

Caught Up Or Left Behind?

WILL THE CHURCH BE RAPTURED
BEFORE THE TRIBULATION?

Answers from the Word of God

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Caught Up or Left Behind?

There is confusion today about when the Church will be raptured, in relation to the time called the Great Tribulation. Will it leave before the Tribulation begins, during the middle, or at the end? Now the Church is the body of Christ and is composed of saved, born again, people: those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. Will those people have to go through even a part of the Tribulation? What different denominations teach is irrelevant to what God says. The Bible will have the answer.

The word "rapture" does not appear in the *King James Version* of the Bible. However, it is a word that symbolizes such biblical terms as the translation, caught up, our gathering together unto Him, and some other terms which are used in God's Word.

It is a term used to describe the removal from the earth of all living people that have received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. The Scriptures show us that in the twinkling of an eye, all over the earth, all people whom Jesus "knows" will be removed from the earth to be with Him.

The Rapture is for those who are *In Christ*

The rapture is exclusively for those who are *in Christ* - those who have accepted

His death on the cross to redeem them - whether they are dead or alive, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

The rapture is not for the nation of Israel as a whole, or the inhabitants of the earth who have *rejected Jesus* as their Savior (Messiah) - they are not *in Christ*. Some people will turn to Christ during the Tribulation and become “tribulation saints”, and they will be beheaded for their faith. The rest of the unsaved do not recognize Jesus until He comes back to the earth “to smite the nations” at His Second Coming (Rev. 19:15).

We meet the Lord In The Air

Jesus' feet do not touch the earth when He comes to take us to heaven in the rapture. We (those who are “in Christ”) will meet the Lord *in the air*. 1 Thess. 4:16,17 *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain 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.*

The Rapture is characterized as a 'translation coming - the dead in Christ will rise with resurrected bodies, and we who are alive will be *changed* in a moment.

The Second Coming happens 7 years after the Rapture of the Church (Body of Christ). *Zechariah 14:3,4 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.*

What is the Pretribulation Rapture?

The rapture is an event that will take place sometime in the near future. Jesus will come in the air, catch up the Church, (every saved person from the cross until the rapture) from the earth, and then return to heaven with the Church. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, we are given a clear description of the rapture: "the dead in Christ will rise, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord." The timing of the rapture is not known. From the Word of God and from sound reasoning, I hope to prove the reality of the pre-tribulation rapture.

There is quite a controversy today over the question of when the Rapture of the Church will take place in relation to the Tribulation Period. There is no question about the unsaved people - they will have to go through this Tribulation Period spoken of in **Revelation 6-18**. The unsaved have no power within them that could overcome the law of gravity and take them off the earth. The Lord himself is the only one who can defy the natural laws that He has set up, and He does this in the saved person by the law of the spirit of life (**Romans 8:2**). The law of gravity will keep the unsaved multitudes on the earth when the saved people are taken to heaven to be with the Lord.

I want to look at the future of a Christian. When I use the term "Christian" I'm referring to someone who is saved, born again, knows for sure that when he dies he is going to heaven, and has assurance like that of the Apostle Paul in **Philippians 1:21-23** *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:*

I'm not writing about someone who is merely a Baptist, or a Methodist, or a church member. The Bible clearly teaches us that there is only one way today to be saved. The Bible says in **Ephesians 2:8**, "For by **grace** are ye **saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.**" I **John 5:12** says, "**He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.**" Do you have the Son? If you do, you have life. It doesn't matter if you have church membership, or a baptismal certificate, or have led a good life and paid your bills. A lot of people had a good life, paid their bills, and then died and went to Hell. Jesus Christ talks about one in Luke 16:19-31. On the other hand, there is a criminal who led a sinful life but still went to heaven in Luke 23:39-43. What was the difference? The man in **Luke 16** wasn't saved, and the one in **Luke 23** was. Are you saved? Have you believe on Jesus Christ as your Saviour? I **John 5:13** continues by saying, "These **things have I** written unto you that **believe on the name Of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.**" Someone who has believed in His name can know for sure that he has eternal life. If you don't know whether you have eternal life or not, you don't have it! Once you have it, the Holy Spirit bears witness to you that you do have it. I John 5:9 says, "*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*"

