

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Questions?

1. What is the Rapture?
2. Will you be left behind? Do you want to be?
3. Will the church go through the Tribulation? What's the point?
4. When will the Rapture happen? Could it be any moment?
5. How do the Rapture, the Second Coming of Jesus, and the Resurrection intersect in Scripture?
6. So What?

B. These are some of the questions that we'll ask as we study what the Bible says about the timing of the Rapture. We'll look at the history of how the pre-tribulation (Left Behind) rapture became so popular here in America, look at many of the common Scriptures that are used as proof texts and we'll see what Scripture says related to the events surrounding the Rapture of the saints and the Second Coming of Jesus.

### II. BE A BEREAN AS YOU STUDY SCRIPTURE

- A. Don't accept my view of Eschatology (the study of the end times) without seeing it in Scripture for yourself. Search it out in the Bible and discard anything that you can't see with your own eyes in Scripture much like the Bereans did with Paul's teaching. (Acts 17:11)
- B. The Lord is calling His church to have living understanding of the Bible and to have clarity of what He says through it so we will be able to rightly discern between truth and deception as more and more "false christs" emerge in the end times. (Mat. 24:4-5)

***However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (John 16:13)***

- C. One of the Holy Spirit's assignments is to lead us into truth and show us things to come. We must consistently ask the Holy Spirit for the grace to see Scripture rightly and to view ourselves rightly in light of it. If our search for the truth does not begin and end with truth on the inside then it will be for nothing in the Day of the Lord.

***Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God. (1 Cor. 4:5 NIV)***

- D. I want to honor the sincerity and godliness of many who hold to the the pre-tribulation (pre-trib) view, but I do see it as a mistake, in light of the witness of Scripture, that may leave

## The Rapture: Ready When He Returns

many not prepared for the great transition into the age to come. My heart is to always love even in disagreement.

***Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. (Rev. 3:3)***

### III. WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

A. The rapture describes what happens to the saints worldwide when Jesus appears in the sky at His Second Coming.<sup>1</sup>

***For the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air... (1 Thess. 4:16-17)***

1. Greek – The Greek words for “caught up” are “arpazw harpazo” (Strong’s 726). This means, “to seize, catch (away, up), pluck, pull, take (by force), gathered.”
  2. Latin – In Latin the term “caught up” is translated “Rapio.” It is from “Rapio” that we get the word “Rapture.”
  3. Meeting Jesus in the sky – Paul understood that being “caught up,” meant to meet Jesus “in the air.”
- B. The “Parousia” of Christ – The Greek word “Parousia” is the most popular word used to describe Jesus’ Second Coming.
1. This idea of being caught up to meet Jesus in the air, from a post-tribulation perspective, has been questioned as illogical since Jesus is returning to the earth after the tribulation.
  2. Historical usage – Historically this word was commonly used to describe the visit of a king to a city in his domain. As the king would approach the city he would be met some distance outside of the town by a select group of dignitaries and close relatives, who would then accompany him in his procession through the city gates to be seen by the resident population.
  3. NT usage – The historical usage of the word “parousia” clearly pictures what the New Testament describes as occurring at the Second Coming. Believers, both those who have died and those who are still living, will “meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17) and accompany him on the last part of his journey back to earth.

### IV. WHEN WILL THE RAPTURE OCCUR?

A. There is almost a universal conviction among pre-millennial scholars that the final week of Daniel is the timeframe that concludes this age (Daniel 9:24-27). In other words human

---

<sup>1</sup> Benji Nolot. The Timing Of The Rapture [www.ihopkc.org/resources/2009/10/03/the-timing-of-the-rapture/](http://www.ihopkc.org/resources/2009/10/03/the-timing-of-the-rapture/)

## The Rapture: Ready When He Returns

history in this age will end with a unique 7-year period of time call the Tribulation. The discussion concerning the rapture involves discerning at what point before, during, or after this seven-years that the rapture occurs.

