

Leftovers

I haven't seen it; maybe you have. It's an HBO series called *The Leftovers*.

I found this commentary about it:

In a global cataclysm, [called] "The Sudden Departure," 140 million people disappeared without a trace. Three years later, residents of fictional Mapleton, NY, try to maintain equilibrium when the notion of "normal" no longer applies. Intense grief has divided families and turned faith to cynicism, paranoia and madness, leading some of the traumatized to join the Guilty Remnant, a cultlike group. Kevin Garvey, a beleaguered police chief, must keep peace between townspeople and the cult, a task made tougher with concern about his kids. His daughter alternates between apathy and rebellion, and his wayward son befriends a charismatic prophet.

They don't call it the rapture; it's a "rapture-like event." One Christian TV critic commented, "This "Sudden Departure" happens swiftly, and is a seemingly random, meaningless event void of the spiritual significance found in popular Christian accounts of a Rapture. There is no logical or spiritual reasoning that can make sense of the disappearances. Children and parents, sinners and saints - all disappear, with no discrimination based on morality or innocence."

It's the rapture to nowhere; one without Jesus. Hollywood would be better off following the Bible's story line. It would be more exciting, and it would make total sense.

Being “leftover” used to be called being left behind. It is how we describe nonbelievers who will be surprised at the resurrection and rapture of the church. When the Lord takes us home, they will be left behind to navigate the troublesome years of the Great Tribulation on the earth.

There are Christians who are leaving things behind for those left behind. The brother that prayed the Sinner’s Prayer with me had notes all over his house, to be found by his nonbelieving relatives and friends who would come looking for him.

I found a website, rapture-survival-kit.com. You first leave your loved ones a letter on raptureletters.com. Then you put your kit together. They say to use a plastic container that has a note on it saying, “Open after my (or our) disappearance.”

Contents are up to you, but Bibles and Christian literature explaining the Gospel are obviously high on the list.

(Maybe if someone had done that in fictional Mapelton, NY, the leftovers wouldn’t be so ignorant).

Since the rapture is our blessed hope, and since it is always imminent, we tend to read the events of Matthew twenty-four through rapture-colored glasses. Especially verses forty through forty-two:

Mat 24:40 Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.

Mat 24:41 Two *women will be* grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.

Mat 24:42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

It's not the rapture. Jesus has not been talking about events that precede the Great Tribulation. He has been talking about the events that occur *during* the Great Tribulation.

And He is speaking in the context of His Second Coming, ending the Great Tribulation. In verse twenty-nine, for example, Jesus said, “immediately **after** the tribulation of those days.”

Jesus said things would be “as the days of Noah.” Verse thirty-nine continues the theme of Noah’s days, and it establishes the timing of what Jesus describes in verses forty through forty-two.

Mat 24:39 ... [they] did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

In the days of Noah, the “flood came” and “took them all away.”

Who did the flood “take away?” It took away the wicked, to death and to eternal judgment.

Who was left behind (or leftover)? Noah and his family, left behind to repopulate the earth

- The people in verses forty and forty-one who are “taken” are those nonbelievers who have survived the Tribulation only to be taken away in judgment at the Second Coming. They are the goats when Jesus separates the sheep and the goats.
- The people in verses forty and forty-one who are “left” are those believers who have survived the Tribulation to be left to repopulate the earth. They are the sheep when Jesus separates the sheep and the goats.

If you’re a Christian, you won’t be on the earth for any portion of the Great Tribulation. You will be resurrected or raptured prior.

Once the church is removed, the earth will be populated entirely by nonbelievers who are left behind. So, at the rapture, *you don't want to be left behind.*

Those who become believers during the seven-year Great Tribulation *will want to be left behind* at the Second Coming. It means they will enter in to the Kingdom on earth, ruled by Jesus for a thousand years.

Why are we so adamantly pre-Trib in our understanding of the last days?

First of all, it's an important question. How you answer it will determine, to some extent, how you live. I mean, if you believed in a pre-wrath or mid-Trib or post-Trib rapture, don't you think you'd do a little prepping for survival?

Mark Hitchcock is a pastor we trust for End Times information. He has a list of six biblical arguments for a pre-Trib rapture. I'll present them without going into a lot of detail.

1. The Place of the Church in Revelation - Namely, in the key section on the Tribulation in the Bible, Revelation 4-18, there is an absolute silence about the church.
2. The Rapture is Not the Return - The New Testament teaches that Jesus will come *for* His church to escort her to His Father's House (John 14:3). And it also teaches that He will come *with* His saints when He descends from Heaven to judge His enemies and establish His glorious 1000 year kingdom on earth (Revelation 19:14). The distinct differences between these two phases of Christ's coming are harmonized successfully by the pre-Trib view. In fact, a post-Trib rapture is impossible, because if all the surviving believers are

raptured at His Second Coming, there are no human beings on the earth to repopulate it for the Kingdom.

