

# The Rapture Truth

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**I**t is impossible to study the doctrine of the Rapture of the Church in isolation from other prophecies concerning the last days. That there will be a Rapture or “catching away” of believers there is absolutely no doubt, but when it occurs in God’s prophetic program is frequently disputed.

This article seeks to establish the context of Scriptures about the Rapture so that we can “*rightly dividing the word of truth*”.

The New Heaven and Earth, the kingdom of God on earth, and the Great Tribulation are all major elements of Bible prophecy as is the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God. Those with a meagre knowledge of Scripture may think it presumptuous to be dogmatic about the Rapture but after 66 years of continuous Bible study, preaching and teaching the subject of eschatology, this exposition is offered with the prayer that it will remove some of the confusion that surrounds the truth of the Rapture of the Church.



## *The Rapture Truth*

**F**ew topics have produced more controversy than the truth of the Rapture. Books have been written with the express purpose of ridiculing the Biblical teaching of the Rapture of the Church. Novels have been written to dramatize the Rapture incorporating the authors understanding of what the Bible teaches on the subject. Films have been produced depicting events at the time of the Rapture.

The danger in producing fictional writings and films is that details can be inserted to make the story more gripping which may not be true to the text of Holy Scripture and it is these details which those who would attack the the truth of the Rapture can easily ridicule. One has to question the wisdom of using the Rapture as a theme for a fictional publication or film.

The Bible is not a Book to be trivialized. It is God's inspired and inerrent Word. To misrepresent or change the words inspired by the Holy Spirit in any way is a serious matter even if it is done with the best of intentions. It is not necessary to embellish Scripture with fiction to increase the impact of the message. The simple literal interpretation of God's Word, when preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, will have more impact than any drama. It is the Holy Spirit's work to convince of sin, righteousness and judgment and since He chose the words of Scripture we should expect that His words will be the most convicting.

### *No Text Should be Taken in Isolation*

Having recognized the need to keep close to the text of Scripture we must "*rightly divide the word of truth*" (2Tim.2:15). The Bible is not a lucky dip from which texts can be extracted out of their historical, grammatical or theological context and this especially applies to prophecy. Peter stated that, "*No prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation*" because the Word of God was given to many holy men (prophets) and in order to gain an accurate understanding we must consider all of Scripture. Each book of the Bible has its own theme. The aspect of prophecy in any particular Book of the Bible will only be relevant to the theme of the Book. However,

all the prophecies of Scripture are in agreement and there is no contradiction.

Prophecies were not always understood by the Biblical writers and Daniel confessed, *"I heard, but I understood not..."* (Dan.12:8). He was told that

*"the words are closed up and sealed **till the time of the end**. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but **the wise shall understand**"* (Dan.12:11-12).

The Lord has thus plainly indicated that much prophecy will become clearer in the last days and those who are wise will then understand. The writer to the Hebrews spoke of the need for greater diligence *"as we see the day approaching"* (Heb.10:25) and Jesus said that those **who see the signs** coming to pass would **know** that His coming was *"near, even at the doors"* (Matt.24:33).

### *Jew, Gentile, and the Church*

In order to *"rightly divide the word of truth"* we must recognize three classes of people: the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God. What God has said to the Jewish nation cannot be applied to the Gentiles or to the Church: failure to make this distinction will cause confusion.

After the Flood humanity was divided into nations. The descendants of Noah's three sons became nations:

*"These are the **families** of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their **nations**: and by these were the **nations** divided in the earth after the flood"* (Gen.10:32).

The word translated *"Gentiles"* (30 times) is from the same Hebrew word translated *"nations"* (413 times). God chose Abram and promised to make of his seed a great nation that through them God would make Himself known to the Gentiles. The nation of Israel came out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses and from that time onward there were two classes of people on earth: **Jews and Gentiles**.

Centuries later, when Christ came to His people Israel, the nation rejected her Messiah and King and so Israel was blinded as foretold

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in Isaiah chapter 6:9-10 and God turned to the Gentiles to call out a people for His name called the Church. The Church began on the day of Pentecost when the Jewish disciples were baptized by the Spirit into the *"body of Christ"* (Col.1:24). From that time onward there were three classes of people on earth: **Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church**. Now when a sinner turns to Christ for salvation he becomes a member of the *"body of Christ"*. *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles"* (1Cor.12:13).

The Church is NOT *"spiritual Israel"* because it is *"NEITHER Jew nor Greek (Gentile)..for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Gal.3:28). Neither was Israel the Church in the Old Testament. The Church was a secret until revealed in the new Testament.

The truth of the Church as a unique body of believers was revealed to the Apostle Paul; the Apostle to the Gentiles. We do not find Church-truth in Peter's or James' epistles but the mystery of the Church was revealed to Paul as he states in Eph.3:1-11, Col.1:24-29, and Rom.16:25-26. All Christians are *"in Christ"*; they are members of the body of Christ and Christ is the Head.

### *Has God Finished with Israel?*

The question then arises whether God has disposed of Israel? Has He finished with His chosen nation? Paul put that question to rest when he said:

*"Hath God cast away his people? **God forbid**. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. **God hath NOT CAST AWAY HIS PEOPLE which he foreknew"*** (Rom.11:1-2).

