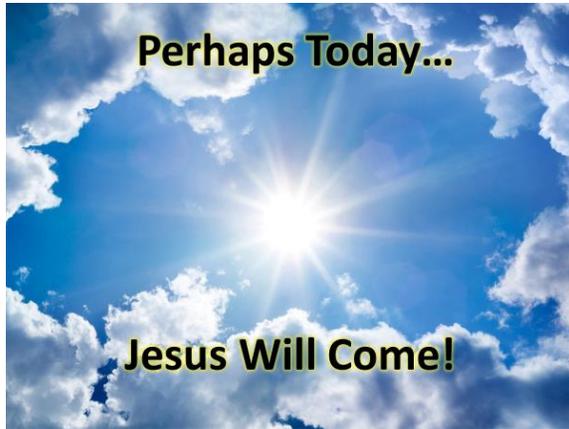


The Rapture

Pastor Kelly Sensenig



Dr. Horatius Bonar, as he drew the curtains at night and retired to rest used to repeat to himself the words, as if in prayer, and certainly with expectancy, "Perhaps tonight, Lord!" In the morning, as he awoke and looked out on the dawn of a new day, he would say, looking up into the sky, "Perhaps today, Lord!" He expected the Lord to return at

any moment. Bonar was in the Lord's service for over 60 years.

This is a favorite saying that many Christians have hidden within their own heart. On the outside of our church building, we have a sign painted with a large trumpet. Above the trumpet these same words are recorded. Perhaps today! Yes, perhaps today Jesus will return and take His bride out of this world. What an amazing and glorious day and destiny it will be for every believer. However, for a world that is left behind there will probably be a humanistic endeavor to somehow explain away the Rapture of the Church. Maybe all these science-fiction writers of today are pre-conditioning the minds of the masses to the point that they will believe anything - even that a vast army of UFO's came swiftly and suddenly snatching millions out of the world. Nobody will want to immediately accept the fact that God had intervened and done something wonderful.

The Rapture of the Church is one of the most exciting and compelling prophetic events in the Bible.

Can you even imagine the papers the next day after the Rapture occurs? What will they say? Millions missing – UFOs are true after all! I don't know what they will say but the world will be totally shocked and disoriented when millions of people all over the world are found missing.

Charles Taylor tried to picture the event of the Rapture and how it might affect the world at large: “The translation of the church will be worldwide, for there are true believers in Jesus Christ in every country on earth, and they all shall be taken. Every country will find itself in turmoil. Each government will have to act as quickly as possible to prevent a wild tide of anarchy and terrorism. Strong measures will be put into effect. Millions of people will suddenly disappear from the face of the earth, including all of the infant children. From all walks of life, and from virtually every phase of life, there shall be people missing. The freeways, subways, airports and streets will be in shambles as many engineers, pilots, bus drivers and a multitude of private car owners shall suddenly be caught up out of this world. It will be many days before they can unscramble the mangled cars, trains and fallen aircraft.

“Remaining millions of people will be wailing, dazed and shaken by the event. They shall be frantically striving to locate loved ones in all of the rubble of broken cars and amid broken storefronts and smashed residences. Communications will be greatly disrupted. Many key persons shall disappear and much of the lines of communications, which are still above ground, will be broken by crashes of cars and aircraft. Distraught and searching multitudes will jam and overload the communication lines and systems that do remain.

“Dazed and confused pleas from bewildered men over the ‘alert’ systems will try to bring about some semblance of order. Policemen, firemen and rescue crews will work around the clock. Hospitals will overflow. Emergency shelters and first-aid stations will be inadequate. The Red Cross and all other emergency units, plus the army facilities will still not be enough.

“Opportunists will add to the confusion and the misery by looting and killing. They shall feel that under such a total emergency they can get away with anything. CHAOS WILL BE ON EVERY HAND.”

We cannot claim to know all the adverse effects that the Rapture will have on the earth after millions of Christian people are suddenly missing. But one thing is certain. The Rapture is going to occur and for you and me who

are saved it will result in a wonderful time of rejoicing and reunion with our loved ones in Christ. We may be part of the generation that goes without dying!

The Rapture is a Biblical truth taught in God's prophetic word.

There are several questions we need answer about the Rapture.

I. What does the word Rapture mean?

1 Thessalonians 4:17

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Some critics of the Rapture teaching try and make something out of the fact that the word rapture does not appear in the Bible. Actually, the meaning behind the phrase "caught up" speaks of a rapture. The English word rapture comes from the Latin "raptus." Throughout the history of the church Latin was the accepted language of theological discussion. Many theological terms developed out of this language such as the terms Millennium, Trinity and immanence. Although these words are not mentioned in the Bible we embrace and fully believe in these Biblical truths. The term rapture is one of those terms. We find words given that relate to such a wonderful event called the Rapture.

The English phrase "caught up" (away) in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is the Greek word "harpazo" which speaks of a literal removal, a catching or carrying away. The basic idea of the word is "to suddenly remove or snatch away." The word conveys the thought of seizing something by force by way of plucking it up or pulling (snatching) it out. You remember how mom used to make you pull weeds out of the garden? You had to pluck them out of the soil and remove them from the garden area. This is the picture behind the English phrase "caught up." The Latin word spoke of seizure, carrying off, or kidnapping, I like this. Lord Jesus, come and kidnap from this world and take me home!

A synonym for this word “harpazo” (“caught up”) would be the word rapture. Webster defines the word rapture as being transported to another place or sphere of existence. The Oxford Dictionary defines rapture as “the act of conveying a person from one place to another” Someday we who are alive at the coming of the Lord will be “caught up” (away) or transported to another place called Heaven.

Note: Back in the 70’s, Hal Lindsey has termed the Rapture of God’s people from this earth as the “great snatch.” This is what it will be like when we are removed from this earth and transported into the sky above.

The word “rapture” is a synonym for the English construction in our Bibles which say we will be “caught up or caught away.” We see this elsewhere in the Bible.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4

“I knew a man in Christ (*Paul was speaking in the third person*) above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven (*Christ’s dwelling place with His saints*). And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up (harpazo) into paradise (*a synonym for the third Heaven*), and heard unspeakable words (*words that he could not convey to us*), which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (*it was a personal message given to Paul only*).

In these verses we see the words “caught up” used in the same sense of being snatched away. This text does not necessarily teach that Paul actually died and went to Heaven. Paul could not even conclude he had died. Rather, like Abraham and others before him (Gen. 15:12-21; Ezek. 1:1), Paul was likely transported (raptured) by visionary means into the third Heaven (the presence of God) where He heard some sacred secrets that he could not share with us.

Through His resurrection and ascension, Christ transported all believers from the paradise of Hades to the paradise of the third heaven (Eph. 4:8–

10; Heb. 12:22–24). Therefore, the only “paradise” in existence today is in the third heaven.

We know that Paul’s experience as an apostle is not a New Testament experience that we can expect to pass through. Visions such as this were rare and predated the finality of the canon of Scripture (1 Cor. 13:8-10). His experience was unique and necessary prior to the completion of God’s Word.

G. Cambell Morgan states:

“How often people have wanted to tell me about their visions! I am always suspicious. I want to know what they had for supper the night before!”

Here is the point. As Paul was transported into the heavenly Paradise of God, we who are alive at Christ’s coming will be caught up (not in a visionary way) but bodily and literally to ultimately return to Heaven with the Lord. This return to Heaven will occur following the final examination in the sky which is the Bema or Judgment Seat of Christ for Church Age saints (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Here is the good news. Someday we are going to be snatched away to be united with the Lord! What a day this will be. What a ride it will be! And we will not even need our seatbelts!

A strange event in the American rail system was the mysterious disappearance of a refrigerator car from the center of a long freight train. It happened during a nonstop trip of 25 miles in Pennsylvania on a night in 1898. Until the car was found by a farmer three weeks later concealed by a group of trees at the foot of an embankment, no one could imagine what had happened to it. While rounding a sharp, steep curve, the car had become uncoupled at both ends and, after it had toppled from the rails, the rear section of the train caught up with and coupled itself to the front section once again. So, the refrigerator car had disappeared.

In a similar way, someday we are going to disappear from this old world. We will be caught away or raptured from this present earth and life with all its problems, heartaches, sicknesses, and diseases. No more old age, no

more cancer to eat away at our bodies, no more heart conditions, no more bifocals, trifocals, and hospitals. No more aches or pains or sorrows!

I once heard a singing group portray this wonderful event. They sang these words which blessed my heart:

“Someday the king of glory will part the clouds, praise His name.
Someday all pain and sorrow will erase.
Some day I’ll see my Savior face to face.
Someday, someday He is coming back for me!”

Beloved, in the Rapture, the great snatching away of the Church, we will be freed from this life of sin, sorrow, sadness and sickness forever and forever! Even so come, Lord Jesus!

2. Who are the participants in the Rapture?

The Bible teaches that only Church Age saints will take part in the Rapture of the Church.

- Church Age saints have a unique position in Christ.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 reveals:

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain (*who are living and are also in Christ*) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

This passage provides the answer to who will be part of the event called the Rapture. The Church Age saints of all the past centuries, back to the day of

Pentecost (when the Church began), will be the participants in this glorious day of the Rapture. This text is placed within the Dispensation of the Church (Eph. 3:1-10) and is a reference to those people who have been joined to Christ and become part of the New Testament Church. The Bible teaches that only Church Age saints who are “in Christ” will be transformed at Christ’s return in the Rapture. This prepositional phrase speaks of the unique union and relationship that only the New Testament Church would have with Jesus Christ. Jesus spoke about this relationship as He looked toward the birthday of the church, when the Lord would begin to form His own body called the Church,

John 14:20

“At that day (Pentecost) ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

This spiritual union was promised to those in the coming Dispensation of the Church where God’s grace would form a body of people called the Church. The new people of God would share in a new union with Christ (“ye in me, and I in you”). This means New Testament saints would have a special relationship with Christ which other Old Testament saints did not possess. It is a unique oneness and realization with Christ where we share His life, nature, and power to live the Christian life.

1 Corinthians 12:13 speaks of this same union with Christ:

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body (*the Body of Christ – the Church*), whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

This is a positional truth that the Bible teaches concerning those saints who are living within this Church Age. We are joined or united to the body of Christ, identified with Him in an unseen spiritual union, sharing Christ’s life. This union and position is expressed frequently as being “in Christ.” We share the life of Christ in a unique manner unlike previous saints who lived during the Old Testament era.

Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:16: “...the dead in Christ shall rise first.” What is true of the dead Church Age saints is also true of the living Church Age

saints. They are said to be “in Christ.” This means only the Bride of Christ or those who are in Christ and part of this Church Age will have part in the glorious event called the Rapture.

Because they are “in Christ” and part of the Church Age, the Bible teaches that Church Age saints will be raised at the event of the Rapture. The Rapture is an event for only those who share this unique in Christ position. Paul illustrates this with the resurrection of New Testament saints.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23 gives some more information on who is raised in conjunction with the event of the Rapture: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ (*referring to Church Age saints as in 1 Thess. 4:16*) shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order (*not all at the same time*): Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming” (Rapture).

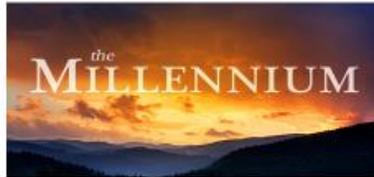
Paul is once again teaching that only those saints who are “in Christ” will participate with the event of the Rapture. Those who have died since Pentecost will be raised and the remaining Christians who are alive and in Christ will be raptured and taken back to Heaven.

From a dispensational perspective, verse 23 clearly has Church Age saints in mind who possess the unique position of being “in Christ.” Paul is not describing at this point Jesus’ return to earth to rule over Israel as the Son of Man. This comes later in God’s resurrection program. Without giving all the detail, Paul gives a general summarization of God’s resurrection program in 1 Corinthians 15:22-24 and indicates that the Church will be raised before the Old Testament saints, Tribulation martyrs, and the unsaved dead. By the time the Millennium is over God’s resurrection program will be completed with the separate events of Church Age saints, Old Testament saints, Tribulation martyrs, and the unsaved being raised (Rev. 20:1-6). But Paul’s point is that the Church Age saints who are “in Christ” will be raised separately from everyone else. There is not such thing as a general resurrection and judgment.

1 Corinthians 15:22-24

RAPTURE

"even so in Christ
shall all be made
alive"
1 Cor. 15:22-23



"then cometh the
end"
1 Cor. 15:24

Those who are in
Christ and part of the
Church Age will be
raised at the Rapture

1,000 Years

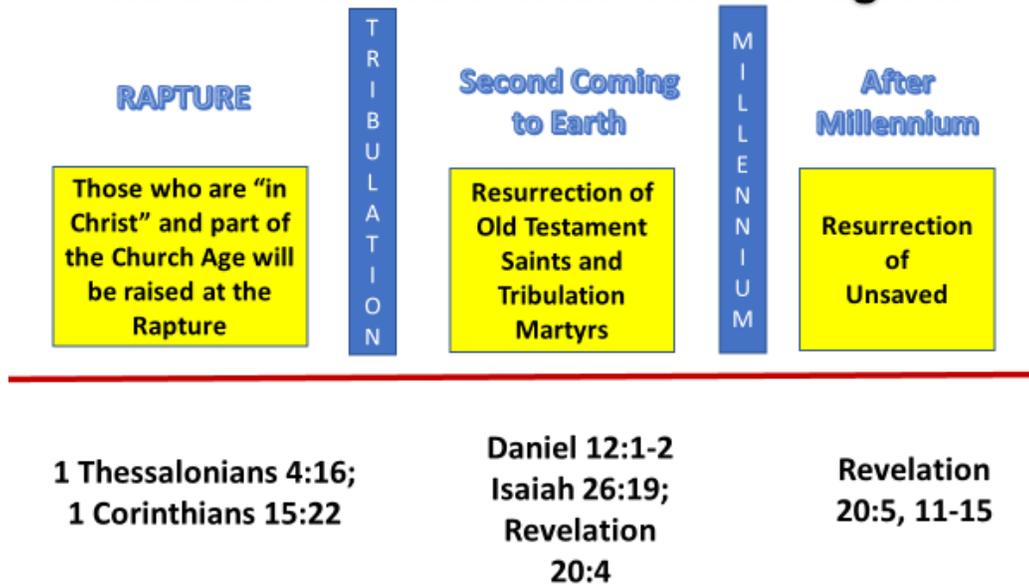
By the time the Second
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(Rev. 20:1-6).

There is 1,000 years between verses 23 and 24! The 1,000 years is the Millennium (Rev. 20:1-6). Again, Paul does not give all the details in one verse concerning other resurrections since he was only concerned about the Church's resurrection. At this point, he simply reveals that there is a gap of time that exists between the resurrection that occurs with the Rapture consisting of in Christ Christians and the end of God's resurrection program which consists of out of Christ unsaved people.

1 Corinthians 15:24

"Then cometh the end (after the event of Second Coming and 1,000-year reign of Christ comes the end of God's resurrection program with the resurrection of the unsaved before the Great White Throne Judgment as recorded in Rev. 20:11-15), when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when (during the Millennium) he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (brought back the earth to a theocracy during the 1,000 years).

The Order of God's Resurrection Program



It must be understood that at the Rapture the bodies of all the Old Testament saints will NOT be resurrected at this time. Only those who are "in Christ" will be part of this event (1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:22). Church Age saints will be raised who are in Christ. The resurrection of the saved Old Testament saints occurs at a later time when Jesus returns at the close of the Tribulation Period, prior to the final resurrection of the unsaved. The Bible passages in the Old Testament point to the Second Coming of Christ following the Tribulation Period. The resurrection of all the saved Old Testament saints will occur seven years after the Rapture, following the Tribulation.

Daniel 12:1-2

"And at that time (the time of the end in relationship to the second half of the Tribulation Period) shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people (the Jewish people of Israel): and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time (the persecution of Isarel during the second half of the Tribulation Period – Matt. 24:15-22): and at that time (the time of the end in relation to the Second Coming) thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book (at the Second Coming those Jews who are still physically alive will be saved and delivered from the

Antichrist and enter the Millennium). And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake (*bodily resurrection of Old Testament saints who have died will be raised*), some to everlasting life (*to enter the earthly kingdom*), and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (*something repulsive, disgusting, disliked and which enters the Lake of Fire*).

It's clear that Daniel's prophecy places the resurrection of Old Testament saints following Israel's persecution in the seven-year Tribulation Period. But the Old Testament revelation was not clear on the time element that separates the resurrection of saved Old Testament saints from the resurrection of the unsaved at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11-15). The progressive revelation of the New Testament reveals there is 1,000 years (a Millennium) between these resurrections (Rev. 20:1-5). The important thing we see here is that the Old Testament saints will be raised in conjunction with the Second Coming of Christ to earth.

Isaiah 26 reveals what will happen after the Tribulation Period is finished and Jesus returns in His Second Coming. The prophecy envisions a time of Israel's chastening during the Tribulation Period (Isaiah 26:16) and suffering (Isaiah 26:19). But Isaiah then gives his people hope in that at the end of the time of their suffering many will rise from the dead: “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise (*resurrection of Old Testament saints with Isaiah in conjunction with the Second Coming of Christ to earth*). Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust (*a reference to the joy of those who are raised after the Tribulation Period*): for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (*bodies of Old Testament believers*).

The Old Testament saints only knew of the teaching of the Second Coming of Christ to earth.

Daniel 7:13-14

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, **one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven**, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there **was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, **and his kingdom** *that* which shall not be destroyed.”

No Rapture into Heaven is Found in Old Testament

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given (**first coming = Christmas**): and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (**Second Coming = Conquering King and Kingdom**).

“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives (the SECOND COMING) – Zechariah 14:4



Daniel, Ezekiel, Gideon, David and all the rest of the Old Testament saints will be resurrected when Jesus returns to the earth after the Tribulation Period of seven years. They never possessed this unique position of being “in Christ” (1 Thess. 4:16). So only the Church Age saints will be resurrected at the time of the Rapture prior to the seven-year Tribulation Period. Only

the Church which is termed as being “in Christ” will be the participants in this snatching away. Those who have died throughout the centuries of the Church and those Church saints alive at the Rapture will take part in this glorious event.

Winston Churchill planned his funeral before he died. His wishes called for a bugler, positioned high in the dome of Saint Paul’s to play the taps after the benediction. The taps were meant to represent that his physical life was over. But then came the most dramatic turn: as soon as the taps was finished, another bugler, placed on the other side of the great dome, played the notes of reveille. At the Rapture, the last note will not be taps; it will be reveille! It will our time when we will go up and live on forever with Jesus!

Church Age saints have a unique position in Christ.

- Church Age saints share in a mystery return of Christ.

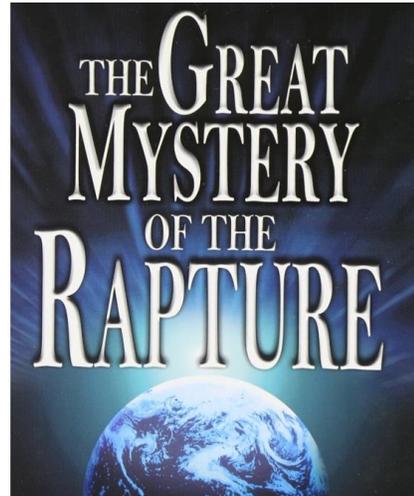
Here is another important point about only Church Age saints being raptured at Christ’s return.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

“Behold, I shew you a mystery (Greek – “mysterion” which means a sacred secret hidden not revealed in the past Old Testament era); We shall not all sleep (a metaphor for death), but we shall all be changed (both the dead and living Church Age saints will pass through a bodily transformation), In a

moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible (*the dead Church saints throughout the past centuries*), and we (*who are living at the time of the Rapture*) shall be changed.”

The word “mystery” denotes in general something hidden or not fully manifest. Paul is saying the Rapture was a secret teaching that was not revealed during the Old Testament. The teaching that speaks about the return of Christ for Church Age saints was not previously known by the Old Testament saints. It was not officially introduced until Paul’s teaching in the New Testament. It was like a sacred secret hidden and not revealed in the past. Since the teaching about the Rapture was a mystery (secret) teaching, I like to call the Rapture a



mystery or secret coming that is distinct from the Second Coming of Christ to earth. It was not merely a secret the Old Testament saints did not understand in, it was a prophetic event not taught until the days of the apostles. In other words the teaching is not found in the Old Testament.

Job 19:25

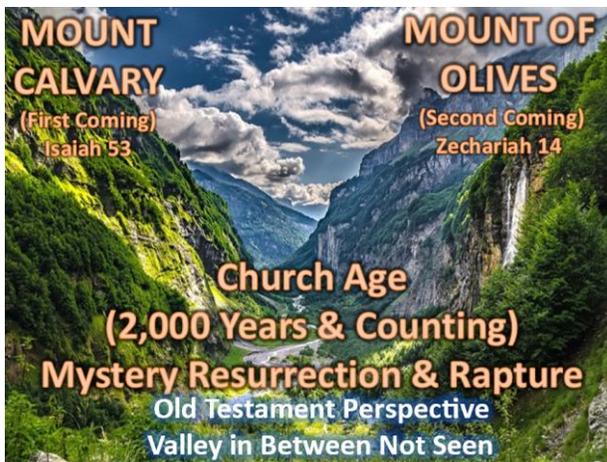
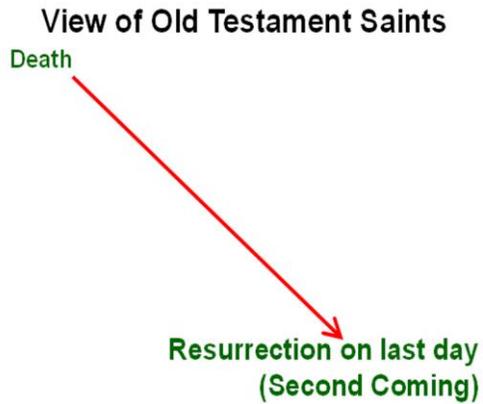
“For I know *that* my redeemer liveth,
and *that* he shall stand at the
latter day upon the earth.”

John 11:24

“Martha saith unto him, I know that he
shall rise again in the resurrection at
the last day.”

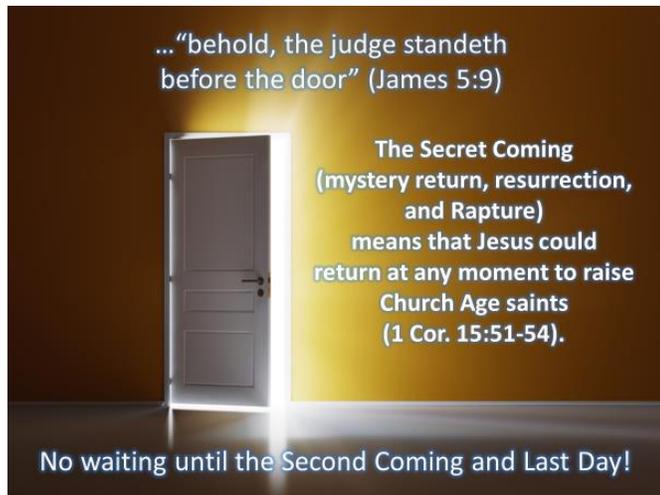
The “latter” or “last” day refers to the Second Coming perspective. The Old Testament saints would be raised at Christ’s return to earth – not the Rapture.

The Old Testament saints did not know of the mystery teaching of the Rapture and resurrection of New Testament saints as revealed by Paul in the epistles (1 Cor. 15:51-52). They viewed their resurrection as occurring when Jesus comes back to earth on the “last day” (Job 19:25; John 11:24) in conjunction with His Second Coming. The “last day” is reference to the time when Christ returns to earth to judge it and become King over the earth



The Old Testament saints only had the perspective of Christ's Second return to earth to establish His kingdom and anticipated the blessing of resurrection at His return to planet earth. They knew nothing of a secret Rapture or resurrection occurring before the Second Coming and Millennial Kingdom.

The Bible teaches that at the time of the Rapture the dead Church Age saints who are in Christ will be resurrected, and the living saints will also be immediately changed or transformed who are in Christ. Together we will experience a bodily transformation. Think how wonderful this will be! No more getting old. No more disease, sin, and heartaches. Yes, it's going to happen someday! Those who are alive will be caught away with a new body into the sky above, meet



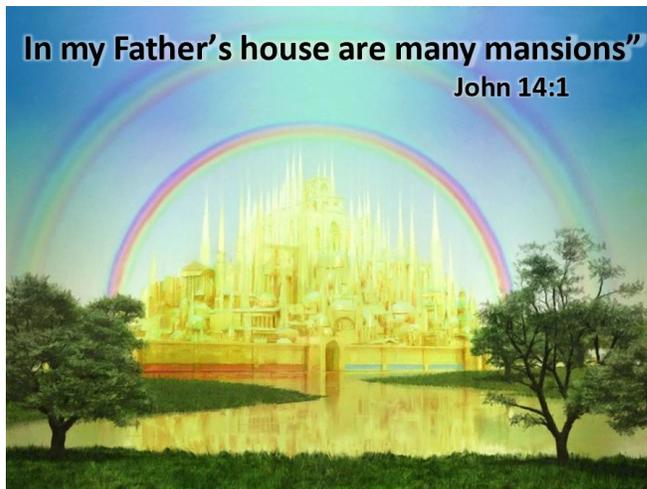
their resurrected loved ones in the atmospheric heaven above (1 Thess. 4:17). This brings us to the next question.

3. Where will we go after the Rapture?

Jesus gives us the answer to this question in the fourteenth chapter of John.

John 14:1-3

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. 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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

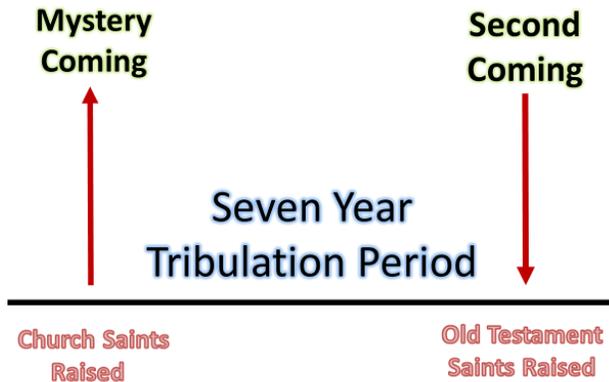


The Father’s house cannot be the location of the earthly kingdom in which Jesus will reign. Some who reject the Rapture teaching suggest that the Lord’s words “I will come again” refer to His coming to take the saints home at the time of their death. But the clear indication of what Christ is teaching here is that there is

only one coming (referencing the Rapture) – not millions of comings when Christians die and go to Heaven.

It’s here that Jesus introduced to His disciples for the first time the event of the Rapture and their return to Heaven – not the earth. The minds of the disciples were focused on the Second Coming of Christ to earth (Matt. 24:1-3; Acts 1:6), according to Old Testament Scriptures, but Jesus introduced to them a new mystery or secret coming not revealed in the Old Testament.

Jesus taught that He is going to return in the sky and then take His Bride back to Heaven to be with Himself following the Rapture. There will be the reward ceremony (the Judgment Seat of Christ) in the atmospheric heaven above following the Rapture (2 Cor. 5:10). Then, following this final examination, Jesus is going to take His newly rewarded Bride (the Church) back to Heaven where we will live with Him. Those who teach that no Rapture will occur before Second Coming of Christ to earth do not have a proper view on eschatology (last things).



Jesus taught that He is going to take the Church back to Heaven to be with Himself before He returns to earth to establish His earthly kingdom and theocracy. Jesus wants us to be part of the place where He lives and resides. This is the place that is elsewhere called the New Jerusalem or the great heavenly city (Heb. 12:22). Someday God is going to welcome His raptured saints back to Heaven and officially welcome them home. An older song tried to capture this eventful day.

"A great day is coming
 Heaven's gates will open wide
 And all who love The Lord may enter in
 To join with their loved ones
 Who in Jesus Christ have died
 Their eternal life in heaven will begin.

And the Lord Himself will greet us
 Oh, what joy will fill that day
 When with a smile of the proudest Father
 He'll look at us and say:

Welcome home, children
This is the place I've prepared for you
Welcome home, children
Now that your work on earth is through.

Welcome home, children
Ye who have followed so faithfully
Welcome home, children
Welcome home, children
Here where I am you shall always be
Forever rejoicing with Me!"

Revelation 19:7 looks forward to the Church meeting in Heaven:
"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

This is an event that will occur at one point following the Rapture of the Church. Christ's Bride (the Church) is seen dwelling in Heaven after her Rapture from the earth. The Church is presently betrothed to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). However, the culmination of our marriage to Christ will occur in the heavenly Bride chamber where we will dwell with our Beloved Savior and fellowship with Him face to face. This reminds us that in the Rapture it's the Bride (the New Testament Church) that will be caught away and taken to the magnificent splendor of Heaven! Jesus will welcome home His children to their place of citizenship (Philippians 3:20) and to their prepared dwelling place (John 14:2) within the lovely city called Heaven.

A little girl was taking an evening walk with her father. Wonderingly, she looked up at the stars and exclaimed: "Oh, Daddy, if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, what must the right side be like!"

At the Rapture, Jesus will lead His Bride back to glory as a general would lead His army in a parade of victory following the battle. In the coming day we will truly be marching back to Zion, the Heavenly City, where we will enter our eternal state as God's people.

A little boy got on the elevator in the Empire State Building in New York City. He and his daddy started to the top. The boy watched the signs flashing as they went by the floors: 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70. They kept going, and he got nervous. He took his daddy's hand and said, "Daddy, does God know we're coming?"

Christian friend, God knows we are coming, and we may all go up today in the Rapture. What a day, glorious day it will be!

4. Which Bible characters experienced a Rapture?

There are other raptures of people within the Bible that picture the coming Rapture of God's people, the New Testament Church. We should not view these events as strict types of the Rapture, like the book of Hebrews views the sacrifices of Christ as types, but they do in some ways picture what is going to occur in the event of the Rapture.

Acts 8:39-40 reveals the Philip was caught away or raptured: "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea."

In Acts 8:39 the same Greek word (*harpazo*) appears, as in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, which carries the idea of being "caught away" and "taken to another place." When Philip was finished baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch the Spirit of God raptured him or caught him away and transported him to the coastal town Azotus. What a ride this must have been! Listen, if God did it for Philip, then we can be sure He can do it for you and me some day!

The parallels of this text to the event of the Rapture of God's people at Christ's coming are significant:

- Acts 8:39 = Someday God's people will vanish out of this old world like Philip, and they will see us no more!

- Acts 8:40 = We will meet in the air above and be found in another city called Heaven!

Genesis 5:24 is another example of someone who was raptured:
“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

Enoch experienced a rapture before the worldwide Genesis Flood occurred. In a similar way, God’s New Testament saints will be raptured out of this world before the next worldwide expression of God’s wrath and judgment falls upon the earth in the seven-year Tribulation Period (Rev. 3:10). Enoch was alive and then suddenly taken away, raptured away by God. What a beautiful picture this is of the great coming day when the Lord Jesus will rapture or snatch away a company of living people, His beloved Church, the Bride of Christ, and take them back to Heaven to live with Him. The undertaker will be robbed of his money! Like Enoch, we will go without dying!

“Oh, joy! oh, delight! should we go without dying,
No sickness, no sadness, no dread and no crying;
Caught up through the clouds with our Lord into glory,
When Jesus receives His own.

O Lord Jesus, how long, how long
Ere we shout the glad song—
Christ returneth! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Amen.
Hallelujah! Amen.”

Friends, we may be part of the generation of Christians who will never see death. We may be like another Enoch who never tasted death!

