

Scotfield Biblical Institute

&
Theological Seminary



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SECTION ONE

GOING UP

The young executive yawned slightly as he entered the familiar lobby of the office building at the start of another routine day of business. He scarcely acknowledged the presence of the elevator dispatcher, who gestured to an open elevator and said, “Going up.” He certainly didn't imagine that the dispatcher's familiar call, “Going up,” was prophetic and would be fulfilled at once! Somewhere around the tenth floor he heard an earsplitting shout and the unmistakable sound of a trumpet blast overhead. And then he really began going up!

Before he could blink his eyes, or wonder if the others in the elevator had heard the strange sounds, the young executive was shooting up the elevator shaft. He seemed to take off like a rocket, going right through the top of the elevator and continuing right through the top of the building itself! He was careening upward through the bright morning sunshine and enjoying a completely euphoric feeling of well-being.

He was dumbfounded, but he was loving it! All around him he saw other people accelerating through the air, and they glowed white. They shined like silver against the blue sky. He suddenly realized that he too was “shining” in this peculiar way, and that his body had somehow been changed. Before his mind could put it all together, his eyes looked upward and saw what was drawing him and all the others into the sky like a gigantic magnet. There He was! Jesus Christ Himself!

The Lord Jesus in all His magnificence stood resplendent in the air as the believers rose to meet Him. He was more glorious, more brilliant, more lustrous than the man had ever imagined He would be, yet there He stood in plain view. The Apostle John who was with Jesus for three and a half years, saw Him die and rise from the dead three day later saw this Resurrected Jesus.

Revelation 1:12-18

I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And when I turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven candlesticks was one like a Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and with a golden sash wrapped around the chest. The hair on His head was white like wool, as white

as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters. He had in His right hand seven stars, and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. His appearance was like the sun shining brightly. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though I were dead. Then He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, though I was dead. Look! I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death (MEV).

The sight set the man's mind functioning again and he understood instantly that he was in the Rapture. He realized that he and the other believers around him in the air had suddenly become "like Jesus," seeing Him face-to-face and possessing their new resurrection bodies. It was true! The promise was real and it was being fulfilled!

He knew well enough what the so-called Rapture was, ever since he had come to believe in Jesus Christ a few years before. And he had believed in this remarkable event implicitly, as he believed all of what the Scriptures taught. But he had been puzzled, too. Was it going to happen in the incredible way that the Bible said it would? Would he really rise into the air and meet Jesus personally on the clouds? Would he be alive then, and conscious of what was happening?

Now he had his answers. Today was the day, and he was alive and well. And there was the Lord, just as He said He would be. He promised to return and receive His own, and here He was, keeping that one-of-a-kind promise.

The joyful company of believers assembled around the Lord high above the earth. As the Master greeted them they were overwhelmed by the warmth of His enveloping love. Then Jesus turned away from planet earth and led His church away to the place He had prepared for them.

Back in the elevator, a few people were rather incredulous. Not everyone had noticed the strange turn of events, since they were mostly looking down at their shoes, like people in elevators do! But some had clearly seen the young man with the attaché case get on at the first floor, and they certainly hadn't seen him get off. And yet, he was gone. Oh well, another day, another dollar. They all got off at their various floors and went about the day's business. Those who thought they were seeing things took a tranquilizer or phoned their analysts. The others had perceived nothing of the godly events, then or ever before, and they weren't bothered at all. They failed to appreciate that the time of God's wrath upon the earth was about to begin. If any of them were to survive the next seven years it would truly be a miracle.¹

We must remember that:

The more literally we take the Bible, the more fundamental our theology becomes. The less literally we take the Bible, the more liberal our theology becomes.

¹ McCall, Thomas S., Levitt, Zola, Raptured, Published by Zola Levitt Ministries, Inc 1975 pgs. 13-15 Used by permission of the author, Thomas S. McCall Th.D.

If we go the liberal route God's message to us is lost.

WORD RAPTURE NOT IN OUR BIBLES

The Word Rapture does not appear in our Bibles. It comes from the description of the program of this event found in I Thessalonians chapter four. The word there used by the apostle in verse seventeen is the Greek word *Harpazo*. It is translated as; to snatch or catch away. When the Greek New Testament was first translated into Latin by Jerome in 405 AD. used the Latin word for Harpazo which is *Rapere*. The Anglicized word for this Latin word is Raptured. This is what has remained in the common Christian lexicon

THE PROMISE OF THE RAPTURE

Jesus Himself promised that this even would occur.

John 14:2-3

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (KJV).

This passage where the apostle John is quoting Jesus contains the promise of the Rapture of the Church. In these verses, Jesus promised to return for the believers. He does not mention the timing or the circumstances, only the fact that there is a *coming of Jesus* for His believers whom he referred to as His Sheep (John 10:27). This passage does make one key point: this coming for the believers was for the purpose of taking them to where He was then going. Since Jesus was then going to Heaven, this is a coming to take the saints to Heaven and not to the earth.. The passage itself says nothing about the timing of the Rapture, only that the result of it is our entry into Heaven. The verb to come is in the present tense meaning and assertion of "I Come" which make it immanent. Another words it have happen any time. Further, they use of the term "Receive you Unto Myself" is indicative of all who will be received unto Jesus will go at the same time. For now the Holy Spirit has charge over us while the Savior is absent from us on earth. When Jesus returns for the believers He will assume the control over our lives from the Holy Spirit. The preposition "Unto" means movement toward. This indicates that the when He comes to receive His believers , He will not be the only one involved in the movement. His believers will be moved all at once from the earth toward Christ to meet Him. Jesus is implying an analogy of the ancient Jewish wedding to the rapture of the Church.

OBJECTIONS TO THE PASSAGE REFERRING TO THE RAPTURE

1. Some have said that this passage simply means that when we die Christ comes for us. That is in opposition to Luke 16:22 which indicates that it is angels that transport the souls of believers at death to Heaven.
2. Some have tied this to Jesus resurrection. This view has problems since verse 3 clearly indicated that He would come again after He went away. His going away refers to His going to Heaven. So therefore He means after He ascends to heaven. Jesus had promised that He would come again and His future coming would be

similar to His first coming which was from Heaven. So will His coming for His Church be from Heaven.

3. Some have asserted that this is a promise of the Holy Spirit coming after His ascension on the day of Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to earth to indwell believers, not take them to be where He is in Heaven. The coming in the actually the counterpart of the going away. Jesus ascended physically to Heaven and He will come again from Heaven to receive His believers to Himself. Jesus did not ascend physically on the day of Pentecost.
4. Some have referred to this as the Second Coming seen in Revelation chapter 19:11-16. We will respond to those claims when we examine the timing of the Rapture in our next session.