- B. **Views on the rapture** – There are four different views on the timing of the rapture according to those who subscribe to pre-millennial eschatology.
1. **Pre-tribulation** – Views the rapture as occurring seven years before Jesus' Second Coming.
  2. **Mid-tribulation** – Views the rapture as occurring 3 ½ years before Jesus' Second Coming.
  3. **Pre-wrath** – Views the rapture as occurring at an undefined period of time after the 3½-year mark of the tribulation and before the end of the tribulation. This view sees the rapture as occurring at the sixth seal in the book of Revelation (Rev. 6:12-17).
  4. **Post-tribulation** – Views the rapture as occurring after the tribulation at the Second Coming of Jesus.
- C. **How many “comings” of Jesus and “resurrections” of the saints?** – Three of these views (pretrib, midtrib, and prewrath) stand or fall on the basis of two basic premises: 1) Are there two Second Comings of Christ? 2) Are there two resurrections of the saints? If it can be accurately shown that there are, then distinguishing when the rapture occurs would be extremely difficult, and basically be an arbitrary judgment. If there is not, then these views are inconclusive, and ultimately the product of mere speculation. In my observation and understanding of Scripture there is no explicit evidence to support the conclusion that there are two, separate 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming Events, nor two resurrections of the saints.
- D. The best place for us to begin in answering the question, “when does the rapture occur?” is by identifying what we know to be true about the Second Coming, the rapture, and the resurrection of the saints.

## V. TRUTH #1: THE SECOND COMING, THE RAPTURE, AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE SAINTS ARE IN THE SAME TIMEFRAME

***“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matt. 24:29-31)***

- A. Jesus describes His Second Coming as a singular event occurring after the tribulation. At no point in His teaching ministry does he ever reference another timeframe for His return.
- B. After His resurrection Jesus spent 40 days with His disciples. When He finally ascended into heaven two angels appeared to the disciples and informed them that, “This same

## The Rapture: Ready When He Returns

Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11) The angels described a singular event in which Jesus would come back from heaven to the earth.

- C. Some point to 1 Thess. 4:15-18 or 2 Thess. 2:1-3 to validate a view that Jesus Christ returns momentarily in the sky to rapture the church 7 years before His Second Coming. However, there is no doubt Paul’s views were formed by Christ’s teachings. If he was introducing a new view concerning a subject as important as an entirely separate Second Coming event I imagine he would have said so.

1. Paul’s teaching harmonizes perfectly with what Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse.

***For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 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. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thess. 4:15-18)***

2. Nowhere in these texts is precedence given for a timeframe other than the one already established by Jesus.
3. Consider the parallels in the passages:
  - a. In Matthew 24 we see that Christ is descending from heaven with angels and a trumpet gathering together His followers.
  - b. In 1 Thess. 4, we see that Christ is descending from heaven with angels and a trumpet gathering together His followers.
- D. The noun used for the word “come” (parousia) in the NT means arrival or presence. The verb tense of this word implies continuous and progressive action. When Jesus returns, He is coming to establish His manifest presence and initiate an indefinite mission upon the earth.
- E. Using the term Resurrection to describe the Rapture is the simplest way to frame this event properly. Jesus returns, raises the dead and gives them and those alive new bodies. If we have this mindset, then 1 Corinthians 15 make things crystal clear.

***in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (1 Cor. 15: 52)***

- F. Any position subscribing to a view that necessitates two Second Coming events is rooted in theory not scripture. This is an important distinction to make. Nowhere does the Bible delineate between two separate Second Coming events. However the Bible does emphatically describe one event, which occurs after the tribulation not at any point before it.

## The Rapture: Ready When He Returns

## VI. TRUTH #2: THE RAPTURE OCCURS AFTER THE TRIBULATION

***“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” – Matt. 24:29-31***

- A. Jesus describes the rapture as an event that is synonymous with His Second Coming.
- B. The Apostle Paul also describes the Second Coming and the rapture as one synonymous event.

***Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed... (2 Thess 2:1-3)***

- C. The only explicit timeframe given to understand the return of Christ and rapture of the saints is “*after the tribulation.*”
- D. If the rapture occurs after the tribulation what does that mean? It means the church is here during the tribulation. Jesus, in fact, prefigures the presence of believers during the tribulation.

***15“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation’...20 And pray that your flight may not be in the winter or on the Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great tribulation, since has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be...23 Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it... Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out...27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” (Matt. 24:15-27***

- 1. The clear emphasis of Jesus’ teaching prefigured the presence of believers on earth during the Great Tribulation.
- 2. Dispensationalists would speculate that Jesus was speaking to Jews here, and so it is the Jews who will be present during the tribulation, while the church has been raptured. If one is consistent with their logic then they must at least acknowledge it is “believing” Jews who Jesus is speaking to. So are we now meant to understand that though the church has been raptured Jewish believers are left behind because of their ethnicity? Are they then not members of the church?
- E. Believers are also pictured as present during the great tribulation throughout the book of Revelation. Once again dispensationalists would redefine this truth by pointing out that

## The Rapture: Ready When He Returns

though the term “saints” is used, the word “ecclesia” or church is not used in Rev. 4-19. Their conclusion then is that the church must not be here and that the saints that are written about are a new group of believers who were saved during the tribulation but are not members of the church.

1. Once again the logic employed here is not consistent. Revelation 4-19 illustrates what is occurring on earth AND in heaven. If the term “ecclesia” is the technical word that we use to decipher the presence or lack thereof of the church, and the conclusion is that since ecclesia isn’t used in Rev. 4-19 the church cannot be on the earth, then doesn’t it stand to reason that the church cannot be in heaven either?
2. Indeed the term “ecclesia” is not the technical word by which we decipher the presence of the church. In fact six NT epistles do not use the term “ecclesia” (2 Tim., Titus, 1 & 2 Peter, 2 John and Jude) but do use the term “saints,” a term used throughout the book of Revelation. Even more striking the word “church” is also missing from those passages directly dealing with the rapture when Christians see Jesus again (John 14:1; 1 Cor. 15; 1 Thess. 4-5). It is not even in the description of the New Heaven and New Earth or the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21-22).

### VII. TRUTH #3: THE LAST TRUMPET OCCURS IN CONTEXT TO THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

- A. Again, the two parallel passages of Matt. 24:29-30 and 1 Thess. 4:15-18 indicate that a trumpet is sounded at the return of Christ signaling the simultaneous resurrection and rapture of the saints. 1 Cor. 15:51-52 refers to this as the “last” trumpet.

***in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (1 Cor. 15:52)***

1. In a pre-tribulation rapture perspective, the last trumpet needs to occur 7 years before the Second coming of Jesus. It couldn't really be said that this is a "last trumpet," if Christ is returning 7 years later to the sound of a trumpet now could it?
2. The last trumpet recorded in scripture is the 7th trumpet in the book of Revelation. At that time we know that the nations come under Jesus manifest leadership, the earth is judged, the saint are rewarded, and the mystery of God is completed (Rev. 10:7; 11:15-18).

***...in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished...(Rev. 10:7)***

3. The Rapture will not be a secret event separate from the Second Coming of Jesus but will be part of it and will occur in association with the last trumpet (1 Cor. 15:50-52; 1 Thes. 4:16-17; Rev. 10:7; 11:15-17). This trumpet is the last in a series of seven trumpets that are seen in Revelation 8-9. It's hard to keep a trumpet blast secret.