In Romans chapter 11 the Jews are seen as the *"natural branches"* which have been plucked out of the olive tree because of their unbelief. The Gentiles who believe, are *"a wild olive branch"* which has been grafted into the olive tree. But, if Israel *"abide not still in unbelief...God is able to graft them in again...into their own olive tree"* (Rom.11:23-24). We are even told WHEN this will take place:

*"I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, **UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**"*

*And so **all Israel shall be saved**: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Rom.11:25-27).*

God has not abandoned Israel. Israel’s blindness is temporary **until** God takes out from among the Gentiles a “*people for his name*” (Acts 15:14) after which Christ will return and “*build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down.*” The Lord has said: “*I will return and build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up*” (Acts 15:16): “*All Israel shall be saved*” (Rom.11:25).

We therefore can come to no other conclusion but that God will keep His promises to Abraham and the nation of Israel will never be abandoned by God. No amount of tinkering with, or spiritualizing the Scriptures can ever expunge Israel from God’s eternal plan:

*“Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: **If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever**” (Jer.31:35-36).*

Unless we understand and accept the above Scriptures in their simple, literal sense, and recognize the division of Jews, Gentiles, and the Church, it will be an exercise in futility to try and understand Bible prophecy. This is **the foundation** upon which all prophetic truth rests.

### *Interpreting the Gospels*

The Old Testament from Exodus to Malachi relates to the Dispensation (Administration) of Law which operated under the Old Covenant that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai. All the regulations, priestly services, sacrifices and feasts were prescribed by God to be administered within the framework of the nation of Israel. Jehovah was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) in contrast with every Gentile nation that worshipped heathen deities.

Babylon was the place where idolatry began and each nation worshipped a national god as well as other gods. The priestly systems associated with these pagan religions were vile, immoral

and cruel. Temples were often places of prostitution and prostitutes were called “temple virgins”.

The priests were involved in witchcraft and prophesied. Sibyls were demon possessed prophetesses prophesying without any knowledge of what they were saying. Kings consulted the Sibyl for guidance before making major decisions. Their prophecies were always obscure and required interpretation. Some pagan religions practiced human sacrifice and children were the victims.

With this background in mind it is easy to understand that when Gentiles were converted to the true and living God in Old Testament times they left their country and joined the nation of Israel whose God was the Lord. Jews therefore became known as the worshippers of the Lord. When a Gentile turned to the Lord he became a Jew. The Law of God provided for acceptance of these “*strangers*” in Israel. In Solomon’s day the “*strangers*” numbered 153,000 (2Chron.2:17). They were awarded equal rights in Israel under the Old Covenant.

Within Israel there were righteous Jews and evil Jews. They may have been a worshipper of the Lord outwardly and had Jewish parents but they may also have had an evil heart just as many today profess to be Christians without being born again. Jesus said that the Jews honoured God with their lips but their heart was far from Him (Mark 7:6).

The Gospels record events under the Old Covenant. The disciples were Old Testament saints before they followed the Lord and John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets as Jesus said: “*The law and the **prophets were until John**: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it*” (Luke 16:16).

It is of the utmost importance to realize that the Lord’s ministry on earth was under the Old Covenant and His parables were directed to Israel, not the Church. Therefore they must be interpreted in a Jewish context: they must **not** be interpreted in the context of the Church age. The parables that speak of the last days will have a special meaning **to Israel** in the Great Tribulation. When the Lord spoke of good servants and evil servants He was not speaking about Christians but saved Jews and unsaved Jews. He warned the

nation about being unsaved in the last days when He returned.

When Jesus prayed His High Priestly prayer in John chapter 17 He indicated that Old Testament believers had been given to Him.

*"I have manifested thy name unto the men **which thou gavest me** out of the world: **thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word**" (John 17:6).*

Jesus and His disciples preached that the kingdom of God was **near** (Matt.10:7) because the King had come but after He presented Himself to the nation as King on Palm Sunday (Matt.10:5-7; Zech.9:9) the leaders of the nation rejected Him and finally said, "*We have no king but Caesar.*"

After Pentecost God "*added to the Church daily such as were being saved*" (Acts 2:47) but the nation rejected the Apostles' message and when Paul preached in the Jewish synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia he said:

*"It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye **put it from you**, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles"* (Acts 13:46).

The Church was formed under the "*New Covenant in Jesus' blood*" (Luke 22:20) so it could not commence until after Christ died and rose again. The New Testament did not begin in Matthew chapter 1 but in Acts chapter 2.

### *Defining the Church Age*

If the Church began on the day of Pentecost when will it conclude? Also was the Church the Kingdom of God on earth?

The Bible abounds with references to a coming kingdom on earth when the Lord will reign as "*King of kings and Lord of lords*". The Lord's prayer says, "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done **in earth** as it is in heaven*" (Matt.6:10).

