**Note:**

Tonight is not a deep dive into the Rapture. That comes next week, as there is way too much information to present in just one session. The analogy of drinking from a fire hose comes to mind – especially for a 101 class such as this is. So, we decided to split it in two, presenting the Jewish Wedding theme this week, since many of you have recently watched the movie *Before the Wrath*. Specific Rapture passages, verses, and concepts will be explored next week.

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**Rapture described:**

The Rapture is an end-time event when all Christian believers who are alive, along with resurrected believers (called the dead in Christ), will be “caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” This involves a bodily “translation” of living believers who will not experience death. When Jesus comes at that time He will also be accompanied by the spirits of the Church age saints. The bodies of these Church age saints will be resurrected and reunited with their spirits, just before living believers are “caught up”.

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**The Rapture and the Jewish Wedding:**

Understanding ancient Jewish wedding practices will illuminate the meaning of Scripture concerning the Rapture. The Rapture cannot be fully appreciated or understood without looking at the parallel of the Jewish wedding, especially a Galilean wedding. The Galilean wedding is a physical expression of spiritual truths of the Rapture. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to realize that this Galilean betrothal and marriage process reveals His relationship to us as believers, as well as His plans to return for us at the Rapture. Jesus’ audience fully understood that He was going to return, because they understood the pattern of their own weddings. His disciples were Galileans and His audience was often comprised of Galilean Jews.

**Parallels between the Rapture and the Jewish Wedding:**

In Eph 5:22-33 Paul clearly correlates the marriage covenant to that of Christ and His Church. Verse 32 definitively states: “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the Church”. In God’s economy, these two unions are deeply connected.

When Jesus spoke of returning for His own in John 14:2-3, He was speaking to His disciples in terms they could appreciate. It was the image of the bridegroom returning to get his betrothed and bringing her back to his father’s house.

John 14:2-3 is a PROMISE of His return! A PROMISE of His return for us! It reads:

“In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for **I go to prepare a place for you**. 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.”

**Counterparts:**

* + Groom = Jesus
  + Bride = Church
  + Groom’s father = God the Father
  + Father’s house = heaven

**The Betrothal or Espousal Process:**

* The bridegroom would leave his father’s house and travel to the home of his perspective bride.
  + Jesus left His Father’s house in heaven and travelled to the home of His perspective bride (the Church) here on earth.
    - “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us…” John 1:14
    - “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” John 6:38
* The groom came for the purpose of establishing a marriage covenant. In order to establish that covenant, a marriage contract (ketubah) was drawn up to document all of the bridegroom’s provisions for his bride and to show the legality of the wedding. In addition, he had to pay a purchase price or “bride price” to her father.
  + Jesus came for the purpose of establishing a covenant – the New Covenant.
    - “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.” Luke 22:20; Mt 26:28
  + The bride price that Jesus paid for His bride (the Church) was nothing less than His life – the shedding of His blood.
    - “…you have been bought with a price…” 1 Cor 6:20
    - “Christ redeemed (purchased) us…” Gal 3:13
* The groom would then extend a cup of wine to His desired bride to be.
  + Jesus had to shed His blood before we could receive salvation. That was the bride price that He paid. But He then extends and offers it to all.
    - “…the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” Acts 20:28
    - “In Him we have redemption through His blood…” Eph 1:7
  + Remember the relationship between the cup of wine and the blood of Christ.
    - “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.” Luke 22:20; Mt 26:28
* Once the cup is offered to his bride to be, she has a free will choice to refuse or accept the offer. Unlike other wedding customs in the Middle East, the bride in the Galilean wedding has the power to reject the marriage proposal. The betrothal could not be completed without her willingly drinking from the offered cup of wine.
  + We exercise our free will and either accept or reject Christ’s offer of redemption through His blood. When we accepted the finished work of Christ on the cross we freely entered into that offered covenant of eternal life.
    - “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” Ro 10:9-10
    - “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Ro 10:13; Acts 2:21
* The groom then publicly states: “You are now consecrated to me by the laws of Moses, and I will not drink of this cup again until I drink it anew with you in my father’s house.”
  + When Jesus spoke the following words at the Last Supper, it must have been impossible for the disciples to ignore the obvious connection to a wedding.
    - “But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” Mt 26:29
    - “I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.” Luke 22:18
* The bride is now “set aside”, “set apart” or “sanctified”. While her future husband is absent, the bride prepared herself for his imminent, but unknown return. She remained continually ready by sleeping in her wedding dress.
  + We are instructed to be ready.
    - “For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.” Mt 24:44
    - Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. Mt 25:13
  + We are “set apart”.
    - “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people…” **1 Peter 2:9**
    - “And such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Cor 6:11
* After the betrothal, the groom left his future wife, and went back to his father’s house. There he built on an addition to that structure and prepared a place for her.
  + At Jesus’ ascension, He returned to His Father’s house to prepare a place for His bride, the Church. We are living in the period of separation between His departure and His return.
    - “I go to prepare a place for you.” John 14:2
    - “But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.” Hebrews 11:16
* No one knew the time that he would return for his bride, except his father.
  + Jesus waits for His Father to say: It’s time – go and get your bride.
    - “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.” Mt 24:36; Mk 13:32
* When it is time, the groom and his groomsmen proceed towards the bride’s home. During that process, a cry would be taken up: “Behold, the bridegroom cometh!” Not only that, there was shouting and the blowing of a shofar (the ram’s horn trumpet).
  + At the Rapture, when Jesus comes for His bride, the Church, there will be the sounding of a shofar and a shout.
    - “But at midnight there was a shout, Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.” Mt 25:6
    - “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God…” 1 Thess 4:16
* A procession would then ensue from the bride’s current home to her new home. However, the Galilean bride did not merely walk in the procession with everyone else. She was lifted up into the air, up off the ground, and “caught away”. She would be “borne aloft” on a litter or (pal-an-keen) palanquin and transported to her new dwelling. She did nothing, nor was it a result of her own efforts – she was “snatched away”! The Galileans called it “flying the bride to the father’s house”!!
  + Jesus comes to get us in much the same way. We are “caught up” and He “receives us” to Himself.
    - “Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.” 1 Thess 4:17
* Once the bride and groom arrive, along with the family and guests, the doors are shut. Those who are left out can no longer get in.
  + Believers go with Jesus, unbelievers are left behind.
    - “And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.” Mt 25:10