## VIII. TRUTH #4 JESUS, THE APOSTLES, AND EARLY CHURCH FATHERS HAD A POST-TRIBULATION VIEW OF THE RAPTURE

- A. **The Didache** – Is one of the earliest pieces of Christian literature after the New Testament, dating from the first quarter of the Second Century. The author warns the Church against the perils of the Antichrist and the tribulation and his purpose in writing this exhortation was to prepare the Church for the Great Tribulation, and to urge steadfastness

***“[There] shall appear the deceiver of the world as a Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders and the earth shall be given over into his hands and he shall commit iniquities which have never been done since the world began. Then shall the creation of mankind come to the fiery trial and many shall be offended and be lost, but they who endure in their faith... And then shall appear the sign of the truth. First the sign spread out in Heaven, then the sign of the trumpet, and thirdly the resurrection of the dead: but not all of the dead, but as it was said, The Lord shall come and all his saints with him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming on the clouds of Heaven.”***

- B. **The Shepherd of Hermas** (circa 150 A.D.) – Hermas sought to prepare the Church for the persecutions of the Great Tribulation

***“Therefore do not cease to speak to the ears of the saints. You have also the type of the great persecution to come.”***

- C. **Justin Martyr** (circa 150 A.D.)

***“He shall com from heaven with glory, when the man of apostasy, who speaks strange things against the Most High, shall venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us Christians, who, having learned the true worship of God from the law, and the word which went forth from Jerusalem by means of the Apostles of Jesus, have fled for safety to the God of Jacob and the God of Israel.”***

- D. **Irenaeus** (Disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John)

***“In a still clearer light has John, in the Apocalypse, indicated to the Lord’s disciples what shall happen in the last times, and concerning the ten kings who shall then arise, among whom the empire which now rules shall be partitioned. He teaches us what the ten horns shall be which were seen by Daniel, telling us that thus it had been said to him. It is manifest, therefore, that of these [potentates], he who is to come shall slay three, and subject the remainder to his power, and that he shall be himself the eighth among them. And they shall lay Babylon waste, and burn her with fire, and shall give their kingdom to the beast, and put the church to flight. After that they shall be destroyed by the coming of our Lord.”***

***“But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man [Antichrist] and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous [the Church] the***

## The Rapture: Ready When He Returns

***times of the kingdom...For all those, and other words, were unquestionably spoken in reference to the resurrection of the just, which takes place after the coming of the Antichrist, and the destruction of all nations under his rule; in (the times of) which (resurrection) the righteous shall reign on the earth, waxing stronger by the sight of the Lord...and who have suffered tribulation.”***

E. Hippolytus, a Bishop of Rome in the early third century interprets Revelation 12 as follows:

***“the tribulation of the persecution which is to fall upon the Church from the adversary.” The time and times and half a time refer “to the one thousand two hundred and three score days during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church, which flees from city to city, and seeks concealment in the wilderness among the mountains.”***

F. Paul, made it a point in the first 3 weeks of establishing the church in Thessalonica to make sure they knew about the rise of the Anti-Christ and what they're response should be in the midst.

***...They came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul... for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead... (Acts 17:1-3)***

***Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ...God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle (2 Thess. 2:3-5, 13-15)***

## **IX. THE RAPTURE WILL ONLY BE AS A THIEF IN THE NIGHT TO THOSE THAT ARE NOT AWAKE AND WATCHING**

***Therefore if you will not watch (wake up, NET), I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. (Rev. 3:3)***

***But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. (1 Thess. 5:1-4)***

***Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (Matt. 24:42-44)***

*And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch! (Mark 13:37)*

## X. ORIGIN OF THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE DOCTRINE

- A. So if Scripture appears clear on the timing of the Rapture (the Resurrection) then why is a pre-tribulation rapture view so wide spread in our day and time?
- B. The pre-trib view was brought to the mainstream of Christianity by John Darby<sup>2</sup>. Darby was a lawyer and a Plymouth Brethren clergyman from Ireland. In the 1830s, he became aware of the writings of Edward Irving<sup>3</sup> and soon after began to articulate for himself the **“secret rapture” theory: Jesus will suddenly remove His bride, the Church, from this world before the judgments of the Tribulation.**
- C. This idea that comes from the theological idea of **dispensationalism** is less than 200 years old. **The Scofield Reference Bible**, published first in 1909<sup>4</sup>, was how this understanding of the end of the age became so widely accepted in the United States. This Bible was the first time that the Scripture was side by side with a man’s opinion, commentary on it.
- D. The belief that there is a “secret rapture” of the church will leave many not prepared for the for the events of the Revelation.

