

Ponderosa Bible Church
Sermon Based Small Group
October 11, 2021



The Rapture: Why I believe it is Pre-Trib

-A Facilitator Guide-

For the Facilitator: *As a small group facilitator, if you have not heard Pastor Joe's teaching, then please go online to our YouTube channel and watch the video titled "The Rapture: Why I believe it is pre-trib" in order to have a full discussion for this small group.*

"Digging Deeper" Fellowship time:

Fellowship time suggestion: I'm back everyone! Thank you for doing an excellent job while I was on vacation for the last week, with your small groups and giving me the information I need. It seems that everyone has had a fantastic experience leading small groups. For this week's *Digging Deeper Fellowship Time* ask your group the following: "Who was your favorite person to spend time with as a child and why?" As you all know, the goal of this time is to get to know one another better so feel free to moderate as you feel led. Thank you for your hard work, I appreciate all of you. (:

Sermon Based Study Questions:

For the Facilitator: *A few things to remember while leading this study: (1) You are not TEACHING, you are facilitating! There will be small group leaders who have led a small group that will teach, but that is not the primary purpose of this leader guide, the primary purpose is to help you facilitate. Your job as a small group leader is to facilitate a discussion, not teach a lesson. The pastor has already taught the lesson, now you are trying to start a discussion on what was taught. You are putting a magnifying glass to the teaching and teasing out the details. (2) As a small group leader you want to bring out personal application of the Sunday message (which means you should have listened to it). Ask questions during the discussion, “How does this apply to you? What did you learn? How does this change your views on Christianity?” Etc. Personal application is the goal of the Sermon based small group. (3) It is not the goal of this outline to get through the whole guide, the goal is to foster conversation. While progressing through this guide is a desired outcome, don’t consider getting to the end as “success.” Success as defined by the “sermon based small group” is defined as equal parts fellowship and a deepening study of the Sunday Sermon. (4) Not every sub-point under a question needs to be asked, these are suggestions for you to consider while you are talking about the question from the study guide. If you asked the study guide question and had a good discussion about it then you may not even need to discuss the sub-points. These points exist to help you encourage a discussion.*

This week's scripture: There is no "key scripture" to go over this week except for the one's Pastor Joe will be mentioning in his teaching.

Questions from the study guide:

(1) Why is it important to distinguish between God's plan for the Jews and His plan for the Church?

****Ask ONE of the following UNLESS you think that asking both will make for a better discussion****

A. Did you know there was a difference between the two plans?

-or-

B. What did you learn from the message about these two plans that helped you understand the Bible better?

• **For the Facilitator:** *It is important to distinguish between God's plan for the Church and God's plan for Israel for a number of reasons. First and foremost, many of the promises that God has made to Israel in the Old Testament have not yet been fulfilled! A good example of this is Daniel's 70th week, or what we call "The tribulation period." Most do not realize that this particular prophecy is not a prophecy about the Church, or even the whole world...it is a prophecy about Israel. Now, this does not mean that the entire world will not feel the tribulation, all we need*

to do is read the book of Revelation and we can see that there are world wide consequences, but the tribulation was not primarily meant for the entire world. The tribulation is God's way of bringing the nation of Israel back to God. In reality, the Bible is book that is first and foremost meant for Israel, and then for us. This is why Paul the Apostle says that we have been grafted into the promises of Israel. This is why Jesus conducted his entire ministry in Israel (Samaria used to be Northern Israel), and this is why the Apostles were first told to begin their ministry in Israel.

The Bible does not teach or recognize "replacement theology" and the Church has not replaced Israel (One only needs to read Roman 9-11 to see this), which means that in the last days not only will God be completing his plan for the Church, but he will also be fulfilling all of the promises he made to Israel and they will recognize Christ as their long Awaited Messiah.

(2) How would you respond to someone who says the teaching about the pre-trib rapture is a teaching that was not taught until Margaret MacDonald, John Darby, and C.I. Schofield?