I've got the witness! He came into my heart and He's been there ever since according to John 14:16. Romans 8:16 says that I am a child of God: "*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*"

Now let's discover, according to the Bible, when the Church is going out in the Rapture in relation to the Tribulation period. There are several different teachings about this and I want to show why contrary theories are wrong, and to comfort Christians with the truth. According to I Corinthians 13:6, charity "rejoiceth in the truth." Galatians 1:7 says that heresy troubles Christians. The teaching that Christians are going through the Tribulation is troubling, because the Tribulation is also called the time of "Jacob's trouble" in Jeremiah 30:7. *Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.*

It is a terrible time such as has not been yet on the earth.

There is a teaching becoming more prominent lately that Christians, or the Church, will not be raptured out before the Great Tribulation described in Matthew 24 and Revelation 6-18. In order to understand why this teaching is wrong, you need a basic understanding of how God has arranged history and the future according to His Word. The following gives a basic outline

of this.

Briefly, the Bible teaches that Christ will return in the clouds to rapture the saved from the earth according to I Thess. 4:13-17 and I Cor. 15:51-57. Immediately preceding His return is a period of approximately seven years called the Tribulation Period or Daniel's Seventieth Week. These seven years is the last phase of a prophecy spoken of in **Daniel 9:24-26. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself..."**

After the 7 years of tribulation on this earth will be the Second Coming of Christ to wage war according to Revelation 19:11-21. After that, in Revelation 20:4-6, He will reign on the earth for 1000 years. This is what is referred to as the "pre-millennial" return of Christ. He comes back before the Millennium (1000 years in Latin). Important: The rapture is when Christ comes for his saints and the Second Coming is Christ Coming back with his saints.

In order to understand the prophecy of Daniel 9: 24-26, we must find the definition of several terms. "Week" in this case means a period of seven years, as in Genesis 29:27, where Jacob had to serve seven years for Rachel and that was called a week. Also, the fulfilling of this prophecy began in **Nehemiah 2** in 450B.C. and the first sixty-nine "weeks" (seven weeks and threescore and two weeks) did not end until Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was crucified, or "cut off", in 33 A.D., a total of 483 years (69 x 7), not 483 days. The remaining "week", or seven years, will be fulfilled during the Tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble, not the Church's trouble.

The term "Tribulation" is defined in **Matthew 24**, where Jesus Christ tells His disciples some signs of His coming and of the end of the world. After a listing of some signs, verse 21 says. **For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.**" Verses 29-31 speak of the Son of man coming in the clouds after the Tribulation, to gather together His elect, in a Post-tribulation Rapture of the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth during the Tribulation (**Revelation 14:1-5**). After this comes a judgment in Matthew 24:51, Matthew 25:31-46, and Revelation 20:4.

The Translation, or Rapture of the Church takes place before this period of Tribulation. It is spoken of in I Thessalonians 1:9,10: "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idol's to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

I Thessalonians 4:13-18 says, *"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the*

Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

I Corinthians 15:51-54 says, "*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."*

Notice the phrase, "*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*"—I Corinthians 15:51

Paul means we shall not all **die**. That is what he means by the word "sleep" in verse 51. This can be seen more clearly in John 11:11-14, where Jesus told the mourners, "Our friend Lazarus **sleepeth**." They did not understand what He was talking about, so He told them plainly that he was dead. In writing to the Corinthians about the believers' future resurrection, Paul instructed them, "We shall not **all** sleep." All the saints will not have died when Jesus Christ comes back. If our blessed Lord returned in our lifetime, we would be among those covered in the last part of this verse: "but we shall **all** be changed." When the rapture takes place, some believers will be raised from the dead and some will be caught up alive, but all will be changed. Our mortal bodies will become immortal, glorified bodies just like Christ's body (cf. I John 3:1-3 and Philippians 3:20-21). All these things will take place faster than the blink of an eye.