## XI. COMMON PRE-TRIB PROOF TEXTS

***A. I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.” And they answered and said to Him, “Where, Lord?” So He said to them, “Wherever the body (dead carcass) is, there the eagles (vultures) will be gathered together. (Lk. 17:34-37 [paralleled in Mat. 24:36-44])***

1. Jesus describes those taken in judgment in a sudden and unexpected manner. These will be “swept away” in death by God’s judgment coming on the earth. Jesus said that it would be like it was in the days of Noah when He returns to the earth. Many people in Noah’s day were surprised by the flood of judgment that killed them. They carried on with life as normal and ignored the crazy boat builder’s warnings. In the same manner, many will ignore the signs that Jesus described in this Scripture (2 Pet. 3:3-5).
2. Jesus told them clearly that those taken were taken by death to the place the eagle or vultures will eat them. I believe this is a reference to the countless casualties in the midst of the battle for Jerusalem (Ez. 39:17-21; Rev. 19:17-18). So not a passage on rapture before trouble but rather one of the severity of the end time judgments. You want to be the ones left behind in these verses.

---

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Nelson\\_Darby](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Nelson_Darby)

<sup>3</sup> Tim Warner. The Origin of the Pretribulation Rapture Doctrine [www.answersinrevelation.org/pretrib\\_history.pdf](http://www.answersinrevelation.org/pretrib_history.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scofield\\_Reference\\_Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scofield_Reference_Bible)

## The Rapture: Ready When He Returns

**B. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. (Rev. 3:10)**

1. In speaking to His disciples in John 17, Jesus gives a window into what His heart is for us in the midst of tribulation. He wants to keep us from the hour of trial in this way, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep (same Greek word [tereo] for both Jn. 17:15 and Rev. 3:10) them from the evil one." (Jn 17:15)
2. The witness of Scripture, I believe, is not to remove from the planet during trouble but to protect.

**C. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him (Gen 5:23)**

1. Enoch is often an example of pre-trib rapture. He certainly was one that escaped death and went directly to the presence of God. However, Enoch was taken not to escape judgment but because God liked him. He was taken to another dimension but not to escape judgment rather he was taken to be closer to his Friend.

**D. When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, 'Arise...lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city...Hurry, escape...for I cannot do anything until you arrive.'...Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah... (Gen. 19:15-24)**

1. Lot did indeed escape judgment, but, again, it was not by being taken to another dimension. He was spared because He heeded the warning from the angels and left town before the judgment came. He received the prophetic direction and acting on it in faith to not be in the wrong place when judgment hit.
2. This type of prophetic direction will be in play in some way at the end of the age. (Isa. 32:18-19; Zeph. 2:3)

**E. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. (1 Thess. 5:5-10)**

1. The call of this passage is to be sober, to be fortified to endure.
2. The pastoral heart of Paul in this passage and book does not seem needed if the believers would be gone before any of the trouble hits.

**C. After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven...Around the throne were twenty-four**

## The Rapture: Ready When He Returns

***thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. (Rev. 4:1,5)***

1. A simple Pre-trib view of Revelation
  - a. Rev. 1-3 exhortation for the church
  - b. Rev. 4-5 showing the church in heaven before the judgment. Rev 4:1, the invitation to “Come up here” is the Rapture. The robes and crowns are reserved for the church.
  - c. Rev. 6 and following is the wrath of God on the wicked while the church has the Marriage Supper in heaven, get robbed rewarded and waits to return to the earth at the Second Coming. There is also the absence of the word church after Rev. 3.
2. John and the 24 elders should not be seen as the whole of the church. You need to have a pre-trib Rapture grid to see the Rapture in Rev. 4:1.