Hebrews 11:5 records:

“By faith Enoch was translated (raptured) that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated (raptured) him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

The New Testament confirmed Enoch’s rapture. Someday God will transfer or transport a group of living believers from this world into the next world. We may very well be that generation of believers! “Even so, come, Lord

Jesus” (Rev. 22:20). This could be the dawning of that great and glorious day. Jesus may come today! We should be living in light of the Rapture and looking for Christ’s return. I think that many times we just live day to day and never really anticipate and long for the return of Christ. It’s simply business as usual. We wonder why we have no zeal or compelling desire to serve the Lord. Folks, we need to be reminded daily that Jesus is going to return to rapture His saints from the earth.

Dr. Morgan said this about Enoch’s rapture:

“Once there was an old man who everyday would take long walks with the Lord. On these walks, he and the Lord God would talk about all kinds of things--about the important times in the old man's life: when he met his wife, the birth of his children, special Christmases, etc. One day while they were out walking for an especially long time, the Lord looked at the old man and said, ‘We are closer to my house than we are to yours. Why don't you just come home with me.’ And that is what he did!”

Someday we are going to be walking along life’s pathway and be raptured and immediately transported into the presence of Jesus Christ. We will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air to forever be with Him (1 Thess. 4:17). Believers from all walks of life and everywhere within the world will suddenly vanish. What a day, glorious day, it will be! Whisked away into the presence of the Lord.

There is another picture of an Old Testament rapture.

2 Kings 2:11 speaks of Elijah’s rapture:

“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”

Elijah was another person to be raptured from planet earth before he died. What a beautiful picture this is of the coming Rapture that will take place when Jesus returns for His living company of Church Age saints. Notice the repetition of the key thought of being “taken away” in this Old Testament passages (2 Kings 1:1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 11). Elijah was going to be “taken away” from Elisha. He was going to be raptured from planet earth and would

never be seen again until he returns in the Tribulation Period, presumably as one of the two witnesses (Malachi 4:5-6).

Friend, someday we are going to be “taken away” from this old world and be “taken up” to the place where God dwells, Heaven itself! We will be transported up yonder to that great and glorious city of the redeemed! The rapture of Elijah is a very clear picture of even a greater Rapture to come! His experience is a pattern of that great and wonderful event of the future, when Jesus will return and catch away His Bride to live with Him forever and forever.

Verse eleven says: “And it came to pass...” Dear Christian readers, in a similar way, the Rapture of the Church will “come to pass” someday! This is God’s promise. It’s going to take place. This is not a pie in the sky teaching!

➤ The speed of this rapture.

Let’s think through what happened in Elijah’s day. Suddenly “there appeared” a fast-approaching chariot and horses of fire that separated Elijah from Elisha (vs.11). In a similar way, the Rapture of the Church will be sudden. It will happen in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:52). We will explain this later.

Revelation 22:12

“And, behold, I come quickly (*suddenly, without delay*); and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

➤ The power behind this rapture.

The chariot and horses with their apparent riders (“horsemen” – vs.12) did the initial separation of Elijah from Elisha. The fiery horses with their riders and chariots represent God’s power. These riders were no doubt some of the angelic order of Heaven (the angels of Heaven). They appeared in a mighty and powerful chariot and as riders upon horses. They represented God’s power to accomplish His will and program on earth (Heb. 1:7). In a similar way, it will take God’s power to raise the dead and rapture millions upon millions of people from planet earth. But nothing is too hard for God.

1 Thessalonians 5:24

“Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*.”

➤ The joy of this rapture.

Elisha saw this wonderful event! 2 Kings 2:12 records:

“And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him (Elijah) no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.”

Elijah promised Elisha that if he would see him leaving this old world by God’s power, here represented by the chariot of fire, that Elisha would receive the portion of power that was given to Elijah (verses 9-10).

So, Elisha was overjoyed when he saw the power of God being displayed in Elijah’s rapture. This meant that he would receive God’s power upon his own life. Elisha tore his own clothes as an act of mourning (Gen. 37:29, 34; 44:13; Josh. 7:6; Es. 4:1; Job 1:20; 2:12) over the loss of this great spiritual warrior. From then on Elisha would wear Elijah’s cloak and would serve with the authority and power it symbolized.

Imagine the joy the event of the Rapture will be for God’s New Testament believers. We will see Jesus, we will see our loved ones, and we will enter all the joys associated with the Eternal State.

1 Thessalonians 2:19

“For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”

➤ The presence of God in this rapture.

The whirlwind (vs. 11) that swept away Elijah was actually a storm with lightning and thunder. Like the pillar of cloud that led the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21), it represented God’s presence. God Himself, represented by the whirlwind, swept Elijah into His very own presence.

At the time of the Rapture of the Church, His living saints will see the presence of Jesus Christ for the very first time.

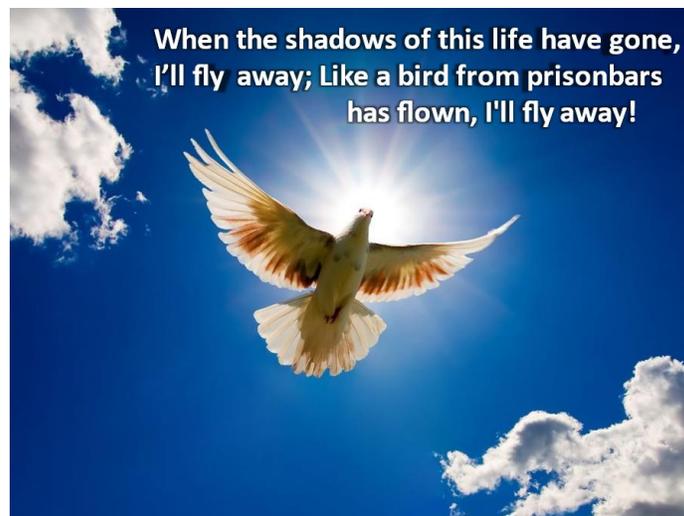
1 Thessalonians 4:17

“Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Thus, in Elijah’s departure we see the power of God being displayed (chariot of angels) and the presence of God (the whirlwind). Both these aspects will be part of the event called the Rapture of the Church. The Rapture will involve God’s power and presence.

We can conclude that Elijah’s disappearance is a prelude and pattern of a far greater disappearance in the future! As Elijah was raptured by the power of God and transported into the atmospheric heaven above, so the Church will someday be snatched away by God’s power and transported back into Heaven itself.

Someday millions of believers will be removed from this old world by the power of God and go up and experience the whirlwind of God’s presence! We will vanish from the presence of this worldly scene and enter the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.



We will be out of here! There is an older and rather fun song that we can sing today and apply to the event called the Rapture. It goes like this:

“Some glad morning when this life is o'er, I'll fly away;
To a home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away
I'll fly away, Oh Glory I'll fly away;
When I die, Hallelujah, by and by, I'll fly away.”

It is true, someday we will fly away as Elijah did! We will be caught up by the power of God into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and be transported back to Heaven. What an amazing day of glory, grandeur, and greatness it will be! I

1 Thessalonians 4:17 says:

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds (like Elijah!), to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

My friend, some glorious day we will be “caught up” or raptured from planet earth by God’s own power. We will be taken and transported from this side of Heaven onto the other side of Heaven!

John W. Peterson’s song catches the scene rather well.

“Someday we’ll leave this world of sin with all its dark despair
And like Elijah rise to meet our Savior in the air.
O glorious day when in clear view we’ll see the Lord we love.
And we can worship at His feet beyond the stars above.
Then faith at last will turn to sight, as Heaven looms before
And in that land of love and light, we’ll live forever more.

We’ll be caught up in a chariot of clouds.
We’ll be caught up in a chariot of clouds.
Like Elijah of old to the mansions of gold,
We’ll be caught in a chariot of clouds.”

We cannot even imagine how wonderful it will really be! We cannot really grasp how overjoyed we will be and what we will experience as we are transported into the clouds above to meet the Lord Jesus Christ for the very first time! Yes, someday like Elijah of old, we will be caught up in a chariot

of clouds and we will meet our Lord and precious Savior. What a day it will be!

5. What will take place when Jesus returns in the Rapture?

We are now going to give a summary of the events of the Rapture so we can understand what is going to occur when Jesus returns for His New Testament saints (Bride of Christ).

A. The sounds of the Rapture.

There are several sounds that will occur when Jesus returns for His people in the Rapture of the Church. These sounds will result in various events occurring in conjunction with the Rapture.

- There will be the shout of the Lord Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:16

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:”

The first sound at the Rapture is the shout. The word means “a shout of command” and implies both authority and urgency. The shout probably comes from the Lord Himself, even though the text is not specific on the matter. Neither does the text declare the content of the shout. Nobody can say with certainty what Jesus will say and shout when He returns. But perhaps it will be something like this. “Come forth and come home!”

- “Come forth” is the shout to resurrect the dead saints.

First, the “come forth” shout may be directed toward those bodies which are dead and termed as “sleeping” awaiting their bodily resurrection. This kind of shout would directly apply to the dead in Christ or those who have died prior to the Rapture and return of Christ. The Bible teaches that Jesus will bring back the spirits of those in Heaven to be reunited with a new resurrected body.

1 Thessalonians 4:14

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”

This is referring to the saints who have died before the Rapture. The word “sleep” is used at a metaphor for the death of the human body. The Bible does not teach the false doctrine of soul sleep (2 Cor. 5:8) but it does view the body as sleeping awaiting a future resurrection. So what is going to happen? The spirits of God’s New Testament saints are residing in Heaven following their death but one day Jesus is going to bring their spirits back with Him from Heaven and reunite them with a newly resurrected body. This is what is going to happen in conjunction with the event of the Rapture. A resurrection of Church Age saints will occur. They too will be part in this glorious event.

The encounter of Jesus with Lazarus may shed some light on what Jesus will say when He decides to raise the bodies of His New Testament saints.

John 11:43-44

“And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”

There is great power and authority in the words of Jesus! He can raise the dead. At the event of the Rapture of the Church, Jesus may simply repeat the simple words that He spoke to Lazarus. He may say, “Come forth.” At the very moment Jesus speaks a command such as this, the dead bodies of bygone Church saints will be resurrected in a new and glorious fashion and be rejoined with their appropriate spirits. Their spirit and body will be reunited. This will be a great time of rejoicing for those who have died in Christ and who were awaiting their resurrection bodies.

How will God raise the bodies of people who were buried hundreds of years ago? What about the bodies of those Christians who were burned to death and whose ashes were thrown to the wind? What about Christians who perished at sea? The resurrection of the dead poses a great problem

to the faith of many people today. However, if God could create the universe, it will be no problem for Him to resurrect every believer who has died throughout the centuries of church history.

When God speaks, things happen! And happen they will! Dead bodies will spring forth from their graves and their remains will be brought back together to form a new and wonderful body, even those who were eaten by sharks and lions or other wild animals. It makes no difference. God will bring them back and give them a glorified and transformed body.

- “Come home” is the shout to rapture living saints.

It is certainly possible that the command shouted out will be like the one given to the apostle John when he was told, “Come up hither” or “come up here” (Rev. 4:1). Jesus on the day of the Rapture may also shout forth something like this: “Come home!” This would apply to those who are still living at His return and who have not yet entered Heaven. A shout like this may be directed toward those who are still alive when Jesus returns (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:17). In short, a shout such as this may summon the entire living saints to be raptured from planet earth into the atmospheric heaven above. Whatever Jesus shouts, we who are alive will hear it and know that the final redemption of our body has come! What a day, glorious day it will be!

This is why we tell other believers to keep looking up! Our redemption is drawing nigh! Once again, this could be the dawning of that great and glorious day when Jesus returns, transforms the bodies of His beloved Bride, and then takes her home to live with Him in Heaven (John 14:3).

- There will be the saying of the archangel.

1 Thessalonians 4:16

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:”

One of the archangels with a high rank among the angelic order is going to issue some kind of command. There seems to be more than one archangel in the angelic ranks (Dan. 10:13). However, one archangel's voice will be heard. I think this will be the voice of a warrior. A specific archangel of Heaven will summon all the angelic order, which is yet true to God, to overlook and protect His Church from the evil and wicked angels or spirits that are roaming the atmospheric heaven above. It may be that this archangel is present to protect the saints of God from Satan and his forces as they pass through his domain. Satan is referred to as the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), and God's people will be passing through these dangerous regions at the Rapture.

Ephesians 6:12 declares:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*" (*heavenly places – the atmospheric heaven above where Satan and demons roam*).

Satan is called "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). You can be sure he will try and stop the event of the Rapture from occurring.

Revelation 12:7 says:

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels"

You will notice that this text does not indicate that this war begins at the middle of Tribulation period. The text reveals that by the middle of the Tribulation period there will be a war already in progress in the atmospheric heaven ("there was"). It's very likely that at the Rapture a fierce war or battle between the evil and holy angels will break out that will obviously last until the middle of the Tribulation, when Satan is finally kicked out of the atmospheric heavens.

If I know the Devil, he will try to do stop the Rapture from occurring. His host of demonic hordes will be there in the atmospheric heaven above (Eph. 6:12). They will be roaming around attempting to interfere with the

Rapture. The devil and his demons will try to promote havoc with the very events surrounding the Rapture.

Satan is called “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). You can be sure he will try and stop the event of the Rapture and the Judgment Seat of Christ from occurring within the atmospheric heavens. He ultimately wants to stop us from entering Heaven. Therefore, the voice of this archangel may very well summon the good angels as military escorts to accompany the Lord and His saints through enemy territory back to Heaven.

Luke 16:22

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried.”

If angels escort God’s people into the afterlife, perhaps the same will be true at the Rapture. The Devil will try to keep God’s people who have been raptured from going to Heaven. He will still want us to go to Hell. But the God of all grace will see to it that we are led or escorted all the way back to Heaven. At the Rapture there may very well be some kind of angelic escort service for all of God’s saints as they pass through the domain of the wicked spirits.

The Devil ultimately wants to stop us from entering Heaven. Therefore, a mighty archangel will summons the good angels to do battle with the evil angels and escort God’s saints back to Heaven. A battle will ensue between the good and evil angels and this leading archangel (the voice of the archangel) will have to be involved with the event of the Rapture.

Recently we have heard a loud moaning and whistling sound coming from the youth room in the church basement. We noticed again the other day there was a howling type of sound coming from the same area in the basement. I mean, it literally sounded like a dog was howling down in the youth room closet. I sent Pastor William down into the basement to check it out! Eventually we discovered that it was a water regular going bad. It certainly gave some strange sounds. Well, there are going to be some sounds associated with the Rapture of the Church. The next sound we are going to study about is the trumpet sound.

- There will be the sounding of the trumpet.



If I were to stand on the church platform and blow my trumpet as loud as I could, I would probably make some of you jump out of your seats and your heart skip at least one beat. Well, someday all of God's saints around the world and in Heaven will hear the trumpet of God ("the trump of God" – 1 Thess. 4:16) and will know that their day of redemption

has come! It will be the signal to resurrect the Church Age saints who have died and rapture the remaining saints who are still alive on earth.

This is literally "a trumpet belonging to God."

Paul Benware gives this insightful summary:

"Since the days when Israel was camped down at Mount Sinai, trumpets were used to call God's people together for assembly. Moses was instructed to make two silver trumpets to be used for notifying people of upcoming events and "for summoning the congregation" (Num. 10:2). This eschatological blast from God's trumpet summons the church of Jesus Christ to heaven and to fellowship in the Father's house. It parallels the "last trumpet" of 1 Corinthians 15:52."

With the trumpet sound the word of the Lord begins to come to pass. The dead bodies will be resurrected and transported. Then we who are living will be raptured and transported into the sky above to meet the Lord.

Will the unsaved hear the shout, the voice, and the trumpet? Since the shout, voice of the archangel, and trumpet apply to God's people, there is no reason to believe that the unsaved masses will hear them. The Bible seems to suggest that these sounds are for God's people alone. It is their redemption which is in view which has nothing to do with the unsaved world.

The trumpet summons will be for God's Church to be assembled and removed from this old world. It will be a trumpet of deliverance.

1 Corinthians 15:52 puts it this way:

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

The trumpet sound, particularly on the last trumpet note, is reminiscent of the trumpet in Exodus which called the people out of the camp to meet with God.

Exodus 19:14-17 records:

"And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives. And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice (sound) of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount."

Paul may be saying that in a similar fashion, we as God's people today, the New Testament Church, will one day hear the loud sound of the trumpet (1 Thess. 4:16). And on that final trumpet note ("the last trump" – 1 Cor. 15:52) we will be delivered from this present earth and be assembled together to see God Himself in the person of His son Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:52). This loud and last trumpet blast will call the saints to their meeting in the air and eventually eternal blessing! What a victorious trumpet summons this will be!

We must understand that the "last trump" (1 Cor. 15:52) is not to be confused with several other trumpets blown in God's prophetic program. The seventh or last trumpet of Revelation 11:15–18, which signals the final outpouring of judgment on the world during the Tribulation period, is not the same trumpet as mentioned in the passages we have just seen. This

trumpet is blown at a different time. It will be blown by an angel during the Tribulation Period and has nothing to do with the event of the Rapture.

Trumpets Related to God's Prophetic Program



Rapture Trumpet

1 Cor. 15:52;
1 Thess. 4:16

**Before the 7
Years**

Church

Tribulation Trumpet

Rev. 11:15-18

**During the 7
Years**

Unsaved of Tribulation

Post-Tribulation Trumpet

Matt. 24:29-31

**After the 7
Years**

Israel

There are those who teach that the last trumpet mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:52 points to the fact that the Church will be raptured during the Tribulation Period and that the Church will have to face many of the judgments of the Tribulation Period. This particular view is called the mid-tribulation Rapture theory.

When reading and studying the Bible we discover that the "last trump" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:52 is the last or final trumpet note which is designed for the saved of the Church Age – not the unsaved living on earth during the Tribulation Period. The Rapture trumpet will be that final note of victory for God's people (New Testament Church) to assure us that we are going home to be with the Lord in Heaven. But the seventh trumpet of Revelation is the last trumpet designed for the unbelieving world to assure them that there is more judgment to come upon an unbelieving world. It is a trumpet that will sound and signify that the final catastrophic judgments of the Tribulation Period will begin to fall upon planet earth.

This Tribulation trumpet has nothing to do with the Rapture trumpet of God that occurs with the event of the Rapture. 1 Thessalonians identifies

the Rapture trumpet as “the trump of God” (1 Thess. 4:16) which is a distinct name for this trumpet. The seventh or last trumpet blown during the Tribulation is a series of different, individual, trumpet sounds blown by angels which is unrelated to the trump of God, and the “last trump” at the Rapture.

In a similar way, the trumpet used in the event of the Rapture should not be confused with another trumpet that will sound immediately after the Tribulation Period has expired. This is a post-tribulation trumpet.

Matthew 24:29-31

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days (*the seven-year Tribulation Period*) shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn (*tribes are a reference to the people of Israel*), and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (*to rule the earth as prophesied in Daniels 7:13-14*). And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect (Israel – Isa. 45:4) from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

People who claim that this is the same trumpet mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:52 teach a post-tribulation rapture theory which concludes the Rapture occurs after the seven-year Tribulation Period. However, this trumpet sound results in the regathering of Israel (God’s elect) to inhabit the earthly Millennial Kingdom (Matt. 24:33) earth. It has nothing to do with the Rapture of the Church. Angels are involved in regathering Israel at the Second Coming, but the Bible does not teach that angels are involved in actually rapturing the Church. The “trump of God” and “last trump” (1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52) is a pre-tribulation Rapture but the trumpet of Matthew 24 is a post-tribulation trumpet.

The Bible teaches there are three distinct trumpets blown at different points in God’s prophetic program. It is a serious Bible error to look at every trumpet and assume that all of them are the same trumpet sounding at the

same time! Many today do not properly assess the specific timing of these different trumpets and end up in a sea of prophetic confusion.

When we have a trumpet trio in our church there are three distinct trumpets being blown. It's silly to conclude that they are all the same trumpets. In a similar way, it's silly to conclude that all the trumpets connected with God's prophetic program are the same trumpets, blown at the same time. Well, God's one day we are going to hear the shout, the saying of the archangel, and the sounding of the trumpet which will put God's Rapture plan into action.

B. The speed of the Rapture

The event of the Rapture will occur in a split second of time. This will not be a long and drawn-out event when it comes to the resurrection and catching away of God's New Testament saints.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 declares:

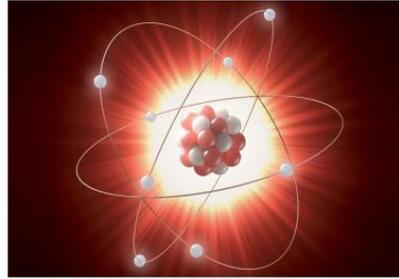
"Behold, I shew you a mystery (a hidden or secret teaching revealed in the New Testament); We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

A sign hanging above the entrance of a church nursery used this Bible text – "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed!" Yes, "we shall all be changed." The dead Church Age saints will be changed through resurrection and we who are alive at Christ's coming will undergo an instantaneous transformation. It is wonderful to contemplate how quickly and miraculously this will occur. The Bible says that it will occur "in a moment" and "in the twinkling of an eye."

The Greek word translated "moment" (*atomos*) is the word from which our English word "atom" is developed. The word "atom" (*moment*) actually means something that is so small that it cannot be divided any further. Here is the point of the word. The Rapture will occur so quickly and

suddenly that the time frame in which it occurs cannot be humanly divided. Paul says that in a moment (in Greek, the phrase literally means in "an atom of time") the dead will be raised, and we will be changed and raptured! This means that our transformation will occur in a split second – in an Atomic Second!

“In a moment – an atom of time”



“In the twinkling of an eye”



Paul goes on to say that “in the twinkling of an eye” the event of the Rapture will occur. It’s said that the average person blinks his eyes between 15,000 and 20,000 times a day. This means that every day there are at least 20,000 opportunities for the Lord Jesus to return! When we twinkle or flicker our eyelids we do so with great speed.

Scientists have computed that it takes one-fiftieth of a second to blink an eye and that a person blinks 25 times a minute. Thus, a motorist who averages 55 miles per hour on a 10-hour trip, drives 33 miles with his eyes shut. I just thought you might like to know this for your next road trip.

Our bodily transformation will be an event that occurs with lightning like speed. This is amazingly fast. But this is how fast our bodies will be transformed.

The verse concludes that “we shall all be changed” (vs. 52) - both the dead and living Church Age saints! The Greek word “changed” means an exchange of one thing for another, to cause one thing to cease and another to take its place. We are getting rid of our old body and getting a brand new one. Out with the old and in with the new! Our earthly, worn out, diseased, sickly, and sinful bodies are going to be exchanged for a perfect, sinless, diseaseless, painless, and timeless body.

Amazingly, in an atomic, one fiftieth of a second, all of God's people down through the church centuries will be resurrected, and those who are still alive will be raptured which result in the transformation and reuniting of all the saints who have lived from the Day of Pentecost and onward. The twinkling or blinking of an eye! That is the speed of the Rapture.

Tim LaHaye said:

“When I was a boy, I took a tour of Henry Ford factory in Dearborn, Michigan. Then we saw an electromagnetic crane move over a large railroad car filled with what seemed to be junk steel. At the flip of a switch, everything in that car leaped up to the magnetic crane. Then I saw a strange thing: some pieces of steel fell back into the car. I waited until others had left on the tour and then climbed up to look inside and find out why these pieces fell back in. I found they were not steel at all. Lying on the bottom of the car were some old two-by-fours, a broom handle, and some broken pieces of wood. Only objects made of the right component responded to the magnet; the rest were left behind.”

Dear friend, so it will be with the Rapture. Only those people who have been saved through the blood of Jesus Christ will be taken out of this world by that great magnetic snatch of God's power! The rest (the unsaved) will be left to go through a terrible time of catastrophic horror on this earth which Jesus described as Great Tribulation.



But for God's people, the Rapture is an event of glorious prospect and hopeful deliverance. There is no wrath or physical judgment surrounding the occasion of Christ's return for His saints. This present passage tells us that there is only joy and victory associated with the Rapture.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 records the song of victory of the saints who participate in the Rapture: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave (hades),

where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul seems to switch from our physical deliverance through bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51-54) to our spiritual deliverance from the realm of spiritual death (1 Cor. 15:55-57) which paves the way for our victorious transformation. The “sting of death” refers to people being punished for their sins in hell after they die. The “strength of sin” refers to how the Law reveals to us we are sinners and condemns us as sinners. It pronounces doom on everyone who has failed to obey God’s holy precepts.

It has been said that if there were no sin, there would be no death. And if there were no law, there would be no condemnation. But we cannot live in a fairytale world. There is sin, death, and punishment for our sins.

Here is what happened. When Jesus died on the cross, He was stung to death in our place. He took the sting of death for us so that we will never face the sting of judgment that follows death and never again be condemned by the law.

Years ago, as a younger boy, I remember tying strings around bumble bees, putting the other end on theissy bars of our bikes, and then riding down the street with the bees buzzing around our heads. People would warn us of the danger of the bees but the danger was removed. It’s because we had removed the stingers from the bumble bees before we tied them to our bikes.

Folks, Jesus removed the stinger or sting of death when He died and rose from the dead. For this reason, when He comes back for His beloved Church, we are going to either be resurrected or raptured and return to the Father’s House (John 14:1-3). This is because we have escaped God’s wrath and judgment and are destined to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ and live with Him forever in Heaven.

The word “death” speaks of the judgment the unsaved person faces when they die physically. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after

this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). The word “grave” is literally “hades” (the place of departed spirits). The point is this. We cannot get to the resurrection of the saved (vv. 51-54) unless we bypass Hades, the place of God’s wrath and judgment for sinners (vv. 55-57), and the only way to escape this place is through faith in the Gospel of Christ’s death and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-3).

Death and Hades (representative of spiritual death – separation from God’s presence) will not have victory over us on this resurrection and transformation day by keeping us from taking part in the glorious destiny of receiving a transformed body at the Rapture (1 Pet. 1:3-5). Instead, we who have been saved from God’s wrath will be able to rise with a glorified body like Christ’s (the dead Church Age saints), or be instantaneously transformed (the living Church Age saints) to live with Him in the Father’s House as Christ promised (John 14:1-3).

At the event of the Rapture, the saints will shout their victory over the sting of death (spiritual death). This is because Hades will not keep us from experiencing this glorious event and wonder of the ages when we will be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Speaking of the imminent (any moment) return of our Lord, Gresham Guinness related that one evening he went to hear a performance of Handel’s Messiah. He said that after a couple of hours someone might have asked, “How much longer will the concert last?” He said he would have answered, “Oh, about 5 minutes.” The individual might have replied, “But how can that be? It’s still in full swing and has been going on for a long time. Why shouldn’t it continue for two more hours? How do you know it will be finished in five minutes?” Guinness said he would have replied, “Because I have the score, and they are singing the last chorus.”

Dear friend, we may very well be on the last score before Jesus returns for His own! We do not know the day or the hour. However, we know the promise that Jesus gave us. He promised “I will come again” (John 14:3). What a day that will be when we are transported out of this world into the air above to meet the Lord! This is that glorious event known as the Rapture. This brings us to our next point.

C. The significant events of the Rapture

At this point in our study, we need to recap the significant events of the Rapture to give us an overall picture of what is going to occur.

In this section of our study, we are going to investigate that transformation of the believer's human body. What will our bodies be like when they are raised from the dead or immediately transformed at the event of the Rapture?

It's interesting to contemplate that we possess a judicial fitness secured for us by the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9), a spiritual fitness secured for us by new birth, the possession of a new nature (2 Pet. 1:4), and a physical fitness to be secured for us at the Rapture when we receive our resurrected and transformed bodies (Rom. 8:23).

Romans 8:23

"And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit (*regeneration, sealing, filling of the Spirit*), even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body" (*the time we will receive a body that is set free from sin, disease, and death*).

I. A transformation will occur

We have mentioned this already but want to talk about it in more detail. Two significant transformations will occur at the Rapture. The dead Church Age will be raised with a transformed body and the living Church Age saints on earth will also receive a transformed body.

Our bodies, whether resurrected or instantly transformed at the Rapture will be the same in nature. So what kind of bodies will receive at the Rapture? Let's investigate this in Scriptures.

- ❖ Our transformed bodies will be immortal.

1 Corinthians 15:52

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible (*receiving a transformed body*), and we shall be changed” (*the living saints will receive a transformed body*).

The word “incorruptible” means that the transformation which occurs will result in a body that will no longer be subject to physical decay or corruption. It will be imperishable and immortal. In other words, our new bodies will never die again! Think of how wonderful this will be. Death will never again be part of our human existence. We will live eternally with a body that will never again grow old, suffer, and experience death.

❖ Our transformed bodies will be changed.

The word “changed” (Gk. *allasso* - “to make other than it is” – 1 Cor. 15:52) speaks of something totally different. This is a word that means to cause one thing to cease and another thing to take its place. It means to exchange one thing for another. Here is good news. We are going to exchange our old and worn-out bodies for new ones! We are going to exchange our bodies of corruption for immortality. We are going to exchange our vile bodies for a glorious new body that is free from sinful impurity, sickness, disease, and pain.

Philippians 3:20-21

“For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body (*a lowly, humiliating, and sinful body destined for death*), that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body (*identical to Christ’s perfect character and physical perfections*), according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (*the same power that Christ will use to bring the universe under His rule during the Millennium is the same type of power that will transform our bodies*).

Here the word “change” in the Greek language means a change in form. It points to something that is transformed. This is what is going to happen at the event of the Rapture. Out with the old and in the new! You know, as we

get older the more we realize that our bodies need a change! We need a new body. The old will be exchanged for the new! Our sin wracked, sick, and scarred bodies will be totally changed like a caterpillar being transformed into a butterfly. We shall all be changed! Our sanctification will be complete! We will undergo a physical and spiritual metamorphosis and be given a totally new body that is free from physical and spiritual defilement. Yes, in the coming day we will receive a transformed body just like Christ.



The glorious promise of Romans 8:30 which made in eternity past will come to pass: “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Yes, we will receive a transformed, glorified, perfect body.

“Complete in Thee,
No work of mine
Could take, dear Lord,
The place of Thine.
Thy blood hath pardon bought for me,
And I shall stand
Complete in Thee.
Yea, justified, oh, blessed thought,
And sanctified, salvation wrought.
Thy blood hath pardon bought for me,
And glorified I, too, shall be.”

Today our present bodies are breaking down. The second law of thermodynamics is in place. Everything is breaking down. Our bodies become diseased, deformed by arthritis, and begin to deteriorate from a physical perspective over time.

The word “vile” (Phil. 3:20) refers to the humiliating and lowly state of our present bodies which are still connected with sin, disease, and sickness. We see this type of body at every funeral as it lies within the casket.

The bodies we possess today are humiliating as they move back toward the grave. We become frail and weakened as we come to the end of our road. It’s amazing how youthfulness flies away from us, then our middle-aged years fly away from us and then finally old age sets in and this too will one day fly away from us. But we can be sure that someday we will get a new body that will never die and one that will be like Christ’s resurrection body. We will not longer possess a “vile” body but a glorious body that resembles Christ’s spiritual and physical perfections. This does not mean that we will all have the same physical appearance of Christ, but our transformed bodies will possess the same physical perfections as Christ’s body – no disease, sickness, and death.

Dr. Harry Ironside frequently emphasized to his friends and relatives that he didn’t want an elaborate funeral of an expensive tombstone when the Lord took him to Glory. He requested that his final resting place be marked only by a plain, wooden slab reading which said: “Harry A. Ironside, Sinner Saved By Grace, Moved until Renovated and Repaired.”

Our bodies will also possess the same spiritual perfections as Christ’s body which is free from sin and moral impurity. We will be morally like Jesus when our bodies are transformed.

1 John 3:2

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

Today it does not appear what we shall be since our bodies have not been completely transformed from a moral and physical perspective. Our bodies are not yet glorified. First, our bodies have not undergone a perfect moral transformation. We still sin with our bodies because they are connected with the Genesis Fall and curse.