THE PROGRAM OF THE RAPTURE

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

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 (KJV).

In this passage the apostle Paul is answering a question that was asked. Do the believers who have died (asleep) miss out on this blessed event? So they were thinking that only living believers would see the Rapture and that the dead believers would be left out. This question arose because some of the believers had recently died. Their loved ones who were still living were distressed, not knowing whether their dead loved ones would lose out.

This passage was written to comfort the bereaved members with the truth that dead believers will not miss out on the benefits of the Rapture. In fact they will be given a preference in order. In reference to the death of believers, Paul uses the term “sleep.” Thus, the Bible views the death of believers as a temporary suspension of physical activity until the believer awakens at the Rapture. Just as physical sleep is temporary (a temporary suspension of physical activity until one awakens, yet there is no suspension of mental activity), so is death: it is a temporary suspension of physical activity until one awakens at the resurrection.²

THE PROGRAM OF THE RAPTURE OCCURS IN SEVEN STAGES.

First: *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven.* At some point in the future, Jesus will

² Fruchtenbaum, A. G. (2003). [*The footsteps of the Messiah : a study of the sequence of prophetic events*](#) (Rev. ed., p. 144). Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries.

come out of the Third Heaven and descend into the earth's atmosphere.

Second: *with a shout*. One day the Lord Jesus will give *a shout*, a command for the resurrection and the translation to occur.

Third: *with the voice of the archangel*. Michael the Archangel will be used in the case of the Rapture. Jesus gives the *shout* or command for the program of the Rapture to begin, and it is Michael's task to set it into motion, so he repeats the command.

Fourth: *with the trump of God*. With Michael's repetition of the command, the trumpet sounds, and this triggers the Rapture itself. Thus, this trumpet serves as a summons for the plan to get into motion.

Fifth: *the dead in Christ shall rise first*. This is the resurrection. This is why the dead believers will not miss out on the benefits of the Rapture. They will actually begin to enjoy the benefits of the Rapture first. The expression *in Christ* limits the resurrection at the time of the Rapture to those who were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body, which only began in Acts two. Thus, this resurrection of genuine Church Age believers who have died.

Sixth: *then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds*. The resurrection of the dead saints is followed by the transformation of the living saints. Every believer without exception will be removed from the earth and will be united with the Lord Jesus in the heavens. The living believers will be caught up (raptured) with the dead ones. What is important to see is that all Church Age genuine believers are raptured.

Seventh: *to meet the Lord in the air: so shall we ever be with the Lord*. The final step is the fact that both the resurrected dead believers and transformed living believers will both meet the Lord Jesus in the air. Then comes the guarantee that once believers have been united with Him in the air, they will permanently remain with Him follow Him as He has already promised in John 14:1-3. Again in the program there is no mention of the timing of when it occurs.

THE LIVING BELIEVERS ARE TRANSFORMED

I Corinthians 15:50-58

Now this I say, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Listen, I tell 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 trumpet, for the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal will put on immortality. When this corruptible will have put on incorruption, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then the saying that is written shall come to pass: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of

the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (MEV).

What about those who are *not* dead at Christ's coming? Paul now turned to answer that unexpressed question. Our bodies are only fitting for this earth in its corrupt state. They are made of flesh and blood. The natural body, could not enter the eternal state.

The Rapture of the church was a mystery (*mystērion*) in that it had not been known in the Old Testament but now was revealed. The dead in Christ will first be raised, and then the living will be translated instantaneously to our glorified resurrected bodies. The trumpet, as in the Old Testament, signaled the appearance of God (Exodus 19:16). It is the last blast for the church because this appearance shall never end (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Like the dead (1 Corinthians 15: 42–43), the living will exchange the natural bodies which are corrupt since the Fall in exchange for the eternal and perfect (1 Corinthians 15: 13:10). For genuine born again believers in Christ, death's power will be removed.

Death came as a result of man's rebellion and disobedience against the command of God (Genesis 3:17–19). The Law, which epitomized the command of God, was thus the mirror against which human rebellion and disobedience was portrayed. Like the first Adam, all who followed him rebelled (1 Corinthians 15: 2:14). But through the obedience of the last Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15: 15:45; Romans 5:19; Philippians 2:8–11), came "victory" and life (1 Corinthians 15:22; cf. 2:15–16).

Paul's doctrinal declarations led to practical commands and this chapter's conclusion was no exception. The Corinthians were urged to stand firm in the apostles' teaching (1 Corinthians 15: 2), unmoved by the denials of false teachers (Ephesians 4:14). This certainty, especially concerning the Resurrection, provided an impetus to faithful service (1 Corinthians 3:8; Galatians 6:9) since labor in the resurrected Lord is not futile (*kenos*, "empty"; 1 Corinthians 15:10, 14, 17, 30–32).

IMMINENCY

Something that is imminent means that it can happen at any time. It carries with it the certainty of an event occurring but also the uncertainty of not knowing when it will happen. Our English word actually comes from the Latin *immineo* meaning to overhang or project. Therefore imminent means hanging over one's head ready to fall or overtake one. It also means close at hand in its incidence. Since we do not know when Christ's coming will be we say it is imminent. 1) We can't count on some amount of time transpiring before He comes. 2) We cannot legitimately set a date for it. 3) We cannot legitimately say it will happen soon. Because of this Christians should always be waiting patiently for our Lord to return at any time. Here are some New Testament passages that teach the imminent coming of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:7

⁷ *so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (KJV).*

Paul had an ever present sense of Christ's return as imminent while we wait.

I Corinthians 16:22

²² If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, Maranatha (KJV).

The term Maranatha consists of three Aramaic words “Mar” (Lord), “ana” (our), and “tha” (come). It means “Our Lord Come.” It is a reference to the Imminency of the return of Jesus.

Philippians 4:5

⁵ Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand (KJV).

Here we are commanded to engage in appropriate conduct since His return is imminent (at hand).

Titus 2:13

¹³ looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (KJV).

This is a direct command to look for the appearing of Jesus Christ. His return could happen at any time and therefore is our blessed hope.

James 5:7-9

⁷ Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. ⁸ Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. ⁹ Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door (KJV).

Just as a farmer waits for the crops to come from the ground in patience so should we also be patient in the coming of the Lord as it draws closer. This is a direct reference to its Imminency. The use of the Greek verb translated “draweth nigh” are in a perfect tense and indicative mood. What this means is grammatically that this action of waiting and drawing near continues. James is saying that Christ’s coming was drawing near before he wrote this and His coming continues to be near.