On the Mount of Transfiguration Peter, James and John had a preview of "*the Son of man coming **in his kingdom***" (Matt.16:28) and when Jesus told the disciples about the signs that would immediately precede His second advent He said:

*"When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that **the kingdom of God is nigh at hand**"* (Luke 21:31).

Since those signs are associated with the Great Tribulation and the second advent occurs *“immediately after the tribulation of those days”* (Matt.24:29) the kingdom of God cannot not be established on earth BEFORE Christ returns in glory and power.

The question remains: Will the Church be raptured **before** the Tribulation or at **the end** of the Tribulation?

### *Israel in the Tribulation*

Wherever the Tribulation is mentioned in Scripture it has **Jewish testimony**. The entire period is described by the Lord in the Olivet Discourse in answer to the question, *“What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age”* (Matt.24:3). The end of the age is clearly a **short period of time just before the Lord comes to reign** and it is described as a time of great trouble. Jeremiah called the end of the age *“The time of Jacob’s (Israel’s) trouble; but he shall be saved out of it”* (Jer.30:7) and he adds that *“the fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it...in the latter days ye shall consider it”* (Jer.30:24).

Half-way through the Tribulation Satan will be cast out of heaven and come down to the earth *“having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time”* (Rev.12:12).

In the Book of the Revelation we read of a multitude of martyrs who *“came out of the great tribulation”* (Rev.7:14) and its duration is given as two periods of 1,260 days, 42 months or *“time, times and an half a time”* i.e. three and a half years. During this period of Tribulation there is **no mention of the Church on earth** but Israel is mentioned in the following places:

- In chapter 7 we read of 144,000 Jewish men who will be sealed by God to serve the Lord in that period of history (Rev.7:1-8).
- In chapter 11 the Temple is measured at Jerusalem and two Jewish prophets are martyred after testifying for 1,260 days (Rev.11:3).
- In chapter 12 the Jewish people are seen as those who *“keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ”* (Rev.12:17).

The Tribulation is **Israel’s time** just as Jeremiah indicated: It will be *“the time of Jacob’s trouble”* (Jer.30:7).



*The 7-Year Tribulation Belongs to Israel*

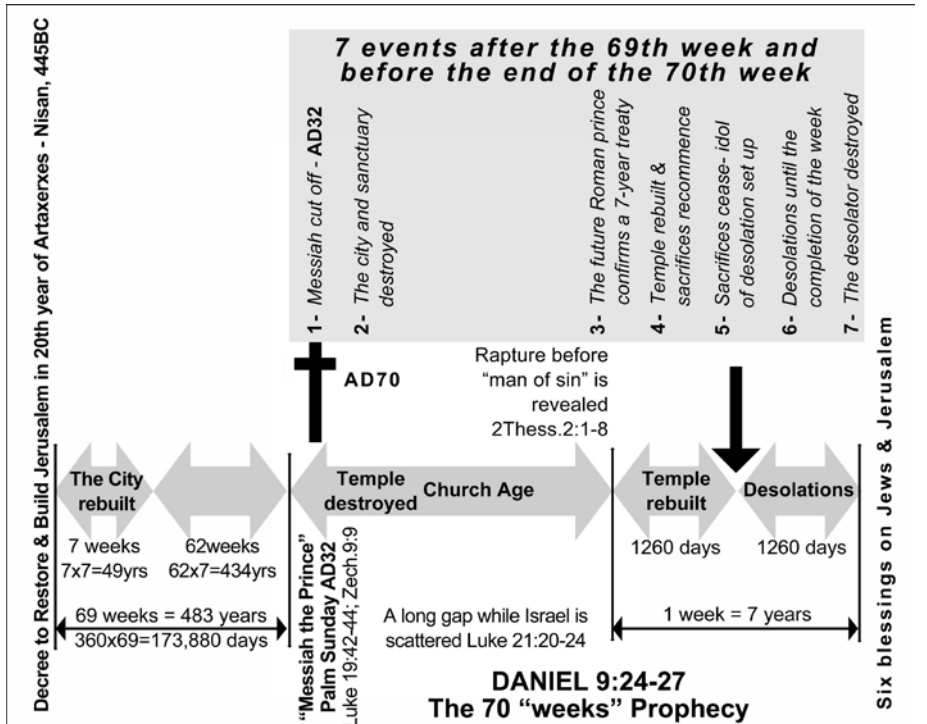
In Daniel chapter 9:24-27 we read that 70 sevens (490 prophetic years) were determined on the Jews and Jerusalem. This prophetic period began at passover 445B.C. in the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes (Neh.2:1). The 490 years has three parts.

The reconstruction of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity would take 7 sevens (49 prophetic years) and there would be a further 62 sevens (434 prophetic years) unto "*Messiah the Prince*".

This was fulfilled on Palm Sunday when Jesus presented Himself to the nation **as its King** in fulfilment of Zechariah 9:9.

Before the 70th seven of years can come **three things must happen**.

- i) Messiah must be "cut off" (4 days later).
- ii) Jerusalem must be destroyed by the Romans (A.D.70) and
- iii) A future Roman prince must confirm a covenant with Israel for 7 years which is the 70th seven.