We won't be totally freed from the curse until our bodily transformation occurs. Second, our bodies have not yet gone through a perfect physical transformation. They are also wearing out from a physical perspective. The moment we are born we begin to die. I know that sounds rather morbid, but it is true.



We sometimes look in the mirror as we get older and pretend to be something we are not! Let's face it, we are all getting older. There is no such thing as eternal youth in our present earthly bodies. We need to get a new and transformed body to discover the eternal fountain of youth.

Someone said:

"My body knows how old I am but my mind refuses to believe it. I am simply youthfully challenged."

Another said:

"It's not the first wrinkle that is scary. It's the chain reaction that follows."

Others have said:

"The older I get the older old becomes."

"I'm not old, I'm retro."

Introduction: In one of his lighter moments, Benjamin Franklin penned his own epitaph. It seems he must have been influenced by Paul's teaching of the resurrection of the body. Here's what he wrote:

"The Body of B. Franklin, Printer
Like the Cover of an old Book
Its contents torn out,
And stript of its Lettering and Guilding,
Lies here, Food for Worms,

But the Work shall not be wholly lost:
For it will, as he believ'd,
Appear once more
In a new & more perfect Edition,
Corrected and amended by the Author.”

❖ Our transformed bodies will be different.

As we continue to investigate the transformation of our human bodies at the event of the Rapture of Church we want to focus on the resurrected and transformed bodies of Church Age saints. Of course, the transformation of the raptured saints who are still alive at the Rapture will possess the same kind of glorified body as those resurrected. Together we will share a similar redeemed and transformed body. So let's get a better understanding of the kind of bodies we will receive at the Rapture and possess throughout eternity.

In 1 Corinthians 15:35-50 Paul is dealing with the skeptics of the physical and bodily resurrection of Christians. In responding to their questions about the resurrection of Christian bodies he gives us a detailed analysis of what our transformed bodies will be like. In summary, he concludes they will be different bodies. They will not be the same bodies that go into the ground, but a different type of body suited for eternity.

❖ There are the questions posed by the skeptics.

When speaking about the transformation of our resurrection body, Paul anticipated two questions from his unbelieving critics and opponents of the resurrection. Greek philosophical dualism taught that the thought of bodily and physical resurrection was not only incredible but actually undesirable. Acts 17:25 says, “And when they heard of the resurrection some mocked ...” The denial of bodily resurrection was also part of the Gnostic teaching. Their teaching involved the idea that the “resurrection” is purely spiritual (immaterial in nature) and happens at conversion.

2 Timothy 2:18 says this of Hymenaeus and Philetus:

“Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”

Apparently, the errant teaching being propagated by the false teachers was that the physical was not spiritual and therefore would not be a part of the resurrection body. They ridiculed the resurrection of the physical body. Anticipating their assaults against the literal, bodily, and physical resurrection, Paul provides us with the most complete treatment of this subject as found anywhere in the Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 15:35

“But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”

- The first question deals with the method of resurrection (“How are the dead raised up?”).

How can a body be raised from the grave after being dead for many centuries? How can a body which has returned to the ashes be remade or reconstructed? How can a body that has been dispersed and disintegrated be brought back together?

The simple answer to this first skeptical question is that God will accomplish all of this by His mighty power. The same God who made the stars and millions of galaxies spinning in space can resurrect the bodies of people and make them into a new body. Paul is going to explain that the resurrection is not merely a reconstruction of the old body but a complete renewal of the previous body.

- The second question deals with the characteristics of the resurrection body (“With what body do they come?”).

What kind of body would people have who previously suffered from deformities and who died early on in life, perhaps as a baby? The critics thought about many difficult situations which would tend to make bodily resurrection improbable, if not impossible. How could life come out of cremated ash? What about a person eaten by a shark? This primary objection to the bodily of physical resurrection has to do with the reconstruction of the body out of the same elements that it formerly

possessed. The opponents of the resurrection saw this as a problem and a valid reason to deny the resurrection of the human body.

They reasoned this way: If someone died at sea and sailors buried him in the sea, a fish might eat his body. The atoms and molecules of his body would become part of the fish. If a fisherman caught and ate the fish, the body of the fish would then become part of the fisherman's body. If the fisherman died and an undertaker buried him in the ground, and someone eventually sowed wheat over his grave, the fisherman's atoms and molecules would go into the wheat. A third person would eat the wheat and the cycle would continue. How could the first person's body ever come together again?

One of the strangest articles I have read on the difficulties of bodily resurrection was the one titled "Who Ate Roger Williams." This great fighter for religious liberty, and the founder of the first Baptist church in America in Providence, R.I., died and was buried in a very insecure casket. The result was an apple tree broke in and a large root went right through his body. This led to some very strange speculation. Since part of the body of Roger Williams would have been absorbed by the root and taken up into that tree, it is probable that some of these molecules became part of its apples. Thus, the foolish question--who ate Roger Williams?

The problem of bodily resurrection is a theological one that men have been wrestling with for centuries. How is God going to get the body of Roger Williams back together again for the resurrection? This gets enormously complex if you think of how his molecules could end up scattered all over the world and becoming parts of many other bodies which will also be in the resurrection.

This may sound absurd, but it has been a serious theological issue since the early church. Tertullian, one of the ancient church fathers, was a fighting fundamentalist on this issue. He insisted that the very same features one had when they were buried is the body that will rise at the resurrection. Every hair and every tooth of this body will be raised, and not a fraction will be lost. This may have been a great comfort to those who died with a fine head of hair and a full set of teeth, but what about those who had lost their

hair and teeth? Are they to be stuck forever with the same body that was buried, or can they anticipate some improvement in their resurrection body?

Even more perplexing were the questions about the Christians that were fed to the lions, or those many who were burned at the stake. More modern Christians have added their own examples of problems with the body. What of those lost or buried at sea, and eaten by sharks or other predators? What about those who have died in planes and various explosions where the body has disintegrated without a trace? There are just too many seemingly hopeless cases where the body, for all practical purposes, ceases to exist. These complex situations have led to much doubt about the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

Augustine, way back in the 4th century, spent a good deal of his time writing answers to all kinds of questions about the resurrection of the body. What about abortion? Will these little bodies be raised, and if so, what kind of body will they have? He concluded that we will all have equal bodies. All will be like Christ in the prime of life, and so all children will have mature bodies, and all old people will have young bodies. All defects will be done away with, and all that is lacking will be added so that none need fear they will have a body they do not feel comfortable with. Of course, this has been the teaching of the Bible and the Christian belief of the early church. It should be our belief as well when we study the Scriptures.

But the Greek Philosophers and critics of the resurrection in Paul's day would ask, "How can God raise up these types of bodies and what kind of body would they have if they are raised? There are always some smart alecks in the crowd trying to place doubt on the miracle of the resurrection. To such mockers, Paul spoke directly: "Thou fool" (vs. 36)!

These people must have gone to dumb school! How senseless and thoughtless to not believe in the resurrection. God's sovereign power can do anything! Today, we have many who are schooled in the liberal brainy universities, and they try to reject all the miracles of the Bible. They are secular humanists who hate Jesus, God and everything to do with the miraculous. Yes, they are still rejecting the resurrection of Christ and the

bodily resurrection of His followers. Paul calls them “fools” who disbelieve in the resurrection. They should put on their dunce hats and stand in the corner of the classroom.

Paul uses the expression “fool” to draw attention to the senselessness of the questions, the seeming stupidity that marked these questions.

1 Corinthians 15:36-37

*“Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened (made alive), except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*.”*



Belief in the resurrection body was like belief in seedtime and harvest. If a person believes in the miracle of the seed and harvest, he must also out of necessity believe in the miracle of the resurrection.

In countering the critics, Paul emphasizes the miracle God performs in seedtime and harvest and then likens this miracle to a similar miracle performed by God’s power which is to bring the body back from its previous existence with a new body. Yes, God will “put together all the pieces” (all the previous molecules) and return our former bodies to us. But once again, our resurrection bodies will not merely be reconstructed – they will be renewed (brand new). There is continuity in the resurrection (it will be our body), but there is not exact identity.

Like the stalk that comes from the seed is different than the seed, so our resurrected bodies will be different. They will not be the same type of body as our present ones, and the exact type of body which goes into the ground. Paul is teaching that bodily resurrection is a total miracle like seedtime and harvest. However, we must remember that what comes up at the harvest is usually more beautiful than what was planted. This is especially true of tulips. Few things are as ugly as a tulip bulb, yet it produces a beautiful flower.

If at the resurrection God would only put us back together again, there would be no improvement. I would like a lot of improvement for all eternity!

Like seedtime and harvest, our bodies in the resurrection will be different than the bodies that go into the ground even as there is a difference between the seed and the harvest, between the flesh of animals, and the brilliance of stars as Paul will teach us in this section of Scripture. God will not merely reconstruct our old bodies but remake them as new bodies for the Eternal State.

Seed and Harvest



The resurrection of the human body is a belief in the supernatural power of God to bring forth brand new bodies from the graves which have been disintegrated, destroyed by fire, or dead for thousands of years.

All questions of the skeptics, critics, and liberals are full of “hot air.”

Acts 26:8

“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”

Like seed to harvest, God will raise the dead; however, they will not be like the old bodies, merely reconstructed, but new bodies renewed and totally different in many ways.

“We shall rise, Hallelujah! we shall rise!
Amen! We shall rise! Hallelujah!
In the resurrection morning,
When death’s prison bars are broken,
We shall rise, Hallelujah! We shall rise.”

❖ There are the answers given to the skeptics.

What will the believer's resurrection body be like? In 1 Corinthians 15:35-50 Paul is now answering legitimate questions about our resurrected and transformed bodies, the kind of bodies we will all receive at the event of the Rapture.

He basically concludes that our bodies will be different than our present ones, but they will still maintain certain characteristics from our old bodies. There will be differences but also similarity.

1. The difference is illustrated - 36-41

The Bible teaches that the body which God resurrects someday will have similarities to the one that died (individual looks, personalities, etc.), even as a plant has a relationship to its seed. However, the resurrection body will also be different in many ways (no more blemishes, infirmities, faults) even as a seed is different from the plant or harvest it produces. Paul illustrates the difference between our present body and the future resurrection body.

Three illustrations are given to prove our resurrection (transformed) bodies will be different.

a. The agricultural analogy (vv. 36-38)



In 1 Corinthians 15:36 Paul begins to counter the foolish arguments: "Thou fool, that *(the seed like the human body)* which thou sowest is not quickened *(made alive)*, except it die" *(the harvest demonstrates a death to life cycle)*.

Paul calls the bluff of these false teachers and explains the seed to stalk analogy. The human body that dies is sown (like a seed) when it is placed in the ground and dies (decays). However, after the seed dies, a new stalk or

life emerges. In the same way, only after the human body dies can one be sure that a resurrection body will emerge. There is a death-to-life cycle in the planting of a seed and so it is with the human body.

The emphasis is on being “quickenened” (made alive) into a new plant. Our old bodies are not going to be simply reconstructed or reworked but totally renewed for the Eternal State. We are getting a brand new one – a new model!

1 Corinthians 15:37 goes on to explain:

“And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body (the stalk) that shall be, but bare grain (you sow the bare seed of grain), it may chance (per chance germinate into a plant) of wheat, or of some other grain.”

In other words, the seed you sow turns into full-grown stalks of wheat or some other grain related to the seed that was sown. However, what goes into the ground and dies is not the same thing that comes out of the ground. It is something altogether different and new! This is the way its gong to be with the resurrection and transformed body.

A farmer does not sow a cornstalk in the ground to get another cornstalk. No! He sows corn kernels. He sows seed in the ground and what comes out of the ground is not another seed but a stalk that is different from the seed and yet related to the seed. This is the way it will be in the resurrection. Our resurrection (transformed) bodes will be related to the body that went into the ground but also be different in many ways. There is continuity with the seed but also difference. The same will be true with the body we have today and our future resurrection body.

1 Corinthians 15:38

“But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.”

What happens in the seed to stalk harvest is also true in the resurrection. God will give us a new body “as it hath pleased him.” Don’t miss this point! I’m thankful that God is pleased to provide me with an eternal body someday that will never die. In fact, as every seed brings forth a stalk or

plant, so every Christian body that dies and is sown in the ground will result in a resurrection body.

Verse 38 speaks of our “own body” which suggests each of us will have our own personalized body. It indicates that we won’t all look alike in the resurrection but retain our distinctive looks and personalities, while at the same time, our bodies will be totally different in their design.

Robert Gromacki comments on this:

“Just as all men have natural bodies with distinct, personal characteristics (fingerprints, height, color), so all believers will have resurrection bodies with distinguishing marks of personal identity. We will not all look like Christ or like each other, and yet we will all have spiritual bodies with the same properties.”

Jesus’ resurrection body was recognizable to people who had previously known Him. Mary recognized His voice (John 20:16). We are told that the only reason the disciples did not recognize Him was because their eyes were “holden” - not because Jesus was not easily recognized (Luke 24:16, 31).

Yes, we will be different, as the seed to stalk analogy indicates, but we will still be recognizable in our resurrection bodies. We will still be recognized as Harry, John, Betsy, and Darlene.

Acts 1:3

“To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”

1 Corinthians 15:5

“And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once ...”

We have learned that the resurrection body will be a new body, not the old body reworked; however, it will be a body that possesses a relationship to

the original one, even as there is a relationship between the seed and harvest.

b. The animation analogy – vs. 39



Paul is now going to reason that all animated or living things possess different types of flesh to prove the resurrection body will also be vastly different.

1 Corinthians 15:39

“All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is* one *kind of* flesh of men (*skin*), another flesh of beasts (*fur*), another of fishes (*scales*), and another of birds” (*feathers*).

This second analogy involves animated life which consists of various forms of flesh - the differing kinds of flesh for men, animals, birds, and fish. All flesh is not the same flesh. So much for evolution! I’ve never seen scales growing on a man! I’ve never seen a fish with feathers. Where is the missing link? There is none! All flesh is different. Likewise, the resurrection and transformed body we will possess someday will be different than our natural bodies we have today.

Of course, there are similarities in that all living things have flesh but there is still distinction. In the same way, our resurrection body will possess similarities to our present-day bodies and yet be very different in many ways from our present bodies.

Pet lovers take note! Paul did not teach here that animals will be resurrected. He only used them as an example to show there is difference between the flesh of animals and therefore a difference in the resurrection bodies or people. Phido will not be raised from the dead, but Phido’s master will be raised from the dead.

c. The astronomical analogy – 40-41

1 Corinthians 15:40-41

“There are also celestial (heavenly) bodies, and bodies terrestrial (earthly): but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another (they are different). There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.”

A third analogy relates to inanimate (nonliving) objects of creation. The “celestial or heavenly bodies” (sun, moon, and stars) differ from “the terrestrial earthly bodies” (great mountains, canyons, oceans, etc.) and the “glory” (beauty and splendor) of the heavenly bodies differ from the glory of these earthly bodies.



In addition (verse 41), the heavenly bodies themselves differ from one another in the way they display their splendor and brilliance. Some stars shine brighter than others and their brilliance and brightness is far more spectacular. Astronomers will certainly agree with this finding.

In the same way, our resurrection bodies will possess a marked difference between our present physical bodies on earth. As the stars differ, so our resurrection bodies will be different than our present earthly bodies.

Of course, at the same time all of the heavenly bodies possess a similarity in that they express splendor and glory. However, they are different. The same will be true in the resurrection. Our bodies will be similar to our previous bodies in various ways (looks, personality, etc.) and yet they will be totally different in their design or makeup.

What kind of body will we have in the resurrection day? It will be different than our present bodies.

2. The difference is explained – 42-50

“So also (by way of comparison) is the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor. 15:42). Paul now applies the differences he just explained within the agricultural, animation, and astronomy analogies to the bodily resurrection of believers. Our new body is going to be totally different in many wonderful ways.

What will our transformed body be like?

- a. It will be a body incapable of dying – vs. 42

1 Corinthians 15:42

“So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.”

The moment we are born we really begin to die. Slowly our bodies begin to move toward the grave. We are cycled for death. However, when we receive a new body, it will never die again. The cycle will stop! We will never grow old in our resurrection bodies! We will always have perfect health and never be subject to dying again. Sound pretty good to me! No more doctors, hospitals, optometrists, Medicare, health insurance, etc.



1 Corinthians 15:52 again reminds us:

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (the *mortal who are still living*) shall be changed.”

The word “corrupt” has the idea of moving away from the origin condition. The body will decay, disintegrate, decompose, and perish (John 11:39). However, when the human body of the Christian will be raised in “incorruption.” This means it will never again know deterioration but will retain its primitive condition of excellence and beauty. Nothing will invade

the body to cause any kind of deterioration, sickness, pain, disease, etc. Its condition will be permanent, durable, and eternal. Never growing old, tired, or weary, our resurrected and transformed body will maintain its freshness and quality of life forever.

At the present time our bodies are subject to disease and death. When they are placed in the grave they decompose and return to dust. But it will not be like this with the resurrection body. Our resurrected and transformed body will no longer be subject to sickness or decay. We will never experience any more heart problems, cancer, and other diseases or maladies that lead to death since it will be a body that can never die.

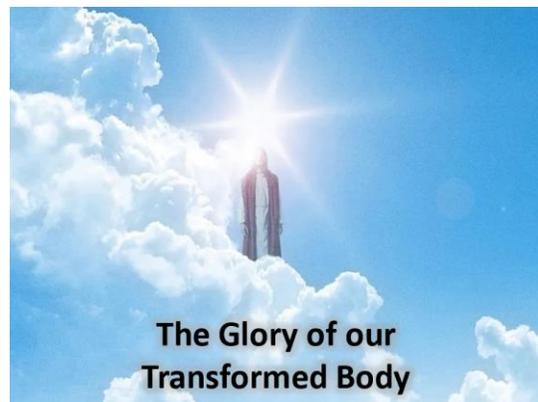
As we have already seen, someday we will experience the joy of an incorruptible, never-ending, undying body (1 Corinthians 15:52-57). Our transformed body will never suffer the physical effects of the curse and experience death.

b. It will be a body of indescribable glory – vs. 43a

1 Corinthians 15:43

“It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.”

It is “sown in dishonour.” In Philippians 3:21 it speaks of “our vile body” which is lowly, shameful, and humiliating in nature for it is the vehicle through which sin operates and which slowly causes the body to deteriorate. There is nothing very majestic or glorious about a dead body. The body, when it dies, is seen to be in a dishonorable state. Even the best mortician cannot beautify the body and bring back its youthfulness. But it will be “raised in glory.” The word glory connoted a body that is resplendent, bright, beautiful, and perfect. In general, the word “glory” speaks of a state of magnificence and



**The Glory of our
Transformed Body**

splendor. It the Biblical word that best describes the resurrection and transformed bodies of God's saints.

There is a three-fold glory of the resurrection body.

- ✓ The glory refers to magnificent beauty.

The word "glory" would indicate something that is beautiful. The new and transformed body that we receive at the resurrection will be a body of spectacular beauty. This means our resurrection body will be free from wrinkles, scars, the marks of age, overweight, and any traces of disease or sin. Our resurrection bodies will never grow old! Our bodies will be beautiful bodies that are no longer subject the Genesis curse in any way. Time and sin will no longer affect them.

- ✓ The glory refers to majestic shining.

Our resurrection bodies will also express an outward glory and magnificence forever as they shine and reflect our state of purity and eternal reward that we have received.

Matthew 13:43 brings out this aspect of the transformed body:
"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

This is not the event of the Rapture but the Second Coming and the resurrection of Old Testament saints. Whether an Old or New Testament saint, the Bible clearly reveals there will be a resurrection and transformation that is similar in nature. The bodies that we receive will be bodies of glory and splendor as they shine and display brilliant light.

At the Second Coming of Christ to earth, there will be a shining associated with those who are transformed to enter the earthly theocracy or Millennial Kingdom. The Old Testament saints will shine as they enter the messianic kingdom. Their shining will be associated with their newly resurrected bodies in conjunction with the rewards associated with their righteous living earthly living.

Matthew 13:43 is reminiscent of Daniel's writings which spoke of the resurrection of Old Testament saints at the commencement of the Millennium.

Daniel 12:3 reveals the same thought of shining with resurrection:
"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

Daniel likens the resurrection bodies of Old Testament saints to shining, emanating a light of brilliance from their bodies in direct proportion to the level of the rewards they have received. This means that God's saints will outwardly radiate and shine in their resurrection bodies as they reflect the eternal reward that they have received because of their righteous acts. This shining or radiance will be one way that we will glorify the Lord for all eternity.

1 Peter 5:4 also speaks of shining in our transformed bodies:
"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Our real crown will be the ability to radiate and reflect Christ's glory in our redeemed, resurrected, and transformed bodies in proportion to our service rendered unto the Lord and the eternal rewards we have received. Our bodies will apparently consist of a shining glory that we will be able to display throughout eternity.

- ✓ The glory refers to moral purity.

The New Testament gives some clear indication on this.

Romans 8:30 again reminds us:
"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Glorification relates to our bodies and the time when we will be morally like Jesus in our transformed bodies.

Romans 8:18 adds this:

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory (*moral glory, pristine perfection*) which shall be revealed in us.”

There will be a glory (beauty and splendor) associated within us when we receive our transformed bodies. This will be an inward glory or beauty associated with our new bodies. When we become like Jesus Christ we will in some measure share His moral beauty and holiness. In other words, there is an inward moral transformation that we will experience in our new bodies at the event of the Rapture. This is the moral glory and perfection that will be revealed in us!

Colossians 3:4

“When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (*sharing in His glorious moral likeness*).

We will manifest throughout the unending ages of time the glory of moral and spiritual purity in our newly transformed bodies. We will sing:

“O, that will be glory for me,
Glory for me, glory for me,
When by His grace I shall look on His face,
That will be glory, be glory for me.”

In summary, the word “glory” refers to the beauty and splendor of our new bodies, the outward shining and brilliance of our glorified bodies, and the inward moral and spiritual perfection we will experience with our new bodies.

Before coming to church last week, I was putting my briefcase in the trunk of the car and accidentally hit my head. I had not opened the trunk far enough and it was at my head level. I really hit my head hard and it left a little mark on my forehead. Before Church I asked my wife for two Advil for I could feel a headache coming on from the recent episode. You know, I was thinking how wonderful it will be when we get our glorified bodies. We will no longer need any Advil or painkillers. We won't need vitamins and other

medical attention. We are going to get a perfect body that will never experience any more pain, suffering, and medical emergencies. It's going to be a perfect body suited for the Eternal State.

Sadly, a recent poll showed that only 36% of American adults believe that, after you die, your physical body will someday be resurrected. 54% do not believe so and 10% are undecided. Of course, we have been studying the Bible and it reveals not only that our bodies will be raised from the dead as Christians, but it also explains the nature of our bodies, what they will be like.

c. It will be a body of immense power - 43b

1 Corinthians 15:43 goes on to say: "...it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:" When the Bible says our bodies are "sown in weakness" it underscores the fact that we are a fragile tenement of clay. We are weak, prone to illness and ultimately death. How easily the strongest of us are cut down! We could hang over them the notice: "Fragile, handle with care." Of course, our bodies are never so weak as when they lie cold in death. But the Bible teaches that these frail and weak bodies will one day be raised in power. This is amazing to contemplate.

The power of our resurrection bodies indicates several things.

- Our powerful body will not be subject to natural weakness.

The fact that our bodies will be "raised in power" should be a tremendous encouragement to us. As we advance in older age, weakness increases, until disease and death strip a man of all his strength. We have all witnessed our friends and family dying and we have seen them in a weakened and unhealthy state of living.



Our present bodies are sown in dishonor and weakness. Our bodies are not a thing of beauty but weakness and humility as we grow old. But in eternity our new bodies will have complete power over disease and the present

weakened state we experience. Our bodies will never age. They will always remain young, new, strong, and vibrant.

- Our powerful body will not be subject to the laws of nature.

Although the body we will possess someday will be physically tangible and real (Luke 24:39), we must remember that the resurrection body of Jesus could move from one place to another in a moment's time and disappear at will.

Luke 24:31

“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.”

In Christ's resurrection body Jesus could vanish in a moment's time. If we are going to possess the same physical perfections and capabilities of Jesus, then we too will be able to move about in such a way as this.

Acts 1:9

“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.”

In His resurrection body Jesus could descend straight up.

John 20:19 gives us more information:

“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”

Here is something else to reflect on. With His resurrection body Jesus could enter a room where the doors were locked. All of this suggests that our resurrection bodies will be powerful and therefore will be able to perform new unimaginable feats.

M. R. De Haan comments that our resurrection bodies “will be able to rise above the laws of time and space. They will be able to travel great distance

in the winking of an eye. They will be able to pass through unopened doors.” There is, indeed, a real sense in which the accounts of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ in Luke 24; John 20 and 21; and Acts 1:1–9 shed light on the nature of the resurrection and transformation of our own body. You see, our transformed bodies will be very powerful bodies. They are sown in weakness but raised in power with new, unimaginable, powerful abilities. Like Jesus, with our transformed bodies we will be able to move about at will, vanish, reappear, and move through closed doors. Imagine being able to move about all over God’s universe in a moments time.

In fact, our transformed bodies we will be designed in such a way that we will be able to defy the laws of nature and move in and out of the New Jerusalem (our heavenly city) that will apparently hover over the earth during the Eternal State.



Revelation 21:1-2

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven (hovering over planet earth), prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

Jack Hunter concluded:

“Swift as the lightning flashes we shall go on our way through God’s vast and wonderful creation, serving Him. Possessing a constant supply of inward energy, we shall be capable of every form of service required of us.”

We have a glorious destiny awaiting us! The half has not been told! The half cannot be fancied, this side the golden shore!

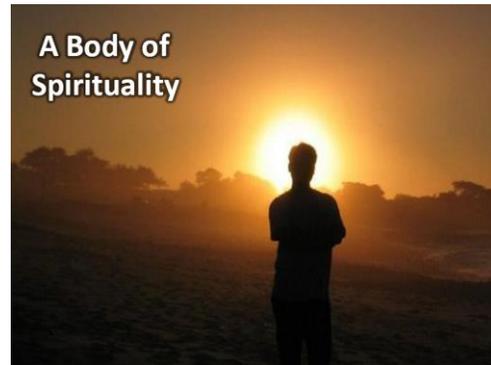
d. It will be a body of impeccable spirituality - 44

Paul now explains the spiritual characteristic of our transformed body.

1 Corinthians 15:44

“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

We must be very careful at this point and emphasize that the word “spiritual” does not mean nonmaterial or incorporeal. Some people have the idea that in the resurrection we will be nothing more than disembodied spirits roaming about, and that the nature of the resurrection body is not physical but only an immaterial spirit being. This is not true.



Although our resurrection body will possess characteristics of the spirit world in the way it will be able to move about, this is not Paul’s emphasis here. The meaning of the word “spiritual” is not referencing an immaterial or non-physical composition of the resurrection body. The reference to a “spiritual” body in the resurrection speaks of the spiritual state of the resurrected human body. As we have seen, we are going to be morally like Jesus, sharing in spiritual perfections (“when he shall appear, we shall be like him” - 1 John 3:2). Yes, we will not only behold Him, but we shall be like Him in the day of our transformation!

Many years ago, in the city of New York, during the days when liberalism was called modernism (back in the 1920s) the modernists had an argument about the spiritual nature of the resurrection, claiming it was only spiritual – not physical.

The liberal, who rejected the miraculous, claimed the resurrection body was only spiritual (immaterial) in substance. He didn’t believe in the miracle of bodily resurrection at all. A very famous liberal Greek scholar from the University of Chicago read a paper on the passage from this verse in 1 Corinthians 15:44. His paper put the emphasis on the word *spiritual*. He

concluded by saying, “Now, brethren, you can see that resurrection is spiritual because it says it’s spiritual.” The liberals all applauded, and somebody made a motion that they print the manuscript and circulate it.

Well, another very fine Greek scholar was there, and he stood up. And when he stood up all the liberals were a little uneasy. He could ask very embarrassing question. He said, “I’d like to ask the author of the paper a question.” Very reluctantly, the good doctor stood up. “Now, doctor, which is stronger, a noun or an adjective? A very simple question, but I’d like for you to answer it.” He could see the direction he was going and didn’t want to answer it, but he had to. “Well,” he said, “a noun is stronger, of course.”

“Now doctor, I’m amazed that you presented the paper that you did today. You put the emphasis upon an adjective, and the strong word is the noun. Now let’s look at that again. ‘It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.’”

He then said, “The only thing that is carried over in resurrection is the body. It’s one kind of body when it dies, a natural body. It’s raised a physical body, but now a spiritual body that is dominated by the spirit—but it’s still a body.”

And, you know, they never published this paper of the liberal! They decided it would be better not to publish it. Here is the point. just a simple little exercise in grammar took the air out of this liberal argument. Let God be true and every man a liar!

The spiritual body does not refer to an immaterial or incorporeal body but a physical body with the spiritual characteristic of pristine perfection. After His resurrection Jesus was not merely a spirit or immaterial being floating around. We know that the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus was composed of flesh and bones. He said, “a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have” (Luke 24:39). Jesus still maintained the crucifixion scars (John 20:27), He ate food (Luke 24:42-43), and people actually touched the risen Jesus (Matt. 28:9). These are all understood as relating to a material and physical body.

Jesus died on the cross with a physical body and He rose again with a physical body to complete redemption's plan for mankind which included the promise of a redeemed body someday. Jesus' resurrection body was - and had to be - a material or physical body. Our salvation and resurrection depend upon it!

1 John 4:2-3

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God (*what messages or teachings are being backed by the Holy Spirit*) very spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (bodily, physically) is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (bodily, physically) is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

The heresy of Docetism taught by the Gnostics was that Christ did not have a real physical body but only a phantom type of spirit. But the Bible dogmatically and emphatically teaches that Jesus Christ came physically in His incarnation, He died physically, and He rose again physically to set us free from sin's penalty, power, and some day from the very presence of sin through a glorified body. Christ as a mere immaterial spirit could not become a saving sacrifice for mankind. He had to become like man to deliver mankind from Hell and judgment.

Hebrews 2:14-15

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death (*Christ's physical death on the cross*) he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Christ had to become man and possess a body like man to rescue mankind from his sinful plight. In a similar way, Christ rising from the grave as only an immaterial spirit could never give the promise of a bodily and physical resurrection. Jesus had a real body in both His life and resurrection to complete God's total redemptive plan for mankind.

Norman L. Geisler, a well-known apologist, stated:

"The logic is clear: If Jesus rose bodily from the dead in the same body in which He died, and if this body (*the original body of Jesus*) was a physical, material body, then it follows that the resurrection body was a physical, material body."

It's amazing how many today still disbelieve in the physical, bodily resurrection of Christ and His followers. I once heard a story about Robert Ingersoll, the famous atheist of some decades ago. It is told that at one time he sought to show how the miracle of Lazarus being raised from the dead by Jesus was just a trick to bolster His waning fortunes. To clinch his point, Ingersoll said to the audience, "Can anyone tell me now why Jesus said: 'Lazarus, come forth!'" (John 11:43)? An old Christian in the back got up and said: "Yes! Because if He had not said 'Lazarus,' He would have had the whole graveyard of Bethany coming out to Him."

Of course, Christ's body that was raised from the dead had been transformed but it was still a physical body. The post-resurrection body of Jesus was like His pre-resurrection body and therefore it was a material body.

I have emphasized the physical nature of the resurrection body to prove that a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44) does not mean we will only be a spiritual, nonmaterial being throughout eternity. This has never been God's plan for the human race. Our redemption not only focuses on the human spirit but also the human body. The central idea behind the spiritual nature of our resurrection body is that we will be totally controlled and dominated by our spiritual nature since the Adamic nature (old nature) will be forever gone. Sin will no longer be part of our resurrection and transformed existence. We will be spiritual beings whose bodies will be completely controlled by the spiritual part of our human existence. We will never sin again, never have an evil thought again, never be tempted again, and never be angry again. We will think no evil and do no evil forever and forever.