3. The Church is Exempted from God's Wrath - The Bible promises in several places that we are exempt from the coming wrath of God of the Tribulation period (First Thessalonians 1:9-10; 5:9; Revelation 3:10). In Revelation 3:10-11, the Lord's promise of deliverance from the tribulation period is very specific. "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 on the earth. I am coming quickly."
4. The Time Gap Between the Rapture and the Second Coming - An interval or gap of time is needed between the rapture and the Second Coming in order to fit together many end time events predicted in the Bible in a logical and timely manner. These end time events can be harmonized by a pre-Trib time gap of at least seven years.
5. Imminence - Multiple passages teach that the rapture could occur at any moment. It is a signless event that needs no precursors.
6. The Blessed Hope - If God's people have to endure 3½ years, 5½ years or all 7 years of the tribulation before He comes, how much of a comfort would the rapture be?

The rapture is not what Jesus was talking about in Matthew twenty-four. The church is not in view; it will already be safe in Heaven by the time one is taken and the other is left.

Mat 24:42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

This brings us full circle to where we started our series on the days of Noah. In verse thirty-six Jesus said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."

But if the Great Tribulation lasts exactly seven years, how can a person in the Tribulation not know "what hour" the Lord "is coming?" Won't it be seven years after the antichrist signs a treaty with Israel? Won't it be three and one half years, or 1260 days, after the Temple is desecrated?

On a practical level, if you read the Revelation, the earth will be so devastated that it may not be possible to tell time or to know where you are on the calendar. Believers who survive the Tribulation judgments must persevere, knowing that the Lord will return to set things right.

We also pointed out that the phrase, "no one knows the day or the hour," is said by some to be a Jewish idiom that announces the Feast of Trumpets.

One Jewish source I found said, "Understanding the expression "No man knows the day or hour" is not possible by simply taking the English translation literally, because in the book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation, we are given EXACT descriptions of timing, relative to KEY events - such as the shutting down of the altar sacrifices in Jerusalem at the MID-POINT of the 70th week."

Jesus **did** claim to know the future, and in pretty precise detail. The entire Oliver Discourse is Him giving us the future. So maybe this really is a Jewish idiom.

From his book *Signs In the Heavens*, Avi Ben Mordechai, devotes a chapter to explaining what "no man knows the day or hour" truly means from a rabbinical Hebraic perspective.

He says:

... "that day and hour no man knows" refers to the sanctification or setting apart of the new moon. Without this sanctification, the Jews had no way of determining God's "appointed times." Twelve times a year a new Jewish month was announced to the people. We have no system like it today. We look at a calendar to determine the first of the month; the Jews, however, looked at the moon. This system of chronology was given to the Jews to know precisely when the holy festivals would fall... The moon was the faithful Jewish calendar or witness in the sky and 12 times a year was sanctified as the basis of the Jewish stellar calendar.

To correctly announce the first day of the month, established by the new moon, was one of the Sanhedrin's greatest responsibilities. They had to ensure the people knew when the first of the month began 12 times a year!

As soon as the new moon was announced, the first day of the month began. Once the beginning of the new month was established, the festivals and weekly Sabbaths for the upcoming month were sanctified for observance.

However, the seventh month, Tishri, was particularly important because it was the only month that had a holy convocation or appointed time on the first day of the month.

This posed a unique problem. The first day of Tishri was the appointed time called Rosh HaShanah, the Feast of Trumpets. Yet no one could begin observing the festival until they heard those famous words from the President of the Sanhedrin, "Sanctified!"

No one in Israel could plan for the first day of the seventh month Tishri. When they knew how many days to count to a festival, that would be easy. But, HOW COULD THEY PLAN FOR A FESTIVAL THAT THEY DID NOT KNOW AT WHAT DAY OR HOUR IT WOULD PUBLICLY BE ANNOUNCED AND THUS BEGIN?

This was unique to the Feast of Trumpets.

It could be that by using this idiom, twice, Jesus was letting us know that His Second Coming would coincide with the Feast of Trumpets.

Just as Jesus fulfilled the spring feasts at His first coming, to the very day, over subsequent days, so we can expect that He will fulfill the fall ones - the Feast of Trumpets, then ten days later the Day of Atonement, and then five days later the Feast of Tabernacles - at His Second Coming.

Jesus was, it seems, setting a date for His return - an exact date, the first of Tishri, the Feast of Trumpets, as the Great Tribulation ends.

But since the heavens will be devastated by the events of the Great Tribulation, only God will know the exact timing.

