

ESCAPE OR PASSOVER ??????????

What does the Bible really teach about the Great Tribulation, The Judgment of God, and the Christian Church?

by Paul Benson

Escape or Passover: What does the Bible really teach about
the Church and the 'Great Tribulation'? by Paul Benson

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Introduction

Why fuss about the timing of the ‘Resurrection’?

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? 4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Matthew 24:3-5

Jesus began his discourse on the end-times with a very stern warning that we should ‘take heed’ because many would come in his name who would be preaching deception and falsehood. And he also said these promoters of false doctrine would be not just a few, but many.

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines...

Hebrews 13:9

Here the writer informs us that there would be various and strange doctrines floating about. And that we should be careful not to be swayed by them. Now more than ever we need to apply these words to our lives. The tidal wave of false teachings we are bombarded with as Christians today has reached such a level that you can hardly turn on Christian T.V. or radio without being lied to by some self-promoting preacher or teacher. On many programs

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you are more likely to hear deception than the truth! It seems that deception is becoming more the rule than the exception. But we should not be all that taken back by this flood of falsehood; Paul warned us:

...evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse,
deceiving, and being deceived. 2 Timothy 3:13

The Bible informs us that with the passage of time deception and error would grow increasingly worse, and so it has. The gospel preached in America today bears little resemblance to the Gospel of the Bible. A nation once sanctified by the flow of God's truth in her midst is now defiled by a flood of deception. We need to understand false teaching is more than just wrong ideas about what the truth is. Truth sanctifies but error defiles. We do not easily discern the spiritual decay caused by doctrinal error; and often fail to recognize it's effects when they later manifest.

It is becoming more and more common to hear of people coming to an agreement to not squabble over doctrine, and only focus on what everyone can agree on. But this just cultivates an atmosphere where heresy can now flourish, and bring about the tremendous damage and decay false teachings produce. Few in the 'modern' church seem to have a discernment of how serious this damage truly is.

And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; 18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. 2 Timothy 2:17-18

False teachings about end-time matters are nothing new. Even in the early years of the Church when the original apostles were still alive heresy was a problem. These verses listed above are an example of doctrinal error doing harm to some believers. Here we are told that false teachings are like a cancer which eats away at a person's faith with the possibility of that individuals' faith being overthrown! We need to always bear in mind where conflict in teaching occurs that it's not just an issue of one person being right and the other being wrong. If one is right and one is wrong, then one is bringing forth truth and the other is bringing forth corruption which eats away at a person's faith!

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Another vital consideration rarely expounded on today is the fact that God hates falsehood. Do a study through the Bible and you would come up with many passages of Scripture which sternly teach us that doctrinal error is more than just a nuisance Christians must deal with in life; it is truly an abomination to God! We should view these matters of false teaching in the serious light that God does. Those who spend their lives promoting error are not going to be pleased with the consequences.

A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish. Proverbs 19:9

A most serious charge we have: to hold forth the pure Word of Life in sincerity and truth. To preach the Words of Almighty God without corrupting them. Only by the prayerful examination of the Scriptures can we gain a confidence that our beliefs are founded in the truth. Only by crying out for Divine assistance can we ever hope to effectively bring forth sound teaching. But so many take this charge lightly; and thus we live in an age where false doctrine abounds, and few seem worried in the least that their beliefs might be a grief to a sovereign God who has promised to punish falsehood and lies.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils... 1 Timothy 4:1

There is a spiritual seduction that goes hand in hand with false teaching. You'll always find a temptation to the flesh involved in accepting error. Somehow wrapped up in every false doctrine is a benefit to the flesh. Whether it be the exaltation of self, the promise of pleasure, escaping the call to crucifixion, the lure of personal prosperity, or simply an easier route to be had; somewhere in every false doctrine is an appeal to the carnal man.

Recognizing Satan's tactics of offering benefit to unsubdued flesh or a carnal mind is half the battle in living in victory over seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Much ground can also be gained in this battle by giving heed to the call to live a crucified life. A dead man is not all that interested in offers catering to the lusts of the flesh or the pride of life. The seduction of false teaching has a much greater pull on the one who chooses

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to live in carnality or pride. A life of humility and holiness is as much a protection against falsehood as is seeking knowledge of the truth. Not everyone will be able to receive that statement, but it's true. A clean heart and wholesome teaching are a lot more connected than we realize. There is a delusion and a deception involved in false teaching that escapes the detection of the natural man, and has to be discerned spiritually.

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

I am certainly not suggesting everyone who has any errors at all in their belief system is in a lost condition or is sinful in God's sight. But we must wake up to the fact that the modern Church is lukewarm and wayward; and if we are not careful we can be led astray by the falsehoods that abound in her midst.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

1 Thessalonians 5:21

We each need to develop a strategy of defense against error; and the best defense against false teaching is a critical examination of what is being taught by studying Scripture in context rather than the memorization of portions of verse as 'proof texts'. We need to realize most false teaching is founded on 'proof texts' which are merely 'snippets' of Scripture which when pulled out of their context seem to support that doctrine. Many can recognize this tactic at work in the teachings of the pseudo-Christian cults but turn a blind eye to this practice being used to indoctrinate us by our own teachers! Have you been led astray by a 'snippet doctrine'?

May God help you and I that we could discern between truth and error, so we might have the testimony at the Judgment Seat of Christ as a people who lived with a love for the truth, and were deemed to be noble: 'in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so' (Acts 17:11).

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CHAPTER ONE

There Will be a Resurrection!

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:49-52

That the Holy Scriptures teach of a coming Resurrection of the Believers (and also one for the Wicked) is an undisputed fact. For many centuries men and women of faith have passed on secure in the hope and promise that for those who have placed their faith in the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ life would be without end. That he bore their sin on that Cross and paid the penalty they rightfully should have. A promise being left behind by Jesus, who rose from the dead, that whoever would turn from their sin and place their confidence in his redemptive work would also

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be raised up at the Last Day. Resurrected by the same power that raised up Christ!

Eternal life: a promise scoffed at by the world, but clung to so tightly by countless millions down through the years. Believers who have had so great an assurance that the promises of God would not fail that they have willingly endured hardship, torture, and even welcomed death; knowing that the mortal body they now possessed would be one day raised up unto immortality.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 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. 16 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: 17 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. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18

The reality of the Resurrection has never been in question to the true Believer; it is the blessed hope of all who call upon the grace of God for salvation. But in recent decades somewhat of a rift has opened in the Body of Christ over just when this Resurrection of the Dead, and the catching away of all living believers, would take place in relation to what has come to be called by many the 'Great Tribulation'. This time of tribulation includes not only a war that will kill 1/3 of mankind, famine, plagues, and huge natural and supernatural catastrophes, but also a world ruler who will cause unheard of oppression and hardship especially against the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The price for not giving allegiance to this 'beast' will be the loss of one's head!

And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. Revelation 13:15

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...and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Revelation 20:4

This time of 'Great Tribulation' will bring affliction and persecution upon the Church greater than the world has ever known - or ever will. Seeing the magnitude of these calamities soon to engulf this planet it should be no surprise that some would like to place the timing of the Resurrection as happening before all of this chaos; with the Church thereby escaping the hardship of those days. This teaching has come to be called the 'Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church', with the term 'rapture' referring to the catching away of the believers. This teaching is a falsehood and should be rejected by the Body of Christ. It does not stand up to scrutiny in the light of God's Word.

The historical (and still dominant world-wide) viewpoint concerning the catching away of the Church is that it happens at the end of the Tribulation coinciding with the Return of Jesus Christ. This viewpoint has been held by the Church down through the ages with the theory of a pre-trib rapture given only very minor (almost none) consideration until the early 1800's. More on this later.

Although volumes could be written about the prophesied events which shall unfold during this time of tribulation the purpose of these writings is to clear up some common misconceptions concerning just what the Scriptures really have to say about the timing of the Resurrection.

CHAPTER TWO

Two Second Comings?

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ...
Titus 2:13

Most who suggest a Resurrection prior to the ‘Great Tribulation’ do not deny that the Scriptures teach of the Resurrection at the Return of Christ. They are asserting that there is also a previous ‘rapture’ of the Church (dead and living) in which the believers will be taken away and kept from the terrors of that time. Those espousing the ‘pre-tribulation rapture’ doctrine claim the verse above is referring to *two* events: a secret invisible Coming (our blessed hope) of Jesus to whisk away the Bride before the trouble hits; and a later visible Coming of Jesus in which he is revealed to the world as he returns as promised at the end of the Tribulation (his glorious appearing): with Him then resurrecting believers who died during the tribulation as well as those who made it through alive. A second ‘Second Coming’ if you will.

But is there any Scriptural basis for separating the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus into two comings (a second and now a third!) separated by a seven year time span? I have prayerfully searched the Word of God for many years, always with this popular teaching in the back of my mind, and I have found not one passage of Scripture which comes right out and plainly teaches a secret ‘rapture’ of the Church before and apart from what the Bible calls the ‘First Resurrection’ at the Return of Jesus. It is simply not taught in the Word of God! The remainder of this booklet will be directed to showing not only the lack of Scriptural support for this

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‘rapture’ teaching, but where in many instances it is in direct opposition to what the Bible really teaches on this subject. We will examine many passages of Scripture; it might be helpful to you if you would take the time to look at each verse or passage in the context in which they are found in your Bible. Falsehood rapidly loses strength when confronted with such a healthy habit of study.

I hope you would prayerfully consider what is presented here. So much of what is being taught on the Return of Christ does not come from the Word of God, and is distorting the focus of the Body of Christ. The evils and hardships of the time of ‘Great Tribulation’ will be difficult as it is; how much more to a unprepared people entering this time perplexed and disillusioned, now encountering a challenge they had been deceitfully convinced they would never see.