Verse 44 says it is "sown a natural body." The "natural" body refers to literally our "soulish" body which is controlled by the soul which is the place

where the old nature resides and manifests itself. Paul knows that when we die, we die with the effects of the old nature and curse upon our lives.

But someday our bodies will be “raised a spiritual body” which means that in the resurrection the spiritual nature will be completely dominate and take over our bodies. There will be no more old nature or soulish existence in our future resurrection and transformed existence. When we get a new body through resurrection or Rapture all the old sinful inclinations will vanish away.

“In the resurrection morning,
When the trump of God shall sound,
We shall rise, Hallelujah! we shall rise!
Then the saints will come rejoicing
And no tears will e’er be found,
We shall rise, Hallelujah! we shall rise.”

Paul now begins to explain the difference between the soulish and spiritual body.

The exchange from the soulish to the spiritual body is now explained.

✚ It involves distinct men (45) = From Adam to Christ

1 Corinthians 15:45

“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul (*Adam was created with a physical body with the propensity to sin and be dominated by the soulish part of his existence, therefore passing the sin gene down to all of us - Gen. 2:7*); **the last Adam (Jesus Christ) was made a quickening (life-giving) spirit**” (*Christ will one day give us a new body that is morally perfect that is only dominated by the spiritual part of man’s existence or the life-principle within, a body glorified with eternal life, a body glorified with eternal life*).

Adam gave us a type of body which would eventually become dominated by the soul and sin nature. The last Adam (Jesus Christ) will one day give us another kind of body that is dominated by perfect spiritual life. It will be a body free from all moral corruption and contamination. This seems to be

what Paul is teaching. We will receive a glorified body from the Lord that possesses eternal life but also a perfect life from a moral and spiritual perspective.

Two headships of humanity are established in this verse. One is Adam's headship which relates to our present imperfect body and the other is Christ's headship which relates to our perfect resurrection body (when we will be like Him).



The Last Adam (Jesus Christ) gives us the promise of transformed body someday that is totally dominated by our spiritual life within. We have this blessed hope through our spiritual Head (Jesus Christ).

Voddie Baucham Jr. wrote:

“The last time I checked, the death rate was one per person. I didn’t check today, but I’m sure it didn’t change. It is appointed to man to die once, then face the judgment (Heb. 9:27). So everyone everywhere is asking or will ask the same question: How can I avoid being defeated by that last enemy? You can’t beat him. You can’t buy him off. You can’t appease him.

“You can’t outrun him. You can’t exercise enough or eat well enough. There is nothing you can do to avoid being overtaken by this enemy. But the resurrection says you can overcome this enemy: “O death, where is your sting?” You see, when you stand over a believer, it’s not the same as standing over an unbeliever, because when you stand over a believer, you know that because of his union with Christ, his federal head, he will rise just as Christ rose from the dead. There is a resurrection coming. So this sting is gone; death’s victory is gone.”

Thank God that Jesus Christ as the last Adam has died and risen from, the dead to give us a new body totally dominated by the new life principle.

Let’s reflect on these two men.

✓ There is the first Adam

The natural body we have today which is “sown a natural body” (vs. 44) is linked to first Adam whose body suffered the effects of sin and became tainted by the transgression. His body was influenced by sin and suffered the ultimate effects of sin. In other words, Paul is teaching that we are descendants of Adam and receive our natural body from him which means we experience the same sinful effects upon our bodies such as disease and death.

Adam’s body was dominated by the soul after he sinned, the soul being the place where the old nature operates and resides. Today we reside in a body that is characterized as “natural” or “soulish” (a soulish body – 1 Cor. 2:14). The natural or soulish body eventually dies and goes back to the dust. So, do we have any hope? Yes! There is another Adam (the last Adam) who came to provide us with the hope of receiving a new body without sin and which is only dominated by the spiritual life principle from within.

✓ The last Adam

In contrast to the Adamic body (the body influenced by sin), the resurrection body that we will receive someday is spiritual and it comes from Jesus Christ who is termed here as the last Adam (not the second Adam), who will one day give us this perfect spiritual body that is dominated by a “quickenning spirit” (a life-giving spiritual life from Jesus Christ). Our future resurrection bodies will be totally dominated by the spiritual life that Jesus Christ, the life-giving Adam, provides for us. This spiritual life is related to the human body. Of course, the wonderful future blessing of a redeemed body totally set free from sin and dominated by our spiritual life within will be the direct result of God’s amazing grace! I am so thankful that Jesus Christ is the life-giver through His physical death on the cross and physical resurrection from the dead.

As Vice President, George Bush represented the U.S. at the funeral of former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, he was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev’s widow. She stood motionless by the coffin until seconds before it was closed. Then, just as the soldiers touched the lid,

Brezhnev's wife performed an act of great courage and hope. She reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest. There in the center of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had run it hoped that her husband was wrong. She hoped that there was another life, and that life was best represented by Jesus who died on the cross, and that the same Jesus might yet have mercy on her husband.

Well, if we find God's mercy and grace in this life, we will be sure to receive more of it in the next life when we receive our transformed bodies. We have discovered that only Christ can give us a resurrection body which will one day be totally dominated by our spiritual life within. This brings us to our next point.

Paul goes on to explain the exchange from the soulish to the spiritual body.

✚ It involves a divine order (46) = From old to new

1 Corinthians 15:46 presents the proper order:

"Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual."

The order is significant. We start with our earthly bodies inherited from Adam which possess a sinful nature but end up with our spiritual bodies inherited from Christ which will be morally perfect. Paul now calls our resurrection bodies spiritual because they are completely and forever only dominated by the new life principle within them which was given to us by Christ. Our resurrected bodies will be completely and forever spiritual. Never again will we sin or even think about sinning.

Here is the right order. Our bodies today follow in the likeness of Adam's "natural" body (a soulish body experiencing the effects of the sin nature). This means we sin with our human bodies, suffer disease, and eventually die in our natural or soulish bodies. It's because our bodies are a reflection and likeness to Adam's body. They are bodies tainted with the effects sin and therefore must go to the grave.

However, “afterward that which is spiritual” looks ahead to the resurrection body which is a spiritual body (a body of moral purity) that reflects the spiritual perfections related to the resurrection body of Jesus Christ, the second Adam. Jesus Christ will someday give us a new body that will be totally spiritual or dominated by spiritual living. Someday we will no longer reflect the old Adamic body with its sinful effects. We will be given a brand-new body that will never suffer any effects of sin. It will be a body of moral perfection and glory.

Afterward! I am glad there is an afterward! A better day is coming. We are going to receive a transformed body that will be suitable to live in the Eternal State.

“God said it and I believe it
And that settles it for me!
God said it and I believe it
And that settles it for me!

Though some may doubt that His word is true
I've chosen to believe it, now how about you?

God said it and I believe it
And that settles it for me!

✚ It involves a designed body – 47-50 = From earthly to heavenly

1 Corinthians 15:47-50 finishes this section on our transformed bodies: **“The first man is of the earth, earthy** (*Adam and his earthly body dominated by sin*): **the second man is the Lord from heaven** (*Jesus Christ who is exalted in Heaven with a sinless and spiritual body of perfection who will one day return to give us a glorified body – 1 Cor. 15:23*).

“As is the earthy (*referring to Adam*), **such are they also that are earthy** (*referring to our present state in earthly bodies that reflect Adam’s body of sinful depravity*): **and as is the heavenly** (*referring to the exalted Christ in Heaven who possesses a glorified body*), **such are they also that are heavenly** (*in view of our union with Christ, believers can look forward to possessing the same kind of transformed body that the heavenly and glorified Christ possesses today in Heaven*). **And as we have borne the image of the earthy** (*Adam’s image*), **we shall also bear** (*at Christ’s Coming*

– *the Rapture*) **the image of the heavenly** (*Christ's image, a perfect likeness to Christ's moral glory and perfections – 1 John 3:2*).

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood (*our natural bodies with sinful inclinations and imperfections*) **cannot inherit the kingdom of God** (*we cannot enter the earthly and Eternal Kingdom, our Eternal State, in our present sinful bodies*); **neither doth corruption inherit incorruption**” (*that which is corrupted by sin and death cannot inherit that which is pure and eternal – we cannot live in the Eternal State in our present bodies – we need a spiritual one that functions in a perfect and sinless realm or environment*).

Let's reflect on these verses for a few moments. “The first man is of the earth, earthly” Adam was created out of the earth and his body was termed “earthly” to describe the human body that has been wracked with the human frailties of sin and marred with the scars of sin. Earthly bodies represent bodies which have been used for sinful purposes and therefore they cannot enter Heaven. We need a new body that is perfectly spiritually and untainted by the effects of sin. Someday we are going to receive a body that is perfectly spiritual, sinless, and one that will no longer possess the propensity for sin. It will be a perfect body from a moral and spiritual perspective.

The Bible goes on to say that “the second man is the Lord from heaven” (vs. 47). Some suggest this refers to Christ's *incarnation* and that Christ came to take on a human body that could eventually be glorified. But it seems better to view this with eschatological implications. In other words, the glorified and exalted Christ is going to return from Heaven to provide us with a new spiritual body that is suited for the Eternal State. The context of this statement (“the Lord from heaven”) suggests that it's a reference to Christ's return in the Rapture. Christ is the first fruits as it relates to resurrection, and we will follow at the time of His return (1 Cor. 15:23).

The phrase “as is the earthy” (vs. 48) refers to our present bodies which follow after Adam's body (the progenitor and head of the human race), a body that has been sin cursed and can only exist on earth. However, “as is the heavenly” (*referring to Christ's resurrected body in Heaven as the exalted Lord*) is now linked to “they also that are heavenly.” In other words,

because of our union with Christ (Eph. 1:3) we too will one day receive a future, resurrected, and transformed body as God's saints which will be like the one Christ possesses now in Heaven. Yes, this will be a body that reflects the moral glory of Jesus Christ who will one day return from Heaven to give us a glorified body. Our bodies will someday perfectly reflect our heavenly Lord! Our body will be a perfect spiritual body that will never sin and one that will shine forth pristine holiness.

The final thought of "the image of the earthly" (vs. 49) refers to our present bodily state and the effects of Adam's fallen image which are still seen in our mortal lives. It is quite staggering to think that from Adam there have descended millions of people like him, possessing the same body and the same nature. However, the countering statement "we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" looks ahead to the resurrection and transformed state when we will receive a new body, a body that perfectly and forever reflects the moral and spiritual image of Jesus Christ, the One who is now Heaven. You see, we have all borne the image of the first Adam but those who put their trust in the last Adam will bear Christ perfect image in the resurrection and transformation day of the Rapture.

Erdman explains 1 Corinthians 15:49 in this way:

"As the descendants of Adam, we are made like him, living souls inhabiting mortal bodies, and bearing the image of an earthly parent. But as the followers of Christ, we are yet to be clothed with immortal bodies and to bear the image of our heavenly Lord."

The point Paul was making was simply this. The resurrection body completes the work of redemption and gives to us the image of the Savior. We shall then be conformed to the image of His Son in the great coming day (Rom 8:29). So, in the resurrection world we shall have bodies like Christ's body, who lives in moral perfection, and we will enjoy life in the fullest sense; yet each one of us will be recognizable and possess a distinct personality.

Beloved, the best is yet to come! We are someday moving out of the earthly body into a spiritual body (a perfectly, holy, body, untainted by sin, and incapable of sinning) that is fit to dwell in the Eternal State. It's a body that

reflects the Lord Jesus who came from Heaven to save us and give us a glorified body.

Tom Constable summarizes:

“God’s intent to make man in His own image (Gen. 1:26) will finally reach fulfillment when believers eventually receive bodies that enable us to live in the spiritual sphere as He does. God’s forming man out of the dust of the ground and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life was only the first step toward God’s realization of His goal. His creation of resurrection bodies for us will be the second and final step.”

1 Corinthians 15:50 concludes the section:

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”

The issue is clear. Bodies suited to this world can never pass over to the resurrection world of eternity. There must be a change.

The expression “flesh and blood” refers to our natural bodies or our present human existence in our earthly bodies which are tainted by sin and the effects of sin. It is a figure of speech that relates to our present humanness and life as we know it today, with our frailties, struggles, hardships, sin, disease, and death that are direct effects of the Genesis curse.

Today we are “flesh and blood” (we possess a body that is tainted with the effects of sin) but in the future we will possess a spiritual and perfect body that reflects Christ’s spiritual nature in a new resurrection or transformed body. The Bible says that we cannot “inherit the kingdom of God” in these corruptible, sin-stained bodies (a body that has experienced the effects of sin). Paul already mentioned this in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 as it relates to unbelievers. But it’s also true in another sense that God’s saints cannot enter the resurrection world of the Eternal State without receiving a newly redeemed body. This obviously means the Church Age saints cannot enter the future Millennial Kingdom which merges into the Eternal Kingdom while possessing a sinful body (1 Cor. 15:24-29). They will be transformed and live in a perfect body for the Eternal State.

A corrupt body is not suitable for our eternal existence. It cannot enter the “incorruption” and perfection of the Eternal Kingdom without a transformation. In other words, we need to get a new body that is spiritual in nature, totally pure and unblemished, so we can enter the earthly Millennial Kingdom and dwell with Christ in the Eternal Kingdom.

Gromacki again comments:

“The ‘flesh and blood’ body, or man’s present human nature (Gal. 1:16; Heb. 2:14) has been designed for life on this planet. It can breathe the surrounding air and eat its food. This body, however, has not been fabricated for heavenly life in the eternal presence of God. Corruption cannot inherit what is designed for incorruption. This is why God must change the human body from a natural state to a spiritual state.”

As God’s New Testament saints there must be a change or transformation in our bodies before we enter the earthly theocracy and our Eternal State. And there will be a change – a tremendous and momentous change!

1 Corinthians 15:52-53 once again triumphantly declares:

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

“We shall be changed! We shall be changed!
Changed from the mortal to immortality,
In the twinkling of an eye.
And we shall all be changed,
Like the lightning in the sky
In the twinkling of an eye,
We will be changed.
Yes, we shall all be changed!”

There is no such thing as a partial Rapture theory, that only the spiritual and victorious Christians in fellowship with God will be raptured. No, we shall all be changed! At the Rapture we will get a new, transformed, spiritual body that will be like Christ’s resurrection body, the Last Adam, the second man who came from heaven. It will be a body fully controlled by the spiritual

nature instead of a soulish, old, Adamic nature and we will be completely and forever dominated by the new-life principle.

Psalm 17:15

“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”

Someday at the event of the Rapture it will happen! We will either be raised or instantaneously experience a perfect moral likeness to Jesus Christ. And we have this promise and hope all because Jesus rose from the dead!

Jesus said in John 14:19, “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

Pastor John Ortberg tells the story of a friend of his (a pastor named Skip) who was attempting to tell the resurrection story in a children’s sermon. He asked the question, “What were Jesus’ first words to the disciples after he was raised from the dead?” Before he was able to give the answer, a little girl raised her hand high in the sky, so Skip let her answer. “I know,” she said, “Ta da!”. As Ortberg would argue, it was “as good a translation as any.”

Did you know that there is no other religion or cult whose leader makes the claim to have risen from the dead? Only Christianity has a leader and Savior who has risen from the dead. Buddha is dead. Confucius is dead. Mohammed is dead. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young are dead. Charles Russell is dead. Harry Krishna is dead. Gandhi is dead. Jim Jones is dead. Pope John Paul is dead. They are all dead except Jesus!

Some bones from one of Buddha’s fingers were sent as a gift to the emperor of China during the Tang dynasty. They were later forgotten about and then found in 1981. The finding was a sensation to Buddhists everywhere, and the bones are now visited by many Buddhists.

If someone claimed to find a finger that belonged to Christ, no true Christians would believe him because our faith is founded on the fact that there is no finger to find—Christ rose from the dead.

Since Christ is alive, He will do what He has promised. He not only has given us eternal life today when we believe in Him, but He will one day in the future give us an eternal body. As God's people we have the blessed hope of receiving a new body someday that will never experience the effects of sin. It will be sinless, painless, and deathless. Do you have this hope today? You can! The Lord from Heaven has promised this!

These passages that deal with the transformation of our bodies via resurrection or Rapture give us enough information to satisfy our curiosity and provide us with enough truth to inspire comfort and stimulate hope in our hearts. Beloved, a better day is coming! We are coming back to life someday with a new and eternal body! We are getting a transformed body for eternity.

A woman looked out the window of her home and was horrified to see her German Shepherd shaking the life out of the neighbor's pet rabbit. Her family had been quarreling with these neighbors; this was certainly going to make matters worse. She grabbed a broom and ran outside, hit the pooch until he dropped the rabbit now covered with dog-spit—and extremely dead.

What was she going to do? The woman lifted the rabbit with the end of the broom and brought it into the house. She dumped its lifeless body into the bathtub and turned on the shower. When the water running off the rabbit was clean, she rolled him over and rinsed the other side.

Now she had a plan. She found her hairdryer and blew the rabbit dry. Using an old comb, she groomed the rabbit until he looked pretty good. Then, when the neighbor wasn't looking, she hopped over the fence, sneaked across the back yard, and propped him up in his cage. No way was she taking the blame for this thing!

About an hour later, she heard screams coming from the neighbor's yard. She ran outside, pretending she didn't know what was going on. Her neighbor came running to the fence and was horrified. "Our rabbit, our rabbit!" she yelled. "He died two weeks ago, we buried him, and now he's back!"

Folks, we are coming back someday with a new body, a body that is perfect from a physical and spiritual perspective. And it's all because of God's amazing grace!

I read about a Christian doctor in London who wanted to arouse a young boy to the importance of the salvation of his soul. One night the doctor explained to him that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout" (1 Thess. 4:16). He then said, "When the Lord comes, you may have my home, John."

The boy was surprised. "And my car." John was more surprised. "And my furniture, and my money." The boy said, "Thanks." But alone in bed he began to think: "If the doctor goes to heaven, what will I do with his house and car and all the rest? Where will I be?" He woke up the doctor and explained his problem, and before morning he was also ready for the Lord to return for he had embraced Christ as his Savior.

6. Are there any signs that must occur before the Rapture takes place?

There are many people today who enjoy the hobby of bird watching. They look at different birds, try to identify them, and know everything about them. In a similar way, we also have butterfly and bug watchers. Of course, there is nothing wrong with these hobbies. However, a great many Christians today are also caught up in sign watching. They feel that the Rapture must be preceded by multitudes of signs before it can occur. Therefore, they are always looking for more signs to be fulfilled so the Rapture can take place. This certainly is not a Biblical perspective on the Rapture. The Rapture is a "signless" and imminent event. In other words, no signs need to be fulfilled for the Rapture to occur.



There are three reasons why Christians should not become sign seekers.

- The Second Coming is contingent on signs – not the Rapture.

The Bible actually teaches the Second Coming of Christ to earth will be preceded by many specific signs. However, the return of Jesus in the Rapture for His Church is not contingent or dependent on occurring signs.

The Church is never told to look for specific signs that must be fulfilled in order for Jesus to return in the Rapture. Of course, we do see precursor signs which are pointing to the fact that the earth is headed toward the Tribulation Period. However, they are not biblical signs that must be fulfilled for Jesus to return in the Rapture. Christians down through the years and centuries have been talking about signs and Jesus still has not returned. Why is this? It's because there are no signs that prove or verify that Jesus will return at any given time in history.

Signs are specifically for a coming generation of people (the Jews) who are living during the seven-year Tribulation Period. Specific signs will be designed to let them know when Jesus is going to return to earth.

The prophetic context of Matthew 24 is the Tribulation Period.

Matthew 24:21

“For then (*not today*) shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

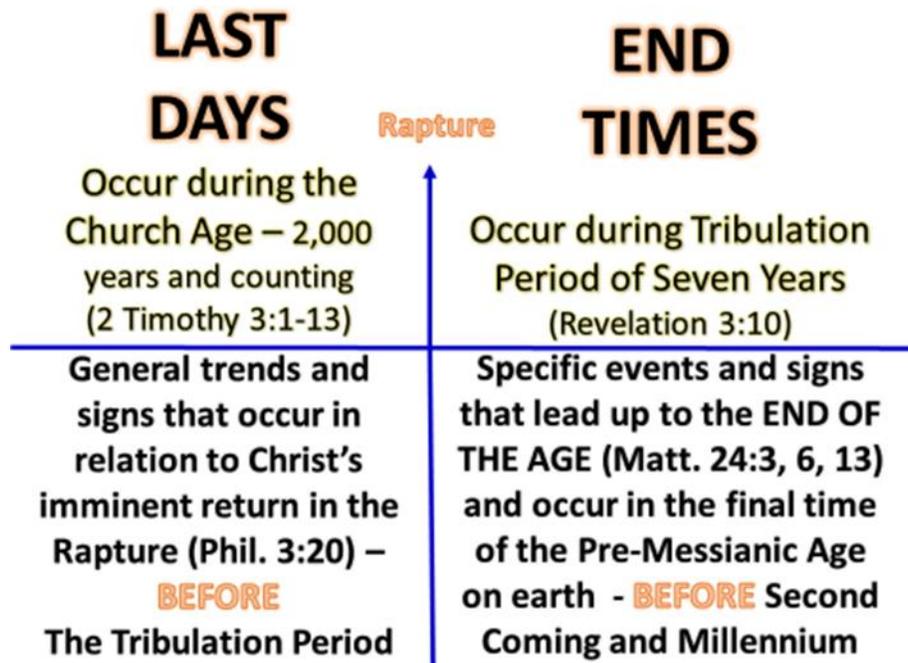
Matthew 24:15

“When ye (*the Jewish people*) therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)”

These verses are strictly dealing with the Tribulation Period as verse twenty-one clearly reveals which is the time Antichrist will set up a statue of himself in the rebuilt temple of Jerusalem. This specific period of time (seven years) with its appropriate signs will usher in His return to earth in His Second Coming.

The term “end” in the context of Matthew 24 is applied to the events associated with the future seven-year Tribulation Period which precede Christ's Second Coming to earth. The End Times (Matt. 24:3,6,13-14) are

events which can only occur during the future Tribulation Period, which specifically lead up to the end of the Tribulation Period, and the age before Messiah rules the earth. Therefore, we are not living in the End Times which occur before Christ’s Second Coming. Instead, we are living during the “last days” (2 Tim. 3:1) which occur prior to the secret coming or the Rapture.



Matthew 24:29-31 gives an overview of Christ’s Second Coming to planet earth: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken (*these are signs that will last an undetermined period of time and which precede the Second Coming*): And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect (*the Jewish people*) from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Of course, this is not a picture of the Rapture since the Rapture does not occur after the seven-year Tribulation Period. The Church has already been raptured to Heaven seven years prior to this event (1 Thess. 1:10; Rev.

3:10). Matthew 24 is strictly dealing with the Second Coming of Christ to earth and the signs that will precede His return to earth.

Matthew 24:32-34 says:

“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation (*a generation of Jews living during the Tribulation Period – not a generation within the Church*) shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.”

What did He mean by “this generation?” Prophetically, Jesus meant that the generation of Jewish disciples that saw these signs during the Tribulation Period would also witness His return. In Matthew 24 Jesus was speaking to his Jewish disciples and His own national people (Israelites). F. W. Grant and many others believe the thought is: “the very generation that sees the beginning of these things will see the end” (Christ’s Second Coming).

It's clear that “all these things” (pertaining to the signs preceding the Second Coming) have never occurred. The completion of all these events is yet future. The generation (genea – a specific race or stock) of Jewish people living in that future day will see the completion of all the events. Jesus was not referring to the generation listening to Him then, for He had already said the kingdom had been taken from that group (Matt. 21:43). The first-century generation of Jews would experience God’s judgment. But the generation that will be living at the time these signs begin to take place (during the End Times or Tribulation Period) will live through this period and they will see the Lord Jesus coming as the King of glory to establish the Millennium.

Luke 13:35

“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until *the time* come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

Who are these signs really for? Signs are for Israel - not the church. I believe no person could have passed their study on Bible prophecy in the Bible Institute where I attended if they did not know the answer to this question. Signs are given to a generation of Jews who are living during the Tribulation Period. This is what Jesus is teaching.

Neither the Church nor the Rapture is found in Matthew 24. Jesus was not talking about a generation of Church saints witnessing His Second Coming. Jesus was speaking to His Jewish disciples (and by extension their people) when He taught that many signs would precede His Second Coming (Matt. 24:1-2). The signs of war, persecution, an increase in iniquity, the abomination of desolation, and more specifically the astronomical signs associated with the Second Coming of Christ, which will obviously last for an unspecified period of time, are the signs that Jesus is referring to in Matthew 24.

Christ will actually return to earth during this period of time when the astronomical signs are occurring. But no person could know the exact timing of His Second Coming or return to earth since Christ returns at one point after the Tribulation has expired (Matt. 24:29).

This is why Jesus taught in Matthew 24:36:

“But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”

This verse is placed within the context of Christ’s Second Coming to earth and should stop date-setters from trying to predict when Christ will return in His Second Coming. Now think about this. If the people living during the Tribulation Period could not determine the exact timing of Christ’s return, with all the signs that will be given to them (Matt. 24:32-33), then how could anyone expect to calculate the time when Jesus will return in the Rapture?

Here is the point. The Jewish people living during the Tribulation Period can look at the signs and know that the Second Coming of Christ to earth is impending. These signs will act as specific indicators that Christ will return to earth very soon. However, none of these signs relate to the Rapture of

the Church which occurs before the Tribulation. They are not signs that must occur or be fulfilled before the Rapture can take place.

Once again, the Rapture is a signless event. There are NO signs which are given to you and me today which indicate that Jesus MUST return in the Rapture this year or 100 hundred years from now. Therefore, it is rather silly to build a lot of hype around different signs. When people begin to look at signs today, they begin to be caught up with the error of date setting.

There are many so-called and self-proclaimed prophecy experts today who claim they can find certain chronologies in the Bible which point to the actual date when Christ will return in the Rapture or in His Second Coming. These intricate and imposed chronologies on the Bible are said to be signs which indicate when Christ will return. Those who try and date Christ's return must perform numerical gymnastics with the Bible to arrive at the time when Christ must return.

The folly of date-setting can be readily seen throughout the passing centuries. Pope Innocent III predicted that Christ would return in His Second Coming in the year 1284. Baptist preacher William Miller predicted Jesus would return to upstate New York on October 22, 1844. Jehovah Witnesses have set several dates for the end of the prophetic end and Christ's Second Coming (1919, 1915, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1925, 1941, 1975, and 1994).

In 1988 Edgar Whisenant wrote a book entitled "88 Reasons Why Christ Will Return in 1988." The book did not sell very well in 1989! In fact, I saw the sequel to the book, "1988 Canceled."

Harold Camping predicted that Christ would return in September 1994 and wrote an entire book imposing chronological implications on the Bible which do not exist. More recently he set October 21, 2011 as the date for Christ's return and the end of the world. Whoops! Others base Christ's return on certain feast days and blood moons and predicted that the Rapture must occur in September 2008. The list could go on.

We have now learned that the Second Coming of Christ to earth is contingent on signs, but this is not true of the Rapture.

There are three reasons why Christians should not become sign seekers.

The Second Coming of Christ to earth is contingent on signs – not the Rapture.

- The Rapture is an imminent event and therefore cannot be contingent upon signs.

Stop and think about this. If a person can set a date when Christ must return or certain signs must be fulfilled before He can return, then Christ's return in the Rapture could not have been imminent during Paul's day, or the days of the early church. This means the entire doctrine or teaching about imminence would be false. But the Bible clearly teaches the imminent or any-moment return of Christ for His Church in the event of the Rapture.

The word imminent is not found in the Bible but has become the word to express the theological idea of the "any-moment" coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word itself speaks of something that is about to happen.

Renald Showers explains:

"An imminent event is one that is always hanging overhead, is constantly ready to befall or overtake a person, is always close at hand in the sense that it could happen at any moment. Other things may happen before the imminent event, but nothing else must take place before it happens. If something else must take place before an event can happen, that event is not imminent. The necessity of something else taking place first destroys the concept of immanency."

There are various Bible verses that speak of the imminent return of Christ in the Rapture. Let's look at some of them and reignite the blessed hope in our hearts which pertains to Christ's return at any moment to redeem our bodies, reward us, and rescue us from the coming Tribulation Period.

Revelation 22:12

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

The word “quickly” (“takhoo”) means that Christ’s will return soon, speedily, suddenly, without delay and warning. The word connotes imminence, or the any-moment return of the Lord to take His Church (the Bride of Christ) back to Heaven (John 14:1-3). The Lord Jesus Christ declared three times, “I am coming quickly” (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20). In all these cases “tachos” (or words related to it - tachu) clearly refer to the imminence or nearness of the event of the Rapture. The tachos word group is used in a similar sense (speaking of imminency) throughout the New Testament (Acts 17:15; 25:4; Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 4:19; Phil. 2:19, 24; 1 Tim. 3:14; 2 Tim. 4:9; Heb. 13:19, 23; 2 Pet. 1:14).

In Revelation 2:16 Jesus warned the church at Pergamum to repent or else He would come “quickly” (suddenly in judging them), while in Revelation 3:11 He comforted the faithful church at Philadelphia by telling them that He would come “quickly” (imminently or without delay). These verses also speak of a sudden and impending event that occurs at a given time without warning. Christ’s coming is said to be at the door.

James 5:9

Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

Jesus was ready to step through the door of Heaven and return for His people.

Revelation 22:10 says that “the time is at hand” or near which speaks of imminency. Christ could return in the Rapture at any moment. Revelation 1:3 also speaks of the imminent event of the Rapture when it states: “the time is at hand” or near. All of these Rapture verses argue against the need for specific signs or events that must be fulfilled before the Rapture can take place.

Peter reminds us that “the end of all things is at hand” (1 Pet. 4:7) which means the Rapture is approaching and is imminent. The coming of Christ in the Rapture will trigger many events. Yes, the “time is at hand” (Rev. 1:3) when Jesus will return and all the prophetic events recorded in the Book of Revelation will begin to rapidly occur.

Here is the point. All that needs to happen for Christ to return in the Rapture is for Christ to return! The soon return of Christ means the any-moment return of Christ and this is what the words “quickly” and “at the door” and “at hand” are teaching. Jesus Christ is returning for His Church soon, suddenly, without any prior warning, and without any necessary signs to be fulfilled.

If I told you that I will soon arrive at your house to take you out to Shady Maple for supper, you would not expect to wait four years or a long period of time to get there! My coming would be imminent or impending. If someone told you that they were coming to visit you soon, it means they could come at any moment. Their visit is impending. If something like the Rapture can occur soon or suddenly (without warning) then the event is imminent. It could happen at any moment and any time.

“It could happen in a moment, In the twinkling of an eye,
It could happen in a moment, He could break the Eastern sky,
Tho our hearts will feel unworthy, yet how happy we will be
When the Savior comes from heaven,
When His blessed face we see.

It could happen in a moment, any minute of the day,
He could call us home to heaven, there forevermore to stay,
"Hold the fort" a little longer in your struggle over sin,
Trust the great Commander's promise: He will surely come again.”

Any moment! Perhaps Today! This is imminency! This is how the early church viewed and anticipated Christ’s return in the Rapture. Jesus Christ was returning soon, suddenly, without any delay, and without any specific signs that must be fulfilled before He returns.

Paul taught that the “last days” which precede Christ’s return in the Rapture would be increasingly perilous and difficult (2 Timothy 3:1-7). These events and the last days were already occurring in Timothy’s day and would continue to transpire until Jesus returns. But none of the “perilous times” of the “last days” were intended to be specific signs that must be fulfilled for the Rapture to happen. Paul was simply teaching that there would be a constant emergence of wicked and sinful things occurring in the world during the period of time known as the last days which occur on earth between Christ’s return to Heaven and return in the Rapture.

