

# THE RAPTURE

GIL RUGH

***The Rapture***

Copyright 2010

Published by Indian Hills Community Church  
Systematically Teaching the Word  
1000 South 84th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68510-4499

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations in critical articles or reviews.

Scripture quotations taken from The New American Standard Bible®, Copyright© 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org)). Used by permission.

Companion Tapes: GRM 1522, GRM 1523

Web Site: [www.ihcc.org](http://www.ihcc.org)

E-Mail: [ihcc@ihcc.org](mailto:ihcc@ihcc.org)

FAX: (402) 483-6716

Phone: (402) 483-4541

# CONTENTS

Introduction .....	v
<b>Part One: The Fact of the Rapture</b>	
Chapter One	
Is the Rapture in the Bible? .....	1
Chapter Two	
The Rapture as Stated in the Gospels .....	3
Chapter Three	
The Rapture as Stated in Paul's Letters .....	5
Chapter Four	
The Rapture as Stated in John's Revelation .....	9
<b>Part Two: Why the Rapture Is Pre-Tribulational</b>	
Chapter Five	
The Focus of Daniel's 70th Week .....	11
Chapter Six	
The Holy Spirit's Ministry through the Church .....	15
Chapter Seven	
The Absence of the Church in Revelation 6-18 .....	17
Chapter Eight	
The Church Is Promised Deliverance from God's Wrath .....	19
Chapter Nine	
The Need for a Gap between the Rapture and the Second Coming ..	23
Chapter Ten	
Events that Must Occur Before the Day of the Lord Comes .....	25
Chapter Eleven	
The Imminent Nature of Christ's Return .....	29
Conclusion .....	31

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

# INTRODUCTION

Prophecy, the end times, and what the Bible has to say about what is going to happen next has always been an area of keen interest for believers. However, one would not have to read too many books or listen to too many sermons to see that there are a wide variety of views and opinions on this subject. Why is there so much difference on prophetic matters?

The Book of Revelation is one of the key prophetic books in the Bible. If one did a quick survey of some commentaries on this book, it would not take long to see that even “like-minded” believers do not all agree on the interpretation of Revelation. Why are there so many views on interpreting prophecy, and in particular, interpreting Revelation?

The answer is simple—people use different hermeneutical principles in making their conclusions. Rather than interpreting the Bible historically and grammatically, they add outside information. In doing so, they come up with their own ideas and inventions. Thus, they move away from the clarity of Scripture.

Using historical and grammatical principles, it will be clear that God’s prophetic message has remained the same throughout all of Scripture. Prophetic passages of Scripture are interpreted the same way as any other portion of God’s Word—historically, grammatically and in its context.

The Book of Revelation is the completion of God’s prophetic revelation. Its message is consistent with what is found throughout the Old Testament. No changes are made to the prophecies given in the Old Testament. Revelation will add some clarification to these prophecies, but their meaning will not change.

As it pertains to prophecy, a literal interpretation of Scripture will lead to a premillennial understanding of the return of Christ. In the

chart below, it shows that a premillennial view is the belief that Christ will return to earth before (i.e., pre) the millennium.



The millennium is 1000 years—Revelation 20 repeats this fact six times throughout the chapter. Therefore, a premillennialist believes that Christ will return to earth before the thousand-year kingdom is established.<sup>1</sup> A literal and historical-grammatical interpretation of prophecy will naturally lead to a premillennial framework for the prophetic message of Scripture.

A literal interpretation of prophecy will not only lead to a premillennial understanding of the return of Christ, it will also lead to a clear distinction between Israel and the church. Israel is always Israel in the Bible. The church is never called Israel in the Bible.

A literal interpretation of the Bible will lead to an understanding that Israel is Israel, and the church is the church. These are two very distinct entities throughout all of Scripture. At no point—as some conclude—does the church replace Israel, or assume the promises made to God's chosen people. God's plan of redemption is now being accomplished through the church. However, this does not mean that His plan for Israel is finished. God will resume His program with Israel—as the rest of this booklet will establish—during the tribulation, once the church has been removed.

---

1. A postmillennialist believes that Christ will return to earth after the thousand-year millennium. An amillennialist, which literally means "no millennium," believes that people are living in the kingdom now because it is a figurative kingdom; it's a kingdom of the heart, where Christ rules from the heavens in the hearts of believers.