*"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."*

—I Corinthians 15:52

"The **twinkling** of an eye" is not the actual blink of an eye. Rather, it is the motion of an eye when it's just starting to blink. Because it is so fast, its speed can only be estimated (about 1/1000 of a second). We cannot imagine how fast that is, but that is how quickly the rapture will take place. Just think, if some unsaved person were sitting across the table from you and the trumpet sounded they would not even see you go if they blinked their eyes.

The Lord will not descend when the last trumpet sounds, but upon the last trump of this particular trumpet.

*"[F]or the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we **shall be changed**."* —I Corinthians 15:52

Since He says "the **last** trump," it would seem that the trumpet is sounded more than once. It appears that there is one blast that signals the dead in Christ to rise, and then a second blast that signals the living to be changed and go up.

This Mortal Must Put On Immortality

“[A]nd the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (I Corinthians 15:52).

There are two classes of people mentioned in this text— the dead saints and the living saints. This agrees with Jesus’ conversation with Martha about Lazarus.

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

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”

— John 11:24-26

□ The first class of believers who “shall be changed” when Jesus Christ returns are those who “were dead, yet shall... live.”

□ The second class of believers— those who “shall never die,” are those who will still be alive when the Lord returns.

Notice in I Corinthians 15:52, that Paul is careful to say, “WE shall be changed,” including himself. (Paul earnestly expected the rapture to take place in his lifetime.) Every believer should live in earnest expectation and hope that the Lord will return to take us to Heaven before we see death. Paul’s deep longing for the Lord’s return earned him a crown of righteousness,⁴ which we can win also. Paul continues in I Corinthians 15:

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” — I Corinthians 15:53

Again, we see two classes of people that will be raptured. The first class, “this corruptible,” refers to those believers who are now deceased— those whose bodies are in the grave. But when Christ returns, these will put on “incorruption.” The new body that comes out of the grave won’t be the same corruptible body that went into the grave, but a new incorruptible body that will never again get old, never sorrow, never suffer, and never die.

The rest of the verse (“And this mortal must put on immortality”) refers to the second class— living Christians. The word “mortal” means “subject to death” (pertaining to our fleshly bodies). We are all mere mortals temporarily dwelling in bodies that are subject to death. But if Christ returns in our lifetime, we will be changed and will “put on immortality.” Our new bodies will not be subject to death. Jesus said, “Neither can they die any more” (Luke 20:36).

*“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, [THE DEAD IN CHRIST] and this mortal shall have put on immortality, [THOSE STILL ALIVE AT HIS COMING] then shall be brought to pass **the saying** that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”*

— I Corinthians 15:54

When the Lord returns, death will be swallowed up in victory, and we will be able to sing the song Victory in Jesus in a way we have never sung it before. Jesus won the victory over death, and that victory is ours in Him.

So Paul writes with confidence:

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

— *I Corinthians 15:55-57*

There will not be a sting of death for believers who are still alive at Christ’s return, because they will not have to die. Furthermore, the grave will have no victory over those already dead in Christ, because the grave will not be able to hold them. He will raise their bodies up out of the grave by the power of His word. We know that “the strength of sin is the law,” and that “sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4). The Law was given so we would know what sin is, and that all are guilty of sin.

At the rapture, we will get our new bodies. Our victory will be complete then— we will have victory over the flesh forever. As a reminder of this, every believer should memorize the following verse.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

— *I Corinthians 15:58*

Today there are four basic beliefs among Pre-Millennialists concerning when the Church will be raptured. They are:

"Pre-Tribulation" - the Church will go out before the Tribulation

"Mid-Tribulation" - the Church will go out in the middle of the Tribulation

"Post-Tribulation" - the Church will go out at the end of the Tribulation

"Partial Rapture" - only some of the church will go out before the Tribulation, and the rest will go through it.

