

Eschatology: Certain or Uncertain?

The uncertainty of the timing of the rapture

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The Advent of Messiah	
Literal	Figurative
Born In Bethlehem Born of a virgin Descendant of David Rejected by the builders With a rich man in His death Cast lots for His clothing Hands and feet pierced Mocked	Elijah will come (John the Baptist)

The Advent of Messiah	
Suffering Servant	King who Reigns
Psalm 22:1-18 Isaiah 50:6 Isaiah 52:14, 15 Isaiah 53:1-12 Daniel 9:26	Genesis 49:10 Numbers 24:17 Isaiah 11:4 Isaiah 49:6, 7 Daniel 7:14

Certain or Uncertain	
Certain	Uncertain
Christ will return	Timing of rapture
Future judgment	Identity of antichrist
Christ will reign	Details of Revelation
Millennial kingdom	What is literal in Rev.
Rapture	What is figurative in Rev.
Great Tribulation	When will Daniel's 70 th week begin
Antichrist	

Prophecy and Composite Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The coming of Messiah ■ Future judgment ■ The Tribulation ■ The Day of the Lord ■ The Second Coming <p>As a general rule, when prophecy is fulfilled there are more, not less, details than would have been expected. Furthermore, prophecy is not given in chronological order in the Bible</p>

The church and the tribulation
<p>Whether or not there is a pre-tribulation rapture, there will be a church during the great tribulation:</p> <p>And I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 7:14)</p>

Historical Considerations

- The early church fathers were pre-millennial
- Augustine proposed amillennialism
- The reformers left Augustine's system intact
- After the Reformation many returned to pre-millennialism based on a literal hermeneutic
- But pre-millennialists have had different views on the timing of the rapture

Rapture: Expected/Unexpected

Expected	Unexpected
2 Thess. 2:2, 3	Luke 12:40
1 Thess. 5:4	Matt. 24:42-44
Math. 24:29, 30	Matt. 24:50
Joel 2:30, 31	Matt. 25:13
	Mark 13:32, 33

The Rapture: expected or unexpected?

- **Unexpected:**

You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect. (Luke 12:40)

The master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, (Matthew 24:50)

The Rapture: expected or unexpected?

- Expected:
that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (2Thess. 2:2, 3)

The prewrath rapture arguments

- Psychological argument: if we do not think we are going to be martyred, we will not be prepared
- Wrath argument: Only what happens after the 6th seal in Revelation is the wrath of God
- Unexpected: the unexpected timing of the rapture only applies to unbelievers

1) The psychological argument

- If people do not think they are going go through part of the great tribulation they will not be prepared
 - People have been martyred throughout church history
 - No Christian is prepared for martyrdom on the grounds he or she thinks it will happen
 - If Christians find themselves alive during the great tribulation, God will give them grace despite what view of the rapture they had

1) The psychological argument

- It can be just as validly argued that if people think Christ cannot return until after antichrist seats himself in the temple that they will not be prepared for the rapture
 - We have passages that explicitly state that some will think "my master will be a long time coming" (Luke 12:45), and it will be a bad thing for them.
 - Some might be looking for antichrist rather than looking for the blessed hope

2) The wrath argument

- Wrath is expressed in more ways than direct outpourings of judgment from God.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness," (Romans 1:18)

2) The wrath argument

- Wrath is expressed in more ways than direct outpourings of judgment from God.

"Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:23, 24)

3) Unexpected

If Christ cannot return until after the signs in the sun, moon and stars (Matt. 24:29), then we need not concern ourselves with His possible soon return.

“And be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.” (Luke 12:39, 40)

3) Unexpected

While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; (1Thess. 5:3, 4)

This passage does not mean that we know the timing of the rapture, but that we are always prepared whenever it might happen.

Paradigm: The rule of God over time

Gen. 1-9	Gen. 9 – beginning of the Tribulation	7 year Tribulation	Millennium
Unmediated spiritual rule	Mediated spiritual rule by men	Unmediated spiritual rule by antichrist	Theocracy Christ rules

Paradigm: the rule of God

Unmediated spiritual rule: Gen. 1 – 9

- The heavenly council (host of heaven)
- God directly appeared to men at times
- The sons of God crossed a boundary in Genesis 6 and God intervened
- Those spirits were locked up in the abyss (1Peter 3:19)

A paradigm: the rule of God

Mediated spiritual rule by men: Gen. 9

- Men will avenge murder (Gen. 9:6)
- Nimrod was the first to have a kingdom (Gen. 10:8-10)
- At Babel all of mankind sought to have a unified kingdom and make a name for themselves (Gen. 11:4)
- God judged Babel and scattered them (Gen. 11:8)

The 70 nations have human rulers but are under the host of heaven, Israel is Yahweh's

■ **Deuteronomy 32:8, 9** (ESV)

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.

When Israel rebelled she was put under the host of heaven as well

■ **Acts 7:42**

But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, "It was not to Me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel?"

Christians are under human rulers but not the host of heaven

■ **Ephesians 1:20-22**

which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

Human rulers over multiple nations is God's way of restraining evil

And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. 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. (2Thessalonians 2:6, 7)

Human rulers will turn their authority over to the beast

And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast. (Revelation 17:12, 13)

Incarnations	
Christ	Antichrist
Revealed (Luke 17:30)	Revealed (2Thes2: 3, 6, 8)
Parousia (vs 8)	Parousia (vs 9)
Power (Matt. 24:30)	Power (vs 9)
Signs (Matt. 24:30)	Signs (vs 9)
Wonders (Jn. 4:47)	Wonders (vs 9)
"The Truth" (2Thes.2:10)	"The Lie" (2Thes. 2:11)
Resurrected(1Co. 15:20)	Resurrected (Rev. 13:3)

The return of unmediated spiritual rule

- The wicked spirits from Noah's day are kept in the abyss (1Peter 3:19)
- The abyss is reserved for punishing spirits that overstep their bounds (Luke 8:31; Revelation 9:11; Revelation 17:8; Revelation 20:1-3)
- The beast comes out of the abyss. (Revelation 11:7)

The entire tribulation is a judgment of reprobation on the entire world


- The world has wanted to recreate Babel, they will get Babylon.
- The world has lusted for interaction with spirits, they will get direct contact with spirits (Rev. 9:1-11)
- The world has wanted idols, they will get an idol that speaks (Revelation 13:15)

During the millennium, there will be an unmediated theocracy where God rules as a man


Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:6)

Plausible Scenario


- If there is no pre-tribulation rapture, God will be placing his faithful church back under the host of heaven from which they had been delivered.
- If there is a pre-tribulation rapture, there will still be many people saved during the tribulation and there will be a church.
- God will seal and preserve 144,000 Jews who will be on earth all the way to the very end.

 Plausible Scenario

If the event associated with the signs in the sun, moon and stars is indeed a rapture and not the return of Christ, and if there is a pre-tribulation rapture, then the rapture shall happen in two stages: 1) the rapture of the faithful church before the tribulation 2) the removal of all but the 144,000 saved Jews before the direct outpouring of God's wrath.

 Conclusion

- It is not necessary to have a certain belief about the timing of the rapture in order to be faithful to God
- We must all admit that there is a degree of uncertainty and that it would be wrong and arrogant to claim to know for certain what is in fact uncertain
- We must be charitable to our brothers and sisters in Christ who have different views about matters that are uncertain



- To hear a sermon that explains the "host of heaven" go to twincityfellowship.com; choose "sermons and Sunday School classes" then choose "sermon archive"; choose the sermon from November 16, 2008: "2nd commandment pt1; host of heaven explained"
- The entire 10 Commandment series is available through the CIC store.