So, Paul did not give us the details of the “last days” to create specific signs that must be fulfilled before the Rapture can occur. He was looking for Jesus to return in His own way (Phil. 3:20-21). The “last days” handbook that Paul gave to us simply reminds us that things will continually get worse until the Rapture occurs, and Christ takes away His Bride (the Church). The general trend of the last days is evil, wickedness, and moral degradation. This is exactly what we see happening today.

The perilous times of the last days blows a giant hole in the theory that the Church is going to Christianize the world and bring in the earthly Kingdom (postmillennialism and Dominion Theology).

1 Corinthians 16:22

“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.”

The word “Anathema” (to be cursed) seems to be somewhat strange here. At least we wonder why it is included at this point, with no explaining context. Many interpreters believe that it was a common saying among Christians, used to express their commitment to one another in distinction from the unbelieving world around them. I tend to agree with this. In other words, it was a statement of their special fellowship that they had together which leads into the second word. The point seems to be this. All who reject Christ will be set apart by God for the display of His final wrath. So long as they persist in this rejection, Christian fellowship cannot be extended toward them. Why? It’s because they are not Christians! Christians could greet one another “Anathema” (you are cursed) if you are

not saved and part of the Christian fellowship of saints who identify with one another in the body of Christ.

The word “Maranatha” (another common saying among Christians) is directly translated from the Aramaic which means, “Lord Come.” This was a popular word of the early Christians. This adopted Aramaic word spoke of imminency as it relates to the return of Christ in the Rapture for His Church. The early church used this as a catchword or popular word which they shared among one another to remind themselves of the blessed hope of Christ’s imminent return.

William Barclay wrote:

“It is strange to meet with an Aramaic phrase in a Greek letter to a Greek Church. The explanation is that that phrase had become a watchword and a password. It summed up the vital hope of the early Church, and Christians whispered it to each other, identified each other by it, in a language which the heathen could not understand.”

Here is one more thing to reflect upon. Perhaps the word “Anathema” is directly linked to “Maranatha” to confirm in their Christian greetings that all genuine believers in Christ would not experience God’s wrath and judgment in the Tribulation Period but instead be removed from the earth in the Rapture. “Anathema, Maranatha.”

All these verses on the imminent return of Christ in the Rapture teach that there were no chronologies that had to be figured out or any signs that had to be fulfilled during Paul’s day, or even today, for Jesus to return in the Rapture.

Someone said:

“God didn’t give us prophecy to make calendars but to build our character (1 John 3:2-3).”

1 John 3:3 says:

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

- Christians are to be looking for the Savior and listening for sounds – not looking at signs.

Since the Rapture is imminent or could happen at any moment, we are not to become carried away with sign watching. The early Christians were not taught to look at signs when it comes to the Rapture, but they were to look for the Savior!

Philippians 3:20

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Titus 2:13

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”

I must live with this hope not only in my head, but also in my heart! The fact that they were looking for Christ to return at any moment also speaks of imminency. The early Christians were not looking at signs to be fulfilled or other events to come to pass before Christ could return in the Rapture. He was simply looking for the Savior to return at any moment of any day!

We are not to be looking for signs but listening for sounds!

1 Thessalonians 4:16

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

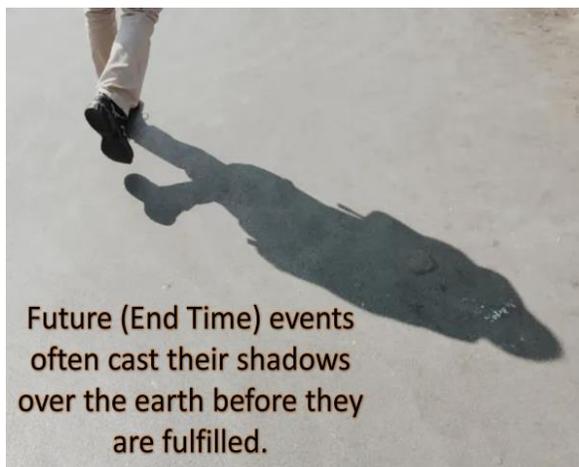
Christians who are “sign seekers” will often become so caught up with aligning events with the newspaper and the coming of Christ that they miss the joy and longing of Christ’s imminent return for them. They miss the truth that Jesus might come today. Perhaps today!

I think many Christians believe in the teaching of the Rapture but at the same time they really don’t believe that the Rapture could really happen at any moment. Many Christians don’t believe it will happen in our lifetime.

But we must be Rapture believers. We must believe that it can happen today! We could be the terminal or last generation in the Church Age who are snatched away!

Although we are not to be sign seekers, looking for signs that must be fulfilled for Jesus to return in the Rapture, neither should we be naive about what we see happening today in our world. Although no events must be fulfilled or specific signs must occur for Jesus to return in the Rapture, we can readily see and understand that what is happening in the culture and on the world stage is preparing and paving the way for the Tribulation Period to begin.

Friend, there is a storm that is brewing today. An ominous dark cloud can be seen on the horizon which is going to eventually come and overtake the earth with God's judgment. This prophetic storm will hit the earth during a period of time known as the End Times or the seven-year Tribulation Period, which is known as Daniel's 70th week (Dan. 9:27) – a final week of seven years. The storm that is brewing and which will eventually come upon the earth is a storm of epic proportions.



Future or End Time events often cast their shadows over the earth before they are fulfilled. Today we do see precursors to this storm. We see the push for globalism, one world government, Islamic countries aligning themselves against Israel, the experimentation with worldwide identification marks on the bodies of people, and the complete breakdown of our

culture from a biblical standpoint. All these things and many more that are occurring in our world today reveal that the Tribulation Period of getting closer which can only mean one thing - the Rapture is that much closer!

In other words, the events, trends, or signs we see happening in the world today point to the coming and ominous period we know as the Tribulation Period. Therefore, what we see happening in the world today indicates that

the Rapture cannot be far off and that we indeed might be the terminal (final) generation that is taken up without dying!

All we can say is that now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed!

Romans 13:11

“And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

In other words, our final deliverance at the Rapture (the redemption and glorification of our bodies) is closer than it was when we came to initial faith or belief in Christ. This can only mean that Christ’s return in the Rapture is imminent and that we can expect to enter into our final state of deliverance at any moment of any day of any time!

I’d like to share a few more Bible verses on imminency.

1 Thessalonians 1:10

“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Waiting requires patience but it also portrays the wonderful truth of imminency. The early church was expecting Christ to return in their own day and time. They were patiently waiting for His return. The same should be true for us today. We should be waiting for His any moment return. We will come back to this verse later when we talk about the pretribulational Rapture. But for now, we can readily see how the early church was patiently waiting for the return of Christ in the Rapture in the midst of very challenging times. They expected His return to happen at any moment. They were patiently waiting with a longing and expectancy that Jesus could come today and remove them from all their hardships, persecution, old age, and sin-cursed body and ultimately the wrath of God displayed in the seven-day Tribulation Period.

Here is another “waiting” verse that tells the story of the saint’s belief in the imminent coming of Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:7:

“So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Waiting is not always easy. Dr. Lehman Strauss has written a booklet entitled, “In God’s Waiting Room.” It deals with suffering and hardships and how to patiently wait for God’s answer, direction, and redirection through all of it. When it comes to the Rapture, we must also patiently wait for Christ’s return. And it takes a lot of patience today in the midst of watching out country implode before our eyes, the culture rejecting God’s moral codes for the family, sexes, and everyday living.

Galatians 5:5 echoes the same truth:

“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”

God’s children are to possess “the hope” (a specific hope related to the Rapture) as they wait for the time when the Lord will come, when they will receive a glorified body, and when they will sin no more. This verse is not teaching that the Christian hopes for righteousness in connection with Christ’s present saving work since each believer already possesses a righteous standing before God through the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). This verse is teaching that the believer waits for the moment when he will be completely, perfectly, and forever righteous in himself or his own state of being and living (“we shall be like him” - 1 John 3:2).

To “wait for the hope of righteousness” means to anticipate the any moment return of Jesus, which will result in the believer’s final salvation (glorification) as revealed in Scripture (Rom. 8:30; 1 Pet. 1:9). This will be a time when the believer receives a perfect state of righteousness and will no longer be tempted to sin or disobey God in any way. What a blessed hope this is! It is an optimistic hope knowing that at any moment Jesus might break through the blue and grant us our final redemption.

1 Thessalonians 1:3 also address the patience aspect of the believer in view of Christ’s imminent return: “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.”

Here we see that the imminent return of the Lord Jesus is the Christian's blessed hope. Their waiting is said to be "their patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." This is another reference to Christ's return in the Rapture and the hope that fills our hearts in view of the redemption of our bodies from all earthly trials, sickness, and sin.

Patience once again speaks of their steadfast waiting for Jesus. We can keep ourselves propped up in view of the imminent return of Christ and our great escape from the world, the flesh, and the devil, as well as from all sickness, persecution, hardships, and elderly age. These saints had been undergoing persecution because of their stand for Christ. They had been passing through hard times. Philipps says that no cracks had appeared in their sheer dogged endurance.

Christian friend, we can be patient, endure, because we know Jesus is coming at any moment to change us forever! The imminent return of Christ inspires me to keep on keeping on, to keep my eyes on the sky, to be listening for the trumpet sound, knowing that at any moment we shall all be changed, in the twinkling of an eye!

Hope! That is what the imminent return of Christ gives to us. We can live with a daily hope in our hearts that at any moment, perhaps today, we will be rescued from our diseased stricken body, from our sinful inclinations, from every hardship and difficulty that we face, and we will be with the Lord forever. Don't let any person or errant teaching on the Rapture steal the blessed hope from your heart.

Spiros Zodhiates said:

"Our hearts will be propped up if we live in the constant expectation of His coming."

I need to be propped up these days. And the blessed hope of the imminent return of Christ will give me the spiritual prop I need, the uplifted spirit, the hope of being with Jesus, and the endurance to go on living for Christ till he comes again! Beatrice Bush Bixler wrote these lovely words:

"There is a message written in the Word of God for me,
My Savior put it there to ease my load of care.

I read, "Let not your heart be troubled, I will come again,
That with me you may be through all eternity."

So many hearts are broken here, so many tears are shed
But Jesus brings sweet peace, this message brings relief.

He'll come again for those he loves.

The clouds will part someday,
And Jesus will break through, I'm going up, are you?

This is the Christian's hope,
And like a beacon in the storm,
It still sends forth it's light, to make the pathway bright.

The dead in Christ, and we remaining,
Shall be upward caught.

Oh, what a day t'will be, blest day of victory!

The Christ I love is coming soon,
It may be morning, night, or noon.
My lamps are lit, I'll watch and pray.
It may be today, it may be today."

Until the Rapture occurs, we can clearly recognize that the stage is being set for the Tribulation Period (End Times) to begin with all of its signs and cataclysmic judgments. The key players and props are already in place. Israel is back in the land as a nation, the nations of Europe are united, Russia has Islamic alliances, times are increasingly getting worse, and the entire earth is in need of a world leader that can bring peace and stability to a war-stricken and economically distressed world. We might call these precursor signs or trends of what is going to take place during the Tribulation Period.

We cannot bury our heads in the sand!
There are some clear prophetic signs
markers that we can see today which
indicate we are nearing the End Times
(Tribulation Period) and that Jesus is
coming soon in the Rapture to take His
beloved people out of this world and
into the place He has prepared for

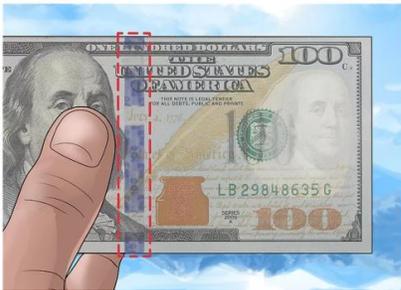
We see **signs of Christmas** during
the **season of Thanksgiving**. In a
similar way, we can see signs of
the Tribulation Period prior to the
event of the Rapture.



them (John 14:1-2)! Although we are not to view signs as necessary for the Rapture to take place, we cannot help but see signs today which are setting the stage and paving the way for the Tribulation Period to come upon planet earth.

“Signs of the times are everywhere,
There’s a brand new feeling in the air.
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky,
Lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh.”

Fake 100 Dollar Bills



Just the other week I was listening to the news and heard how several men were in a grocery store passing off fake one-hundred-dollar bills. They would buy a smaller item and then get a large amount of change back. The police caught them.

How do you spot a fake 100-dollar bill? Let the experts tell us. Look at the serial numbers. The serial number should correspond to the series. The serial number appears in the upper left and lower right corners. If the serial number doesn't correspond to the series, then you are dealing with a counterfeit.

Feel Franklin's shoulder. The new \$100 uses raised printing on Ben Franklin's shoulder. Run your fingers over the spot. You should be able to feel texture. No texture, you are dealing with a fake bill.

Hold the bill up to the light. An embedded thread runs just to the left of Franklin's portrait. The letters "USA" and the number 100 alternate along the strip, which is visible from both sides of the note.

Check the blue security ribbon. Just to the right of Franklin's portrait is a blue security ribbon. This ribbon is 3-D. Move the bill back and forth and check that you see the number 100 and tiny bells move from side-to-side as you move the bill.

Look for the watermark portrait. Hold the bill to the light and look for a faint image of Benjamin Franklin in the white oval on the right-hand side. You can see the watermark portrait on either side of the bill.

As we continue our study of the Rapture, we are going to study the real 100-dollar bill which I have called pretribulationism (the Rapture happens before the Tribulation Period). The reason we are going to primarily focus on pretribulationism is because the more we study the real thing we can easily detect the counterfeits such midtribulationism, pre-wrath, and posttribulation Rapture theories.

Many people might label the next question as a controversial question. But as always, the controversy is with man – not with God’s Word.

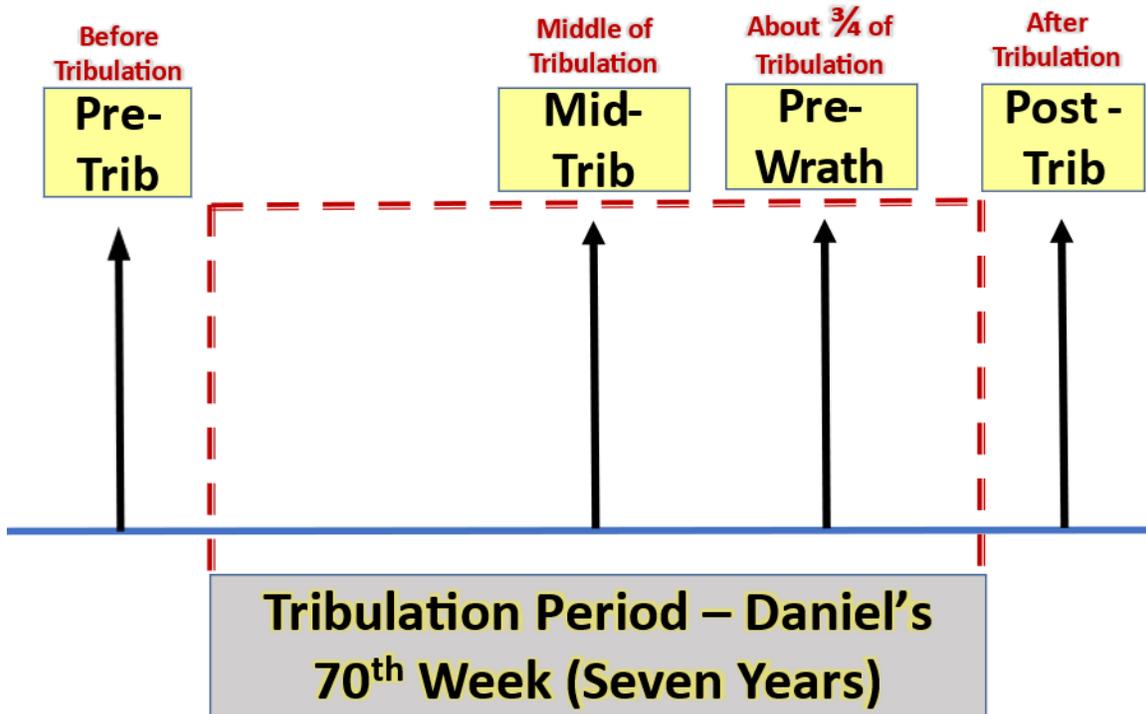
7. What is the timing of the Rapture?

The controversial question in relation to the Rapture is, “When does the rapture event take place?” When, in relation to the Tribulation Period (“Seventieth Week of Daniel”), does the Lord Jesus return to remove His Church from the earth? There is significant disagreement over the timing of the Rapture. Christians today have actually created a debate around this question. However, there is no debate in God’s Word concerning when the Rapture will take place. It will take place before the Tribulation Period of seven years (Danile’s 70th week). This is what we term the pre-tribulation Rapture. Christ will return for His church prior to the Tribulation Period and remove them from the coming judgment upon planet earth.

Chart of Rapture Views on Next Page

Rapture Views

Pastor Kelly Sensenig



Many people ask me what my view is on the Rapture. This is a sad commentary on the church today. Truth is being systematically categorized as only views that are negotiable. Instead of seeing truth as taught infallibly from the Bible, many are beginning to base their ideas of Scripture on views which are published by man!

I hesitate to talk about views concerning the Rapture. However, to convey the thinking of others on the timing of the Rapture, I will summarize the popular views and then teach the truth on the timing of the Rapture. I'm more interested in conveying the truth and not the errant teachings regarding the Rapture of the Church.

There are five different views taught regarding the timing of the Rapture. Some lengthy books have been written promoting these various positions. I'll briefly review the incorrect ones and then we will zero on the Biblical view of a pretribulation Rapture.

1. Partial Rapture theory

Holiness teaching adopts the partial Rapture view. Earlier authors like G.H. Pember, D.M. Panton, Robert Govett, and J.A. Seiss taught the idea that only overcoming Christians will be Raptured. The modern theory of partial rapture seems to have originated in the writings of Robert Govett who published a book setting forth the theory as early as 1853.

This view teaches that the church will be taken before the seven-year Tribulation Period begins but only the spiritual and faithful Christians will be taken in the Rapture. If you are having an argument with your wife when Jesus returns, then you will not be taken. If you have kicked your dog during the day, then the dog will be taken, and you will be left behind! This is a rather confusing theory to say the least.

Partial Rapture Theory

Only Christians in fellowship with God and who are living victoriously are raptured.

Christians who are living carnal lives are not raptured and left behind to pass through the Tribulation Period.



Bible teaches that all Church Age saints are raptured (1 Cor. 3:1 with 15:51; 1 Thess. 5:6 with 9-10).



This view sees the Tribulation as a time of purging of the left-behind believers from their sin and carnality. After this purging which occurs during the seven years, they can be raptured. Being raptured, therefore, is seen as a reward for being faithful to Christ and an overcomer.

The Bible says, “we shall all be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51), not just those Christians who are living victoriously and who are in right relationship with Him. The Bible teaches that all Christians will go up in the Rapture because of their position in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2). Their present state of our living will have no bearing regarding our participation in the Rapture. The Corinthians were carnal in their living (1 Cor. 3:1) but Paul still reminds them that they will have part in the Rapture of the church (1 Cor. 15:51). This means that even carnal Christians will be raptured.

1 Thessalonians 5:8-10 is a key Pretribulation Rapture passage:

“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation (*the hope of deliverance before the Tribulation Period begins*). For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation (*deliverance from the Tribulation Period as outlined in 1 Thess. 1:10*) by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.”

Did Paul mean “whether we are alive or dead” or “whether we are spiritually alert or lethargic”? It seems that he meant the latter (being spiritually alert or lethargic) is in Paul’s thinking for he used the same Greek words for “awake” and “asleep” in 1 Thessalonians 5:6, where they clearly mean to be spiritually alert versus spiritually lethargic in relation to our Christian living.

1 Thessalonians 5:6

“Therefore let us not sleep, as *do others (being spiritually insensitive to living for Christ and failing to watch for Him)*; but let us watch (*stay alert*) and be sober” (*spiritually sober in relation to our Christian discernment and living in view of the Rapture, reward, and meeting the Lord*).

The Bible tells us that whether we are spiritually awake or spiritually asleep, not really living for the Lord and looking for Christ’s return, that we still have the hope of being raptured. Whether we are watchful or worldly we (all the saints) will be delivered from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10). So even the worldly and unspiritual saints will be raptured when Jesus returns for His Church.

Another important thing to remember is that the translation and resurrection of the saints at the Rapture is part of the believer’s future salvation experience when they receive a glorified body (Rom. 13:11; 1 Pet. 1:5). Since our translation, resurrection, and glorification is a promised part of our salvation experience, being raptured and glorified cannot be a reward for faithfulness. Our entire salvation (past, present, and future) is viewed as the working of God’s grace (1 Pet. 1:13). The Rapture and the redemption of our bodies (our future salvation) has nothing to do with man’s faithfulness but God’s faithfulness. The entire Church will be

raptured into Heaven based upon God's saving grace which will be displayed in the future when He gives to us our newly redeemed bodies.

There is no such thing as a partial Rapture. Of course, this does not dismiss the fact that there are many worldly Christians clinging to the things of this world to find satisfaction. Someone has remarked that certain Christians will be taken up "feet first" (upside down) because they are hanging on to so much within this world! Raptured upside down! Imagine that!

In fact, even those Christians who do not believe in the Rapture will be raptured along with those Christians who have loved and taught the blessed hope of the imminent return of Christ in the Rapture.

I once heard a Presbyterian and Reformed preacher on the radio say this: "Some of you Christians think there is a Rapture that is going to take place before the Second Coming. I don't think anything like this is going to happen. But if you are right and it does happen, then grab me and take me along with you!"

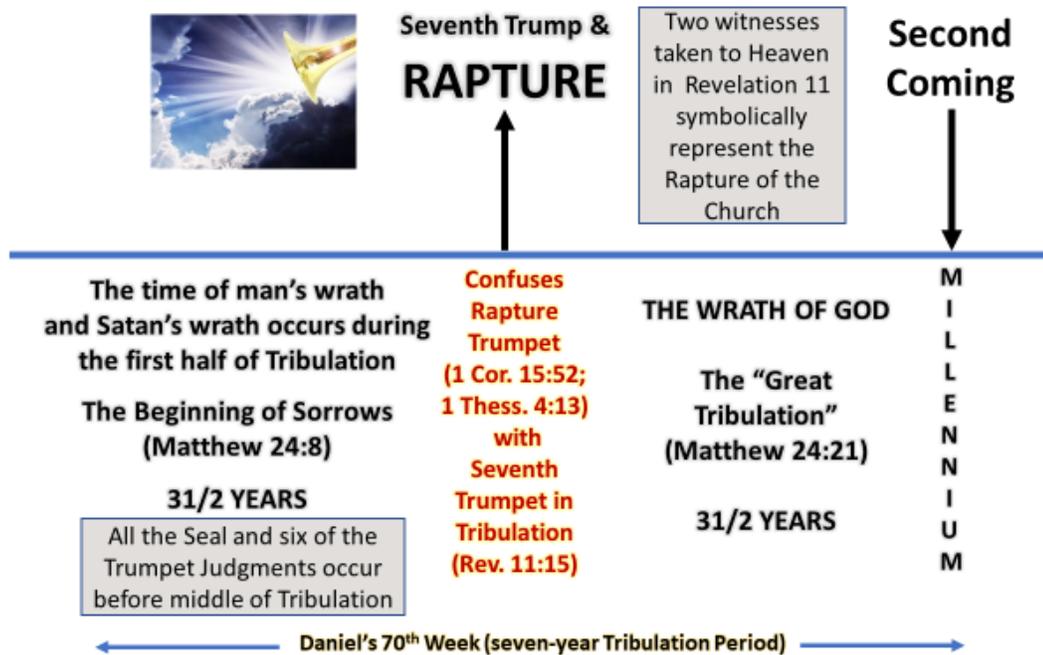
Well, Jesus will do the grabbing and snatching away at the Rapture and all true believers in Christ will be raptured and taken back to the Father's House as Jesus promised (John 14:1-2).

2. Midtribulationism theory

Remember that we are studying the TIMING of the Rapture in these divergent views – not all the details of each view. This errant view places the Rapture at the middle of the seven-year tribulation period or after three and one-half years have elapsed. In this view the Rapture and Christ's second coming to set up His kingdom are separated by a period of only three and a half years. According to this theory, the Church goes through the first half of the tribulation but is spared the worst or brunt of the Tribulation in the last three and a half years.

Midtribulationism

Pastor
Kelly
Sensenig



Midtribulationism bases its teaching on the sounding of the seventh trumpet that occurs during the middle of the Tribulation Period (Revelation 11:15), which is said to be the same trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and the "last trump" of 1 Corinthians 15:52. They claim that this is when (the middle of the Tribulation Period) the Church will meet Christ in the air. Afterward, the final bowl judgments are poured upon the earth (Revelation 15—16) in a time known as the Great Tribulation.

To assume that these two trumpets are the same and are blown at the same time is faulty interpretation. This view wrongly associates the trumpet blown by angels during the Tribulation Period with the trump of God of the Rapture. The word "last" and "last trump" must be understood in relationship to the context in which they are found.

This view disassociates the wrath of God from the first three-and one-half years of the Tribulation Period and claims God's wrath begins only with the Seventh Trumpet. In other words, all the Seal and six of the Trumpet Judgments take place before the midpoint of the Tribulation.

The midtribulationists try to say that what we are observing in the first part of the tribulation is human wrath and Satan's wrath but not God's wrath. This is essentially what the prewrath view of the Rapture also concludes which we will mention next. Of course, this is not a true evaluation of this text.

Revelation 6:16-17 refutes the theory that there was no wrath prior to the sixth seal judgment: "And (*the unsaved people of earth*) said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

Mankind in his rebellion during the Tribulation Period will correctly analyze that the cosmic (heavenly) and terrestrial disturbances are a part of the great End Time Day of wrath from the Lamb who sits upon the throne. They are not saying that God's wrath is going to come at one point in the future but that His wrath was already falling upon planet earth. Listen, when the sky is falling, the world of lost humanity will know that they are dealing with God's wrath, not man's or Satan's wrath as many suggest, to make the Rapture happen later, when God's wrath allegedly arrives upon the earth.

It's very clear that God's wrath has already come long before the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet as the midtribber suggests. The whole idea that the expression "his wrath is come" ("has come") is only introducing or looking ahead to future impending judgments of God's wrath but not the past and present seal judgments of God's wrath is erroneous.

These people were not announcing that the wrath of the Lamb and Day of the Lord's judgment was only going to begin at the middle of the Tribulation or about three quarters of the way through the Tribulation. The people on earth during the Tribulation Period certainly knew that God's wrath was being poured out upon them at this present time and even before this time.

The verb ("has come") is in the Greek aorist indicative, which refers to a previous arrival of God's wrath, not something that is about to take place in the future. The Greek grammarians do not agree with the mid-tribulation or

pre-wrath conclusions regarding the verb “is come.” For instance, Dana and Mantey state this about the verb, “It has no essential temporal significance, its time relations being found only in the indicative where it is used as past.” Wallace also states, “In the indicative, the aorist usually indicates past time.”

It’s also interesting that the other five times this verb is used by John in Revelation, none are futuristic. In examining the occurrences of this same expression in Revelation that involve the action of people (5:7; 7:13; 8:3; 17:1, 10; 21:9), we find that every one of them describes an event that occurs prior to the time of speaking. None is futuristic. This is important for the simple reason that you cannot build a Rapture theory on false evidence and improper hermeneutics. The idea that God’s wrath is still in the future to support a mid or prewrath Rapture during the Tribulation Period does not pass the Greek grammar test nor does it pass the “comment sense” test! If the sky is falling, you can be sure that these people were not viewing this as man’s or Satan’s wrath!

As mentioned above, many conclude that the Seal Judgments are the expressions of man’s wrath and Satan’s wrath, but not God’s wrath. Therefore, the Church will be raptured at some point later in the Tribulation Period when God’s wrath shows up! But the idea that the people’s comments in Revelation 6:16-17 are referring to God’s future wrath which will begin later in the Tribulation Period is an exegetical fallacy.

Let’s be honest with Scripture. The Seal Judgments precede the Trumpet Judgments in the book of Revelation. This means the Scriptures tell us that the wrath of God is already present in the Seal Judgments. God’s wrath will not be held back and only begin with the Seventh Trumpet as this system teaches. God’s wrath has already come long before the Seventh Trumpet occurs. The theory that asserts the Rapture happens at the middle of the Tribulation before God’s wrath begins on the earth is unbiblical. The midtribulational Rapture and prewrath Rapture theory can be easily debunked. This is because God’s wrath begins immediate when the Tribulation Period commences.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord (*the Tribulation Period and God’s judgment upon the earth*) so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them (*as the Tribulation Period begins*), as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

The whole idea that the wrath of God does not show up until the middle or three-fourths of the Tribulation Period is an erroneous conclusion. More on this later.

Something else must be said at this point. The view of a mid-tribulation Rapture and the next two views we will look at (pre-wrath and post-tribulation Rapture) all disavow the Biblical teaching and truth of imminency (Christ could return at any moment). If Christ cannot come until the middle of the Tribulation Period or $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the Tribulation or after the Tribulation, then His return in the Rapture is not imminent. But as we have seen, the Bible teaches imminency as it relates to the event of the Rapture (Phil. 3:20; 4:5; Rom. 13:11-12; 1 Cor. 16:22; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Pet. 4:7; Rev. 1:1; 3:11; 22:10, 20).

1. Pre-wrath Rapture theory

Very close to midtribulationism is the belief in a “pre-wrath” Rapture (a spinoff from midtribulational teaching) which concludes that the Church is caught up to Heaven before the “great day of ... wrath” (God’s wrath) comes to earth as allegedly indicated in Revelation 6:17. They hang their hat on Revelation 6:16-17. According to this position, the Church will pass through the first 3 and 1/2 half years and a significant part of the second half of the 70th week of Daniel before being removed from the earth.

To simplify, this view teaches that the Church will be taken in the Rapture three fourths of the way through the Tribulation, allegedly before God’s wrath begins. It teaches we will be Raptured at the end of the Great Tribulation but before the Day of the Lord begins. This view holds that there are three distinct and identifiable periods of time: the beginning of sorrows, the Great tribulation, and the Day of the Lord. But only on the Day

of the Lord (the final Trumpet and Bowl judgments of the Tribulation Period) is God's wrath experienced. The other time periods involve man or Satan's wrath.



This a very strange view that was developed in the 1970's and popularized by a man named Robert Van Kampen. Marv Rosenthal took up Van Kampen's false theory of the Rapture. Rosenthal became a student of this fellow and accepted his funds to publish a book called "The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church."

Back in the day, he sent a copy of his book to my home free of charge. This book is filled with unbiblical findings as Rosenthal finds prooftexts for his theory and creates a prophetic world salad. This very name pre-wrath is a misnomer. This view suggests that God's wrath is not seen until the final quarter of the Tribulation Period (trumpet judgments) and that the Church will be raptured prior to God's wrath, which is about three quarters of the way through the Tribulation Period.

Marv Rosenthal had an ax to grind! He suggested that the Church will only experience man's and Satan's wrath but not God's wrath. This is a very bizarre statement. In other words, the Church will pass through approximately five years of the Tribulation Period, which deals with man's wrath (Antichrist's judgments on the world = Seal Judgments 1-4) and then Satan's wrath (during the Great Tribulation – Seals 5-6) but will be raptured before God's wrath begins with the Seventh Seal out of which the Trumpet and Bowl Judgments flow (the expressions of God's wrath).

