



THE HERALD OF HOPE
PROPHECY SERIES — STUDY NO. 2

The Rapture

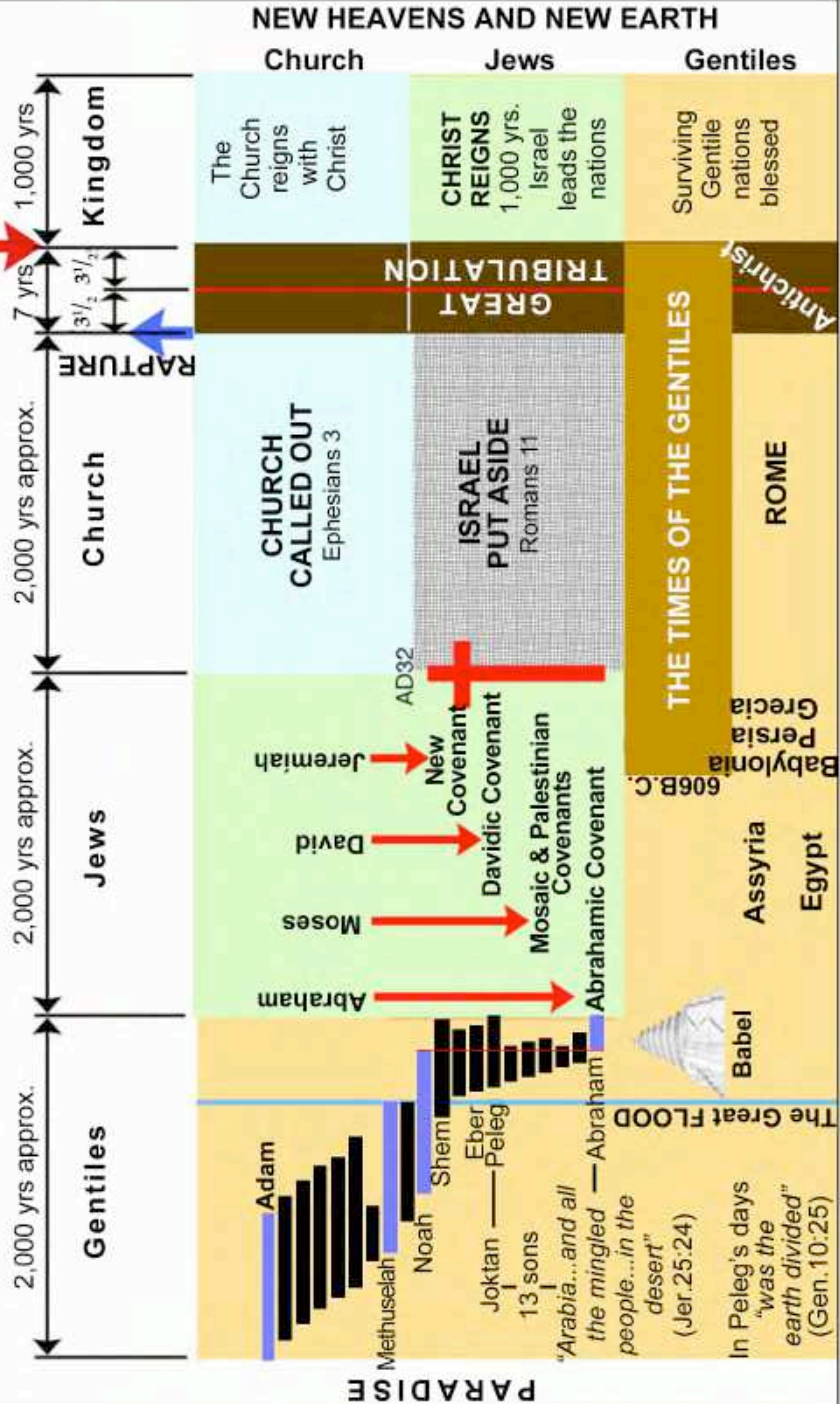
BY
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JEW, GENTILE & CHURCH throughout time

Second Coming



The
Rapture
of the
Church

by

John R Ecob DD

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Introduction

The Biblical teaching about the Rapture, or catching away, of Christians is not taught in many churches and when church members are asked if they know about the rapture they frequently answer that they know nothing about it. The Bible-believing Christian then has to explain that at the end of this age Christ will come into the sky and will bring with Him the souls of all Christians who have died. There will then be a resurrection and the bodies of the **deceased Christians** will be raised and reunited with their soul to be forever with the Lord.

At that moment, all Christians who are alive on earth will also be changed and given a resurrection body. In an instant, dead and living Christians will be caught up together to *“meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord”* (1Thess.4:17).

Those alive on earth who are not caught up in resurrection bodies at this time will be left behind to experience the horrors of a period of seven years of great tribulation, during which, the world will be raked with famine, war, earthquakes and disease such that the human race will be almost wiped from the earth (Matt.24:7,21-22).

Immediately after the rapture of the Christians, 144,000 Jewish men will turn to Christ and be saved (Rev.7:1-8; Matt.24:14). These men will preach the *“Gospel of the Kingdom,”* warning the world that Christ is about to return and reign; they will tell men to repent and seek the Lord because Christ will appear in the heavens and then establish His Kingdom. These Jewish men will all be martyred by the mid-point of the Tribulation (Rev.14:1-5).

During the Tribulation, the Roman Empire will be revived and Antichrist will rule. By the mid-point of the Tribulation, the earth will have been devastated and be ready to accept global government by Antichrist. Antichrist will be possessed by a demon from the bottomless pit (Rev.9:1-12; 17:8) and become known as the Beast (Rev.13:1-10). The Beast and his False Prophet will demand on pain of death, that men worship Satan and an image of the Beast which he will set up in a rebuilt Jewish Temple at Jerusalem (Rev.13:14-17). Men will not be able to buy or sell without the mark of the Beast in their forehead or in their right hand. That mark will be 666.

At the end of the seven years of tribulation Christ will return with all His angels and the resurrected saints. He will destroy **the wicked**

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who survive the judgments of the Tribulation. Christ will re-establish the throne of David in Jerusalem and reign over the entire earth for 1,000 years (Rev.20:1-6).

During this 1,000 years, Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit, in Hades, and great blessing and prosperity will be experienced on earth by those **saved people** who survive the Tribulation. This period is called "the millennial kingdom of Christ."

At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be released to test the nations and will raise a great army to attack Jerusalem where Christ's throne will be established. God will respond with fire from heaven and those armies will be destroyed. Satan and his hosts will be cast into an eternal lake of fire which God has prepared for him and his angels (Rev.20:7-10).

The judgment of Satan will be followed by the resurrection of all the **unsaved** souls from Hades who will be judged by Christ at the "Great White Throne" where they will receive their degree of punishment. They too, will be cast into the eternal lake of fire (Rev.20:11-15).

At this time, all the saved living on earth will be given resurrection bodies (Rev.20:5) and the world will be renovated by fire. A totally new environment will exist on earth and there will be "no more sea" (Rev.21:1). The eternal New Jerusalem which Christ is preparing for His people in heaven, will come down to earth and God will establish His eternal throne with His saints on the new earth. It will then be said

*"Behold, the tabernacle of God is **with men**, and he will dwell **with them**, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be **with them**, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev.21:3-4).*

So the Rapture applies to all **those people living on the earth in this Church age since the day of Pentecost**. It includes those Christians who have died and those who will be alive at the end of the Church age.

Chapter 1 - Objections to the Rapture

Frequently, theologians have rejected the truth of the rapture of the Church because they say that the Church did not teach it until JN Darby “invented” it in the 1800s. They say that the whole idea of the Rapture, Tribulation and Christ reigning on the earth for 1,000 years is only a modern theory and that historically the church interpreted the scriptures symbolically. One such theologian stated:

“The Rapture doctrine did not exist before John Darby invented it in 1830. Before it ‘popped into John Darby’s head’ no one had ever heard of a secret rapture doctrine.”

Dr. William Watson's Research

Such a statement is utterly wrong as to fact and this has been shown to be so. Dr. William Watson, Professor of History, Colorado Christian University spent seven years full-time researching old English writers since the 15th century to see if the truth of a pre-Tribulation Rapture was taught before JN Darby (1800 - 1882). Dr Watson has produced a 55-page document with a multitude of quotations from primary sources to demonstrate that eight leading Churchmen from as early as 1320 used the Latin word “Rapt” to describe the resurrection of the saints and that the word “rapture” was used by ten writers between 1627 and 1768.

Another six writers from 1642 to 1761 spoke of those “left behind” in the context of the Rapture.

Also many quotations are given in this valuable paper to show that preachers taught the return of Israel to the land and their conversion during a time of great trouble.

Thirty one quotations from writers between 1641 to 1761 confirm that they believed the saints would be taken to heaven, escaping the Tribulation.

We strongly recommend our readers download the research paper by Dr Watson simply by Googling, “*Pretribulation Rapture in 17th and 18th century England.*”

The Testimony of Church History

Any church history book will bear testimony to the fact that the early church Fathers up to the 4th century, almost universally taught that there would be a period when the Beast would globally reign

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for 42 months (the second half of the seven-year tribulation) and there would be great tribulation before Christ came and reigned for 1,000 years.

Schaff's History of the Christian Church reads:

“The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age (before AD325) is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is, the belief of a visible reign of Christ on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years...It was indeed...a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as **Barnabas** (end of 1st century), **Papias** (a disciple of John), **Justin Martyr** (born about AD100), **Irenaeus** (AD120-202) the disciple of Polycarp who in turn was the disciple of John, **Tertullian** (AD150-220), **Methodius** (3rd century), and **Lactantius** (end of 3rd and beginning of 4th century) ...” (Vol.II page 614).

Irenaeus (AD120-202) was a personal disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John and wrote extensively. We give an example of Irenaeus' understanding of Bible prophecy from Book I of his *Against Heresies* Chapters 28-30 he records:

“For when he (Antichrist) is come, and of his own accord concentrates in his own person the apostasy, and accomplishes whatever he shall do according to his own will and choice, sitting also in the Temple of God, so that his dupes may adore him as the Christ; wherefore also shall he deservedly be cast into the lake of fire. And he shall order an image of the beast to be made, and he shall give breath to the image, so that the image shall speak; and he shall cause those to be slain who will not adore it... And he will cause a mark [to be put] in the forehead and in the right hand, that no one may be able to buy or sell, unless he who has the mark of the name of the beast or the number of his name; and the number is six hundred and sixty-six, that is, six times a hundred, six times ten, and six units. He gives this as a summing up of the whole of that apostasy which has taken place during six thousand years.”

Again Irenaeus wrote:

“And therefore, when in the end **the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this**, it is said, ‘There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be’...But, knowing the sure number declared by Scripture, that is, six hundred sixty and six, let them await, in the firstplace, the division of the kingdom into ten; then, in the next place, when these kings are reigning... and (Antichrist) shall terrify those men of whom we have been

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speaking, having a name containing the aforesaid number, is truly the abomination of desolation. This, too, the apostle affirms: "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them. when he (Antichrist) is come, and of his own accord concentrates in his own person the apostasy... sitting also in the temple of God, so that his dupes may adore him as the Christ" (Book 5, ch.29, para. 1).

These two examples from the pen of Irenaeus demonstrate that at least he understood the truth of Bible prophecy literally and he lived in the 2nd century, long before Darby.

Did Edward Irving Begin the Rapture Teaching?

Another attack on the truth of the Rapture claims that Darby got his ideas of a secret Rapture from Edward Irving, a Presbyterian minister who preached in Scotland and England between 1815 and 1834. Irving claimed strange prophecies and believed in baptismal regeneration.

Irving saw the deadness of the orthodox Scottish Church and prayed for revival and the restoration of the sign gifts of tongues and prophesying which were manifest in the early Church. The Church of Scotland had quite rightly taught that these gifts ceased with the passing of the Apostles but Irving could not accept this.

Irving moved to the Caledonian Chapel in London and changed the order of service. In May 1830, Irving was charged with for allowing unauthorized persons to take part in public worship. However, at that time the Moderator in London declared that he was not an unfit person to be a minister of the church. In spite of this, there was growing concern at the strange manifestations of tongues and prophesying in the meetings, usually by women. These manifestations were reported in the secular press. Irvings excommunication took place three years later in 1833 on the grounds of heresy. He died in 1834 when he went to Scotland in the winter, against his doctors orders, because one of his followers had prophesied that he should go.

An examination of Irvings teaching on prophecy will show that his views were very different to those of Darby and, in fact he was closer to Historicist views which was the basis of Seventh Day Adventism. He spiritualised Scripture and adopted the "year/day" theory which Darby never did. All of this totally conflicts with the Biblical premillennial view of prophecy and the charge that Darby was influenced by Irving is nothing more than slander.

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Should the reader wish to check Irving's views on prophecy they can be found in his lengthy *Preliminary Discourse* in the book, *The Coming of Messiah In Glory And Majesty*, Volume I which contains Irving's translation from the Spanish of a writing by Manuel Lacunza, a Jesuit Priest who left Chile when the Jesuits were expelled. He died in 1801. Lucanza had considerable light on prophetic truth largely because he was willing to regard the Scriptures above Church tradition. He interpret many prophecies literally.

