

APPENDIX TO SESSION 8: The Nature and Timing of the Rapture and How it Relates to the Second Coming

A biblical perspective on the nature and timing of the rapture and second coming

I. WHY IS EVERYONE CONFUSED ABOUT THE TIMING OF THE RAPTURE?

- A. The issue of the rapture has become a part of western pop-culture since leading voices of evangelicalism of the past few decades began to speak publicly about the matter. Books like “Left Behind” put the doctrine to the forefront of Western conscience in places like grocery stores, chains like Wal-Mart and coffee shops. These books and others have been sold in millions all across countries across the western world; especially in places like the US and the UK.
- B. In this session, I want to state clearly that the idea of a secret rapture prior to great end time drama is *completely unbiblical*. And on top of that I want to show that it is *not difficult to understand*. While I respect those who hold this view, I cannot tolerate it as being remotely Biblical. And neither should you.

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- C. The problem with this debate (the *timing* of the rapture that is) is that most immature believers without much confidence in their ability to understand the Bible feel incapable of making a decision about what the Bible says about it. And the guys who do feel capable use so many ridiculous proof texts and out of context Bible verses so cleverly that it seems like they know what they're talking about. And it's sufficient to persuade themselves and their hearers into believing that they know what they're in truth. In all seriousness, respect and humility: They don't know what they're talking about and it is *not* true.
- D. We're going to look at five verses that show with absolute clarity and obviousness when the rapture occurs. But before we turn to the verses, let me answer the question of "When does the rapture occur?" in simple terms:

Regenerate believers are transformed and raptured at the 7th Trumpet. The 7th Trumpet is part of a series of judgment events that constitute "the great tribulation." The 7th Trumpet follows the 7 Seals and previous 6 Trumpets chronologically and precedes the 7 Bowls of Wrath.

II. SUREVEYING THE FIVE VERSES SIDE-BY-SIDE

- A. There are only four verses in the entire Bible that speak explicitly about the rapture. Before bringing anything to the table we need to consider these four verses. I am including a fifth verse pertaining to the 7th Trumpet for clarity sake. Note the language and the timing indicators in the following verses:

*"Behold, I tell 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 Trumpet.** For the Trumpet will sound, and the dead in Christ will be raised..." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)*

*"The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with **the Trumpet of God.** And the dead in Christ will rise first." (1 Thessalonians 4:16)*

*"Immediately **after the Tribulation of those days...**He will send His angels with a **Great Sound of a Trumpet,** and they will gather together His elect..." (Matthew 24:29-31)*

*"Concerning the **coming of our Lord and our gathering together** [Rapture] to meet Him....Let no one deceive you by any means; for **that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin** [Antichrist] is revealed..." (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)*

*"...in the days of the sounding of **the Seventh Angel/Trumpet**, when He is about to sound, **the mystery of God** would be **finished**, as He declared it to His servants the prophets." (Revelation 10:7)*

- B. No rapture debate comes without the preacher employing his/her favorite proof texts. But that's exactly the problem. The problem with this issue is that people use too many proof texts that they shouldn't be using and distort the ones they should use. If we look at the verses at face value and identify their plain meaning we would be confident to say:
1. We are raptured At the **LAST Trumpet** (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)
 2. We are raptured With **THE Trumpet of God** (1 Thessalonians 5:16)
 3. We (the elect) are raptured **AFTER the Tribulation** at a **Great Trumpet** sound (Matthew 24:29-31)
 4. We are raptured **AFTER the Falling Away** and **After the Revealing of the Antichrist** (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)
 5. When the **SEVENTH and LAST Trumpet** sounds the Mystery of God is complete (Revelation 10:7)
- C. The idea of a secret rapture is nonsensical for a multiplicity of reasons. But if we just look at the *only* passages in Scripture that speak about the event, we have an unequivocal statement that the rapture happens at the Last Trumpet which is also the Seventh Trumpet and that it occurs after the Tribulation and after the emergence of Antichrist and the.

III. THE INCREDIBLE SIMPLICITY OF THE MATTER

- A. God has made it so easy for us to understand. You don't need to do a survey of the Bible to find all the types and shadows of a rapture before the Tribulation. You don't need to read dozens of commentaries and compare what people say about it. It is so clear! We are raised and transformed at the Last Trumpet and at the Seventh Trumpet which is after the Tribulation which includes the falling away and the revealing of Antichrist.