In other words, the Church will be rescued from what Rosenthal calls God's wrath (the Day of the Lord) which only begins three quarters of the way through the Tribulation Period with the Trumpet and Bowl judgments. The problem with this whole theory is that it's unbiblical.

- Daniel, Jesus, and John only divide the 70th week of Daniel into two divisions – not three – Man's wrath, Satan's wrath, and Day of the Lord (Dan. 7:25; Matt. 24:8, 21; Rev. 12:6, 14). This puts a hole in the Prewrath Rapture view which claims the Church will be Raptured with the shortening of the Great Tribulation and before God's wrath begins.
- The use of the word Tribulation is used to refer to the entire seven years (Matt. 24:9-21), whether it is greater or lesser Tribulation or affliction as mentioned in Matthew 24:9. It does not merely refer to the Great Tribulation Period.
- The Bible associates the Day of the Lord with the Great Tribulation (Joel 2:1-2; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21). The Day of the Lord is a time of trouble (Zeph. 1:14-15) as is the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21; Dan. 12:1). This means the Great Tribulation is not a separate time period from the Day of the Lord but part of the Day of the Lord. The Old Testament viewed the entire period (the seven years) not only as tribulation but as the expression of God's wrath (Isaiah 2, 13:6-13; Zech 14).

All the judgments of the Tribulation Period are the expression of God's wrath. They come from the hand of God (Rev. 1:5) and are part of the one

unified scroll (Rev. 5:2, 5; 6:1). Furthermore, it is the Lord Jesus Christ who opens the seven seals which unleash the judgments of the Tribulation Period (Rev. 6:1). These are not man's judgment or Satan's judgment, but God's judgment coming upon the earth. The Tribulation begins when Jesus opens the first seal, and from that point on, the wrath of God is meted out on a sinful world. All the Tribulation judgments are God's wrath – not man's wrath.

Marv Rosenthal said that he changed his view from a pre-tribulation Rapture to a pre-wrath Rapture theory, he suffered great sorrow and agony of soul. He records about the great agonies he went through and encountered as he changed his position. Marv Rosenthal is a brother in Christ; however, he has departed from truth and has felt the convicting blow upon his conscience for doing it.

Rosenthal wrote:

"These were the most tension filled, heart wrenching two and one half years of my life." He talks about many sleepless nights and excruciating tension and strained and somber board meetings.

Obviously, this was not a Christian who was being taught and led by the Holy Spirit regarding his teaching on the Rapture. To discover truth about Christ's coming is a joy and blessing and does not promote chaos and agony of soul and tension. It brings comfort and hope to our hearts – not misery and woes.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

There is no comfort knowing that we are going to pass through three fourths of the Tribulation Period!

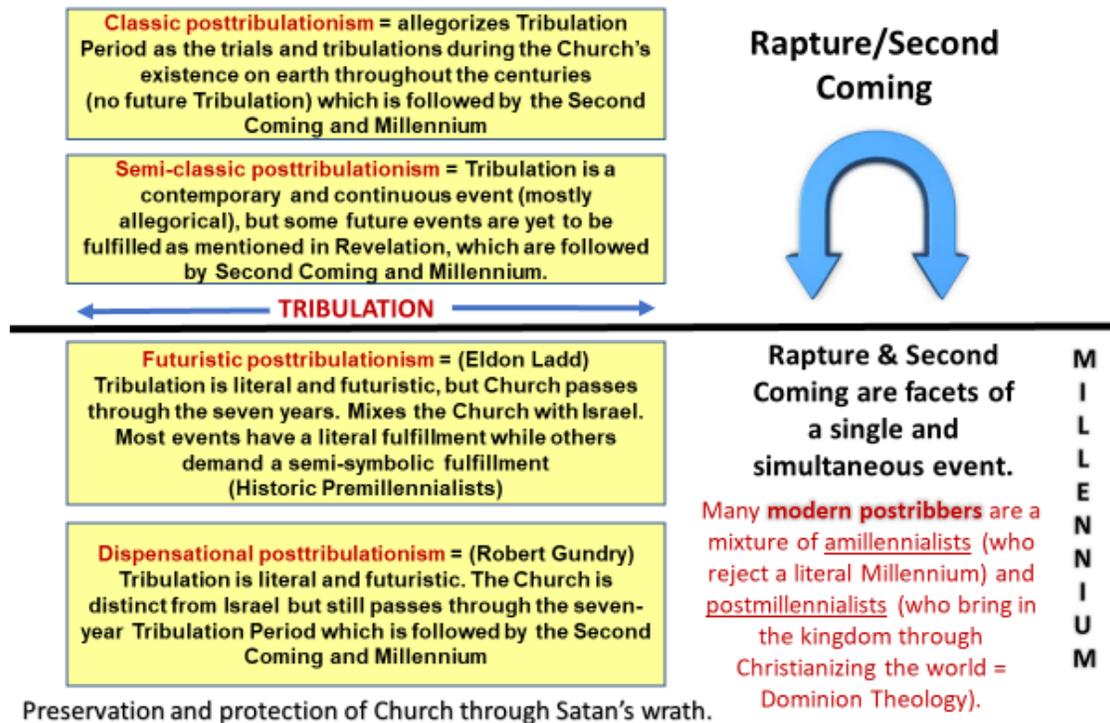
4. Posttribulationism

There are still some who embrace a posttribulation Rapture. A man probably developed this theory while he was eating "Post Toasties" cereal for breakfast! Personally, I have never found the post that these people are

leaning upon! Nevertheless, this is one of the more widely held rapture views. But it too is incorrect for it does not hold to imminence (Christ could return at any moment).

Posttribulationism

Pastor Kelly Sensenig



Posttribulationism teaches that the Rapture and the Second Coming are facets of a single event (one and the same) which will occur at the end of the Tribulation when Christ returns to earth. The Church will be on earth during the Tribulation to experience the events of this period and be raptured and immediately return to earth for the Eternal State. Today there is such a wide variety of interpretations among posttribulationists that they contradict one another many times.

Classic posttribulationism holds that the Church has always been in the Tribulation. This is because during its entire existence on earth it has suffered persecution and trouble. In this view, the Tribulation is not a literal future event but an ongoing present reality of hardships the church experiences. Therefore, most of the events of the Tribulation are not understood in any literal or futuristic way but are allegorized as tribulations

and trials in the Christian life. The Tribulation prophecies are constantly being fulfilled in the life of the Church over the centuries.

Some of the classic “posttribblers” claim to embrace imminency regarding the Second of Christ to earth. They pass through tribulation today and at one point the Second Coming happens. But their view of imminence is unfounded. This is because it rests on a faulty, non-literal, allegorical interpretation and understanding of the Book of Revelation and Matthew 24, which denies the literal teaching of a seven-year Tribulation Period containing various signs that precede the Second Coming, which make the Second Coming an event that cannot be imminent. Our view of imminence must be based on a proper hermeneutic or else it will lead to a blind zeal resting upon unbiblical conclusions.

Offshoots of the same theory such as semi-classic posttribulationism agree that the Tribulation is a contemporary and continuous event. However, it concludes that some events are future and await fulfillment. Because there are still some unfulfilled prophecies, the Second Coming and Rapture (viewed as a single event) cannot be an imminent event.

Futuristic posttribulationism became a major view in the 20th century. George Ladd, in his book “The Blessed Hope,” promoted the idea that there was a future period of seven years that immediately preceded the Second Coming. These seven years of tribulation would be experienced by the Church before it was removed from the world at the Rapture, which would occur at the time of the Second Coming. Of course, how much blessed hope could one have if they knew they were going through the Tribulation Period to face starvation, to be hunted down and persecuted and face the beheading by the Antichrist. I don’t see any hope at all in these debunked views!

Dispensational Posttribulationism is the viewpoint within the posttribulational position that takes a futurist approach but with a different twist. Usually those who are posttribulationists do not hold to a clear distinction between the church and national Israel in God’s program. But Robert Gundry, in his book “The Church and the Tribulation,” attempts to combine a dispensational interpretation with posttribulationism. Although

he sees a distinction between the Church and Israel, he says that the Church lives through the Tribulation Period and argues against imminency.

Gundry strangely claims that believer's will be kept safe from God's wrath but not Satan's wrath. But we know from Scripture that large numbers of believers do die during the seven years of tribulation (Rev. 7; 20:1-3). Unless you allegorize all of this away we cannot help but see that untold millions of saints will die during the Tribulation Period. Of course, there can be no comfort knowing that we will not die in God's wrath but instead will perish in the wrath of Satan or the Antichrist! A condemned murderer would not be greatly encouraged with the news that he would not die in the electric chair but would instead die by lethal injection.

The Bible is very clear in teaching that the vast majority of Tribulation saints are not going to be preserved through the Tribulation Period. They will be martyred for their faith. In conclusion, there are no valid exegetical and biblical arguments to support these theories as to when the Rapture will occur.

One fellow told me that he actually believed in another theory which he termed as the "pan out theory." I asked the man what he meant by the pan out theory? He said, "Well, I believe it will all pan out in the end, whatever will be will be!"

Dear friend, we must stop giving in to the opinions of man and accept the Word of God today for what it says! We are living in a day of great distortion and confusion of prophetic truth!

Dr. Harry Ironside used to say:

"Be careful of any teaching that is new, it might not be true"

This is a good reminder. What every Christian must believe is the truth about the Rapture! Men are trying to steal away the hope that we have in the imminent (any moment) return of Christ before a coming time of God's wrath upon earth. Whenever someone tries to place the Rapture within the Tribulation Period or after the Tribulation Period, they destroy the whole doctrine of imminence. They become hope stealers! Despite what some

say, these aberrant and errant views on the Rapture would result in God's saints suffering at the hands of the Antichrist and facing God's wrath in the Day of the Lord (Tribulation Period).

The mid-trib, post-trib and pre-wrath church hymnal has different words to the hymn "Glad Day." In fact, they should entitle their hymn "Sad Day" since they have the Church passing through the Tribulation Period.

"Jesus can't come today,
Sad day! Sad day!
Dangers and troubles won't end,
If Jesus can't come today.
Sad day!
Sad day!
Jesus can't come today.
The Beast and False Prophet I soon shall see,
Jesus, my Lord, I cannot see;
Sad day!
Sad day!
Jesus can't come today."

Those mid-tribbers, pre-wrathers and post-tribbers all fall into the same trap. They reject the imminent return of Christ and teach the Church is passing through the Tribulation Period are not promoting the blessed hope of the imminent return of Christ in the Rapture. Beloved, it is a sad future without God's deliverance.

A man was out on walk when he saw another man about to throw himself from a bridge into the river. He ran over to save him. "Why do you want to kill yourself?" the man asked. "I've nothing to live for."

"Don't you believe in God?" "Yes I do."

"What a coincidence-so do I! Are you a Jew or a Christian?" "A Christian."

"What a coincidence-so am I! Protestant or Catholic?" "Protestant."

"What a coincidence-so am I! Anglican or Baptist?" "Baptist."

"What a coincidence-so am I! Baptist Union Church or Independent Baptist?" "Independent Baptist."

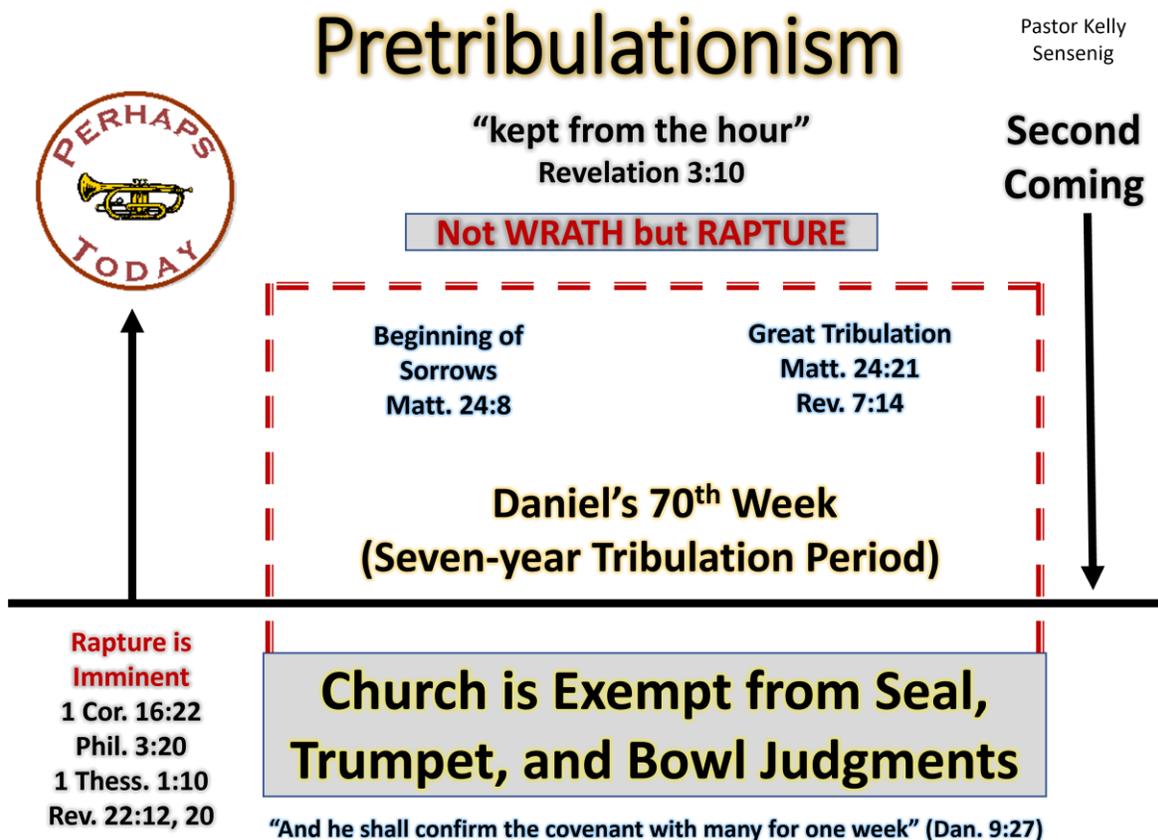
"What a coincidence-so am I! Premillennial or amillennial?" "Premillennial."

"What a coincidence-so am I! Pre-tribulation rapture or mid-tribulation rapture?" "Mid-tribulation rapture." With this answer the first man pushed the suicidal man into the river shouting "Die heretic, die!"

Well, some of our brothers and sisters do espouse a wrong view of the timing of the Rapture, but let's not push them off the cliff and call them heretics. It's better to label them as confused regarding God's prophetic program.

5. Pretribulationism

The next chart represents the true teaching of God's Word.



There is a lot of confusion in the Church today regarding the timing of the Rapture. The good news is still the good news, Jesus will come before the Rapture. This brings us to the biblical teaching on pretribulationism.

The pretribulational Rapture of the Church is the biblical truth that the Church will be caught away before the Tribulation begins and not participate in any part of Daniel's 70th week of seven years (Dan. 9:27). Ultimately the truth and roots of this teaching are in the findings of the New Testament epistles. However, long after the days of the apostles and early church, many doctrinal and prophetic teachings began to be lost in the traditions and heresies of the Roman Catholic Church. There was a wholesale erosion of prophetic truth, including the teaching about the Rapture and pretribulationism that occurred for many centuries within the history of the Church. But a resurgence of the Biblical teaching of Pretribulationism began in the 1800's within the Brethren Movements and expanded through the Bible conference movements in the later 1800's and turn of the 20th century.

The Reformation was responsible for bringing back the teaching of salvation in Christ and faith alone in Christ. It would not be until later that the study of prophecy would be revived and brought into its full bloom again. Because of corruption, there has been a need to revive great doctrinal and prophetic truths throughout the course of the centuries. Unfortunately, with the passing years there has been a decline in pretribulationism because of the many errant views being taught which confuse people regarding God's prophetic plan.

Revelation 3:2 says:

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things, which remain, that are ready to die:"

The truth of Christ rapturing us before the Tribulation Period is beginning to die amid the sea of prophetic confusion, or should I say in the midst of the pathetic conclusions about the Rapture. The truth of the pretribulational return of Christ is ready to die in some of the hearts of pastors and teachers. It's no longer relevant to them. Its impact and importance are being swept under the carpet and drowned out in volumes of jargon that cannot be understood by the average laymen.

Don't be fooled and don't be robbed of the blessed hope! The Bible says, "Let no man deceive you by any means" (2 Thess. 2:3). We are not going to

participate in Daniel's 70th week in any way – physically, allegorically, idealistically, historically, etc. The problem with the Church today is that we have become far too lenient with error and accommodating these errant views on the Rapture and Tribulation! Bible colleges are presenting these views to young people and then ask them to pick the one that makes sense to them. We need to teach the truth to our young people today – not views.

When the prophetic Scriptures are interpreted literally, non-allegorically, grammatically, futuristically, and soteriologically they teach pretribulationism. It reveals that the Church will not experience any of God's wrath during the seven-year Tribulation Period (the 70th week) as prophesied by the prophet Daniel (Dan. 9:27) and Jesus (Matt. 24:1-29). Those who espouse different views on the timing of the Rapture, which are not pretribulationist, mix the Church with the Israel (overlap their identities) in Matthew 24 and other prophetic texts to arrive at their false conclusions regarding the timing of the Rapture. They allegorize the Tribulation Period as referencing the trials we face today – not as future trials related to God's wrath. They view the book of Revelation through the lens of church history instead of prophecy. They view the book of Revelation as having historical fulfillment (Preterism) and not futuristic fulfillment. The preterist view does not view Bible prophecy as "things to come" but rather as "things that came."

The old adage is still true:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense!"

When studying the Bible contextually, literally, grammatically, hermeneutically, dispensationally, and prophetically we must arrive at the conclusion that there is a literal Rapture which occurs before a literal seven-year Tribulation Period which is followed by a literal Second Coming of Christ to earth and Millennium.

Again, here is the good news. The Church is promised Rapture - not wrath! In other words, the Church is not promised preservation through this time of wrath but removal from this future period of earthly Tribulation.

Where does the Bible teach a pretribulational Rapture?

Revelation 3:10 teaches a pretribulation Rapture: “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep (God’s saints) thee from the hour of temptation (*trial, adversity*), which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (*the unsaved who are left behind after the Rapture*).

In this passage of Scripture, the word “hour” is used as a reference to an extended period of time – the seven-year Tribulation Period. The context will determine the meaning of the word “hour.” This verse clearly teaches that we as God’s people (New Testament Church) will be raptured from this earth prior to the Tribulation Period. This promise was given to the Church of Philadelphia and by extension is a promise given to all Church Age saints.

The “hour of temptation” (testing or adversity) is a direct reference to the coming Tribulation Period which is about to be unfolded in chapters 6-19 of this End Time book. There can be no doubt about the purpose and simplicity of this statement. The believers at Philadelphia were patient in all their trials and persecutions as Christ instructed them to be. Therefore, Jesus makes a promise to them that would bring great hope and encouragement to their hearts in view of all their patience. Jesus promised that each one of them would be raptured from the earth before the planet moves into the horror and judgment of the future years of adversity. It is Rapture – not wrath!

The Bible says we will be kept (tereo – “to guard”) “from” (not through) the Tribulation Period. The careful selection of this preposition indicates that these Church Age saints will not enter this period of testing and trouble. The Greek preposition “from” (ek) relates to the hour of trial and must be understood as being kept FROM entering the entire trial period. The preposition does not mean deliverance through the time of trouble. The preposition literally means to “be out of, kept from, or away from.”

Paul Benware comments: “The promise is to keep the church from the time period of testing, which necessitates actual removal from the time period itself and not preservation through it.”

If the Church is still living during this time period (the seven years), she will not be kept from it! You can't miss what is being taught unless you are wearing mid-tribulational eyeglasses, pre-wrath bifocals, or post-tribulational hearing aids!

If the passage intended to teach that these people would be kept through the time of trouble, it would be proper to use another Greek preposition ("dia") which means "through." But again, the use of the preposition here coupled with the term "the hour" should make it crystal clear that the deliverance is from the period, not deliverance through the period as midtribulationists and posttribulationists have asserted. Again, the literal meaning of the preposition means "out of" or "away from." If John wanted to convey that we are passing through the Tribulation Period another preposition (dia) would be required. The general meaning and understanding of the preposition "from" (ek) connotes exemption from something (John 17:15; James 1:27).

If you tell a little boy that he will be kept from taking a bath in the evening if he is not dirty, then he will take you at your word. Now suppose he comes inside in the evening and the boy is not dirty, but you as a parent change your mind and say, "Now son, I want you to go through the shower after all." Well, that boy will be quick to remind you that you promised to keep him from the shower or out of the shower that evening!

My point is this. Even children understand clear thinking and language. But what do many so-called prophecy scholars do today? They don't believe God and take God at His word. They try to make the simple word "from" mean "through" and teach that the Church is going to pass through a portion or all of the Tribulation period.

Those who try and counter Revelation 3:10 as meaning "kept from" the Tribulation Period will often point to John 17:15.

Jesus taught in John 17:15

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from (preposition – "ek" – same as Rev. 3:10) the evil."

Using this passage, it is argued that Christ does not ask for believers to be kept from the presence of the evil one (Satan). Rather He asks that they be enabled to stand successfully in His presence or be kept safe from the power of Satan. In other words, the disciples would not be removed from the world but be kept safe while living in it. It is then suggested that in a similar way the Church will be kept safe from the judgments of the Tribulation Period while passing through it.

Let's interact with this faulty line of reasoning. First, in John 17:5 Jesus was referring to the preservation from evil that is already present on earth, but in Revelation 3:10 Jesus is referring to the preservation from a period of future time of judgment that will fall on the world.

Second, in John 17:15 the disciples were already living during the time of evil, but in Revelation 3:10 the plagues of the Tribulation Period are still future, and the Church is promised escape from this time period. So you cannot compare apples with apples when looking at the different contexts in which this preposition occurs.

Third, and most importantly, the preposition (ek) in John 17:15 is similar in meaning to Revelation 3:10. It basically is conveying exemption from something as in James 1:27. In other words, Jesus was teaching that the Church would ultimately be exempt from both the power of sin and Satan's authority to keep His people bound to spiritual death and sin since they have been born again and transferred into the realm of new life in Christ (1 John 5:18) .

Here is the point. Revelation 3:10 does NOT refer to preservation inside the realm of "the hour of trial." It refers to preservation outside the realm of "the hour of trial."

Fourth, the Scriptures do not suggest anywhere that God's people who are living during the Tribulation Period will be kept safe from Antichrist's persecution. This text in Revelation 3:10 could not possibly mean that the saints will be kept safe through the Tribulation Period, because many of the tribulational saints who become saved during these dark days will suffer

death by martyrdom (Rev. 20:4; Rev. 6:9; 13:7). Christ would never say that His people would be kept safe through this time period when so many saints are going to actually die during this dreadful period of time (Revelation 7:9-14).

Something else that is worth noting is the reference to “them that dwell on the earth” (Rev. 3:10). This has a particular reference to those unsaved people who miss the Rapture and are left on the earth to become the objects of God’s wrath during this awful time of testing (Rev. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8,12,14; 17:2, 8).

So, this verse emphasizes that God’s people (the Church) will be kept “from” this specific period of testing which will come upon another distinct group of people who are left behind and become the objects of God’s wrath. God’s wrath will come upon “them” but not upon “us.” Why? It’s because we will be raptured prior to this seven-year trial and affliction that will come sweeping upon planet earth.

Left behind! Missing the Rapture. The judgment of God is upon those people who remain on earth after the Rapture and are left behind to go through the Day of the Lord. We will be taken out of this period and away from this testing completely! Thank the Lord!

Let’s look at another Bible verse that provides a scriptural basis for a pretribulational teaching on the Rapture.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 points to a pretribulation Rapture:

“And to wait for his Son from heaven (*the Rapture*), whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (*the specific wrath of the seven-year Tribulation Period*).

The church of Thessalonica was continually waiting and looking for the return of Christ! The saints were not expecting to see the Antichrist during the Tribulation Period, but the true Christ before the Tribulation Period begins. They knew that Christ’s coming was imminent! Their motto was “Perhaps Today.” They were looking for the return of Christ in the Rapture before the revelation of Antichrist.

This context (speaking about the Rapture) reveals that Jesus will deliver these saints from the wrath to come (the Tribulation Period) when He returns in the Rapture. The wrath here is pointing to a specific type of wrath that is closely linked with Christ's return in the Rapture (the Tribulation Period). The word "wrath" in verse 10 is referring to the specific future time of God's wrath displayed on earth which is the seven-year Tribulation Period. This is because the definite article ("the") precedes this word ("the wrath to come"). The definite article is designed to emphasize something specific, to make a distinction and draw attention to something that is being conveyed. "The wrath to come" is a reference to a specific expression of God's wrath that will come upon planet earth during the Tribulation Period.

This verb "delivered" carries with it the idea of being rescued through a forcible act. Listen, we are going to be snatched away and translated out of this world by the direct, supernatural, power of God at the Rapture and nothing is going to stop God's plan from coming to fruition. We will be delivered!



Paul uses the present participle (an ongoing action) for this verb ("delivers") which emphasizes the ongoing office and work of Christ as our Deliverer from His wrath and condemnation. *We have the perpetual promise of deliverance from all of God's wrath.* This means the deliverance we have from the Tribulation Period of God's wrath is based on the deliverance Christ provided for us on the cross from the wrath of Hell.

In another pretribulation passage Paul confirms that our pretribulation Rapture and escape from God's wrath is based on the death of Christ for us. 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath (the wrath of the Tribulation Period), but to obtain salvation (deliverance from this time period) by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." In the mind of God, when Christ died on the cross and rose again, we were delivered from the full expression of His wrath, both Hell and the Tribulation Period, and He

maintains this deliverance for His people. In other words, it's a done deal! We can count on this deliverance based upon Christ's death on our behalf.

There is no condemnation of God's children in Christ (Rom. 8:1; John 3:18). Believers live anticipating a coronation day (2 Tim 4:8) rather than having condemnation looming over their head. This promised deliverance from the future Tribulation Period should never cease to be an ever-present reality and glorious prospect in our hearts. This is because Christ's death saves us from this specific expression of His wrath and because the blessed hope of the Rapture will remove us before this specific seven-year expression of God's wrath falls upon the earth.

This text promises that Christ will return and deliver the saints "from" (Gk. preposition – "ek" meaning "out from" or "away from") the coming time of wrath (1 Thess. 1:10). As we have already discovered, this same Greek preposition is used in Revelation 3:10 where the same promise is also given to the saints about their Rapture and rescue from planet earth before the Tribulation Period begins.

Beloved, the Church will not be part of the Tribulation Period. We will not pass through half, three quarters, or the entire Tribulation Period. The truth is this. We will be up in Heaven enjoying the presence of the Son of God while this terrible time of God's wrath is poured out upon the earth (John 14:3; Rev. 19:7-8). The Church is exempt from the entire seven-year period of Tribulation.

Paul also alludes to this same wrath in 1 Thessalonians 5:9:

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath (*the specific wrath of the seven-year Tribulation Period*), but to obtain salvation (*deliverance*) by our Lord Jesus Christ."

This "wrath" is placed in the same context with Christ's coming (the Rapture) and sets it off as God's future wrath of the Tribulation Period. This is another direct reference to the Church being delivered from the specific future wrath of the seven-year Tribulation Period with the return of Christ ("by our Lord Jesus Christ"). The "salvation" does not have reference to the salvation of our soul but our deliverance from the Tribulation period

through a pretribulation rapture and rescue from the expression of God's wrath expressed on earth.

The great scholar W. E. Vine has made a noteworthy comment on 1 Thessalonians 1:10. "This wrath is to be understood, then, of the calamities wherewith God will visit men upon the earth when the present period of grace is closed."

The entire section of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 presents a united testimony of a pretribulation Rapture of the Church. Let's give an overview of all the verses in this section. Notice the marked difference between the saved and unsaved.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 begins the exposition:

"But of the times and the seasons (*the duration and characteristics of the events related to the Old Testament eschatological period known as the Day of the Lord or Tribulation Period - Isa. 13:6-11; Ezek. 30:3; Joel 2:28-32; Amos 5:18,20; Zeph. 1:14-18; 3:14-15*), brethren, ye have no need that I write unto **you**. **For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord** (the Tribulation Period) **so cometh as a thief in the night** (unexpectedly). **For when they** (*the unsaved left behind, who are not part of the Rapture*) **shall say, Peace and safety** (*following the Rapture event - Rev. 6:2*); **then sudden destruction cometh upon them**, as travail upon a woman with child (*with the outpouring of God's wrath on earth in the Tribulation Period - Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:8*); **and they** (*the unsaved left behind who do not participate in the event of the Rapture*) **shall not escape** (*the End Time judgments of the Tribulation Period - Rev. 6-19*).

1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 continues the exposition:

"But ye (*the saved who are raptured*), **brethren** (*the saints*), **are not in darkness** (*characterized by moral and spiritual darkness which coincides with the blindness of Satan and habitual sinful living - Rom. 13:12*), **that that day** (*the Day of the Lord or Tribulation Period*) **should overtake you as a thief** (*suddenly and unexpectedly as it will for the unbelievers who are left behind after the Rapture - indicating that God's saints will be raptured and not be overtaken by the Day of the Lord or Tribulation Period*). **Ye** (*God's children*) **are all the children of light, and the children of the day**

(characterized as possessing spiritual illumination, holiness, uprightness – Eph. 5:8): **we** (God’s redeemed saints) **are not of the night, nor of darkness** (unlike the unsaved, we have been delivered from the domain of Satan’s darkness and kingdom – Eph. 4:18 with Col. 1:13).

Paul continues to draw the dichotomy or distinction between the unsaved and saved in the remaining verses. Notice the marked difference between the pronouns which point to the unsaved who are left to pass through the Tribulation Period and the saved who are raptured and escape the seven-year Tribulation.

1 Thessalonians 5:6-8

“Therefore (since we are not to be characterized by darkness) **let us** (God’s saints) **not sleep, as do others** (the careless indifference of the unconverted or unsaved who are living on earth today, prior to the Rapture); **but let us watch and be sober** (In contrast to the unsaved, we as God’s people are to remain spiritual alert to Satan’s temptations and the spiritual pitfalls of life as we watch and wait for the Rapture). **For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night** (the unsaved who love the darkness over the light and are not looking for the Rapture to occur – John 3:19). **But let us** (God’s redeemed saints), **who are of the day** (who are to be characterized by the light of purity - Eph. 4:18; 5:11; 1 John 1:7), **be sober** (maintain spiritual alertness during these last days as we anticipate and prepare for the event of the Rapture – 1 Pet. 4:7; 5:8; 1 John 3:3), **putting on the breastplate of faith and love** (faith in God and love for the Lord is the armor of Christian character, which protects us from the moral darkness in a sinful world, so we are ready to meet the Lord at the Rapture – 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 6:14-17; 2 Tim. 4:8); **and for an helmet** (referencing the protection of our mind), **the hope of salvation** (contextually, 1 Thess. 5:1-3, the specific blessed hope and deliverance from the coming Tribulation Period, not fearing that we will enter the Day of the Lord as explained in verses 9-10).

These saints had already experienced salvation from the penalty of sin, but they will also experience salvation (deliverance) from the wrath of God during the Tribulation Period based on Christ’s death who was condemned in their place.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 ends the exposition on pretribulationism:

“For (stating the reason for our hope of salvation or deliverance – vs. 8) **God hath not appointed us** (God’s Saints) **to wrath** (contextually, the specific wrath of the Day of the Lord – the Tribulation Period – 1 Thess. 5:1-3), **but to obtain salvation** (deliverance from the Day of the Lord or Tribulation Period through the event of the Rapture = *Pretribulationism* as in Rev. 3:10) **by our Lord Jesus Christ** (at the event of the Rapture), **Who died for us** (on the basis of Christ’s death, not our own efforts, good works, perseverance, or overcoming - all of God’s saint’s will be raptured – 1 Cor. 15:51), **that, whether we** (God’s saints) **wake** (are spiritually alert as in verse 6) **or sleep** (are spiritually lethargic in our Christian life as in verse 6), **we should live together with him** (in our new heavenly home that Christ has prepared for us – John 14:1-3). **Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do”** (the pretribulation Rapture provides comfort and strength to the saints, knowing they will be rescued from the Day of the Lord, the seven-year Tribulation Period, and dwell with Christ in their heavenly home – 1 Thess. 4:18).

