

The Rapture | David Baumgartner

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[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Good morning, everyone.

God is good. And all the time, amen. He is good. We've started a new sermon series, and instead of looking at a book from the Bible, we've asked every man who rotates in the pulpit to, they've been asked to give a message on a topic of his choice.

So there's a schedule posted in the fellowship hall. And by the way, I wanted to mention this to you, only the speaker knows what his topic will be. So it's possible we may get messages on how to wash a dog, or how to change the oil in your car, something like that.

I think not. Brother Frank here started us off last week. We got off to a good start. This morning, I would like to speak on a topic that's near and dear to my heart, and that's the rapture.

Yeah. And if I'm not able to finish this message because we've been raptured, that's okay with me. I'm sure it is with you, too. You know, the rapture has always intrigued me.

[1 : 24] I mean, just think of it. The dead in Christ will rise, and then we who are alive and remain will be caught up with the Lord in the air to be with him forever.

What a great theme that is. What a great event that will be. The catching up of the saints, if you will, to be with the Lord. And so, you know, what a wonderful thing.

We may ask this question, what's the purpose of the rapture? Have you ever asked that? What's the purpose of it? Some people would say that by removing all the believers from the earth, that that will serve as a catalyst to start that final countdown.

You know, the scriptures tell us that we're in the end times now, that will start the end of the end times. Is that true? I think it's true.

I think it will bring about the circumstances of the rise of the beast that we read about in Revelation. Here's another possibility. The purpose of the rapture is to rescue God's people from the wrath that will be poured out upon the earth.

[2 : 32] Is that true? Yeah, I say it is too. You know, when, to the letter of the Christians in Philadelphia, in chapter 3, verse 10 of Revelation, you will be kept from the hour of testing, it says.

Now, there's a lot of dispute about what that means, but I think it applies here to the rapture. How about this one? It begins the final time of testing. Yeah, in other words, some people will come to Christ in the tribulation period, that last seven years.

Others won't. But here's the thing. God will judge in righteousness. Is that true? Yeah. I think these are all good reasons. I'd like to offer another reason today.

Listen carefully. It's because our hearts can be troubled. Please turn with me in the Bible, chapter 14 of John's Gospel.

The apostles at this time have been with Jesus for almost three years. In chapter 12 of John's account, we read that Jesus had entered Jerusalem.

[3 : 43] Chapter 13, it's the Thursday evening. And Jesus tells them he wants to have dinner with his apostles, which is rather an expected thing, because obviously they're going to be celebrating Passover.

I think it's really interesting, if you look in John's account, that that evening of the Lord's Supper actually takes up four chapters in John's account. chapters 13, 14, 15, 16.

If you include chapter 17, where the Lord is praying to his Father, then it would be five chapters. Well, they're weak. As we read, it got off to a great start.

But that evening with Jesus in the upper room, we find that Jesus began telling them some disturbing things. In chapter 13, verse 7, he washes their feet, and then he says this, you'll understand later.

What's that all about? And then in verse 11, he says, not all of you are clean. Is that me? What he's talking about?

[4 : 50] And then verse 21, he says, one of you will betray me. Wow. Jesus. That's incredible. But I think the biggest shock of all is that he told them that he was leaving them.

I'm going to leave you. Verse 19, after a little while, the world will behold me no more. In fact, that whole evening, Jesus had been telling them, I'm leaving you.

Chapter 16, verse 5, he says, but now I'm going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me where you're going. But because I have said these things, sorrow has filled your heart.

Back in chapter 14, verse 33, we read that Jesus says, I'm with you a little while longer, and where you're going, you cannot come.

And so Peter, brother Peter, bold Peter, he blurts out, why can't I come with you? And in verse 38, you can't come with me.

[6 : 01] And besides, tonight, you're going to deny me three times. Friends, what an evening. Started out pretty good, but it sure, it just doesn't make sense right now.

You know, they could have said, wait, Jesus, this is all very puzzling here. You're at the top of your game, and you're saying you're leaving now?

When you arrived in that city, you were riding on that donkey, and all the people were cheering for you. They wanted to make you king. They were waving branches to you.

