

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## Timing of the Rapture: Pre, Mid or Post

1

MICHAEL NORTEN

Believers have varying views of the timing of the Rapture of the Church, those that are in Christ. I am not referring to the day or hour of the event, but whether the Rapture will occur before the Tribulation, in the middle of the Tribulation, or even at the end of it. A fourth view is what is called pre-wrath (bowl judgments). I dismiss that view, because I consider the whole Tribulation, Jacob's Trouble, as God's wrath to be poured out on the whole world, for a time of seven years.

There are quite a number of evidences that should be looked at that makes the Pre-Tribulation view very overwhelmingly convincing. I will cover each argument one at a time.

First of all, Revelation 3:10 comes to mind. "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." Notice that it says that the Church will be kept out of the very time period of the testing, rather than the testing itself. Also, in 1 Thessalonians 4:18 we are to be comforted by the promise of the Rapture. In context of the description of the events of the Tribulation, how can the Rapture be comforting, if it is not promising an avoidance of the horrible time?

Secondly, and a very important evidence, is the wedding motif. The New Testament always explains that the Church is the bride of Christ and Christ is the Bridegroom. If we put on our "Jewish eyeglasses," we can understand much more about our relationship to Christ as our Bridegroom.

It is necessary to look at the ancient Jewish custom of weddings, in order to understand the metaphor of bride and bridegroom used to describe the relationship that the Church has with her Savior, Jesus Christ. God uses parallels, patterns and pictures to teach us about Himself and His plans. When a Jewish man proposes to the prospective bride that his father chose for him, he offers her a cup of wine. When she drinks it, she is accepting the engagement or betrothal promising to live a pure and chaste life, totally committed to him. Then the groom announces to his bride-to-be that he is going to his father's house

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

to prepare a place for her. She then asks when he will be back. According to custom, he tells her that only his father knows when that will be. If this discourse sounds familiar, you are probably remembering that this is basically the same discussion that Jesus had with His disciples at the Last Supper in John 14. A rabbi explained to me that Jesus was talking to His future bride and the cup that they drank was not only the third cup of the Passover Seder dinner, called the Cup of Redemption, but it was also the Cup of Betrothal! This is the same cup we drink at the communion service. We are also promising to walk a holy life by the power of the Holy Spirit, looking forward to Christ coming to take His Bride to His Father's house. This event is referring to the Rapture. We (the Bride) will meet Christ in the air. The reason that Christ doesn't come to the earth at this time is that the bridegroom never came to the habitat of the bride. He would blow his shofar and she would come out of her home to meet him. Likewise, Christ, our Bridegroom, will not set His foot on the earth, our habitat. The shofar will sound and the Bride (the Church) will be caught up to meet him in the air.

We are told that we will be in the Father's house for the duration of the Tribulation that will be going on upon the earth, which is seven years, according to Daniel 9:27. The seven years of the Tribulation makes an interesting parallel to the seven days that the earthly bride and groom would spend at his father's house. After that time the couple left the father's house to attend a wedding reception or feast to celebrate the wedding. At the feast the couple drank together the cup of consummation to celebrate their wedding. The friends of the groom were present and participated in the celebration. This parallel is seen in Revelation 19:5-9a. The Church, the Bride, will return to earth with Christ for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. This passage in Greek uses the word for *wife* rather than *bride*. Apparently, at this point, the wedding was in Heaven at the Father's house, and the celebration feast will be on earth. A Jewish rabbi told me that is why Jesus refused to drink the fourth cup of the Last Supper (which is partaken of in all Passover Seder meals). That fourth cup called the Kingdom Cup is also the Cup of Consummation. Christ said that He would not drink of the cup until we were all together in the Kingdom (Matthew 26:29). The rabbi, then said, "We know whom the bride and bridegroom are in this event, but who are the friends of the Bridegroom, and where do they come from?" He explained that they were the Old Testament saints and Tribulation saints that were resurrected at the end of the Tribulation (Daniel 12:1-2 and Revelation 20:4-6). He also referred to: Rev. 19:9, "Blessed are those who are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb."

Speaking of feasts, there are a couple of divinely appointed feasts that also shed light on the subject of the timing of the rapture and the second coming of Christ. I am referring to the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah) and the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). These are the first two of the fall feasts that Jews observe every year. The main events of Christ's first coming were all fulfilled on the very day of the spring feasts. He was crucified on

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Passover, buried on Feast of Unleavened Bread, and rose on the Feast of First Fruits. Therefore, it makes sense that the events of His second coming would also be fulfilled on the specific days of the fall feasts. The Jews observe Rosh Hashanah for two days because no one knows *the day or the hour of the new moon*. As soon as the new moon is verified, they start blowing their trumpets (shofars). Between the last day of the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement, there are seven days, which again are parallel to the seven years of the Tribulation. It is also interesting that the two days of Rosh Hashanah along with the seven days and the Day of Atonement are a time period of ten days, which are called *the Days of Awe*. It is commonly understood by believing Jews that the Rapture will happen on one of the days of the Feast of Trumpets, since no one knows which day or what hour. Then the Messiah will come and set His feet on the Mt. of Olives (Zech.14:4) on the very day of Yom Kippur to administer forgiveness or judgment. In Matthew 25:31-46 Christ explains that when He comes, He will have the judgment of the sheep and goats. The goats (non-believers that survived the Tribulation) will be cast into the Lake of Fire. The sheep (believers that survived the Tribulation) will be escorted into the Kingdom. Those people will still have their mortal bodies and will populate the Kingdom for the thousand years described in Revelation 20. The Church in their glorified bodies will reign with Christ over these mortals. This leads us to another very important observation. If the Rapture happened at the end of the Tribulation, all the believers, including the sheep of Matthew 25, would come back to earth in their glorified bodies. There would be no mortals to give birth to new babies to grow up and populate the Kingdom and certainly no one for us to reign over.

So, in conclusion, since the Scriptures were written to the Jews and for the Jews from the hand of the Jews by the inspiration of God, it would behoove us Gentiles to read the Scriptures with the culture and mindset of the Jews in our thoughts. Jesus spoke of His relationship with us in the metaphor of the Jewish bride and bridegroom motif. Keeping this in mind, it stands to reason that the pre-tribulation rapture is the only view that makes sense.