

# Rapture Study

An Examination of the Pretrib Rapture Doctrine

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## Preface

Dear reader, the purpose of the following study is to equip every believer with well supported and properly interpreted Scriptures concerning the teachings of the pretribulational rapture. The preparation has been done and the material organized so that readers can prayerfully study the Word on this subject in a more complete and fairly in-depth manner. You might think you know what you believe, but can you Scripturally answer the hard objections made herein to this commonly held doctrine? Generally as people, we are easily tied to traditions and follow doctrines and teachings largely based upon our denominational leanings. You owe it to yourself and to those you influence to know the WHY of what you believe. I implore you to study along with a true and honest heart to arrive at the truth on this important topic. I hopefully anticipate that you will see how the various Scriptures on this subject combine together in one harmonious and sure picture – God Bless!

In search of the truth, and for the equipping of the saints I offer this,  
Brother Jim

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## Rapture Study

### Chapter 1 - Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the Scriptural support for a pretribulational (aka pretrib) rapture and to help the reader to better discern the validity of this theological position. This commonly held belief is of significant importance as we navigate the times and seasons in which we are living in and attempt to guide and instruct others on spiritual matters and doctrine, especially in the area of eschatology with the hopes of preparing ourselves and others with Biblical knowledge to help steer and direct us, as well as provide an anchor for our souls in the times ahead. If the pretrib rapture teaching is Biblically sound and correct, then we should teach and emphasize it, but if it is not, then we should abandon it and look for the truth. It should also be said, that if the pretrib rapture is not Scripturally supported, then we have a fairly serious problem before us and a great delusion as scores of people will be believing for an event to occur that actually does not occur. It should be noted how often the Lord admonishes us to give attention to His return and yet we have so often done just the opposite and given it so little heed.

It is in lieu of these things that I ask you to review the information herein and carefully consider and examine it and "prove all things". The internet is full of "sources" of information on end-times events and much of it, in my opinion, is misleading. It is imperative that Christians in general, and especially those who are privileged to teach the Word, know what we believe and why. In the event that you do not agree with some of the conclusions contained herein at least you will be reinforced in your own understanding.

It might also be advantageous to disclose at this point that I once held to a pretrib rapture position prior to (by the grace of God) doing an in-depth study of the matter. I came up through churches that, to the best of my knowledge, mostly held to or agreed with this position. Personally, I had only looked at the pretrib position on a basic level, read various material supporting it, and listened to some very good men teach it. I had no reason for wanting to refuse it as it seemed both comforting and well supported. When I finally felt that I should look at the material more deeply, I chose and selected (in the beginning at least) only to hear or read material that supported the pretrib position. All the materials I personally owned or referenced on the matter were strong in the pretrib rapture position. I had purposed just to grow in the understanding of what I already believed in and discover the reasons I believed it in a more clear and distinct sense. It was in this attempt to find and clarify the supporting evidence that I found some strong Scriptural challenges to the pretrib rapture as it has been presented. I did not treat this matter flippantly, but with much fear and trembling prayed, studied, prayed, studied, examined and reexamined the material until I felt that the Biblical record was clear on this issue and that we have, as a Body, missed some very important discoveries.

I implore you, as you might be thinking that you have already examined all the other options, to please review these notes, and if nothing else you will be able to provide sound

Scriptural explanations to folks like myself who find serious Scriptural problems with the pretrib rapture position and want to know the truth.

Let us remember that Jesus' first coming was a great surprise to many of the theologians of His day. The fact that it unfolded differently than many expected became a great stumbling block to faith in Him and a source of contention (John 7:52). The disciples themselves, even after the Resurrection, and with the advantage of hindsight, did not fully understand the unfolding of prophecy, and it took Jesus' personal explanation of those events (Luke 24:27) to help them see what unfolded before their eyes. It would be ignorance and even arrogance to suppose that we have a completely developed theology of future events concerning the Second Coming. There are issues we need to be immovable on, but with regard to how things unfold in eschatology we should be open to consider that it might not be as we were taught or expected. During the Transfiguration on the Mount (Matthew 17) the disciples asked about "Elijah" coming first as taught by the Scribes, and Jesus informed them that he indeed had already come and pointed them to John the Baptist. Was this what everyone was expecting? No. We must learn from these things.

## Chapter 2 - How to interpret Scripture

Before diving into specific Scriptures with reference to this topic, I think there are some fundamental ideas that I believe are important with regard to interpreting Scripture. The first of these is that any "truth" we find needs to be defined and cannot stand alone if we are to prevent its manipulation. To illustrate what I mean by this let us consider the great truth pronounced by John the Baptist in John 1:29 "...behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." In this wonderful verse we find a great truth, namely, that Jesus died for the sins of the world! This seems clear cut and straight forward but you can go places with it that is beyond its intent. You could use it to defend a position of universalism and say that everyone in the world will ultimately be saved because of Jesus' work. If you wanted your "second witness" to this position you could use 1 John 2:2, "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Both these Scriptures are entirely true in and of themselves, but we know that they do not stand alone in our Biblical view of Salvation because other Scriptures like Mark 16:16 also shed light on our understanding as it declares: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." This and other Scriptures (for example, John 3:18) make it clear that universalism is not Scripturally supported, even though proponents can point to Scriptures that would seem to indicate such when read narrowly and out of conjunction with other Scriptures.

What is too often the case when a person, or group of persons, encounter Scripture which does not coincide with their position is that they either just avoid addressing those Scriptures altogether, or they go through "Scriptural gymnastics" to try to give a

“reasonable” explanation of why they do not apply. Every serious student of the Bible has read commentaries that left you scratching your head wondering how anyone could come to such a conclusion or provide such an insufficient explanation of a Bible verse. Unfortunately, I believe that some of the common verses used to teach the pretrib rapture have not been tested sufficiently with other Scripture. I am not implying that this has been done with wrong motives per se but that the “truths” used to teach the pretrib rapture may not have been tested thoroughly by many well-meaning individuals.

The other thing that would be beneficial is if we could understand the difference between the types of evidence we find and how such evidence pertains to our beliefs. Evidence can be viewed in two categories: direct evidence and indirect evidence (aka circumstantial evidence). Direct evidence is evidence that directly proves a key fact or issue. Indirect (circumstantial) evidence is evidence that allows a person to infer that another fact at issue is, or can be true, but it does not directly prove it.

Examples of these:

Direct evidence – A video surveillance camera and three eye witnesses saw Johnny break into the candy store.

Indirect (circumstantial) evidence – Three witnesses saw Johnny running from the area of the candy store that was broken into.

This difference in understanding this is crucial because there are times that people are relying upon evidence for their beliefs that is only circumstantial but is not direct and cannot be relied upon in itself or even in conjunction with other circumstantial evidence. (As strong as it might appear, it is only part of the puzzle).

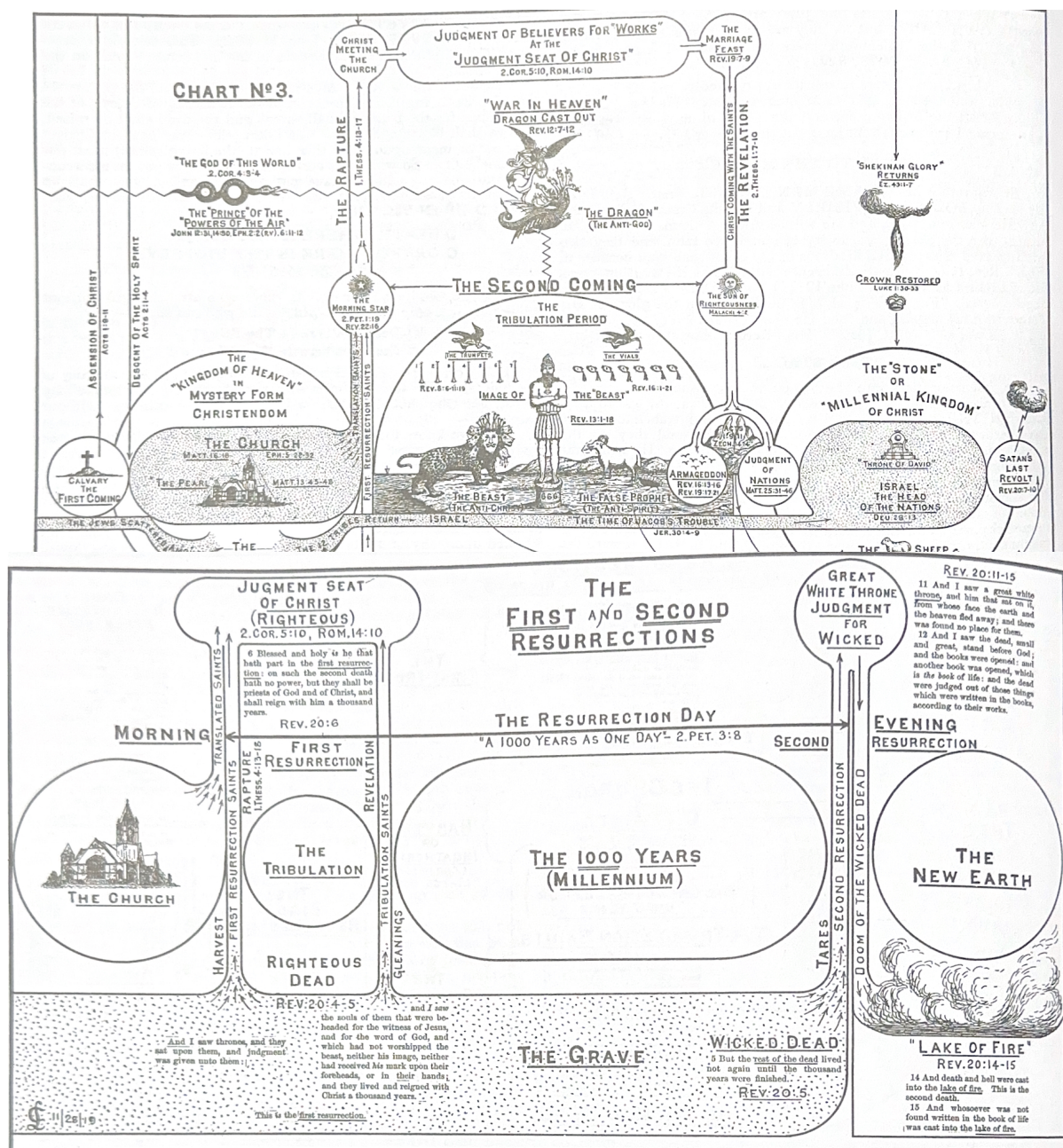
### Chapter 3 – What is the pretrib rapture and its claims?

So what is the pretribulational rapture and the support often given for it?

As to what it is, we will give a general overview because in all likelihood if you are reading this you have an understanding of this view already. But in summary, it is the view that Jesus will return for His bride (the Church) and take it from the earth prior to the Tribulation. This event is generally presented as “secretive” in the sense that Jesus comes in the clouds and for the Church alone. Dead saints are resurrected from the grave and then immediately following their resurrection, the saints that are alive at His appearing are also caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The Church then safely abides in heaven while the earth (presumably unaware of what happened) goes from bad to worse as it enters seven years of Tribulation which consummates in Jesus returning once again to bring judgment and destroy the antichrist, etc., before His Millennial reign.