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- B. If anyone wishes to impose a secret rapture on any of these texts, shame on them. The texts cannot be distorted or manipulated to say such a thing. Those who affirm the idea that the rapture takes place before the Tribulation must necessarily butcher these texts to oblivion to make them fit. If we were to put these verses before the eyes of a brand new convert in the Himalayas to ask them when they believe the rapture takes place they would simply repeat what the texts say: “At the Seventh Trumpet After the Tribulation.”
- C. ***So what is this Seventh Trumpet?*** When is it to be sounded? The book of Revelation contains the clearest and fullest statement of the coming hour of Tribulation.
1. The Tribulation begins in chapter 6 and ends in chapter 19. Those chapters are comprised of ***three series of judgment events***. These events are 7 Seals, 7 Trumpets and 7 Bowls.
 2. These events are interrupted in the book so that the angel can interject important information that God wants us to know in context to those judgments. In other words, Revelation 6-19 is made up of one straightforward storyline of the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls being released on the earth chronologically and angelic interjections parenthetically.¹
 3. Following the first six Seals the Seventh is torn. The Seventh Seal releases the 7 Trumpets. The Seventh Trumpet releases the 7 Bowls of Wrath. All of these judgment events are literal events that occur chronologically. That’s why they are numbered.
- D. We need to consider the 7th trumpet in context to the clear structure given by the Lord; that is, in relation to the 21 other judgment events.
- E. The rapture occurs at the sounding of the 7th Trumpet which is synonymous with the 1st Bowl of Wrath. We are raptured as Jesus returns to the earth at the Seventh Trumpet. This Seventh Trumpet concludes the 42 months of the Great Tribulation. The Bowls of wrath are poured out over a period of 30 days (of which we’ll talk about later). Scriptures for the last 3½ years of this age use 6 different expressions: ***42 months*** (Rev. 11:2; 13:5), ***1260 days*** (Rev. 11:3; 12:6), ***time, times and half a time*** (Rev. 12:14; Dan. 7:25; 12:7), and ***Middle of the Week*** (Dan. 9:27), the ***Great Tribulation*** (Rev. 7:14), ***Jacob’s Trouble*** (Jer. 30:7). NOTE: The 3½ year time period is designated in three different ways so as to render it impossible to spiritualize, thus making it symbolic of something other than 3½ years.

¹ Writers use parenthesis in paragraphs to interject important information into the chronological storyline. The purpose of a parenthesis is to help clarify that which may be confusing or ambiguous in the plot.

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- F. The reason we do not and cannot include the Seven Bowls of Wrath into that 3 ½ years is because Scripture is clear that the Seventh Trumpet concludes it. Note these two verses in the book of Revelation:

*“...in the days of the sounding of **the Seventh Angel/Trumpet**, when He is about to sound, **the mystery of God** would be **finished**, as He declared it to His servants the prophets.” (Revelation 10:7)*

*“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!”.... “You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead that they shall be judged and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints....and destroy those who destroy the earth.” (Revelation 11:15-18)*

- G. The mystery of God spoken of in 10:7 is “the Gospel.” Paul uses the term “mystery” to explain the Gospel in his epistles. ² (See the footnote for the 7 facets) All of these nuances of the Gospel will be completed and consummated at the Seventh Trumpet. That is clear from the text. That is a very clear indication that the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet is one of the most significant events in history. It brings the Tribulation to a close and consummates the mystery of the Gospel.
- H. In chapter 11 we read that the transfer of power takes place at the Seventh Trumpet. When it is sounded, the Kingdoms of this world are all taken over and replaced by Jesus’ earthly Kingdom. This text tells us 6 things about what happens when the Trumpet is sounded that makes it clear for us that this is the end of the Tribulation.
1. The Kingdoms of this World are All Replaced
 2. Jesus begins to Reign on the Earth
 3. The Wrath of God comes in Full (in the form of the 7 Bowls)
 4. The Day of Judgment for the Dead comes
 5. The Day of Reward for the Saints Comes

² He uses it to describe 7 facets of the Gospel. **(1)** The incarnation of Jesus (1 Tim. 3:16), **(2)** the Marriage of Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:25-32), **(3)** the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52), **(4)** the salvation of Israel at the end of the age (Romans 11:25-26), **(5)** the Indwelling Spirit (Colossians 1:27), **(6)** the bringing together of Heaven and Earth in the age to come (Ephesians 1:9-10) and **(7)** One New Man (Ephesians 2-3)

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6. Jesus destroys Those who Destroy the Earth (in the form of the 7 Bowls)

- I. How clear is that? It's safe to conclude that the 7th Trumpet concludes this age. These 6 events are not easily dismissed.