I John 2:28

²⁸ And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming (KJV).

If the readers would maintain their fellowship with God, they would enjoy a genuine boldness of speech when He will come (appear). This refers to our abiding in Jesus until He comes for us.

The exact point in all human history when this will occur is not given to us in Scripture. Christ even said we would not know the day or the hour as He discussed its Imminency.

Matthew 24:42

⁴⁰ Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. ⁴² Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. ⁴³ But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. ⁴⁴ Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man cometh (KJV).

Philippians 3:20-21

²⁰ For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: ²¹ 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 (KJV).

Here Paul makes it clear that we wait and watch for the Lord to return at any time. When He comes He will change our corrupt bodies into a glorious resurrected body.

RESURRECTION

At death the human spirit is separated from the body (Genesis 3:19; Ecclesiastics 12:7; 2 Corinthians 5:8). A resurrection is an event whereby a dead body is raised to immortal life for some explicit purpose. This is different from somebody coming back to life. This doctrine is two-fold, pertaining to (A) the resurrection of Christ and (B) the resurrection of humanity, including both saved and unsaved. In other words death does not end life it starts it! In the Old Testament the Doctrine of Resurrection is taught in Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2-3; Hosea 12:14. It was believed by the patriarchs (Genesis 22:5; with Hebrews 11:19; Job 19:25-27) and revealed through the prophets.

Daniel 12:2

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (LKV).

In the New Testament the resurrection is taught in John 5:25-29, I Corinthians 15:50-51; I Thessalonians 4:14-18, and Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15. This doctrine contains the implication of immortality. They are raised to live forever. Christ was the first one to be raised from the dead with a resurrected body. Others were raised from the dead such as Lazarus but he had a normal body and died later (restored).

John 5:25-29

²⁵ Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. ²⁶ For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in

himself; ²⁷And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. ²⁸Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, ²⁹And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (KJV),

One of the fundamental truths of Christianity is the fact in Christ guarantees eternal life. We may experience physical death but not eternal death, which is separation from God. This is what happens to unbelievers. They die physically to an eternal damnation.

Jesus is God. Jesus has always been God and always will be God. His entrance into the world is called the incarnation. He was born with a normal human body albeit from a woman's egg fertilized by the Holy Spirit. It was still a human body. When Jesus died and rose again from the dead He was the first person of a human body to be resurrected.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

But now is Christ risen from the dead, [and] become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man [came] death, by man [came] also the resurrection of the dead. 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; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming (KJV).

THE RESURRECTION ORDER

This shows that all of the Christians shall live again or be resurrected and that there is an orderly progression of the stages of resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

²⁰But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. ²¹For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. (KJV)

The rest of the stages of resurrection are described in other books of the Scripture:

1. First, Christ rose from the dead (I Corinthians 15:2-23).
2. Next will be the resurrection of the Church age believers at the Rapture. (I Thessalonians 4:16).
3. Next will be the resurrection of the two witnesses in the middle of the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 11:11-12)
4. Next will be the resurrection of Old Testament Saints (Isaiah 26:19).
5. Last will be the resurrection of the Tribulation Saints (Revelation 20:4)

There is one more resurrection, and it is for unbelievers only. It happens after the one thousand year Millennial Kingdom on earth is completed, and none of these unsaved people will be in the Eternal Order (Revelation 20:13).

OUR BODIES CHANGE

These verses in I Corinthians 15:54-58 describe that the body changes from corruption to incorruption, and is the final victory over death:

I Corinthians 15:50-58

⁵⁰Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²In 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. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [must] put on immortality. ⁵⁴So 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. ⁵⁵O death, where [is] thy sting? O grave, where [is] thy victory? ⁵⁶The sting of death [is] sin; and the strength of sin [is] the law ⁵⁷But thanks [be] to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, 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. (KJV)

THE NATURE OF THE GLORIFIED BODY IS DESCRIBED HERE:

I Corinthians 15:35-49

³⁵But some [man] will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? ³⁶[Thou] fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: ³⁷And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other [grain]: ³⁸But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. ³⁹All flesh [is] not the same flesh: but [there is] one [kind of] flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, [and] another of birds. ⁴⁰[There are] also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial [is] one, and the [glory] of the terrestrial [is] another. ⁴¹[There is] one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for [one] star differeth from [another] star in glory. ⁴²So also [is] the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: ⁴³It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: ⁴⁴It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. ⁴⁵And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [was made] a quickening spirit. ⁴⁶Howbeit that [was] not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man [is] of the earth, earthy: the second man [is] the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸As [is] the earthy, such [are] they also that are earthy: and as [is] the heavenly, such [are] they also that are heavenly. ⁴⁹And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (KJV)

This section discusses the nature of the bodies of the resurrection of the believers. It is important that we completely understand this because we will experience this some day. The following points are made:

1. Most think this is foolishness
2. We have the example of nature to see how God does this
3. When a seed such as an acorn falls from a tree it is dead
4. It goes into the ground then comes back to life with a brand new body
5. There are many types of bodies visible to us in nature and in the heavens
6. Our bodies are corrupt; that is they are susceptible to aging and decay
7. Keeping with the seed illustration our bodies are put into the ground (sown) in dishonor (decay, aging and death) and raised in glory without the aging and decay. That is power.
8. It goes into the ground as a natural body and it is raised as a spiritual body
9. The two bodies are different characteristics
10. Adam the first man was made a living person, a human body.
11. The last Adam (Christ) was made a life giving spirit because He was raised from the dead with an immortal body. He was the firstfruits of all that would be resurrected.
12. In like manner our bodies are first natural and when we are resurrected will be spiritual bodies.

BELIEVERS WILL HAVE A GLORIFIED, INCORRUPTIBLE BODY. WE HAVE CHRIST'S RISEN BODY AS AN EXAMPLE:

Philippians 3:21

21 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. (KJV)

Some further information may be seen from the resurrected Jesus' body, but we do not know what attributes are from the resurrection and which are attributed to His deity:

- His voice was recognized as being the same one He had before His death. (John 20:16)
- His physical features were recognized although not always immediately. (John 20:26-29)
- It was a real body of flesh and bone since it was embraceable. (John 20:17; 27)
- He was able to suddenly disappear. (Luke 24:31)
- He could go through walls. (John 20:19)
- His body could eat food. (Luke 24:41-43)

To summarize, a resurrected body will be:

- A body of resurrection power.
- A spiritual body.
- A heavenly body.
- An immortal body.

WHO IS THE CHURCH?