The two diagrams that have been inserted are from "The Greatest Book on Dispensational Truth in the World", by Clarence Larkin. Before commenting about them it should be noted that similar diagrams are available from other pretrib rapture proponents, and they convey the same basic idea and it is possible that Larkin's work inspired or served as a guide to theirs.

In the first chart it should be pointed out that the "Second Coming" is written with arrows pointing in two directions. This is due to the fact that the pretrib rapture calls for TWO second comings; one for the Church pretribulationally, and a second second coming at the end the Tribulation. The first chart shows "The Rapture" and the Church meeting Christ in the air with the righteous dead who also meet our Lord. Larkin has labeled this, "First Resurrection Saints."



It is not clear in the first chart, but the second chart shows that there is another rapture and resurrection of “tribulation saints” at the end of the Tribulational period at the time of Jesus’ second second coming. This pattern is seen in other diagrams you can locate on the subject, and you can view the “second rapture” at the end of the Tribulation. What is also visible on the second chart is that after the 1000 years (i.e. Millennium) there is what is labeled the “Second Resurrection” of the unjust.

This might seem confusing to the reader but in conclusion, **the pretrib rapture position** (though not often summarized in this manner) **proposes that Jesus has two Second Advents or Second Comings:** one for the Church and then one where He is manifested to the world at large.

**In addition to this, there are THREE resurrections of dead individuals.** The first resurrection (note the term “first” in diagram) occurs at the pretrib rapture, then a second resurrection at Jesus’ second second coming which is visible to the entire world (this is just labeled “tribulation saints” in second chart), and then a third resurrection (labeled second resurrection) of the unjust after the millennium. Remember these ...

With this overview of the pretribulational rapture covered, we can move on to some of the support that is often given for it. This is not a comprehensive list, but these are some of the strongest arguments made and evidence presented. It is claimed:

1. The doctrine of imminence necessitates a pretribulation rapture (to be explained).
2. 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17 & 2 Thessalonians 2:1 describe this pretribulation rapture.
3. 1 Corinthians 15:52 also describes pretribulational rapture.
4. 1 Thessalonians 5:9 states that we are “not appointed to wrath” (interpreted to mean the Tribulation) and this necessitates a pretribulation rapture.
5. The “absence” of “the Church” being mentioned in Revelation from chapter 4 onward.
6. There are other examples of people being exempted from God’s wrath in Scripture, and these are types of the pretribulation rapture.

We will now examine these, carefully looking at the verses and opinions expressed to see what is actually being said. I would also like to advise that it would be advantageous to look at how the verses we cover would be interpreted by a person without any preconceived ideas or doctrinal bias. Ask yourself how the original readers would naturally understand the text – look for its “natural interpretation.” It is also necessary to look for key phrases, such as “Day of the Lord,” “That Day,” etc., and begin to make observations of both their usage and the events coupled therewith.

In the examination of these evidences given for the pretrib rapture, there will be crossover of examination and certain of these “evidences” will be examined repeatedly as we look at multiple passages of Scripture. We will include several Scripture passages at length in order to go beyond a presumed meaning of a few selected verses and instead try to capture the



flow of the passage or letter at large. Some verses might be left out for brevity but it is encouraged that one follows along with their Bible open so they can take in an even larger view and reflect on the comments I will try to provide. This being said let's look at the "doctrine of imminence."

#### Chapter 4 – "Doctrine of imminence"

The doctrine, or teaching, of imminence is based upon Jesus' numerous admonitions that His appearing would be sudden and unaware (Mat 24:36, 1Th 5:2, 2Pt 3:10 et al.). Jesus clearly taught this, but the logic, when it is applied as evidence for the pretrib rapture, is that since Jesus' appearing is at a time no one knows, then there must be an Appearing other than the Appearing at the end of the seven year Tribulation. This reasoning concludes that the Tribulation is of a definite period (seven years), the middle of which is marked by the antichrist's desecration of the holy place (Mat 24:15, Dan 9:27). Since this event can supposedly be "pinpointed in time," it cannot be the appearing Jesus was speaking of when He says no one will know the time thereof. This reasoning then continues to conclude that the sudden appearing that no one will be able to predict must be speaking of the pretrib rapture.

I must admit, that when I first heard arguments for the pretrib rapture, that this evidence seemed to make good sense to me, but upon looking further at it, this conclusion quickly unraveled. Do Jesus' statements about a return of His that comes "like a thief in the night" indicate or necessitate that there must be "another return" than that of the one described in Revelation ch. 19 & 20 which is after the Tribulation? If so, then this argument is stating positively that Jesus' appearance at the end of the Tribulation, as described in Rev 19 & 20, is an event that can be calculated and does not fit the criterion of being described as "a thief in the night" or a "day and hour" which no one knows! This is the conclusion that this "supposed evidence" is making and this is a part of the equation that we often fail to see, namely, if Jesus' return at the end of the age is calculable and therefore necessitates "another return" (aka pretrib), then the Bible cannot describe the return at the end of the age as a surprise or at a day and time no one knows.

Let's see what the Scriptures say about the Lord's return, The Day of The Lord, and see if this holds up! **Remember, (and this understanding is vital for this entire study so please keep it in mind), that the Lord's return at the proposed pretrib rapture is not a day of wrath or vengeance upon the earth.** This statement is clearly presented by pretrib advocates in the article, "*The Rapture*," by John F. Walvoord found in the Tim LaHaye "*Prophecy Study Bible*" where it reads: "*Prophecies regarding the Rapture make no mention of angels or attending hosts, and no mention of judgment on earth to follow.*" The pretrib rapture is a much different event where the Lord swoops down unaware and pulls His Church from the earth. Hence anytime we see the coming of the Lord described in Scripture where wrath or vengeance accompanies it then this **CANNOT** be pertaining to a pretrib rapture. So

let's look at two verses now and then others later as they come up when we address the additional evidences given for the pretrib rapture.

**2 Pt 3:10** "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

**Note:** In this verse from 2 Peter, we see clearly (and please read the accompanying verses) that Peter is talking about the Lord's Second Coming and it is a cataclysmic event of destruction as described at the end of Revelation. It is this event that Peter, by the Holy Spirit, says comes, "as a thief in the night."

**Rev 16:15** "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

**Note:** This verse contains the words of our Lord spoken well into the book of Revelation and toward the end of the Great Tribulation, and Jesus is still claiming that He is coming "as a thief."

These two references indicate that Jesus' Second Coming as detailed in Rev 19 & 20 at the end of the Tribulation is indeed described as coming as a "thief in the night," and if these two witnesses are not enough, we will see this repeated again in passages yet to be covered. It will be abundantly clear that the Second Coming of the Lord, the day where wrath is inflicted, comes at a day and hour which no one knows. This understanding will completely dissolve the argument that the Lord's actual Second Coming is calculable and necessitates another coming, specifically a pretrib rapture.

## Chapter 5 - What were the Thessalonians taught?

It is possible that the verses in 1 Thessalonians 4 are quoted most often on this sacred topic so now let's cover these verses, for they are some of the "foundational verses" said to describe the pretrib rapture. It is often 1Th 4:13-19 and 5:9 that are selected as evidence for the pretrib rapture, but we are going to take a much larger look at the book of 1 Thessalonians and then venture into 2 Thessalonians to get a better grip on what is being conveyed. One of the troublesome parts of the teaching of the pretrib rapture is that the reader is forced to keep flip-flopping in determining and defining "which" Day of The Lord is being spoken of. Once again, the reason for this being that there is no longer ONE Day of The Lord, but TWO (one where He comes secretly to take away the Church and one where He comes to bring judgment). When "The Day of the Lord" is referenced as pertaining to the pretrib rapture, it must be distinguished from the "Day of The Lord" that brings vengeance and wrath. We will reiterate that, **verses that demonstrate judgment cannot point to, or be referencing, the pretrib rapture.** So let's look at some of 1 & 2 Thessalonians and see what is being said. I encourage you to read along side with your Bible open to see the entire passage while considering the notes for the verses I have given.

Please remember to consider the natural flow of the epistle as it reads through chapter divisions.

**1 Th 1:10** "And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

**Note:** As you have hopefully read through all of ch. 1 you will see that the Lord's return is first spoken of here in this 10th verse. When you begin to look for it, it is amazing how often the Lord's Second Coming is spoken of and in more places than you thought. Each of these references are pieces of the puzzle concerning His return. Some verses contain more details than others, some overlap, some do not, and some overlap on different points at different times. It is when you put them together that you get the fullest description of His Return.

Here we see that Jesus will return from heaven, and He has delivered us from the wrath to come (more on this point later).

**1 Th 2:19** "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"

**Note:** The Lord Jesus' return is a continual theme and thought in the letter.

**1 Th 3:1-5** "(1) Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

(2) And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

(3) That no man should be moved by these afflictions: 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; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

(5) For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain."

**Note:** I still hope you are able to read these chapters in their entirety and now I include these verses to make a point and a distinction. I must state first of all that I do not believe the tribulation referred to here is a reference to the seven year period we refer to as "The Tribulation." It is rather the tribulation which we endure as being part of this world and more specifically, being identified with Christ. I believe that as Christians there are things we are saved from, or you could say, redeemed and delivered from. I believe we are redeemed from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13), that Jesus bore our sins, our griefs, our sorrows, and the chastisement of our peace is upon Him and by His stripes we are healed (Isa 53:4-5). I believe God's wrath is not for the believer but for the unbeliever (John 3:36), but we should also make it clear that tribulation of other sorts are part of this life, and Jesus said we would encounter them (John 16:33). The greatest of these perhaps, and so

prevalent in the Scriptures as seen coming upon the early Church, was persecution and hatred from the world (under the influence of satan). Jesus promised that this persecution would occur, and it will not stop, or even get better, for it will be exacerbated during the Tribulation. This being said, as Christians we also experience other events that resulted from the Fall of Man. The planet is ravaged by storms, wars, disease, crime, etc., and here we Christians are in the midst of it. Christians have lived through horrible times on the earth and will continue to, but we are still different – we are not alone! There has been an untold number of miraculous interventions by our God in these times and throughout history and as recorded in the Scriptures. This distinction and awareness will be profitable when we discuss further our being “delivered from wrath”! Another reason it is worth mentioning this tribulation (i.e. persecution) that the Thessalonians were enduring is because it will be referenced again in 2 Thessalonians as it pertains to the coming of the Lord.

**1 Th 3:11-13** “(11) Now God Himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

(12) And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

(13) To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.”

