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Theme: *The Edge of Tomorrow – What Does It Mean For The Church?*

Revelation 4:1-2 - After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 - 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. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” 55 “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

The world has little or no knowledge of eschatology much less the Biblical concept of the Rapture. However, according to the ***Millennial Prophecy Report*** there are 1,100 groups in the world who believe that the “end” is imminent. This object of this study is to tackle the doctrine of the rapture (*the belief in a secret catching-away of the body of Christ out of this world*). My goal is that you will be convinced that we, as the body of

Christ, have not been appointed by God to go through the wrath of Daniel's 70th week.

Most Bible commentaries would agree that chapter 3 closes out the Church Age, as it is seen in history. Then to start chapter 4, it says, "AFTER THIS (or after the Church Age) I looked, and, behold, a DOOR opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a TRUMPET TALKING with me; which said, COME UP hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." **So after the Church Age**, it is (John the beloved) who sees what will happen after the church is caught up.

In Revelation 4:1, John the beloved, sees a DOOR opened in heaven. In the Gospel of John 10:1 Jesus talks about the DOOR into the Sheepfold...then in verse 9, Jesus says, He is the DOOR, and in verse 11, Jesus says he is the Good Shepherd. It is interesting that it is the same Greek word for, DOOR, (*yura thura*) that is used in Rev 4:1 as John used for the door into the sheepfold in John 10:1. John is caught up through the DOOR into the Sheepfold, and John sees everything as a Type of the Church in Chapter 4.

In John 10:3 Jesus says, "...and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out..." for the sheep know his voice. John is caught up through the Sheepfold Door as he hears a voice of a Trumpet. This is a beautiful picture of the Rapture of the church as it is shown in, 1 Cor. 15:51-52, 1 Thess. 4:16-18 and Heb. 12:18-23, Rev. 1:10-11.

The word, church or churches, mysteriously disappears from the Revelation after 3:22 and is not mentioned again until Rev 22:16 and then, it only references back to what the angel was going to tell John in the first three chapters concerning "these things in the churches." Too many people are trying to put the church into all of Revelation when the

fact is the church is NOT mentioned or seen on earth during the Seven Seals of Judgment.

I. **The mystery of the rapture – 1 Cor. 15: 51-52**

A. Paul called the rapture a *mystery* and felt the need to explain this mystery to the church at Corinth because age and illness were beginning to claim church members.

i. These members had been expecting Jesus to return before they passed in death

B. **Mark 13: 32 - But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**

i. No one knows the day nor the hour of the rapture

ii. When it came to timing – Jesus likened the season of his return to the days of Noah – **Matt. 24: 37**

iii. Noah didn't know the hour of the flood

II. **Different rapture Positions**

A. **No Rapture** – This position holds that the church will become so victorious upon the earth that it will usher in the millennial kingdom. This is better known as *Dominion Theology or Kingdom Theology*.

i. **Problems with this view:**

1) It contradicts Paul's teaching in **2 Timothy 3: 13** – In describing the last days Paul said evil will get worse and worse.

2) The second law of Thermodynamics – Organized systems become more disorganized over time

3) The pattern of world history confirms man's nature is becoming more corrupt

B. **Partial Rapture** – This view states that when Jesus comes He will only rapture those who are sanctified enough. According to this view the church exist in two parts: The sanctified part that will

make the rapture – The unsanctified part that will be left to go through the tribulation.

i. **Problems with this view:**

- 1) This is a rejection of the work of the cross – Only the death of Jesus removes all sin (**Heb. 10:17**).
- 2) The bride of Christ is a body and Christ will not be divided. We as Christ body have been made to drink into one spirit (**1 Cor. 12: 13**)
- 3) It also implies salvation by our works...

C. **Mid-tribulation Rapture** – This view says that the Church will endure the first three and a half years of the seven-year tribulation period.

i. **Problem with this view:**

- 1) The tribulation is the punishing of the ungodly not the church
- 2) The tribulation is to cause Israel to turn to Christ – It has nothing to do with the Church

D. **Post-tribulation Rapture** – This view states that the Church will go through the tribulation and will endure the wrath and judgment of God. Then, it will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air only to return immediately with Him to earth to set up the Kingdom.