**In conclusion:**

The Bride of Christ is currently in the betrothal or engagement stage. We are waiting for our Bridegroom to receive us to Himself and take us to the Father’s house, “that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). Once the Lord fetches us and brings us to heaven, He will carry out His Bema Seat Judgment and finish our cleansing and purification process. In 1 Cor 3:11-15, we learn of the Bema Seat Judgment, which is the final cleansing stage of the Body of Messiah. The result is that we can now live with our holy, righteous, and just God in a covenant marriage relationship.

Once the Bema Seat Judgment is complete, the bride of Christ is now ready for the wedding ceremony itself. The marriage of the Lamb to His bride will occur in heaven, and the wedding feast (or reception) will follow the wedding ceremony. It is my view that the marriage supper of the Lamb takes place in heaven between the rapture and the second coming.

* This coincides with the tribulation taking place on earth. The 7 days of a Jewish wedding feast is reflective of the 7 years the Church spends in heaven, while the 7 year Tribulation occurs on earth.
* The result for the Church is seen in Rev 19:8. “It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.” Rev 19:7-9

In his vision in Rev 19:7-9 John saw and heard the heavenly multitudes praising God because the wedding feast of the Lamb – literally, the “marriage supper” – was about to begin.

“Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” Rev 19:9

This takes place before heaven is opened and Christ returns to earth. “And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.” Rev 19:11

**These parallels, mirror images and correlations are NOT accidental!**

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**Transition:**

I now want to swing the pendulum completely the other way, from union to separation; from joy to sorrow; from blessing to wrath. Let’s ask 2 questions: Who is the object of God’s wrath? What is the purpose of the Tribulation?

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**Wrath:**

To begin, a distinction must be made between persecution or suffering and judgement. Christians are not spared from suffering or persecution, but we are exempt from God’s judgement and justice on the world, sin, and satan. Persecution comes from the world and satan, while **THE** Tribulation is the wrath of God poured out on unrepentant mankind, sin, and satan. The wrath and judgement that my sin deserves has already been paid for by Jesus Christ my Redeemer – it is a debt I no longer owe. I am no longer the object of God’s wrath.

* “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.” Ro 5:9
* “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor 5:21

These next 2 verses concerning wrath are found in Paul’s 1st letter to the Thessalonians. This is key, because these verses are strategically located in the same epistle that contains a concentration of verses and concepts about the resurrection of dead believers, the Rapture, and the day of the Lord. Next week we’ll look closely at the Thessalonians letters.

**1 Thess 1:10:**

“…and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who **rescues / delivers** us **from the wrath to come**.”