**Note:** Here Paul is expressing his great desire and prayer to visit the Thessalonians again and that their love towards each other would increase (a prayer that I believe we see answered in 2 Thessalonians). He then declares that the end thereof would be that they would be established and appear unblameable before God, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, “with all His saints.” These are some important details because as stated we are trying to deduce whether there are two days of the Lord or just one. If there are two comings, which one is being referenced now? Here we read that the Lord Jesus will come with all His saints which is what is described in Rev 19:14. When Jesus is described as coming in the pretrib rapture, He is coming supposedly “for His saints,” not with them. It should be very clear then that this is the actual Second Coming that is being spoken of and not a “pretrib rapture” coming. This also agrees (though perhaps less obviously) with Paul’s desire for them to be found “unblameable” in that day (this has application with regard to the letters to the seven churches in Revelation). Paul then flows seamlessly into chapter 4 with a “furthermore” as he instructs them on Godly living. After this he enters into our verses that are said to describe the pretrib rapture, so let’s look at these and their natural flow into ch. 5.

**1 Th 4:13-17** “(13) But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

(14) 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."

**Note:** These verses are said to be a description of the pretrib rapture. Let's look at them and determine what we can definitely identify them as saying and what event they pertain to. Paul begins with an exhortation of comfort that these Christians do not sorrow like the world over their saved loved ones who have died (v. 13). The reason for this hope is that the dead in Christ will be resurrected at some point in the future. Jesus' resurrection is given for the basis and assurance of this hope. This point is important and will be referenced again when we look at 1 Corinthians Ch. 15. Paul also states in verse 14 that the dead in Christ will come back with Him. This point is often overlooked but it is repeating what was spoken of in 1 Th 3:13, "Jesus returning with all His saints." When do the dead in Christ actually return with Him? The answer is seen at the end of Revelation at the Lord's coming. Paul then says the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. Where do we see these things that accompany the return of the Lord? Remember, these verses are presented to be specifically about the pretrib rapture, but interestingly enough, the pretrib rapture is described as a secretive event where Jesus comes in a brief moment unobtrusively, and the Church instantly vanishes from off the planet. The world does not see Him in the pretrib rapture, but look at the accompanying signs in these verses: "a shout, an angel voice, a trumpet." Does this seem like a quiet arrival? Where else do we see these things mentioned in conjunction with Jesus' return?

**Mt 24:29-31** "(29) 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."

We will cover much of Matthew chapter 24 later, but for our purposes now there are some relevant things to see. Verse 29 clearly says that this is after the Tribulation, and then in verse 30 we see Jesus returning for judgment. He is described as coming in the clouds, with angels, and the sound of a trumpet (sound familiar?). It then says that His elect are

then gathered together from all around the planet. This presents a problem for the pretrib rapture position because we must find a way to interpret these verses in a manner other than what should seem plain. The pretrib rapture proponents would say that this is a description of the "second rapture" of "tribulation saints" and that the "actual church" or "pretrib church" is already in heaven. But notice that our verses in Thessalonians, that supposedly describe the "pretrib rapture," remarkably fit this passage which is clearly after the Tribulation. If you examine the verses surrounding The Second Coming (Rev 19:6 etc.) you will notice that it is not a quiet time and that there are angels present and shouts, etc.

Returning to examining our verses in 1 Thessalonians 4, we also see that the dead in Christ will be resurrected before the living saints are caught up in the air to meet the Lord. It is an interesting point that they meet the Lord in the air. Why? Why meet us in the air instead of just bringing us all the way up to heaven where He is? Could it be that He is returning in the manner described in Rev 19 & 20 where we read of the Marriage feast and His return? It should also be mentioned that pretrib rapture proponents speak much about the traditional Jewish wedding feast and people have gone to great lengths connecting the dots with its reference to the Church meeting Christ for the pretrib rapture, but I caution you that although there might be some connection and imagery related between the traditional Jewish wedding and Jesus returning for His Bride (the Church), that the connections often drawn are subject to the interpreter's imagination. Being able to connect imagery between the Jewish wedding ceremony and pretrib rapture doctrine does not serve to validate the pretrib rapture. There is an interesting observation made in the Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (JFB) Commentary that the Church as a whole is called the "Bride of Christ, but individuals (as seen in the parables on the matter) are called guests (more on this later).

Here's another thought for the reader that is connected with these verses, as they describe THE resurrection of the dead in Christ. This is connected to one of the things I believe was used of the Lord to lead me to further study this subject - the fact that the first and second resurrections of the dead are described in Revelation Ch. 20:4-5 & 13. It is very clear in these verses that there are TWO resurrections of the dead. In spite of this, even as seen in the previously shown charts, the pretrib rapture calls for three resurrections (one of saints pretrib, one of saints at end of the Tribulation, and then one after the Millennium of the unjust). How do pretrib proponents account for this apparent contradiction with what the Scriptures teach? They say the first resurrection comes in "installments." Interestingly enough Jesus taught that there was to be only two resurrections (see John 5:28-29), and when Jesus told Martha at the death of her brother Lazarus that he would rise again she replied that she knew he would rise again, "in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:23-24). Martha in her understanding knew that there was a resurrection that would occur at the "last day," a time where there would be time no longer (Rev 10:6); the "last day" is not some point in time pretrib (i.e. prior to the Tribulation). Why then do pretrib proponents demand that saints are resurrected prior the Tribulation? For what cause? Some would say: To bring His bride to Himself and to save them from the trouble that is going to

occur upon the earth during the Tribulation. Ok, then why resurrect the dead? Are they going to be affected by the Tribulation? No, they are already dead! Why not resurrect them with the rest of the saints as described in Revelation ch. 20? The answer, as I believe it will become more clear, is that there is ONE Resurrection for the saints of God that accompanies the Lord's return as described in Rev 20 which is in perfect agreement with all other passages concerning the resurrection of saints (as we shall attempt to demonstrate). Let's move on now to the verses immediately following in ch 5 to shed more light on this discussion.

1 Th 5:1-11 "(1) But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

Note: (Remember that the original flow of this letter was one continuous thought, and ch. 4 is intimately connected to ch.5) **Times and seasons of what?** Obviously, the things he was just talking about: the meeting the Lord in the air, the dead in Christ being raised up, the Lord descending with a shout and a trump! The supposed pretrib rapture - but look at what is said next.

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

Note: Once again this "Day of The Lord" comes as a thief in the night, by surprise. According to pretrib rapture teaching this can only pertain to the pretrib rapture because the coming of the Lord at the end of the Tribulation is calculable by their estimation.

(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.

Note: Wait a minute! Once again we see the return of the Lord, one in which destruction occurs, being described as coming unexpectedly like "birth travail." This cannot be the tranquil rapture event that occurs pretrib; this is clearly the Second Coming described at the end of Revelation. Here is the question then that we need to answer, and I believe we can answer, and will answer again: Is Paul talking about one event or two? Does Paul in the midst of a flowing thought, a flowing discourse, switch back and forth between two events - two Second Comings? Because at the end of chapter 3 the Lord is returning with all His saints (as described at end of Revelation), then in chapter 4 we get a description of what will happen to believers at His coming. We will meet Him in the air along with the dead that are resurrected. Following this description of what will happen to us at the Lord's return, Paul reminds them that they have insight or knowledge of the times and seasons of such events, and he enters into describing the Day of The Lord as one in which there is destruction. Unless one's mind has preconceived notions about a pretrib rapture, there is no difficulty in determining that the event being spoken of is one event, the Day of The Lord that occurs at the end of the Tribulation, the end of Revelation. The only way a pretrib rapture can be supported by these verses is if you pull a few of them (4:14-17) out and expound on them without the rest of the context or say that the rest of the context is not

describing the same event which is unreasonable. The natural flow is that Paul is speaking of one and the same event – The Day of The Lord!

(4) But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

(5) Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

**Note:** Here again this verse only gets complicated if we have two different events to distinguish between. If Paul is speaking of a pretrib rapture where one day you could be driving down the road drinking coffee and suddenly vanish, it certainly would overtake you as a thief. Something we will hopefully see described in more detail in Matthew ch. 24 is that we are supposed to be watchful and awake, and in doing so, we are told that we can interpret the season as things draw nigh. This verse is linking the “Day of the Lord” (a day of destruction) with believers, in saying that it will not be the surprise to them like it will be to the rest of the world.

(6) Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

(7) For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

(8) But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

(9) For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

(10) Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

(11) Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

**Note:** As you read through ch. 5 you can see clearly that the context is clearly “The Day of the Lord” and that sudden destruction (v. 3) will come upon them (the ungodly world) unexpectedly, but we are also told that because we are not in the darkness as others that that day won’t be such a surprise to us (v. 4). Paul then admonishes them (and us) to be alert (v. 6) concerning that Day, and then comforts us by saying that we are not appointed to wrath! What wrath is he specifically referencing? Some have thought that escape from wrath has meant escape from the Tribulation period as a whole, but specifically the wrath that is being spoken of is the great Day of Wrath, a day in which judgment will come upon the whole earth with the exception of those who have the hope of being saved by the Blood of Jesus Christ. We will not partake of that wrath. This, I believe, is why in verse 8 the phrase, “hope of Salvation” is used referring to the hope (confident expectation) of being Saved on that day from destruction that should devour the adversaries (Heb 10:27). We shall discuss this deliverance from wrath further again later. It is now fitting that after the discussion of these things, and the seriousness of what is said to come upon the world, that Paul finishes with these words in his closing statements.

**1 Th 5:23-24** “(23) And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(24) Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.”



Note: Paul prays that they will be blameless, spirit, soul, and body unto the coming of the Lord Jesus! I think now after reading this epistle in its fulness that it is clear that "The Day of Lord" being spoken of in the epistle is all one event – one day, not two. It is only when you select verses 4:13–17 and take them out of the rest of the discussion that you can set them in their own framework, and this can only be done for these verses in particular because the mentioning of wrath is not specifically located there. This absence of wrath, though, is due to the fact that these verses are describing what will be happening to alive and dead believers at His great return. This is just part of the discussion of what occurs at the return of the Lord, but even in these verses we see that the descriptors surrounding His return (shouts, trumpet, etc.) point to the Second Coming that is at the end of the Tribulation.

We shall now move into 2 Thessalonians where the Holy Spirit through Paul continues to give us more understanding.

## 2 Th ch. 1 & 2

**Ch. 1**"(1) Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

(2) Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

**Note: Paul's prayer from 1 Thessalonians, that their love would abound, was answered!**

(4) 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:

**Note: The Thessalonians were still enduring persecution and tribulation, but now note closely the statements Paul makes regarding these trials.**

(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:

(9) Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

(10) When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Note: There is quite a lot here that is overlooked, specifically when verse 2:1 (which we shall come to) is presented as referencing the pretrib rapture. In verse 5 Paul mentions suffering for the Kingdom of God. Then in verse 6 he concludes that it is a righteous thing for God to repay trouble to the ones who were troubling them. But note when! At the same time trouble comes upon the ones causing trouble, Paul says that they will receive rest with us (i.e Paul and his companions). This, he says, is when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (v. 7), taking vengeance (v. 8). I encouraged you now to reread these verses for a moment and see the connection in the events of which Paul speaks. One group receives trouble, while the believers receive rest at the coming of the Lord Jesus, and there can be no mistaking "which" coming this is. Unbelievers will be punished with everlasting destruction (wrath in which believers will not partake) (v. 9). Then in verse 10, he says that Jesus will be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe. Why admired in that day? I believe it is because the saints are finally seeing their Lord, and this is the Marriage Supper described in Revelation 19! Notice also that it specifically says, "in that day," - singular. This is the way all the Scripture harmonizes on the topic; The Day of The Lord, The Coming of The Lord, When the Lord Jesus is Revealed, Day of Wrath, That Day. They are all one and the same as you will see now in ch. 2

(11) Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power:

(12) That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

**Ch. 2** "(1) Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him,

**Note:** These words are often applied to the pretrib rapture but let's first remember that all of the speaking of the "coming of the Lord" in chapter 1 dealt with a time of vengeance. Let's see if the apostle once again "flip-flopped," and if these words can fit a pretrib rapture.