The Church is the Body of the Christ. There is the invisible Church which is what the real Church is and this is what Christ called His Church – His Body, the real believers. It is the invisible Church, you can't see it obviously. You don't know who's a believer and who is really not a believer. That's the invisible Church. Colossians 1:18 calls it the "Body of Christ", the "Body of the Messiah." Jesus referred to the genuine "Invisible" church as His Sheep.

John 10:27-29

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand (KJV).

COMPOSED OF JEWS AND GENTILE BELIEVERS

In 1 Corinthians Chapter 12 and 14, Christ is called the "Head of the Body" in a discussion of spiritual gifts. The term "Body" which is analogous to this whole Church we see in Colossians 1:18 which refers to the "Body of Believers." It is composed of both Jew and Gentile believers.

The Bible does not speak of missionary activities, foreign and domestic. The Bible only speaks of Missionary activity to the Jew first and then the Gentile. It doesn't say you are to go to foreign missions or domestic missions. That's not how God divides the world up. It's Jews and Gentiles and that's the Mission activity.

YOU ENTER THE CHURCH BY SPIRIT BAPTISM

BEGAN AT PENTECOST (ACTS 2)

Is composed of all true believers from Acts 2 (Pentecost) until the rapture. That's the Church. It's the Ecclesia, the Called Out Ones.

IT DOES NOT INCLUDE OT SAINTS

A "saint" in the Bible is a believer. That's pure and simple. You are a "Saint" if you are a believer. God says you are a saint if you believe. There are Old Testament Saints. The Church does not include the Old Testament Saints

IT EXCLUDES TRIBULATION SAINTS

There will be Tribulation Saints – those who come to be a believer during the Great Tribulation. The Church does not include the Tribulation Saints.

Only those: In Christ; in Jesus; in Jesus Christ, in Christ Jesus; in Him; in Whom; and in the Lord are members of the real invisible Church. These are people who really believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead and they are part of the Church. The apostle Paul

used these preceding terms to identify those who were baptized by the Spirit, into the body of the Messiah.

ONE ENTERS THE BODY BY BELIEF.

Spirit Baptism

One gets into the Body by Spirit Baptism after belief. The Church is comprised of Jews and Gentiles and continues on until the last Gentile is saved and then the Church ends.

1 Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, [That's how we get into the body.] whether [we be] Jews or Gentiles, whether [we be] bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit (KJV).

It doesn't matter who you are. Paul's is trying to encompass both sides of the ecclesiastical equation and he is encompassing both sides of the general civilization of that time – you were either a slave or you were free. Everybody gets into the Church the same way. After belief, there is a Spirit Baptism and it happens one time. It doesn't continue to happen over and over again. There is one Spirit Baptism.

Now there is a filling of the Spirit. We see that in Ephesians 5, that is different than Spirit Baptism. Spirit Baptism is a onetime event. The Spirit enters us and takes up residence and never leaves, the Spirit is never without us.

CHRIST IS THE HEAD

WHO IS THE CHURCH AND WHAT IS IT COMPOSED OF?

Colossians 1:18

And he [meaning Jesus] is the head of the body, the church: [So the church is the body.] who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all [things] he might have the preeminence (KJV).

Chronologically, Christ was not the first person in the scriptures that came back from the dead. This verse is referring to the resurrection. Christ was the first one to be resurrected.

Christ is the head of the body. We know from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians in Chapter 12 and 14 that he goes on to talk about the nature of the body, the use of the body in the different segments, and how the body all works together. Christ is the head of the body.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE BODY

WHAT IS THE COMPOSITION OF THE BODY?

Ephesians 2:11-16

¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called the “uncircumcision” by the so-called “circumcision” in the flesh by human hands, ¹² were at that time apart from Christ, alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who were formerly far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For He is our peace, who has made both groups one and has broken down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of the commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile both to God into one body through the cross, thereby slaying the enmity (MEV).

What he is saying here is that the Jews called the Gentiles uncircumcised and they wouldn't let them in. They didn't want the Gentiles to be part of this commonwealth of Israel. The Gentiles didn't have the Abrahamic Covenant that they were aware of. However, one aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant does say that all nations are going to be blessed through Abraham – all nations. That's going to come through Jesus. They didn't have the Mosaic Covenant although they could have made themselves Jews, that didn't happen very often. For they have come in now to this new entity, the body, by the blood of Christ.

In other words, Jews and Gentiles are not different anymore in terms of this new entity, the Church.

The Old Covenant was conditional and it was replaced by the New Covenant. So we are not under any of the Commandments – the 613 that are in the Old Testament. We have all of our New Testament laws of Christ that will appear in the Epistles. We have instructions for the future church in the Gospels. We are under the law of Christ that He inaugurated at the Last Supper.

The composition of the Church, the Body of the Messiah, is a combination of Jews and Gentiles united together by faith in Jesus. As this passage shows here is no such thing as a Gentile Church and there is no such thing as a Jewish Church, although some would like for them to be separate. It is not separate. There is one Church and it's made up of real believers that are now the body of Christ (Ephesians 3:6).

A PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH AGE

A major purpose of the Church Age is a calling out from among the Gentiles by the gospel according to Acts 15:14:

Act 15:14

Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name (KJV).

In other words, we are fellow partakers and according to Romans 11:25-27, this calling out of the Gentiles will continue until some [finite] number of Gentiles is saved. There is going to be the Church until that last Gentile gets saved. We don't know who that is; we

don't know when it is, or where it will happen. It's really not for us to know. Christ has kept this from us.

Romans 11:25-27

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: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this [is] my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins (KJV).

In other words, Paul doesn't want us to be conceited and think that the Church is all Gentiles and think that we're God's people now and the Jews are not. Nothing can be further from the truth. The unsaved Nation Israel has a different program on God's Grand plan. We will look at that in our next session

THE ROOTS OF THE CHURCH

When the word "church" was very first mentioned in Scripture, Jesus used that word in the future tense, Matthew 16:18. He referred to the Church as future from the time that He was here during His first Advent. What Christ referred to is the Church proper, the ecclesia, the called out ones, the Church. He is talking about the specific people that are in His church.

There is a "mystery" that Paul speaks about which indicates the church was unknown in the Old Testament. The Church has a beginning and it has an end. The beginning was at the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when Spirit Baptism came and the end of the Church is the Rapture. It doesn't mean people weren't saved before and people won't get saved after. It just means, from the technical term the "ecclesia", that's its life consists of the interval or the time period of the Church.

The first time the word church" was used was in:

Matthew 16:18

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (KJV).