***F. “Do not let your hearts be distressed. You believe in God; believe also in me. There are many dwelling places in my Father’s house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you. And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may be too. And you know the way where I am going.” (John 14:1-3)***

1. The Father’s House, the New Jerusalem is coming to the earth. The government in the heavens will be joined with the government of earth under the leadership of Jesus at His Second Coming. We are not going away, Jesus is coming to stay. Scripture is very clear on this.

***that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.(Eph. 1:9-10)***

2. It is essential to see that all things in creation will come under one head, Messiah. The global leadership of Jesus based in Jerusalem is how the earth is prepared for this eternal reality of face to face fellowship.

***Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them... (Rev. 21:3)***

3. When God created the heavens and the earth, He created one reality. With the curse in Genesis 3, God also promised that a messiah would remove the curse and restore the earth to what it was intended to be. All of it!
4. What is in the heights of the heavens is just as real as what you can see immediately in front of you. The “abode” of God is in the heavens and is where He presently sits enthroned in light (Is. 66:1). The Father on His throne and Jesus, fully God and fully a Jewish man, at His right side.
5. “Heaven” is the place believers have gone for the last 2,000 years (from the cross to the Second Coming) as a “temporary holding pattern” before receiving a resurrected body.

## The Rapture: Ready When He Returns

The saints do not need a resurrected body in to be there but they are not complete. They need a body to be “fully alive”. Only when the Father gives His Son the “go ahead” to come back and establish His government on the earth will we be able to express the fullness of God’s personality and purposes (Eph 1:22-23; 3:19; Col. 1:19-20, 27; 2:9-10; Heb. 2:8; 2 Peter 3:9).

6. Greek philosophy (Platonism) viewed the spirit realm as good and the material realm as bad. This philosophy continues in the Church today. It leads to wrong thinking about heaven on earth. It makes heaven an ethereal place that gives us the choice of the following job descriptions for eternity: 1. strum a harp 2. hold a golden bowl 3. lay a crown down or 4. sing, “Holy” a lot, etc.. If we do not think rightly about Heaven then we end up not thinking of Heaven at all.
7. The foundation of salvation within the Greek worldview is essentially the destruction of our corrupt flesh. The base of this corruption is creation itself so it must be destroyed.<sup>5</sup>
8. The logical conclusion of modern Platonism is the destruction of the natural realm. Though many will acknowledge their hope in the eternal existence of the soul, few realize that the base of this hope is the destruction of the natural realm which harbors the existence of their corrupt body.
9. This has led to the fundamental misunderstanding of salvation that the ultimate end of redemption is an etherealized “Heaven,” resulting in popular sayings, such as, “If you died tonight, where would you spend eternity: heaven or hell?” and popular songs such as “I’ll Fly Away”. This conclusion of salvation practically disconnects people from reality and destroys “the blessed hope” (Tit. 2:13) of restoration and resurrection within the human soul.
10. So to take the words of Jesus in John 14 as he is preparing a place that will take us away from the earth to stay is in opposition to the theme of Scripture: restoration.

## XII.THE CHURCH IN THE MIDST OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

- A. The Lord’s dealings with His people through history bears out that we have not been spared from suffering, persecution, and tribulation. Scripture indicates that this will not change as the transition into the age to come unfolds. In fact, martyrdom is the glorious destiny of the church at the end of the age.

***I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb... Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes-- who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:9-14 NIV)***

- B. The message to the 7 churches of Revelation is to hold fast, to be faithful unto death, to overcome, to persevere so that they would endure to the end and receive their reward

---

<sup>5</sup> John Harrigan. Biblical Theology Of Mission. 5a Cosmological Regeneration vs. Annihilation [www.danieltrainingnetwork.org/cosmological-regeneration-versus-annihilation-biblical-theology-of-mission/](http://www.danieltrainingnetwork.org/cosmological-regeneration-versus-annihilation-biblical-theology-of-mission/)

**The Rapture: Ready When He Returns**

given by Jesus. These pastoral letters to the church do not make sense in the context of our blessed hope being escape. The call to endure and faithfulness is a call to love Jesus in the midst of tribulation.