We were there. We saw that. And not only that, if you go back a little bit, it says that you, they could have said, you told us earlier, that good things were going to happen to us.

When we sit upon 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel, and now you're saying you're leaving? Wow. They're profoundly confused.

[7 : 05] Their hearts were troubled. I want to ask you this morning, is your heart troubled by anything? I'm not saying, is your heart anxious? No, because, you know, that may be the case, but sometimes we think of being anxious as being related to sin.

Now, I want to ask you, are you troubled? Are you bothered by some things? Maybe you're bothered by the conditions of our society. Maybe you're bothered about just the abortion industry in this country.

Maybe it's the society's views on God. How do people view God? How do people view the Bible? How do people view God's people, his church?

You know, in fact, we see that what's good is called bad. What is bad is called good. And there's, lastly, there's religious groups.

I'm not saying, I'm not even calling them Christians. They're religious groups who have embraced serious error, serious doctrine, and yet their pews are filling up with people because they have a man-centered message that exalts themselves.

[8 : 19] And they've made a God in their own image. Not the God of the Bible, but a God of their own image. Is your heart troubled by these things?

In this account, Jesus senses that, obviously, and he comforts them. And he does it with a love story.

Please read with me just the first three verses of chapter 14. Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me.

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.

There you may be with me also. Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that we can come here today and study your word and to be refreshed and be reminded of who you are, Lord, and all of what you've done for us.

[9 : 28] I want to thank you for each person here and ask, Lord, that these words would come to life to us. We thank you, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.

One of the things that we have to remember when we study Scripture is that there's a great cultural, historical, and geographical divide.

a separation, if you will, that exists between us today and the original hearers and readers of God's word. In fact, there are some cultural elements in this very passage that we read.

Now, these cultural things, these would have been well known to the Jewish culture. And one of those elements has to do with a Jewish marriage.

marriage. How did the Jews, how did they conduct their marriage ceremonies? Well, when Jesus said, in my Father's house are many dwellings, and then he says, I go to prepare a place for you, friends, the apostles would have known the significance of what Jesus had just said.

[10:39] Jesus says, he's referring here to a wedding, a Jewish wedding, and he's reassuring his apostles by telling them a love story.

I'd like for you to look at this with me here because it's something that I think can encourage each one of us today. And perhaps we can encourage others. If you look on your handout here, I got a lot of verses here.

The Jewish marriage is actually divided in three parts. There's the betrothal, there's the wedding itself, and then there's the wedding feast.

Now, I'm just going to be looking at the first part of this, the wedding itself. I'm sorry, the betrothal. And I've actually broken it down into four different steps. If you'd look with me, that first step in a Jewish wedding is the betrothal.

It's the kardushin. And there's three steps to this. The first step is this. You would think it's like boy meets girl, right? Yeah, that's how it is in our culture most of the time.

[11:45] Not with ancient Israel. No, one of the most interesting aspects in the ancient Jewish culture is that the father chose the bride for his son.

So, Mike, Carrie, are you here? I don't see Mike. I'm just... Yeah. You know, did you do that for your son Ben recently? Did you go out and choose Kylie and stuff?

No, we don't do that. Sometimes, but here, look at this. In Genesis 24 on your handout, we read that Abraham sends a messenger to get a bride for his son, Isaac.

Look with me here. Genesis 24. You shall... This is to the messenger. You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I live, but you shall go to my country and to my relatives and take a wife for my son.

In other words, you pick her out. Not my son. You pick her out. Sometimes, a young man may spot a particular woman who captured his interest.

[12:54] But here's the thing. The son still had to... It was still up to the father to acquire the woman for the son. In fact, if you look with me in Judges 14, Samson is with Delilah's father.

And it says, Then Samson went down to Timnah and he saw... That's a good start. He saw a woman in Timnah. No, that's not good. One of the daughters of the Philistines.

So he came back and he told his father and mother, I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines. Now, therefore, get her for me.

Get her for me as a wife. Wow. Now, we may not agree with the Philistines here, but he still had the wherewithal to ask dad, Go get her for me.

I think it's really the main point here. This is really interesting here of how this is a picture of how the father chooses us for his son. Amen.