By the use of the future tense Acts 1:5 makes it clear that Spirit Baptism was still future in Acts one:

Acts 1:5

For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (KJV).

In other words, it won't be long now before the Spirit of Baptism takes place. It was that Spirit Baptism that came upon the believers or those who would be believers at that time to initiate the Church.

There is a "mystery" that Paul speaks about which indicates the church was unknown in the Old Testament. The Church has a beginning and it has an end. The beginning was at the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when Spirit Baptism came and the end of the Church is the Rapture. It doesn't mean people weren't saved before and people won't get saved after. It just means, from the technical term the "ecclesia", that's its life or the interval or time period of the Church.

Spirit Baptism was then future to Acts 2 and it is clearly stated in Acts 11:15-16:

Acts 11:15-16

And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. "Fell on them" "at the beginning", he's talking about the beginning of the Church. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost (KJV).

JESUS IS THE PERSON WHO BOUGHT OUR SALVATION

Now that we have defined the True Church it is incumbent on us to define the person who enabled us to be in it and what the extent of our salvation is.

Jesus is the person who claimed to be God and willingly died on that Roman cross many years ago to enable us to receive our salvation.

WHAT OUR SALVATION GUARANTEES

1. We are His Child

John 1:12-13

¹² But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: ¹³ which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (KJV).

2. We are Not Condemned

John 3:17

¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ¹⁸ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (KJV).

Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (KJV).

3. We are New Creatures

II Corinthians 5:7

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new (KJV).

4. We are Accepted and Forgiven by God

Ephesians 6:6-7

⁶ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved: ⁷ in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (KJV).

5. We possess Eternal Life

John 10:28

²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (KJV).

6. We are Reconciled to God

Romans 5:10

¹⁰ For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (KJV).

7. We are at Peace With God

Romans 5:1

¹ Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (KJV):

8. We Have Passed from Death to Life

I John 3:14

¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death (KJV).

9. The Holy Spirit Dwells in Us

II Timothy 1:14

¹⁴ That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us (KJV).

10. We are Forgiven of All Our Sins

Colossians 2:13

Canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands (ESV).

11. We are Adopted into The Family of God

Galatians 4:5

⁵ To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (KJV).

12. Our Names Are Written into The Book of Life

Philippians 4:3

³ And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life (KJV).

13. We Receive The Righteousness of Christ

Romans 3:22

²² Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference (KJV).

14. We are Friends of God and No Longer His Enemies

I Corinthians 12:13

¹⁵ Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you (KJV).

15. We have an Inheritance in Heaven Waiting for Us

I Peter 1:4

⁴ *To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (KJV).*

16. We are Sealed by the Holy Spirit Until the Day of Redemption

Ephesians 1:12-14

¹² *That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ: ¹³ in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (KJV).*

17. We are Not Saved to Wrath

I Thessalonians 5:9-11

⁹ *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. ¹¹ Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do (KJV).*

Matthew 3:7

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

So Matthew is saying that there is a way to flee from the wrath to come. How do you flee from the wrath to come? It's going to come over the entire world. The only way to flee is to be in Christ and to be with Him off the earth. That's the only way you are going to get out of it. The Lord Jesus also was quoted by Luke saying the same thing.

Luke 21:34-36

³⁴ *And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. ³⁵ For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man (KJV).*

The Tribulation is coming on the entire world. The only way to escape it is to be off the world and stand before the Son of Man, Jesus. In other words to be Raptured before the Tribulation.

THE UNSAVED NATION ISRAEL

The name Israel was first given to the patriarch Jacob as chronicled in Genesis 32: 28 about 1900 B.C. Jacob was the grandson of the patriarch Abraham who received a significant unilateral covenant from God. This covenant included a land, seed and blessings for both he and his progeny.

Jacob wrestled with a celestial being that had the appearance of a man. We know this to be the Angel of Jehovah also known as a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally when the Lord wanted the wrestling to end He gave Jacob's thigh a debilitating supernatural blow that dislocated Jacob's hip. Still, Jacob would not release his hold on the Angel until He blessed him. Interestingly the Angel asked Jacob his name and he answered "Jacob." The Angel then said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed." So God renames Jacob "Israel", which in Hebrew is Yisrael, or a combination of two Hebrew words sarah and el and it literally means "he who strives with God." The word play helps our understanding of Israel and Jacob. The Abrahamic Covenant he was prophesied to receive by inference included him striving with his father in law, twin brother and God Himself. God gave Jacob's uncle, Ishmael (future Arab nations), a prophecy regarding the perpetual struggle between the Jews and the Arabs (Genesis 16: 11-12). The history of the Nation Israel clearly fulfills this prophecy about the relationship of the Jews, struggling with the Arabs, other nations and God. Jews in their struggles with the world continually turned from God to follow after the pagan nations around them. Further insight revealed in the word play of the word "Israel" is that God protects and preserves for Jacob and God will protect and preserve Israel. Even though they sin terribly, God will be on their side as all the world's nations seek to conspire against them. There is only one way God will abandon this protection and Jeremiah describes it in chapter thirty-one of his book:

Jeremiah 31:35-37

³⁵ Thus saith Jehovah, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, so that the waves thereof roar; Jehovah of hosts is his name: ³⁶ If these ordinances depart from before me, saith Jehovah, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. ³⁷ Thus saith Jehovah: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith Jehovah (ASV 1901).

Some time later the ten older sons of Jacob, in their envy, sold Joseph, Jacob's favorite son into slavery to some itinerant Ishmaelite merchants traveling to Egypt. Joseph providentially rose up to become second only to pharaoh of the greatest nation on earth at that time and is charged with protecting that country from an imminent famine. In the process his family comes to Egypt seeking food. They reconcile with him and all seventy of them enter Egypt to live there under his protection.

When they emerged from Egypt four hundred years later traveling back to Canaan in 1445 B.C they were a bonafide nation with a population of more than two million citizens. Under the leadership of Moses, who was chosen by God, they become a theocracy. Over the next eight hundred fifty nine years until they fell to the Babylonians, they would intermittently trust God and relapse into the idolatrous practices of the nations around them. God would correct them but all the while loving and assuring them He had a future for them as a nation.

Leviticus 26: 42-44

⁴²then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. ⁴³The land also shall be left by them, and shall enjoy its sabbaths, while it lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity; because, even because they rejected mine ordinances, and their soul abhorred my statutes. ⁴⁴And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am Jehovah their God; ⁴⁵ but I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am Jehovah. ⁴⁶These are the statutes and ordinances and laws, which Jehovah made between Him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by Moses (ASV 1901).