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. John 2:28

In this verse we find John speaking of the Lord’s ‘appearing’ and his ‘Coming’ as one and the same event. This is a statement consistent with the overall teachings of the Bible on the Return of Christ. To try and divide his Coming into two separate events causes many conflicts with Scripture. When someone must excuse away contradiction after contradiction to the Word of God in order to gain your acceptance of their doctrine, this is strong evidence of false teaching. When we hear comments like, “That passage of Scripture doesn’t mean what it sounds like it means.” or, “Jesus meant those words just for the Jews, and not for his Church.” we need to get suspicious about what direction our beliefs are being steered in.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming (Greek-*parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above

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all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

In order to believe in the 'pre-trib rapture' you must throw aside the simple straight-forward message of the above passage; namely that Antichrist will come before our gathering together unto Christ at his Coming. But some have, through deceptive practices and great theological gymnastics, fabricated a myth contrary to what the verses plainly state. People go through great lengths trying to prove a prior event seven years before the Resurrection at the Second Coming. If examined in the context in which it was written, and taken at face value, this above group of verses says in no uncertain terms that Jesus will not come for the Church until after a great falling away and the vile 'man of sin' (Antichrist) is revealed.

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming (parousia):

2 Thessalonians 2:8

Here's a question which causes the shaky 'pre-trib' doctrine to wobble wildly: If the Coming (parousia) of Christ is before the Tribulation to 'rapture' us, how then could his 'Coming' (parousia) destroy the Antichrist 3½ years before the evil one even rises to power? To be true to the Scriptures the Coming of Christ cannot be until after the reign of the Antichrist, because his Coming destroys Antichrist. Plainly stated in the passage above!

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, 25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. 26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. Mark 13:24-27

This excerpt of Mark's account of the Gospel brings forth a clear and precise statement that Jesus will gather the elect Church

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to be resurrected after the Tribulation. I have heard a number of people try and get around this passage by making the statement that in this passage the word 'elect' is referring to the Jews, and not the believers; but this is a very flimsy supposition. Does it say his *Jewish* elect? No, it does not. Then where would you get such a notion if the verse is not speaking it to you? Why, from somebody who is trying to remove an obvious contradiction to their 'rapture' teaching!

Most 'pre-trib' preachers believe, but many do not openly announce, that the entire 'Olivet Discourse' was given to the Jews and not to us the followers of the Lord Jesus. But when Jesus gave this discourse he addressed it to 'the disciples'. He was addressing the men who were the very foundation he was laying of the 'elect' Church! To say that Jesus was referring to the Jews and not the Christian Church when he said, "and shall gather together his elect..." is not only false, but shocking evidence of the deceitful way Scripture must be twisted and altered to spin this tall tale of a 'pre-trib rapture'.

Didn't anyone tell these folks that the Jews were cut off because of unbelief, and we were grafted in through faith? The Christian Church *is* the elect of God! The word 'elect' is not used even one time in the New Testament to refer to the Jewish nation as in a state of election, but I can show you nearly a dozen times where it is used to directly speak of the Body of Christ!

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit... 1 Peter 1:2

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness... Colossians 3:12

Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect... Titus 1:1

In light of these verses why should we assume Jesus was referring to anyone other than the believers in Mark 13:24-27? Was Peter addressing his letter to the Jews? No, and Paul was not either. These men both used the word 'elect' to refer to the believer, as did the Lord Jesus in his discourse on the mountain. (Mark 13:27)

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Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. 2 he shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

Isaiah 42:1-2

This passage, a very familiar reference to the Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Isaiah, calls Jesus God's 'elect'. The Bible also teaches that as believers we have a positional standing 'in Christ'. Him in us; and us in Him! This is the reason *we* are the elect of God; because of Christ in us. And since we are found to be in Christ who is God's elect, we also are God's elect: the Body of Christ.

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. 23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not; Matthew 24:21-23

For the sake of the elect, which we have already shown is the Church of Jesus Christ, God will keep the time of the Tribulation from going on and on, or there would be nobody left alive. If the Church was already gone why would God shorten the time for their sake? We are the 'elect' and that obvious roadblock to the progress of the 'pre-trib doctrine' is why they must twist the meaning of the word elect to refer to the Jews. These verses that show the elect Church in the Tribulation, if left unmolested, shatter their fragile doctrine of escapism.

That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

1 Timothy 6:14

If there were a 'rapture' removing the Church before the Tribulation they would have already had corruptibility done away with; and Paul's command to stay obedient and without reproach until the appearing of Jesus would be a misrepresentation of the truth. As would be all other Scriptures that teach the Church should seek to endure in faith to the day Christ appears. It is a common

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theme throughout the New Testament that the early Church was looking for the appearing of Jesus. Where is there one indication they were expecting a separate 'secret' coming which would remove them 7 years before the appearing they were told repeatedly to be diligently watching for?

So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? 28 he said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. Matthew 13:27-30

Here is another passage seldom considered when speaking in regard to the timing of the catching away of the believers. Notice the husbandman tells them to gather together *first* the tares to bind them in bundles so they can be burned. Then and only then will the wheat be gathered into the masters barn. Boy is this contrary to the 'pre-trib' teachings or what? They have the wheat being harvested first, and then the tares being bound later! We can't tell from this passage just what it is that binds the tares and marks them for destruction; but I believe it to be them taking the mark of the Beast, and their allegiance to the Antichrist. Their choice has bound them, and destined them for the fire. According to this set of Scriptures *after* the tares (the wicked and unbelieving) are identified and marked for destruction *then* the wheat (the true believers) will be harvested (resurrected to meet Christ in the air as he returns).

The farmer of Bible days would wait for his crop to mature; then he would go through his fields and bundle the weeds (so they could be later burned), so as not to mix the bad seed of the weeds in with the good seed of his crop. he would *then* harvest his crop and afterward return to burn the weeds and prepare the field for the next season. This is a perfect picture of God's harvest of the Church, and Jesus returning in flaming fire to take vengeance! God

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gave us the ‘types and shadows’ of the Scriptures as an additional witness to the truth; and when teachings and doctrine are blatantly in conflict with easily recognizable types such as this one, it should raise a red flag to say the least. The ‘pre-trib’ teachings just don’t fit the allegories of the harvest; because they are untrue. God is going to identify the weeds, mark them for destruction, harvest his crop, and then return to destroy the weeds and prepare his field anew for another crop. This is the Biblical pattern.

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. James 5:7

This verse gives us once again the allegory of the harvest. God is going to wait until the crop has received the early *and* the latter rain before he harvests. The Body of Christ has not yet received the latter rain. There have been moves of God’s Spirit that people have tried to tag with the label ‘latter rain’, but were not the latter rain prophesied. That is yet to come. And concerning God’s harvest of mankind: where do you find a description of this harvest? In a passage portraying an escape of the ‘Great Tribulation’? Not quite!

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

Revelation 14:15-16

This vivid description of the harvest of mankind is given after the Antichrist has had his reign and persecuted the Body of Christ, after the two witnesses prophesy, and as the seventh angel sounds the Last Trump. If the ‘rapture’ is truly God’s harvest of the believers then it will have to happen after the tribulation of those days; which is exactly what the Lord Jesus said to us in Mark 13:24-27!

CHAPTER THREE

A Secret Coming?

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. Revelation 1:7

And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Mark 14:62

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Titus 2:13

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. 1 Peter 5:4

When the Scriptures speak of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ there is a reoccurring theme which is quite evident. The plain truth that his Coming will be out in the open, and visible to all, is taught in a great number of places. But what is not taught in the Bible is a secret non-visible coming of Christ as proposed by those preaching the 'rapture' doctrine. I have heard many a speaker proclaim a secret invisible Return of Jesus as an integral part of the teachings of God's Word, but I have never heard anyone quote a passage which actually says such a thing! Try as they might to garner Scriptural support for this notion, there is none. There is not one passage in the Bible which explicitly puts forth this concept. It has to be presupposed, and then collaborated by bits of verse pulled out of context.

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When Jesus was giving us the rundown about end-time events, he gave us a wealth of information on the subject of his Return. He made some comments on this issue that many have purposely chosen to ignore. They just don't jive with their story.

Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. 27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be; Matthew 24:26-27

When Jesus was teaching about these things he gave us some very straight-forward instruction about the possibility of someone coming to us who would be trying to convince us of a secret appearance of Christ. He said, "Believe it not!" He was telling us not to believe anything other than a completely visible event. His Coming will be as visible as a flash of lightning! But the 'pre-trib rapture' doctrine has the Body of Christ joining Jesus in a 'secret chamber' for a wedding feast. This is just the type of falsehood Jesus was warning us of. Plus don't you think the Father would wait to throw a wedding feast for the Bride and Groom until the Bride has completely arrived? There are going to be believers on earth right up until the Return of Christ; only after they are resurrected could the wedding supper rightly take place. The 'pre-trib' teaching has part of the Bride missing out on her own wedding feast! (Many actually teach the Old Testament and 'tribulation Saints' are not a part of the Bride of Christ and don't rise in the Resurrection of the Just. They say they are Jehovah's Bride. Yes, they teach God has two Brides! You might be surprised at all the elements of dispensationalism theology you never hear about because of the controversy preaching them causes!)

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. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 1Thessalonians 5:2-4

When preachers are using the phrase 'like a thief in the night' to teach their 'rapture' they seldom include these last two

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verses. That is because they describe sudden destruction immediately following the catching away. That doesn't fit the rapture story. And also the passage says Christ's Return will not take the awake believer by surprise; the Bible says we are not in darkness that that day should sneak up on us! That doesn't fit their fable either. Jesus gave us a great number of indicators to watch for that would herald his Return. Here are a few Luke listed:

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; 26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. Luke 21:25-28

A similarity many prophecies concerning the Lord's Return share is their description of the signs in the sun, moon, and stars. Some unbelievable things are going to take place that are going to literally scare people to death! These signs are always given as preceding the Coming of Jesus. Notice that when Jesus gave these signs he said when you see them look up for your redemption draws near. He said look up because that's where he will appear: in the sky! Not a secret coming of an invisible Jesus, but a visible Return in the clouds for all to see!

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Acts 1:9-11

The angels were very specific in pointing out the fact that when Jesus descends again it will be a visible event. Please take a moment and think about something here. If the pretrib rapture

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theory was correct, and it is the event we are to be looking for, would not the angels at this time have commented on that event and not on a visible Return the Church would not be on earth to look for? What would be the sense of describing something believers wouldn't be here waiting for while giving no information on the event that they would? The angels in Acts 1 would not have spoken the way they did if there was going to be a pretrib rapture! They were saying, "Here's what to expect when he returns again; the reverse of what you are seeing here! He rose visibly and he will descend visibly."