Did Ribera, a Jesuit, Start the Teaching of the Rapture to Counter the Reformation?

Some theologians of the amillennial persuasion claim that the premillennial, futurist (premillennial) view, originated with an exposition of the Book of Revelation written by a Spanish Catholic Bishop who was supposed to have written to counter the Reformation.

In Ribera's day (AD1590), Augustine's amillennialism was the dominant view of **both the Catholic and Reformed Churches**, and if he expounded the Book of Revelation literally he would have contradicted the official teaching of the Catholic Church. His work was never translated into English.

Whether Ribera was right or wrong is of no consequence. It's a question of "*rightly dividing the word of truth*" and to do that one must take the Bible literally, interpreting it in its historic and grammatic context. When a text of Scripture is taken out of context it becomes a pretext for defending error.

Just because Ribera was a Catholic bishop does not mean that every thing he taught was error. Martin Luther was a Catholic priest when he was converted and protested against sin in the Church. At first he fought to reform the Church but finally had to leave. There were some men in the Catholic Church who had spiritual light during the dark ages.

Chapter 2 - The History of Eschatology

It is true that few of the writings of early Church Fathers contain clear teaching about the Rapture, and this is understandable when we consider the history of the Church in the first four centuries. This was the period of the ten pagan persecutions under the Roman Empire which terminated in AD313 with the Edict of Toleration. Constantine eventually declared Christianity the State religion bringing an end to the persecution of Christians.

We can understand that, in a time of intense persecution, some Christians would think that the Tribulation had already come. The writings of the Church Fathers reveals that some early Christians were trying to identify Antichrist by the number 666. The suffering Christians at Thessalonica thought the Tribulation had come in Paul's day and had to be corrected. In his second epistle (Chapter 2:7-8) Paul made it clear that Antichrist would not come until the Holy Spirit, who indwells the Church, was removed.

“He (the Holy Spirit in the Church) who now hinders, will hinder (the appearance of Antichrist), 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.”

With such intense persecution it would not be surprising if some early Church writers thought that they were already in the Tribulation and expected Antichrist to appear. However, we can now look back in history and see that those terrible days were not the Great Tribulation and that Antichrist did not appear at that time.

Before the time of Constantine (AD305-337), the predominant view was that Christ would return **after** the Tribulation and reign for 1,000 years. However, when Christianity gained political power throughout the Roman Empire, **many thought the kingdom of God had come** and that they had been wrong in interpreting the Bible literally. The symbolic interpretation of Scripture flooded the Church with false doctrine even challenging the Deity of Christ.

By early in the 5th century it became very apparent that the Roman Empire was not the holy kingdom of God, and Augustine of Hippo wrote his book, *The City of God* in which he spiritualized scripture and denied the premillennial return of Christ.

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Augustine still maintained that the kingdom of God had come but that it was being established in the Catholic Church, which he referred to as “The City of God.” He placed emphasis on salvation through the Church which is an essential element of Roman Catholic doctrine. Augustine’s works dominated the theology of Christendom through the thousand years of the Dark Ages and were adopted by the Reformers after the Reformation began in 1517.

So the truth about the history of eschatology (“last things”) is that neither Darby, Irving, nor Ribera “invented” the truth of the Rapture; it was always in the New Testament and history shows that the Church Fathers of the first four centuries were predominantly premillennial. Reformation theologians however, clung to much of the baggage of Augustine and the Roman Catholic Church. The priestly system, the union of church and state, infant baptism, vestments, amillennialism and a general resurrection etc. continued to be taught by reformers.

However, we have already shown that Dr Watson’s research revealed that there always were individuals who believed the Scriptures literally. It was when the leaders of Christendom followed Augustine and spiritualized the scriptures, that error flourished.

The Testimony of Victorinus

About AD258-260, Victorinus, a Bishop in what we today would call Slovenia, wrote a commentary on the Book of Revelation. He was martyred in AD304 during the reign of Diocletan.

Victorinus taught Chiliasm which is the Latin word for 1,000. Chiliasm was the name given to the Biblical truth that Jesus Christ will return and reign on the earth for 1,000 years.

Before the time of Constantine, Chiliasm was the generally held view in the christian church but after Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, many ceased to look for the Lord to return to establish his kingdom because they believed the kingdom of God had come.

In AD398 the Latin Father, Jerome, revised Victorinus’ commentary in order to delete any reference to Chiliasm (that Christ would reign 1000 years on earth). He did this to make it conform to the Nicean/Constantinople Creed of AD381, which opposed Chiliasm. However, an original copy of the commentary has been preserved from which we learn that Victorinus believed in the Tribulation, that the Jewish Temple would be rebuilt and the Jews would be converted in the last days. He taught that Christ would return and reign for 1,000 years.

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Although Victorinus spiritualized parts of Revelation, he believed that Mystery Babylon (Rev.17/18) was literal Rome located on seven hills and that Nero was Antichrist whose “deadly wound” occurred when he cut his own throat. He thought Nero would rise from the dead.

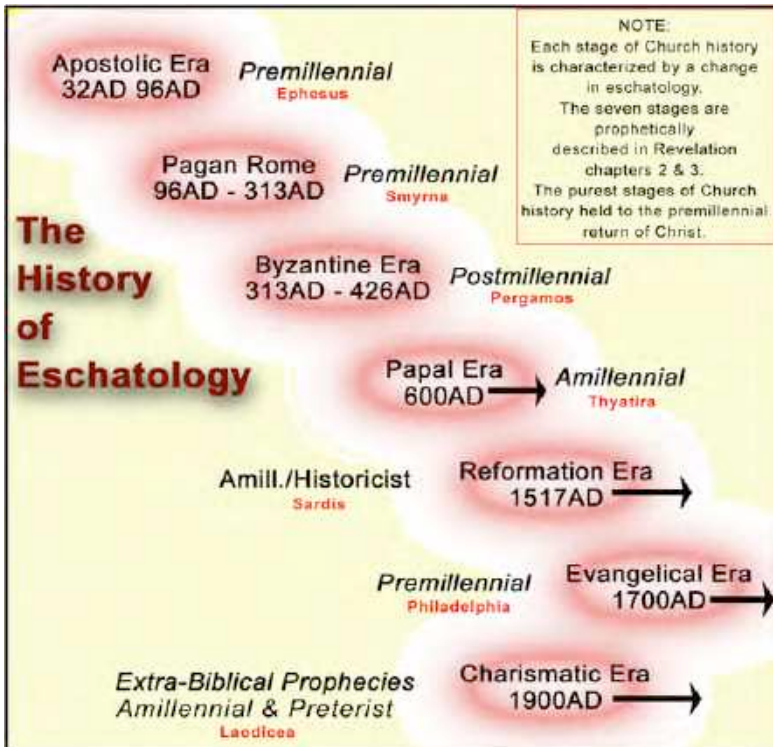
Victorinus wrote that the Tribulation plagues will strike “when the Church will have gone out from their midst” (p.35 of his commentary) but also speaks of saints in the Tribulation.

Victorinus’s writings are further evidence that early Christians were premillennial in doctrine and that after Constantine, the church attempted to wipe out Chiliasm (millennialism).

Prophecy was Sealed Up by God Until the End Time (Dan.12:4)

That the truth of the Rapture has become clearer today is strong evidence it is the correct interpretation of Scripture. When Daniel finished his prophecy of events in the Tribulation, Antichrist and the return of Christ, he said,

“I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?”



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God told Daniel to

“Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Dan.12:4).

This prophecy that knowledge would increase no doubt is true of scientific knowledge in the secular world but primarily it applies to the knowledge and understanding of the prophetic Scriptures because that is the context. When he said, *“I understood not”*, he certainly was not thinking about his understanding of science.

Paul urged greater diligence, *“AS YE SEE the day approaching”* (Heb.10:25) thus indicating that prophetic truth would become clearer toward the end times.

By the 20th century Christendom had reached its final stage of development as described in the letter to the Church at Laodicea and Christians could look back over the centuries and discern the prophetic fulfilment of each stage of church history seen in the letters to the seven churches (Rev.chs.2 and 3).

In the 19th and 20th centuries world events began to indicate we were drawing near to the coming of the Lord for His Church and that the world was becoming ripe for judgment. Two world wars saw the slaughter of millions of people and it continues today. The population explosion, the rise of radical Islam and Communism, Israel’s return to nationhood, apostasy in Christendom and the days of Lot and Noah; violence and the global gay agenda.

Globalization and the population explosion have resulted in massive urban developments making global famine a real possibility within a matter of weeks if transportation systems are disrupted. Knowledge has increased and with so many scriptures fulfilled, we should expect that our understanding of Bible prophecy would increase. Fulfilled prophecies in our day cry aloud, *“The coming of the Lord is drawing near!”*

Any thinking person who listens to world news can see that history is reaching a climax and a global holocaust is imminent. God has promised that the Church will be removed BEFORE the coming Tribulation and it is with a sense of urgency that we turn to the New Testament to see what God has said about the rapture of the Church.

Chapter 3 - The Rapture is Dispensational

To anybody who interprets the Bible's history and prophecy literally, it is obvious that God has administered mankind differently at various stages of history. In the Garden of Eden there was no sin; from Eden to the Flood men lived by their conscience; after the Flood human government was introduced and the patriarchs sojourned in the land of promise from Abram to the Exodus.

The age of Law saw God administering His will among men through a nation with laws, a priesthood and kings. Prophets were raised up to reveal God's plan for the nation to prepare them for the coming of the Lamb of God who would provide eternal salvation for sinful man. When Israel rejected the Saviour and so was put aside, God turned to a Gentile Church.

On the birthday of the Church at Pentecost, the Word of God was preached in **Gentile languages** as a clear sign to the Jews that God was pouring out His Spirit, not on Jews only, but on "*all flesh*" and that "*whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Acts 2:17,21). A new dispensation had come - the Church age.

The Gap Between Israel's 69th "week" and 70th "week"

The Church age however, must come to an end for God has not finished with Israel. The Church fills a gap in Israel's history between the 69th "week" and 70th "week" of Daniel's prophecy (Dan.9:24-27).

Daniel was shown God's plan for the Jews and Jerusalem and 490 years (70 sevens) were determined upon them beginning from Passover in the 20th year of Artaxerxes, King of Persia. After 483 prophetic years (69 sevens) Messiah would be cut off, Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Romans, and desolations were determined until a future Roman prince made a seven-year covenant with the nation.

The gap between the 69th seven of years, and the last seven years of Israel's history - before they experience everlasting righteousness and blessing in the kingdom of Christ - was the mystery Church age.

Paul indicated that during this long gap in Israel's prophetic history the Jews would be scattered among the nations and blinded spiritually. Paul described the gap in Israel's history as the time when "*the fulness of the Gentiles*" would come in and called it a "*mystery*" (Rom.11:25). He said:

"Blindness in part is happened to Israel, UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved..." (Rom 11:25-26).

The Rapture of the Church

So the Church age has a terminus point after which Israel will again seek the Lord and be blessed with a new covenant, from which they will never again stray.

The Church age is the age of Israel's blindness (Rom.11:7), but when the Church is complete, Israel will again turn to the Lord (Rom.11:15,26).

James indicated that this would be the case when Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem to report on the conversion of Gentiles. James said:

*"Simeon (Peter) hath declared how **God at the first did visit the Gentiles**, to take out of them a people for his name (the Church). And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,*

***AFTER THIS I WILL RETURN**, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the **RESIDUE OF MEN** might seek after the Lord, and **all the Gentiles**, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:14-18). See also Amos 9:11.*

Peter had reported to the Apostles on his visit to the Gentile, Cornelius, and God had shown him that Gentiles, whom he considered unclean, (Acts 10:15) would be cleansed and become a people for Christ's name.

After the Gentile Church is complete, God will again raise up the throne of David and then all the Gentiles would be blessed in the millennial kingdom. God had it all planned out from the beginning of the world but He hid the truth of the Church until Paul.

It is perfectly clear from this prophecy that the Church will exist only for the period of the gap between the 69th "seven" and the 70th "seven" of years during which Jerusalem and the Temple would experience desolations.