Half-way through the final 7 years the Roman prince will cause the daily sacrifice and oblation in a **rebuilt Jewish Temple** to cease for *“the overspreading of abominations”* (idolatrous worship). The Temple must be rebuilt because it was destroyed as foretold in A.D.70. **Today the Jews are planning to rebuild.**

This last 7 years in Israel’s prophetic history has never been fulfilled and Jesus indicated in the Olivet Discourse that it would be **the Tribulation**, He referred to Daniel’s prophecy and said:

*“When ye therefore shall see **the abomination of desolation**, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains”* (Matt.24:15-16).

There was no Church on earth during the first 69 sevens (483 years) and there will be no Church on earth in the final 7 years. The Church will not be here for the Tribulation. That time is determined on the **Jews and Jerusalem** so the Church must be removed BEFORE the Tribulation.

### *The Rapture is Exclusive to the Church*

The Rapture and the Second Advent are totally different events.

At the Rapture, only those who *“sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him”* and the *“dead in Christ rise first”* (1Thess.4:14,16).

To be *“in Jesus”* or *“in Christ”* is exclusive to the Church. The expression *“in Christ”* occurs more than 50 times in the Epistles and indicates that New Testament believers are in the **body of Christ which is the Church** (Col.1:24). This can never be said of Old Testament saints, Tribulation saints, or Millennial saints. yet at the Rapture, as described in 1Thess.4:13-18, it is the *“dead in Christ”* who rise first to meet the Lord *“in the air”*.

At the Second Advent **all the saints** in heaven come with Christ **to the earth**: *“the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee”* (Zech.14:5). *“His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives”* (Zech.14:4).

To Ezekiel the Lord said:

*“Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile”* (Ezek.43:7).

The saved who survive the Tribulation will not be caught up to meet the Lord in the air but will remain on earth to “inherit the kingdom” over which Christ will reign (Matt.25:34).

### *When will the Kingdom Come?*

When the Pharisees asked Jesus, “When the kingdom of God should come?” Jesus indicated that it would **not come** in “*the near view*” (KJV “not with observation”) i.e. **They would not see it.**

Jesus then turned to the disciples and said:

*“The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and **YE SHALL NOT SEE IT**”* (Luke 17:22).

The disciples saw the Church established at Pentecost so the kingdom cannot be the Church. Jesus said:

*“First must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.”* (Luke17:25) but the kingdom would come **when He returned** “as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day” (Luke 17:24).

The kingdom will only come **after Christ returns** in glory and power; He did not come in glory and power at Pentecost.

Jesus then gave the Jewish disciples some signs to indicate **when** the kingdom would come.

**First Sign:** It would be like the days of Noah. “*The day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all*” (Luke 17:27).

**Second Sign:** “*Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be when the Son of man is revealed*” (Luke 17:28-30).

Both of these signs indicate that, the judgment that precedes the Second Advent, cannot come **UNTIL the righteous are removed** just as the angels said to Lot, “*Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither*” (Gen.19:22).

**Third Sign:** At that time there would be a sudden global disappearance of people.

*“I tell you, in that night there shall be two in one bed; the **one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.** Two shall be grinding together; the **one shall be taken, and the other left.** Two shall be in the field; the **one shall be taken, and the other left.** And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together” (Luke 17:34-37).*

In anybody’s language this sign to the **Jewish disciples** indicates that before the judgment of the Tribulation falls the righteous will be removed and it will be a sudden, global, disappearance i.e. *“One shall be taken and the other left.”*

When the disciples asked, Where would those who disappeared be taken, Jesus said they would rise like eagles and gather to the **living, saving body**. The Greek word for “body” (*soma*) here is not a dead carcass (*ptoma*) but a living, saving, body: the body of the risen Son of God: That can only be the Rapture of the Church.

Of course the Jewish disciples could not understand the implications because the Church did not exist **at that time** for the Church was unrevealed till after Pentecost.

Please note that the word “taken” means “to receive to oneself” and the word “left” in the original Greek language means to “put away”. Those “taken” were **not** taken in judgment and the others “left” to enter the kingdom as some have suggested.

### *The Rapture will be Sudden*

The catching away (Rapture) of “*the dead in Christ*” and the translation of the living saints at the same instant is not accompanied by the manifestations that will occur when Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation. It is simply a **sudden disappearance in a split second** that will occur without warning. We are not told that every eye shall see the Lord at the Rapture as we are told at the time of the Second Advent.

When Christ returns in glory and power the whole world will see Him and be greatly distressed:

*“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations,...Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And **then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory**” (Luke 21:25-27).*

*"...All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Rev.1:7).*

When John wrote to the Christians about A.D.90 he spoke of the resurrection of Christians which occurs at the Rapture:

*"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" (1John3:2).*

Only believers will see the Lord at the Rapture and it will be a great comfort for Paul says, *"Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1Thess.4:18).* Believers won't be wailing at the Rapture!