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Matthew 24:29-30

We can thumb through the Scriptures and find verse after verse after verse which give us an account of a visible and glorious Return of Jesus to this earth, and the Church being resurrected at that time. But any passages thoroughly expounding on the aspects of a secret non-visible non-return? Zero, zilch, zip, nope, nyet, notta single one!

CHAPTER FOUR

Is Christ's Return Imminent?

Most 'pre-trib' preachers use the word 'imminent' to convey the reasoning that a 'rapture' of the Church is about to happen at any minute. But is the Return of the Lord Jesus for his Bride so imminent that it could take place today, or any day soon? Actually no; it would be impossible for Christ to return today, or any day in the near future, because there are as of yet certain prophecies that must be fulfilled first. As long as these prophecies are unfulfilled the Return of Christ, and the Resurrection of the Just, will not happen.

To me a number of questions arise over this teaching of 'the imminent Return of Christ'. Just when did his Coming *become* imminent? Was it imminent 100 years ago? 200 years ago? Was it imminent during the time of the early Church? Let's examine the latter first. Were the early believers looking for an 'imminent' Return of Christ? The answer to this would have to be no. The early Church knew there were certain things that had to happen first.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. John 21:18-19

Jesus had prophesied of the day that our precious brother Simon Peter would depart from this world. It was spoken by the Son of God that Peter would be martyred; but not until he had lived to be an old man. This was commonly known among the believers of that day. They knew that Jesus could not return as long as Peter was still alive. His Return was not 'imminent'.

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave

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in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. Luke 19:43-44

Here we have another prophesy of Jesus; only this time speaking not of the death of one, but of many. The Lord was looking ahead several decades and seeing the destruction of his beloved Jerusalem, and the wholesale slaughter of her inhabitants. The Bible describes him as weeping as he spoke the words given above. How his heart must have been broken that day, looking over that ancient megalopolis he loved so dearly; knowing thousands would die, and that the beautiful temple buildings would be decimated to the point not one stone would be left standing upon another. I don't think those who heard his words probably comprehended the enormity of what he was saying; but he definitely could not return until these events had transpired. His Return could not have been imminent up to the point of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Another example we could show here speaks, I believe, of the rise centuries later of the horribly corrupt Catholic Church:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith... ..Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. 1 Timothy 4:1-3

When we read the Bible we come across a good number of verses such as the one above which speak prophetically of trends or events in the future of the Church. Each one of these things must come to pass before the Lord's Return. Now we must ask ourselves if all of these prophesied things have already taken place, or are some as of yet unfulfilled?

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. Matthew 24:14

Remember this discourse in Matthew 24 was given to answer the question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Jesus said in response to their inquiry that all nations shall receive the witness of the Gospel. This prophesy

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remains yet unfulfilled, though surely not for long. With the great advancements we have in this age the entire world soon will have been exposed to the Gospel of God's kingdom. But until that happens we will not see the Coming of Jesus Christ. His Return is not yet imminent, and therefore never has been up to this point.

Many preachers try to deceitfully suggest the writings of Paul, Peter, James, etc. contain verses that teach an 'any minute' Return of Christ. But because the Holy Spirit knew many things must transpire first he could not have inspired the writers of the New Testament to portray Christ's Return as 'imminent'. This would have been a bold-faced lie! The gospels and letters of the Bible were written to the Church of that day, and since they could not have been written to speak to them of an imminent Return; they cannot rightly be suggested to do so for us. Try to grasp this concept: if the Scriptures had been written to teach an imminent Return of Christ, then he would have returned in the time they were written, or his Return was not imminent. See an obvious problem with preaching that the Bible teaches an 'about to happen at any minute rapture'?

There was a certain point in time when the inauguration of John F. Kennedy was imminent; are we still waiting for that event? There was a point in time when a moon-walk was said to be imminent; are we still waiting for the words, "One small step..."? If an event still has not happened years after it was declared 'about to happen at any minute', then somebody was speaking falsely! Does God anoint people to speak what is untrue?

I wonder how many preachers who told people 50 years ago that Christ's Return was about to happen at any minute have repented of that lie? It didn't happen, so it was not the truth! Did any of them apologize? Or how about those who spoke this doctrine 20 years ago; have they repented of their falsehood? The Holy Spirit could not have been anointing them to speak something untrue; so where did their unction come from? And if this 'imminence' teaching was not true in years gone by (or the event would have happened then): when did it become truth? Do you see what I'm getting at? As the years go by the very meaning of the word 'imminent' becomes an accusation against those using it falsely. The preaching of a multitude of 'pre-trib' promoters has

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been exposed as error by the simple passage of time. Their premise of an 'imminent Return' has been proven false with each passing year; but no one stops to ask, "If his Return was imminent years ago then wouldn't he have to be here by now?"

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Matthew 24:14

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

Directly refuting the 'pre-trib doctrine' the above sections of Scripture, in their context, speak of the rise of the Antichrist before the Coming of Jesus Christ. More examples could be given of prophesied events that had to come to fulfillment before his Return. The Scriptures could not have been written from the viewpoint of an imminent Return of Christ; too many things had to happen first. Therefore they do not teach a 'going to happen at any minute rapture'. To say the Bible teaches the 'imminent' Return of Christ is a falsehood that needs to be repented of!

Though we have shown an 'imminent rapture' is not a valid teaching, and should be shunned by those who have a love for the truth; we must always bear in mind that although this could not yet be the day of Jesus' Return, this very well could be the day of your departure (or mine). We should be living ever ready, not for a false hope of escaping the Tribulation, but to stand undefiled before the Judgment Seat of Christ. I have known a number of people who joyfully professed to be 'waiting for the rapture' but whose lives testified they were not yet ready for eternity.

We should be focusing on a crucified life of consecrated faith in Jesus that will keep us from an eternal Lake of Fire, not worrying about sidestepping a 3½ year time of affliction that will come and go!

CHAPTER FIVE

The First Resurrection

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Revelation 20:4-5

Please notice in the passage above the phrase ‘the first resurrection’. In this description of the ‘first resurrection’ is included all those who overcame the Antichrist, and had not taken his mark or worshiped him. If there had been a Resurrection of the Church before the time of the ‘Great Tribulation’ could this be properly referred to as the ‘first resurrection? No, it could not! The catching away of the Believers and the Resurrection of the Dead takes place immediately after the Tribulation at the Return of Christ.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 24 Then cometh the end... 1 Corinthians 15:20-24

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Some try to get around this problem of the first resurrection by saying it is a multi-phase event with the rapture as only part of it. But the verses above state that those who belong to Christ are all raised at his Coming. The Coming of Christ is at *the end*, as is the Resurrection of the Righteous also known as the Resurrection of the Just also known as the Resurrection at the Last Day. All speaking of the same event. One event for all believers.

This is clearly shown if you take the verses for what they say in context. This is a major key to rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Anyone can come up with a teaching, and then poke around the Bible and pull out some portions of verse that seem to go along with what they are wanting to teach. But do the verses say what they allude to if read in their true context? If not don't accept the teaching.

When ever you hear a verse used to teach a 'pre-trib rapture', read the entire passage and ask yourself: "Is the writer trying to convey the idea of a secret catching away separate from the 'first resurrection' after the Tribulation?" The answer will always be no. There is not one single passage of Scripture that explicitly teaches a secret coming of Jesus Christ. But in order to try and find substantiation for their erroneous beliefs those attempting to seduce you with the error of the 'rapture' teachings confine themselves to lifting small portions of Scripture out of context, and try to use them to allude to what they preach.

Another method used to propagate this falsehood is the way many preachers pervert the 'types and shadows' of the Scriptures to fabricate false allegories in favor of their doctrine. I recently heard a new one (new to me anyway) in which the man was trying to use an Old Testament teaching concerning the harvest as an allegory of a multi-phase 'first resurrection'. He properly typed the first-fruit offering as symbolic of Christ, the first-fruit of God's harvest of mankind. But then he strayed from the truth by trying to split the 'first resurrection' into two separate parts being typified by a main harvest and then a later 'gleaning'. This teaching would leave you supposing the main harvest to be the 'Rapture' and the gleaning to be the rest who would later be resurrected at the Return of Christ. Nice try, but no prize I'm afraid.

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Although the concept of gleaning is truly a part of O.T. Scripture, gleaning is a bad picture to use to try and teach the error of a multi-phase resurrection. In order for their allegory to work the later gleaning would have to be done by the same one who had harvested the field: the owner (symbolic of God). But the gleaned fruit/grain does not end up in the same place as the main harvest. It is gleaned by others who do not own the field. They end up with a gleaned crop because they are so poor they cannot afford a field of their own. This allegory just doesn't fit what they are trying to teach; as is typical of all efforts to twist Scriptural allegories to fit this false doctrine. They have to selectively (and deceptively) use just portions of 'types and shadows' that in reality don't actually fit what they are teaching. You can find overwhelming confirmation to the true teachings of the Bible in the 'types and shadows' of the Old Testament, but beware of those who would craftily and subtly bend them to convince you of things which are not the true sayings of God.

Many a 'pre-trib' preacher has used the story of God delivering Lot out of Sodom and Gommorah as a type of the 'Rapture'. "Look!", they tell you, "Just before God destroyed Sodom and Gommorah he lifted Lot right out of their midst; that's the Rapture!" But do the events of this story really paint a picture of what they are claiming? No, the story of Lot does not give credence to their doctrine, but actually refutes it, if one takes a closer look.

Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. 21 And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. Genesis 19:20-21

When the angels took Lot out of his home-town, and told him to flee the coming destruction, Lot interceded on behalf of a small town named Zoar. He asked the Lord that he might dwell there in safety. And the Lord granted his request and spared, because of Lot's intercession, the entire town from the fire and brimstone which entirely destroyed every other city in the plain of Jordan. Right in the midst of an large area of devastation Lot was tucked away in a refuge of safety! He was not 'raptured out'; he

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was right there in the divine protection of Almighty God watching as the entire valley around him fell victim to the fruit of their ways. Rather than being a picture of the 'Rapture' this most perfectly types the Church being kept by supernatural provision during the Tribulation. If you will more closely examine the teachings of those who promote this 'pre-trib doctrine' you will see a similar treatment of many passages they claim support their theory, but in reality do not. Under examination their theory falls apart!