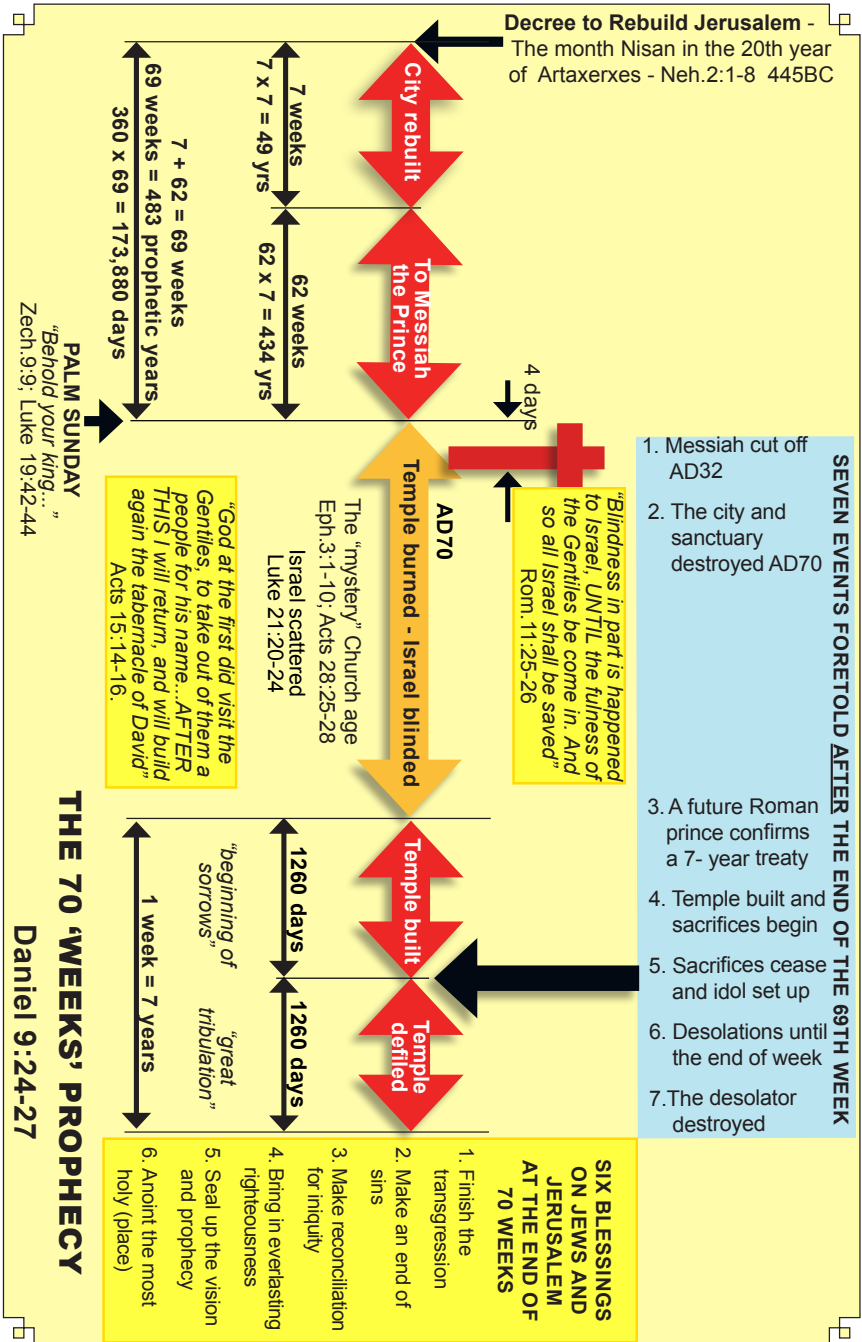
There is no time given for the length of the Church age and Jesus said that no man knows the day or hour of His return. Israel's testimony was indicated as 490 years but the length of Israel's blindness is not indicated. Even Jesus does not know how long this will be. Mark wrote:

*"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, **neither the Son, but the Father**" (Mark 13:32).*

It is the Father who determines the "times or the seasons" (Acts 1:7). When the "fulness of the Gentiles" has come into the Church the Father will send the Lord Jesus for His bride and the Church will be "caught up" (raptured).

The Rapture is Dispensational

"70 weeks (sevens) are determined upon THY PEOPLE (ISRAEL) and upon THY HOLY CITY (Jerusalem)" Dan.9:24.



The Rapture of the Church

Life on earth must continue after the *"fulness of the Gentiles"* has come in because it is after that, that *"all Israel shall be saved"* and God will make a *"new covenant"* with the nation (Jer.31:31; Rom.11:27).

The conversion of Israel occurs when Russia and her Islamic alliance invade Israel (Ezek.39:22-29; Joel 2:1-21). So life on earth must go on after the *"fulness of the Gentiles"* comes in and the Church age is complete.

Thus, if life goes on upon the earth after the Church is complete, and Israel becomes God's witness on earth again, isn't it logical that the Church would have to be removed **before the last seven years** of Israel's prophetic history?

Many scriptures indicate that the last seven years before Christ returns to reign on the earth will be a period of great trouble; Jeremiah calls it *"the time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble"* (Jer.30:7). Jesus called it *"great tribulation"* (Matt.24:21) and Paul called it *"the day of the Lord"* (1Thess.5:2). Israel will be *"saved out of it"* (Jer.30:7) and the Gentile nations who follow Antichrist will be judged. The Book of Revelation shows that Israel is God's witness on earth during the Tribulation. The Church is not mentioned in Revelation chs 6 to 18.

The Church Age to Finish Before the Tribulation

The Book of Revelation was a message to the seven churches of Asia. It was to indicate to them future events - *"things which must shortly (quickly) come to pass"* (Rev.1:1). God gave us a chronological outline of the future from John's day to the end of time.

First, John wrote to each church describing their condition, commending their faithfulness and condemning failure. Promises of blessing were made to some in each church who were described as *"overcomers."* From these promises we understand that the name *"overcomer"* means those in each church who were saved. The same terminology is found in John's first epistle (1John 5:4-5).

As we become familiar with the text, it is clear that these letters have a prophetic character and describe the professing church, Christendom, from Pentecost to the Rapture; seven stages culminating with Laodicea which is an apostate church that sickens Christ. This is consistent with other prophecies about the end of the Church age (1Tim.4:1-3; 2Tim.3:1-8; 2Peter 3:3-4).

Since Revelation chronologically describes future events from the time of John, we would expect to discover a clear prophecy of the rapture of the Church. And that is precisely what we find.

The Rapture is Dispensational

After Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 where the seven churches are described as seven stages of church history from Pentecost to the end of the Church age, we find John in Chapter 4 saying:

*“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, and one sat on the throne” (Rev.4:1-2).*

When God spoke to prophets He enabled them to see future events occurring before the time, and since John was a part of the Church, the Body of Christ, he foresaw his own rapture through the open door into heaven at the end of the Church age.

Then in Chapters 6 to 18 a detailed description is given of the seven years of great tribulation divided into two periods of 1,260 days, concluding with the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ as He comes to reign on the earth for 1,000 years (Revelation Chapters 19 and 20).

John heard *“the trump of God”* and was *“immediately”* caught up. This agrees with the description 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” (1Cor.15:51-52).*

The Rapture is Dispensational!

Chapter 4 - The Rapture is for the Church

There are different types of saints in the Bible. There are Old Testament saints, New Testament saints, Tribulation saints, and Millennial saints. These are individuals who are saved in different dispensations. All saints are saved by faith as the epistle to the Hebrews Chapter 11 so clearly shows. From Abel, all the way down through history, men have turned in repentance to God, believed His promise, and been justified by faith before God. God has administered His grace differently in various dispensations.

Under the Old Testament regime men looked forward to Calvary's cross, seen only in the shadows cast by animal sacrifices. Since Christ died and rose again, we look back to a completed work of redemption. Whether saints look forward or backward, all are redeemed through one sacrifice of the Lamb of God and nobody is saved by keeping the law or any other good work they may perform.

Old Testament saints could not go to heaven after death. The sacrifices they offered only covered their sin until the blood of Christ removed their sins for ever. When Old Testament saints died they went to **paradise**, called "*Abraham's bosom*". In *sheol* (Hebrew) they waited for Christ to come and take paradise into heaven.

When Christ rose from the dead, He was "*the firstfruits of them that slept*" (1Cor.15:20). When He arose, the graves of the Old Testament saints were opened and they "*came out of the graves after His resurrection*" (Matt.27:53). When Jesus "*ascended up on high*" and "*led captivity captive*" (Eph.4:8-9), He took the Old Testament saints into heaven. Paradise was relocated to heaven! (2Cor.12:1-5).

Ever since Christ ascended to the throne of heaven, **the souls of Christians** who die, depart to be with Christ and are clothed with a spiritual body (2Cor.5:1-4) until our physical bodies are raised from the grave in resurrection power at the rapture of the Church:

*"The dead in Christ shall rise first: 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"* (1Thess.4:16-17).

Only "*the dead in Christ*" will rise at the Rapture. To be "*in Christ*" one must be **in the Body of Christ** and this is only possible in this Church age. Paul told the Corinthian Christians:

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be

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*Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For **the body is not one member, but many**" (1Cor.12:13-14).*

To the Colossian Church Paul wrote:

*"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh **for his body's sake, which is the church**" (Col.1:24).*

And again to the Ephesian Church:

*"And hath put all things under his (Christ's) feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to **the church, which is his body**, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph.1:22-23).*

Paul began his epistles to churches as "*the saints **in Christ Jesus***" a title used *exclusively of saints in the Church age*.

New Testament saints cease to be Jews and Gentiles in God's sight. The Body of Christ is a unique company; Christ is the Head.

*"For as many of you as have been baptized (by the Spirit) into Christ have put on Christ. There is **NEITHER Jew NOR Greek**, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for **ye are ALL ONE in Christ Jesus**" (Gal.3:27-28).*

In Old Testament times, when a Gentile left his national gods to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, **he became a Jew**; ie. a Jewish proselyte (Acts 2:10). Proselytes were called "*strangers in Israel*". There were 153,600 "*strangers in Israel*" in Solomon's day (2Chron.2:17).

Saints who are "*in Christ*" are therefore uniquely those who are saved **in this Church age** and are **in the Body of Christ**, which is His Church. Therefore when we read of the Rapture, that "*the **dead in Christ shall rise first***", the Bible is distinguishing between Church-age saints and saints from other ages. Old Testament saints and Tribulation saints are not "*in Christ*". When Christ returns, martyrs, slain by Antichrist, are raised:

*"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).*

Millennial saints are not "*in Christ*" and they are raised 1,000 years after Christ returns to earth.

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

The Rapture of the Church

Christendom is not the Church

In Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 there are messages to seven local churches in cities of Asia. The Church of Jesus Christ has only saved members but local churches have some saved and some unsaved. Local churches are better called Christendom. The parables in Matthew 13 make it clear there will always be tares among the wheat.

Throughout Christendom there are sincere souls who genuinely are saved through faith in the Lord Jesus. These may not have a perfect understanding of Biblical doctrine but they know Christ and have experienced the new birth. The seven churches of Asia are representative of seven stages of **Christendom** from the beginning of the Church Age to the Rapture when all the saved will be caught up to be with Christ. The unsaved within Christendom will be left behind to enter the great Tribulation.

The chart on page 21 shows the **seven stages of Christendom from Pentecost to the Rapture**. Within each stage of Church history there has been a remnant that are called "*overcomers*". Overcomers are truly saved within each stage of Christendom. All Jews are part of God's chosen people, Israel, but not all Jews are saved. Christendom was pure at its beginnings, but has apostatized and will go into the Tribulation as "*Mystery Babylon the Great*" (Rev. Chs.17 & 18) after the true Church is removed at the Rapture.

The Church was a Mystery

Jesus spoke very little about the Church because He came in the Old Testament era of Law. He told his disciples:

"Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt.10:5-7).

But this changed after Jesus rose from the dead when He gave the great commission to the same disciples:

"He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Before Pentecost, Israel was God's witness on earth. After Pentecost, the Church was God's witness on earth. The Holy Spirit could not come until Christ returned to heaven and was glorified (John 7:39). Only then did He and the Father send the Holy Spirit to baptise believers into the Body of Christ (John 14:16-17).

The Seven Stages of Christendom as Foretold in the Seven Letters to the Seven Churches Rev.chs.2 & 3

AD32
Ephesus
"Desired"
Early Church

Smyrna
"Martyr"
Suffering Church
The 10 Pagan persecutions

AD313
Constantine's edict of Toleration

Pergamos
"Married"
State Church

AD600
Pope Gregory assumes political power

†
These churches no longer exist yet Jesus said to "Hold fast till I come" (Rev.2:25). They therefore are prophetic of the Church till the Rapture.



"Come up hither"
Rev.4:1



NOTE:
The "overcomers" in each stage are the saved remnant in Christendom. The Lord promises blessing to them and that they will be kept from the HOUR of temptation which shall come upon all the world (Rev.3:10)

Thyatira
"Continual sacrifice"
Roman Catholic Church

1517
Luther's Protest
Sardis
"Escaping Few"
Reformation Church

1700
Moravian Revival
Philadelphia
"Brotherly Love"
Missionary Church

1900
Laodicea
"People Rule"
Charismatic, Emerging Church

7- year Tribulation called The Day of the Lord, The Time of Jacob's Trouble, & Daniel's 70th "week".

1,000-year reign of Christ from David's Throne at Jerusalem

Azusa Street Mission, Los Angeles, 1906

The Rapture of the Church

The mystery of the Church was revealed to Paul and was previously hidden from men and angels. Paul wrote:

*“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to **the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest... made known to all nations for the obedience of faith**”* (Rom.16:25-26).