The Rapture will occur

*"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 (living believers) shall be changed" (1Cor.15:52).*

At the Second Advent events will be ongoing and visible. Christ will gather all living nations that survive the Tribulation and, though few in number, they will be divided into two camps; the sheep and the goats. The sheep (Gentile believers) inherit the kingdom on earth while the goats (Gentile unbelievers) go away into the Lake of Fire *"prepared for the Devil and his angels" (Matt.25:31-46).*

Further differences between the Rapture and the Revelation (Second Advent) are listed on the next page.

### *The Rapture is **Before** the Day of the Lord*

Immediately following Paul's description of the Rapture in 1Thess.4:13-18 he indicates that the Rapture of the Church will be BEFORE the Day of the Lord.

*"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, **ye** have no need that I write unto **you**. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when **they** shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon **them**, as travail upon a woman with child; and **they** shall not escape. But **ye**, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake **you** as a thief" (1Thess.5:1-4).*

The subject is *"the times and seasons"*. There were no chapter divisions in the original Scriptures; these were added in the 16th century.

## **DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN RAPTURE AND REVELATION**

*At the RAPTURE Christ comes to the air - 1Thess.4:17*

*At the REVELATION He comes to the earth - His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives - Zech.14:4.*

*At the RAPTURE all Christians ascend - 1Thess.4:17*

*At the REVELATION no one ascends - Christ descends - Matt.24:30.*

*The RAPTURE is for Christians (The Church) - 1Cor.15:51-53*

*The REVELATION is for Jews and Gentiles - Matt.25:32.*

*At the RAPTURE only saved are removed from earth - 1Thess.4:13-18.*

*At the REVELATION only saved remain on earth to inherit the kingdom - Matt.25:34.*

*The RAPTURE is for salvation - 1Thess.5:9*

*The REVELATION is for Judgment - Ps.96:13*

*The RAPTURE will be Private - Rev.4:1*

*The REVELATION will be Public - every eye shall see Him and all tribes will wail - Rev.1:7*

*The RAPTURE will come at any moment - Mark13:32*

*The REVELATION after the events of Israel's seventieth "week" - Matt.24:29; Dan.9:27; 12:6-13*

*At the RAFTURE Christ is the Morning Star - 2Pet.1:19.*

*At the REVELATION He is the Sun of Righteousness - Mal.4:2.*

*At the RAPTURE Christ will call for His Bride*

*At the REVELATION a sword proceeds out of His mouth Rev.19:15.*

*At the RAPTURE the living saints are changed - 1Cor.15:52.*

*At the REVELATION the living saints remain unchanged - Zech.14:16.*

*At the RAPTURE the living unsaved remain on earth - Luke 17:34-37.*

*At the REVELATION the living unsaved are cast into "everlasting fire" - Matt.25:41.*

*At the RAPTURE the Jews look to Antichrist - Dan.9:27*

*At the REVELATION the Jews look to Christ their King - Isa.25:9*

*At the RAPTURE Antichrist appears as a man of peace - Rev.6:2*

*At the REVELATION Antichrist makes war with the Lamb - Rev.17:14*

*At the RAPTURE all the "dead in Christ" are raised - 1Thess.4:16 At the REVELATION the Tribulation martyrs are raised Rev.20:4*

Paul is hastening to inform the believers that the Rapture will occur BEFORE the day of the Lord (The Tribulation). The world will be taken by surprise. That day will not overtake the Christians because

*“God hath **not appointed us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together”* (1Thess.5:9-11).

The **wrath** which is the subject of this chapter is not eternal wrath in hell or the lake of fire but the wrath of the Day of the Lord. That is the immediate context. Christians can derive comfort from the assurance that God has determined that they will be delivered (saved) from the wrath of the Great Tribulation.

Some will say that God may preserve Christians in the Tribulation but as we have seen, the righteous were removed before the judgment fell in Noah and Lot’s day. They were removed from the wrath and did not suffer in the midst of the judgment that befell the world and Sodom.

In the letter to the Philadelphian Church the Lord Jesus said:

*“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, **I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown”*** (Rev.3:10-11).

This promise is not that believers will be preserved **in the midst** of the awful judgments of the Tribulation but to be **kept from the TIME** that is coming on all the world. That can only be achieved by removing the Church from earth BEFORE the Tribulation begins.

### *The Thessalonian’s First Concern*

In Paul’s first epistle to the Thessalonians he responded to the concerns of the Christians who thought that **believers who died would miss out on the Rapture**. Paul assured them that

*“if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him”* (1Thess.4:14).

When a Christian dies the soul departs *“to be with Christ which is far better”*(Phil.1:23) and is clothed with a **heavenly body** (2Cor.5:1-4).

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The Christians who die will not miss out on the resurrection of their **physical body** for at the Rapture, they will be raised **FIRST** and only **THEN** the living saints will be changed to receive their resurrection body and be caught up **with them** to meet the Lord in the air. Those who die will not miss the Rapture.

The souls of the deceased believers will therefore **come from heaven** with the Lord. The Lord will pause in the heavens until the bodies are raised and gathered to Him in the air.

### *The Thessalonian's Second Concern*

Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians responded to another concern of the Christians. Paul had taught them in his first epistle that they were not appointed to the wrath of the Day of the Lord but persecution was fierce and some were saying that the Tribulation had already come and they had been left behind.