Before I show you where three of these beliefs are wrong, I will list seven reasons why the Church will be taken out in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

First, Christians are not appointed to wrath, but to salvation, according to I Thessalonians 5:9, *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."* The whole context of this verse, from I Thessalonians 5:11, is the **"day of the Lord"** and the Rapture. In the passage, the Apostle Paul is writing about the redemption of the body, since the soul and spirit are redeemed at the time of salvation.

According to Romans 8:11-23, in the future the Spirit will quicken, or make alive, our mortal bodies. This is called the adoption, or the redemption of the body. Until then our bodies are sinful and cannot go to heaven like our soul and spirit. But God has not appointed our bodies to wrath, but to obtain salvation. During the Tribulation we will not receive the wrath of the Lamb, Jesus Christ mentioned in Revelation 6 because we are going to be with Jesus Christ in

heaven. We will not receive the wrath of Satan mentioned in Revelation 12 because we have already overcome him according to J John 2:13,14. We also will not come under the wrath of God because according to Isaiah 53, it fell on Jesus Christ when He took our place at Calvary. Therefore, we are not appointed to wrath, or Tribulation, but to salvation, or Rapture.

Rom. 5: 9 tells us the same things. *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

Second, the doctrine of salvation in the Tribulation is not the same as salvation in the Church Age. Let me say it this way. The content of faith is different in the Tribulation and is not the same as the Church Age, but everybody is saved through the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. You may hear it put this way...“ Salvation in the Old Testament is by faith & works and New Testament salvation is by grace through faith without works. We must keep in mind that the Jews were looking for a physical deliverance (physical salvation) from Rome, and they were looking for the Messiah to come and set up his kingdom on the earth, which he will do in the Millennial.

Noah was looking for a physical salvation from the flood. Moses was looking for a physical deliverance when he came to the Red Sea. People in the Tribulation will be looking for a physical deliverance from the Mark of the Beast. Let me give you an example. There is a difference in physical salvation and spiritual salvation. When you say “Have you been saved” , what are you talking about. You could be saved from a car wreck. That’s physical. You could be saved from drugs. That’s physical. You could be saved from sin by believing and accepting what Christ done for you on the cross. That’s a spiritual salvation. True, the people in the Old Testament did not know anything about the blood of Christ yet, but they were saved by believing God and the promises that he gave them at that time.

Romans 4:3 “ For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Faith was a key ingredient *under the law* too. However, the Bible makes a distinction between the faiths during various time periods.

' Romans 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The Bible also distinguishes between the faith of different groups of people. For instance, the faith of Israel under the law differs from the faith of the Gentile during the Church Age.

Romans 3:30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

The distinction that must be recognized concerns what the faith consists of. Although the word "faith" is used for each time period or group, the **content of the faith** (or what it consists of) differs from one age to the next. For instance, the Church Age faith is the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. The faith of the Old Testament and Tribulation periods differs in *content* by including works. Faith is a requirement in all ages for salvation. **Thus, everyone is saved by faith in every age;** however, the *content* of the faith differs from one age to the next.

Some will tell you that salvation in the Old Testament is the same as in the New Testament. We know that not to be so because if they were saved the same way in the O.T. as in the N.T. , then why did the saved people of the O.T. go to Abraham's bosom instead of going straight to Heaven when they died. A saved person in the N.T. goes straight to Heaven when they die. Why? Because Jesus Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection.

People in the Tribulation will be saved by believing the promises of God for that time. Our salvation now is by faith and the only work involved is God's work in redemption, according to Ephesians 2:8-10. "For by grace are ye 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, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." God even gives us the faith to believe, and we are His workmanship.

Notice during the Tribulation, how the content of faith is different according to Revelation 12:11,17: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of *her* seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Also in verse 11, concerning overcoming the Devil, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." They overcame the Devil in the Tribulation because they died as martyrs by not taking the mark of the beast. Faith and works are mentioned again in Revelation 14:12 "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," Revelation .20:4 says, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." A Christian with eternal life cannot go into the Tribulation and lose that eternal life by taking the mark of the beast. If that were possible, his salvation would be dependent on works, not on faith. So the Christian just doesn't go into the Tribulation!