In Ephesians Chapter 3 Paul defines the “mystery church”

*“...the mystery of Christ which in other ages was **not made known unto the sons of men**, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; **That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body**, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”* (Eph.3:4-6).

Until revealed to Paul, the truth of the Church as the Body of Christ with a unique identity as *“neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all”* (Col 3:11), was unknown. Even the angels had no knowledge of the Church until it was revealed (Eph.3:10).

The Truth of the Rapture of the Church is Also a Mystery.

“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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1Cor.15:51-53).

In Romans chapter 11 Paul indicates the Church will be complete before Israel turns back to the Lord

*“For 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 ...”* (Rom.11:25-26).

The expression, *“the fulness of the Gentiles”* indicates that the mystery (hidden) Church which is predominantly Gentile, will have a finite number and when that number is reached, the Father will send the Son to snatch away His Bride before Israel’s 70th “week” begins. The Church age will finish and Israel will again be God’s witness on earth.

Christendom is not the Church of Jesus Christ. At the Rapture, only those *“in Christ”*, the born-again believers, are caught up; the rest of Christendom will go into the Tribulation.

Chater 5 - The Rapture is "THE Departure"

In the first chapter of his second epistle to the Thessalonians Paul gave thanks to God for the testimony of the Thessalonians and encouraged them in their time of persecution. In the second chapter he corrects some misunderstandings about the Rapture and the Tribulation.

Paul had told them in his first epistle that the Christians were not appointed to the wrath of the "*day of the Lord*," and that the Rapture would come first (1Thess.5:1-10). We read:

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

The "*day of the Lord*" in 1 Thess.5 refers to God's judgments on the inhabitants of earth in the last days. It begins immediately after the Church is raptured and concludes with all of the events that characterize the Great Tribulation. The return of the Lord Jesus in glory, and His millennial kingdom, are also a part of it.

Two Events -Gathering and Glory

In chapter 2 of the second epistle to the Thessalonians Paul speaks of the Rapture AND the glorious appearing of the Lord while in Chapter 1 he spoke only of the glorious appearing and described it as a dramatic and fearful sight for the unsaved. In his **first epistle** he spoke only of the comforting hope of the rapture of the Church and it is well to note that at the Rapture we have LIVING saints changed as well as the dead raised. Only those "*in Christ*" are raised in the Rapture which eliminates Old Testament and Tribulation saints.

When the Old Testament saints were raised, the living Old Testament saints were NOT changed and when Christ returns to earth the living saints from the Tribulation go ALIVE in natural bodies into the Kingdom. (Matt.25:34; Zech.14:16). They are NOT changed at that time either. Only the martyrs from the Tribulation are raised when Christ comes in glory (Dan.12:2; Rev.20:4).

Paul begins with the words:

*"We beseech you, brethren, by **the coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by **our gathering together unto him**"* (2 Thess.2:1).

Between these two events the awful judgments of the day of the Lord are enacted. Paul is raising this subject because there have been several events that have taken place that led the Thessalonians to fear that they were already in the Tribulation.

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Paul had indicated that the day of God's wrath would come unexpectedly as a *"thief in the night"* (1Thess.5:2), but they were fearful that they had missed the Rapture. Two things had caused them to be *"shaken"* in their minds:

- 1) The persecution they were enduring was intense.
- 2) Letters had been received telling them that the Great Tribulation had already begun.

Their understanding was that the day of the Lord was the time of God's wrath poured out on the ungodly, and Paul had assured them:

"Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1Thess.5:4).

However, reports were coming to them by *"spirit, word, and letter"* (2Thess. 2:2) claiming to be a word of prophecy from the Lord, that the day of the Lord had come. Some claimed they had heard about it from others, but the most troubling of all was a pseudo-graphic letter that had been received with Paul's name on it. Paul brands these messages as deceit and says:

"Let no man deceive you by any means" (2Thess.2:3).

If these messages were from God, then why did Paul, in his first epistle, say that the rapture of the Church would precede the day of the Lord? (1 Thess.5:9).

The concern of the Thessalonian Christians is strong evidence that Paul had taught these believers about the pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church, otherwise why would they be so concerned?

A Falling Away or THE Departure

Paul now proceeds to speak of two events that must occur BEFORE the day of the Lord could come.

"That day, shall not come, except there come (the) falling away first, AND that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2Thess. 2:3).

The Greek noun translated *"falling away"* is *apostasia*, and the core meaning of the word is *"to stand away from or depart."* It is used here and in only one other place in the New Testament, in Acts 21:21 where Paul is accused of teaching Jewish converts to **forsake** (depart from) the teachings of Moses concerning the law.

The verbal form of the word is found 15 times in the New Testament and has several usages. In 1Tim.6:5 Paul tells Timothy to *"withdraw"* (depart) himself from ungodly men. **That is the opposite to apostasy.**

In his letter to the Corinthians Paul expressed the desire that his *"thorn in the flesh"* might *"depart"* from him, that is, that God would remove it (2Cor.12: 8).

“THE Departure”

In Luke’s Gospel the word is used of Anna the prophetess who “*departed not from the temple but served God with fastings and prayers night and day*” (Luke 2:37).

It is recorded in Acts 12:10 that when Peter was imprisoned by Herod, the angel conducted him through the prison gates to the streets of the city and then “*departed from him.*”

In Luke 4:13, following the temptation of Christ, it is recorded that the Devil “*departed from him for a season.*”

Christians are told to “*depart from iniquity*”(2Tim.2:19) which is the opposite to apostasy. So on eleven occasions the verb is used of a physical departure from a place or from people. On only three occasions is it used of a departure from the faith (Luke 8:13, Heb. 3:12, 1Tim.4:1). Twice it is used of departing from evil.

What exactly does Paul mean when he says that “*the falling away*” must come before the Tribulation?

Many say that *apostasia* refers to a departure from the faith, but is this correct in the context? An increasing number of sound Bible Teachers have come to see that the context demands it be translated, “*departure.*”

How did the early translations of the Bible translate this word? The Latin Vulgate Bible, around AD400, used the word *decessio*, which means “*departure.*” **Seven English translations**, from the Wycliffe Bible of 1384 to the Geneva Bible of 1608, all translated the word as departure or departing. The King James Bible of 1611 was the first English version to translate *apostasia* as “*falling away.*”

It is also important to note that the original Greek uses **the definite article** before the noun, therefore it should read, “*THE departure.*” This indicates that Paul was speaking of **a specific event** of which his readers were already aware. The Rapture was the subject of the first epistle, and the subject of this chapter is

“the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him” (2 Thess. 2:1).

Apostasy in the Last Days

Let us now return to the earlier question, “What did Paul mean?”

Many understand Paul to mean a “departure from the faith” prior to the Rapture; a time of wide-spread apostasy. Theodore Beza, the successor of Calvin in the 1500s, **transliterated** the word *apostasia* and the word has since come to mean a departure from the faith once delivered to the saints.

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But was Paul talking about a departure from the faith? As already mentioned, in the original Greek, the noun "*apostasia*" is preceded by **the definite article**, which indicates that Paul is talking about **a definite event** that will precede the Tribulation and will be clearly identifiable when the time comes.

It is true that the Scriptures indicate that in the last days there will be an increase in lawlessness and a departure from the Word of God. When Paul wrote to Timothy, he said that men would become totally self-centred and rebellious toward God (2 Tim.3:1-5). He also said that *"in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils"* (1 Tim.4:1).

However, when Paul addressed the Ephesian elders, he warned that *"grievous wolves"* would enter in among them *"not sparing the flock"*. These would be men *"speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them"* (Acts 20:29-30).

Apostasy is not exclusively a feature of the last days. Apostasy was present in the Christian Church in the days of the Apostles and has continued for nearly 2,000 years. During the 1,000 years of the "dark ages", superstition and false doctrine abounded. The scriptures were hid from the common people and Church liturgies were in Latin. It was the sale of indulgences by Tetzal that provoked Luther to protest.

It is true that after the rapture of the Church there will be a worldwide ecumenical religious movement that will seek to bring all religions under its control. This system will also have a large influence on the political development of Antichrist's kingdom (Rev.17:7). It is already emerging but will not come into being until after the Rapture. Paul told the Thessalonians that the Tribulation will not come until after *"the departure"* takes place, so it cannot be referring to this system.

Paul reinforces the view that it is the Rapture, and not a departure from the faith, when he says:

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth (restrains) will let (will restrain), UNTIL HE be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked (One) be revealed" (2 Thess.2:7-8).

"Taken out of the way", is the departure. The word translated *"caught up"* in 1Thess.4:17 is *harpazo* in the Greek and means, *"to carry off by force"* or, *"snatch away"*. Paul says this must happen FIRST. *"Until he be taken out of the way"*. The interlinear Greek New Testament reads, *"until out of the midst he be gone."*

Who Hinders the Appearance of the Man of Sin?

The one who restrains or hinders Satan’s plan to rule the world today is God the Holy Spirit indwelling His true Church. It is His influence in the Church that prevents the whole world becoming absolutely corrupt and evil in the sight of God. The Church is the salt of the earth.

It has been Satan’s desire to place his “*man of sin*” over the kingdoms of this world but someone has been hindering and it is the Holy Spirit indwelling the Church. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes “*he shall reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*” (John 16:8). Trace the history of the world over the last 2,000 years and see how the Roman Empire, which will be Antichrist’s seat of power, has been frustrated by the true believers. Paulicians, Albigenses, Waldenses, Huguenots, Moravians, Ana-Baptists, Wesleyans, Lutherans, Bohemian Brethren etc. have all stood in the way of the development of Antichrist’s kingdom, ridden by the harlot woman of the Papacy.

In the 18th and 19th centuries Britain stood in the way of the kingdom of Antichrist. Her missionaries went to the farthest parts of the world and translated Scriptures into many languages. The British navy and army overthrew the Pope’s armies and navies and preserved elements of the true Church.

Christians should never underestimate the value of a life lived to the glory of God. A Godly life restrains evil.

Paul says that the revelation of Antichrist is held back UNTIL the presence of the Holy Spirit is removed. He came at Pentecost and departs at the Rapture. There is the same progression of thought in Verses 3, 7 and 8 where the two signs that indicate the “*day of the Lord*” has come are repeated.

1. The departure FIRST when the Church is “*taken out of the way.*”
2. The “*man of sin*” is then revealed, the Wicked one, whom the Lord will destroy at His coming at the end of the Tribulation.

Two Views of Who Hinders the Man of Sin

From earliest times there have been two views of who it is that hinders the appearance of Antichrist. Chrysostom (AD347-407), in his *Homily 4* on 2Thess.2:6-9, mentions them both. He writes:

“What then is it that withholdeth, that is, hindereth him from being revealed? Some indeed say, the grace of the Spirit, but others the Roman empire, to whom I most of all accede. Wherefore? Because if he meant to say the Spirit, he would not have spoken obscurely, but plainly, that even now the grace of the Spirit, that is the gifts, withhold

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him. And otherwise he ought now to have come, if he was about to come **when the gifts ceased; for they have long since ceased.**"

Because the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit had ceased long before the day of Chrysostom, and the Roman Empire was crumbling under the attacks of Germanic tribes, he concluded that the restrainer must therefore be the Roman Empire and that once it collapsed, which it did in the West in AD476, the man of sin would appear. However, Antichrist did not appear in AD476.

Many Bible commentators have followed this line of teaching, and because AD476 did not bring Antichrist to power, they see the Papacy, which began (AD600) with Gregory the Great, as the "*man of sin*". The Reformers and others believed the Papacy was the Antichrist.

Antichrist, however, is a **man** and not a system. The Hinderer is also a **person**; the Holy Spirit. The Papacy is symbolized in Revelation 17 and 18 as the harlot woman, and the Antichrist as the Beast.

The Holy Spirit did not depart when the sign gifts ceased with the passing of the Apostles, and He still indwells the true Church. While the Church is present in this world the "*man of sin*" cannot be revealed, but once the Holy Spirit, indwelling the Church, is removed then the man of sin will appear.

Christians Are Chosen to Salvation

*"But God hath from the beginning **chosen you to salvation** (deliverance at the Rapture) through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2Thess.2:13).*

Election is always to **glorification** for believers at the Rapture according to the **foreknowledge** of God and not to faith (1Peter1:2). Here the word salvation is used in the same sense as in (1Thess.5:9).

*"God hath not appointed us unto wrath (Tribulation) but **to obtain salvation** (deliverance) through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The word salvation here cannot mean salvation from the guilt of sin for Paul was speaking to believers who were **already saved** from guilt. The salvation (deliverance) here is from the **presence** of sin at the Rapture.

Therefore in God's foreknowledge and foreordaining power, He has determined that all believers of this Church age will be delivered BEFORE the wrath of the day of the Lord. Our "*salvation*" will be complete with the **redemption of the body** at the Rapture. The "*day of the Lord*" cannot commence until our bodies have been redeemed.