****Ask ONE of the following UNLESS you think that asking both will make for a better discussion****

A. Was this ever a belief that you held?

-or-

B. Had you ever heard of the above mentioned teachers?

• **For the Facilitator:** *This particular argument that Pastor Joe discusses was one that I used to tout when I believed in a post-trib rapture (I don't hold to this view any longer). I used to tell people all of the time that the "pre-trib rapture was a modern invention and the early Church used to believe and teach post-trib." Boy was I wrong! There is only one problem with this belief, the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians were written because the Thessalonians thought that they had missed the rapture! That was the whole point of these letters. Some in the Church had been teaching that the rapture had already occurred and it was confusing the Church, so Paul wrote a letter to refute this. Also, after discussing the rapture, Paul tells his readers to "comfort one another with these words." There is nothing comforting about a "post-trib rapture," which means he HAD to be referring to a pre-trib rapture. (1 Thess. 4:18) Last but not least, there were early Church fathers who taught a pre-trib rapture (Pseudo-Ephraim) and it seems that the later invention was a post-trib rapture. So these things are what I would say to someone who touted the idea that the pre-trib rapture was a later invention.*

(3) How does the rapture differ from the second coming?

****Ask ONE of the following UNLESS you think that asking both will make for a better discussion****

A. Did you know there was a difference between the two?

-or-

B. What did you learn that helped you to understand the difference better?

• **For the Facilitator:** *To answer this is quite simple: The rapture is when the Church meets Christ in the air at the great trumpet blast (1 Thess. 4:16-17), the 2nd coming of Christ is when he returns with the Lord's army to defeat the anti-christ which culminates with Him touching down on the Mount of Olives. (Rev. 19:11-15)*

During the rapture Christ comes to take his faithful back with him, during the 2nd Coming Christ returns to establish his rule and reign The only reason why people get these two confused is because they do not understand the purpose behind each "return." Once the purpose is understood, then it is established that the two could not be more different.

(4) Why is the rapture *not* mentioned in Matthew 24 and why does this matter?

****Ask ONE of the following UNLESS you think that asking both will make for a better discussion****

A. How Matthew 24 used to prove a "post-trip rapture?"

-or-

B. How did Pastor Joe dismiss using Matthew 24 to teach a "post-trib rapture?"

• **For the Facilitator:** *Matthew 24 was also a passage I cited as “proof” of a post-trib rapture.” But this was before I understood that there is no “Church” in the Gospels. The Church is not even born until Acts 2. Until Acts 2 no one in the Bible is talking about the Church. In the scriptures the Church takes up a very small portion of the reading. Most of the writing in scripture is to the nation of Israel. Some would say that Christ speaks of the Church when he says to Peter, “On this rock I will build my Church...” However, that word in the Greek is the word “ecclesia” and was mostly used to refer to synagogues or public gatherings. In reality, the word “Church” should never have been used in this context.*

What does this all mean? If there was no Church in Matthew 24, then Christ could not have been referring to the rapture of it (Post or pre-trib). The first one to discuss the rapture was Paul the Apostle, not Jesus, and when Paul discusses it he refers to it as a mystery. (1 Corinthians 15:51) This means that until Paul discusses the rapture, it had never been mentioned. Therefore, Matthew 24 was referring specifically to the Jews. Remember, we said that the tribulation (Daniel’s 70th week) specifically had to do with the Jews (Though it has worldwide implications), this means that when Christ is discussing it with the Jews in Matthew 24 that he was discussing Jewish ideas with the Jewish people and that there would be no problem with this at all. The rapture has to do specifically with the Church as a whole, which means that Christ would not have been talking about a post-trib rapture in these verses.

(5) When the apostle Paul described the rapture as a “mystery,” why is this important to the discussion?

****Ask ONE of the following UNLESS you think that asking both will
make for a better discussion****

A. How is the rapture a mystery?

-or-

B. Why is it important that the rapture is a mystery?

• **For the Facilitator:** Paul declares that the rapture is a mystery (1 Cor. 15:51) because until he teaches it, no one else had known about the rapture. This means that no one except Paul had taught the rapture. This is important because that means that the rapture cannot be found in the Gospels or anywhere else until 1 Cor. 15:51. This should be somewhat of a relief because it should help Bible teachers to streamline their teaching and eliminate all pretenders.

PLEASE READ, VERY IMPORTANT!!! How you close your meeting is very important so even if you do not get through all the questions and even if you stick on one point for far longer than you anticipated, please decide how you plan on ending your meeting before it has even started. It would even be good to choose a talking point to end the meeting on about ten minutes before it ends. Also decide who is going to pray to close out the meeting. Ending a meeting in an abrupt manner leads to a very awkward meeting. So have your last talking point ready to go along with someone chosen to pray in order to close the meeting smoothly.