Third, if Christians go through the Tribulation, when do they appear before the judgment seat of Christ spoken of in II Corinthians 5:10? "For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.**" This judgment takes place before the Great White Throne judgment in **Revelation 20:11-15**, which takes place after the Millennium. The Church has already been judged before the marriage supper in **Revelation 19:7-9**, where the saints were arrayed in white linen, which was their righteousness, and when Jesus Christ comes back in verse 11, they come with Him as the armies of heaven in verse 14. The Church comes out of heaven with Him, so they must have been taken up there earlier. In **I Thessalonians 4** , Jesus Christ comes back for the saints, and in **Revelation 19**, He comes back with the saints.

Fourth, the chronology of the book of Revelation demands that the Church go out before the Tribulation. **Revelation 2** and **3** speak of characteristics of the Church Age. The seven churches picture seven time periods in the Church Age from 33 A.D. to the Tribulation . In

Revelation 4:1, a door in heaven opens and John the beloved apostle, a type of the Church, is taken up to heaven. **Revelation 5-19** concerns the Tribulation. Then in **Revelation 19**, heaven opens again and the Lord Jesus Christ comes down with His saints. The Church goes out before the Tribulation, and comes back after it is finished. Please note that we are not saying Revelation 4:1 is the rapture of the Church. It's just a picture of the rapture.

Fifth, the Tribulation is Daniel's Seventieth Week, which is determined on Israel, not on the Church according to **Daniel 9:24**, "Seventy weeks **are determined upon thy people**. . ." Daniel's people were Jews, not Gentile Churches. God will not be dealing with the Church during the Tribulation, just as He did not deal with it during the Old Testament. God began dealing with the Church after Israel had rejected the Messiah and was out of the way, and when God begins to deal with them again, He will take the Church out of the way. Think of it this way, God was dealing with the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Israel rejected Christ as the Messiah according to John 1:11 "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." In Acts 7, God gives Israel one more chance to accept Christ as the Messiah. They once again rejected and stoned the messenger Stephen. God then calls "Time Out" on Israel and sets them on the side line, just as you would in a game of basketball. God then brings to the playing floor, the blood bought church of the living God. At the end of the church age, whenever that might be, God takes the church out of the game at the Rapture and calls "Time In" on Israel in the Tribulation and puts Israel back on the playing floor to finish what God started with his people. God will finish that last week(7 years) with his people.

Sixth, if the Church was going to go through the Tribulation, we would be looking for the abomination of desolation spoken of in Matthew 24:15-21. "**When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet**, stand in the holy place... for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." According to Philippians 3:20,21, we are to look for something different. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." We are not looking for the Antichrist, or for the Jew to rebuild the temple. That might not happen until after the Rapture, which is the next event we are to anticipate. Titus 2:13 says, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." We're expecting the Lord Jesus Christ before the Antichrist.

Seventh, Enoch, in Genesis 5, is a type of the translated Church, and he was taken up to heaven before the flood,(Genesis 7) which is a type of the Great Tribulation. Noah is a type of believing Israel that will be sealed according to Revelation 7, and taken through the Tribulation protected by God's power. Concerning Enoch, Hebrews 11:15 says, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Notice that the verse mentions the translation three times. According to I Corinthians 15:21-24, there are three parts to the First Resurrection. Briefly, number 1.... "Christ the first-fruits" includes Old Testament saints who arose with His resurrection and appeared in Jerusalem according to Matthew 27:51-53 and are spoken of in Ephesians 4:8-10. Number 2...."They that are Christ's at his coming" is speaking of the Church Age saints who will go up in I Thessalonians 4:13-18. Number 3...."Then cometh the end" speaks of those Tribulation saints

raptured in Revelation 7:9-14. This is covered in more detail later in this book. There are other reasons why I believe the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation, but these should be enough for anyone who really wants the truth.