The Testimony of Greek Scholars

Kenneth Wuest lectured in New Testament Greek at Moody Bible Training Institute for 28 years and wrote 16 books on *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*. Wuest devotes Chapter 3 of one book to the “Day of the Lord” and gives a detailed explanation as to why the correct translation of *apostasia* in the context is “the Departure” of the Church. (See *Prophetic Light in the Present Darkness Chapter 3*).

The corrupt *New International New Testament* and *New English Bible* both translate *apostasia* as “the rebellion” but these are based on only one papyrus fragment.

The Amplified New Testament has a footnote that reads, “A possible rendering of *apostasia* is “departure [of the Church].”

Dr. Thomas Ice, of Dallas Theological Seminary, wrote this conclusion: “If it is true that “*apostasia*” most likely has the meaning of physical departure, it is a clear support for pre-Tribulationism and it means that a prophetic sequence is laid out by Paul early in his apostolic ministry and that he taught that the Rapture will occur first, before the Day of the Lord commences. It is not until after the beginning of the Day of the Lord that the Antichrist is released, resulting in the events described by him in chapter 2 of 2 Thessalonians. This is the only interpretation that provides hope for a discomfited people. Maranatha!”

There can be no doubt that the context demands that *apostasia* be translated in its basic sense and that the day of the Lord, the Great Tribulation, cannot come until **the Departure of the Church** takes place. Only after the Church has gone from this world, will the “*man of sin*”, Antichrist, will be revealed. The revelation of Antichrist is hindered by the presence of the Holy Spirit who indwells the Church and

“He who now hinders will hinder, UNTIL He be taken out of the way and THEN shall that Wicked (One) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” (2Thess.2:7-8).

That is the clear teaching of this Scripture. “*Let no man deceive you by any means*” (2Thess.2:3).

Chapter 6 - The Rapture is the Last Trump

Some who refuse to believe that the Rapture occurs **BEFORE** the **seven years** of Tribulation point to the scripture that the Rapture will occur *“at the last trump.”*

*“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).*

These people contend that the *“last trump”* mentioned by Paul is the last of the seven trumpet judgments that sound at the end of the first half of the Tribulation. The seventh trumpet sounds at the mid-point of the Tribulation (Rev.11:15).

In the Book of the Revelation we read that the Lord Jesus opened *“a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals”* (Rev.5:1). As each seal is opened a judgment is revealed and when the seventh seal is opened John saw

“seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets” (Rev.8:2).

As each angel sounded his trumpet a judgment fell on men. The first four trumpets announced environmental judgments. One third of all grass and trees are burned, one third of the sea became blood and one third of ships were destroyed, one third of all rivers and *“fountains of waters”* became poisoned, and one third of the sun, moon, and stars were darkened.

When the fifth trumpet sounded the bottomless pit was opened to release vast numbers of demons that appear like a locust plague and when the sixth trumpet sounded, four fallen angels that are *“bound in the great river Euphrates”* are released to gather 200 million men to wage war, probably in Asia for

“an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men” (Rev.9:15).

When the **seventh angel sounded his trumpet** the *“seven last plagues,”* seven vials (bowls) are poured out upon earth during the second half of the seven years. If this **seventh trumpet** is the *“trump of God”* then the Rapture must be at the mid-point of the Tribulation. On this basis, the Church would have to pass through the first 1,260 days of the Tribulation. Therefore those who hold this view maintain a mid-Tribulation Rapture.

The Rapture and the Last Trump

However, while the seventh trumpet may be the last of seven, it is not the last trumpet mentioned in the Book of Revelation. There is another trumpet that will sound **AFTER the seventh** trumpet judgment. We read:

*"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 (Israel) from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"* (Matt.24:30-31).

This trumpet will sound at the second advent of Christ, which Matthew states is *"**immediately AFTER** the tribulation of those days"* (Matt.24:29) and is 1,260 days after the seventh trumpet judgment. Therefore the seventh trumpet judgment cannot rightly be designated as the **last** trumpet and there cannot be a mid-Tribulation Rapture.

Furthermore, the trumpet that sounds at the Rapture is *"the trump of God,"* while both the seventh trumpet judgment and the trumpet that sounds at the second advent are specifically said to be sounded by **an angel**.

If however, the *"last trump"* is the trumpet that sounds when Christ returns to gather Israel *"from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other,"* Christians would have to pass through the entire Tribulation and this contradicts other scriptures that say Christians will **not go into the Tribulation**. For example:

*"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"* (Rev.3:10-11).

This promise to the Church at Philadelphia is not that Christians will be kept from the judgments of the Tribulation but from *"the hour"* which will come *"upon all the world"*. They will be preserved from **the time** of Tribulation which can only mean they will be removed and will not be here.

Also in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians he states:

*"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. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ**"* (1Thess.5:2-9).

A clear distinction is made between the saved and the unsaved. *"They shall not escape"* but *"Ye brethren...are not appointed to wrath."*

The Rapture of the Church

The “wrath” in this verse cannot be punishment in hell because the context is “*the day of the Lord,*” which is the Tribulation.

So if the last trump is not the trumpet that blows at the end of the Tribulation, what is it? **Paul died 30 years before John wrote the Book of the Revelation** and knew nothing about the seven trumpet judgments which were not revealed by Christ to John until AD96.

However, Paul lived and wrote in the era of the mighty Roman Empire whose armies constantly preserved peace in the provinces. Roman legions were extremely well disciplined and when they shifted, they followed strict procedures. Paul may have witnessed Roman legions shifting camp or at least would have been told about them.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, in his book entitled *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 3, Chapter 5, described how a Roman Legion shifted camp. Three trumpets were blown and the third trumpet was the last trumpet. He wrote:

“Nor can their enemies easily surprise them with the suddenness of their incursions; for as soon as they have marched into an enemy’s land, they do not begin to fight till they have walled their camp about ... When they have thus secured themselves, they live together by companies, with quietness and decency, as are all their other affairs managed with good order and security. ... they neither sup nor dine as they please themselves singly, but all together. Their times also for sleeping, and watching, and rising, **are notified beforehand by the sound of trumpets**, nor is anything done without such a signal ... When they are to go out of their camp, **the trumpet gives a sound**, at which time nobody lies still, but at the first intimation they take down their tents, and all is made ready for their going out; then do the trumpets sound again, to order them to get ready for the march; then do they lay their baggage suddenly upon their mules and other beasts of burden, and stand, at the place for starting, ready to march; when also **they set fire to their camp**, and this they do because it will be easy for them to erect another camp, and that it may not ever be of use to their enemies.

Then do the **trumpets give a sound the third time**, that they are to go out in order to excite those that on any account are a little tardy, that so no one may be out of his rank when the army marches. Then does the crier stand at the general’s right hand, and asks them thrice, in their own tongue, whether they be now ready to go out to war or not. To which they reply as often, with a loud and cheerful voice, saying, “We are ready.” And this they do almost before the

The Rapture and the Last Trump

question is asked them; they do this as filled with a kind of martial fury, and at the time that they so cry out, they lift up their right hands also."

Paul frequently used the symbolism of a Roman soldier and urged Christians to "*endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (2Tim.2:3). He spoke of taking the "*whole armour of God*" (Eph.6:13) and told Timothy, "*No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier*" (2Tim.2:4). He referred to Archippus as "*our fellow soldier*" (Philemon 1:2) and at the end of his ministry he said "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*" (2Tim.4:7).

I think we can confidently say that Paul was well acquainted with the procedures in the Roman army and with this in mind, he would liken the rapture of the Church to a Roman legion shifting camp. The "*last trump*" was the final call to depart and the eagerness with which the Roman soldiers "*with a loud and cheerful voice*" answered their captain saying, "*We are ready,*" will be the response of Christians when the Lord descends with a shout saying, "*Come up hither!*"

THE TRUMP OF GOD

John Ecob

The Trump of God will one day sound
and the mystery church will not be found;
The Lord will call to all His Own
And saints on earth will know the tone.

The Trump of God will bring great fear
As millions here will disappear;
Some from their bed and from the mill
And those who plow the earth to till.

The Trump of God is likened to
The final call to soldiers true
Their camp on earth will now be burned
They're heading home to rest they've earned.



Chapter 7 - The Rapture is a Sign to Israel

*“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).*

The above verses must be viewed in the context of Luke Chapter 17 where we read about the healing of ten lepers, one of them a Samaritan. The miracle had been witnessed by a group of Pharisees who must have been impressed. Jesus had sent the healed lepers to the priests at the Temple to be declared clean according to the Law when one of them turned back and loudly glorified God. However, the leper who returned was a Samaritan and this provided a complication in the minds of the Pharisees. But how could they complain about such an act of mercy? Perhaps they were embarrassed that a Samaritan could be so blessed and glorify God; they immediately changed the subject to conceal their embarrassment and asked *“when the kingdom of God should come?”*

The Pharisees believed Messiah would be able to do miracles. If Jesus was Messiah, then He must **also** establish His kingdom with Israel at the head of the nations. The political implications were vast, for the Romans controlled Israel and the known world as far away as Britain. Hence the question, *“When will the kingdom of God appear?”*

Jesus' Answer to the Pharisees

Jesus gave a brief response to the Pharisees then He turned to His disciples and provided them with the detailed answer. To the Pharisees He said,

*“The kingdom of God cometh **NOT** with observation: **NEITHER** shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21).*

It is obvious that these Pharisees were not believers and therefore it would be quite incorrect to say that the kingdom of God was WITHIN THEM. It would also be inconsistent with many prophecies to say that the promised kingdom of God would **not** be a literal and visible kingdom that could be observed. The word translated *“observation”* is para-tereseos meaning *“near-see”* or *“see in the near view”* and the words *“within you”*,

The Rapture is a Sign to Israel

would better be translated, "*in the midst of all of you*" or "*among you.*" Jesus told them that they would not be able to say, "*See here it is,*" or, "*See there it is!*" because the kingdom was going to be deferred.

Jesus said to Nicodemus,

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"
(John 3:5).

The New Birth is a New Covenant experience which was not possible under the Old Covenant, and neither was entry into the kingdom of God possible to Old Testament saints. The New Birth awaited Christ's death and resurrection and involved the indwelling Holy Spirit who was not given until Pentecost. On this basis alone, it would not make sense to say that the Pharisees were already **in the kingdom** of God or that the kingdom of God was "**within**" them.

The Pharisees were too blind to recognize the King of Israel **in their midst** and so the Lord had nothing more to say to them. He had already told the disciples, "*it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, BUT TO THEM IT IS NOT GIVEN*" (Matt.13:11).

A paraphrase of the Lord's answer to the Pharisees would be,

"The kingdom of God will not be seen in the 'near future' in its visible form and none of you will be able to say, 'See here is the kingdom, for behold, the king is among you now' (and you reject Him)".

Jesus' Words to the Disciples

*"And he said **UNTO THE DISCIPLES**, 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**. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them" (Luke 17:22-23).*

The disciples were Jews and they looked for the kingdom to be restored to Israel as they later indicated on the Mount of Olives:

*"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom **to Israel?**"*
(Acts 1:6).

At this stage the disciples had no concept of the Church being Jews and Gentiles in one body. The mystery of the Church remained a secret until revealed to Paul (Eph.3:1-9).

Jesus warned the disciples that there would come false prophets and false Christs from among the Jews and He didn't want the disciples to think that any of these were genuine so He said, "*Go **not** after them*" (Luke 17:23). When He returned He would **not** be leading His

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followers out in the wilderness as Theudas, or Judas of Galilee had done (Acts 5:36-37), but He would come **visibly in the heavens in power and great glory**. He said:

“For 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).

Let us remember the question Jesus was answering:

“When will the kingdom of God appear?”

There have been many false Christs through the centuries but none have been

“revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2Therss.1:7-8).

Bar-Kochbar was proclaimed Messiah and his army occupied Palestine for more than two years, but he was only a man and was finally slain by the Romans at Bether near Jerusalem in AD135.

The kingdom of God will be established on earth but only when the Lord personally and visibly descends in the open heavens at the end of the Tribulation.

The Disciples Would NOT See the Kingdom

Jesus said to His disciples,

“Ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and YE SHALL NOT SEE IT” (Luke 17:22).

The Lord was preparing His disciples for the **hidden Church Age** and indicated **His coming to reign would be deferred**. This passage is one of the few in the Gospels that indicates there would be a delay in establishing the kingdom during which time God would *“take out of them (the Gentiles) a people for His name”* (Acts15:14).

Five Events Must Precede the Kingdom

Five events must occur BEFORE the Lord would return and establish the kingdom:

- Christ must be rejected by that generation of Jews and go to the cross, suffer, and die for the sins of the world.

“BUT FIRST must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation” (Luke 17:25).

- An evil world, similar to the days of Noah, must be judged after the godly remnant is removed:

“And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son

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of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, **UNTIL THE DAY** that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:26-27) .

- The world must become sinful, like the city of Sodom before God removed righteous Lot and burned Sodom together with all the cities of the plain of Jordan.

*“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 in the day when the Son of man is revealed”* (Luke 17:28-30).