[14:01] It is. Look with me in Ephesians chapter 1. Just as he, this is talking about the father, chose us in him, that's the son, before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love, he predestined us to adoption as sons. Yeah, we talked about that in our Sunday school a little bit. Through Jesus Christ to himself, that's the father, according to the kind intention of his will. So that's the first step. You know, picking the, you know, the, the, the, the, the, picking the girl here. The second step is seeking the bride's consent.

The young man and the father would visit the home of the prospective bride, and the prospect of marriage would then be discussed. You know, it's very important here that the bride had to give her consent.

The groom could not force himself upon her. In Genesis 24, again, we read that when Abraham sent his servant to get a wife for his son Isaac, the servant arrived, and who did he speak to?

[15:12] He spoke to the woman's father about the marriage. And so, there comes a point where this messenger asked, so what's your answer? If you look with me in Genesis 24, 57, it says, and they said, we will call the girl and consult her wishes.

And then it says, they called Rebecca and said to her, will you go with this man? And she said, I will go. She said, yes. Similarly, Jesus doesn't force himself on us.

No, I do believe in the doctrine of election, but I think there's just enough free will in there that people will be held accountable for rejecting Jesus.

We see that in John's gospel account. He came to his own and they rejected him. I want to ask this question. How would the son pop the question to the woman?

Well, in the Jewish tradition, the son would sip from a cup of wine and then he would pass it to the woman. And if she willingly took a drink from the cup, it signified, yes.

[16:24] I'm for this. I'm saying yes. This first cup is actually very significant. Not only for her saying yes, but it signified that the couple was willing to set themselves apart for each other in the future.

We may think of that word sanctified, being set apart. So, now that the cup has been shared, the two families would do something now very important again.

They would sit down to this communal meal together over which the terms and the conditions of the marriage would be discussed.

And so, this third step here is the wedding contract. That's the ketubah here. The terms of the contract would be discussed.

And you have to understand that these terms here are very one-sided favoring the bride. And that's because it's designed to protect her, to protect her interests.

[17:25] For instance, it would stipulate the terms and the obligations, the provisions that the groom would make for his bride before and after the wedding.

And there's really three stipulations that are relevant to us this morning here. First, it's this. It's the dowry or the bridal payment. And this would be a sum of money that's paid by the groom to the girl's dad.

And it's important to note, she's not being purchased, if you understand it, like a slave or like a piece of property. No, this dowry was actually, it's kind of an insurance policy in case of divorce, in case of separation or desertion, in case of his death.

If she, or if he ran out of the marriage, what would happen? She would get all his property. So it was actually very important for this to happen. Actually, the bride price changed the status of the woman.

It would set her free from her father's house so that it would enable the groom to come and ultimately get her and take her away as his own.

[18:37] In fact, if we read in Genesis 34, this guy named Shechem, he's this wealthy Hivite, and he had his eyes on Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. And notice what it says in Genesis 34.

Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, if I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you ask. Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give it according to what you say to me.

but give me the girl in marriage. That's the bridal payment. Now again, this thing with Shechem here was a mess, but you still see that in the Old Testament.

The redemption, the bridal payment. I think of how in 1 Peter, he reminds believers, he says, you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your four fathers, but with the precious blood as of the lamb, unblemished, spotless.

What's he talking about? He's talking about the blood of Christ. That word we see there, redeemed, that's referring to that purchase. We see that here.

[19:54] So that's the first stipulation, the bridal price. The second stipulation is that this contract would stipulate would be these provisions. For instance, food, clothing, gifts, that would be given to the bride.

Notice here, Shechem is willing to give a gift, if you notice that. What is this gift? It's something valuable, perhaps like an engagement ring.

But here's the thing, it was a symbol that she was his and him alone. And so it's a deposit, if you will.

It's like a seal upon this arrangement here. Friends, we ought to consider all the gifts that God gives us through Jesus Christ.

We are clothed with garments of salvation. Look with me what the prophet Isaiah says, chapter 61. I will rejoice greatly in my Lord. My soul will exult in my God.

[20:54] For he has clothed me with garments of salvation. He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland and as the bride adorns herself with jewels.