## **PART ONE: THE FACT OF THE RAPTURE**

### **Chapter 1**

### *Is the Rapture in the Bible?*

The chart in the Introduction (page vi) indicates that there will be a seven-year period preceding the return of Christ to establish His millennial kingdom on earth. The seven-year period is divided into two 3½ year segments. At some point prior to, or during, this seven-year period, the Bible says that the rapture will occur. Or does it?

Some will argue that because the word “rapture” does not appear in the English Bible, it is not a biblical concept. Thus, before establishing when the Bible says the rapture will occur, the fact of the rapture must first be established.

The word “rapture” is not found in any concordance of the Bible. Thus, it is fair to ask if the rapture is just a man-made concept without any biblical basis.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:17—a passage that will be looked at more in depth in a later chapter of this booklet—Paul wrote: “Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.” The word translated “caught up” is where the concept of the rapture finds its roots in Scripture.

The Greek word *harpazo* is the word that is translated “caught up” in this verse. When the Bible was translated into Latin, the word used for this phrase was “rapture.” It is from this Latin word that the word was then incorporated into the English language, a word that is still used

today. This word means to “carry off; to snatch or catch away.”

Therefore, while the word rapture may not be found in our Bibles today, the word harpazo—the carrying off or catching away—is the word that is translated in a variety of ways in our Bibles today.

This Greek word is found in a number of passages in Scripture. The next chapters of this booklet will look at some of these passages, as well as other passages that record the fact of the rapture in Scripture.



## Chapter 2

# *The Rapture As Stated in the Gospels*

A prominent passage in the Gospels that addresses the rapture is John 14. A careful study of this passage will help establish that the rapture is found in the Bible.

### **John 14:1-3**

John 14 records the last night that Jesus spent with His disciples. In preparation for His impending death, He gave the disciples some final instructions. Jesus said, “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

This statement by Jesus must have surprised His disciples. Up until the time He made this statement, they had been expecting Jesus to establish His kingdom on earth. All of the promises to Israel had been for a kingdom on earth. With the Messiah having finally come, the expectation was that He would soon establish this kingdom.

However, Jesus promised that He will prepare a place for them in glory. Then, after a period of time, He will return to take them to this place He had prepared for them. This was entirely different than Jesus telling His disciples that He was about to establish His kingdom and they will rule and reign with Him. That will still happen, but it is not the next event in God’s plan.

Since the promise given in John 14 no longer focused on establishing a kingdom, Jesus revealed to His disciples that He will be coming to earth two times. The Old Testament prophecies, the prophecies that

the disciples were familiar with, did not make it clear that there would be two comings to earth separated by a period of time (2000 years and counting).

Naturally, the disciples thought, based on these prophecies, that once the Messiah came, He would establish His kingdom. The Old Testament prophecies were being changed, undermined, or reinterpreted by what Jesus said. Rather, they were being clarified. The new information that Jesus provided was not changing the fact that He will one day come to establish His kingdom on earth; it just won't happen at His first coming. He will come again, and at that second coming He will establish His kingdom.

Therefore, in light of this, when Jesus said in John 14 that He would go and prepare a place for them—specifically His disciples—He was not talking about His kingdom on earth. Rather, He was talking about a place He would prepare in heaven, a place where they will one day come and be with Him.

When will the disciples come and enjoy this place? Is it immediately after they die? No, that is not what Jesus is depicting here. Instead, they will come and enjoy this place after they have been raptured. That is the time when all the saints—the dead first and those who are alive (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18, which is discussed more fully in the next chapter of this booklet)—will enjoy the place that Jesus has been preparing for more than 2000 years. What a day of rejoicing that will surely be!

## Chapter 3

# *The Rapture As Stated in Paul's Letters*

### **1 Corinthians 15:50-58**

This chapter is all about the resurrection, not only the bodily resurrection of Christ, but also the bodily resurrection of every believer. In verse 50, Paul wrote, “Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”

In this context, Paul spoke to the church. He said that not one person who is part of the church will go into the kingdom in a physical body that has not been glorified—that is, in a physical body that could be subject to death and disease. No one who is part of God’s universal church is exempt from this restriction. It is important to keep this point in mind as this passage is interpreted.