- There will be great Tribulation and the Jews will have to flee from Jerusalem:

“In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot’s wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it” (Luke 17:31-33).

Jesus repeated this warning when He described the Great Tribulation in the Olivet Discourse. He said:

“Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains” (Matt.24:16).

- There will be the **sudden, global disappearance** of individuals from earth:

*“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”*** (Luke17:34-36).

The word translated “taken” (paralambano) in the original language means “to receive to one’s self” and the word translated “left” (aphiemi) means, “to put away” as a man would put away a wife in divorce (1Cor.7:11).

Consistent with the signs of Noah and Lot, the righteous will be “taken”, or **received to Christ’s own self**, while those that are “left” on earth will **remain to suffer the judgment of the Great Tribulation**. Both Noah and Lot were placed in safety before the judgment fell.

The departure of the righteous must be **BEFORE** the Tribulation begins for the angels told Lot,
*“Haste thee, escape thither; for **I CANNOT DO ANYTHING TILL thou be come thither”*** (Gen.19:22).

The Rapture of the Church

The disciples knew nothing about the Church or the rapture of the Church at this stage so they were puzzled as to where those who were “taken” would go, and so they asked,
“Where Lord?” (Luke 17:37).

Jesus said:

“Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together”
(Luke 17:37).

The word translated “body” is **NOT** “carcase” (*ptoma*) but “a living, saving, body” (*soma* from *sozo* - I save). Just as eagles spiral upward to the heavens, so at the Rapture, “the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to **meet the Lord in the air**” (1Thess 4:16-17).

It is to Christ who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven; who is in heaven now, and who will one day again come in the clouds, that millions of Christians will instantly rise like flying eagles for the grand meeting “*in the air.*”

When will the kingdom appear? It will occur when the Lord returns in flaming fire to judge the nations. Before that day, there will be a time of great tribulation **after** the righteous are removed to meet the Lord in the air. The Rapture must therefore occur **BEFORE** the Tribulation begins.

LUKE CHAPTER 17:20-37

The Pharisees asked:

When will the kingdom appear?

Jesus replied:

It won't be seen in the near future.

Behold, the kingdom of God is among you!
(i.e. The King is here!)

To the disciples Jesus said:

The days shall come when ye shall desire
to see one of the days of the Son of man,
and ye shall not see it

When they say, See here; or see there: go not
after them, nor follow them...

For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of
one part of heaven, shineth unto the other
part of heaven; so shall also the Son of man
be in his day.

But first must he suffer many things, and be
rejected of this generation.

SIGNS OF WHEN THE KINGDOM IS NEAR

And as it was in the days of Noe...

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot...
even thus shall it be in the day
when the Son of man is revealed.

There shall be two in one bed...

two shall be grinding together...

two shall be in the field;

the one shall be taken and the other left

The disciples asked, Where, Lord?

Jesus answered, Wheresoever the (living) body is,
thither will the eagles be gathered together.

*"The dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are
alive and remain shall be caught up together with them
in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air (1Thess.4:16-17).*

Chapter 8 - The Rapture is a Resurrection

*“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.** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory**” (1Cor.15:51-54).*

When Paul preached on Mars’ Hill at Athens the philosophers listened until he spoke of the resurrection and we read:
“when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked” (Acts17:32).

The rapture of the Church is a resurrection to life of all those who are *“in Christ.”* At death, the soul of the Christian is transported by the angels into the immediate presence of Christ; absent from the body and present with the Lord (2Cor.5:8). Physical death occurs when the spirit and soul leave the body, but for the believer, the body will be raised to be with Christ. Jesus said:

*“The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the **resurrection of life**; and they that have done evil, unto the **resurrection of damnation**” (John 5:28-29).*

There is a resurrection to life and a resurrection to damnation. The saved are raised in the resurrection to life and the unsaved are raised in the resurrection to damnation.

The vast majority in Christendom believe in a **General Resurrection** when all the dead, saved and lost, will be raised at the same time to stand before God to be judged for their works. This view distorts the Gospel of Christ and maintains a works-based Gospel so that heaven or hell are rewards for deeds recorded in the book of works.

The Gospel of Christ teaches us that salvation is *“not of works lest any man should boast”*(Eph.2:9). By the grace of God, men are saved when they turn from sin and place their faith in Christ.

The teaching of a General Resurrection not only confuses the Gospel message but also what the Bible teaches about resurrection. If there is only one General Resurrection at the Great White throne, and all the saved are judged with the unsaved, then how do they explain

THE RESURRECTION TO LIFE (The First Resurrection or The Resurrection of the Just)

The Dead

Old Testament
Saints were raised
with Christ
Matt.27:52-53

THE RAPTURE

*"The dead in Christ
shall rise first: then
we which are alive
and remain shall be
caught up together
with them...to meet
the Lord in the air"*
1Thess.4:16-17

Tribulation martyrs will be raised and reign

Millennial

Saints raised
& raptured
*"The rest of
the dead lived
not again until
the 1,000 yrs
were finished"*
Rev.20:5

OLD COVENANT

CHURCH AGE

SEVEN YEARS TRIB.

1,000 YEARS KINGDOM

The Living
Old Testament Saints
became
New Testament Saints

The Living
Tribulation Saints,
the "sheep", become
Millennial Saints

The Rapture of the Church

the resurrection of the Old Testament saints which took place when Christ rose?

The scripture could not be clearer that

*“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.27:52-53).

Furthermore, the resurrection of Old Testament saints was not partial, for Jesus went to Paradise when He died and Paradise was transferred to heaven when Jesus led the resurrected saints into heaven at His ascension (Eph.4:8-9; 2Cor.12:4). Nobody could rise from the dead before Christ rose.

*“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become **the firstfruits of them that slept (died)**”* (1Cor.15:20).

So if all the Old Testament saints have already been raised from the dead, when will the Church-age saints be raised? Obviously it is at the Rapture when **both dead and living saints** arise together to meet the Lord in the air.

Living Old Testament saints **were not changed** when Christ rose. They became New Testament saints. After the Church age is finished, God will deal with Israel so there is a difference between Church-age saints and Tribulation saints.

In this Church age the saved are the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ which is *“neither Jew nor Greek.”* In the Tribulation, the saved are Jews and Gentiles. They will be saved under the New Covenant in Jesus’ blood and they will be born again of the Spirit and indwelt by the Holy Spirit as promised in Ezekiel 36:27, but they will not be baptized by the Spirit **into the Body of Christ**. The chief witness in the Tribulation will be 144,000 Jewish men from the 12 tribes of Israel.

The Church age ends when *“the fulness of the Gentiles”* comes into the Church and the Father determines that the number is complete. For this reason the Church cannot remain on earth during Israel’s 70th “week” and the living saints must be removed beforehand. Hence, there will be the resurrection of **dead and living saints** from the Church age before Israel’s last seven years begins and 144,000 Jews will turn to Christ immediately after the Rapture.

This fact is a great encouragement to those working among Jewish people for though it is hard to win Jews to Christ in this Church age, if we teach them about the Rapture and how they can be justified

The Rapture is a Resurrection



The Rapture of the Church

by grace through faith in Christ, then there will be a great harvest immediately after we have departed.

We know that Jews will be saved **immediately after the Rapture** because two Jewish witnesses preach at Jerusalem for 1,260 days and they are slain at the mid-point of the Tribulation, therefore they must be saved immediately after the departure of the church.

The resurrection of the **Tribulation martyrs** will occur at the end of the Tribulation. These will include the 144,000 Jewish martyrs. John said:

*"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).*

Finally, at the end of the 1,000-year reign of Christ the earth will be burned (2Peter 3:10-13) and there will be the **final stage of the resurrection of life**. The millennial saints who have died will be raised and the living saints will be changed just as we will be at the Rapture.

"The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the (completion of) first resurrection" (Rev.20:5).

The *resurrection of the Just* (Luke 14:14) or the *resurrection of Life* (John5:29) may be understood as a **harvest**. The firstfruits of the harvest rose with Christ but the main harvest will be from the 2,000 years of the Church age. The gleanings of the harvest will be the martyrs at the end of the Tribulation and millennial saints at the end of the millenium.

Chapter 9 - The Rapture is for the Bride of Christ

*“I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for **I have espoused you to one husband**, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2Cor.11:2).*

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives” (Eph.5:25-28).

Two thousand years ago, if a young Jewish man proposed marriage to a young Jewish lady, he would go to her home and present her with a betrothal contract, a legally binding instrument, specifying the terms of the marriage. Chief among these terms was the price he was willing to pay for her.

The price paid for the bride was not trivial. Raising children was seen as investing in one's future. If one raised boys then they could work on the farm. Daughters, on the other hand, were a long term investment and the bride price was a reflection of the worth of the bride to the groom. It was an insult to offer too little for a bride.

So the girl and her father would negotiate and the bride and groom would seal the contract, the betrothal, with a cup of wine. This is reflected in modern Jewish weddings by the performance of (kiddush) during the (kiddushin), performed with a cup of wine and/or a loaf of bread.

Once the betrothal was sealed, the groom would immediately pay the price for his new bride. The price Jesus paid for His Bride, the Church, was His own life blood as He indicated at the Last Supper.

*“And Jesus took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of **the new testament** (covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt.26:26 - 28).*

Once the betrothal was accepted, sealed with the cup, and the groom had paid the price for his bride, he would ceremonially tell his betrothed that he was going to make a place for her.

“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” (John 14: 2).

Two thousand years ago the new couple's home was built on the property of the bridegroom's father. It was also to be the bridal

The Rapture of the Church

chamber and was stocked with provisions to last a week so that the bride and groom could retire there, not to emerge or be disturbed for an entire week.

On this point, the modern ceremony and the old tradition diverge most significantly. Two thousand years ago, the bride and groom saw no one else except each other for the whole week.

The time of betrothal was expected to last approximately one year, until the groom's father determined when the new home, the bridal chamber, was complete. The groom's father alone decided when it was time to go and get the bride.

"Tell us, when shall these things be? ... But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13: 4, 32).

During this betrothal period the bride would wait to be taken away at any moment. She would keep a lamp filled with oil, ready to be lit should her groom come for her in the night. Also during the betrothal period the bride would select her sisters and/or friends who were to accompany her to the wedding. They would often spend the night at her house and would carry lamps filled and ready, so as not to be left out when the wedding night arrived.

At last the groom's father would declare the new home completed and the groom would set out to claim his new bride, usually at night. As the young men drew near to the bride's house, one of them would run ahead and sound a trumpet or shout that the groom was approaching. This alerted the bride to grab her clothes and her lamp. It also alerted any of her sisters and friends who wanted to attend the wedding party to get their clothes and lamps.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them" (Matt. 25:1-10).

The bride and her bridesmaids, and the groom and his groomsmen,



A Jewish Bride carried to the wedding

The Rapture is for the Bride of Christ

would then all go to the new home the groom had prepared. The bride and the groom would retire to the bridal chamber where they would remain for one week. The most trusted of the groom's friends would wait outside the chamber door for the groom to confirm that the marriage had been consummated. He would then share the news with the other members of the wedding party and with the guests that the groom's father had assembled, and the celebration would begin.

After a week the bride and groom would emerge as husband and wife, and all would celebrate with a **glorious marriage supper**.

"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. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness(es) of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Rev.19:7-9).

Understanding the Parable of the Ten Virgins

The parable of the ten virgins has been interpreted as Christ coming for His Bride (the Church) at the Rapture but this cannot be the case. The virgins were only **friends of the Bride** and not the Bride. Also, five foolish virgins fail to gain entrance to the marriage, but at the Rapture ALL that are "in Christ" must be caught up to the Father's house.

The parable begins with the words, "*THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto...*" Jesus was speaking to Jewish disciples about **entrance into the kingdom** at the end of the Tribulation. The Church did not exist when Jesus spoke the parable of the virgins.

There is no doubt that Christ is the heavenly Bridegroom but there is **no mention of the Bride** in the parable. John the Baptist stated:

"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29-30).

The Church is not just a **friend** of the Bridegroom but the Bride, and the three parables told by the Lord in Matthew Chapter 24:45 to 25:30 are warnings to those who will be living on earth at "*the end of the age*" i.e., during the Tribulation, for they conclude with the words,

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." (Matt.25:31).

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That is not the Rapture before the Tribulation but the throne of Christ's glory before the Kingdom. The Lord will judge the living nations at the end of the Tribulation in order to separate the sheep from the goats. The sheep are the saved from the nations that survive the Tribulation and **who enter the kingdom**. Only the "*wise virgins*" who possess the oil of the Holy Spirit in their lamps, will be permitted to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb on earth, at the beginning of the kingdom.

The marriage supper is **after** the Lord will "*return from the wedding*" at His glorious appearing (Luke 12:36). Luke adds:

"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke12:37).

This is an obvious reference to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb where only the "*blessed*" attend.

We should note that the second coming of Christ is **AFTER** the wedding in heaven, therefore **the Bride must be caught up to heaven BEFORE the Tribulation**. There can't be a wedding in heaven without the Bride! In Revelation Chapter 19 the Bride comes **WITH** Christ **from the wedding** to attend the celebration of the marriage supper of the Lamb on earth!