As with the story of Lot, so the story of Noah has also been mistakenly used to teach the Church is taken out before the time of the Great Tribulation. We are told that Noah's ark is a type of the 'rapture' in that they rose up, and were safe. What they fail to point out is the fact that Noah never left the planet; but was divinely provided for right here on earth, floating through the devastation in an ark of safety. Actually on the point of Noah's Ark being a type of the Resurrection the 'pre-trib' crowd is right in theory, but wrong in timing. At the end of the Tribulation, when Jesus pours out the wrath of God, we will be floating up above it all safe as can be with Him. That ark is symbolic of Christ; we who abide in Him will be granted a provision of safety the rest of the world will not know!

CHAPTER SIX

The Last Trump

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: 17 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. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Here, in this glorious description of the catching away of the Church, Paul declares that it shall be heralded by the sounding of the mighty trumpet of God. All believers from all ages are awaiting the sounding of this trumpet. What a day that will be, when the hope of untold millions will finally be realized. Resurrected into an eternally enduring body! No more death, disease, sickness or suffering; the sorrows of this world swallowed up by eternal joy and peace in the presence of the Lord Jesus. That will be a day unlike any before. Paul gives another important detail concerning the events of that wonderful day in his letter to the Church at Corinth. He gets more specific:

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the

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dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Another stumbling block the 'pre-trib' preachers must detour around is the fact the Bible says the dead shall be raised, and the living believers changed, at the last trump. We know that the last trump cannot be sounded before the tribulation because the trumpet of God sounds time and time again *during* the Tribulation; any one who has studied the book of Revelation would have to admit this. And saying the seventh trumpet which proceeds the Return of Christ in Revelation, or the trumpet of his Coming in Matthew 24, is not the last trump of 1 Cor. 15 because the rapture is, carries no weight at all. What is your proof of such a claim; or did someone just pull it out of thin air? The Scriptures plainly refute such a notion.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Matthew 24:31

There is a resurrection at the Second Coming regardless of what ever might take place before hand. There has to be, to raise those martyrs of the first resurrection if no one else. There is no way around this. And the trumpet of God is sounded at that time!

Although mistakenly, the rapture teachers say this verse above is only the resurrecting of the 'tribulation Saints' along with the O.T. Saints. But there is clearly a trumpet sounded to call whoever it is that is being raised from the dead and caught up to Jesus at this time.

How could the rapture be the last trump if we have another trumpet sounding at this later identical type of event? What is this one; the trumpet after the last trump? Oh I know, how about 'last trump version 2.0'? Maybe God is upgrading his system. Or better yet how about a 'Multi-phase Trumpet Blast!' As ridiculous as that sounds I wouldn't be surprised if someone ran with it. It is no more ridiculous than some of the other stuff they come up with to wiggle out of a tight spot when called to the carpet by the Word of God like they are here for saying the rapture is the last trump of 1 Cor.15:52. There is no pretrib rapture event; the last trump takes place at the Second Coming after the time of great tribulation.

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In the following verses please notice how all the elements of the Return of Christ are plainly stated, and grouped together, to clearly teach they all happen in the same time frame. (Italics are mine.)

The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded (*Last Trump!*); 15 and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord (*Revelation of Christ/Resurrection of Saints!*), and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. 16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come (*Armageddon!*), and the time of the dead, that they should be judged (*The Judgment Seat of Christ!*), and that thou shouldst give reward (*Recompense!*) unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them (*Jesus takes vengeance!*) which destroy the earth. Revelation 11:14-18

The rapture teachers say this is the lesser secondary resurrection at the Second Coming, and the major resurrection took place seven years earlier. Don't you think that an event as significant as 'the rapture' would have been given the same (or greater) treatment in God's Word as this; and also be plainly taught in a great number of passages? If the 'rapture' were true it would be the raising from the dead, and catching away, of all believers from the Cross up to that point. When compared to that great crowd, the amount of folks in this later event would be a small fraction. That would mean a fraction of God's people getting resurrected at the end gets major coverage in the Scriptures, but little mention (actually none) is made of the (supposed) event in which the overwhelming majority are resurrected! That should get anyone scratching their head no matter what viewpoint you approach it from.

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Most people believe in a ‘rapture’ because they were told it was true by someone they trusted; but many bizarre and false teachings have come into the Church over the years through the unsound practice of receiving doctrine through the tradition of the elders, and not the rightly divided Word of God. And what is shocking is the way some of them have taken such a great hold among the beliefs of the people. For example the Papal infallibility, salvation in a cracker, infant baptism, and so forth of the Catholic Church. Also the non-deity Jesus, and salvation by good works, of the Mormon and Jehovah Witness. Even a few gifted men of God have greatly erred in some of the doctrine they have promoted.

William Branham was a truly gifted man of God with a very powerful ministry followed by many healings and miracles granted by God’s divine power; but when he strayed into a teaching ministry that he was not called to he brought forth great error. His ‘Serpent Seed’ teachings led many thousands into a false concept of ‘righteousness by lineage’, and wrought much harm to the Body of Christ. Entire books have been written about ‘the Watchers’, and also about ‘fallen angels having children with women and polluting the bloodline of man’, with only a meager bit of verse to found their teachings upon; but see how they carry on for chapter after chapter with their ‘Bible Teachings’! It is no different with the ‘pre-trib rapture’ doctrine; books by the hundreds are written every year about an event that *will never happen!*

What many people don’t know is that even some of the most popular ‘pre-trib’ promoters privately admit that the Scriptures do not explicitly teach a ‘rapture’; but that it has to be received by ‘revelation’; and then you can see where the Scriptures imply it. Well, to that I say that any doctrine that has to come by a mere implication, and is not explicitly taught in the Bible, has no business being a part of the teachings of the Body of Christ!

Something else many people forget to consider about the sounding of the trumpet is that it's a call to battle! After the final trumpet blast Joshua and his armies took Jericho. The last trump is the final call to battle immediately followed by the battle of Armageddon. About this point some of you are wondering, “What about the Marriage Supper of the Lamb? Aren’t we supposed to go off world for an extended wedding feast?” But I am wondering:

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just what passage of Scripture gives a person the basis for believing such a thing? Sorry, there isn't any to be found. I hate to be the one to tell you, and I know this is contrary to what you have been told by umpteen preachers, but the *only* supper described in Scripture in regard to the Return of Christ, and the gathering of the believers unto Him, is the battle of Armageddon. How's that for a marriage supper! Read it for yourself.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. 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. 10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. 11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 his eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of

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horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. Revelation 19:7-18

(see also Ezekiel 39:17-22 and Zephaniah 1:7)

You have just read the Biblical description of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb! Not what you've been taught? Sorry, there is no other depiction of this wedding supper given in the Scriptures; any other teaching on this matter is a baseless fabrication. Where are the 'Pre-Tribbers' getting all their facts about a seven year feast away from this planet; out of a magician's hat? They're not getting it from the Scriptures! So much of what people believe and preach about the Return of Christ lacks a foundation in the Word; but is taught as if it were thoroughly expounded upon in the Bible. And most folks eat it up like it's Gospel truth.

When Jesus receives the Bride, it is when he is returning to this earth to make war on those who have rejected and hated Him. Many have trouble with this, because it is in such contrast to what is commonly taught; but if you honestly consider these words John wrote in Revelation 19, there are only two choices: accept what is being said there by John, or brush it aside and believe a fable which has *no* Bible behind it! (Show me explicit Scriptural support for teaching the marriage supper takes place in Heaven and I will retract those words!)

I would also like someone from the 'pre-trib' crowd to explain to me how come they can have the Bride of Christ at the wedding supper before She has been to the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is clear from the passage we looked at earlier in Revelation 11:14-18 (and many others) that this judgment takes place at his visible Appearing. To place the Judgment Seat of Christ *before* the tribulation is contrary to a good number of places where the Bible says Jesus will judge us, and reward us, at his Second Coming. How can people accept a doctrine that is in such obvious conflict to the Bible at every turn?

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Church without the Spirit?

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

2 Thessalonians 2:7

This is probably one of the most frequently misinterpreted verses in the entire Bible in our day. This verse has been twisted and stretched until a whole series of false concepts have been fabricated to shore up the wonky ‘pre-trib’ doctrine. We are informed this verse says the Holy Spirit will be taken out of this world before the Great Tribulation. There is nothing in this text or any collaborating passages anywhere in the Bible that promote such a notion; this is absolutely false doctrine.

The idea that the Spirit of an omnipresent God will somehow at this time be not-present goes against the fundamental doctrines of who God is as revealed in the Scriptures. Also given as truth supposedly extracted from this verse is the reasoning that the Holy Spirit restrains the spirit of Antichrist, and must be removed before the Antichrist can rise up. Where did they get all that out of this verse?

Was there not a Christian Church in Nazi Germany? Or in Jerusalem when Titus came in the spirit of Antichrist and destroyed the city? I suppose the Lord removed the Holy Spirit from this earth for a few generations so the spirit of Antichrist could birth the Catholic Church? To teach that the Holy Spirit will leave this world, along with the Church, in a ‘pretribulational rapture’ contradicts the teachings of the Bible on so many levels. It baffles me that anyone who even casually reads the Word of God could seriously suggest such a thing!

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Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:20

What a wonderful promise Jesus made that he would be here on earth with the believers until the end of the world. Did he now change his mind? What a shocking statement made by those promoting the ‘pre-trib’ theory that the Holy Spirit would be taken from the earth at this (supposed) ‘rapture’ before the Tribulation! Before Jesus left he promised to return to dwell with us in the form of the Holy Spirit.