Paul continued in verse 51 by saying, “Behold I tell you a mystery.” A mystery is not something difficult to understand, but something that could not be known or understood without revelation from God. By using the word “mystery,” Paul indicated that he was saying something new, something that had not been revealed before.

The apostle then said, “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.” Paul said that not all believers who are part of the church are going to die. However, all believers are going to experience bodily transformation. When will this transformation take place—the perishable putting on imperishable, the mortal putting on immortality? As Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4, this will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (verse 16). That is, it will happen at the rapture. This is the moment when all believers who are part of the

church—whether dead or alive—will experience bodily transformation.

### **Philippians 3:20-21**

In this passage, Paul wrote, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory.”

Paul indicated just what our resurrected body will look like in this passage. It will be like the body that Christ had when He was raised from the dead. For Christ, it was the same body He had before He was crucified—the same scars, the same nail prints, and the same wound in the side. However, His body was no longer subject to death, pain, or perishing. The same will hold true for our resurrected bodies.

Again, when will this transformation take place for those who are part of His church? It will happen at the rapture.

### **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

When it comes to stating the fact of the rapture, this is the passage that is perhaps the most well known. In verse 13, Paul wrote, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.” The “rest” in this verse refers to unbelievers who are without hope in this world. When one of their loved ones die, they are crushed with grief in their unbelief because they will never see them again.

In contrast, “those who are asleep” is a reference to believers who have died. When a believer’s loved one dies, they do not face the same kind of hopeless despair in their grief. Since Jesus died and rose again, the believer also has the faith to believe that when He returns, He will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall always be with the Lord” (vv. 14-18).

As was noted earlier in this booklet, the phrase “caught up” comes from the Greek word *harpazo*. This passage talks about the carrying off, the snatching or catching away of believers. All believers—those who are alive as well as those who have fallen asleep—will one day be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air.

This is the concept of the rapture. The Lord will come down in the clouds with those believers who have died—these people have been with Him, but their bodies have remained in the grave. At the moment of the rapture, their bodies are called to life and are resurrected, allowing them to move into their glorified, resurrected bodies. Then, those believers who are still alive at the time of the rapture will also be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. This is the rapture of the church.



## Chapter 4

# *The Rapture as Stated in John's Revelation*

### **Revelation 19:7-14**

A clear distinction exists in the Bible between the Second Coming of Christ to earth and the rapture. Revelation 19 records the return of Christ to earth to establish His kingdom. In verses 7 and 8, John wrote, “Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

As the Lord returns to earth, it is important to note that the bride of Christ is with Him, all prepared and ready to return to earth for the marriage supper of the Lamb, which will follow the marriage ceremony. The bride is already clothed, having been rewarded for their righteous deeds.

Similarly, in verse 14, John talks about the armies that are in heaven, who have been clothed in fine linen, white and clean. This is the same bride he wrote about in verses 7-8; the same bride who is with Him in heaven and ready to return to earth for the marriage supper of the Lamb. The church is the bride of Christ, who has been in heaven enjoying the place prepared for her.<sup>2</sup>

Revelation 20 then records Christ setting up his 1000-year millennial kingdom. Christ returns—this is commonly called His Second Coming—in chapter 19. As He returns to earth, Revelation makes it clear that believers are already with Him. Believers are already clothed in

---

2. Cf. John 14:1-3

heavenly garments, having traded the perishable for the imperishable.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, since believers are already with Him at His Second Coming, they must have already been caught up to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-18), and have been taken to the place He has prepared for them (cf. John 14:1-3). The rapture, which is clearly not the Second Coming, must have already occurred before the events recorded in Revelation 19-20.

### **What Happens at the Rapture?**

Having concluded that the rapture is indeed an event that is recorded in Scripture, what then will happen at the rapture? Simply, Christ will come down in the air. The Bible does not say that He will come to earth; rather He will descend in the clouds.

At that moment, the bodies of believers are glorified. First, the bodies of believers who have fallen asleep (i.e., have died) will be caught up and their spirits are reunited with their glorified bodies. Then, believers who are alive at that moment will be caught up to meet Christ in the air. All of the saints will then be taken to the Father's house where Jesus has been preparing a place for each believer. They will remain in this place until Christ returns to set up His millennial kingdom.