IV. JESUS RAPTURES HIS CHURCH AND LEADS A 30 DAY PROCESSION FROM HEAVEN INTO JERUSALEM

- A. At this point many might ask why there are still events taking place on the earth after the rapture. This doesn't compute for many. To be specific, the Bowls of wrath aren't poured out *after the rapture* but *during* it. Jesus' second coming consists of (1) a procession **in the air** to gather the saints,³ (2) a procession **on the land** towards Jerusalem⁴ and (3) a procession **into Jerusalem** to destroy Antichrist and dispense the final Bowl of Wrath.⁵
- B. Jesus raptures the Church to initiate His Second Coming Procession which consists of those **3 stages** including many events occurring over a **30 day period**. Now the question is: What's the deal with the extra 30 days?
- C. The 30 day can be seen clearly by comparing the 1,260 days (3½ years) in Revelation 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5; Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7 with the 1,290 days of Daniel 12:11. The 30 days is the length of time it takes for Jesus to rapture the saints and lead a procession into Jerusalem to kill Antichrist. The result of this procession is the destruction of Antichrist, the deliverance of the surviving Jews in the land of Israel and the shedding of so much blood that it reaches up to the bridles of horses for 200 miles.⁶ This procession into Jerusalem *takes time* and it occurs during and after the rapture. It takes 30 days.
- D. An angel told Daniel about a thirty-day period that would extend beyond the commonly understood 1,260 days of Tribulation (3½ years) in which most of God's end-time plan occurs (Dan. 12:11).

³ Matthew 24:30-31; Revelation 1:7

⁴ Isaiah 63; Habakkuk 3; Revelation 19:11-16

⁵ The "tribulation of those days," does not include the great slaughter of the Antichrist's armies which leaves blood flowing for 200 miles (Rev. 19:19-21; 14:20) along with the great plague that will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem causing their flesh, eyes and tongues to dissolve. This plague also strikes their horses, mules, camels, donkeys and all the cattle in their camps (Zech. 14:12-15). Jesus will destroy the Antichrist with the brightness of His coming (2 Thes. 2:8).

⁶ ¹⁷ Another angel came...having a sharp sickle. 18 Another angel came out from the altar...cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." 19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 The winepress was trampled...and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for 1,600 furlongs (200 miles)." (Rev. 14:17-20)

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*“And from the time that the daily **sacrifice is taken away**, and the **Abomination of Desolation** is set up, there shall be **1,290 days**.” (Dan. 12:11)*

- E. It is surprising that God allows the Antichrist's worldwide worship system to continue to function in Jerusalem for 30 days after Jesus raptures the Church at the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15). But that's what the text reads. We struggle with this if we have carelessly swallowed what pop-culture Christianity tells us.
- F. The Antichrist's future worship system is referred to as the Abomination of Desolation ⁷ because it is an abomination to God that results in the desolation of the nations by His Great Tribulation judgments. This set up and remains for 1290 days which is precisely 30 days more than the 1260 days of the Tribulation.
- G. Though difficult at first to understand, it is simple and straightforward. Daniel's 30 days makes complete sense when we view those 4 passages about the rapture and the Seventh Trumpet with the account of the 7 Bowls of Wrath in Revelation 15-16.
- H. When we see the prominence of the 1260 days the 1290 days makes sense. Scripture makes it clear that during the three-and-a-half-year period three significant end-time activities unfold pertaining to God's people. This very important 1260-day period begins on the day the Abomination of Desolation is set up. Each of these three primary activities will begin on the very day that the Abomination of Desolation starts and they will continue for 1260 days. The three activities that span the duration of 1260 days are:
 - 1. God will make **provision** for the remnant of Israel for exactly 1,260 days (Rev. 12:6, 14).
 - 2. The two witnesses will **prophesy** for exactly 1,260 days (Rev. 11:3).
 - 3. The Antichrist will **persecute** the saints for exactly 1,260 days (Rev. 13:5).

⁷ The centerpiece of the Abomination of Desolation worship system is an image or statue of the Antichrist that will be seen standing in the holy place of the temple in Jerusalem. It will stand there for exactly 1,290 days. On the day this starts, we will know that the Great Tribulation has begun and the three primary activities soon to be listed begin:

“When you see the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place... then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” (Mt. 24:15-16)

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- I. These three activities will abruptly end on exactly the 1,260th day after the Abomination of Desolation begins. See how this coincides with the rapture of the church at the 7th Trumpet? The very day that the provision, prophecy and persecution ceases is the day the rapture of the Church occurs (Rev. 11:15).