Dr. John Walvoord summarizes these verses:

“In this passage he [Paul] is expressly saying that our appointment is to be caught up to be with Christ; the appointment of the world is for the Day of the Lord, the day of wrath.”

Paul states that the “times and seasons” (vs. 1) will be fulfilled during the coming Tribulation period called “the day of the Lord” (vs. 2). The “times” (duration or length of time) and the “seasons” (the state of the time and characteristics of the time) in relation to the events of the Day of the Lord were not something that he needed to address. Why? It’s because he had already spoken to them about these things already during his visit with them (2 Thess. 2:1-12).

The “day of the Lord” is a major theme of Bible prophecy with its fullest exposition and explanation in the events of the Tribulation Period (Revelation 6–19). The Day of the Lord is the greatest period of wrath in the history of man on earth (Matt. 24:21).

The point is this. The Church is looking for the return of Christ before the “times and seasons” of the Day of the Lord begin. We are to be looking for the Savior’s return and not the events of the Tribulation period to begin. God’s saints would not be here during the Tribulation period. However, the unsaved will enter the Tribulation Period as indicated by the pronouns “they” and “them” – (vv. 3-4). But the saved will not enter the Tribulation period as indicated by the words and pronouns “brethren,” “yourselves,” “ye” and “us” – (vv. 2, 4, 6).

The Church saints are “of the day” (vs. 8) which means that they are characterized by the spiritual illumination of holiness, uprightness, and delivered out of the domain of satanic darkness (Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9) whereas the unsaved are “of the night” (vs. 5) and are characterized by spiritual darkness, which refers to the habitual sphere of satanic blindness and sin that the unsaved world lives (Eph. 4:18). The story of our salvation is “out of the night” and “into the light.”

The “hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8) that all believers can look forward to with great assurance and expectancy is the Lord’s return and their deliverance from the wrath to come (the Day of the Lord or seven-year Tribulation Period). Our hope is to be raptured before the Tribulation Period begins. It is clear from the context that this is a specific time of wrath that Paul has in mind. Once again, it is the wrath of the Tribulation days which has a specific duration of time attached to it (“times”) and a specific characteristic of judgment (“seasons”) that will occur during its fulfillment (1 Thess. 5:1). Paul already told the Thessalonians that they were saved from the wrath of hell through God’s saving program of election and grace (1 Thess. 1:4-5).

These saints had already experienced salvation from the penalty of sin. The “hope of salvation” (deliverance) deals with the deliverance from a specific time of “wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:5) which is a specific reference to the future Tribulation Period as in 1 Thessalonians 5:10. The redeemed followers of Christ have a sure hope, a blessed hope (Titus 2:13); they are not as others who have no hope and who will enter the Tribulation Period.

When Paul speaks of the “helmet, the hope of salvation” (vs. 8) he is saying that these believers could protect their minds from worry and despair regarding the coming Day of the Lord. They could possess the certainty and assurance in their own minds that they will be delivered from the Day of the Lord. This is what wearing the “helmet of the hope of salvation” means. Our minds should not be tormented by uncertainty as to whether or not they will be overtaken by this coming judgment.

1 Thessalonians 5:9

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath (*the wrath of the Day of the Lord*), but to obtain salvation (*deliverance via Rapture*) by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

There are many believers today (midtribbers, prewrathers, and posttribbers) who cannot possess this hope in their hearts since they reject the Biblical teaching of Christ’s imminent return and since they expect to enter the Tribulation Period which is a time of God’s direct judgment upon the world.

It’s true. Some Christians do not possess the thrilling hope and joyous expectation of departure from all trials and tribulation, at any moment, or rescue from the specific coming tribulation judgment upon earth. This is because they reject the teaching about the imminent coming of Jesus Christ. Many saints cannot live on the edge of their seats eagerly awaiting their sudden or spontaneous redemption and glory because of their failure to believe in the imminent return of Christ. They cannot say with John the apostle, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

When the message of the blessed hope and imminent return of our Lord is lost, through the shuffling of prophetic Bible texts, it’s then that God’s people lose a great treasure which God has intended them to possess and hold dear to their hearts.

Whenever I drove to the airport to pick up a guest speaker for the church, my children always wanted to go along. Even if we need to leave at 5:30 in the morning! They enjoyed the action in the airport terminal and seeing the airplanes taking off and landing. Well, let me say that I want to be sure to be on board when the flight marked “Rapture” departs. Dear friend, there is only one scheduled flight out of this world. Don’t miss it! Jesus is coming

again to fly us out of here. We may soon be boarding! And we will all have a window seat!

Every Bible taught believer should refuse to accept the prophetic hocus-pocus that the Church will pass through the Tribulation Period.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 and 7 is another important Bible passage that supports the pretribulational Rapture of God's church. Some were teaching that the Church had already entered the Tribulation Period, but Paul debunks this myth. He says they cannot be living during the seven years because the Antichrist was not revealed, the apostasy of Antichrist worship was not occurring, and because the Holy Spirit was still restraining sin on earth through indwelling the Church. He uses this argument to teach pretribulationism. Let's follow his line of reasoning.

**When the
Restrainer
Is Removed
The Church is
Removed**

Think this through. The Tribulation Period cannot begin until the Church is raptured. The Holy Spirit indwells the Church (1 Cor. 6:19) and it's through God's saints that the Holy Spirit works to restrain sin or to keep it in check, stopping sinful anarchy (apostasy) from overtaking on earth. However, when the Church is removed in the Rapture (in whom the Spirit dwells) the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit is also removed which is a key factor that starts the Tribulation Period. Let's look at the two verses together to get the flow of thoughts and main teaching.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him (*the Rapture*), That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ (*day of the lord – the Tribulation Period*) is at hand (*present – they are living during the Tribulation Period*). Let no man deceive you by any means (*by saying you are living during the Tribulation Period*): for that day shall not come (*the seven-year Tribulation Period or time of God's judgment*), except there come a (the) falling away first (*the apostasy of Antichrist during the Tribulation Period who presents*

as God – 1 Thess. 23-:4), and that man of sin be revealed (the revelation of Antichrist), the son of perdition.”

2 Thessalonians 2:7 goes on to say:

“For the mystery of iniquity (lawlessness) doth already work: only he who now letteth will let (holding back spiritual anarchy and keeping sin and apostasy from overtaking the world), until he (the Holy Spirit) be taken out of the way” (the influence of the Holy’s Spirit’s restraining ministry of sin and apostasy on earth will be removed when God’s people are removed or taken up in Rapture).

Paul’s point is that the Tribulation Period (the seven years) cannot begin before the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit is removed and this can only happen with the removal of the Church in the Rapture through which the Holy Spirit restrains sin and keeps spiritual anarchy and apostasy from occurring on a universal basis and overtaking the entire earth.



What precedes and is a key factor that starts the Tribulation Period? It’s the removal of the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit through the Rapture of the Church. This is because the Holy Spirit is in some measure keeping sin in check through the Church on earth as God’s people counter sin and lawlessness. Therefore, this means the Church must first be removed (raptured) in order for the earth to lose the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit, which marks the beginning and causes the breakout of total wickedness during the Tribulation Period. So, the departure of the Church (in whom the Spirit dwells) results in the departure of the restraining work of the Holy Spirit which allows the Tribulation Period to get started with its total or full-blown wickedness, sin, spiritual anarchy, Antichrist, and apostasy over the earth.

Let’s look at the two verses together to get the broad picture.

2 Thessalonians 2:7

“For the mystery of iniquity (lawlessness) doth already work: only he who now letteth will let (holding back and keeping total spiritual anarchy and sin from overtaking the earth), until he (the Holy Spirit) be taken out of the way” (not taken out of the world but out of the way – the Spirit’s ministry of restraining sin and apostasy while He indwells the Church will be removed over the earth when God’s people are removed or taken up in the Rapture).

2 Thessalonians 2:8

“And then (after the restraining work of the Spirit and Church are removed - *pretribulationism*) shall that Wicked (Lawless One – the antichrist) be revealed (during the Tribulation Period), whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:”

To reiterate, the Tribulation Period cannot begin until the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit is removed from earth (2 Thess. 2:7-8) which indicates that the Church, through which the Holy Spirit restrains wickedness, is raptured and removed BEFORE the seven-year Tribulation can begin. The removal of the restraining work of evil in the world (with the absence of the church on earth) is the key factor that triggers the start of the Tribulation Period. So, the Rapture must occur BEFORE the Tribulation begins.

Essentially, these events of the Tribulation Period can only occur after the Church has been raptured: the revelation, apostasy, and worship of Antichrist because of the removal of the Holy Spirit’s restraining influence over wickedness and sin (2 Thess. 2:2-3, 7). Again, this means the Rapture of God’s people (resulting in the removal of the Holy Spirit’s restraining ministry on earth) must occur before the Tribulation Period to start the terrible wickedness and total apostasy of the seven years.

All these pretribulation verses teach that God delivers His people from wrath – He does not send them through wrath. “Let no man deceive you” (2 Thess. 2:3) into thinking that you have entered the Tribulation Period. Don’t allow any person to steal away the thrilling hope of your wonderful deliverance. I don’t care how scholarly and full of fancy words he may be!

He may be able to read fluent Greek and Hebrew upside down and sideways. He may have his own magazines and books that are propagating these falsities!

One fellow who I never heard about before sent a paper to the church. In the paper he is propagating these lies that we are going to go through the Tribulation Period. He claims to thank the Lord that he could retire and do more writing to help God's people. Listen, this man is not helping God's people. He is trying to steal away my hope in what Jesus has promised! I take offence to this! Every Bible taught believer should refuse to accept such prophetic hocus-pocus.

Stand up for the truth! Stand up against any person who is trying to steal this hope from your heart! Believers will not be part of the Tribulation Period (Day of the Lord). How do we know this? It's because the "falling away" or that great apostasy (departure) of the end time church has not occurred. Also, the Antichrist has not yet been revealed (vs. 3).

2 Thessalonians 2:3 once again reads:

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away ("departure") first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."

Some expositors suggest that the term "falling away" ("departure") in this verse may be a reference to the Rapture of the church - when God's people will depart from this world. It would seem however that Paul does not have the departure of the church in view. He had just spoken about our gathering unto Christ in verse one. Also, the thought of wickedness is in Paul's thinking, which would relate to the character of the apostate church (see vs. 7). The "falling away" seems to suggest a departure or total abandonment into apostasy during the Tribulation Period.

Paul clearly reveals that the antichrist will not be revealed to the world until the restrainer, the Holy Spirit, is taken "out of the way." This statement provides another prophetic key that unlocks the truth about the pretribulation Rapture.

Let's give more explanation to 2 Thessalonians 2:7:

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let (hold back or restrain), until he be taken out of the way” (not out of the world but out of the way - the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit will be removed when the Church is removed).

You will note that the reference is to a person (“he”) and that this person – the Holy Spirit is now holding back something so it might not occur (“now letteth”). The Holy Spirit is presently acting as a restraining force within this world, so it does not collapse into total or complete spiritual disorder and corruption. The Holy Spirit is actually restraining evil and preventing total apostasy from occurring through His indwelling presence in the lives of Christians (the church). God’s people within the church have the Holy Spirit indwelling them (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19) and act as a restraining force against evil and apostasy within this world. In other words, the Holy Spirit will keep the truth alive and certain morals alive through the witness and testimony of God’s people in this world.

However, there is coming a day when God’s people will be raptured from planet earth and then the Holy Spirit’s ministry of restraining evil and apostasy within the ranks of the church will be “taken out of the way.” The fact that the Holy Spirit’s influence regarding the spread of sin and apostasy will no longer exist is a clear indicator that the church will no longer be residing on earth when all these great evils occur. The restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way because the very instruments (God’s people) that the Holy Spirit has used over the church centuries will have been taken out of this world!

Please understand that the Holy Spirit will not be removed from the world; however, the people and lives that He worked through will be removed from this world through the glorious event called the Rapture. When the Rapture occurs, the Holy Spirit’s restraining ministry through the church will no longer be present in this world and all morals will collapse and total apostasy will abound in the remaining ranks of an unsaved church.

When Jesus returns and snatches away all the true members of God’s New Testament church, who are truly saved and connected to Christ, there will

only remain a false church. This will be a church that is full of apostasy and end time delusion. It will be a church that departs from the truth of salvation and man's need for Christ. All that will remain will be an amalgamation of false religions, sects, clergy and denominations, which are represented as a great whore or harlot (Revelation 17:1,5). There will be total apostasy and corruption.

2 Thessalonians 2:8 concludes:

“And then (after the restraining work of the Spirit and church are removed) shall that Wicked (Lawless One – the antichrist) be revealed (during the Tribulation Period), whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:”

Paul is saying that after the church is raptured and the Holy Spirit no longer resides within a redeemed church on planet earth to keep evil in check or balance, “then” (and only then) will the lawless individual who is the antichrist be revealed to a lost world. Then (and only then) will such wickedness be able to spread and flourish.

Paul makes it very clear that these key events concerning the great apostasy of the church and the revelation of antichrist will not occur until after the church has been raptured. The Rapture of the church, resulting in the collapse of a moral system and system of truth, will actually be the mechanism that triggers off these specific events of total unrestraint, apostasy and the revelation of the antichrist.

Paul taught this truth to the people so they could realize that they were not living during the Day of the Lord or the Tribulation Period as some were erroneously teaching. He wrote that they would be raptured or gathered unto him before this time of great apostasy within the church occurs and before the revelation of the antichrist.

2 Thessalonians 2:1

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him.”

Again, some were teaching that the Church had already entered the Tribulation Period, but this could not be for the simple reason that the Antichrist was not revealed on earth along with his sinful departure from God, and the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit had not been removed from the earth. This means the Church was not living during the Tribulation Period and this is another clear argument for a pretribulation Rapture. The proof Paul gives for this is that Church is NOT expected to be on earth when the revelation, apostasy, and worship of Antichrist occurs and when the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit is taken out of the earth. The removal of the church (in whom the Holy restrains sin) must be first removed which in return triggers the actual beginning of Tribulation Period.

Today the Holy Spirit is working through the Church to restrain sin. But at the Rapture (prior to the Tribulation) the Church will be removed and so will the Holy Spirit's work of restraining through the Church. This results in the beginning of the Tribulation Period. In other words, the Tribulation cannot begin until the Church is Raptured through whom the Holy Spirit works to restrain sin. The Church must be raptured first along with the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit so all these events can begin to occur (the revelation, apostasy, and worship of Antichrist). So, ignore what the people are teaching that say you are living during the time of the Tribulation Period or will someday pass into the Tribulation.

Some glorious day the assembly of the church will truly be assembled together with the Lord Jesus in the air above. We will be translated and then transported back to Heaven. What a gathering it will be! What a fellowship! What a reunion! What a comfort! What a day, glorious day, it will be!

Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ's Coming, Roy W. Gustafson said that in southern England there is a village with the curious name of "Tiptoe." It seemed natural to call it that because years ago before paved streets and sidewalks were installed, the muddy condition of the lanes in that area often made it necessary for the people to walk on tiptoe. Gustafson remarked, "The child of God who walks the streets of this life faces a similar situation. He is to go forward on the tiptoe of expectancy, not only

because of his evil surroundings, but also because he is waiting for Someone who is coming very soon!"

My friend, I am not looking for the Tribulation Period of war, bloodshed, pestilence, death and horror. I am not looking for the antichrist! I am tiptoeing in expectancy! Jesus may come today! What a day of deliverance it will really be! We will be out of here!

The timing of the Rapture is pretribulational which means Jesus could come at any moment. We are not waiting for the Tribulation to begin before the Rapture can take place. Christ could come at any moment. This is the way the early church viewed the return of Christ.

Once again, the early church believed in a pretribulation Rapture because they looked for the Savior's return as an *imminent* or *impending* event that could occur at any moment.

Titus 2:13

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (*anticipating and expecting Christ's any moment return in the Rapture*).

The early Church believed in a pretribulation Rapture because they looked for the Savior's return as an *imminent* or *impending* event that could occur at any moment. They were not waiting around for the events of the Tribulation Period to begin before the Rapture could occur.

1 Corinthians 16:22

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema **Maranatha** ("*our Lord comes*").

The early church believed Christ could return during their lifetime and at any moment. They were not waiting around to enter the Tribulation Period and experience the End Time events of God's wrath predicted in the book of Revelation.

Philippians 3:20

“For our conversation (*citizenship*) is in heaven; from whence also **we look for the Saviour** (*to arrive at any moment*), the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Philippians 4:5

“**The Lord is at hand**” (*His return is near, close at hand and therefore imminent*).

James 5:8

“Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for **the coming of the Lord draweth nigh**” (*near – meaning it is impending and imminent*).

Revelation 22:12

“And, behold, **I come quickly** (*suddenly, without delay and therefore imminently*); and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

Revelation 22:20

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely **I come quickly** (*suddenly, without delay*). Amen. **Even so, come, Lord Jesus**” (*a prayer of expectancy and anticipation in the any moment return of Christ*).

It’s clear that the early church had the expectation that Christ could return at any moment. They were commissioned “to wait for his son from heaven” (1 Thess. 1:10). The early church was “waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:7) which means they were anticipating His return to happen at any time and moment. They were not waiting around for the Tribulation Period to begin, Antichrist to be revealed, and God’s wrath to fall on the earth. Any other Rapture position (mid, prewrath, or post trib) denies that Jesus could return at any moment for the Church and therefore must wait until certain things occur in the Tribulation Period for Jesus to return. Therefore, this view cannot be correct based on the imminent (any moment) return of Christ in the Rapture. Nothing needs to take place before the Rapture occurs. As a result, the event of the Rapture is pretribulational in nature.

Reflect on this. A blessed hope relates to Christ’s coming for His Church to rescue His people from the wrath of the Tribulation Period.

- What kind of blessed hope would the coming of Christ be if you knew that you were going to face the awful Seal, Trumpet, and Bowl judgments of the Tribulation Period before Jesus returns?
- What kind of blessed hope would the coming of Christ be knowing that you were going to enter the Tribulation Period to face the Antichrist, 666 marking system, and all of God's wrath that is going to be poured out upon Antichrist's kingdom?
- What kind of blessed hope would the coming of Christ be knowing that you are going to have to die from hunger, malnutrition, war and from being decapitated (martyred) by the Antichrist's dictatorship?

This is not hope - it's a horror! It certainly is not the comfort of which Paul spoke about in relation to Christ's pretribulation return (1 Thess. 4:18; 1 Thess. 5:11). The characteristics of the Rapture revolve around comfort – not judgment, wrath, distress, and hopelessness. Rapture teaching was given to comfort those who mourn! The threat of going through the Tribulation is hardly a doctrine of comfort to the saints. I am not looking to pass through the terror of the Tribulation night and this specific expression of God's wrath during this future period of time over the earth (Rev. 3:10). I am looking for the Savior to return and rapture me out of this world (Phil. 3:20) before any judgment begins!

This is why the entire truth about Christ's coming in the Rapture is a blessed hope that fills our hearts with joyous anticipation! Again, the characteristic of our "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13) in the event of the Rapture is one of joy and the anticipation of experiencing a tremendous future together with our loved ones in Christ, receiving a transformed body, and being with Jesus! This could hardly be said if we possessed the gloomy and dark prospect of entering the Tribulation Period, being part of God's time of wrath, and suffering martyrdom at the hands of Antichrist.

After church, where she had been taught about the rapture, a little girl was quizzing her mother. "Mommy, do you believe Jesus will come back?" "Yes." "Could He come today?" "Yes." "In a few minutes?" "Yes, dear."

“Mommy, would you comb my hair?” The doctrine of the immanency of the rapture should motivate us to be ready for it.

8. What are the differences between the Rapture and the Revelation (Second Coming) of Jesus Christ?

The Bible makes some clear distinctions between the Rapture and Revelation (Second Coming) of Jesus Christ. In the Rapture Christ returns FOR the saints (1 Thess. 4:13-18) but in the Second Coming He returns WITH the saints to establish His earthly Kingdom (Rev. 19:11-19). Those who argue that Jesus will only return once at the end of time are missing the very important distinctions that the Bible makes concerning the Rapture and Second coming which are two separate events. There are two returns or comings of Christ.

A chart is provided on the next page that will give you a biblical overview of the two returns of Christ. One is related to the Rapture of the Church and the other to the Second Coming of Christ to earth.

The Two Comings of Christ Contrasted

Pastor Kelly Senseinig

Secret Coming of Rapture ("his appearing" – 2 Tim. 4:1)

Unrevealed and not predicted in O.T. Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:51) since it was a "mystery" or sacred secret only revealed in the epistles (compare Eph. 3:9)

New Testament saints are involved that are in Christ (1 Thess. 4:16) and who are part of the Dispensation of Grace (Eph. 3:2-10)

Judgment Seat of Christ follows (2 Cor. 5:10)

The saved are taken to Heaven (John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18;) and the unsaved are left on earth to pass through the judgment of the Tribulation (1 Thess. 5:1-3; Rev. 3:10)

Geographically, Christ comes in the air (1 Thess. 4:16-17)

Christ comes *for* His saints (1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-56) and returns to Heaven (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:14)

Christ claims His bride (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27)

A wedding ceremony in Heaven will occur following this coming (Rev. 19:7; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27)

Only His children see Him (1 Thess. 4:17-18; Phil. 3:20; Titus 2:13)

Christ coming as the bright and morning star (2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 22:16)

A time of blessing and comfort for God's children (1 Thess. 4:18; 5:11)

Earth not judged by the returning Savior (John 14:3; 1 Cor. 15:51-53; 2 Thess. 2:1; Phil. 3:20)

Imminent (any moment) - sign-less (Phil. 3:20; 4:5; Titus 2:13; 1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 3:11; 22:12, 20)

Occurs before God's wrath (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:4, 9; Rev. 3:10 – "keep thee from the hour")

Marks the coming of God's day of wrath on earth (1 Thess. 5:1-9)

Tribulation begins following this coming (1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Thess. 2:1-3; Rev. 3:10; Rev. 6-19)

No mention of Satan (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

Second Coming to Earth ("his kingdom" – 2 Tim. 4:1)

Revealed and predicted often in O.T. Scriptures (Isa. 9:7; 11:4; 26:19-21; 63:1-4; Dan. 2:44-45; 7:9-12; Zech. 14:1-9; Ma. 4:2-3)

Israel and Gentile nations are involved (Matt. 24:1-25:46) – salvation of Jews and Gentiles confirmed (Rom. 11:26).

Judgment of Living Nations follows (Matt. 25:31-46)

The unsaved are taken to judgment (Hades) and the saved are left on earth to enter the Millennium as in Noah's day (Matt. 24:37-41; 25:31-46; 13:41-42; 3:11-12) – A reversal of the Rapture!

Geographically, Christ comes back to earth (Zech. 14:4)

Christ comes *with* His saints (Zech. 14:5; 1 Thess. 3:13; Jude 14) and returns to earth as the King (Rev. 19:11-14)

Christ comes with His bride (Rev. 19:7-9; 11-14)

A wedding feast will occur on earth following this coming (Rev. 19:9; Matt. 22:1-14; Isa 25:6)

Every eye shall see Him – visible to entire world (Matt. 24:27; Rev. 1:7)

Christ comes as the sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2)

A time of God's wrath for the unsaved (2 Thess. 2:8-12; Matt. 24:51; 25:46)

Earth is judged by the returning King (Rev. 16:14-20; 19:15; Isa. 11:4)

Follows predicted signs (signs occurring during & after the Tribulation Period – Matt. 24:29-34)

Occurs "after the tribulation of those days" (Matt. 24:29-30) – after the 7 years

Marks the culmination of God's day of wrath on earth (Joel 2:31; Rev. 19:15)

Millennium begins following this coming (Rev. 20:1-3; Matt. 13:41-43; Daniel 7:13-14; 12:2-3)

Satan is bound (Rev. 20:1-3)

One cannot combine these two events when looking at all the biblical data that reveals the differences between them. It's impossible to make all these events happen simultaneously. The timing and differences cannot be joined together without causing "prophetic salad" or confusion regarding God's eschatological program.

A certain man once argued to me about the Rapture. He said that I was deceived and wrong for promoting the doctrine of the Rapture. He called it a "fly away teaching" and he called me a "fly by night preacher" who was running a "fly by night program!" In spite of his scoffing, the Bible is very clear that the Rapture is not the same as the Second Coming. Facts are stubborn things.

A Christian man was very poor and only had an old worn-out bike to ride. He rode this bike everywhere and anywhere. One day another Christian was talking to the poor man about the Rapture. He asked the poor fellow, "What are you looking forward to the most, when Jesus comes in the Rapture?" Without hesitation the man replied, "Most of all, I am looking forward to the free transportation that I will get when the Lord takes me back to Heaven!" It's true. All of us will have free transportation when we are raptured from this earth. And yes, it is a fly way doctrine!

9. What will happen to those people who are incapable of believing or expressing faith in Christ when the Rapture takes place?



I have been asked this question on several occasions and want to deal with the issue of those who cannot believe due to age or other certain afflictions. We know that there are some people who have had the opportunity to believe on Christ but then lost the opportunity because of some disease or trauma. For instance, an elderly

unsaved person who has developed Alzheimer's Syndrome will not be taken in the Rapture since they have had ample time to respond to the message of the Gospel before their disease.

Likewise, an unsaved adult lying in a coma because of an automobile accident will not be taken in the Rapture since they had time to accept Christ prior to their accident and trauma. But what about babies and infants who were never capable of believing on Christ? What about those who are mentally impaired or handicapped from birth? Will God take them in the Rapture?

There are several reasons why babies will be raptured.

1. Because of the character of God.

The Bible does not specifically speak to this issue, but it does speak of the character of God and the love of God toward little children and those who are incapable of believing. Because of the character of God, His love, grace, mercy, and justness, it can be concluded that these people, incapable of making a faith decision for Christ, will be raptured with the saints when Jesus returns. God is always fair, loving, just and will always do right.

Genesis 18:25

“That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Abraham was bringing something out about God's character in this verse and it's this. God always does what is right. That means He is just and righteous in whatever He allows and does. God does sometimes allow the righteous to suffer with the unrighteous in times such as war and famine, But the point is this. Abraham was addressing the character of a just God even though He may not always understand the ways God fully works and all His decisions. Is God going to allow babies to miss the Rapture and enter the Tribulation Period of God's wrath and judgment? The way to answer this question is with another question: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth

do right?” In other words, God will do what is righteous and just and rapture these babies into Heaven.

In Revelation 15:3 a redeemed group of people sing: “just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.”. If God calls on men to repent and have faith in His saving provision and then judges babies or children who cannot make a decision for salvation, then He proves Himself to be unjust. Is God ever unjust? Never. Perish the thought! It would seem that the character of God would give us some insight on whether or not babies and young children will go up in the Rapture. Since God is always just, it seems undeniable that babies and children will be raptured with God’s redeemed people.

2. Because of the statements of Jesus.

During His earthly ministry Jesus spoke about young children already possessing a certain amount of intuitive faith in Him and how these children would be part of the earthly Messianic Kingdom when it would be inaugurated on earth.

After the disciples had a prideful moment (“who is the greatest in the kingdom” – vs. 1) Jesus gave them a lesson on humility.

Matthew 18:2-3

“And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children (*humble in nature*), ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Although the names of the disciples were written in Heaven because they had already placed child-like faith in the Messiah (Luke 10:20) and were born again they would one day enter the earthly kingdom (John 3:5, 7). So, when Jesus was teaching them to become a child to enter the kingdom He was reminding them how they got started on their spiritual journey through simple, humble, child-like faith and how they needed to return to their humble roots.

Tom Constable states:

“In one sense the disciples had already humbled themselves like children when they believed on Jesus. This gave them access to the messianic

kingdom. However, in another sense, they had abandoned that attitude when they became concerned about their status in the messianic kingdom. They needed to return to their former childlike attitude.”

The fact that Jesus mentions that His disciples are to “become as little children” indicates that they must in a greater way possess a humble mind within their everyday lives like children already possess. Jesus identifies little children as possessing a converted mind and life that is humble, tender, and characteristic of those who have turned their thinking and ways to God. The word converted means to “turn” and is used to describe people whose minds and hearts are turned to God and in tune with His ways. In some way Jesus viewed children who have not yet reached the age of accountability, those not able to decide one way or another for Christ, not able to express faith in Christ, as being “converted.” This is the description given of those who are saved from His wrath and who are God’s children (Matt. 13:15; Acts 3:19).

Children, when not indoctrinated, have a natural inborn tendency to believe in God even as they believed in Jesus while He was living on earth (Matt. 18:6). You don’t have to try and explain the cosmological or teleological arguments for God’s existence to children. They humbly accept His existence and possess an intuitive belief in Him as their minds expand and grow. The point Jesus is making is that children are in some sense converted (turned) to God in their thinking and ways. Even though they have not yet understood their own sinfulness before God and need to express faith in Christ (the Messiah), they embrace the truth about God’s existence. For this reason, Jesus promises that these “little ones” will one day enter the earthly kingdom. They are apparently converted and therefore covered by grace and will enter the earthly kingdom.

Jesus confirms this in Matthew 18:14:

“Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.”

In Matthew 19:14 Jesus concludes:

“But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

The implications are very clear. Little children who are “converted” (whose minds instinctively and intuitively are turned to God and embrace Him) would enter the Millennial Kingdom when it would be established upon the earth. This would mean that Christ in His grace sees little children covered by His gracious sacrificial provision and will bring them into the joy of the kingdom someday when it is established over the earth.

We might use this reference as a spiritual guide and framework to help us answer the question about babies being raptured prior to the Tribulation Period of judgment. It should be concluded that God will also rapture babies when He returns to take His children to Heaven to be with Him because of their inability to believe on Christ. Apparently, God applies the finished work of Christ to the account of these “little ones” and allows them to be raptured and enter Heaven at the event of the Rapture in the same way Jesus made allowance for children to enter the earthly Messianic Kingdom.

One thing is certain, an overview and uniform testimony of Scripture seems to conclude that when a baby or child dies, Jesus applies the benefits of His death on the cross to that child, thereby saving him or her. This is necessary because every child is born in sin within Adam’s fallen race (Rom. 3:23; 5:12). This may be contrary to popular opinion, but children do not go to Heaven because they are innocent. Children are not born innocent (Ps. 51:5). They are born lost and in need of salvation (John 3:16, 18) because they are under God’s wrath (John 3:36). This is why it’s necessary for Christ to apply the benefits of His death on the cross to each child that dies. And why does Christ do this? It’s because He is just!

We might ask, would the riches of God’s grace be displayed in wisdom and prudence (Eph. 1:7-8) in sending little children to hell and holding them responsible for doing what they could not do – believe on Christ for salvation? Children do not have the capacity to exercise saving faith. Therefore, God covers them by His grace upon their deaths and gives them entrance into Heaven.

David also realized he would see his deceased son someday in the afterlife which is another indication that children do not face the judgment and wrath of God.

2 Samuel 12:22-23 records these words:

“And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”

David was assured that his child would enter into Sheol at the point of his departure or death, which was the place of blessing and rest for the regenerated believers living during the Old Testament era. He was given the assurance by God that his child would not face judgment but bliss and blessing after his departure. David’s conclusion is another spiritual guide that we can use to stress how God is gracious toward little children and how he spares them from judgment. Such will be the case when Jesus returns in the Rapture. He will evidently rapture babies and young children who are incapable of understanding the concepts of sin and personal faith in Christ and not allow them to face the judgments of the Tribulation Period.