(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.

**Note:** Paul here is writing to correct some misinformation that had apparently spread that the "Day of Christ" is at hand (about to occur) or as some translations put it, already past. I believe "at hand" is correct (spreading rumors that Christ is about to return is more reasonable than trying to say "it already happened" - an event that would be hard to miss). I will not expound upon this much now but only say that it is possible that people were "date setting" as they have through history causing confusion. (see JFB commentary & Albert Barnes.) Moving on, we must again ask what "day" is Paul speaking about? Is he referencing the pretrib rapture as some say he is? Or is there only one "Day of Christ" at the end of the Tribulation? Let's see!

(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;

**Note: This should be an end to all argument as to what day verse 1 is referring to. It is appropriate that it begins with, "let no man deceive you" because the Spirit through Paul tells us clearly that "that day shall not come" until there is a falling away, AND the man of sin (antichrist) be revealed. THESE EVENTS ARE DIRECT EVIDENCE - these are signal markers that must occur before that Day.** In attempt to try to get around this, some of the leading pretrib rapture advocates have tried to imply that the phrase "falling away" could actually mean "departure," in the sense of leaving the planet and that this further validates the pretrib rapture. This is one of those examples of "Scriptural Gymnastics" and the practice of: "going back to the Greek" and trying to manipulate a definition when the text does not match one's interpretation. The word is "apostasia" and you can research the word and its application yourself. But even if you fell for this interpretation, what about the revealing of the antichrist? The verses that follow clearly reinforce that this is indeed the antichrist and these are signs given to us through Paul. These are DEFINITE indicators of timing for the Day of the Lord. This verse makes perfect sense with the natural interpretation flowing from chapter 1 and up to this point, that this is THE DAY OF THE LORD revealed in Revelation after the Tribulation. Anything else is taking the verse out of context.

(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.

(5) Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

**Note: Confirmation of this being antichrist.**

(6) And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

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

**Note: Pay attention to what these two verses say.**

(8) 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:

(9) Even him, whose coming is after the working of satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

(10) 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.

(13) But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

**Note:** The two verses (v. 6-7) mentioned are often given for additional evidence that the Church is removed prior to the Tribulation. The reasoning proposed suggests that the One doing the withholding is the Holy Spirit (which it could be). It is suggested that when the Church is raptured from the planet that the presence of the Holy Spirit within it is also removed and then the antichrist can be revealed. This argument can sound plausible at first glance, but it is fatally flawed for more than one reason. First, when we read the chapter as one flowing thought, and not broken into segments, we see clearly that the verses said to describe the pretrib rapture (v. 1-2) are defined as not coming until after a falling away and the revealing of the antichrist. It is then illogical to take verses 6 & 7 out of their context and present them to say the exact opposite conclusion, i.e. that the antichrist cannot be revealed until the church is removed by a pretrib rapture. **Paul says the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him is after the falling away and revealing of the antichrist** – the pretrib rapture proponents say the antichrist can only be revealed after the gathering of the saints during the pretrib rapture. This is the opposite of the text's clear meaning. Second, as many pretrib proponents admit, the Holy Spirit would not cease to be on the earth if the Church was raptured. He being a member of the Godhead is omnipresent and cannot be removed. Thirdly, I believe we need to understand what the Church actually is. Once we understand what the Church is, then we can evaluate what claim is actually being made when it is taught that the Church is removed from the earth.

## Chapter 6 – What is the Church?

If we asked the question, “What is the Church?”, we might get a number of answers, including: the Body of Christ, His Bride, the universal company of believers, etc. These would all be correct, and we could study through the Gospels and the Book of Acts and see how the Church started as a very small company of believers, only a few hundred (that is all it consisted of), and then grew from there. These persons who had genuine faith in Jesus Christ and believed the Gospel became His Body, His Church. They were called out of the world and saved by The Blood of the Lamb, by faith in Christ for He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6) (1 Jn 5:11-12) and Acts 4:12 tells us, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Now picture the proposed pretrib rapture scene: life on planet earth is carrying along until one day the Lord returns (although not fully) to the earth and wisps away His Bride from the planet and multitudes of graves are emptied. The remaining population of earth, I speculate, is dumbfounded and shaken (wouldn't you be if the person you were speaking to vanished?). I assume there would be mass speculation about what occurred and spiritual confusion would escalate since the Church, the “Light of the World” (Mt 5:14) was just

extinguished. Yet in Revelation 7:9-17 we see clearly that vast multitudes, which cannot be numbered from every nation, kindred, people, and tongue are saved during the Tribulation:

#### Revelation 7:9,13-14

“(9) After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

(13) And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

(14) And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

So here is a question worth consideration: “Who are these people?”. The pretrib rapture proponents would say “Tribulation Saints” and it leaves us placing them in a separate category other than the Church. This is a “necessary” classification for the pretrib rapture doctrine because it teaches that “the Church” has been raptured already and that the “church age” is over. It needs a way to get around and account for passages such as the one just given, but this is an unscriptural separation that has no support in all of the Bible, it is a simple fabrication of the pretrib doctrine. Let me explain further. Let’s say that the Church is raptured and all believers are gone from the planet and a certain group of people, (maybe someone who had heard about the rapture but was an unbeliever) now lays hold of the truth and is converted and starts to share with others the Gospel and this group grows. What do we now have back on the earth? The Church! And the Holy Spirit that supposedly was withdrawn in some measure when the Church was raptured is back again too!

Remember, Jesus said that where two or three are gathered in His Name that He is in the midst of them (Mt 18:20). Are we going to say that this innumerable multitude we see come out of the Tribulation is a somewhat “lesser Church” a “different Church” or even a different sort of believer? It seems apparent in Revelation 19 & 20 that they join in at the Marriage Feast. Will they have a different place in heaven? It just doesn’t make sense when you think it through! You cannot pull all believers from off the planet and say, “The Church age is over” (yet this is what is said) and then try to put Tribulation saints into a category of “other” like they are not part of the Bride. No, they are the Church on the earth during the Tribulation (even if there was a pretrib rapture of the existing church). Which then begs the question, why would these believers that exist in the Tribulation not be “raptured out” upon their conversion? If the promise of a rapture from wrath is good for one group of believers, would it not still apply to these believers?

I believe what some people have done that has caused confusion is in making distinctions between Old Testament Saints, New Testament Saints, “Tribulation Saints,” and national Israel that goes too far. Some have even gone as far as saying certain books of the New Testament are written to and pertain to the Jews and consequently what is contained therein is not for us. It becomes very confusing when people start picking parts of the New

Testament and saying, "that was for the Jews". I observed this very sort of claim while watching a teacher online. The man was addressing his audience about a certain subject and used James 1:1 in which "the twelve tribes" are greeted in the salutation. He went on to say that it was this Jewish audience that the contents of the Book pertained to and not us. Well, if we follow this logic we should throw out 1 Timothy because there Paul starts by saying, "Unto Timothy..." so this must not be addressed to us either.

**No, it is not indicated anywhere that the "Church age" will end prior to the Tribulation.** The Church will be on the earth until it meets its Savior in Revelation 19 & 20. It is also a good explanation for why we see an innumerable multitude come out of the Tribulation (Revelation 7:14). I find it hard to believe that such a multitude would come to faith in roughly seven years when the Church, the "Light of the World," is gone and the only source of truth is removed, especially since the Tribulation is such a time of deception with manifestations of false signs and wonders being performed by satan himself. Do all these people come to the truth with no Church on the earth, no believers to witness? Not likely.

For a further study on how the people (i.e. saints) of God are one, I encourage the reader to study sections of Scripture like Ephesians 1-2 and Romans 11-12 and see what the Lord has done to make all who believe one in Christ.

#### Chapter 7 - The Church in the Book of Revelation & exempt from wrath.

So what about the claim that you cannot find the word "Church" from Revelation chapter 4 onward? As impressive as this point might come across in the manner it is often taught, it also unravels with some examination. Let's look at Revelation chapter 1 and see the purpose of this great Book and the way it is laid out.

**Revelation Ch. 1** "(1) The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John:

**Note:** Here the "reason" for this Revelation is given in the very first verse. It is "to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass." Why bother revealing these things to us if we are not even going to be on the planet? Is it just for the sake of information? The true value in this Revelation is to prepare us for these things so that we are "not in the dark" as Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:4 and to keep us from being deceived.

(2) Who bare record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

**Note:** John was privileged to see things.

(3) Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

**Note:** This verse states clearly **that this is prophecy**, which obviously deals with future events. It is said that, "blessed is he that reads and hears" these words. The Revelation was meant to be written and passed on.

(4) John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne;

**Note:** Here we have who John first addresses: the seven churches which are in Asia. Why exactly these seven churches we might not know in all certainty, and there is much speculation, but here are some thoughts I will suggest. First, I feel that the fact that there are seven churches selected when there were certainly others that existed is in itself significant. Some have proposed that these churches are a "panorama" of the Church throughout history and each church mentioned represents the Church at a particular point in history (i.e. the first apostolic church seen in the Book of Acts is symbolized by the church at Ephesus and so on up to the Laodicean church which represents today's Church). I disagree with this broad generalization and don't see that conclusion made or implied in the Scripture. I feel that churches with these characteristics have likely existed simultaneously throughout all church history. There have always been churches doing well spiritually and those that are not. Secondly, I feel certain that these were actual churches that existed in history when Revelation was written but also that their characteristics were possibly selected because their situations, strengths, and weaknesses provide an adequate summary of the spiritual condition of churches overall. In selecting these seven, an individual person or church can see the admonition they particularly need. Lastly, I would once again note that this Revelation was given to the Church - for the Church's learning. This prophecy only seems to be relevant for an event, or events, they will encounter. If the Church was going to be watching all this from heaven then what would be the significance of it?

(5) And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

(6) And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

(7) 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.

**Note:** Observe verse 7, and consider what coming of the Lord is being referenced. If the early Church was reading this as it was first distributed among them would they be entertaining the idea of a pretrib rapture? Why would not an event as crucial to eschatology as a pretrib rapture not be mentioned directly in this Book? If it's the Church's future why not include it in some specific terms? I believe that if I was reading this Book of Revelation as a first century Christian I would see the coming of the Lord as going to take place just like it is referenced in verse 7 and every other place in the Book - at the

end. Pretrib proponents might suggest that the pretrib rapture can be found in Revelation, but I feel this is only conjecture found by reading into things that the text does not say. In this verse Jesus is described as “coming in the clouds”, which is similar to what the pretrib doctrine teaches, but we see here clearly that EVERY EYE sees Him at this event and they wail. This coming of Jesus described here obviously cannot be the proposed pretrib rapture.