There are numerous false teachings about the Rapture, and I will not cover them all now. Most of them are the result of either failing to rightly divide the Bible according to dispensations, by changing the words in the King James Bible, or by taking the verses out of context.

One common argument used by the heretics is concerning the history of what they call the Pre-Tribulation "theory." They try to prove that the teaching didn't originate in the Bible, but was concocted later on.

It doesn't matter who we can find in history that taught the doctrine - the Bible teaches it and that is all we need to know!

Another false teaching is concerning the two witnesses of **Revelation 11** who appear during the Tribulation. Verses 3 and 4 say: "And **I will give power** unto my two witnesses, and **they shall prophecy** a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." These two witnesses are the two olive trees in Zachariah 4:11-14: "Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No my Lord. Then said he. These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." The heretics then use Romans 11:17-25 out of context, where some branches were broken from an olive tree, to teach that the Jew goes up in a rapture and the Church goes through the Tribulation. There are several "holes" in this teaching. The Apostle Paul is speaking of the relationship between God, the Jews' and the Gentiles. Verse 25, referring to the preceding verses about the tree and branches, says, "For I would not, brethren, that 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." The Gentiles have an opportunity to partake of the Holy Spirit, which was originally the right of the nation of Israel. Israel was set aside and the wild olive tree, the Gentiles, was grafted in until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. Verse 12 says, "Now if the fall of them" (the Jews-verse 7) "be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" The context of the passage is not the Church - it is the Jew and the Gentile. The Jew is the good olive tree, and the Gentiles are the wild olive branches that will be grafted in.

God dwelt with the nation of Israel exclusively from 1500 B.C. until the time that they rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah and rejected the message of the Holy Spirit in Acts 8. Then God cut them off and scattered them throughout the nations. From then on the gospel went primarily to the Gentiles. According to verses 23-27, Israel will be grafted *in later* when they believe and out of Sion comes a Deliverer. That is the meaning of the passage. There is no Rapture mentioned.

Another attempt to refute the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is to teach that the trumpet of the seventh angel in **Revelation 11:15**, at the Second Coming of Christ, is the same as the "trump of God" in **I Thessalonians 4:16** and the "last trump" in **I Corinthians 15:52**. The trumpets are not the same because the trumpet in **Revelation 11** is an angel's trumpet, not God's as in **I Thessalonians 4**. In **Joshua 6**, there is a type of these seven trumpets in the context of Jericho, the accursed city, verse 17. Babylon, the accursed city, appears in the Tribulation, not in the Church Age. Joshua's conquering Jericho is a type of taking Babylon in the Tribulation. Joshua's people and seven priests with seven trumpets march around the city seven times on the seventh day and then blow the seven trumpets and shout, and the walls fall flat.

The "last trump" in **I Corinthians 15:52** also has a type in the Old Testament. Notice that it is the last trump, not the seventh. It can be the last of two trumps. In **Numbers 10**, God tells Moses to make and use two trumpets. Verse 1-2 say, "And the LORD **spake unto** Moses, saying, Make **thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps.**" Silver is a picture of redemption in the Bible (Matthew 27), and the trumpets were blown for the assembly, then the journeying. The first trumpet will be blown in the Rapture for the assembling of the church, and the second for the calling out.

Earlier, I mentioned the resurrections in the Bible. A study of these resurrections and their parts will dispel the false teachings about the resurrection in **Revelation 20:5,6**, which takes place at the end of the Tribulation. According to **I Corinthians 15:22-24**, there are three parts to the First Resurrection: **For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits (1), afterward they that are Christ's at his coming (2). Then cometh the end (3), when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.**" The first part took place when Jesus Christ brought up some of the Old Testament saints at His resurrection according to Matthew 27:52-53 and Ephesians 4:8: "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." This happened at the time of the Passover. The second part takes place at the Rapture, I Thessalonians 4 and I Corinthians 15, which will coincide with the feast of Pentecost. The third part will occur at the end of the Tribulation, at the time of Tabernacles spoken of in Zechariah 14:18,19, and will include Tribulation saints, as in Revelation 20:4,5.