In His faithfulness He will someday completely fulfill His covenant with Abraham. This will follow the Great Tribulation by a blessing through Messiah to Christ-believing Jews and bring them into the promised land of Israel. The fullness of the covenant will be realized in the Millennium. However, He gave them sufficient prophecies ensuring that they would be back in the land before that time but in a state of unbelief regarding Jesus as their Messiah (Ezekiel 20: 33-38; Ezekiel 22: 17-22; Zephaniah 2: 1-2).

THE FINAL BATTLE

The World has known that there will be a final World Wide Battle on this earth some day.

Names of the Great Tribulation Found in the Bible: ASV of 1901

The Time of Jacob's - Trouble-Jeremiah 30:7. Jacob's name was changed to Israel. This is the time of Israel's trouble.

The Seventieth Week (a seven) of Daniel - Daniel 9:27

Jehovah's Strange Work - Isaiah 28:21

Jehovah's Strange Act - Isaiah 28:21

The Day of Israel's Calamity - Deuteronomy 32:35; Obadiah 12-14

The Tribulation - Deuteronomy 4:30

The Indignation - Isaiah 26:20; Daniel 11:36

The Overflowing Scourge - Isaiah 28:15,18

The Day of Vengeance - Isaiah 34:8; 35:4; 61:2

The Year of Recompense - Isaiah 34:8

The time of Trouble - Daniel 12:1; Zephaniah 1:15

The Day of Wrath - Zephaniah 1:15

The Day of Distress - Zephaniah 1:15

The Day of Wasteness - Zephaniah 1:15

The Day of Desolation Zephaniah 1:15

The Day of Darkness Zephaniah 1:15; Amos 5:18, 20; Joel 2:2

The Day of Gloominess Zephaniah 1:15; Joel 2:2

The Day of Clouds - Zephaniah 1:15; Joel 2:2

The Day of Thick Darkness - Zephaniah 1:15; Joel 2:2

The Day of the Trumpet - Zephaniah 1:16

The Day of Alarm - Zephaniah 1:16

New Testament References

The Day of the Lord - 1 Thessalonians 5:2

The Wrath of God - Revelation 15:1, 7; 14:10, 19; 16:1

The Hour of Trial - Revelation 3:10

The Great Day of the Wrath of the Lamb of God - Revelation 6:16-17

The Wrath to Come - Matthew 2:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:10

The Wrath - 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 11:18

The Great Tribulation - Matthew 24:29

The Hour of Judgment - Revelation 14:7

The Bible reveals exactly how the coming world leader, known as the Antichrist, will suffer defeat for all the havoc he has caused on earth. And specifically, the greatest persecutions of the Jews this earth will have ever seen. This person will have great political acumen and will be a virtual sorcerer. During the holocaust under the Nazis approximately one-third of the entire world's population of Jews were exterminated. That amounted to about six million people. At that time the people listened to the swaying words of Adolph Hitler enabling him to kill so many. The Antichrist and his pogroms will kill two-thirds during the Great Tribulation (Zechariah 13:8). With Jewish worldwide population estimated presently at approximately 13.3 million that equals 8.86 million to be killed. Of the remaining one-third all will have been refined and finally accept Christ as their Messiah.

Zechariah 13:9

“And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them, I will say, ‘They are My people, And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’” (NASB)

In concert with this is Christ's Words regarding the Jews finally accepting them as their Messiah. This of course refers to the Jews who did not believe in Jesus and entered the invisible Church.

Matthew 23:39

“For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!” (NASB)

And finally, the final fulfillment of Paul does prophesy regarding the Jews national salvation.

Romans 11:26-27

And so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.” THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.” (NASB)

During the last stage of the Great Tribulation, which we call the battle of Armageddon, the Antichrist, will move his forces into the Valley of Jezreel. His enemies, which are the underground or resistance forces who have been saved during the Tribulation, take the opportunity to destroy Babylon the world capital of the Antichrist. They do it

unannounced and in rapid fashion. According to Isaiah 13:3, they will be Gentile believers of the Tribulation. Just prior to this they will make their way to Jerusalem to report to the Jews who are there. This sudden destruction of the world political and economic capital will cause great distress on the earth, but not in heaven. Because when Babylon gets destroyed, it will signal to those in Heaven that the Second Coming is soon to occur!

WHY GOD BRINGS THE TRIBULATION

1. To Make and End of Wickedness and Wicked Ones

Isaiah 13:9:

Behold, the day of Jehovah comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land a desolation, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it (ASV, 1901).

This passage uses the term *the Day of Jehovah* as a reference to the Great Tribulation and gives its goal in the phrase, *to destroy the sinners thereof out of it*. The purpose, then, is to destroy *wicked ones* out of the land.

Isaiah 24:19–20:

The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent asunder, the earth is shaken violently. The earth shall stagger like a drunken man, and shall sway to and fro like a hammock; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again (ASV, 1901).

The closing words of this verse state that the basic reason for the judgments of the Tribulation is that the transgression worldwide shall fall and not rise again. Its purpose is to make an end of *wickedness*.

2. To Break the Power of the Holy People

One Other purpose of the Tribulation is to break the power or the stubborn will of the Jewish nation. In Daniel 11–12, the prophet was given a vision of what conditions will be like for his people (Israel) during the Tribulation.

Daniel 12:5–7

*Then, I, Daniel, looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on the brink of the river on this side, and the other on the brink of the river on that side. And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that lives for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; **and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.** (emphasis added) (ASV, 1901)*

This passage provides an important goal of the Tribulation. It is to break the power or the stubborn will of the Jewish nation. The Tribulation will continue and will not end until

this happens. So from this, purpose of the Tribulation can be deduced: God intends to break the power of the holy people in order to bring about a national regeneration. This is because they did not believe on the Messiah Jesus when He was here. The way in which God will perform this is given in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 20:33–38:

As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, surely with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, will I be king over you. And I will bring you out from the peoples, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out; and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I enter into judgment with you face to face. Like as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you, says the Lord Jehovah. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me; I will bring them forth out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah (ASV, 1901).

In this passage, Ezekiel draws a simile with the Exodus. What is important to note here is that after God gathers the Jews from around the world, He will enter into a period of judgment (the Tribulation) with them. The rebels among the Jewish people will be purged out by this judgment. Only then will the whole new nation, a regenerate nation, be allowed to enter the Messianic Kingdom under King Messiah.

TIMING OF THE RAPTURE

There is therefore no reason for God to punish those children of His who have believed in Him – no reason. That is not a purpose for the tribulation. As a matter of fact, He’s said exactly the opposite. When you and I come to Jesus Christ and we accept Him, He has taken the punishment for us. We don’t get punished again. There is no reason for us to get punished. He has taken this burden upon Himself.