(8) *I Am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending*, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

**Note:** Notice it does not say, “and Which is to come, and come again.”

(9) I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

(10) I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

**Note:** Some have said that this “Lord’s Day” that John mentions here refers to John being brought into “The Day of the Lord,” (i.e. the pretrib rapture) but again this doesn’t match the text. John says he was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day when he heard a great voice which he turned to see – he does not say he heard a great voice, and then was brought into the Lord’s Day. The Lord’s Day is in all likelihood Sunday.

(11) Saying, *I Am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last*: and, *What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

**Note:** Here John receives from the Lord specific instructions on what to do and the word “churches” is mentioned.

(12) And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

(13) And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

(14) His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire;

(15) And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters.

(16) And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

(17) And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, *Fear not; I Am the first and the last*:



(18) I Am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I Am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

(19) Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

**Note:** Here John receives further instruction. He is told to write the things he has just seen; the things which are (generally understood to be the message to the seven existing churches); and the things which shall be hereafter. This is significant because some have taken this last category "things which shall be hereafter..." and have said that the absence of the direct use of the word "church," is indicative to it being gone from the earth via the pretrib rapture, but this proves nothing of the sort. What simply occurs after the seven churches are addressed is a shift of focus to the events that the Book is intended to reveal (i.e. the things which shall be...) and it is these events that the text focuses on. The prophetic vision is describing significant events that usher in the final return of the Lord Jesus and in this Revelation, in the description of these events, we do not see the word "church" specifically used, but we clearly see the word "saints" used. It is these believers (saints) from every nation under heaven that the "beast" makes war with (Rev 13:7, Daniel 7:21&25), and are said to "die in the Lord" (Rev 14:13). How can you "die in the Lord" and not be in Christ and how can you be in Christ and not be part of the Bride - His Church. These saints are just as much a part of the Church as any other saints. There is no indication of an imaginary line being drawn in the sand so to speak, prior to the Tribulation, and now we have a different category of believer. We also see in Revelation 19:7 that after all the events of the Tribulation have taken place then it says, "His wife hath made herself ready." Wasn't she ready at the pretrib rapture if there was such a thing?

(20) The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

**Note:** Observe that the seven churches are represented as candlesticks which I believe connected to us being "the light of the world."

After chapter 1 and the introduction to the book, the next two chapters contain the letters to the seven churches and include commendations and rebukes from which we may learn. For the sake of brevity we will not go through these seven letters to the churches, but what I believe is noteworthy is that every church receives a promise to the overcomer, and these promises are connected with the Kingdom of God and the restoration of all things as detailed at the end of Revelation. For instance:

**Ephesus - Rev 2:7** "...to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (See Rev. 22:2 & 14)

**Smyrna – Rev. 2:11** "...he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." (See Rev. 20:6 & 14, 21:8)

**Pergamos – Rev. 2:17** "...to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written..." (See Rev. 3:12 John 6:48-51 & **verse 54 which says:** "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.")

**Note:** Please notice that when Jesus gave the sermon declaring that HE IS THE BREAD OF LIFE, He states that those who partake of Him will be raised up by Him – ON THE LAST DAY. This was the same phrase that Martha used at the tomb of Lazarus. The "last day" is not a day in time prior to the seven year Tribulation – it is at the very end. With this in mind I would encourage the reader to revisit Jesus' parables about the Marriage Supper, Parable of the Talents, and others that speak of His return, and I believe that you will not see any intimation of a pretrib rapture but instead the picture given is the return of Jesus at the consummation of all things.

**Thyatira – Rev. 2:26-27** "(26) ...he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:  
(27) and he shall rule them with a rod of iron..." (See Rev 19:15, 20:4, 22:5)

**Sardis – Rev. 3:3-5** "(3) Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

(4) Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.

(5) He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father..." (See Rev. 19:8, 20:12 & 15, 21:27, 22:19)

**Note:** It is interesting that Sardis, a church of which it is said that it has a name that it is alive but is dead (3:1), that this church is given a warning in verse 3 that sounds a lot like what is said to unbelievers, namely: "I will come upon thee as a thief..." and then in verse 4 it is said that there are a few that will walk "in white," implying others will not. Keep this in mind as we now look at Philadelphia.

**Philadelphia – Rev. 3:12** "He that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of

My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name.” (See Rev 21:2, 22:4)

**Note:** Philadelphia is special in that it is only one of two churches that does not receive a rebuke or correction, the other being Smyrna. There is a promise given to Philadelphia in Revelation 3:10, “Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

This promise has often been referred to as the promise of a pretrib rapture to spare the Church from the Tribulation. This is another one of those instances where this can seem like a strong argument when presented outside of the whole context, but upon examination we can see that it is not the promise of a pretrib rapture. For starters, the pretrib rapture doctrine teaches that the entire Church (all believers) will be raptured prior to the Tribulation. The promise given in verse 10 (whatever it might mean) is not given to all the churches but to Philadelphia in particular for its outstanding and unwavering commitment to the Lord Jesus. Other churches like Sardis are actually presented with strong threatenings if they do not repent and even the faithful church of Smyrna is told that they are going to endure “tribulation ten days” (Rev. 2:10). Why not use this verse in Revelation 2:10 to teach that all the Church will go through the Tribulation in the same way Revelation 3:10 is used to teach that it will not? This is inconsistent. Consequently, it is a large stretch of interpretation to say that verse 10 teaches or supports a pretrib rapture; if anything it teaches to the contrary since it is only given to this faithful church and not the others. It was also brought to my attention by a learned man, that the phrase Jesus uses, “keep thee from” is similar in construction to Jesus’ words in His High Priestly Prayer recorded in John 17:15 “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” Here Jesus prays that believers are kept from the evil while not being removed out of the world, proving He can protect from evil while in the midst of it.

We must also bear in mind that although this Word to Philadelphia is eternal and has implications for the Church in any and all ages, that it was also a direct statement made to a real church in Philadelphia at that time in history. This realization then begs the question, was the original church in Philadelphia that this was written to “raptured” in order to preserve it from a coming trying time, or does God have other ways to keep from evil?

This brings me now to some concluding remarks about the Church being excluded from wrath. We saw in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 that we are not appointed to wrath, and in context it is my belief that the particular wrath being spoken of in that passage is that wrath of that great Day when the Lord returns and brings judgment and the ungodly suffer the wrath of the Lamb. Some would reply and say that the entire Tribulation is “wrath” and then make the conclusion that we will be raptured prior to it. In this conclusion, which I believe to be erroneous, we must make some distinctions. For starters, I would encourage the reader to revisit the plagues that God brought in judgment upon Egypt because there are some

striking resemblances between these and some of the judgments seen in the Book of Revelation. One should note that Israel was exposed to some of the 10 plagues brought upon Egypt (viz. plagues 1-3) but then God made a distinction as seen in Exodus 8:22 -

"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."

In a similar manner, I believe one might expect the same in the events of the Tribulation. For instance, in Revelation chapter 6 the seals are being opened and we see war, violence, and famine, break out and increase upon the earth. These events will be greater during the Tribulation than any other period in history, but believers have been alive and present on the earth through wars, famines, violence, pestilence etc., and have not experienced a "rapture." This being said, and in a similar manner to what occurred in Egypt, we see the wrath of God in the Book of Revelation is specifically upon those who have received the mark of the beast and who have chosen to side with the antichrist (see Rev. 9:4-5, 14:9-10, 16:2). I believe the text indicates that the saints are not subject to these judgments, but what we do see coming upon the saints during the Tribulation is widespread martyrdom and persecution (see Rev. 6:9-11, 7:14, 12:11, 13:5-9 & 15, 16:6, 17:6, 20:4). Let's look at one of these passages:

#### Revelation 13:5-9

"(5) And there was given unto him (**the beast or antichrist**) a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months (**3.5 years - the last half of the Tribulation**).

(6) And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

(7) And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

(8) And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

(9) If any man have an ear, let him hear."

**Note:** This passage in itself is so revealing because we see in it that the antichrist will be blaspheming God and persecuting the believers of Jesus, the saints, the ones whose names are in the Book of Life. When one stops and ponders on this it becomes absurd that anyone does not view them as the Church on the earth at that time. Consider also that they are the ones sitting on thrones and reigning with Christ (Rev. 20:4) and that they are the ones who "overcame him (devil) by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony..." (Rev 12:11). These verses which we often take to ourselves as the Church (and rightly so), are actually in context pertaining to the ones who the pretribulationists don't consider "the

Church" but relegate to the category of "Tribulation saints," which is just a way of obscuring the facts in an attempt to lead everyone to believe that the "Church age" is over prior to the Tribulation and that the "real" Church has been removed. These are not just "unlucky ones" who missed the rapture and got saved later; they are the Church. Obviously, it is easy for pretrib proponents to make this claim, but the burden of evidence is upon them to prove it from the Scriptures because as we have seen in the letters to the Thessalonians, our gathering together with the Lord is when sudden destruction comes upon the ungodly world (1 Th 5:3) and after the antichrist is revealed (2 Th 2:3). So in conclusion, it is completely right in one sense to say believers are exempt from wrath in the distinction that the plagues that attach themselves to unbelievers are not for the saints. Also, on **That Day** when the Lord returns, He will not be fighting against us with the Sword of His mouth – this wrath is not for us, but I do not believe you will find anywhere in the Scriptures the exception from a troubled planet and persecution which characterize the Tribulation.

Laodicea – Rev. 3:21 "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." (See Rev 20:4)

Note: These letters contain the "things that are" (Rev. 1:19) and from chapter 4 forward we are given a glimpse of the things "which shall be hereafter." This "glimpse" from chapter 4 onward might not use the word "church" but it does speak of the Lamb's Bride and references saints and followers of Jesus throughout. Once again, I encourage you to think on the purpose for the Book given in Revelation 1:1 "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass...". Again, why pass this Revelation onto the Church if it details events that they will have nothing to do with – events they will just be spectators of while in heaven? Why not just clearly tell them that they will be removed and watch from above? I believe the answer is the same as it was for any prophecy in Scripture; all are given to prepare His people for what to expect, so they can make adjustments and prepare their hearts.

In case the reader has not read or studied Revelation chapters 19–20 I will give this brief outline:

## Ch. 19

V. 1–5 Rejoicing in heaven for God's judgements.

V. 6–10 Marriage Supper of the Lamb. It states, "the Marriage of the Lamb has come" (verse 7). Here, Christ joins His Bride – THE CHURCH, AFTER THE TRIBULATION, and immediately before He pours out His wrath. We will see this laid out again very specifically in Matthew chapter 24. Interestingly, pretrib doctrine has taught that the Marriage Supper follows the pretrib rapture and is prior to or during the Tribulation period. This is contrary to the Scripture.

V. 11-21 Jesus returns on a white horse with His armies and brings judgment and wrath which those who have entered the Marriage Supper do not partake of.