If ye love me, keep my commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. 18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. John 14:15-18

How could Jesus be with the believers on earth until the end of the world if the Holy Spirit was taken out seven years before the end? Could someone please show me a passage of Scripture where Jesus or Paul or one of the other writers ever said such a thing. You won't find any such teaching in the Bible because it is not true! The idea that God would leave the 'tribulation Saints' to face the hardship and chaos of those days without the life, power, edification, and gifts of the Holy Spirit is absurd. It was the indwelling of the Spirit that brought forth the entity we know as the Body of Christ. To say that God would remove the Spirit, and tell Jesus' disciples to go on without that indwelling life and power, denies the very concept of what salvation is: those who have the Spirit of God dwelling inside them *are* the temple of God; and Jesus is with them and in them through the presence of his Spirit!

This notion that God would send a group of believers through the darkest time this world has ever known without the Comforter is hard for me to grasp. How about you? Besides how could the folks the ‘pre-tribbers’ refer to as the ‘tribulation Saints’ have gotten saved in the first place without the Holy Spirit here?

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No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:44

No one can be saved except the Spirit of God convinces them of their lost condition and reveals Christ to them. To say there will be people saved during the Tribulation without the Spirit of God here flies in the face of the Biblical teachings on salvation. The grace of God is more than a contract to go free from the consequences of sin. It is the presence and strength of God's Spirit abiding in the heart of the believer, giving us the power to become the sons of God.

But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

Mark 13:11

A large share of the difficulties faced by Christians during the Tribulation will concern being ostracized from society. Forbidden to take part in the Antichrist controlled system of buying and selling, believers will be forced to resort to the then illegal activity of bartering. They will have made themselves outlaws by refusing to take the mark of the Beast and worship him. This will cause God's children by the millions to be brought before the magistrates of that day to give an account. How could they properly speak forth God's words, and also overcome the temptation to give in to the system of the Beast, without the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit?

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Romans 8:11

The indwelling Spirit of God is the resurrection power. In Revelation 20:5 we see where those who have been martyred for the witness of Jesus during the Tribulation have taken part in the 'first resurrection'. Without the Holy Spirit on earth these folks could not have been 'quickened' into immortality! The Holy Spirit

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must be on earth during the time of the 'Great Tribulation' or there could be no believers, no overcoming, and no one who was martyred (or left alive and remaining) being caught up unto the Lord at his Return. No Holy Spirit - no Resurrection!

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. John 6:63

Without the Spirit of God here the believers would not be quickened to receive the Word of God. It would be just a lifeless book to them like it is to the rest of the world. There also would be no praying in the Spirit, no singing in the Spirit, and no walking in the Spirit. What a rip off. How could anyone be 'strengthened with might in the inner man', or have 'joy in the Holy Ghost'? There would be no edifying one another because you would have no spiritual grace to minister to each other. We could go on and on about the shortcomings of a Christian minus the Spirit; but I hope this has been enough to provoke some thought on your part as to the folly of thinking there could be followers of Christ here on earth without the Holy Spirit. A body without a spirit is a corpse! Is Jesus returning for a corpse?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Rewarded at his Revelation

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

Revelation 22:12

Let's look at another aspect of the Return of Jesus Christ to the earth: our reward. It is impossible to reconcile a 'pre-trib rapture' with how the Scriptures are worded in regard to Jesus giving his followers their promised reward. Notice this verse above teaches that when he returns he will have our reward with him. Many places in the Bible carry this same vein of teaching.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8

If Jesus had returned to 'rapture' the Church, marry his Bride, reward the righteous, and throw a feast; how could the Bible rightly be describing Him as rewarding the Church at his visible appearing seven years later? This is a very serious monkey-wrench in the 'pre-trib doctrine' that just can not be explained away. It could be pointed out also that Jesus doesn't say here a crown will be given to them who love the 'rapture', but to those who love his appearing. Remember the verse earlier: "every eye shall see him..."? At his visible Return he will have our crown with Him!

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Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 1 Peter 1:13

If the believers had been translated into immortality at the ‘rapture’ why then would they be looking for the grace of God to be brought to them later at his Revelation. An immortal resurrected believer has no further need to hope for what he has already been given. This is but one of many such inconsistencies caused by the erroneous teachings of a ‘pre-trib ‘rapture’. Let’s look a little closer at this concept of being rewarded at the Return of Christ; notice in the next two examples the word ‘recompense’.

But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. Luke 14:13-14

So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: 5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: 6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Thessalonians 1:4-8

In Luke 14:13-14 Jesus says we shall be recompensed at the Resurrection of the Just; and in the above passage Paul says we will be recompensed when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven. This has to be one and the same event. That eliminates the possibility of the Church being resurrected/recompensed seven years earlier! Also Paul says in this passage the persecutions and tribulations they had endured made them to be *counted worthy* of the kingdom of God for which they suffered! How does this fit in with the escapism mentality of the ‘pre-trib’ teachings? It doesn’t!

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Another significant point I see in the above segment of God's Word is the usage of the term 'rest' (verse 7). Paul told the Thessalonians they would be recompensed with 'rest'. The Bible has a great deal to say about the promise of the Christian 'entering into his rest'.

For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. 10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Hebrews 4:8-10

If they will have already 'entered into their rest' at the 'rapture' this statement to the Thessalonians about them entering into their rest when Jesus is 'revealed from heaven' would be contrary to the truth. There are no errors of this sort in the Word of God.

CHAPTER NINE

Is The Great Tribulation 'The Wrath of God'?

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:10

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Thessalonians 5:9

One of the most popular reasons given for supposing that the Church could not possibly go through this time is that the 'Great Tribulation' is the wrath of God; with one of the above verses of Scripture normally quoted as support for this line of thinking. In the second example notice that wrath and salvation are presented as being diametrically opposed to each other. Ask yourself: Is 'Tribulation' the opposite of salvation? I think most would say, "No, damnation is the opposite of salvation."

Is tribulation synonymous with damnation? Where ever did anyone get the idea that when a verse speaks about being saved from 'the wrath to come' that the verse is referring to the Great Tribulation? Does this represent a consistent theme throughout the Scriptures?

O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Matthew 3:7

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Was John with these words warning the Scribes and Pharisees to flee from the 'Great Tribulation'? I don't think so! Neither was Paul speaking of such when he taught the believers of his day that they were delivered from the wrath to come (1Thess. 1:10). It would be ridiculous to think Paul was writing to tell them their cause for rejoicing was that they were not going through a 3½ year period of hard times 2000 years in the future! He was teaching that they were saved from damnation and the eternal Lake of Fire. When trying to grasp the meaning of a verse or passage we must be careful about reading into it something other than what was being spoken.

Neither of these example verses (1Thess. 1:10 and 1Thess. 5:9 quoted above) in the context which they were given speaks of being removed from danger of tribulation in this world. In the first case Paul had just spoken to them of receiving the Word in much affliction. (1Thess 1:6) The word affliction there is translated from the Greek word 'thlipsis'; the same word which is translated as tribulation 18 times including 'great tribulation' in Matthew 24. Here is the listing for the word in Strong's Definitions:

G2347 θλίψις thlipsis thlip'-sis

From G2346; pressure (literally or figuratively): - afflicted, (-tion), anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, trouble.

Total KJV occurrences: 45

There is nothing in this definition that points to the wrath of God. A word study on thlipsis and its' usage in Scripture is very enlightening. It clearly shows we are not exempt from tribulation as believers, but rather called to endure it!

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation (Greek-Thlipsis) enter into the kingdom of God. Acts 14:22

That no man should be moved by these afflictions (Thlipsis): for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. 4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation (Thlipsis); even as it came to pass, and ye know. 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4

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For then shall be great tribulation (Thlipsis), such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. Matthew 24:21

Sometimes I wonder if those who claim the great tribulation is the wrath of God have ever really given this verse from Matthew a good looking over. It says whatever this great 'tribulation' is will be the worst expression of it that ever has been or ever will be! Could this be wrath? If the great tribulation was the wrath of God it would have to be worse than the wrath of God which destroyed the entire world in Noah's day. Plus it would have to exceed the wrath to be poured out at the Return of Christ! That is certainly not going to be fulfilled by the events of the great tribulation. I think maybe someone is deceitfully inserting a false definition into the phrase: the great tribulation. Let's insert Strong's definition into it and see what that speaks:

For then shall be great tribulation (pressure, affliction, anguish, burden, persecution, tribulation, trouble) such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. Matthew 24:21

There is nothing in the definition of the word 'thlipsis' that has not always been common to true Christianity. The Body of Christ has been in tribulation for nearly 2000 years! Jesus was saying that at the end of this age would come a time when the tribulation (pressure, affliction, anguish, burden, persecution, tribulation, trouble) his followers endure would be magnified to such an extent it would be like nothing ever seen before or ever will be! This was a heads-up (a warning) not a promise of exemption.

The terrible events of the coming time of Tribulation will consist of, among other things, wars and natural catastrophes. Are wars the wrath of God? Are earthquakes or famine or plague? Are persecutions the wrath of God? All of these things are a part of world history. Did God remove the Church to keep it from those things? No, he did not, and there is no basis to think he will. Is

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mankind's moving toward one world government and one world religion the wrath of God? Many aspects of the end-time events are merely the iniquity of man coming to a fullness.

Mankind is once again approaching the chaos God was trying to keep them from when he cut their plans short at Babel by dividing them unto differing languages. Modern man is now uniting to recapture the vision of Babel; a unified people safe under the covering of an elite group whose great knowledge and superior wisdom will see them through whatever troubles might come along. Sounds good, but once global control is established the iniquity in man shall seize the opportunity and exhibit it's worse behavior ever. God had foreseen the oppression and outright slavery a world government would bring, and curtailed it by his intervention at Babel; but through advances in computer technology, travel, communications, etc. mankind is once again returning to be 'one people' without worry of any language barrier. But all of this also could not be considered 'wrath'.