When we believe in Christ, He has taken the punishment for our sins. When He died, He suffered all present, past, and future sins from the lives of mankind on the planet.

It is Jesus that conducts the Tribulation.

Revelation 6:1-1-17

¹And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come. ²And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth conquering, and to conquer.

³And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature

saying, Come. ⁴And another horse came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

⁵And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. ⁶And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.

⁷And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. ⁸And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

⁹And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: ¹⁰and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? ¹¹And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course.

¹²And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; ¹³and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken of a great wind. ¹⁴And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. ¹⁵And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand (ASV, 1901).

I have no idea how many billions of people have lived. He took the punishment. The Bible speaks about when we sin, we get forgiven. It doesn't say when we sin, we are punished. It says we get corrected at times, it doesn't say we are punished. The punishment has already been taken. He is not going to punish us twice for our crimes – our sins if you will.

When we come to Christ, we make peace with God. The Bible says we make peace with Him. The long war is over. You probably realize it before you became a believer that you were at war with God. We were at enmity with Him and we didn't know it. We realize it after we get saved. We realize it through Bible studies and good teaching and preaching. You make peace with God and He gives you the Peace of God. He loves his prisoners of war. He wants us to be with him.

If you truly believe in your heart that Jesus died and rose again from the dead, you're with Christ, you're with God. You lost the condemnation, you made peace with Him. You're one with God.

GOD'S WRATH AND THE CHURCH

The Church is at peace with God and we will not go through this wrath, this time of wrath.

1Thessalonians 1:10

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, [even] Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (KJV).

Our belief on Christ saves us from the wrath to come. We are not going to be here for the Tribulation. Even though the when Jesus starts the Tribulation and conducts it to the end we are kept from it, as He punishes the world.

When the first seal is open the Antichrist is launched to office in the world and he brings the message of peace and safety as he make a covenant with Israel so they can build their long awaited Temple. However this will bring the Tribulation on this world. It will come gradually as a thief in the night as Jesus opens the seals on the scroll. Number six of the seals summarizes the first five by identifying them as The Wrath of the Lamb. The Lamb of course is the name of Jesus who became our Passover Lamb and took the sins from the world for whom all that believe in Him.

I Thessalonians 5:2-3

² For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.³ 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 (KJV).

THE ANCIENT JEWISH WEDDING

A most profound illustration in Scripture is the depiction of the Church as the bride of Jesus the Messiah (Ephesians 5:25-29). To approach this illustration from a modern perspective, we miss much of the richness and depth of this picture. To truly appreciate what it must have meant to Jesus' disciples when He taught them about His Kingdom using marriage metaphors, or to Paul's readers when he described Christ as the husband of the Church, we need to discover what marriage and courtship were like in First Century Israel. When we compare what we discover to the calling out of the Church by the Lord Jesus, we find an amazing parallel, in which virtually every aspect of the ancient Jewish tradition is fulfilled. This Jewish wedding actually continued until the early twentieth century.

The importance of this is that, we see that our God is a God who pays meticulous attention to detail, who fulfills according to what He has established, who was willing to pay an inconceivably high price to secure a Bride for His Son, and who will not fail to send His Son back to reclaim His Beloved.

The Jews had no dating or courtships as we now think of those things. Marriage to them was a practical legal matter, established by contract and carried through by exacting procedure. These customs exist in a form today in the Jewish wedding ceremony. When the father of the young man of Israel in Jesus' time chose the girl he wanted for his son he would approach her father with a marriage contract. He would come to her house with a covenant- a true legal agreement – giving the terms by which he would be willing to propose marriage. The most important consideration in the contract was the price the bridegroom would be willing to pay.

The “bride price” is still utilized today in parts of the Mediterranean and African worlds and while it seems archaic to us, it had some useful purposes. First of all, if the bridegroom was willing to sacrifice hard cash for his bride, he was showing his love in a tangible way. Secondly, it was a favor to his future father-in-law. In the days of farming and heavy labor, it was something of a liability to raise a daughter. A family with sons would prosper more because of the built-in work force; but a family with daughters would expect to “consolidate their losses” when the girls were mature enough to attract bridegrooms. And so the father of the bride was more or less paid off for his earlier expenses and for his patience and skill in raising a girl to be good marriage material. The father of the bridegroom would present himself to the bride or her father with this agreement, offering to pay a suitable price for her, and she and her father would consider his contract. If the terms were suitable, the future bride and groom would drink a cup of wine together and this would seal the bargain. This cup was most significant. It signified the bridegroom's willingness to sacrifice in order to have this bride. It was offered as a toast to the bride and of course, it showed the bride's willingness to enter into this marriage.

Then the groom would pay the price. This price was no modest token but was set so that the new bride would be a costly item – that was the idea. The young man's family had no delusions that they were getting something for nothing. They would pay dearly to marry the girl of their choice.

When the matter was settled the groom and his father would depart. He would make a little speech to his bride saying, “I go to prepare a place for you,” and he would return to his father's house. Back at his father's house he would build her a bridal chamber, a little mansion, in which they would have their future honeymoon.

He would actually build a separate building on his father's property, or decorate a room in this father's house. The bridal chamber had to be beautiful- one doesn't honeymoon anywhere; and it had to be stocked with provisions since the bride and groom were going to remain in it for seven days. This construction project would take the better part of a year, ordinarily and the father of the groom would be the judge of when it was finished. The father of the groom would be the final judge on when the chamber was ready and when the young man would go to claim his bride.

The bride, for her part, was obliged to do a lot of waiting. She would take the time to gather her trousseau and be ready when her bridegroom came. Custom provided that she had to have an oil lamp ready in case he came late at night in the darkness, because she

had to be ready to travel at a moment's notice. During this long period of waiting, she was referred to as "consecrated" or "set apart" or "bought with a price". She was truly a lady-in-waiting, but there was no doubt that her groom would return. Sometimes the young man would depart for a very long time indeed, but of course he had paid a high price for his bride; even though there were other young women available, he would surely return to the one with whom he had made a covenant.

The bride would wear her veil whenever she stepped out of her house so that other young men would realize that she was spoken for and would not try to approach her with another contract. (Today the Bride of Christ wears a veil-those understanding of our covenant try to make other contracts with us that would violate the one we have with our Bridegroom. We are to resist those other offers and wait only for the One Who paid for us.)

As the year went on, the bride would assemble her sisters and bridesmaids and whoever would go with her to the wedding when the bridegroom came, and they would each have their oil lamps ready. They would wait at her house every night on the chance that the groom would come along with his groomsmen, and sweep them all away to a joyous and sudden wedding.