At this Second Coming, Christ will return with the raptured church to establish His kingdom. Unlike the rapture, everyone who is alive on earth will see this return (cf. Rev. 1:7). The heavens will open and Jesus will come. At that time, He will destroy His enemies and remove them from the earth. Again it is essential to see that the rapture and the Second Coming are two distinct and very different events.

---

3. Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50-51.



## PART TWO: WHY THE RAPTURE IS PRE-TRIBULATIONAL

### Chapter 5 *The Focus of Daniel's 70th Week*

Having established the fact of the rapture, it is then logical to examine when the rapture will take place. Four prominent positions are held as to the timing of the rapture. These positions are:

- Mid-Tribulation Rapture—those who hold this position believe that the rapture will occur in the middle of the tribulation. That is, 3 ½ years after the tribulation begins, the rapture of the church will occur.
- Pre-Wrath Rapture—a fairly new position, those who hold this view believe that the rapture will occur in the second half of the tribulation. After the 3 ½ year point, and after the six bowl judgments of Revelation 6, but prior to the seventh bowl judgment, the rapture will take place.
- Post-Tribulation Rapture—this view holds that the rapture will happen when Christ is returning to earth to establish His kingdom. Believers will be caught up to meet Christ in the air, then will turn around and come back down with Him to establish His kingdom.
- Pre-Tribulation Rapture—this position holds the view that the rapture will take place before the tribulation begins.

As the title of this section indicates, the pre-tribulation rapture position is the one that this booklet will defend as being most biblical. Many reasons exist as to why it is this position that can be defended best by Scripture, but these reasons will be narrowed down to seven. The first

reason why the Bible seems to point toward a pre-tribulation timeframe for the rapture is because of the focus of Daniel's 70th week.

The seventy weeks can be found in Daniel 9. All seventy of these weeks must be seen as a single unit. "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city" (Dan. 9:24). These seventy weeks are literally 70 sevens.

By comparing Scripture with Scripture, it is clear that these 70 sevens are 70 seven-year periods of time. Thus, Daniel is talking about seventy weeks of years, not seventy weeks of days. So, 70 sevens have been decreed for the people of Israel and its holy city of Jerusalem, a total of 490 years. Therefore, the focus of Daniel's seventy weeks are the Jewish people—not Gentiles, the United States, or the church.

In Daniel 9:24, the prophet lays out six things that will be accomplished for the Jews and Jerusalem before they will be ready to enter into the millennial kingdom:

1. To finish the transgression
2. To make an end of sin
3. To make atonement for iniquity
4. To bring everlasting righteousness
5. To seal up vision and prophecy
6. To anoint the most holy place

Daniel continues in verse 26 by saying, "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary." Daniel does not say that the Messiah will be cut off in the 70th week. Rather, he says he will be cut off after the 69th week.

This verse does not say when the 70th week will begin. However, it does give a couple of indicators as to its timing. First, the Messiah will be cut off after the 69th week. And second, a prince will come who will destroy the city of Jerusalem. Thus, this prince must be a Roman prince, for the Romans were the ones who destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

In verse 27, the prophet then wrote, "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week." The many refers to the Jewish people.

Thus, this indicates that the beginning of the 70th week will be marked by the prince coming and making a covenant with Israel for one week.

The focus of the 70th week, like it was for the first 69 weeks, will be totally on Israel. A gap exists between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel. The church did not come into existence until the Messiah was cut off after the 69th week. The church then became the focus of God's plan during this gap.

God was not, however, finished with Israel, as Daniel showed in this passage. God's focus on Israel will again resume once the 70th week commences.

Thus, it would not be inconsistent to say that the church will be removed—that is, the rapture will occur—before God's resumes His plan for the nation Israel in Daniel's 70th week. It would seem to create quite a conflict to have the church present when God's focus again returns to the Jewish people. He didn't bring the church into existence until He broke off His program with Israel; and then when He removes the church at the rapture, He will resume and complete His plan for Israel.



## **Chapter 6**

# **The Holy Spirit's Ministry Through the Church**

In John 14:16-17, Jesus said, “I will ask the Father and He will send you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Holy Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.” He later said in John 15:26, “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.”