This second concern confirms that the Thessalonians had been taught that the Church would be raptured **BEFORE** the Tribulation otherwise why would they be concerned that they had missed the Rapture?

Paul said:

*"Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" (2Thess.2:5).*

First Paul comforts the Thesalonians that God would judge those who persecuted them (2Thess.1:7-9) but he had to provide an answer to those who had been saying that the Tribulation had already come.

In his answer Paul begins by differentiating between the Rapture and the Second Advent: He beseeches them

*"by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, AND by our gathering together unto him" (2Thess.2:1).*

The **coming** and the **gathering** are separate events.

Then Paul says don't be troubled by those who say

*"that the day of Christ (day of the Lord) is at hand (now present). Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed..." (2Thess.2:2-3).*

Those who said that Christians would go through the Tribulation were deceivers! Amillennialists and SDAs tell us the same thing today and Paul says they are deceivers!



Then Paul states that his reason for making such a strong assertion is that the Tribulation had not begun because two things must occur before that day comes:

- a) There must be “*THE departure FIRST*” and,
- b) The “*man of sin*” must be revealed.

Unless we can prove that these two events **have already occurred** we have no right to say that we are in the Tribulation now.

Most Bible translations today translate *apostasia* as “*a falling away*” but they have transliterated the Greek instead of translating. Our English word apostasy is a transliteration of the Greek word *apostasia*. However, *apostasia* appears only twice in the New Testament and is translated, “*falling away*” and “*forsake*”. It is the feminine noun form of the root verb *aphistaymee*.

*Aphistaymee* appears 15 times and is translated 11 times as “*depart*” (usually a physical departure), once it is translated “*refrain*”, “*fall away*”, “*drew away*”, and “*withdraw*”. Five early English translations of the Bible all translated 2Thess.2:3 as “*departure*.”

In 1Tim.6:5 the Greek word is translated “*withdraw*”:

*“Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself”.*

This is the **opposite to apostasy** or falling away from truth, therefore the word must be translated according to its basic meaning, “*depart*”, in each context.

Based on the above evidence we have no doubt that the correct translation in the context is “*the departure*” and the definite article in the Greek indicates that it refers to a specific event with which the Thessalonians were already familiar just as the revelation of the man of sin will also be a definite event. “*A falling away*” is not a definite event but a prevailing condition. For a full discussion on the Greek text see *Prophetic Light in the Present Darkness* ch.3 by the Greek scholar Kenneth S. Wuest.

The Thessalonians were familiar with the truth of “*the departure*” (Rapture) of the Church as described in the first epistle to the Thessalonians and the whole reason for the second epistle was to correct what some deceivers were teaching that the Christians were

already in the Tribulation and had missed the Rapture! The error Paul was correcting was a **denial** that the Rapture would occur BEFORE the Tribulation.

Some teach that we are living in the Tribulation now and they quote the Lord's words, "*In the world ye shall have tribulation*" (John 16:33). However, Paul distinguishes between the tribulation believers now endure and the great Tribulation called the "*Day of the Lord*".

In 1 Thessalonians 3:3 we find that we are **appointed** to have tribulation:

*"That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we **are appointed thereunto.**"*

But when Paul speaks about the wrath of the **Day of the Lord** he says:

*"God hath **not appointed us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Thess.5:9).*

The revelation of the "*man of sin*" (Antichrist) is the other event that must precede the Tribulation. It will occur when Antichrist confirms a covenant with Israel for 7 years. Thus the departure of the Church and the appearance of Antichrist must precede the Tribulation which means that the Church does NOT go through the Tribulation.

### *The Hinderer Removed Before the Tribulation*

Having exposed the deceivers who had told the Thessalonians that the Tribulation had already come Paul gives a further reason why the Tribulation had not come:

*"And now ye know what withholdeth (restrains) that he (the man of sin) might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only **he who now hinders** will hinder, UNTIL he be taken out of the way. And **THEN** shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2Thess.2:6-8).*

The Tribulation begins when Antichrist confirms his 7-year covenant with Israel but **someone** is hindering the revelation of Antichrist and it is the Holy Spirit as He indwells the Church.

The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost and now indwells every member of the body of Christ. He also indwells the Church as

the Temple of God. While ever the Holy Spirit is here indwelling the Church Antichrist cannot be revealed but when *"he who now hinders"* is *"taken out of the way...THEN shall that wicked one be revealed"*.

Again Scripture confirms that the Church must be Raptured BEFORE Antichrist is revealed which means the Rapture must occur before the Tribulation begins!

If the Tribulation cannot begin until the man of sin is revealed, and the man of sin cannot be revealed until the hinderer is removed then the Church must be Raptured before the Tribulation.

### *The Last Trump and the Rapture*

The nation of Israel is given **signs** of the Second Advent and *"the end of the age"* but the Church is given **sounds** that herald the Rapture.

*"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"* (1Thess.4:16).

*"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"* (1Cor.15:51-52).

When John foresaw his own Rapture into heaven he saw

*"a door was opened in heaven: and **the first voice which I heard was as it were OF A TRUMPET talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven"*** (Rev.4:1-2).

