post-mill, all I want, I want you to love Jesus, as your pastor I want you to trust in him alone for salvation, I want you to long for the return of Christ, whatever that means, okay, and I want you to be willing. And by the way, Tim LaHaye, Hal Lindsey would say the same thing, I just want you also to be willing to suffer and if need be die for Jesus. Now, if I'm wrong, happy camper. If pre-tribbers are wrong, if all of a sudden a seven-year treaty is signed and you're still here, and the Antichrist proclaims himself to be God and you're still here, don't give up on Jesus. Any of our theology in non-essential areas, okay, we've got to say, hey, you know what, I'm a post-tribber tentatively. I'm a pre-tribber tentatively, okay? But throughout the coming weeks we'll study more about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. What did he tell us to do until he returns? He told us to partake of the bread and the wine, Pat so eloquently last Sunday as Jesus' proposal to us, and so John's going to lead us in celebration of the Lord's Supper.