In these two passages, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to do a unique and special work—a work that He had not done up until that point in time. This special work would be done and accomplished through the church. This is made evident in John 16:7, when Jesus said, “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.”

The key question is when did Jesus promise that the Holy Spirit would come? When did Christ send Him? In Acts 1, Luke told us that Jesus ascended to heaven. Then, in the very next chapter, he related the details as to when the church was founded and when the Holy Spirit came—both of which occurred on the same day.

Thus, the church began in Acts 2, and so did the unique ministry of the Holy Spirit—a ministry He would carry out only through the church.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul talked further about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In verse 3, in addressing when the Second Coming would

take place, the apostle said, “Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.” The man of lawlessness is the same person as the prince that Daniel spoke of in 9:26-27.

Paul continued in verses 6-7 and said, “And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.” The one who restrains is the Holy Spirit. He is the one who restrains lawlessness; He holds it back.

When the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way, then all lawlessness will break loose. The Spirit will not be removed, but rather His ministry—especially His special ministry of restraining sin—will be removed. This is because the church will be removed via the rapture. Since the Holy Spirit’s ministry is through the church, once the church is removed, then the stage is set for seven years of tribulation and lawlessness unlike anything the world has ever seen.

Thus, the Holy Spirit’s ministry began in Acts 2 when the church was founded. It has continued for nearly 2000 years, and He will continue to minister through the church until it is removed prior to the beginning of the tribulation. Once they are both removed, then the 70th week of Daniel can begin.

## Chapter 7

# *The Absence of the Church in Revelation 6-18*

The apostle John wrote Revelation 6-18 in part to unpack some of the details of Daniel's 70th week. These chapters outline the events that will take place during the final week of God's program for Israel. What is significant is that the church is not mentioned one time in any of these chapters.

In contrast, the church is mentioned repeatedly in the first three chapters of Revelation. In fact, the word church is used 19 times in these three chapters. Chapters 2-3 are addressed to seven literal churches—local churches that existed on the earth at that time.

Then in chapters 4-5, the scene changes to heaven. The church is represented in that heavenly scene by the twenty-four elders.<sup>4</sup> Once chapter 6 begins, the church is not mentioned. The twenty-four elders will appear, but they always appear in heaven before the throne of God—that is, they are not on the earth. The church is not mentioned one time from the beginning of chapter 6 to the end of chapter 18.

In chapter 19, John records the return of Christ to earth at the end of the 70th week of Daniel—that is, at the end of the seven-year tribulation period. Jesus is returning to establish His kingdom. As such, John wrote in verses 7-9, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him,

---

4. The reasons why the 24 elders represent the church goes beyond the scope of this booklet. Specifically regarding these elders, John wrote the following in Revelation 4:4, "Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads." These 24 elders, clothed in the righteous acts of the saints and with the victor's crown (cf. 2 Tim. 4:8) upon their heads, are gathered around the throne of God.

for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" "

When Christ returns, His bride is there with Him. The church is the bride of Christ, and has already been judged, rewarded, and clothed in the fine linen, which represents the righteous acts of the saints. The church returns to earth with Christ for the wedding feast, and then to help Him set up His millennial kingdom.

Thus, in Revelation 1-5, the church appears, first on the earth in chapters 1-3, and then in heaven in chapter 4-5. The church is absent in chapters 6-18 during the time of the great tribulation. Once the tribulation is over, and Christ returns to establish His kingdom on the earth, the church is again mentioned, as the bride returns with Him in Revelation 19 to celebrate the wedding supper.

All of this points toward a pre-tribulation rapture. If the church was to take part in any part of the 70th week of Daniel, clear references to the church would be mentioned at some point during the recorded events of the tribulation in Revelation 6-18. It is, however, not mentioned one time.



## **Chapter 8**

### *The Church Is Promised Deliverance from God's Wrath*

The focus of Daniel's 70th week is God's wrath on an unbelieving world. It is a time of God's judgment on the earth; His wrath will be poured out on the earth. In Revelation 6, the opening series of God's judgments—called the seal judgments—are recorded.

The sixth seal is broken in verse 12. John then wrote in verses 15-17, "The kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'" The awesome time of God pouring out His wrath on the earth will begin and people, regardless of their stature or status, will beg for a way to be hidden from God's presence.

Two passages from the Old Testament help in understanding God's wrath.