What a gift that we have from the Lord. His righteousness, his garments of salvation. Here's another one. Three times in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is referred to as a gift. Again, Paul says in chapter 1 to the Ephesians, in him, you also, after listening to the message of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise who is given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of his glory.

Friends, God just gives and gives and gives. He gives other provisions as well. Jesus, he's the bread of life. We feed upon his word.

Jesus is the water of life. He says, if any man's thirsty, let him come to me and I'll give him the drink. Jesus nourishes and cares for his church, his bride.

[22 : 17] Look what Paul says again in Ephesians. Husband, love your wives just as here. Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word that he might present to himself the church in all her glory having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that she should be holy and blameless.

Friends, this is talking about a marriage. This is a love story. This is talking about the gifts that the bridegroom gives to the bride. There's a third stipulation of this contract and get this, it called for the new home, a new place that would be built and this was not a rented apartment.

No, it was, the son would build this home onto his father's home as an extension to it and this dwelling, it had to be better than her previous home.

That's what it tells us. It has to be equipped. It had to be furnished with items, you know, enough for a year for them. Here's where Jesus, here's what he told his apostles.

He says, in my father's house there's many dwellings. You know, that's a very simple word there. It's referring to just a room, just a place where a person or a couple stays for just a while.

[23 : 48] It's not intended to be a permanent dwelling. And he says, I go to prepare a place for you. And then he says, and if I go to prepare a place, I will come again and I will receive you to myself that where I am there you may be also.

What a great thing that we see here. Once the terms of the contract were agreed upon, both parties would share in a second cup of wine, over which a blessing would be pronounced.

And then this betrothal period begins. And this, in the Jewish culture, lasted about 12 months. Isn't that amazing? It would be a separation period and during this time, the groom-to-be would return to his father's home and start building the new home onto his father's house.

The bride-to-be would remain with her father's home. And she would begin preparations. There's the wedding garments. There's the, she would be making, packing her bags and getting ready.

And most importantly, she had to keep herself unblemished, keep herself pure. Although they would be living apart, this betrothed couple were actually considered to be married in Jewish law, even though they weren't enjoying the benefits of being together.

[25 : 13] Any infidelity would be regarded as adultery. So, as I said here, this period of separation, it usually lasted about 12 months.

And here's the key. Only the father determined when the son would get his bride. It's amazing. Only the father.

Dad, is it time yet? Nope. Got to add another little part here to that place. Dad, I think it's time. Don't you think today? No, you got to save a little more money.

You got to wait. Only the father gave yes. And I'll tell you what, friends, waiting, I think that probably is the hardest part. Wouldn't you agree with that?

Waiting, watching, waiting, watching. Dad, are you awake? a lot of things can happen in a year. Yeah.

[26 : 13] Think about last year at this time. Who would have thunk that we were dealing with a pandemic in the world? Who would have thought that?

Yeah. And so, while we're waiting, while the bride is waiting, she had to be ready. How would she be ready?

Well, I covered these, actually. She would be waiting, and through the gifts that he gave her, like that ring, that ring would remind her that she was always in his thoughts.

He loves her. He can't wait. And secondly, she would be pouring over and meditating deeply. I think this is on your handout, that she would meditate deeply over every scrap of correspondence that she received from her betrothed.

Every reminder of him would be precious. He is her future. She is his future. And she would be waiting for that.

[27 : 28] There's a verse in Matthew 26, 29, where Jesus had taken the cup, and he says, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until I'm with you again. What a promise that is.

Thirdly, she would hold fast to his promises. I will come back. Now, the bride would not know the exact day or time, and therefore, she had to be ready.

Her wedding garments, she had to have enough oil in her lamps. We just flicked the switch today. No, they had to have lamps and wicks trimmed. Remember, Jesus told that parable of the ten virgins.

The brides and the bridegrooms, they had to be ready all the time with enough oil in their lamps. In Jewish culture, it was enough for two weeks. Well, the day would finally arrive, and the bridegroom comes.

Wow. The father would let his son know. The son would gather all his groomsmen, no doubt, all well-chosen manly men, and they'd begin their journey.