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. 2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. Revelation 15:1-2

Here, at the end of the Great Tribulation, we now see the Wrath of God; and as we see in Rev.15 the vials these angels have contain this wrath. But nowhere can we find support for the notion the 'Great Tribulation' itself is his wrath. Notice that when this wrath is being prepared to be poured out heaven is filled with those who had gotten the victory over the Mark of the Beast. The battle of the Church with the Antichrist is past and now it's time for payback! The book of Revelation does speak of God's wrath after the Tribulation; but don't let anyone deceive you into thinking you won't be here because the Tribulation period is in itself his wrath. `

And what about the (supposed) tribulation Saints the rapture teachers speak of who are found to be on earth during this horrible time; has God appointed them unto wrath? Are they not

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the same blood bought children of God we are? Did not Jesus deliver them from the wrath to come? Do the promises of God not apply to them? Is 1Thess 5:9 (God has not appointed us to wrath) no longer true; did it expire? If one group of believers has to endure this time why not another? Is God going to spare the lukewarm Church of our nation, who have had such an abundance of light given them, from this tribulation; but make a new generation of baby Christians go through it unsupported by any seasoned elders, mature teachers, experienced prayer warriors, or the precious Holy Ghost because they have all been given an exemption and left the planet? Gee, thanks God!

The widespread acceptance of this ‘pre-trib rapture’ doctrine is the by-product of a lack of confidence by modern Christians in the ability of God to supernaturally keep a hedge about his people, or provide for them in times of want. Most believers in this nation never face situations so adverse that they require divine deliverance or supernatural provision. The counterfeit gospel of personal prosperity and optional consecration being preached today has produced a generation of pampered and pompous infants who refuse to be weaned for fear they might have to leave the crib, and learn the steps of a crucified servant. A steady diet of a watered-down gospel has left those feeding off it spiritually anemic, and stunted in growth.

The modern message of ‘good news’ going forth from most pulpits of our country (lacking any mention of true repentance, holiness, or dying to self) is not the true gospel of the Bible. Thus we see so many self-centered, carnal, and spiritually crippled ‘believers’ in this day. But there is a time of chastisement and purification coming!

Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. Daniel 12:10

Although referring to the hardships of the ‘Great Tribulation’ as a means to chastise a lazy and lukewarm Church is a very unpopular concept (few even dare to raise the point for discussion) it is not without Scriptural support. There are several passages in the Bible which seem to indicate a purification taking place during this time in regard to the Body of Christ. And who

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could deny this to be needful, considering the state the Church is in today? Is the Bride ready for the Groom? Not hardly; but nobody wants to face that issue; they just want their ‘rapture’!

The truths the Bible teaches about the spiritual preparation and endurance necessary to face affliction and hardships like those of the last-days are being thrown aside to make room for the fables of escapism. We have ‘Christian’ authors today making huge sums off of fictional novels that portray a lying representation of the darkness soon to be faced by the Body of Christ. Those promoting such falsehood will stand (unless they repent) as liars before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

CHAPTER TEN

The Land of Goshen

One of the things that bothers me most about those who teach the 'pre-trib' myth is that they purposely ignore a large number of passages in the Scriptures which clearly show God's ability, and intention, to keep his people in times of tribulation. For example: Daniel in the lions den, the faithful three in the fiery furnace, Lot safe in the little village of Zoar while God destroyed every city around him, Noah safe in the ark while the rest of the world perished, etc. While we can not realistically expect to live free of the unpleasant effects of persecution, and should be willing to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ even unto death, there are in the Scriptures plenty of examples of God's divine protection of his people. Let's look at one: God keeping the children of Israel from the judgments he was inflicting upon the land of Egypt.

And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. 23 And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be. Exodus 8:22-23

Not only did God keep his people from these plagues, but this verse tells us this was to show he is: 'the Lord in the midst of the earth'. God is glorified by showing his ability to divinely

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protect his people! What does the escapism mentality of the 'pre-trib rapture' doctrine say: that God has to remove his People from the earth because some extremely hard times are coming? Does that testify to the keeping power of the Lord; is 'the Lord in the midst of the earth' glorified by that? No, and it is in opposition to a theme found throughout the Bible: that God can divinely keep that which belongs to Him.

And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: 23 They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. Exodus 10:22-23

In the midst of the supernatural darkness that had come upon the land of Egypt God's people had light to see by. Praise Jesus! No matter how dark this world gets, the Body of Christ will always have the Holy Spirit here to light the way. During the time of the 'Great Tribulation' God will once again put a division between his people and the children of this world. And in doing so he will be greatly glorified by the myriad of testimonies going forth proclaiming the mighty acts of God on behalf of the elect Church. Divine provision and divine protection will be testified to around the globe as the events of that day ravage this planet. The 'Lord in the midst of the earth' will be exalted!

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. 3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. 4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; 6 Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. 7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. 8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Psalms 91:1-8

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The Lord is seeking to instill in his people a purified faith which will allow them to receive supernatural abundance in the middle of famine and chaos. What better way could Satan find to keep people from preparing spiritually for that time than to convince them they are not going to be there! I believe that the 'pre-trib rapture' doctrine is worse than just an erroneous teaching. It is a destructive lie from the Devil that turns people away from what God is really saying, and causes them to reject the notion of God preparing his children spiritually for the rough road ahead.

Many passages in the Scriptures tell us the wrath of God will come upon the wicked in a day when the sun does not give light properly, and the moon and stars won't shine. Reading through the major passages on the end-times teaches this darkness will cover the earth at the very end of the Great Tribulation. The entire period is not the wrath of God. Actually most prophesy teachers (even pre-trib) would tell you that the first half of the final seven years maybe somewhat uneventful compared to the devastation of the final 3½ years. The major events of the first half will most likely be in the realm of politics, world government and world religion. But this will all give place to a fierce time of years of relentless upheaval and cataclysmic events. But this too shall pass; and then when it looks like the danger is past and people begin to say peace and safety sudden destruction will befall mankind. This time in the form of the wrath of Almighty God!

...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 1 Thessalonians 1:7-9

It is clear from this passage, and a good number of others, that the Lord Jesus Christ will be in charge of dishing out God's wrath upon his Return to earth. The believer has no need to fear that he might be a recipient of God's wrath; Jesus already bore that judgment for us. The believer will be right along side Jesus as he administers the anger of the Lord upon the sinners and hypocrites

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who have rejected the Lordship of Christ, and who never received a love for the truth.

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds. Romans 2:5-6

Here the Return of Christ is also called the day of wrath when the righteous judgment of God will cause each to receive his just reward. It is a false witness to insist the period called the 'Great Tribulation' is the wrath of God. Those who are teaching this are deceiving people in order to gain acceptance of their 'rapture' doctrine. Don't let yourself be fooled by this falsehood.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Enduring until the End

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. Matthew 24:13

There is an expression that used to be commonly used among Christians that we seldom hear anymore: “Keep the faith!” For many centuries the mindset of the Church was that faith was something which could slip away and be lost; something which needed to be nourished and tended to. A treasured possession to be closely guarded and ‘polished’ daily. But the preaching of the Gospel in this nation has evolved (or should we say devolved) into a hybrid mixture of truth and error which presents salvation like some kind of an unbreakable contract entered into by going forward at church and parroting a ‘sinners prayer’ at the prompting of some well meaning Christian worker; a ‘no demands’ contract which can be neatly tucked away until needed, and causes little intrusion upon a basically unchanged life-style. This more often than not unconverted parrot is told not to doubt his experience, even if it seems like nothing has happened; and later advised to pay no mind to those who have rudely upset him by harping on about a standard of holiness and separated living: those people are just judgmental and legalistic!

But this modern ‘witches brew’ being pawned off as ‘living water’ is far removed from the true saving faith of the Bible. I will at this time refrain from expounding on the evils of the growth hindering doctrine of ‘Eternal Security’; but do let us take a look at what the Scriptures have to say about the necessity of a believer’s faith being ‘held on to’ and ‘purified’.

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Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; Hebrews 3:12-14

As assuredly as true faith brings us into union with Christ: sin, unbelief, and the resulting hardness of heart can cut us off from the life of God which is in Christ Jesus. Many a soul has made shipwreck of their faith by failing to hold on to a clean conscience (see 1Tim 1:19) and an undefiled heart. Yes, we all have fallen to one stupid temptation or another along the path of faith, and we sure do thank God for 1 John 1:9; but as we mature a little in this walk we should be developing a hunger for something more than an endless cycle of falling and repenting, falling and repenting, and so on. We should be developing a discernment as to the deceitfulness of sin, and the process of the hardening of one's heart which is caused by habitual sin.

A life of continual sin will bring you to a place where eventually you no longer have the witness of the Spirit in your heart, or an unfeigned testimony of salvation on your lips. You might retain a religious form, a religious lingo, and a regiment of religious activities; but, without a union with the source and supplier, the oil in your lamp will run out and the flame will flicker and die. This statement might not set well with my Calvinistic brethren, but it is what the Scriptures teach. To believe the doctrine of 'eternal security' you must toss aside passages of Scripture by the dozens. The Bible teaches faith can be eroded to the point where it is replaced by unbelief. A branch of the vine can be cut off (through unbelief), wither and die, and be sentenced to be taken and destroyed! Don't doubt it.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather

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them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

John 15:4-6

In order for a branch to wither it must first have been alive and full of the flow of the vine. And what happens when the branch no longer abides in that vine but is withered and dead? It is taken and burned because it is lifeless and fruitless. Jesus was talking about people here; and we should give great consideration to these words. As the husbandman works with the vine, ruthlessly pruning it as well as lovingly nourishing it, so God has his dealings with us. We should wholeheartedly embrace this process, as unpleasant as it might seem at times; knowing that the times of leanness and abasement are for our long-term welfare; and that a season of fruitfulness eventually follows a time of pruning,

Most are not being taught today about the process of the purification of a believers faith by our being subjected to trials, tribulations, and adverse circumstances in life. These hardships are sent our way as a refiner's furnace to burn off the impurities of our faith; a kind of pruning if you will. This pruning is designed to cause fruit to come forth. But those who have been stewing in the false teachings of the 'prosperity movement' often see these trials and hardships as indicators that they are just not moving in faith; or they would be prospering. So they ignorantly reject the dealings of God (rebuking in the name of Jesus what is really the Father's hand upon their life!); and give another large gift to some wolf/prosperity teacher in sheeps clothing; hoping somehow this time it will bring that promised 100-fold return they have been promised and are crying out for. But the abundant and eternal provision of God comes our way through a purified faith, not by twisting God's arm by a rigid adherence to 'principals of prosperity'. (It seems to me the only ones greatly prospering off of the prosperity teachings are the ones who can con folks into buying their books, CDs, and DVD's! Do you think Jesus wanted people to have to *purchase* the truths of his kingdom?)