"Wail, for the day of the Lord is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will fall limp, and every man's heart will melt. They will be terrified, pains and anguish will take hold of them; they will writhe like a woman in labor, they will look at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame. Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth

their light; the sun will be dark when it rises and the moon will not shed its light. Thus I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold and mankind than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken from its place. At the fury of the Lord of hosts, in the day of His burning anger” (Isaiah 13:6-13).

God’s judgment, His burning anger, and the destruction of His enemies are recorded.

The second passage in the Old Testament that helps in understanding God’s wrath is Daniel 12. Having said that the entire 70 weeks pertained to the Jews and Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24), the prophet also wrote, “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued” (Dan. 12:1).

At the end of the 70th week, as God is culminating His program with Israel, Daniel tells of a time of distress such as had never occurred at any point in time. Think of the worst disasters that have ever occurred anywhere in the world, and they aren’t as bad as it is going to be during that time. God’s wrath during this time is incomparable to any point in the history of the world.

The New Testament also aids in our understanding of God’s wrath as it pertains to Daniel’s 70th week. In Matthew 24, the disciples were asking Jesus about the kingdom and the signs that would accompany it and the end of the age. Starting in verse 9, Jesus answered the disciples’ question by saying, “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations,

and then the end will come.”

The context for this passage is not the present period of time. Rather, Jesus was talking about events that would take place in the 70th week of Daniel. Hence the reason Jesus added in verse 15, “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.”

This is the same abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke of in Daniel 9:24. This is the event that occurs at the half-way point of the tribulation, and signals the beginning of the pouring out of God’s wrath on the earth. This wrath is so severe that Jesus said, “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved” (Matt. 24:22). If Christ did not intervene with His Second Coming to earth at the end of this seven-year period, nobody would be left alive on the earth. That is how devastating the judgment will be.

All of this background is given to contrast this wrath to come with the promise made to believers in Revelation 3:10. This promise, given by Christ to the church at Philadelphia, but applicable to all believers, says, “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

The hour of testing is a reference to the period of time that is about to come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. This period of time is the tribulation, or Daniel’s 70th week. Those who dwell on the earth is a reference, in the Book of Revelation, to unbelievers; they are always identified with the earth. Believers are strangers and pilgrims on the earth (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1,17; 2:11); the world is not their home, rather their citizenship is in heaven (cf. Phil. 3:20).

Thus, as this promise in Revelation 3:10 states, the devastating judgments of the tribulation are directed toward unbelievers. The church, on the other hand, is promised deliverance from that hour of testing. Before the hour of testing commences in Revelation 6, Jesus promises the church that they will be kept from this time of wrath.

Paul stated the same thing in 1 Thessalonians. First in chapter 1 he

said, “For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come” (vv. 9-10). Paul clearly states that it is God who will rescue believers from this wrath to come.

In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul said, “For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.” The order of events in this context is important.

Paul continued, “Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:1-2).

Thus, first the rapture occurs. Then the next event that Paul mentioned was the start of the Day of the Lord (cf. Isa. 13:6,9; Joel 1:15; 2:1,11,31), which is a reference to the tribulation or Daniel’s 70th week. How will this day come? It will come like a thief in the night. “While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape” (1 Thess. 5:3).

The Day of the Lord will come on them like labor pains (cf. Mt. 24:8). People will be living in what they think is peace and safety. Everything is seemingly good, and then destruction will suddenly break out, and no one will be able to escape it.

Paul told all believers that “God has not destined us for wrath” (1 Thess. 5:9). The apostle makes it clear that believers are not looking toward the tribulation, but rather for the coming of Christ to deliver them from the wrath of God.

Jesus Christ is going to deliver His church from the wrath to come. The order of events in 1 Thessalonians makes this clear:

- The rapture (4:13-18)
- The beginning of the Day of the Lord (5:1-2)
- The church is promised deliverance from this Day (5:9; cf. 1:10)

## Chapter 9

# *The Need for a Gap between The Rapture and the Second Coming*

If the rapture occurs at the end of the 70th week of Daniel—that is, if it occurs as part of the Second Coming of Christ to the earth—then believers will get caught up to meet Christ in the air and then turn around and come back down with Him.