## Ch. 20

V. 1-6 There is now a scene change and we are told that the devil is bound and cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, but this is not all John sees. John sees thrones (verse 4) and those that are sitting on them are some who were martyred during the Tribulation and these reign with Christ over the Millennium. These folks are no longer dead and they are not "just souls" as in Revelation 6:9. They are in their resurrected state and John states that, "...**this is the first resurrection**" (verse 5) and informs us that it is for the "blessed and holy" (verse 6). The significance of this event being referred to as the "**First Resurrection**" cannot be overstated because this both designates it as the first and locates its position in time in the unfolding of events. This "first resurrection" is one of two resurrections, as Jesus spoke of in **John 5:29**, **Daniel spoke of in 12:2**, **Paul references in Acts 24:15**, and laid out here in Revelation 19-20. The Bible is emphatically clear on this, yet the pretrib rapture doctrine calls for THREE resurrections: ONE at the pretrib rapture, ONE at the return of Jesus in Revelation ch. 19, and ONE for the unjust after the Millennium. As stated before, the only way to get around this apparent contradiction is for the pretrib doctrine to state that the "first resurrection comes in installments." This is not according to the Scriptures, it's contrary to the Scriptures.

## Chapter 8 - 1 Corinthians 15 and the Last Trump!

We shall now visit another passage said to be speaking of and describing the pretrib rapture found in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52. Once again, I believe that once the whole passage is read and the full landscape taken in, it will become evident that it is not a pretrib rapture passage at all, although it deals with the Resurrection. As we shall see, the entire chapter is centered around demonstrating the fact of the Resurrection as the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul tries to combat wrong teaching that has entered the church. We will now look at the entire passage with notes attached to bring out certain details and purposes.

### 1 Corinthians chapter 15

(1) Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

**Note:** Paul is about to revisit and restate the facts of the Gospel that he preached to bring these fundamental truths back to their memory in light of wrong teaching.

(2) By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

(3) For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

(4) And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

**Note: As Paul is revisiting what he has taught he repeats that it was “according to the Scriptures.”**

(5) And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

(6) After that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

(7) After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

(8) And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

(9) For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

**Note: It might not be noticed at first, but as Paul lays the groundwork for the point(s) he plans to make, (namely the literal resurrection of the body), he gives a list of the witnesses of Jesus’ Resurrection in order to add certainty to its validity.**

(10) But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

(11) Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

(12) Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

**Note: Here Paul states the wrong teaching that he has begun to address. Evidently, some among them were teaching that there was not a literal resurrection. We are not informed of what they were actually teaching in its place.**

(13) But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

**Note:** Paul pulls no punches but immediately cuts to the chase and makes the bold statement that if the dead do not rise (literally) then Christ did not rise either. He then goes on to list the consequences that would be the result if such things were true.

(14) And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

(15) Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

**Note:** Once again Paul links the resurrection of believers and the Resurrection of Christ so intimately as to state that they are either both true or both erroneous, but they cannot be separated.

(16) For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

(17) And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

(18) Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

(19) If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

**Note:** Additional emphasis on the importance of the literal resurrection of believers and Christ.

(20) But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

**Note:** Paul now moves from his argument of reason to bold facts which will help the readers understand the significance of Christ's Resurrection and that of believers. He states the fact that Jesus is the "firstfruits," of those who have died - He did it first!

(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.

**Note:** This is a huge detail that can be overlooked, and it's not a "fuzzy" detail, it's very clear and it's "according to the Scriptures." It says in verse 23, that those who are Christ's will be **resurrected at His coming**. The only Second Coming of Christ detailed in the Scripture is at the end of the Tribulation as recorded in Revelation chapter 19 (which we visited briefly in the previous chapter). As we have seen, the verses pretrib proponents select and claim to describe another "second coming" of Jesus for the purpose of a pretrib rapture, when



viewed in their proper context, are actually connected to the Second Coming detailed in Scriptures where the Lord returns in judgment. There is an echo of the truths found in these verses located in 1 John 3:2, which the reader may view.

(24) Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

**Note:** Please note the flow of Verse 23 into verse 24. Verse 23 ended with: "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" - (Verse 24) "then cometh the end" - directly followed with the establishment of the Kingdom. This Kingdom of God which is spoken of throughout the New Testament is now come to its full fruition and it is directly linked to the necessity for a resurrected body as we shall see. But note again that the believer's resurrection is at Christ's return which is at the end. At this point I also want to bring to the reader's attention Revelation 11:15 which reads:

"And the seventh angel sounded (i.e. **blew the last or seventh trumpet**); and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." **(Parenthesis added)**

We will hopefully see even greater significance attached to this verse shortly and then again later in this study, but for now please notice again how verses 23 & 24 of our chapter in Corinthians unites the resurrection of saints, the time of "the end," and the delivering of the Kingdom of God. This verse from Revelation associates the Kingdom with the seventh angel's sounding of a Trumpet.

(26) The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

**Note:** All enemies of the Lord are destroyed and so is death. How is death destroyed? By the resurrection of the saints.

(27) For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him.

(28) And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

(29) Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

(30) And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

(31) I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

(32) If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.

(33) Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

(34) Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

### **The Resurrection Body**

(35) But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

**Note:** Paul is likely here presenting the argument of the scoffer who would mock at the resurrection as "illogical." We can surmise that this is not just a question of interest because the next verse leads with, "You fool."

(36) Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

(37) And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

(38) But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed His own body.

(39) All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

(40) There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

(41) There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

(42) So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

**Note:** Paul here is speaking of how the resurrected body will be different from our original body, but it is important to note that the original body is "sown in corruption" and that it is corrupted. This will be significant as it pertains to the coming Kingdom.

(43) It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

(44) It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

(45) And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

(46) Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

(47) The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second Man is the Lord from heaven.

(48) As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

(49) 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.

**Note:** This is the important connection that I made reference to before. These natural bodies of ours cannot “inherit” the Kingdom of God. “Inherit” is the same as saying “enter in” for these phrases are used interchangeably in the New Testament on the matter of the Kingdom of God. Only the Saved, the Redeemed, will see the Kingdom (or inherit the Kingdom) and these will need to have their bodies changed first in order to do so.

(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. (EMPHASIS ADDED)

**Note:** Verse 52 is often given as another of the “proofs” for the pretrib rapture. How they deduce the timing as occurring before the Tribulation is not really known to me, but it seems it is arbitrarily assigned or is assumed because of the doctrinal position held. Think of what we have read in this chapter up to this point. Paul has made a defense for a literal resurrection and goes on to show its necessity in actually inheriting the Kingdom of God. Paul has linked the resurrection of the saints with Christ’s return (at the end), and the Kingdom’s manifestation (also at the end). Now the Spirit through Paul wants to reveal a little more of the mystery to them and informs them that some believers will be alive at the time of the resurrection, or better said, “when corruption puts on incorruption.” These believers will experience the change without dying, just as spoken of in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. When this change, and the resurrection of the saints is going to occur, is then given a very specific time stamp – THE LAST TRUMP – (Remember Revelation 11:15 referenced above).

We will speak on this “trump” again after reviewing Matthew chapter 24 but a few things should be restated now for consideration. First, the pretrib rapture is presented as a secretive event that takes everyone by surprise, the Lord comes quickly in the clouds and in the twinkle of an eye all Christians are gone and changed. But again the Scriptures actually describe this event quite differently, in that it’s attended by angels, shouts, and a trumpet blast and now Paul informs us that it is the “LAST TRUMP.” I have studied this particular verse and have read or heard various reasons from the pretrib rapture position on

why this Last Trump Paul mentions here is not the last trump that is in the Book of Revelation. Some have said it's "just the last trump for the Church," but this again is one of those instances where you must ask: How do you Scripturally arrive at that conclusion? And, Why is this not the Last Trump in Revelation at the end of all things? Answers to questions like this must be based upon the Scriptures and not circular reasoning like, "we know it's not the last trump in Revelation because the rapture is before the Tribulation." This to me can now be added to the claims that seem clearly erroneous but are made by the pretrib rapture position, these being:

- ~ The last trump that attends the resurrection of the saints and their bodies being changed "is not actually the Last Trump."
- ~ The First Resurrection seen and described in Revelation chapters 19-20 accompanying the Lord's return is not actually the first resurrection, "it is stage 2 of the First Resurrection." Stage 1 occurs at least 7 years prior to part 2 of this First Resurrection.
- ~ Jesus is not actually coming back once at the end of all things, an event referred to in Scripture as The Day of the Lord, but He actually has "two second comings."

(53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

(54) So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

**Note:** Here is further evidence as to the timing of the resurrection. Verse 26 told us the last enemy to be destroyed is death, and here we see that "death is swallowed up in victory" when believers are changed. If the Church is removed from the earth prior to when the Tribulation occurs, and at that point they are given their glorified bodies, then death is destroyed prior to the Tribulation (at least in part); seven or more years prior to when all the other enemies, (antichrist included), are destroyed. Also, how is it logical to say death is destroyed and swallowed up in victory prior to the Tribulation, when it is going to be such a time of massive death and large portions of the earth's population are dying rapidly and martyrdom being carried out? It does not make any logical or Scriptural sense, but if we see the resurrection of believers and the return of Christ all as part of one cataclysmic event, then the statement makes more sense.

(55) O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

(56) The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

(57) But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Note: Amen**

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

### Chapter 9 - Matthew 24: Summary of the End Times.

Now on to what is possibly one of the clearest presentations of end time events, the Olivet Discourse. In Matthew chapter 24 Jesus Himself lays out end time events in a very direct and summarized fashion. I often think of it as the "Cliff Notes" for the end times. As we read through this chapter we won't hit every possible detail, but I want to pay particular attention to the clear natural reading of it.

#### Matthew Chapter 24

(1) And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to shew Him the buildings of the temple.

(2) And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

(3) 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?

**Note:** Jesus' statements in verse 2 likely sparked the disciples' question found here in verse 3, which in Matthew comes in 3 parts. Part 1. When shall these things be? Part 2. What shall be the sign of Thy coming (return)? Part 3. And of the end of the world? I have heard pretrib proponents teach this passage as three separate questions with three separate answers and say that part 2 is separate from part 3 and consequently that the answer to part 2 is referring to the pretrib rapture since it is separate from the end of the world. There are several reasons not to accept this rationale, the first being that it is a big jump of speculation (indirect evidence) to assume that a three-part question in itself reveals a pretrib rapture and that the question itself formulates a reason to believe that there is "another" return of Jesus. Secondly, Mark and Luke record this same conversation for us and in those Gospels the questions are essentially the same, both containing two parts as seen here:

#### Mark 13:4

"Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things be fulfilled?"

#### Luke 21:7

“...when shall these things be? And what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?”