He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and
he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

Proverbs 22:16

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Have you cursed yourself by supporting rich prosperity teachers instead of giving to the needy? I have been saying for some time that the tactics of psychological and emotional manipulation being used to coerce God's people out of their money at many of these seminars and 'camp meetings' (and churches) are behavior bordering on outright sorcery. These money-hungry preachers are not the servants of Christ, but of Mammon! If you are truly seeking the favor of God then try giving (in secret) to the poor; or maybe to a poor missionary outreach, or an orphanage in a third-world country. Give where you have no hope of being recompensed, and this will show God the true measure of your heart. Giving to get is just a form of covetousness, Giving to today's prosperity teachers in hopes of invoking some reciprocal law of manifold return is not only self-centered, but is also covetous and sinful.

In God's perfect plan for your life there will be times of abundance as well as times of abasement. We need to learn to see his hand in both, and also for both to be thankful. God knows that in order for us to receive the riches that really matter it will require a refined faith only acquired by the agonizing process of God's furnace of purification. And it is this purified faith which will carry one through times of tribulation and persecution like those soon to challenge the Body of Christ like never before.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 1 Peter 4:12-13

In removing the believers before the Tribulation period God would be denying them the opportunity to partake in the sufferings of Christ which shall be inflicted upon the Church in those days; and thereby rob them of the eternal rewards they would have received. Does this really sound like God's long-term best for his children: to diminish their eternal reward by sparing them hardship? Only if you view things through an escapism mentality filled with fleshly fears of facing persecution for the name of Christ.

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That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 1 Peter 1:7

The carnal Christian can not fathom the Church going through such a time of trial and testing. He cannot muster enough courage to witness to his neighbor, let alone face the crushing onslaught of the world-controlling system of the Antichrist. And he knows this full well, so he must reach out for another scenario which spares him having to prepare for and face the coming darkness. His answer? Why, of course: The Rapture! “Don’t worry; we won’t be here! No need to pray for ‘gold tried in the fire’. Why should a person get all shook up about developing the faith to endure something they’ll never experience? Don’t you listen to the Pastor? Would he mislead us? He says God will *not* let the Church go through such a horrible time!”

I dare you to go to China and preach such nonsense, they will label you a false prophet, and shun you like the plague. Corrie Ten Boom, a well beloved and accepted voice for the persecuted Church, was a Dutch survivor of the Nazi concentration camps. She spoke out often against the ‘pre-tribulation rapture’ doctrine, and called those who preach it: “the false teachers that Jesus warned us to expect in the latter days”. She went on to say, “In China the Christians were told, Don’t worry; before the Tribulation comes you will be translated - raptured. Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a Bishop from China say, We have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution rather than telling them Jesus would come first.”

Only God knows how many of those persons had their faith ‘overthrown’ when confronted with a time of tribulation they were told they would not be around for. The pastors and teachers who were promoting this falsehood will surely give an account of their lies, and the damage they inflicted upon the Body of Christ; and such as these lived out their lives among the Church as ones who no longer had any credibility or regard as men of God. This will also be the fate of those who are today preaching the ‘pre-trib’ myth. As we move into the time of the ‘Great Tribulation’ they will

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be branded as false speakers, and lose all influence and standing among the believers! Would you want to live out your final years bearing that stigma?

Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. 31 Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, he saith. 32 Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD. 33 And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD. 34 And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house... ..for ye have perverted the words of the living God.
Jeremiah 23:30-36

By preaching a lie instead of the truth the promoters of false teaching are viewed in God's eyes as ones who are stealing his words of truth away from the people. The false teachings about the 'rapture' take the focus off of the true teachings on the Return of Christ. You hardly ever hear anyone preaching to warn the sinful about Jesus returning to administer the wrath of God upon a disobedient world; only the theories of escapism falsely portraying an image of Jesus coming to 'save the Church from the Tribulation'. The truth is shelved in favor of a fable! The Lord states in this above portion of his Word that he is against those who prophesy false dreams. Maybe this would be a good time to take a look at some history of this 'rapture' doctrine.

Although there are some very isolated mentions in the writings of the early Fathers which may be speaking of entertaining such a theory, most are worded in a manner that could just as well be speaking of being removed before the terrors of the wrath poured out at Christ's Return and not an escape from the great tribulation. It seems to me a lot of folks are reading into those quotes what they want them to say. Many today cite these

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supposed early mentions of a rapture theory as proof of its validity, but this is an unwise assumption. There were many errors being preached in the days of the early Church with some of them still being preached to this day. Would the early appearance of those false teachings validate them? Certainly not.

It is commonly reported by those who have researched the history of the pretribulation 'rapture' doctrine (Dave McPherson, H. A. Baker, Jim McKeever, John Scruby, etc.) that they find very little evidence of it prior to the nineteenth century. It was not the viewpoint of the early Church nor of the believers of the following centuries. Although others may have attempted to promote that error, the roots of its modern popularity appear to surface about 1830 in the preaching of Edward Irving, founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church, and in that of those under his influence; and was supposedly the by-product of an 'anointed' dream/vision given to one of his parishioners - a young girl named Margaret McDonald. Apparently the congregation was so impressed with this girl's account of her 'revelation' that they received it as truth from God; and began to broadcast it as such.

Later John Nelson Darby got on the bandwagon, and had some success in promoting acceptance of this new teaching. And with its introduction into the pages of the Scofield Reference Bible it was destined to someday in the future become a widespread belief.

It is wrongly believed by many today that this doctrinal viewpoint has been the opinion of the Body of Christ since the early Church; this doctrine is unmistakably not promoted in the writings of the early fathers. They wrote of the rise of an evil one who would persecute the Church but be destroyed by the Return of Christ; not a secret catching away to spare the Church from the persecution and trials of that day of darkness. The early Church did not teach a 'pre-tribulation rapture'! The widespread acceptance of this teaching is relatively new as far as Church history goes, and thankfully more and more people are today questioning its Scriptural foundation (or rather the lack thereof).

CHAPTER TWELVE

Preparing Your Ark

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. 37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.
Hebrews 10:36-37

Jesus *is* coming; it's only a matter of when. In the fast-food mentality of the 'modern' Church the practice of extolling the virtues of patience and perseverance has been cast aside in favor of preaching/selling principals of prosperity which promise to get you what you want from God, and get it for you now. But patience and endurance are both truly necessary to receive favor and fulfillment of promise from God; and as this age progresses they will become all the more needful and precious.

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; 1 Thessalonians 3:4

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Acts 14:21-22

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Romans 8:35-37

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Modern Christianity with all of its prosperity teachings and self-centered focus cannot accept the concept of God's people being sheep for the slaughter. The preservation and prosperity of self has replaced the crucified life for the greater part of the American Church.

There is an uncanny parallel between the condition of this nation and that of ancient Israel (Judah) before they were devastated and taken captive by the Babylonians. As the prophets of Israel used 'lightness' and ear-tickling false teachings to deceive the people; so the prosperity teachers and false prophets of our day are taking our focus off of what God is really saying: Judgment is coming! On a lukewarm Church, on this wicked nation, and on a sinful and unbelieving world. Those who think God would not judge, and chastise, a backslid Church do not know the God of the Bible. The words of many ministers today sound just like the deceivers in ancient Israel who said judgment was not coming - only peace, prosperity, and deliverance from all adversity. When judgment fell the people never even saw it coming, even though they had been warned to mend their ways for several decades! Their focus had been diverted away from what God was speaking by the false prophets of their day; just as ours has been by the lying, ear-tickling, money-hungry prophets of our day.

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Hebrews 11:7

Just as Noah was warned to construct an ark, we believers today are being warned of God to build an ark of our own. That ark of Noah's was symbolic of Jesus Christ; he is our ark of safety today. We need to be hidden away in Him by a total commitment to the will of God, and a wholehearted desire to follow the truth of his Word; no matter how contrary it is to what is being popularly preached. Where are all the preachers who used to quote the words of the apostle:

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I

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will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 6:17-18

It seems to me that somewhere along the line the pulpit lost its spine (or traded it in for a paycheck).

And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

Luke 8:10

God is more than happy to unfold to us the truths of his Word. It is not his desire, nor to his glory, that we as the Body of Christ would be in ignorance of, or in disagreement over, the mysteries of the kingdom of God. We have been given not only his Word of Truth; but also his Spirit of Truth. How sad it is that with these great resources at our disposal there is such a rift in the Church over the teachings concerning the Return of our Lord and the gathering of the Believers unto him. What is even sadder is the fact that so many have allowed this to become an issue of eligibility for fellowship. I have numerous times been not only shocked, but also somewhat hurt, by the way so many will reject your company if you don't agree with their extrabiblical fantasy of escapism. Such behavior is a grief to God. This should not be an issue of fellowship, but a matter of corporate prayer. But even this latter-day inclination to follow error was prophesied long before the birth of Christ:

Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: 28 And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err. Isaiah 30:27-28

To me the most unnerving part of this passage of Scripture is it teaches there would be an influence in the days proceeding Christ's Return steering the people unto error. Just as Paul told the Thessalonians that God would send strong delusion that those who

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believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness would be damned. He said God would send them a delusion because they refused the truth and stayed in defilement! A delusion from God? God putting a bridle in the mouth of some to steer people unto error? This doesn't sound like the lovey-dovey 'Daddy' of all who have said the sinners prayer; the easy-going God who is 'not angry at sin any more' being portrayed in the preaching from most pulpits.

They have got the goodness of God down pat, but have rejected the other side of the coin: the severity of God. The Bible says a false balance is an abomination to God. In presenting to the people only the goodness of God, and not his severity, you create for them a false image of God - a golden calf, so to speak; and worshiping a man-fabricated image of God is idolatry!