This Resurrection does not include anyone who is "dead" and facing the second death; being cast into the lake of fire. Jesus Christ tells the Sadducees of this in Matthew 22:30-32, after they try to trick Him concerning their resurrection. He says, "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The First Resurrection will be of the living only. There is a type of this in Deuteronomy 16:16: "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread (Passover), and in the feast of weeks (Pentecost), and in the feast of tabernacles..." These feasts were scheduled according to the times of harvest in Israel, just as God will harvest the earth

in the Resurrection. The following chart gives a brief example of what is being said. These events occurred on the exact dates that God had set over 1400 years before Jesus was born. Keep in mind that the Jewish day begins in the evening (near dusk), on the previous day. Feasts appear in the order that God gave them (Lev 23).

1. Passover -----Fourteenth day of the first month. Jesus was crucified. Jesus became our Passover (fulfilled).
2. Unleavened Bread----- Fifteenth day of the first month. Jesus buried. The middle loaf of bread is hidden or buried (fulfilled).
3. First fruits -----Sunday following Unleavened Bread. Jesus resurrected. He became the Firstfruits of them that died (fulfilled).
4. Pentecost-----Also called Feast of Weeks in the Old Testament. Fiftieth day after Firstfruits. The Holy Spirit came in His fullness (fulfilled).
5. Trumpets -----First day of the seventh month. The Rapture (not yet fulfilled). Next major event.
6. Atonement -----Tenth day of the seventh month. Repentance of Israel. When they shall look upon Him, Whom they have pierced (not yet fulfilled).
7. Tabernacles-----Fifteenth day of the seventh month. The coming state of rest. Jesus reigns on earth for one thousand years (not yet fulfilled).

It should be noted that these seven feasts were observed on specific days. When Jesus came the first time, He fulfilled the first three feasts on the precise days and in the same order that God had given them. The fourth feast was also fulfilled ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, when He sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. The last three feasts are awaiting fulfillment and are associated with events surrounding His second coming. Please note that when Jesus returns the second time, there are actually two phases to His coming: 1) before the Tribulation, He comes in the clouds to rapture the saints-ref 1 Thes 4:16,17; and 2) after the Tribulation, He physically returns to the earth, and every eye shall see Him-ref Mt 24:29,30; Zech 12:10. The next feast to be fulfilled is Trumpets; the next event to be fulfilled on God's prophetic timetable is the Rapture. In the wilderness account, there were two trumpets blown, the first one and the last one. The first trumpet was for the gathering or calling of the people; the second (or last) was for the people to move out.

The resurrection of the dead, those who will suffer the second death, takes place in

Revelation 20:11-13. "And I saw a **great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.**" Notice that there are no living at this resurrection, only the dead. The living have gone up in one part of the First Resurrection, with the Church Age saints going out in the Rapture before the Tribulation.

Another false teaching is that the Rapture is not a "secret" coming. To prove this, men quote **Revelation 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him."** This passage is not speaking of the Rapture, but of the Second Coming to reign on earth.

Another argument is that the elect present in Matthew 24 are Church Age saints. Other groups besides the Church are called "elect" in the Bible.....refer to **Isaiah 42:1 and Isaiah 45:4**, where Israel is called God's elect.

Some of the arguments for a Post-Tribulation Rapture are based on changes made in the words of the Bible. For example, in an attempt to prove that only Christians who are watching for the Lord's return will be raptured at the beginning of the Tribulation, some expositors change I **Thessalonians 5:10** to read, "**whether we watch or sleep, we should live together with him,**" instead of "wake" **or sleep."**

The heretical teachings about the Rapture affect the believer in the same way as other heresies. These false teachers try to rob the Christians of several things: their peace and security, by teaching that their sins are not totally forgiven; their hope, by teaching that they will go through the Tribulation; their Saviour by denying the deity of Christ; and their authority, by trying to destroy the infallibility of the King James Bible. Knowing and believing the truth will give the Christians peace and assurance.

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