So why the difference between the authors? My opinion on this is that the Holy Spirit uses Mathew's account to expand on what is contained, or meant, in the questions presented in Mark and Luke in order to give us increased revelation on the subject. Again, I emphasize that this is just my opinion, but it is based on observations made through reading the Scriptures in other passages. For instance, in the beloved John chapter 3, when Jesus enters into His discourse with Nicodemus, Jesus tells him in verse 3 that “...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” This statement confuses Nicodemus (verse 4) so Jesus makes a similar declaration in verse 5 substituting different words to provide clarification: “...Verily, verily, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” These word substitutions / additions were to shed light on the question, not to provide additional questions. Just as different Parables written by the different Gospel writers give us different important details, Matthew in a similar manner is shedding light on the situation with the substitution of phrases. Matthew expands upon what Mark and Luke record as part 2 of the question in their Gospels, namely: “...what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?”. This question is in essence greatly revealed and expounded by Matthew who says: “What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?” I believe this statement is not actually two separate questions with two separate answers but is actually one event stated two ways. It is as if I asked you, “When will you walk your dog, and come to my house?” This question does not have to be asking two entirely different questions but restating the facts about one event. This conclusion that these two statements are actually describing one event is supported by Jesus' answer (i.e. the rest of ch. 24). We shall work through this chapter but with regards to the issue now being addressed, it should be noted that when we read Jesus' answer to His disciples questions we see the end of the world combined with His return after the Tribulation. There is no pretrib return visible in this passage.

(4) And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

Note: The end times are characterized as a time of deception and the admonition given is to not be deceived. The question then arises, (and should be asked throughout the rest of the reading of this passage): To whom is Jesus speaking? In context, the answer is obviously His disciples who constituted the early Church. But this is a valid question, because although it should seem readily apparent that Jesus is addressing this passage to His disciples both then and for all time (as with all of Scripture), some have taken the position that this passage is not for the Church. The suggestion is either that the address being made is to national Israel or possibly “Tribulation saints,” but if you do not begin with these preconceived ideas or force this interpretation upon the text it is obvious that Jesus was answering His disciples' questions about end time events and His return. The instructions given to them are

given to be handed down to all believers for all times so that "that day" would not come on them "unawares" (Lk 21:34 & 1 Th 5:4). The only reason I can see for not believing that Jesus was, and is, giving these words to all believers (i.e. the Church), is to make them fit in accordance with and not contradict pretrib teaching which says the Church age is finished at this point in history and all believers have been taken from the planet.

(5) For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

**Note:** Who is Jesus trying to warn about false Christs trying to deceive them? Who would naturally be looking for Christ's return amidst all the events He is about to describe? The answer is the Church who has generally always felt the return of the Lord is at hand when troubled times have come. In response to this general reaction of the Church, Jesus is warning us to be on guard against false Christs.

(6) And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

**Note:** Notice that Jesus repeatedly is saying "ye" or "yourselves." Since He was looking in the face of His disciples at the time spoken, to who else can these words be spoken but His people. If this verse is not speaking to believers, then why admonish them not to be troubled? If it is to any other group, then they should be troubled because wrath is coming and they need to be saved. Notice also in this verse that Jesus says that the end is "not yet;" He is working His way towards the answer to His disciples' question.

(7) For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

(8) All these are the beginning of sorrows.

**Note:** It is believed by many that Jesus is now describing the period of time at the beginning of the Tribulation. The things described shadow the opening of the seals (likely the first four) which describe similar events. The phrase "beginning of sorrows" characterizes these things as a distinct set of events that are the beginning of something significant that will be further described.

(9) Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My Name's sake.

**Note:** Who else can be hated for "His Name's sake" other than believers? Jesus is obviously addressing believers and believers = The Church. Notice the persecution is from "all nations."

(10) And then shall many be offended (i.e. fall away - 2 Th 2:3, 1 Ti 4:1), and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

(11) And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

**Note:** These warnings only make sense if addressed to believers and speak of false prophets in the Church.

(12) And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

(13) But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

**Note:** End of what? In context, it is the time being referenced throughout the chapter – the Tribulation period – the end of all things. Connect this verse with verse 10 – the offended were those who did not endure to the end. Is this verse speaking to unbelievers telling them that if they just make it to the end they will be saved? No, it is speaking to believers to endure. This is similar to what Jesus spoke to the churches in Revelation with regard to overcoming.

(14) 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.

**Note:** Who is preaching the Gospel in this time? Not national Israel, they will be having it preached to them. Believers preach the Gospel – the Church proclaims the Gospel. Those that believe in Jesus Christ are the Church whether they get saved during the Tribulation or not. To say that the Church has been removed and that these are a separate group of “Tribulation saints” does not work because now you have generated a new category of people who believe in Jesus and preach the Gospel but are actually not part of the Church – they are sort of a less privileged subcategory that also goes to heaven but missed the Church age – very unreasonable and unsound.

### The Abomination of Desolation

(15) 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:)

**Note:** Almost all agree and recognize that this verse is speaking of the antichrist and this point in time marks roughly the midpoint of the Tribulation which goes with the flow of the passage since verse 8 described other events as “the beginning of sorrows” which were followed by increased persecution and then this desecration by the antichrist.

(16) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:



**Note:** These are specific instructions for those in this region since the antichrist has moved in and "Jerusalem is compassed about" (Lk 21:20).

(17) Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

(18) Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

(19) And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

(20) But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

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

**Note:** Further indication of the time being that of the Tribulation.

(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.

**Note:** "Those days" What days? The days of Tribulation. "For the elect's sake." Who is the elect? This is one of those places where someone can speculate any answer that fits their position, but if you look up this very word "elect" you will find it overwhelmingly is speaking of believers and the Church (see Lk 18:7, Ro 8:33, Col 3:12, 1 Pt 2:9), and the context here indicates so as well. To apply it to another group, such as "elect Jews" is not consistent with its typical usage and can be done upon no other basis than that of trying to remove the Church from the Tribulation scene in order to support a particular doctrine.

(23) Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

(24) For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

(25) Behold, I have told you before.

(26) 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.

**Note:** Repeatedly, Jesus is speaking to His disciples and saying, "you"; "I have told you"; "if they say unto you." Jesus is warning His disciples about being led astray by imposters (false

christs). Once again, if the Church is already removed from the earth then why give the warning? Jesus also makes it clear to them that although there will be false christ "sightings" here and there, that when He actually returns that it will be unmistakable! Where is the secret rapture?

(28) For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

### The Coming of the Son of Man

(29) 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:

**Note:** It is abundantly clear here that this point in time is at the end of the Tribulation and the end of all things is at hand. One should note the striking resemblance of these events and those of the 6th seal in Revelation 6:12. The mystery around the order of the seals, and other events of Revelation can be confusing but the provided link below contains some worthy observations that can be advantageous to the reader in understanding the unfolding of these things. I would encourage you to copy the address below into your browser and study this document.

[https://etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/files\\_JETS-PDFs\\_16\\_16-3\\_16-3-pp149-158\\_JETS.pdf](https://etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/files_JETS-PDFs_16_16-3_16-3-pp149-158_JETS.pdf)

(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. (See Rev. 6:16-17).

(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.

**NOTE:** These verses are so revealing and when read in their simplest form, without preconceived ideas, there is not a lot of confusion as to the order of events. Verse 29 clearly places us "after the Tribulation of those days" and we see the heavens shaken and the Son of God coming in His glory "like lightning that cometh out the east" (verse 27). All men see this appearing and the people of the earth mourn, but at the same time another group is gathered! Angels are given the order and a Trumpet sounds and the elect are gathered from across the earth! **If there was a decisive moment to discover the timing of the rapture of the Church it is now.** Let's recap what we have learned up to this point

and then with the addition of some other verses, put all the pieces of Scripture together and see the beautiful harmony of what is being said. Please reread verse 31 above again before reading the following verses.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16 (Note: we have shown the timing of this verse is at the end.)**

“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: **(sounds just like Matthew.)**

**1 Corinthians 15:52 (This verse is when the saints inherit the Kingdom.)**

“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. **(Sound likes Matthew and 1 Thessalonians.)**

**Revelation 10:7 (This is the LAST TRUMP of the seven – review other translations if needed.)**

“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound **(the LAST of seven TRUMPETS)**, the mystery of God should be finished, **(i.e. the end)** as He hath declared to His servants the prophets.”

**Revelation 11:15 & 18**

“(15) And the seventh angel sounded; **(his trumpet)** and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.

(18) And the nations were angry, **(sounds like Matthew)** and thy wrath is come, **(this is THE DAY of the LORD)** and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.”

**Daniel 7:21–22, & 27 (We see Daniel prophesied the same event – notice who the antichrist persecutes; the saints.)**

“(21) I beheld, and the same horn **(the antichrist)** made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;

(22) Until the Ancient of days **(Jesus Who is also called the “everlasting Father”)** came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

(27) And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.” **(Sounds like Revelation 11:15.)**

#### **Luke 21:27-28**

“(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.” **(Notice believers are told to look up now!)**

I hope it is now abundantly clear that all these books of the Bible we have referenced are in perfect harmony. They all, perhaps from slightly different angles, point to the same event. They point to a day of wrath, after a time of Tribulation and the appearance of the antichrist (2 Th 2:3-4), when the Lord will come in glory to put an end to all things. The earth will mourn, people will gnash their teeth, but the Church is not appointed to wrath, but to obtain Salvation (1 Th 5:9), to inherit a Kingdom, to join the Lord in the Marriage Supper (Rev 19), and this is the rapture of the Church, when the dead will rise and hear the voice of the Son of God and corruption will put on incorruption (1 Co 15:54). From then on we shall reign with Him, this is the first resurrection (Rev 20:5). Look up! This is so good to know! Thank You Lord!

#### The Lesson of the Fig Tree

(32) Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

(33) So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it **(His return)** is near, even at the doors.

**Note:** Jesus, after describing the unfolding of end time events and His return, shifts to a lesson on timing and He draws our attention to the fig tree. Why? Because He wants us to be awake and aware. He exhorts us to learn from the fig tree, and the simple message contained therein is, “you can read the signs of the fig tree and know the season” – summer is a season. This is important for us to discern because a “season” is not a specific “day or hour” but a broader period of time. Jesus’ encouragement and lesson for us then is that we should be able to discern the “season” of these events. (More on this in a moment.)

(34) Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

(35) Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.

#### No One Knows That Day and Hour

(36) But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

**Note:** Jesus now states concerning His return that no man, nor angel, knows the day and hour of this event; a day and hour being an exact point in time. Here is where I believe there has been much confusion. The majority of believers have been rightly taught that no one knows the day and hour but they have not generally understood that they should be able to discern the season because of the events mentioned. This has been complicated by the teaching about a pretrib rapture which teaches Jesus will return twice. As we stated, that position has erroneously assumed that Jesus' return at the end of Revelation is calculable because of the desecration by the antichrist, but I will attempt to show in a moment how that calculation cannot be done to the exact day and hour as people have proposed. As it pertains to us being able to discern the "season," we see Paul teaching the same thing in 1 Thessalonians when after speaking of the destruction to come upon the world at the Lord's return he says in 1 Th 5:4:

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."

In other words, "That day will not be such a surprise to you."

Then in 2 Thessalonians we see the same thought being contained in Paul's words to them about not being erroneously stirred up and shaken by false reports that the Lord's return is "about to happen." Notice 2 Th 2:1-3

"(1) Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming 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 (antichrist) be revealed, the son of perdition"

I mentioned these verses before but now they might have even more meaning as you hear Paul saying, "Now concerning the Lord's return and our gathering to Him, don't be misled by false reports that it is about to happen - don't be deceived by these things - for that day cannot come until a great apostasy and the antichrist is revealed."