The last trump cannot be the 7th trumpet judgment (Rev.11:15), as some suggest, because it is not the last trumpet to sound in the Book of Revelation. A great trumpet will be blown when Christ returns to gather his elect nation Israel (Matt.24:31). The Book of Revelation which records the 7 trumpet judgments was written more than **30 years after Paul died** so he had no knowledge of what John wrote. The *"last trump"* was a **common military term** in Paul's day. According to Josephus in his book, *The Jewish Wars*, when the Roman army moved camp there were three trumpets blown. The first was to pack up; the second was to stand ready to move; and the *"last trump"* was to move out. The soldiers were asked, *"Are you ready?"* They would raise their hand and shout, *"We are ready!"*

The shout of the Lord is a **commanding shout** and John tells us what that command will be: *“Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter!”* (Rev.4:1).

When the two Jewish witnesses are raised halfway through the 7-year Tribulation, they also hear *“a great voice from heaven”* and the same commanding shout, *“Come up hither!”* (Rev.11:12). *“The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God”* and live (John 5:25).

### *When will the Rapture Take Place?*

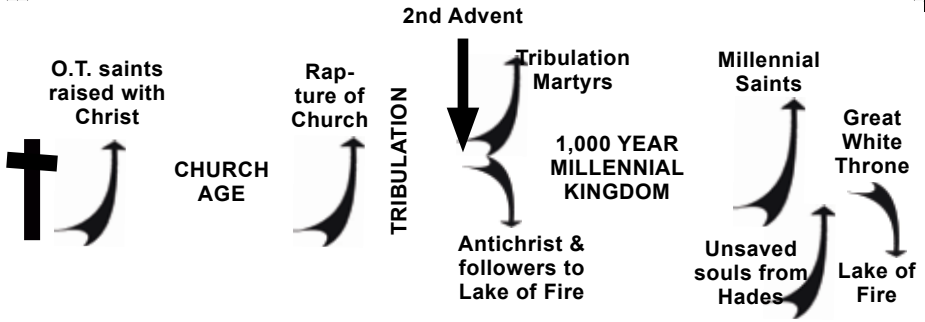
*“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father”* (Mark13:32).

The Gospels record the Lord’s ministry to **Israel** and He affirmed that not even He knew when He would return. **Only the Father knows.** It is the Father who determines *“the times and seasons”*(Acts 1:7). Jesus told the disciples, *“It is not for you to know the times and seasons”*.

We must remember that once the Rapture takes place the prophetic clock will again begin to tick. The last 7 years of Israel’s history is the great Tribulation; *the time of Jacob’s trouble*; and it is divided into two periods of 1,260 days. The reason why nobody knows when the Second Coming will take place is **because nobody knows when the 7 years begins.** However, once the Church age concludes and the bride of Christ has been taken to the wedding in heaven then **Israel will know exactly** when the Second Advent will take place.

During this Church age God is calling out from the nations a people for His name (Acts 15:14) and when *“the fulness of the Gentiles be come in”* (Rom 11:25) i.e. the Bride of Christ is complete, the Father will say to the Son, *“Go and get your bride.”* That’s when the Rapture will take place. That will be *“The Departure”*. Millions of believers will suddenly disappear and this will be the **sign to ISRAEL** that the end of the age has come.

When Antichrist confirms his covenant with Israel for 7 years the *“man of sin”* will be revealed and the Day of the Lord will begin. **Before the first seal judgment** is broken (Rev.7:1-3) there will be 144,000 Jewish men sealed by God to preach the *“Gospel of the kingdom in all the world for a witness unto all nations”* (Matt.24:14). These will



be “the firstfruits (of Israel) unto God and the Lamb” (Rev.14:4). Israel’s blindness will cease and “so all Israel shall be saved” (Rom.11:26). This will be during the first half of the Tribulation as the Russian-led Islamic invasion takes place (Ezek.38 & 39; Joel 2; Dan.11:44). The ungodly rulers of Israel will perish but the remnant will cry out to the Lord and be saved, preserved, and protected for the remainder of the Tribulation (Rev.12:6,14).

The Bride will have been taken to heaven for the wedding at the Rapture and at the end of the 7 years she will return WITH Christ at His Second Advent (Rev.19:7-8). The marriage supper of the Lamb will be held **on earth** and Israel will be guests.

*“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb”* (Rev.19:9).

The parable of the 5 wise and 5 foolish virgins is a warning to **Israel** to be ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Only saved Jews will be admitted to the marriage supper. The ungodly Jews (foolish virgins) will perish during the Tribulation (Zech.13:8-9; Ezek.34:1-10). It is significant that the bride is not mentioned in the parable of the virgins; **the message is to Israel**. The virgins are friends of the Bride! An Israeli leader, Mr Rabin, once said, “Israel has only two friends, Evangelical Christians and some Jews”.

### *The Rapture a Part of the First Resurrection*

The resurrection of the body is the ultimate phase of God’s plan of salvation and the rapture is the resurrection of the Church, the body and bride of Christ.