* G4506 rhuomai:
  + Definition: to draw to oneself, deliver
  + Usage: rescue, **deliver (from danger or destruction)**
  + **HELPS Word-studies**:
    - *Rhýomai* (from *eryō*, “draw *to oneself*”) – properly, draw (pull) *to oneself*; to rescue (“**snatch up**”); **to draw or rescue a person *to and for the deliverer***.
    - In Mt 6:13 (“the Lord's Prayer”), *rhýomai* (G4506) is used in the closing sentence, “*Deliver* (*rhýomai*) us from evil” – i.e. “*Deliver me to Yourself and for Yourself*.” That is, “Lord *deliver* me out of my (personal) pains and bring me *to You and for You*.”
    - *Rhýomai* (G4506) properly means, “**to snatch out *for oneself***” (H. Cremer, G. Winer).
    - J. Thayer, “Properly, *rhýomai* means *to draw out*…*to one's self*” – i.e. to rescue *for oneself* (*to oneself*). *Rhýomai* (“rescue”) **implies removing someone in the *midst* (presence) of danger or oppression**, i.e. delivered “right out *of*” and *to* (*for*) the rescuer.

**1 Thess 5:9:**

“For God has **not destined us for wrath**, but for obtaining **salvation** through our Lord Jesus Christ…”

* G4991 sótéria:
  + Definition: deliverance, salvation
  + Usage: welfare, prosperity, deliverance, preservation, salvation, safety.
  + **HELPS Word-studies**:
    - Cognate: G4991 *sōtēría* (from 4982/*sṓzō*, “to save, rescue”) – *salvation*, i.e. **God's rescue which delivers believers out of destruction *and into* His safety**
  + **Thayer's Greek Lexicon**:
    - deliverance, preservation, safety, salvation: **deliverance from the molestation of enemies**

**Rev 3:10:**

“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 upon the earth.”

* G1537 ek:
  + Definition: from, **from out of**
  + Usage: from out, out from among, from, suggesting from the interior outwards.
  + **HELPS Word-studies**: Properly, “*out from* and to” (the *out*come); *out from within*. *ek* (“out of”) is **one of the most under-translated (and therefore mistranslated)** Greek propositions – often being confined to the meaning “by.” (*ek*) has a two-layered meaning (“**out from and to**”) which makes it **out-come** oriented (out of the depths of the source and extending to its impact on the object).
  + **Thayer's Greek Lexicon**:
    - It is used:
      * of place [my interpretation: ‘geographically’]
      * to keep one at a distance from [my interpretation: ‘spatially’]

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**Purpose of the Tribulation:**

The Tribulation is intended for:

* Israel: God has not forgotten Israel and He will use the Tribulation to turn the hearts of His people back to Him. The 70th week of Daniel is specifically engineered for Israel to return to their God.
  + Purging out of the non-elect Jewish element (“rebels”) from the nation. Ezek 20:38; Zech 13:8
  + Discipline will cause the remnant to be brought “into the bond of the covenant.” Ezek. 20:37
  + The refining process is compared to silver being melted in a furnace by the wrath of God (a picture of the Tribulation). Ezek 22:21-22
  + Conversion of the elect to faith in Jesus as their Messiah. Zech 13:9
* Gentile Nations: The Tribulation also concerns God's judgment upon Christ-rejecting Gentile nations. Matt 25:32
* The world: Another purpose for the tribulation is that it is a time of God’s wrath (Rev 6:16-17; Rev 11:18; Rev 14:10; Rev 16:19; Rev 19:15) and judgement upon a sinful world and unrepentant mankind. Is 24; Jer 25
* We, the Church, are not included in the end times purpose of God. The Church is not the object of God’s wrath. The architecture of the Book of Revelation reveals the following:
  + Though the Church is mentioned 20 times in the first 3 chapters of Revelation, before John is called up to heaven (Rev 4:1), it is missing from Rev 4:1 to 19:7. The absence of the Church is glaringly obvious and this nonexistence during the seals, trumpets, and bowls cannot be easily ignored.

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**Transition:**

I want to bring up one of the criticisms I’ve encounter throughout my research and study. It is labeled as escapism and the question is worded something like this…

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**Escapism:**

Why do Christians hope for a rescue op or have the audacity to think they should be spared from the Tribulation?

It’s in the Word, and is not an attitude of escapism if it’s based on Scripture. We’ve just examined 3 areas that support the pre-trib Rapture.

* + How Christ views His bride
  + We are not appointed to wrath
  + The purpose of the Tribulation

Next week we’ll look at many more reasons, especially Scriptures, in support of a pre-trib Rapture.

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**What has been presented tonight is only a fraction of what you’ll hear next week!**