The same would be true for those people who never graduated from their childhood stage such as the mentally impaired. They are still essentially children in a grown-up body. We must remember that faith itself is not meritorious. Therefore, following Christ’s conclusions about children, we can rightly conclude they are not accountable to God because of their infancy state, and since they cannot consciously exercise saving faith in Christ, they will be raptured when Jesus returns. Apparently a loving, gracious, and just God applies His saving merits to their lives and will transport them into the air with the rest of the saints giving them a new body of glory like the rest of the redeemed saints (1 Cor. 15:35-50).

This brings us to another related question. *Will babies remain babies in Heaven when they are raptured?* The best scriptural advice we can give is this. When the church is raptured all of us together will immediately receive a glorified body like Christ’s glorified body. This means babies and children will also receive a glorified body at the Rapture.

Philippians 3:20-21

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

If God’s people are promised to receive a body like Christ’s, it’s apparent that those babies who are raptured will also enter into their glorified bodies. This would lead us to believe that raptured babies will be grown and mature in years like everyone else whose bodies are transformed for the eternal state.

The elderly saints will experience the fountain of youth when they receive this new body, and the babies will experience a sudden maturity of years and together we will be united as God’s people with a magnificent body that is free from death, pain, sin and sadness. It seems that all of God’s saints, including raptured babies and young children, will enter their eternal state at the time they receive their glorified body, which from this point forward will never undergo any physical or spiritual changes over the unending ages of eternity. Therefore, a baby that is raptured will not remain a child and experience changes in growth cycles when receiving an eternal body at the Rapture. This goes against the eternal and unchanging nature of the glorified body (Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; 5:1).

This leads us to another related question. *Will there be infants and young children in Heaven who die prior to the rapture?* There are two ways that this question is generally answered.

View #1 - The Exclusion of Babies and Children in Heaven

There is something in all of us that want to believe that Heaven will be filled with laughing and playing children among the mansions of glory and the streets of gold. But the whole idea of babies and young children in Heaven may go against the general teaching of scriptural revelation. I know there is something in every mother’s heart that leads her to believe that she will see her baby in Heaven when she gets there. But we must remember that Heaven is going to be wonderful not because our baby is there but because

the Lord is there! Our attention and affection will be centered on the Lamb or the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:1-12).

Heaven is also a place of complete knowledge, maturity, and deep fellowship with God which would argue against babies and young being in Heaven (Rev. 21:3-5). It is not pictured as a place possessing a nursery full of babies who have incomplete knowledge, immaturity, and incapability of fellowship with God.

Here is something else to think about. Heaven's occupants are always pictured as being capable of giving praise to God and fellowshiping with Him (Rev. 4:10-11). This would argue against babies in Heaven. All occupants will need to be old enough to give praise to God. Age will not be a factor in Heaven. Apparently the elderly will become young again and the young will become older so that we possess a similarity in our thinking capacity and ability to worship God.

Of course, the immediate transformation of children to an older age does not mean that mothers and fathers will not know who their children are when reaching Heaven's shore. The disciples knew Jesus after His resurrection and when going back to Heaven Jesus said He would return as they saw him go (Acts 1:11). This means that they would recognize Him when they die and finally arrive in Heaven.

You will remember that Peter, James and John saw Moses and Elijah at the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-4). And dear friend, there were no introductions! There was no need for name tags. This means that in Heaven we will possess intuitive knowledge so that we will be able to identify and know the saint of all the ages. Paul also taught that at the event of the Rapture we would know those loved who have gone on before us and have a wonderful reunion together in the air (1 Thess. 4:17-18).

Yes, we will know others in Heaven. In fact, our knowledge will increase, and we will know all of God's redeemed of all the ages. The Bible teaches that the "former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4). Jesus also said in relation to Heaven and the eternal state that He would "make all things new" (Rev. 21:5). When we get to Heaven we will not lack knowledge about

who are children were in this life but be given complete insight about these details and many other details that we never knew about.

This would include those babies that may have died in a state of infancy. God will allow us to know who our children are in this blessed place of eternity. This is because we will be given a new revelation and complete knowledge when we get to Heaven.

The fact that God will “make all things new” could also mean that children will not enter Heaven in their infant state or stage since all will be perfectly new and complete as God intended it to be.

So, the Bible does not seem to openly acknowledge that children will be in Heaven for several reason. First, the Bible never mentions about children being in Heaven. Second, since all heavenly inhabitants are seen as being capable of fully understanding who God is and worshipping and fellowshiping with Him, this argues against babies and children in Heaven. Third, since there will be complete knowledge and all things will be made new seems to also argue against babies and children being in Heaven. Anything related to imperfection, including infancy, will not be part of Heaven.

View #2 - The Entrance of Babies and Children into Heaven

Babies in Heaven would indicate personality development and developing stages of maturity, which the above view seems to argue against. Many suggest that children are granted instant maturity when they enter Heaven. They hold that God immediately makes children mature and adult individuals. This will certainly be true in relation to the eternal glorified body that we receive at the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-57) and when God’s people enter the eternal state after the Millennium (Rev. 21). However, some suggest this would not necessarily rule out the possibility of children being in Heaven prior to the Rapture and resurrection of Church Age saints and before the eternal state commences following the Millennial Kingdom.

As we have seen, during His earth ministry Jesus gives the promise of children entering the Millennial Kingdom (Mark 10:14). Kids will be in the kingdom that Jesus establishes on earth (Isaiah 11:6, 8).

Isaiah 11:6

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.”

Isaiah 11:8

“And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.”

Some make the argument that if children can enter the Millennium that they might also be able to enter Heaven upon their death. To be honest, the earthly kingdom is not a place of perfection like Heaven and therefore children can enter the Millennium (1,000 years) in their infant stage and develop as a child. However, as we have seen, Heaven is a place of perfection.

Again, it is significant that in every Biblical scene of Heaven no children are actually stated to be present. Of course, many of these scenes have reference to the eternal state when we will all be glorified after the Rapture and prepared for eternity. Therefore, it is suggested that the words of Jesus concerning children entering and occupying a place in the earthly kingdom could suggest the possibility of children also occupying a place in Heaven where Jesus will also manifest His presence. However, the state of the redeemed in Heaven prior to the eternal state will be like the eternal state in that we will enjoy no more pain, sorrow, sickness, crying, and death (Rev. 21:4).

This state of bliss will be true even before we receive our glorified bodies at the Rapture and when we do finally receive them which is actually prior to the commencement of the eternal state in the chronology of prophecy. At one point, our enjoyment and life in Heaven will simply merge into the eternal state (Rev. 21-22). The purpose of the eternal state is to confirm that everything throughout the entire universe will be made new and sin will no longer have any impact upon the universe (heavens and the earth).

The effects of all sin for all time in every place will be abolished forever even though the saints will have been experiencing this prior to the eternal state.

Despite this conclusion, some suggest that if the Lord Jesus approves of children in the earthly kingdom, would He not approve of them in Heaven and allow them to live out a perfect childhood life in their perfect heavenly state? Furthermore, if David knew he could go to and see his child in the afterlife (2 Sam. 12:22-23), some suggest that his child may still be in an infancy stage. Of course, the Bible does not inform us on the age of David's child in the afterlife. However, because of these statements several theologians suggest that children will also be in Heaven.

Charles Spurgeon believed that children would be in heaven. Spurgeon wrote: "I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them!"

With the high mortality rate of infants in many countries of the and the abortion epidemic in our country and the world might lead us to believe that children do go to Heaven, prior to the Rapture and eternal state, and that they are given the opportunity to grow and mature in the perfect environment of Heaven without possessing any sin nature and rebellion in their lives.

Could there be children in Heaven prior to the Rapture, the transformation of our bodies, and before the eternal state begins? Only Heaven will reveal the final answer to this question. Many Scriptures seem to argue against this but to be on the safe side - don't count it out! Ultimately, "the secret things belong unto the LORD" (Duet. 29:29).

D. L. Moody said, as he hovered in the twilight zone between life and death, "Earth recedes, Heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go." His son who was standing by his bedside said, "No, no, father, you are dreaming." "No," said Mr. Moody, "I am not dreaming: I have been within the gates: I have seen the children's faces."

There is another question about babies that we must answer. *Will babies be born during the Tribulation Period?* The Scriptures are very clear about this matter. Babies will be born during this awful time of tribulation upon planet earth. Jesus warned about the horrors of giving birth and nursing children during the future Tribulation Period.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:19:

“And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!”

As previously mentioned, all babies and infant children will obviously be raptured before the Tribulation Period begins based on the statements of Jesus and character of God. God is always just and fair. However, those babies born during the second half of the Tribulation Period will undoubtedly experience hardship and even death along with their mothers at the hand of the Antichrist and the related judgments falling upon the earth. There is no evidence in Scripture that would lead us to believe that babies born during the seven years will be raptured or else Christ would not be giving a warning for those who bring children into the world during these dark times. The Tribulation will be a difficult and almost impossible time to raise children. But the Scripture verifies that babies will be born during the Tribulation and some of them will likely survive and enter the earth kingdom (Millennium) as Jesus taught in the gospel records (Matthew 18:2-3, 14; 19:14).

Other related questions revolve around babies who will be forming and living in the mother’s wombs at the time of the Rapture. As confirmed above, it’s obvious that a baby outside of a mother’s womb will be raptured based on God’s fairness and grace. It is also understandable and obvious that babies inside the wombs of saved mothers will be raptured along with the pregnant mother. God will not leave a baby helpless and all alone when its parents have been raptured and taken back to Heaven. *But what about a baby inside the womb of an unsaved pregnant mother at the time of the Rapture?* Will this baby be taken out of a mother’s womb who is unsaved and be raptured with the rest of God’s people? Raptured babies from the wombs of unsaved mothers have been dramatized and made into Hollywood productions today.

As we have just confirmed, we do know that there will be babies born during the Tribulation Period to unsaved mothers, such as the unsaved Jews who are fleeing from the Antichrist (Mark 13:17). Scripture repeatedly verifies this in the gospel records (Matt. 24:10; Luke 21:23). In fact, some of these babies may very well be conceived *before* the event of the Rapture in the wombs of *unsaved* mothers and will then be born during the Tribulation Period as Jesus clearly reveals. We should not assume that babies will be taken out of the wombs of unsaved mothers who are living during the Tribulation Period for Scripture is silent on this matter.

In a similar way, babies will not likely be taken out of the wombs of unsaved mothers in the event of the Rapture. There is no definitive proof that this will occur. Could God do this? Yes. But we should not make unwarranted claims about babies disappearing from the wombs of unsaved mothers when the Rapture takes place. Since the Bible says babies will be born during the Tribulation Period and not be removed from the wombs of mothers (Luke 21:23), there is no reason to believe they will be removed from the wombs of unsaved mothers when the Rapture occurs. Instead, they will be part of those babies who are born during the Tribulation Period.

We can often formulate a good answer to a question on what we know other Scriptures say about a certain subject. Since babies will be born to *unsaved* mothers during the Tribulation Period (Matthew 24:19; Mark 13:17; Luke 21:23), they will obviously not be removed from *unsaved* mothers at the time of the Rapture. Instead, they will be born during the Tribulation Period as Jesus reveals and pass through the difficult times of the Tribulation. Whether a baby is conceived *before* the Rapture in the womb of an unsaved mother and then born *after* the Rapture during the days of the Tribulation, or whether a baby is conceived *after* the Rapture and born *during* the Tribulation is really a point that has no significant relevance, since we are dealing with babies being born during the Tribulation Period.

None of us like to think about this but Jesus warned about it and said it will occur. We must leave the answer then with Jesus. There will be babies born and children living during the dreadful times of the Tribulation Period.

Undoubtedly, many of them will die with the untold millions of others who will lose their lives during this time of judgment. The positive note is that when babies and infant children die during the Tribulation, who have not reached the age of accountability (Jonah 4:11), they go to Heaven based upon the statements of Jesus.

This brings up a final question that often revolves around babies or little children. *What about Old Testament genocide or the deliberate killing of large number of people including children?* I pose this question for it might somehow relate to babies not being removed from the wombs of unsaved mothers at the Rapture and being born to only suffer death during the Tribulation.

Let's not forget that hundreds of thousands of babies were killed by the nation of Israel by the authorized command of God to wipe out all heathen nations.

Deuteronomy 2:34

"And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones (children), of every city, we left none to remain" (no survivors).

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

"But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee *for* an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them; *namely*, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee: That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God."

Have you ever wondered why there are no Amalekites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites today? If you believe the Biblical accounts of history in the Old Testament are accurate, it's because God commanded the Israelites to slaughter those people groups—men, women, children, infants, and animals.

Can you imagine an Israelites killing babies? The Bible teaches that God once commanded such actions. How do we reconcile those passages with a belief that God is unconditionally loving to all human beings? Such passages are among the least discussed and most ethically problematic in the Bible, but they cannot be ignored just because we don't like what they say.

Numbers 16:27

“So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.”

Numbers 16:30-33

“But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that *appertain* unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that *was* under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that *appertained* unto Korah, and all *their* goods. They, and all that *appertained* to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.”

In these passages, the text says God told the Israelites to slaughter children, women, even animals. How do we even begin to process this? Many have found fault with God for doing this. However, if God would not have allowed this to occur in His providential plan, the promised seed (the Messiah) would not have been born and the world of mankind would have no hope of salvation. This is because the messianic line would have been corrupted with paganism.

Something else needs to be said about these Old Testament slayings. The death of these babies during God's sovereign judgment on heathen nations, though tragic from a physical standpoint, was also an expression of His grace and mercy. This is because these same babies would be transported to safety in the afterlife rather than grow up to become heathen people who reject God and go to hell.

We must remember that God's is always just and true in his ways (Rev. 15:3) which include the manner that He chooses to display His mercy toward others. Also, His ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8). Don't try and play God by saying that you would have done things differently! God has allowed His *indirect* judgment to fall on little children in the past without compromising His mercy and grace expressed toward these children.

Such will be the case with those babies born during the Tribulation Period who are not raptured from the wombs of pregnant mothers. Within the parameters of His own sovereign purpose (Ps. 115:3), God has decided to allow His *indirect* judgment to pass over their little lives during the Tribulation Period. Although they will face hardship and even death in many cases, God will still shower His mercy and grace upon their lives by taking these children home to be with Him at the point of their death.

Another related question involves infants who are made to receive the mark of the beast during this time of the Tribulation. Will they be doomed with the rest of those who receive the mark?

Revelation 14:9-10 reminds us that those who receive the mark will be doomed to deception and judgment. The scripture says in Revelation 14:9, "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God..." This obviously means that only those people who are of mature years and who fully understanding what they are doing will be judged by God and doomed to God's judgment by receiving the mark.

This will not be true for infants and young children who are forced to take the mark during the Tribulation Period. They are too young to know what they are doing, and they certainly cannot knowingly worship the beast and his image. It's clear that God will not hold babies and infant children, who are born during the Tribulation Period, responsible for receiving the mark of the beast. God will in His own gracious and loving way override what godless and unsaved fathers and mothers do to their children during this coming dreadful time known as Daniel's Seventieth Week. Why? It's because Jesus loves children.

“Jesus loves the children,
All the children of the world;
Red and yellow, black and white,
All are precious in His sight:
Jesus loves the little children of the world.”

One summer a church camp staff staged an elaborate “Rapture” while the camp director was off the grounds. When he returned, everybody was missing, clothing was on the ground as though people had “passed through” it, a motorboat was circling on the lake without pilot or passengers, and everything in the kitchen was functioning without a cook. A carefully timed phone call from town (“Hey, what’s happening? Everybody’s missing over here!”) only added to the effect.

“I’ve got to admit,” said the director, “it really shook me for a minute.” Just think of what effect this event will have on a lost world! Suddenly millions of Christians will disappear from the earth, and nobody will know what has happened.

The Rapture gives us the promise of hope in the midst of our morally debunked nation and world. Jesus is going to take us out of this world, and all will be made new for us! The best is yet to come.

10. What is the practical teaching of the Rapture?

How does the prophecy about the Rapture give me practical help and hope for my journey in life? How can it impact my life right now? Today? All Bible prophecy should have a profound impact upon our everyday lives. How can the truth about the Rapture affect our lives and the lives of others?

1. The Rapture has a converting influence on the lost.

This point deals with the unsaved. On a human level, no one knows how much time he has left to live. If we are honest, we are aware of our mortality. Death is coming to all of us. We have no guarantee that we will see tomorrow. For the unsaved or unconverted, the reality is that “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

On a prophetic level, we don't know how much time we have. Christ could come at any moment to take His Bride, the church, back to Heaven (John 14:1-6). But all unbelievers will be left behind to endure the horrors of the Tribulation. Left behind! Imagine what it will be like to be left behind and enter the Tribulation Period of God's wrath and judgment. With the reality of this, the most important question for every person to face is whether he is saved through the person and work of Jesus Christ. You see, the fact that unbelievers will pass into the Tribulation Period should have a converting influence upon their lives. It should compel them to repent and place their faith in Jesus Christ and be saved from the coming night of horrible tribulation that will come upon planet earth.

Acts 3:19

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

To "repent" means to think differently and reconsider about your sinfulness, your lost condition, and need for salvation and to be "converted" means to "turn around" from a position of unbelief and sin to a place of belief and new life in Christ. Turning to God involves repentance and faith. Without the volitional response to God, a sinner cannot be saved. This is called free will which is often denied in the reformed circles of Christianity.

The good news of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ has come and satisfied our sin debt. He bore our judgment and paid the price for our sins. He died on the cross taking the wrath of God on our behalf and was raised to life on the third day to prove conclusively that the work of salvation had been fully accomplished (Col 2:14; 1 Peter 3:18).

The salvation that Christ accomplished is available to everyone. Salvation is a free gift that God offers to sinful people who deserve judgment - that's all of us. Those who fail to turn to God in repentance and faith before the Rapture will be left behind to endure the Tribulation. Since this is true, the Rapture should have a converting influence upon the unsaved. They should want to turn to God in simple repentance and faith to be saved and therefore escape to coming night of the Tribulation Period. People should

want to be saved in view of the future expression of God's wrath that will be meted out upon the earth.

I don't want to be here when God's judgment starts falling upon the earth in the Seal, Trumpet, and Bowl Judgments as outlined in the book of Revelation. God wants to save you from "the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10). So, the Rapture should have a converting effect upon the unsaved. The Thessalonians had turned to God from idols through repentance and faith (1 Thess. 1:9). They had been converted. If you are not saved, then repent and express faith in Christ so you will be taken in the Rapture and escape the terrible time of judgment that is coming on earth.

2. The Rapture has a cleansing effect for Christian living.

The Word of God is clear that a proper understanding of the Rapture should produce a life of holiness and purity. It should have a cleansing effect upon our lives.

The evangelical church in America desperately needs holiness. In *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*, Ron Sider writes, "Scandalous behavior is rapidly destroying American Christianity. By their daily activity, most 'Christians' regularly commit treason. With their mouths they claim that Jesus is Lord, but with their actions they demonstrate allegiance to money, sex, and self-fulfillment." As Christians, God expects us to live a life of purity and the Rapture of the Church provides the incentive to do it.

1 John 3:2-3

"Beloved, now are we the sons (*children*) of God (*by regeneration*), and it doth not yet appear what we shall be (*in our present bodies and human state of imperfections*): but we know that, when he shall appear (the Rapture), we shall be like him (*morally*); for we shall see him as he is (*in the coming day, to see Christ is to be like Christ*). And every man that hath this hope in him (seeing Christ and being like Him) purifieth himself (*keeps himself clean, pure, holy*), even as he (*Christ*) is pure."

John is teaching that should understanding our present position as children of God and our future hope of being like Jesus when He comes. Knowing

and believing this will motivate us to grow in holiness right now in our daily lives.

Today we are the “sons of God” (children of God) by virtue of our union and position in Christ. The Bible reveals to us that every appeal for conduct and good living and behavior (purity) is always made in terms of our position in Christ. Godly conduct rests on our understanding of our true, great position as children of God. If we begin to really understand this it will begin to shape our identity and actions. We are the children of God! We share Christ’s life and therefore are born again and identified as God’s children. Are you having an identity crisis? You are not sure who you are? You are a child of God: now act like one!

Here is how our identity in Christ, as God’s children, works. You are tempted to engage in some sin or to join the world in some degrading form of entertainment. But you think, “I can’t do that because I’m a child of God and it would disgrace the name of my heavenly Father.” Or you’re reading the Bible and it convicts you that some of your behavior is not godly. It may be lustful thoughts or a grumbling, ungrateful attitude or words that put down others. Perhaps you frequently bend the truth to cover up your own misdeeds. But when Scripture and the Holy Spirit confronts you about these things, you think, “I’m now a child of God. I can’t do this as a member of His family.” Your new identity (who you are as a child of God) motivates you to grow in holiness. John begins with the foundation of our present position in Christ as His children.

But John goes on to say, “it doth not yet appear what we shall be” with all our spiritual and physical defects. Our future state of glorified perfection, where we will be free from all the impurity of sin, is not a present reality. Right now, we live in these fleshly bodies. We are not and never will be perfectly sanctified in this life. You show me a Christian who is perfectly sanctified, and I’ll show you someone who is fibbing!

I once met a man at a local grocery market who told me that he no longer sins. He did tell me he makes mistakes, but he does not sin. Liar, liar, pants on fire!

Even though we are children of God, and this should affect our manner of living, we still need to grow in purity as he goes on to say. We are to keep purifying ourselves (“purifieth himself” - 1 John 3:3). We are to seek to live a sanctified and pure life in all realms of our living – physically, spiritually, musically, etc. Nothing should be left out. John then provides the incentive to live a transformed and consecrated life. We are to live this way because someday at the Rapture, when Jesus appears in the air for His Church, we are going to be like Him (“we shall be like him”). As I understand this, John is teaching that the instant that we see Jesus, we will become like Him (not physically but morally and ethically). At the very moment Jesus returns and when we look upon Him, we will be totally sanctified in body, soul, and spirit.

You see, the blessed hope of the Rapture, when we will receive a glorified body like Christ’s, should be motivating factor to maintain purity right now. What we are now because of our identity in Christ (we are children of God) and what we will be in the future (perfected and fully sanctified) should motive us to live a pure life.

John states two reasons why the Christian ought to be pure. One is related to a past work of God (making us His children) and the second to a future work of God (making us like Christ). Our position in Christ and our future with Christ should have a purifying impact and effect upon our lives. It should challenge us to clean up our lives and seek to be pure in our hearts and living. What we are today should be lining up in some measure with what we are going to be in the future. We should strive to live in purity because we are God’s children representing Him and because we will be like Jesus Christ at the Rapture. We are motivated to live a pure life because of our identity (we are children of God and should represent Christ) and because of our future (our glorification and moral Christlikeness).

What we are in Christ and when we will be like Christ are the motivating factors to keep our lives pure. We should get on with holy and consecrated living because of who we are and what we shall be! We shall be like Him!

Both our position in Christ and the prophetic reality of our Christlikeness should cause us to be obedient to God, follow His will for our lives, and consecrate ourselves to Him. Since we are His children and someday are going to be exactly like Him, we should start acting Christlike, godly, and pure in all our attitudes, actions, and aspirations in life.

There is coming a time that is fast approaching when we will, at the Rapture, be free from the possibility of all defilement, sin, sickness, sorrow, and death. Today we are not perfected but at the Rapture when we get our glorified bodies and are transformed into the likeness of Christ (His purity) we will pass into our eternal state in relation to our glorified and eternal body. Focusing on Christ's coming is a surefire formula for maintaining personal purity. However, this coming must be a reality to us. It is one thing for us to hold right doctrine about Christ's coming. It is another thing for the doctrine to hold us!

In 1988 a book was published: 88 Reasons Why Christ Will Return in 1988. In the book the author stated that he had conclusive proof that Christ would rapture the Church to heaven in early October 1988. Of course, the Bible clearly declares that date setting concerning the coming of Christ is futile and foolish. However, this erroneous book had caused many people to reexamine their lives just in case.

Obviously, the book was incorrect, but the point is that when people began to consider the fact that Christ might return soon, it transformed their lives. The Bible declares that we should always be looking for Christ's coming, not just when someone sets an arbitrary date.

Titus 2:13–14

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Here again are the dynamics of how the Rapture impacts our lives. The Rapture of Christ (“blessed hope”) and death of Christ (“who gave himself for us” as explained in verses 11-12) work together to bring about

transformation in our hearts and lives. This same reminder is given in verse We are to be looking for the blessed return of Christ when He will return in the Rapture. If we keep looking, anticipating, it will cause us to keep our lives pure and in order since in this day we will be accountable to Him. But the one we look forward to meeting someday and to whom we will be accountable is the same one died for us to purify our lives from sin so that we might live a life that is dedicated to “good works” – not godless living. Christ did not die to make you worldly, but holy!

So, both the Rapture and the death of Christ are to be motivating factors to keep our lives in check and maintain holiness in our daily conduct. In general, the Rapture is to have a cleansing effect and impact upon our lives today. It should cause us to maintain purity of living. Jesus may come today! We are accountable to Him, and we will be like Him someday. For these reasons, let’s get our lives in order and start living like we are the children of God and stop kicking the can down the road!

1 John 2:28

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”

Keith Miller puts it this way:

“It has never ceased to amaze me that we Christians have developed a kind of selective vision which allows us to be deeply and sincerely involved in worship and church activities and yet almost totally pagan in the day in, day out guts of our business lives and never realize it.”

The Rapture of God’s people should be a stirring and motivating factor to sanctify our lives. Jesus may come today! I want to be living for Him and not ashamed of Him at His coming! I want to meet Him in the air knowing that I was a good testimony for Him during the day and faithful in what He has called me to do.

“Faithful and true would He find us here,
If He should come today?
Watching in gladness and not in fear
If He should come today.”

When the Prince of Wales was making a tour of some seldom visited areas, he decided to stop at a workman's home. The next day the laborer said sadly, "I never expected him, nor did my wife. The house was untidy, and I hadn't even washed. We shall never forgive ourselves. If we had only known he was so near, we would have set things in order and been better prepared to receive him." Well, the great Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus, may also suddenly appear. Although we know not the exact day or hour, He has promised that He will return! It may be today! It may be soon!

The truth about the Rapture and imminent return of Christ should motivate us to set our own house or life in order. This truth should provide great incentive for present-day faithfulness and commitment and purity before the Lord.

3. The Rapture has a calming impact in troubling times.

Another practical effect of the Rapture is that it should have a calming influence on us when our hearts get troubled.

Jesus taught about the Rapture in John 14:1-3 and said:

"Let not your heart be troubled (A PEACE): ye believe in God, believe also in me (A PERSON). In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you (A PLACE - HEAVEN). And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (A PROMISE).

The word "troubled" can also mean to "be stirred or agitated" and is a heart that keeps someone from having a calmness of mind. Trouble is the common denominator of all mankind.

Job observed in Job 5:7:

"Yet man is born unto trouble, As the sparks fly upward."

Often our difficulties can leave us distraught, distracted, and disturbed. One of the great comforts in times like these is to remember that Jesus will someday return to take us home to be with Himself. "Let not your heart be troubled." Jesus says, "Be at peace. Be calm. I'm coming again to take you

back to Heaven.” In conveying this, Jesus was teaching that His return for the Church should have a calming and soothing effect in our heart. After the Rapture, we are going to escape all the hardships and difficulties of life when Jesus returns for us. All the troubles, trials, and temptations will be gone forever when Jesus returns for His Church. There will no more sickness, sorrow, and suffering under sinister people running the government and terrorizing Christians when Jesus returns for His people and takes them home to Heaven.

Jesus is saying, “Be calm! I’m coming for you! Find peace in the blessed hope of My return! I’ll come and take you away from all your earthly hardships and give you a new dwelling place in your heavenly dwelling place above.”

Be calm! Be still! Be at Peace!

Elsewhere, in John 14:27, Jesus taught:

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

4. The Rapture has a comforting aspect for grieving saints.

If we have lived any length of time on earth, we have lost people near and dear to us. We might experience some comfort in the encouraging words of others but ultimately the only real comfort that we have is the reality of seeing our loved ones in Christ again. Paul gives this promise to us.

1 Thessalonians 4:16–18

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first (*those who have gone on before us*): Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up (*raptured*) together with them (*our loved ones who have been raised from the dead*) in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

The blessed promise of our gathering together and reunion with our Lord and beloved family and friends someday at the Rapture is designed to be a comfort to our hearts. The prophecy about the Rapture is given to produce comfort in our souls. We have the blessed hope of being with Christ and reunited with all our loves ones in Christ who have gone on before us – a mother, a child, a husband or wife, a grandpa or grandma, a friend in Christ. We will all be together again when Jesus returns to Rapture and reunite the saints of all the ages and take them back to their heavenly home. We will see Jesus and our beloved family members and friends and together we will enjoy one another's company for eternity. Yes, we are to comfort one another with these words.

The truth of the Rapture should transform the way we view death. God has promised that death has lost its sting for believers in Christ (1 Cor. 15:55-56) and for this reason we possess the spiritual blessing of eternal life in Heaven and will see one another again in the afterlife. Of course, we grieve when our friends or loved ones die. Even Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:35). However, the Bible declares that our weeping should not be the weeping of despair and hopelessness. The Bible says that our "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). A better and brighter day is coming. It's almost here. I can hardly wait! This could be the dawning of that grand and glorious day! We will soon be together again! "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18).

Beloved, we are to find deep solace, hope, and comfort for our grieving hearts in the truth of God's Word which promises that we will see our loved ones in the future when Jesus returns for His Church.

“Some glorious morning sorrow will cease
Some glorious morning all will be peace
Heartaches all ended, school days all done
Heaven will open - Jesus will come.

Some golden daybreak Jesus will come
Some golden daybreak, battles all won
He'll shout the vict'ry, break thro' the blue
Some golden daybreak, for me, for you.”

5. The rapture has a controlling influence on serving God.

Warren Wiersbe once said:

“The purpose of prophetic truth is not speculation but motivation.”

The truth about the Rapture should motivate us to serve God faithfully and with all our hearts.

1 Corinthians 15:51–52 reveals the context of the Rapture:

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

1 Corinthians 15:58 then gives us the incentive to serve the Lord in light of the Rapture when it states: “Therefore (*in view of the Rapture*), my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

In 1 Corinthians 15:58, after presenting the truth of the Rapture, Paul concludes with this strong admonition to keep serving and laboring for the Lord. Why? It’s because when Jesus returns in the Rapture, we will be rewarded for our service done for Christ. Our “labour is not in vain in the Lord” because we will be richly rewarded for all our acts of service rendered unto the Lord. We will discover at the time of the Rapture that it was worth it all – all our service, commitment, sanctification, and dedication to the cause of Christ and for Christ will come back to us in reward and recognition.

Many today are unstable and unsettled in their Christian work and service. But knowing that Jesus will return in the Rapture should cure any problem we have with idleness and lack of zeal in our service for the Lord. Realizing that Christ could return at any time should make us enthusiastic about serving the Lord. It should light a fire in our soul! If the Rapture is a living and daily reality to us, it will motivate us to work faithfully for our Lord.

Noted Bible teacher Warren Wiersbe tells a story of when he was a young man preaching on the last days. After he'd spent the service laying out the plan of prophecy in great detail, an older gentleman came up to him and whispered in his ear, "I used to have the Lord's return planned out to the last detail; but years ago, I moved from the planning committee to the welcoming committee."

What this elderly man was saying to Dr. Wiersbe is that we can know all about the teaching of the Rapture and Bible prophecy, but we should be serving the Lord, waiting, and anticipating for Christ to return, and ready to welcome His arrival!

1 Thessalonians 1:10

"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

Will you be on the welcoming committee when Jesus returns in the Rapture? Have you been concentrating on living each day to please the Master? Do you have your life in order? Are you waiting and ready to see Him?

Maranatha!