### *Old Testament Saints*

Old Testament saints have already been taken to heaven in resurrection bodies. They had been waiting in the paradise section of *sheol* for Christ to come and rise from the dead. When Jesus died there was an earthquake:

*“And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And **came out of the graves after his resurrection**, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many”* (Matt.27:51-53).

These are the spirits of justified men who have been *“made perfect”* in resurrection and now are led by the 24 Jewish elders at the throne of God (Heb.12:23; Rev.4:4; 2Chron.24:6-18).

Jesus said,

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, **AND NOW IS**, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live”* (John 5:25).

The time for resurrection had arrived with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and those waiting in paradise but they could not rise before the Lord because He was *“the firstfruits of them that slept”*.

### *Church-Age Saints*

Church-age saints will be raised at the Rapture (1Thess.4:13-18). Every deceased saint since Pentecost is now asleep *“in Jesus”* and will hear the voice of the Son of God and live. The dead will be raised and the living saints will be changed.

*“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, 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”* (Phil.3:20-21).

*“We shall not all sleep (die), 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”* (1Cor.15:51-52).

*“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. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1John 3:2-3).*

### ***Tribulation Saints***

The martyrs of the 7-year Tribulation period will be raised when Christ returns in glory and power.

*“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and **which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years”** (Rev.20:4).*

Daniel also referred to these martyrs who die during the Tribulation:

*“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and **there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt”** (Dan.12:1-2).*

Those who follow Antichrist during the Tribulation will be raised and cast, with the Beast, into the lake of fire (Matt.25:41; Rev.19:20).

### ***Millennial Saints***

At the conclusion of the 1,000-reign of Christ there will be a multitude who have died and many will still be alive. These will receive their resurrection body.

*“But **the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection”** (Rev.20:5).*

**The resurrection to life, the first resurrection, is a harvest:** The Old Testament saints were the firstfruits; the Church is the harvest, the Tribulation and millennial saints are the gleanings.

*What IF the Rapture did Occur at the 2nd Coming*

Amillennialists who deny any millennial kingdom, believe that there will be a **general resurrection** when Christ returns in glory. They interpret the judgment of the LIVING nations (Matt.25:31-46) when Christ returns, as the same judgment described in Revelation 20:11-15 when the **unsaved dead** are raised from *hades* and cast into the lake of fire.

When the Bible says that "*death and hell (hades) delivered up the dead which were in them*" (Rev.20:13) they interpret "*death*" as the saved and "*hell*" as the unsaved. How then do they explain verse 14 which states:

*"And death AND hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death"* (Rev. 20:14)?

Once any preacher holds to a general resurrection at Christ's 2nd Coming he cannot believe in a millennial kingdom on earth because there would be nobody left on earth to inhabit the kingdom.

The SDAs (Seventh Day Adventists) place the Rapture at the 2nd Coming and since they believe in a millennium they think that only the Devil will inhabit the earth for the 1,000 years!

If all the saved and unsaved are raised at the same time when Christ returns then everybody will have a resurrection body at that moment and the vast number of prophecies throughout the Bible that speak of an **earthly kingdom with earthly people** become meaningless; they cannot be interpreted literally and must be interpreted "spiritually". The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob become worthless and the messages of the prophets to Israel about a future kingdom are just hot air.

Once we start to "spiritualize" Scripture, any Tom, Dick, or Harry, can place his own interpretation on the prophecies of the Bible according to how he believes: all sound rules of exegesis such as historical context, and grammatical exactitude, go out the window. When they "spiritualize" they tell spiritual lies for when the text is taken out of con-text all we are left with is a "con".

It is no wonder Amillennialists are vehemently opposed to a pre-Tribulation Rapture or any suggestion that Israel will be restored to the land and to the Lord in the last days. Their theology has the potential to breed Antisemitism as it did with Luther.



### *Is It Important?*

The truth of the Rapture is important because is an accurate exegesis of Holy Scripture and it gives urgency to the message of the Gospel of God's grace. When we know God's plan for Israel and the nations in the last days we will be able to show that, although we cannot place a date on the Rapture, we can certainly see that the day is fast approaching. Time is running out and it is time to seek the Lord.

- Israel has returned in unbelief,
- Islam is aligning with Russia and threats are made to wipe Israel off the map,
  - the Roman Empire is being revived under the banner of the EU and the positions of President and Foreign Minister in the EU parliament have been established in readiness for the Beast and the False Prophet.
- The violence that characterized the days of Noah, and homosexuality that characterized Sodom, are becoming a global epidemic just as Jesus said they would in the last days.
  - There is a world population explosion that threatens famine and disease on a scale never seen before.
  - Within the Church we see apostasy and every kind of evil, even paedophilia on a massive scale. Those who scoff at the truth of the Lord's return occupy the pulpits.
  - The Kings of the East (Asia) are preparing for war.

The Rapture could happen any time and the message of the Rapture has never been so relevant. If you dear reader are not saved we urge you to seek the Lord **now** lest you be left behind and suddenly realize that the Great Tribulation is upon you. God loves you, Christ died for you and salvation is the free gift of God. Will you receive it? *"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Rom.10:13).

**If you would like further assistance please contact:**

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