III. **Reasons I believe in the rapture:**

A. **The very nature of the tribulation doesn't fit the church**

- i. The tribulation period is a terrible time of judgment and condemnation upon the ungodly.
- ii. **Romans 8: 1** – There is no condemnation for those in Jesus
- iii. If Church has been cleansed by the blood, how will tribulation make it cleaner than the blood?

B. **The teaching of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3**

- i. The believers in Thessalonica were suffering persecution and thought they were going through the tribulation
- ii. Evidently some teaching them that they would go through tribulation
- iii. Paul defined specifically that the tribulation couldn't come until the church was removed and the anti-Christ revealed.

C. The appearance of the 24 Elders in Revelation 4:4

- i. These elders are seated, robed, and crowned
- ii. **2 Tim. 4: 8** is clear that we get this crown at the Judgment seat of Christ.
- iii. The elders are sitting in glorified positions around the throne... how did they get there if there is no rapture.

D. The early church believed in a pre-tribulation rapture – 2 Peter 3: 3-4 – “...knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”

- i. The apostles saw the ascension of Jesus and expected Him to return in like manner – **Acts 1: 11, Luke 21: 36**
- ii. In 373 A.D., Ephraim the Syrian wrote: *For at the Rapture all saints and Elect of God are gathered, prior to the Tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins.*
- iii. Scoffers claim that the Rapture doctrine was never believed or taught until the 1800's...

1) Letter From Clement to Corinthians (97AD) - Chapter IX

- Let us steadfastly contemplate those who have perfectly ministered to His excellent glory. Let us take (for instance) Enoch, who, being found righteous in obedience, was translated, and death was never known to happen to him. Noah, being

found faithful, preached regeneration to the world through his ministry; and the Lord saved by him the animals, which, with one accord, entered into the ark.

2) 100-155AD Polycarp's letter to the Philippians

- "For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist; " and whosoever does not confess the testimony of the cross, is of the devil; and whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and **says that there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment**, he is the first-born of Satan. Wherefore, forsaking the vanity of many, and their false doctrines, let us return to the word which has been handed down to us from the beginning; "watching unto prayer," and persevering in fasting; beseeching in our supplications the all-seeing God "not to lead us into temptation," as the Lord has said: "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak."

E. The rapture in the pattern of a Jewish Wedding

- i. ***John 14:1-4 – "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And where I go you know, and the way you know."***
- ii. The mystery of the rapture is easily seen in the nuptial chain of events in a traditional Hebrew wedding
- iii. Sequence of Hebrew wedding:

- 1) **The search for the bride** – the bridegroom or an agent of the bridegrooms father went out to search for a bride.
- 2) **The price for the bride** – A price (dowry) would be established or agreed upon.
 - Price was called a *mohar*
- 3) **The contract for the bride** – A scribe would then draw up a *ketubah*, marriage contract. This contract stated the bride's price, the promises of the groom to the bride, and the rights of the bride.
- 4) **The gifts for the bride** – When the gifts were accepted by the bride they would together share a *cup of wine* (The cup of the covenant)
 - The bride would then declare – I go to prepare a place for you...
- 5) **The return of the groom for the bride** – When the “place” was prepared the father would send the son to fetch the bride. When he approached the bride's home there would be a **shout and the blowing of a trumpet**.
- 6) **The consummation of the marriage** – When the “place” for the bride is prepared he journeyed to the bride's house and got – This was a special event. The bridesmaid's job was to keep the bride alert and prepared for the return of the bride.
- 7) **The adorning of the bride** – in ancient times the bride would then adorn herself in beautiful garments to please her groom. If she were wise, while she awaited his return she would prepare a trunk of beautiful garments to wear for him.
 - **This speaks of the Judgment seat of Christ**
- 8) **The marriage feast** – The groom would then call his friends and family together to a 7-day feast.

- The Hebrew wedding feast was to honor the *groom* not the *bride*.
- At this time it was expected that people would compose poems and songs that they would sing to the groom.

Conclusion:

Hebrews 9:28 - To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation...

We are admonished to look for his appearing a second time unto salvation. But we must be reminded, scoffers will come to discourage the hearts of believers for the rapture and try to steal the hope of the church. Lets keep our eyes on the sky, for this same Jesus is coming in like manner.

ORDER OF EVENTS OF BIBLE PROPHECY