In addition, if the rapture is post-tribulational, then every believer will receive a glorified body.<sup>5</sup> This means that everyone who will enter into the millennial kingdom will receive a glorified body. This is not possible.

In the resurrection, when a believer receives their glorified body, they will no longer marry or be given in marriage (cf. Mt. 22:30). As such, believers will not be having children or starting a family. This is just like the angels who also cannot procreate.

In Isaiah 65—the context of which is the millennial kingdom, a new heaven and new earth—the prophet wrote, “No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed” (verse 20).

If everyone who enters the kingdom has a glorified body, how can the prophet talk about an infant who only lives a few days? Or an old man who does not live out his days? How can he talk about a youth who does not reach the age of 100 and dies? If everybody has a glorified body, then how can someone die?

---

5. Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

It seems that there must be a gap of time between the rapture and the millennial kingdom to allow some believers to enter into the kingdom with a physical, rather than glorified, body. Those who are saved during the tribulation will also enter into the millennial kingdom. However, they will enter with a physical body, not a glorified one. This will allow for procreation, since in the millennium, people are going to be born—some of whom will eventually join forces with Satan and his demons and rebel against Christ.

Revelation 20:7 refers to the end of the millennium—”When the thousand years are completed.” When this thousand-year period is complete, Satan will be released from his prison (verse 7). When he is released, he will do what he does best—he will go about and deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth (verse 8).

Satan will then “gather them together for the war; the number of them will be like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city” (vv. 8-9). Satan will lead a countless number of people into a final act of rebellion, attempting ultimately to dethrone Christ.

If only believers enter into the millennial kingdom—which is true—and if all believers receive glorified bodies, then who are these people who join Satan in rebellion? Certainly those who have glorified bodies will not rebel against God.

People who are saved during the tribulation will enter the kingdom in physical bodies. Since only those with physical bodies will be able to have children, only their offspring could join Satan. Hence, this is why there must be a gap of time between the rapture and the Second Coming of Christ.

## **Chapter 10**

### ***Events that Must Occur Before the Day of the Lord***

What must occur before the Day of the Lord—the commencing of Daniel’s 70th week—begins? According to 2 Thessalonians, only two things must occur before the tribulation can begin. Chapter 2 begins with Paul writing, “Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.”

Paul referred to what he had written in his first letter to the Thessalonians. Specifically, in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, when he spoke of the Lord coming and gathering believers in the air; that is, the rapture. Paul continued in his second letter to the Thessalonians by stating, “that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come” (2 Thess. 2:2).

Some confusion existed in the church at Thessalonica. Because they were suffering greatly from the persecution they were enduring, some believers thought that they were in the tribulation already. Paul wanted to bring clarity to this matter—”Let no one in any way deceive you” (verse 3).

He did not want these believers to be unsettled in their faith. Paul continued his thought by telling them that the reason it has not come yet is because two events had to happen before the tribulation could take place. And since those events had not occurred yet, they were not in the tribulation.

Paul said, “Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed,

the son of destruction” (1 Thess. 2:3). Paul mentioned two events that have to occur: 1) the apostasy, and 2) the revelation of the man of lawlessness.

The noun translated apostasy in this verse is used only one other time in the New Testament. In Acts 21:21, it refers to a departure from Moses. The English word apostasy is transliterated from this Greek word. The word literally means a departure or a disappearance.

The word apostasy is often associated with a departure from the truth. However, at its root, the word simply refers to a departure. In Acts 21:21, where the word is used in its noun form, it is modified—hence a reference to a departure from Moses. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, the word is used only as a reference to a departure or a disappearance.

The verb form of this word is used 15 times in the New Testament. In Acts 12:10, at the end of the verse, Luke wrote, “They went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.” The word departed is the verb form of this word—the angel departed from him; he was gone.

In 2 Corinthians 12:8, Paul said, “Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.” The word translated leave is again the verb form of this word. In Luke 4:13, at the end of Satan’s temptation of Christ, the apostle wrote, “When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.” Again, the word left is the verb form.

Thus, with this background, 2 Thessalonians 2:3 could be translated simply as: “Let no one deceive you, for the Day of the Lord will not come unless the departure comes first.” In this context, what could the departure refer to? Verse 1 provides the answer—“Now we request you brethren with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering to Him.” Again, in this context, the departure would be a reference to the time when believers will be caught up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Thus, when Paul said that the tribulation could not come until the departure happened first, it must be a reference to the rapture. This is the only departure that would fit in the context of this passage, and in the



context of the letters to the church in Thessalonica.