[28 : 35] And as they approached the bride's home, they'd wind through the streets of the city. They would be blowing their shofars, the trumpets, the ram's horns.

And upon hearing their approach, the bride and the bridesmaids would all grab their lamps, and they'd go out to meet the bridegroom and the party.

They're all decked out to the max. What a great scene that is. Remember in Matthew's gospel account, but at midnight there was a shout, behold the bridegroom, come out to meet him.

Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. Here's another important thing here. The bridegroom in the Jewish culture here would not enter the bride's home.

No, he wouldn't. That would be considered to be an invasion. Instead, she had to go out to meet the party. And she would be placed on a chair.

[29 : 36] It's called a litter. I don't know why it's just called that. She would be placed on a chair. She would be lifted up high and put on shoulders and paraded around like a queen.

And then the entire wedding party would travel back to their new place. And they would set up this chupa, this wedding canopy, and then they'd have the ceremony, the nissuin, where they'd finalize their vows and then later they'd consummate their wedding.

This event here reminds me of what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians. Listen to this. It's in your handout here. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. And then he adds these words, therefore comfort one another with these words.

That's what we're doing today, friends. So there you have it. We're in this waiting period right now, and as I said before, waiting can be very hard.

[30 : 56] Think about all the disturbing, troubling things that can go on. So I wanted to end this message here with what's the remedy for troubled hearts.

If you find that your hearts are troubled, not anxious, but troubled, having a godly concern over the way things are, here's the first thing.

We must believe. Notice that Jesus says, he says, let not your hearts be troubled, in verse 1, and he says, believe in God. And then he says, believe also in me.

What a thing to say to the apostles. When I consider here, they've been with Jesus for nearly three years. They've never heard him tell a lie.

They've never heard him speak badly about someone. They've never heard him gossip. They've never heard him utter a curse word. They've never saw him try to cheat somebody out of something.

[32 : 00] Instead, chapter after chapter, they saw his love, his compassion. He taught them with authority. They saw him do miracles.

We must believe also. Throughout this gospel account, John makes this point. Jesus is deity. We must believe. John ends this gospel.

In fact, it's the very last verse in John's gospel account. These things have been written, he says. Why? That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

So first, we must believe. Secondly, we must keep ourselves pure. This is last week. You remember when Frank talked to us about Titus chapter 2.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.

[33 : 18] I just think about that. Just say no. Just say no. When ungodliness creeps up, maybe when there's a temptation around the corner, just say no, because we can do that with the power of Jesus.

Jesus. Thirdly, you and I also can pour over all these love letters from the Lord. Every correspondence, every chapter, every book in the Bible is about what?

It's about Jesus. And we can be encouraged by that. Paul would say in his letters to the church at Colossae, if then you have been raised up with Christ, he says, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your mind on things above, he says, not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

What a great promise that is. Lastly here, I invite the musicians to come up here. We must cling to the Lord's promises.

[34 : 34] Watch. Wait eagerly for the coming of the Lord. The bridegroom one day will come. He will return to this earth and he will take his church home.

He said it. He will do it. In 2 Peter, it says, know this, that in the last days, mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts and saying, where's the promise of his coming?

Forever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation. No. No mockers. Reject the mocker.

The Lord is coming. In fact, I believe that the rapture is the next end times event that's going to happen. no one knows when the father says, go get him, son.

No one knows that. But here's a verse to end with. 1 Thessalonians, now may the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved, complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[35 : 50] Faithful is he who calls you and he also will bring it to pass. Amen? Heavenly Father, we do thank you, Lord, that your Bible is filled with so many promises, Lord.

And it's all, Lord, a reflection of your goodness to us. And Lord, you made a way for us. And we even today have that privilege of being considered your bride, the bride of the Son.

Lord, we can't wait for that day when you come and get us. But Lord, until then, may we be found faithful. May we pour over your love letters.

May we encourage one another through scripture, through song, through prayer. May we believe you in all of our beings.

Let us leave here, Lord, as those who have been changed by your word, and to be refreshed in the promises that you will come back for us and take us to be with you.

[37 : 00] In Christ's name, amen. Amen. Thank you.