Truth is a gift from God; but not everyone receives that gift. Those who love their sin and/or their own opinion (or the opinions of ministers they idolize) more than they love the Word of God will receive a delusion which will convince them they have the truth, even though they are following falsehood. I would refer you again to a comment I made in the introduction to this booklet: "A life of humility and holiness is as much a protection against falsehood as is seeking knowledge of the truth. A clean heart and wholesome teaching are a lot more connected than we realize." I used to wonder greatly at the way so many professed believers turn a deaf ear to the true teachings of the Bible, and embrace extrabiblical teachings such as the 'rapture' myth. Now I am wondering how many do so by no choice of their own.

No, I am not suggesting that everyone who believes in the error of a 'rapture' before the Tribulation is lost, or living in gross sin, or steeped in religious pride. But I am saying the Bible clearly teaches that sin and pride will cause many to miss the truth, and be turned to a lie instead. And then the deceived in turn becomes a deceiver himself as he broadcasts his mistaken beliefs to those trusting him to speak the truth. Then that deceived person in turn shares his or her wayward beliefs. And so on, and so on.

The cure? A soul-searching and Scripture-searching examination of our beliefs; ever wary of believing anything not explicitly taught in the Word of God (even if our organization or

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fellowship declares it to be fact). Humbling ourselves before God, and admitting the possibility that we are capable of being deceived; crying out for Him to open our eyes to the truth, and deliver us from whatever false beliefs may have been introduced into our hearts. The prideful will not see the need to take these steps to purify their beliefs; they are convinced they're fine just the way they are. Are you daily seeking a purification of your beliefs and doctrines, or are you just going along with the crowd and believing whatever is popular or self serving? What we believe determines who we are, and also how we live before a God who takes our behavior a lot more seriously than the 'modern' gospel would lead you to imagine.

Let's look again at a verse we examined earlier:

Many shall be purified, and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. Daniel 12:10

There will be a group of 'professing Christians' who are very much in need of purification at this time, and they will get the chastisement and purifying trials they require. These will face a horrible purge which will separate all of the true believers from the make-believers. They had all their lives brushed aside the repeated admonition to 'buy of the Lord gold tried in the fire'. They had no clue that this phrase was a command to call out for the purifying of their faith by being divinely led through adverse circumstances and personal breaking; and they were even more clueless as to just how precious, and needful, a purified faith would be. They had chosen the 'modern' false gospel of easy believism and cost-less Christianity. A gospel with them at the center and not Christ. They rejected as fanaticism the true Gospel which demands a crucified life, a pure heart, and total consecration to the will of God; even mocking those preaching such a message of holiness and separated living. They had chosen to follow an easier route where the focus was on personal gain, and not on personal growth; where self was seeking a throne instead of a cross.

And now at a time when they should be soldiers for Christ, they find themselves in a boot camp of unimaginable hardships, a journey of darkness of which many of these 'foolish virgins' will not have enough oil to see them through to meet the Groom. How

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many will faint in this day? We have no way of foreseeing; but the fruits of following the lying pacification being presented as the Gospel of Christ in this nation could sadly be the loss of a multitude. The terrible times and hard decisions of those final 3½ years will truly separate the weeds from the wheat in preparation for the coming harvest of mankind.

But what of the ones who had already sought the Lord for ‘gold tried in the fire’? I am speaking of those who had already been through the fires of purification because they begged the Lord to do a cleansing work in their lives and hearts. They cried out daily for God to mold them and shape them into obedient vessels no matter how great the personal cost; willingly suffering the furnace of affliction that breaks the will and brings forth submission. Gold that has been through the fiery furnace until it is pure has *no need* of further purification. It is now fit for the master’s use! And use it he will.

And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. 33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. 34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. 35 And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed. Daniel 11:32-35

In this prophetic chapter dealing with the time of ‘Great Tribulation’ a very grim image is given of an era of oppression filled with death, violence, and even (in the worlds eye) the apparent defeat and destruction of the Church of Jesus Christ. But in the midst of this woeful scenario is an amazing statement: the people who do know their God shall be strong and do exploits! While the lukewarm and backslid are floundering, and trying to find oil for their lamps, there will be another breed of believers who come into this time prepared for battle, and in a position to instruct and help others. Yes, they are quite likely to fall victim to the onslaught of persecution, but what wonderful glory they will

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bring to Christ with their mighty deeds of faith, and their guidance of the weaker brethren.

Which of these two companies will you belong to: the weak and stumbling searching desperately for God in the midst of this chaos, or the strong and valiant being wise and doing exploits for their God?

When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; 31 (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them. Deuteronomy 4:30-31

The doctrine of a 'rapture' before the time of 'Great Tribulation' is a man-made myth. No such event will happen. The Church will go through the Tribulation. God will not forsake us. God will not destroy us. God will not forget his covenant with us. We will be caught up to meet the Lord at his glorious Return to earth. Praise the name of Jesus Christ both now and forever!

Paul Benson

Addendum A

The Stars Go Before We Do!

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.
Isaiah 65:17

The Bible clearly teaches God is going to create new heavens. In light of this have you ever wondered what brings about the end of the current heavens? It is an event we see prophesied throughout the Old and New Testament. In studying out this thought I was quite surprised to learn there are nearly twenty passages of Scripture which refer to the demise of the heavens / stars which now are. That is a lot of Scripture devoted to a topic we rarely hear preached or taught on. And what was even more surprising was the realization that according to God's Word this event must transpire BEFORE what many refer to as 'the Rapture' (but the Bible refers to as the Resurrection of the Dead and the gathering together of the living saints unto Christ.)

Let's first lay some Scriptural foundation as to the fact this demise of the heavens / stars happens in the chain of end-time events leading up to the Return of Jesus Christ to this planet.

Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. 15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. 16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel
Joel 3:13-16

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In this passage from the Book of Joel the celestial event we are discussing is tied to the 'harvest' of mankind and it says also that the day of the Lord is now near. Although this passage in Joel is somewhat unclear that what is being referred to is *the end* of the heavens / stars, when we look to other prophetic passages on this subject we receive more relevant information which can lead us to no other conclusion.

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. 10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. Isaiah 13:9-10

For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. 3 Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. 4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. Isaiah 34:2-4

I find it remarkable that we notice such similarity between the wording of Isaiah 34 and what we now read in Revelation 6:

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Revelation 6:12-14

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell

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therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. Isaiah 51:6

From these passages above, *and others, it becomes quite clear that the heavens / stars as we know them will cease to exist as a result of the unfolding scenario of Christ's Return and God's judgment of sinful mankind. This is a mind boggling concept.

But the specific question at hand is, "How does this all relate to the timing of the Resurrection of the Dead?" Let's look at some more of these prophetic passages:

Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. 4 he shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. 5 Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. 6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah. Psalms 50:3-6

These verses state that when the Lord returns it shall be very tempestuous and a fire shall be devouring before Him. This sounds a lot like the words of Paul to the Thessalonians: when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God... (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

Now notice that at this time Jesus calls to Heaven and earth to gather his saints unto Him. This is the Catching Away/Resurrection! The following is another one of the many end-time verses you will never hear a 'Pre-Trib Rapture' promoter quoting. How could they; the truths found in passages like this one blow their myth of escapism clean out of the water!

But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? 11 As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: 12 So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. Job 14:10-12

Kind of sinks 'the good ship Rapture' doesn't it? In this prophetic passage above we are informed that this Resurrection will not happen till the heavens be no more! This does not happen

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until after the latter part of the Great Tribulation. And if we look at Jesus' discourse on the end-times as recorded in the Gospels we receive the very same order of events:

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Matthew 24:29-31

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, 25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. 26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. Mark 13:24-27

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; 26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. Luke 21:25-28

The events we are talking about are so indescribably tremendous and horrifying people will actually be dropping dead from fright seeing these things come to pass! Who knows what will transpire when these words of Isaiah 13:13 are fulfilled: Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out

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of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. Will the earth remove out of her normal orbit? That would definitely get the sea and the waves roaring (verse above). Just how great is this God: Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and seaeth up the stars? (Job 9:6-7) Would it be any harder for Him to remove the stars than it was for Him to speak them into existence? Probably not.

The reality of the stars no longer being in the sky is not something I can grasp with my finite mind. It is one of those things you have to receive by faith because the Word says it's so; like the fact our earthly body will be transformed in a heartbeat into a heavenly glorified eternal body which will never get sick, age, or die. I can't totally grasp that concept either but if God said it I choose to accept it as a fact.

Although we cannot say for sure just what all will happen in the final days of this world as we know it, we can hang on to what we are unmistakably taught through the Scriptures. And as we have clearly seen here the Resurrection of the Dead and the catching away of the Church can't happen until after this unspeakable event has transpired in the heavens. Once again we see that the doctrine of a 'Rapture' causing the Church to disappear and leave the earth before the time of the Great Tribulation is in such conflict with the truth of God's Word that it just is not a possibility!

There is no where in the Bible where it says the Church will 'vanish' only that we shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye; and no where does it say the Church will leave the earth at the Resurrection. We will be caught up to meet Jesus in the air right here on planet Earth when he returns to Earth! I hope this further information has been as insightful to you as it has been to me.

Paul Benson

*See also: Joel 2:10-11, Jeremiah 4:27-28, Joel 2:30-31, and 2 Peter 3:5-13

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Materials Available

Books:

Is the Bible you read: The True Sayings of God? by Paul Benson (8½” x 11” 160 pages. Shows nearly 500 of the corrupting changes to the ‘modern’ versions. A comparative study of 10 versions!)

Should we trust: The Rapture Theory? By Paul Benson (A hard hitting examination of the rapture teaching.)

Should They Be Changing The Bible? by Paul Benson (Shows why the ‘modern’ versions are not to be trusted.)

Escape or Passover by Paul Benson (A look at the Rapture theory using nearly 100 Bible passages.)

Tracts:

In Spirit and Truth (A good primer on the error of the ‘new’ Bible versions.)

The Scripture Quiz (An eye-opener to the difference between the KJV and the ‘modern’ versions.)

A Good Man’s Garment (An exhortation to appreciate the gift of Christ’s righteousness.)

The Prophetic Feasts of the Lord (On the prophetic types of the Old Testament Feasts.)

Don’t Go To Hell! (This is a tract they will not soon forget!)

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