V. THE 30 DAY PROCESSION MUST OCCUR AFTER THE RAPTURE

- A. Jesus' coming is in context to a military conflict around the city of Jerusalem. He will come to win the Battle of Jerusalem which ends the Armageddon Campaign (which lasts for 3½ years). Jesus will march through Bozrah in Edom (Jordan) killing His enemies on His way to Jerusalem (Isa. 34:1-10; 63:1-6; Hab. 3:3-18; Ps. 110:5-6; Deut. 33:2; Num. 24:17-19; Rev. 19:11-16). This procession must come after the rapture because it is logically, exegetically and reasonably impossible to place it after it.
- B. Consider the following passages concerning the 30 day procession into Jerusalem:

¹ *Who is this who comes from **Edom** [Jordan], with dyed garments from **Bozrah** [capital of Edom], this One who is...**traveling** [marching] in the greatness of His strength?...2 Why is **Your apparel red**, and Your garments like one **who treads in the winepress**? 3 I have **trodden** the winepress...I have **trodden** them in My anger, **and trampled them** in My fury; **their blood is sprinkled upon My garments**, I have **stained** all My robes. (Is. 63:1-3)*

² *The indignation of the LORD is against **all nations**, and His fury against all their armies; He has **utterly destroyed them**, He has given them over to the slaughter...5 "For My sword...shall come down on **Edom**...for judgment. 6 The sword of the LORD is filled with blood...for the LORD has a sacrifice in **Bozrah**, **and a great slaughter** in the land of Edom...8 For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion. (Isa. 34:1-8)*

³ *God came from **Teman** [in southern Edom], the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. 5 **Before Him went pestilence**, and **fever followed at His feet**...7 the **land of Midian trembled** [Arabian desert reaching into the Sinai Peninsula]...12 **You marched through the land** in indignation; You **trampled the nations** in anger. 13 You went forth for the salvation of Your people... (Hab. 3:3-13)*

¹¹ *Behold, a white horse. He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and **makes war**...13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the **armies in heaven**, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, **followed Him on white horses**. 15 Now out*

*of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should **strike the nations**...He Himself **treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God**...19 I saw the beast, the **kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered** together [on the earth in Jerusalem] **to make war against Him**...20 The Beast was captured, and with him the False Prophet...these two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And **the rest were killed** with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him... (Rev. 19:11-21)*

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. The two greatest reasons why we conclude that the rapture takes place after the Tribulation and at the 7th Trumpet are:
1. The four texts that speak about the rapture all place it after the Tribulation and at the Last Trumpet.
 2. The evidence for the 30 day procession from heaven to Jerusalem only makes sense contextually when we affirm the timing of the rapture according to those three texts.
- B. Now the question many will be asking is, "Where will Jesus and the saints be during these thirty days?" This becomes clear when we remember the context of the big picture. Remember that the rapture will occur at the seventh trumpet, exactly 1,260 days after the Abomination of Desolation is set up. This is the very day that the Antichrist's persecution of the saints stops (Rev. 13:5), when God's supernatural provision for Israel in the wilderness stops (Rev. 12:6, 14) and when the prophesying by the Two Witnesses stops (Rev. 11:3). They all end exactly on the 1,260th day because that is when the saints are raptured.
- C. As we have seen from a handful of passages several things will be happening with the saints when this glorious event known as the rapture occurs (as seen in Mt. 24:31; 1 Thes. 4:17 and Rev. 11:15-18). They will be gathered together in the sky to receive their resurrected bodies, they will be evaluated and rewarded by Jesus and they will be organized and mobilized for the battle of Jerusalem which results in the hostile takeover of the governments of all the nations on earth. This is when Jesus marches up from Edom (Jordan; Isa. 63:1-6) to Israel, as the greater Moses, releasing the bowl judgments on the Antichrist as the end-time Pharaoh. He marches into Jerusalem to liberate Israel and kill the Antichrist and his armies, thus ending the Abomination of Desolation (Rev. 19:11-21) and the wicked reign of the man of sin. The saints will be deeply involved in this. These dramatic events will take 30 days from the rapture of the Church to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to be received as King of kings.

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- D. Again, we respect men and women who claim that the rapture occurs before the Tribulation. But this claim is not only unbiblical but dangerous. Imagine living through the hour of Tribulation under the impression that you will escape any moment. Considering the fact that the Tribulation is that which is loosed by the church upon the powers of darkness, we do a great disservice to the people of God when we tell them they will miss this awesome hour.
- E. We will be on the earth releasing the Tribulation and will meet the Lord in the air at the 1260th day. And we will witness with our own eyes the violent demise of the Antichrist on the 1290th day.
- F. I encourage you to meditate on those five verses mentioned at the beginning and ask the Lord if there is anyway the doctrine of a secret rapture could be hidden within them. Keep the simplicity of it in mind and wrestle with it until it becomes clear. Remember: There are only five verses! Anyone can study five short verses!