Meanwhile, the bridegroom would be building and decorating with all that he had. His father would inspect the chamber from time to time to see if it was ready. If we came along the road at this point and saw the young man working on his bridal chamber, we might well ask, "When is the big day?" But the bridegroom would answer, "Only my father knows that."

Finally, the chamber would be ready and the bridegroom would assemble his young friends to accompany him on the exciting trip to claim his bride. The big moment had arrived and the bridegroom was more than ready, we can be sure. He and his young men would set out in the night making every attempt to completely surprise the bride.

And that's the romantic part-all the Jewish brides were "stolen." The Jews had a special understanding of a woman's heart. What a thrill for her, to be "abducted" and carried off into the night, not by a stranger but by the one who loved her so much that he had paid a high price for her.

Over at the bride's house, things had better be ready! To be sure, the bride would be surprised since the groom would try to come at midnight while she was sleeping. But, the oil lamps were ready and the bride had her veil. And while she might be sleeping in her wedding dress, she was definitely surprised. It is a wonder that she could sleep at all as the year went on.

Now there were rules to be observed in consideration of a woman's feelings. The groom couldn't just rush in on her. Actually, as the excited party of young men would get close to her house they were obliged to give a warning. Someone in the wedding party would shout.

When the bride heard that shout, she knew her young man would be there momentarily. She had only time to light her lamp, grab her honeymoon clothing and go. Her sisters and bridesmaids who wanted to attend also had to have their lamps trimmed and ready too. No one would try and walk through ancient Israel with its rocky terrain in the dark of night without carrying a lamp.

And so the groom and his men would charge in, grab the girls and make off with them! The father of the bride and her brothers would look the other way-perhaps just making one quick check to be sure this was the young man with the contract-and the wedding party would be off. People in the village might be awakened from their sleep by the happy voices of the young people carrying the oil lamps through the streets, and that's how they knew a wedding was going on.

When the wedding party reached the house of the groom's father, the bride and groom would go into their chamber and shut the door. No one else would enter. The groom's father, meanwhile, would have assembled the wedding guests-his friends-and they would be ready to celebrate the new marriage. Since the wedding was actually going to take seven days (until the appearance of the bride and groom out of the wedding chamber), it was hard to plan for. Occasionally, the host would run out of wine, as one can well imagine. The Lord Himself graced a wedding at Cana with His presence and replenished the wine for the celebrants as told in John 2.

But the celebrating wouldn't start right away. First, the marriage had to actually be consummated. The law provided that the bride and groom become one before their marriage was recognized. Thus, the friend of the bridegroom- the individual we might refer to as the best man would stand near the bridal chamber and wait to hear the bridegroom's voice. When the marriage was consummated, the bridegroom would tell his friend through the door and the friend would then go to the wedding guests and announce the good news. The celebration would then begin and continue for an entire week.

At the end of the week, the bride and the groom would make their long awaited appearance to the cheers of the crowd. There would then be a joyous meal-a marriage supper, which we might refer to as the wedding reception-to honor the new couple. At this point, the bride would have discarded her veil, since she was now a married woman and all would see exactly who it was the bridegroom had chosen. The new couple and the guests would enjoy a magnificent feast to conclude the entire matrimonial week.

After the marriage supper, the bride and the groom would depart, not remaining any longer at the home of the groom's father. They would go instead to their own house, which had been prepared by the bridegroom. (The bride of Christ will spend seven years in heaven at the home of the groom's Father, and then we shall return with our Bridegroom to occupy the Kingdom He has prepared for us.)

As the bride and groom would travel back through the village, it would be appreciated by all the onlookers just who the couple was and where their permanent home would be.

And that was a complete Jewish wedding in Jesus' time. Readers of the Gospel can easily see the beautiful analogies between this complex procedure and the manner in which the Lord Himself called us His chosen Bride.

SO THERE ARE FIVE STAGES TO THE JEWISH WEDDING.

1. The Father of the Groom made the arrangement for the Bride and paid the bride price.
2. In this case the price was the blood of Jesus (Ephesians 5:25-29).
3. The fetching of the bride, which referred to today as the Rapture of the Church (I Thessalonians 4:13-18)
4. The Marriage ceremony of the bride to the Groom or the Church weds the Messiah (Revelation 19:6-8)

5. The wedding feast or the Marriage Feast of the Lamb.

THE MARRIAGE FEAST OF THE LAMB

The fourth stage of the Jewish wedding is the marriage feast and this lasted for seven days. The Church is the bride and was married to Christ in heaven after the Rapture and Resurrection. The Old Testament saints make up the friends of the bridegroom. Now that those saints have been resurrected too the wedding feast can take place. The wedding itself has already occurred and was just for the Church and Christ. The other saints are invited to the feast though. The invitation has already been issued.

Revelation 19:9

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God (KJV).

The result of this invitation is the resurrection and the wedding feast, which will last for seven days. Christ spoke of this during the last supper as He raised His glass of wine with His apostles.

Matthew 26:27

And he 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, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom (KJV).

This then is the event that inaugurates the Millennium. The Millennium is also known as the Theocratic Kingdom or the Messianic Kingdom. The wedding feast parable told by The Messiah is connected with the Kingdom.

Matthew 22:1-14

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the

guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen (KJV).

The main point of this parable is that those who were originally bidden to the wedding feast, the Pharisees and the Jewish generation of Jesus' day will not partake of the feast or enter into the Theocratic Kingdom. This is because they committed the unpardonable sin of attributing the works of God to Satan. This is also known as blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:29) The Jews of the Tribulation period will be at the supper and enter into the Kingdom. Only believers will go in; all unbelievers will be cast into outer darkness and be excluded from entering the Messianic Kingdom.

Matthew 25:1-13

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: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh (KJV).

The contrast, which Christ spoke of here, is not between two types of believers, but between believers and unbelievers. The wise virgins are the believers and they have oil, which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, while the foolish virgins have no oil at all. They had not been prepared through belief. Some think there is plenty of time before they have to commit their lives to Christ or they just don't want to believe that there is a God. We never know the day or the hour when He will come. The foolish ones were excluded from the wedding feast and going in to the Messianic Kingdom. That is why they are foolish.

Psalm 53:1a

The fool hath said in his heart, [There is] no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity (KJV).

Isaiah also connects a feast with the Kingdom and a resurrection of the dead.

Isaiah 25:6-8

And in this mountain will Jehovah of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that covereth all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people will he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it (KJV).