***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” (Rev. 2:7)***

***Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Rev 2:10b)***

***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” (Rev 2:17)***

***But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. (Rev. 2:25-28)***

***He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (Rev. 3:5)***

***Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. (Rev. 3:11-12)***

***To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Rev. 3:21-22)***

***“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” (Rev. 12:11)***

C. The Anti-Christ will be given authority to crush the saints.

***He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast... (Rev. 13:7-8)***

D. Daniel gives detail on the severity of the crushing that the saints will go through globally.

***I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the***

## The Rapture: Ready When He Returns

**saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom. (Dan. 7:21-22)**

**And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. (Daniel 8:24)**

**And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time. (Dan. 11:35)**

- E. Jesus gives detail in the Olivet Discourse that in context of persecution and martyrdom the nations will be reached.

**Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matt. 24:9-14)**

**But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. (Mark 13:10-11)**

### XIII.CONCLUSION

- A. **We will be here** - The church will be on the earth to endure unprecedented persecution that will be a refiner's fire of purification for the whole earth and in particular Israel and the saints. (Mat. 24:21-22; Dan. 7:21-23; Mal. 3:2-3; Rev. 13:7)
- B. The church will be on the earth as a witness to the patience and mercy of the Father and the coming Day of the Lord in the midst of being "crushed". Martyrdom is the context in which the Gospel is gloriously put on display as a final witness before the end of the age (Mark 13:10). Many will turn to the Lord and all that call on His name in that day will be saved. (Joel 2:28-32)

**The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. (Luke 24:46-48 NIV)**

**He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify (cf. Acts 1:8) that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. (Acts 10:42-43 NIV)**

- C. In light of the Day of the Lord being near (cf. Rom. 13:12; Phil. 4:5; Heb. 10:25; Jam. 5:8; 1 Pe. 4:7; 2 Pe. 3:3ff) patient enduring faith in God, his Messiah, and the restoration of all

## The Rapture: Ready When He Returns

things is the foundation of the church's mission in this age (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28; Jam. 5:8; 2 Pe. 3:12; Jude 1:21).<sup>6</sup>

***But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. (Jude 1:20-21 ESV)***

***Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth-- to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come..." This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. (Rev. 14:6-12 NIV)***

- D. **We must prepare** – A clear purpose of the book of Revelation is to prepare the Church for what is to come. There is no other logical reason that details concerning the great tribulation would be given if the Church is not going to be here. The inclusion of chapters 6-18 would be a complete mystery.

1. Corrie Ten Boom, who suffered through the terrible atrocities of the German concentration camps in WWII, had these sobering words to say about the tribulation

***"I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution. In China the Christians were told: 'Don't worry, before the tribulation comes, you will be translated, raptured.' Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a bishop from China say, sadly: 'We have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution rather than telling them Jesus would come first.' Turning to me, he said: 'Tell the people how to be strong in times of persecution, how to stand when the tribulation comes – to stand and not faint.' I feel I have a divine mandate to go and tell the people of this world that it is possible to be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in training for the tribulation. Since I have gone already through prison for Jesus' sake, and since I met that bishop from China, now every time I read a good Bible text I think: 'Hey, I can use that in the time of tribulation' Then I write it down and learn it by heart."***

2. We can have all the facts straight without being prepared. Truth is defined by what leads to righteousness and a grid for martyrdom. The cross must be central to all prophecy and our interpretation of it. Our interpretation of Biblical doctrine and prophecy may be accurate without leading to truth in the inward part.

---

<sup>6</sup> John Harrigan, Biblical Praxis of Mission. 12a The Messianic Allegiance of the Church Part 1 [www.danieltrainingnetwork.org/messianic-allegiance-of-church-1-biblical-praxis-of-mission/](http://www.danieltrainingnetwork.org/messianic-allegiance-of-church-1-biblical-praxis-of-mission/)

---

**The Rapture: Ready When He Returns**

***Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. (Matt. 16:24-27)***

***Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." (Luke 9:23-26)***