The foolish virgins in the parable relate to the goats who will "*go away into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*" (Matt.25:46). The door to the marriage supper of the Lamb and the kingdom will be shut to them for when the foolish virgins came it was too late, the door was shut. Like the false prophets described in Matthew 7:22-23 they will say,

"Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you"(Matt.7:22-23).

The foolish virgins will say:

"Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Matt.25:11-12).

Some expositors have seen in the virgins, five that represent born again Christians, and five that represent unsaved professors who have never received the Holy Spirit. The oil being a symbol of the Holy Spirit. This interpretation ignores the context. We repeat:

1) The parable is pre-Church.

The Rapture is for the Bride of Christ

2) The Bride is not mentioned and the Bride is the Church. Only her companions are mentioned. Jewish saints like John the Baptist are the friends of the bride and bridegroom (John3:29).

3) The Bridegroom is Christ. Jewish believers and Gentile Tribulation saints who join Israel in Israel's 70th "week" are the friends of the Bride and Bridegroom.

Understanding the Olivet Discourse

The Olivet Discourse answers three questions:

- i) When will the Temple be destroyed?
- ii) What is the sign of the Lord's coming?
- iii) What is the sign of the "*end of the age*?"

The "*end of the age*" is the seven-year Tribulation, and the Coming of the Lord to reign is "*immediately after the tribulation of those days*" (Matt.24:29).

Who was the Lord speaking to? Were they Jewish believers or New Testament believers? They weren't Christians because the Church was not formed till Pentecost and the "*mystery*" of the Church was not revealed until it was given to Paul (Eph.3:8).

The Olivet discourse gives **signs to the Jews** of

- The destruction of the Temple: Jerusalem would be "*compassed with armies*" (Luke 21:20). This was fulfilled in AD70.
- The coming of the Lord: "*They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds...*" (Matt.24:30). This will happen at the end of the Tribulation.
- The end of the age: "*then shall be great tribulation*" like the days of Noah and Lot, when there is a global disappearance of individuals. We know, that this is the Rapture.(Matt.24:21).

The Bridegroom paid the price for His Bride 2,000 years ago on the cross and He has gone to prepare a place for her in His Father's house. Every born-again believer is espoused to Christ.

While He is away in His Father's house, **the 10 virgins "all slumbered and slept."** Israel has "*the spirit of slumber*" in this Church age while Christ is preparing mansions for His bride (Rom.11:8).

When the Bridegroom comes for His Bride, "*one shall be taken and the other left.*" There will be a global disappearance of people as a **sign to Israel** that the "*end of the age*" has come.

Immediately, 144,000 Jewish men will respond, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom. These are the "*firstfruits*" of Israel (Rev.14:4) and through them many Jews will be saved. Two thirds will die

The Rapture of the Church

(Zech.13:9) but the entire remnant will be saved (Rom.11:26) at the Russian/Islamic invasion (Ezek.39:22). Gentiles who are saved in the Tribulation will join Israel and become *“strangers in Israel.”*

The parable of the Virgins therefore is **a warning to Israel and the world** to be ready and heed the final call. Only Tribulation saints with a *“wedding garment”* (Matt.22:12) will be at the marriage supper of the Lamb at the end of the Tribulation.

We must remember that the 70th “week” is a continuation of the 69 “weeks” and is the **time of Israel’s testimony** on earth. Just as saved Gentiles became Jews in the Old Testament, so saved Gentiles in the Tribulation will become Jews in the Tribulation. That is why, when the sheep are judged at the Judgment of the living nations, they will be judged according to how they relate to the Lord’s brethren; Israel. *“The King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of **the least of these my brethren (the Jews)**, ye have done it unto me”* (Matt.25:40).

In the Tribulation the final conflict will be between the God of Israel and the idols of the Beast (Antichrist). **The Olivet Discourse is a message to Israel to be ready.**

Chapter 10 - The Rapture is the Helmet of Salvation

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day,...And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph.6:13-18).

The helmet has been a standard piece of military equipment for as long as men have fought in wars. A club, an arrow or bullet, striking the head will totally disable a soldier and render him incapable of combat. The first part of a soldier to be exposed is his head as he observes the enemy and assesses each situation.

It is not surprising then that the Holy Spirit would have believers *“take the helmet of salvation”* in the spiritual conflict with Satan.

The word helmet in the Greek is literally *“encircling the head,”* which aptly describes what a helmet does; it encircles the head to provide protection against attack.

We are to take the WHOLE armour of God but the helmet is an important part. God has provided protection for believers in spiritual warfare. It should be the desire of every Christian to be a *“good soldier of Jesus Christ”* (2Tim.2:3) but we can never effectively engage the enemy without the whole armour of God.

What is the Helmet of Salvation?

Is the helmet of salvation obtaining forgiveness of sins or being born again of the Spirit? Certainly not.

When Paul urged the Christians at Ephesus to take the helmet of salvation he was speaking to people who were already *“in Christ”* (Eph.1:1); they had already been *“quicken together with Christ”* (Eph.2:5) and *“sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”* (Eph.1:13). So what does the helmet of salvation represent?

In Paul’s first epistle to the Thessalonians he states:

“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. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Thess.5:8-9).

This exhortation is immediately followed by the statement that God has not appointed believers to the wrath of the Day of the Lord (Tribulation) and a causal *“for”* (because) is inserted before the promise. This links the helmet of salvation with the following verse.

The Rapture of the Church

The reason for taking the helmet of salvation is **because** we are “not appointed to wrath” -ie. not appointed to pass into the Great Tribulation, and the helmet therefore can only be **the Blessed Hope of the Rapture before the wrath of God** falls on this evil world. The protection of our **thinking** and discernment is therefore found in “looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

The consequences of going into battle without our head protected are very serious indeed, for all our **thoughts and judgments** are at risk.

When a Christian fails to live his life in anticipation of the departure of the Church and of meeting the Lord “*in the air*” he leaves himself open to manifold **false teachings**. It is very often only when a Christian gets the teaching of the Lord’s return clear in his mind that other doctrines of the Word of God fall into place and make sense.

Confused Thinking

Take for instance the amillennialist who has little thought about the coming of the Lord and relegates the subject of Bible prophecy to the too hard basket. Think of all the doctrines so clearly seen in Scripture that he gets confused and distorted.

First he denies that Christ will reign on the earth and if that is the case, then there must be a “general resurrection” at the second coming of Christ. What about the Old Testament saints who rose with Christ 2,000 years ago? What about the “*dead in Christ*” from this Church age who must depart before the Tribulation; caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1Thess.4:13-18)?

What about the martyrs from the Tribulation who lay down their lives for refusing the mark of the Beast and who are raised to live and reign with Christ 1,000 years? (Rev.20:4) or “*the rest of the dead*” who “*lived not again until the thousand years were finished?*”

To fail to have the “*hope of salvation*” burning in one’s heart can expose the mind of the believer to crooked thinking and denial of the great doctrine of the first and second resurrections.

There can be no General resurrection at the coming of Christ but if one is not “*looking for that blessed hope*” of the Christians, the Rapture of the Church before the Tribulation, and the “*glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,*” there is little choice but to believe in a general Resurrection that destroys any hope of an earthly reign by Christ for 1,000 years. After all, if everybody

The Rapture is the Helmet of Salvation

is raised when Christ returns *"immediately after the tribulation"* (Matt.24:29) there will be nobody left on earth for Christ to reign over!

But what of the vast array of prophecies regarding Israel in Scripture? When persons refuse to have *"the hope of salvation"* uppermost in their thinking they may easily succumb to replacement theology which wipes out any future in God's plan for Israel. Their thinking will be twisted and they will begin to look for "spiritual" interpretations of literal prophecies. Fanciful theories will flow from their vivid imagination and there are no boundaries to their thinking. Their mind becomes exposed to Satan's agents who are *"lying spirits"* (2Chron.18:21) instead of the Spirit of Truth.

Denial of Dispensations

For a Christian to interpret the Bible without the helmet of *"the hope of salvation"* will lead to a denial of the dispensational structure of the Bible. The clear lines of demarcation between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant will become fuzzed. Scriptures that applied to Israel and the Gentile nations will be applied to the Church. The behaviour permitted under the Old Covenant will be condoned and there will be little understanding of the power of the Gospel under the New Covenant.

There will be a total misunderstanding of the past history of the world or of the future. The roles of the Jew, the Gentile and the Church, will merge and can even lead to Anti-semitism and thus bring down the curse of God upon their head.

Jesus' Warnings

There are solemn warnings by the Lord Jesus about failing to *"watch"* for His coming and surely these alone should prompt every believer to take the helmet of the *"hope of salvation."*

The prophetic meaning of the seven churches of Asia recorded in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 likens the Reformation period of Church history to the Church at Sardis. Reformation Theology is amillennial. The Reformers followed the theology of Augustine of Hippo and spiritualized the scriptures. It wasn't until the next stage of Christendom, the Philadelphian Church period from 1700 to 1900, that the hope of the Lord's return burned brightly and the great missionary movements spread the Gospel into all the world.

To the Church at Sardis the Lord said,

"If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Rev.3:3).

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But to the Church at Philadelphia the Lord said

*“Because thou hast kept **the word of my patience** (James 5:7-8), 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).*

It was in the two centuries from 1700 to 1900, that the truth of the rapture of the Church and the premillennial return of Christ was restored to the Church resulting in the greatest era of evangelism the world has ever seen. God raised up the British Empire to open doors into Asia, Africa and the Islands of the seas. The “word of My patience” was preached as believers watched and patiently waited for the coming of the Lord. Much of the baggage that the Reformation churches brought across from Roman Catholicism was abandoned. Infant baptism, State control of the church, ecclesiastical garb, a General Resurrection and amillennial teaching etc were abandoned as Christians began to look for *“that blessed hope and the glorious appearing”* of the Lord Jesus.

The relics of Reformation theology continue today and will do so until the rapture of the Church, and those who are truly saved in those churches will be taken by surprise and lose rewards when the Bride of Christ is caught up to the Judgment seat of Christ where she will be rewarded for faithful service on earth.

Amillennialists teach that Christians will stand before the Great White throne where the Lord is seen as One from whose face the earth and *“the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them”* (Rev.20:11).

At the Great White throne judgment the Lord is acting as a judge in a criminal court and He banishes **all who appear before Him** to the lake of fire. At this throne the unsaved answer for their sins but the believer’s sins have already been judged at the cross when Jesus took the wrath of God for our sins.

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Bema, Christ will appear as a judge to **give rewards for faithful service** just as a judge at the Olympic Games would award gold, silver, and bronze medals. All service that is *“wood, hay and stubble”* will be worthless but that which is of any value to Christ, *“gold silver and precious stones,”* (1Cor.3:8-15) will abide so that when we come with Christ at His glorious appearing, we will be adorned with the *“righteousness(es) of the saints”* ie. the righteous acts of the saints (Rev.19:8). On that day Christ will be *“glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe”* (2Thess.1:10).

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While the Tribulation is raging on earth, the Bride of Christ will be adorned in heaven with rewards so that when the seven years of the Tribulation will have passed, she will have *“made herself ready”* (Rev.19:7) to go on display to the glory and praise of the heavenly Bridegroom.

The *“helmet of salvation”* is also a comforting hope in the time of great trouble. Again and again the New Testament warns that the end of the age will see awful violence, debauchery, apostasy and demonic activity. Without the hope of the Rapture before the Day of the Lord’s wrath, the Christian could become fearful and depressed.

Jesus said that men’s hearts will fail them for fear of the things coming on the earth, but with the protection of the helmet of salvation the Christian will see the calamities as a sign that the day of our Departure is drawing near and fearful thoughts will depart. It will also stir believers to be more diligent about gathering together with the saints *“as ye see the day approaching”* (Heb.10:25).

Any soldier going into battle without a helmet, especially in ancient times, would fail to be bold; he will be more concerned for his own safety in the conflict than taking the offensive and obtaining the victory. He would be fearing that at any moment he could be struck down by the enemy. Among all the weapons available to the believer the helmet protects our mind (our understanding of God’s Word) and enables us to efficiently use the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Let us put on, *“for an helmet, the hope of salvation”* (1Thess. 5:8).

Chapter 11 - Erroneous Theories About the Rapture

As one would expect, Satan will try to confuse the Biblical teaching of the Rapture to deprive the Lord's people of confidence in the last days.

A Gap Between the Rapture and the Tribulation?

Some have taught that there will be a gap between the Rapture and the Great Tribulation but this is totally without scriptural support. Why they teach this is hard to comprehend. There is no reason to do so unless they feel that more time is required for prophesied events to occur, but as we approach the end of the age events are speeding up. Global changes can happen overnight.

The Russian/Islamic Invasion Before the Tribulation?