The second event that must occur before the tribulation can occur is that the man of lawlessness is to be revealed. This man of lawlessness is also called the son of destruction by Paul (2 Thess. 2:3). In verse 7, Paul said, “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.” The one who restrains is the Holy Spirit. It is He who restrains lawlessness, holding back events until God’s time.

The Holy Spirit and His restraining ministry will be removed once the departure takes place—that is, once the church is removed at the rapture. In verse 8, Paul wrote, “Then that lawless one will be revealed.” This parallels what he wrote in verse 3, “The man of lawlessness is revealed.”

In essence, verse 3 is saying the same thing as verses 7-8—the departure in verse 3 refers to the time when the church and the Holy Spirit, who indwells the church, are removed. Once they are removed, then the man of lawlessness can be revealed, and then the stage will be set for the tribulation to begin. Indeed, the 70th week of Daniel will begin when the man of lawlessness signs an agreement with Israel for one week (cf. Dan. 9:27).

Therefore, because neither the rapture nor the manifestation of the man of lawlessness has taken place, Paul made it clear that the tribulation had not begun. Clearly, the rapture has to take place before the tribulation can begin. This is another reason as to why the rapture is pre-tribulational.



## Chapter 11

### *The Imminent Nature of Christ's Return*

The indication of the New Testament is that Christ can return at any time. However, once the tribulation begins, He cannot return during that seven year period to establish His kingdom on earth. Thus, if the rapture is not pre-tribulational, how can these two truths be reconciled?

The anticipation of the church is that Christ can return at any moment. The church is looking for His return. It is not looking and preparing for a time of terrible wrath and judgment on the earth. God gave Israel instructions as to when they should flee and hide. The church, however, did not receive such instructions. This is because the church will not be around during the tribulation.

Imminence does not mean soon, although Christ's return could be soon. Instead, it means that it can happen at any time. As such, no prophecies have to be fulfilled before the rapture can take place.

The confusion over the fulfillment of prophecies stems from prophecies that some believe need to happen before Christ can return. However, these prophecies—some call them signs of the end times—all have to do with the events related to the 70th week of Daniel.

For example, some say that because Israel is in their homeland once again that this is a sign that Christ's return must be soon. Others will point to the European Union as a possible revived Roman empire, again as a sign that the end is near. The more things seem to be coming together, the more people will talk about the rapture and the tribulation being close at hand.

While all of these things, and many others, may indicate that Christ's return is not far off, it is important to note that nothing has to take place for Christ to return. This is why His return is imminent. The next event for the church is the rapture. This has been true for the past 2000 years. No one knows when Christ will return because no one knows when the rapture will take place.

In Philippians 3:20-21, Paul said, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." Believers have always been looking for the day when Christ would return to take them home to heaven and give them glorified bodies.

Paul said something similar in Titus 2:13. Believers are "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." God will spare believers from the wrath to come (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10), and the anticipation of His imminent return gives comfort and hope.

## Conclusion

The weight of Scripture makes it clear that the rapture is a biblical truth. It also makes it clear that the rapture will occur before the tribulation begins. What a marvelous truth that believers will escape the wrath to come.

Most importantly, however, is that these great truths should shape the conduct of the believer, impacting the way they live. 1 Corinthians 15 is a wonderful passage on the resurrection, and is also a great rapture passage. At the conclusion of this chapter Paul said, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”

This should be the focus of the believer. It is easy to get caught up in the turmoil of the world—the stock market, the economy, the loss of jobs, natural catastrophes, death, and other disasters can easily overwhelm anyone. However, for the believer, all of these events are within the plan of God. It should bring peace, not turmoil; hope not despair; and purpose not purposelessness.

As believers living in an uncertain world, there is no need to be wringing hands in despair. Rather hope and comfort should be found in the thought that redemption may be drawing very near. The world will continue to get worse, but the time of departure may be at hand, as the Lord continues to prepare the way. Because the rapture is imminent and will occur before the tribulation, believers can praise the Lord that He will deliver them from the wrath to come.