This very admonition is the same in essence as saying, "You should know the season."

Now as to the confusion about being able to calculate the exact day and hour of Jesus' return based upon the actions of the antichrist, here are some thoughts. For starters it should be said that it will not be easy to identify the day when the Tribulation starts. Yes, it is a period of seven years, but I do not believe you will easily know when to actually start the clock. For this reason, the actions of the antichrist around the middle of the Tribulation become a more reliable marker of time - remember Jesus said to look out for "abomination

of desolation...standing in the Holy Place" (Mt 24:15). But this, like the actual beginning of the Tribulation, might not be something easy to pinpoint. Notice these verses in Daniel ch. 12 where Daniel is actually inquiring about when the end will be and see the answers that are given. I encourage you to read the entire chapter on your own, and when you do, pay attention to v. 2 which also speaks and indicates two resurrection.

#### Daniel 12:7-8 & 11-12

"(7) And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a TIME, TIMES, and an HALF and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. (Time - 1 year, Times - 2 years, & Half - 1/2 year = 3.5 years. The Jewish year being 360 days for a total of **1260 days**).

(8) And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?"

(11) And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. (Here we get the time of **1290 days** from the abomination).

(12) Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. (Here we have a time of **1335 days**).

What does all this mean? Truthfully, I cannot say with certainty what it all exactly means, but this I do see: Daniel asks a question, and we see three different periods of time given that all relate to that last half of the Tribulation. This leads me to suspect that being able to "put your finger" on the exact moment to start counting down might not be easy to do. If you calculate the difference of days between these periods of time given you end up with a difference of 75 days, which to me seems to be about the length of time for a "season." It becomes easy to imagine that in the political turmoil, violence, devastation, and confusion that will mark this actual period of time in history, that defining the exact beginning of what is considered the moment of desecration could be confusing and not easily defined. On this point I could be wrong, but it could be that all that is easy to determine at that moment in history is, that the "fig tree has put forth her leaves". These differences in time stand in opposition to the claim that you will be able to spot a particular event in the course of the seven years and begin an exact countdown to the end. This statement is true even if you still held to the idea of a pretrib rapture because Jesus in Mt. 24:26, when He declares that no man knows the day and hour, is clearly speaking in context to His return that is the culmination of all things - hence the "doctrine of imminence" is once again discredited and holds no weight in "demanding" another return for Jesus other than seen in Revelation.

(37) But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

**Note:** It would be profitable to read verse 36 with this verse again to see that in context it is obvious that Jesus is speaking of the same time period. I mention this because I have heard it expressed that the verses that are to follow speak of the pretrib rapture and actually take place before all the events Jesus described. In other words, it is proposed that Jesus finished speaking about His Second Coming seen in Revelation and now He is speaking of the pretrib rapture - He sort of switches gears and brings us backward in time from the things just spoken of. It should be very clear that this is not the case when you put the verses together, even as seen in verse 39 where the context is still the time of judgement.

(38) For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,

**Note:** The world will be in the Tribulation, yet at the same time there will be an "element" of normal life, and probably political leaders, "promising better days," for as Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, people will be saying "peace and safety" when sudden destruction comes upon them, and this is exactly the same thought Jesus is conveying here.

(39) And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

(40) THEN shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

**Note:** Notice Jesus ends verse 39 referencing His return and begins verse 39 with a THEN - Then shall some be taken and others remain. I believe it is very reasonable to view these verses as describing the actual rapture and what Jesus said would happen at His return in verses 30 and 31 - He will gather the elect. This is the repeating of the same truth.

(41) Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

(42) Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

**Note:** This is another one of those details that once again demonstrates that the rapture is not pretrib. It can go by so fast that it is not noticed, but if we understand that all of the context is about His return to bring judgement at the end of all things, why would He say, "Watch," if the Church is already gone before the return that is the context of these verses.

(43) But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

(44) Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.

(45) Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over His household, to give them meat in due season?

(46) Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing.

(47) Verily I say unto you, That He shall make him ruler over all His goods.

(48) But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming;

(49) And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

(50) The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

(51) And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Note:** Here is another point of consideration (although we will not take the time to go through the various individual examples). Notice how Jesus admonishes His followers to be ready at His appearing. These warnings are repeated as chapter 24 flows seamlessly into chapter 25 where we have the parable of the "Ten Virgins" and the "Talents." In all of these parables there is a warning to be in the right spiritual condition and ready for the Lord's return. In these parables the ones who were not in the right "spiritual position" at the Lord's return are damned. If the Lord's return for His people was pretrib, then all the individuals who were not prepared at the Lord's return would actually have seven or more years to get it right, but there is no indication of that in these lessons which are clearly provided to have people prepared. This common feature, that is seen in these and other parables, is generally not part of the discussion on the pretrib rapture, and by and large I believe they are not even thought of by most individuals when considering the validity of this doctrine. This being said, I have seen these verses addressed and the way the issue is dealt with is to say that parables like the "Ten Virgins" are not actually for the Church, or not speaking of believers. Justification for these claims is along the lines of how these virgins are wedding "attendants" not the "Bride" etc. These claims though, hold no validity, and actually, if really examined, start to tear at the fabric of the Gospels and the New Testament as a whole because now we start to take certain passages and designate them for one group and some passages for another. The context is clear, crystal clear, Jesus is speaking to His disciples, and when read in honesty of heart there is no question who these parables are for – they are for His people. If someone is going to scrutinize the fact that Jesus chose "wise and foolish virgins" to showcase a point, and try to make a case between these virgins and "The Bride," then why not make a similar case over the details in the parable of the talents? Did Jesus actually ever give people money which someone buried in the ground? These parables are about preparedness and these parables are clearly for the Church, and they have always been recognized as such in all the honorable commentators of previous generations that I have read.



## Chapter 10 –Proposed “examples” of the pretrib rapture and the Church fathers’ beliefs

Now onto some closing points to address the common assertion that Noah, Lot, and Enoch, served as examples or types of the pretrib raptured saints. Strong arguments for the pretrib rapture are often made using these examples and in the 24th chapter of Matthew, Jesus referenced Noah, but notice what He said in the 37th, 38th, and 39th verses. Jesus comments on how people went on “business as usual” until Noah entered into the ark and a flood came and took them all away. Notice that Noah was not raptured from the planet years before judgment. Noah was on the earth right up until the day of judgment that destroyed everyone else, and he remained on the planet. He and his family were not appointed to wrath but to obtain Salvation and what carried everyone else off into destruction he was spared from because he was a righteous man who took refuge in the ark. Jesus is our Ark. Note these verses:

### Genesis 7:1

“And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation.”

### Hebrews 11:7

“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.”

### 2 Peter 2:5-7

“(5) (The Lord) And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

(6) And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

(7) And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:”

These verses show that this was not only true of Noah but also of Lot. Lot was in the very city to be destroyed up until the last moments, but because he had favor in the eyes of the Lord and was not among the condemned, he was delivered during their overthrow. Lot, like Noah, was not off the planet at the time of judgment – fire and brimstone were at his heels, and he was present on earth to observe it. These men were not types or shadows of a pretrib rapture, they were just men who escaped the Lord’s wrath when judgment came, just as the saints shall when the Lord returns!

With regard to Enoch, who is also painted as an example of a pretrib raptured saint, what does he show us? What Enoch shows us is that God has the ability to remove or “translate” saints out of this world without them seeing death. He might very well serve as an example of what the saints who are alive at the Lord’s return might experience, but as to the time of the rapture Enoch proves NOTHING. To use Enoch to make a case for the pretrib rapture is simply a matter of invention.

Lastly, I want to talk about what the “Church fathers” have believed. I gave this part of the subject a fair amount of time, but truthfully we want to find our answers to the validity of the pretrib rapture from the Scriptures and not from other sources. One Church father himself has said, “even antiquity is not authority.” Nonetheless what they believed has some significance to us. This being said, it was also an area of interest because both pretrib and posttrib rapture proponents make claims that the Church fathers held their view. I believe after trying to sort through it, that the evidence is overwhelmingly clear that the view of the Church fathers and the historical church was that of a post tribulation rapture. I encourage the reader to do research of their own but here are some quotes.

Irenaeus, the well respected church father of the second century, is believed to have been trained under Polycarp, who is believed to have learned from the apostle John. It is stated on page 276 of *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics* by Ed Hinson and Ergun Caner (2008 Harvest House Publishers) that:

“Irenaeus held premillennial views, for he outlined his beliefs in Rome’s future fall, the antichrist’s reign for three-and-one-half years, and Christ’s return when the just are raised to life and the unjust are condemned...” (underlined emphasis added).

Irenaeus is quoted as saying:

“The day of the Lord...were unquestionably spoken in reference to the resurrection of the just, which takes place after the coming of the Antichrist.....and [with respect to] those whom the Lord shall find in the flesh, awaiting Him from heaven, and who have suffered tribulation, as well as escaped the hands of the wicked one...” (underlined emphasis added).

From *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* by David W. Becot

P. 23 “He shall come from heaven with glory, when the man of apostasy, who speaks strange things against the Most High, will venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us Christians. *Justin Martyr* (c. 160, E), 1.253, 254”

P. 322 “‘There will be tribulation such has not been since the beginning, neither will be.’ For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which they are crowned with incorruption - when they overcome. *Irenaeus* (c. 180 E/W), 1.558.”

It seems evident from these brief quotations from Justin Martyr and Irenaeus that they believed in Christians facing the antichrist, enduring the Tribulation, and being resurrected at the return of Christ after this time of Tribulation. These issues being what this study has attempted to demonstrate that the Scriptures clearly teach.

Another source the reader could use on this subject is that of Joel Richardson and his series on what the Church fathers believed about the rapture, which can be found on YouTube. I know just a little of Mr. Richardson, but I believe that his studies on this topic would be of interest.

It can also be noted that in my own personal study of the Bible and the use of at least six commentaries from men who lived from the 1600's and into the late 1800's, that I have not found the pretribulational rapture mentioned in their comments. These men who are very thorough and often cite various interpretations on passages, etc., did not seem to have this view in mind. In years of using these commentaries I have not yet found any reference to a pretrib rapture discussed which leads me to believe that it likely was not even part of their eschatological framework. This is significant to me because if the pretrib rapture doctrine was held from the time of the "Church fathers" I would expect to see one of these thorough commentaries at least mention it. Could it be there and I have missed it? Sure, but as of yet I have not seen it.

In conclusion, after reading all of this material, I hope you have a clearer understanding of the content and also a baseline for areas of further study, along with an awareness of how important this matter is. This should not become an area of ugly debate (many wonderful Christians believe in the pretrib rapture), but as it concerns the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering together with Him, it should be important. Sadly, it is often given too little attention and it is a matter of great ignorance and confusion. In my reflections on this subject it is a valid concern that many, many good Christians will be blindsided by future events and fall into deception because they believe in, and are waiting for the pretrib rapture, an event that is not even going to occur. As a consequence of this they will be more easily misled and not be able to "be ready" (Mt. 24:44) as they have been instructed.

Thank you for your time and may God bless you all!

Come Lord Jesus Come!