Some teachers have placed the Russian/Islamic invasion of Israel **before** the Rapture but this cannot be the case since all Israel turns to the Lord when the land is invaded. We read

*"So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God **from that day and forward**. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them" (Ezek.39:22-23).*

Paul made it clear that the "*fulness of the Gentiles*" must come in **before** "*all Israel shall be saved*" (Rom.11:25-26) so the Russian invasion can only occur **after** the rapture of the Church.

The Rapture at the End of the Tribulation?

Those who have adopted Replacement Theology and totally removed Israel from God's plan for the last days, teach that only the Church will be on earth when Christ returns and therefore both the living and dead saints will be resurrected in a General resurrection. Thus they have the Rapture at the end of the Tribulation. But Jeremiah wrote:

*"Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob... for **I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them**" (Jer.33:25-26).*

Israel and not the Church must play the central role during the Tribulation. When Christ returns to earth, Israel will look upon Him "*whom **they** have pierced*" (Zech.12:10; Rev.1:7).

Erroneous Theories About the Rapture

The Rapture After the Trumpet Judgments?

The most recent and most confusing theory about the Rapture is called the Pre-wrath Rapture which teaches that the first half of the Tribulation is the wrath of man and only the second half of the Tribulation is the wrath of God. So when Paul wrote that *“God hath not appointed us to wrath”* it only meant that we would escape the second half of the Tribulation.

Those who hold this view are sadly ignorant of the chronology of the Tribulation and ignore the plain statements of scripture.

The Russian/Islamic invasion must occur **after** the Rapture and will be used of God to bring all Israel to repentance. Two-thirds of the nation will perish in this awful holocaust (Zech.13:9).

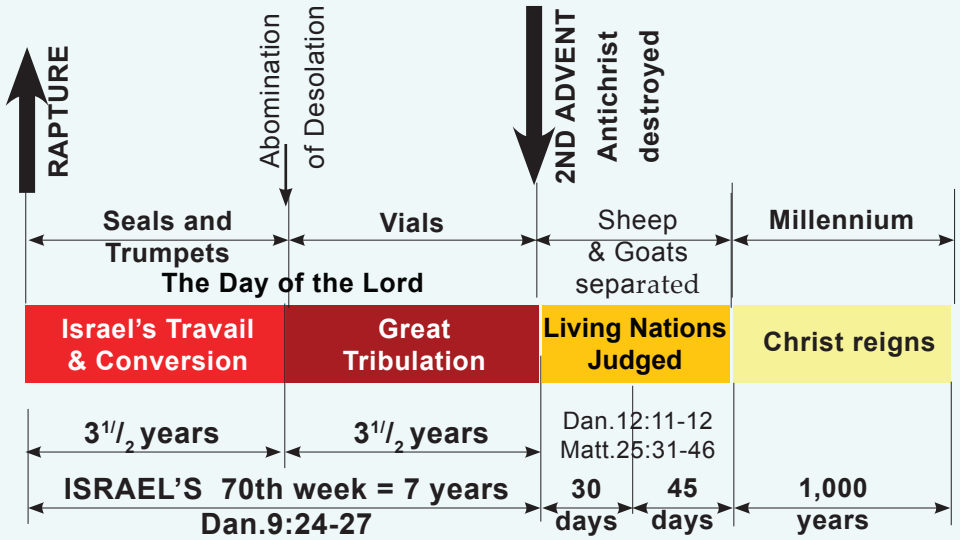
We know that half-way through the Tribulation, Israel is a saved nation because the *“remnant of her seed”* will be keeping *“the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ”* (Rev.12:17). Therefore we have to place the Russian invasion in the first half of the Tribulation. Ezekiel specifically indicates that at that time, the invaders are **not** destroyed by Israel but **by God Himself**. We read:

“At the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel...and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down...And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man’s sword shall be against his brother” (Ezek.38:18-22).

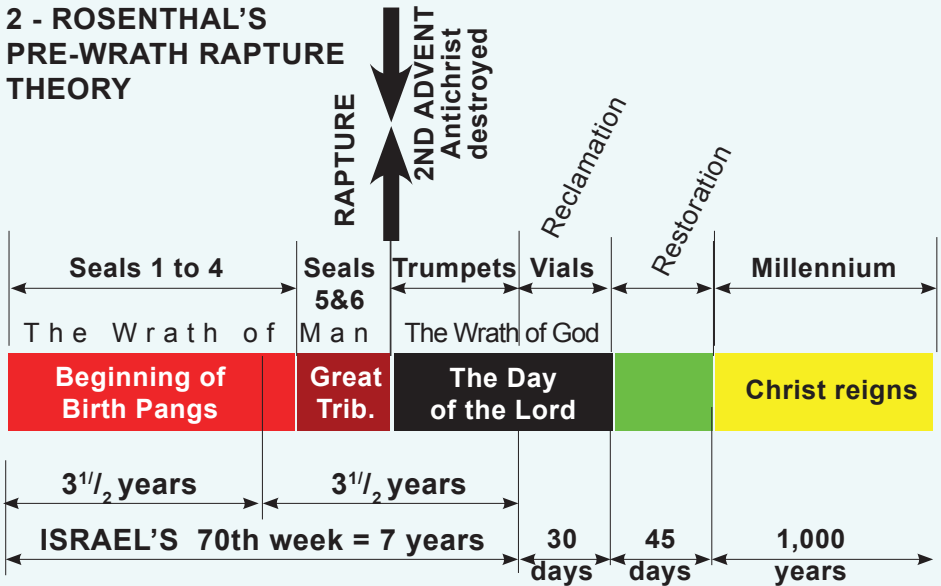
This event results in a **global earthquake, the sun being darkened and great hailstones from heaven**, and fits perfectly into the 6th Seal judgment (Rev.6:12-17) when the mighty men of the earth will hide in the rocks of the mountains and say to the rocks, *“Fall on us, and hide us from...the wrath of the Lamb.”* To say that there is no wrath from God in the first half of the Tribulation is absurd.

In the **first half** of the seven years God’s wrath is poured out on the Russian/Islamic armies and in the **second half** God’s wrath is poured out on Antichrist (the Beast) and his armies. Israel turns to Christ in the first half and is delivered from the Beast in the second half. On both occasions there will be a global earthquake and hailstones (meteorites) raining down on earth for in **both cases** God will come to the aid of His people Israel (Rev.6:12-13; Matt.24:29).

1 - BIBLICAL PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE



2 - ROSENTHAL'S PRE-WRATH RAPTURE THEORY



Erroneous Theories About the Rapture

Just as God sent hailstones on the enemies of Israel in Joshua's day and the sun and moon stood still "*about a whole day*" (Josh.10:11-14), so God will intervene for Israel in the last days.

During the Tribulation the Lord will fight for Israel (Zech.14:3; 12:9). On **both** occasions **God's wrath** will be revealed and the Church will not be here to see it. Read the Book of Revelation from Chapter 6 to Chapter 18 where the Tribulation is described, and you will fail to find one reference to the Church on earth. But you will find **Jews, Jerusalem, the Temple and Israel** mentioned in Chapters 7, 11, 12 and 14.

Israel takes centre stage immediately after the Rapture and two **Jewish witnesses** testify at Jerusalem for 1,260 days before being martyred at the mid-point of the Tribulation. Also, 144,000 Jewish men are saved when the Church is removed and are seen before the throne in heaven half-way through the Tribulation. For the first half of the Tribulation **these Jews** preach the "*Gospel of the Kingdom in all the world for a witness to all nations and then shall the end come*" (Matt.24:14), they are the "*firstfruits (of Israel) unto God*" (Rev.14:4). Their testimony will be brief as Jesus indicated in Matthew 10:23.

*"Ye shall not have gone over **the cities of Israel**, till the Son of man be come"* (Matt.10:23).

The Pre-wrath Rapture Theory is essentially an attempt to rearrange the chronology of end-time events but its proponents have shown a lack of understanding of the sequence of events during the Tribulation. There are several modified Pre-wrath Rapture theories beginning with one published by Marvin Rosenthal in 1992 and another more recent one by Kent Hovind who wrote his book while he was in gaol in the USA for taxation fraud.

When John wrote that men will cry out that "*the day of His wrath is come,*" Pre-wrath theorists interpret "*is come*" as "is about to come" but the Greek verb is Aorist Active Indicative which is **the simple past tense** in English and could better be translated "*has come*" thus indicating that the Seal Judgments are the wrath of God from which the Church has been spared by Divine appointment.

Chapter 12 - Are You Ready for the Rapture?

The Rapture will occur immediately before the Tribulation and will be sudden, secret and selective so far as the world is concerned. The Bible says:

*"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.15:51-53).*

Christians will suddenly disappear. Jesus said, *"One shall be taken and the other left"* (Matt.24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-36). The question is, Will you be taken or left for the Tribulation?

God gives every person an opportunity to be saved. Christ died for the sins of the whole world and *"now is the accepted time behold, now is the day of salvation."* If any person is left behind at the Rapture it is because they have not received the free gift of eternal life. There is only one way to be ready for the Rapture and it is to turn from sin to Jesus Christ who came from heaven the first time to die a substitutionary death, bearing the full guilt of our sin. His precious blood was shed to make atonement for sin and when we call on the Lord to save us, God keeps His Word.

Salvation is not just reformation. Salvation is a **free gift** from God when a sinner seeks the Lord with all his or her heart. When God saves us He promises to keep us. Eternal life is for ever. *"The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life"* (Rom.6:23)" The Bible says:

*"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but **have everlasting life**. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16-17). Jesus said: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).*

*"For **by grace** are you saved **through faith**; and that **not of yourselves**: it is the **gift of God**: **Not of works**, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph.2:8-10).*

Dear friend, you can be saved at this moment. Why not call on the Lord and admit you are a sinner; thank Him for sending Jesus to die for your sins and ask Him to save you by His grace. Read God's promise and thank Him for saving you. Then you can live for God: Pray and read the Bible daily and tell others you have trusted Christ. Seek the fellowship of other Bible-believing Christians and God will change your life. When the Rapture comes you will be caught up to be forever with the Lord.

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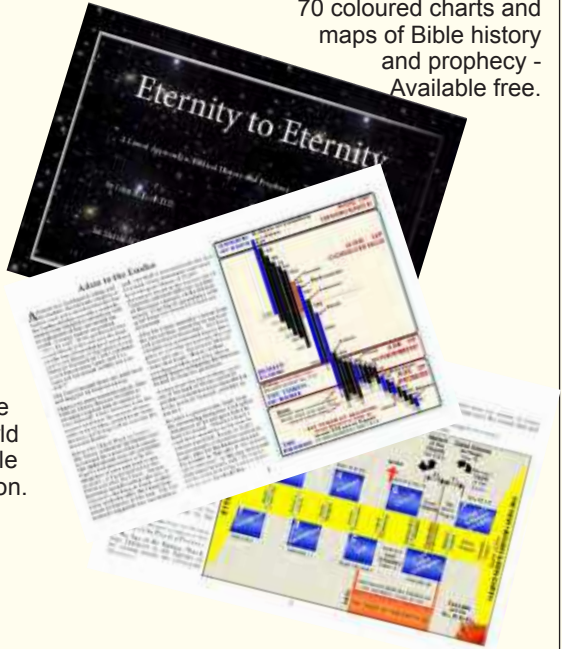
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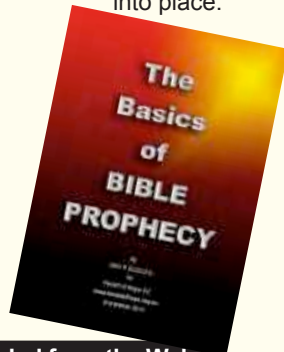
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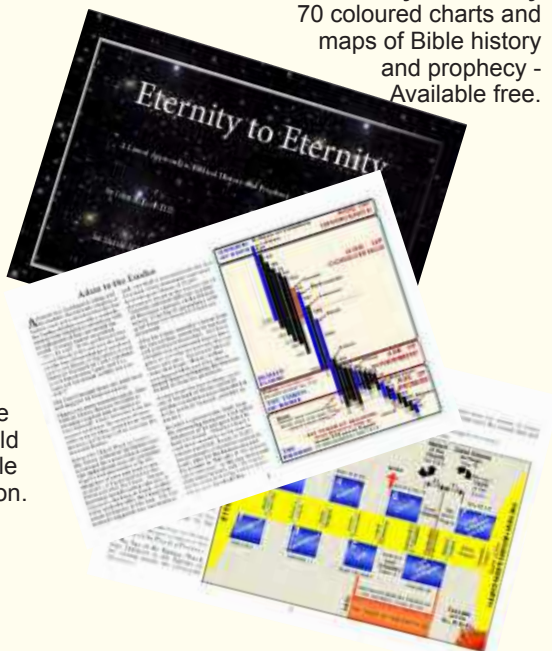
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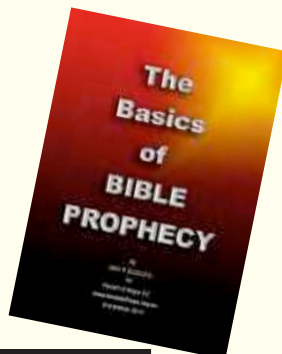
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