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# Prophecy, End Times 1. Introduction

Tom Tillman

We will begin our study of Prophecy and the End Times with some background and foundational truth. Our Church's statement of Faith, published on our Gracepointe website says this about the End Times:

**'We believe in the bodily resurrection of the saved and lost, the eternal existence of all people either in heaven or hell, in divine judgments, rewards and punishments.'** and they have included four areas of Scripture to expand on that brief statement:

**John 5:21-29:** For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. <sup>22</sup>For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup>that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

<sup>24</sup>"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. <sup>25</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, <sup>27</sup>and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup>Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice <sup>29</sup>and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

**Acts 24:14-15:** 'But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. <sup>15</sup>I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and the unjust.'

**2 Cor 5:10:** 'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.'

**Revelation 20:11-15:** 'Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. <sup>12</sup>And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. <sup>13</sup>The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. <sup>14</sup>Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup>And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.'

When our Elders finalized the present iteration of our Church's beliefs they wanted to keep it relatively short and concise and to focus on those areas of Scripture that are the things for which we stand, things that are nonnegotiable to this Church body.

As we teach, as we learn, as we interact with other believers and with nonbelievers, there should be, in our minds, four divisions between topics and Doctrines which should dictate how we interact and *interreact* with each other and with others.

**Our first division of Scripture** includes those verses and Doctrines for which we should be willing to **die** rather than recant. This would include such Doctrines as the Deity of Jesus Christ, Salvation only by God's grace through our faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, His personal physical return and others.

All around the World, Christians are being martyred because they will not deny their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. During one of our recent 'school shootings' the shooter asked a girl if she was a Christian. She knew if she said 'yes,' he would kill her. She said 'yes' and he did. She immediately went to be in the presence of her Savior, he, the shooter, most likely never will.

All of us will face greater and more severe persecution in the coming months and years. There is currently a genuine war against Biblical Christianity. One of the areas from which Satan is attacking is homosexuality and

'transexuality:' LGBTQ... Christian business men and women are being run out of business while Christian customers are being run out of businesses like restaurants and others.

The Left are trying to push through a bill that will make it illegal to 'discriminate' in any way against anyone of the LGBTQ crowd... even to the point of making it illegal to use pronouns in addressing or describing anyone, other than the pronouns they claim as their own. Churches would be required to abide by all the dictates of this law, even to the extent of hiring nonbelievers or lose their tax exempt status which would tend to bite into the financial 'health' of many organizations. The most recent example of this kind of attack is the recent announcement from Chic-fil-a to stop contributing to the Salvation Army and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes... they chose to capitulate to the resistance organized by the homosexual lobby, a small fraction of our population. The '*sin*' of these charitable organizations and others is that they stand on the truth of God's Word in affirming the reality of true marriage being the union of one man and one woman... only.

The question is not that true believers hate the LGBTQ crowd... most of us are not out to fight them or even change them in any way, except by lovingly sharing the Gospel of Salvation. Rather, their goal is that nothing short of glorifying and promoting LGBTQ 'doctrine' is acceptable. Soon, even we, the little people will be forced to choose: do we believe God's Word which actually does condemn homosexual activity as an abomination before God, Lev 18:22 (You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It *is* an abomination.) and also in several areas of the New Testament... and that God's Word actually condemns transexuality as an abomination to God, Duet 22:5 (A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so *are* an abomination to the LORD your God.) Do we believe God's Word that defines marriage as only the bond between one man and one woman? Do we believe God's Word that 'cross-dressing,' trying to become the opposite sex is an abomination before God? We are never called to hate those involved in these sins or any others but neither are we called to condone and promote them. These sins are dividing more and more families... even our own; we just learned that a grand niece-in-law has chosen to 'change' her sexual identity. We also have a nephew who calls himself 'queer.' We continue to love them but their immediate families are being torn.

Ultimately, the question will not come down to, do you support and promote LGBTQ... it will be, do you believe God's Word is true? As long as our answer to that is 'Yes,' we will be fine in God's eyes.

And that will be what guides us as we study Prophecy... is God's Word true and accurate or not? Can the truth be discerned from God's Word or not?

**Our second division** of Scripture and Doctrine would be things over which we are willing to **divide**; being willing to leave a Church or to see others leave. This would include things like believers baptism, is it essential for Salvation... the eternal security of the Believer, can a true Christian ever be lost... and some of the things we will study regarding prophecy and the End Times.

**Our third division** of Scripture and doctrine are the things we are willing to lovingly **debate** with each other. Some of the things we will learn going forward fall into this category, such as what I have taught that I believe is true regarding what happened in Genesis 6 when the Sons of God came down to the daughters of men.

Finally, **our fourth division** of Scripture and doctrine would include those things that we personally decide over, things we can discuss and debate as friends while remaining friends and loving each other as brothers.

In these third and fourth divisions, the Words of Paul, John and Peter and, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ should guide us. We are commanded to love each other always, unconditionally and we are commanded to submit to one another. This is an area where we can love and submit. If a brother or sister in Christ disagrees with us, even though we **know** our understanding is the correct understanding of a given subject in Scripture, we are called to submit ourselves unto them, meaning, we submit to their right to hold the belief they do and we don't allow it to become an area of contention; we continue to interact in love.

Here is truth that is very important to our study of Scripture: there might be differing views on the correct truth of some doctrine but **there is only one true interpretation of any area of Scripture!** Many Christians can

hold many different views on a subject and they can and should debate it in love but **only one view is the true and correct view**. Now it is possible that they are all wrong but never is it possible that they are all right or that even just two differing views can be right. Of course, someone could be only partly right but partly wrong. This is actually one of the principles to be willing to die for or at least to divide over (***I don't mean the specific interpretation of a passage but, rather, the conviction that only one interpretation of any Scripture can be true,***) that there is an actual true definition to every area of Scripture and that the truth of it can be ascertained with the leading of the Holy Spirit because, if one area of Holy Scripture is open to several different 'valid' interpretations, then all of Scripture is open to several different 'valid' interpretations... and that is exactly the attitude Satan wants to be most prevalent in the Church... there is no absolute truth... your own truth is whatever you decide it is.

A good example of this is the reality of and the timing of the Rapture in regard to the Millennium and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Some believe that the Rapture will take place just before the Tribulation, 'pre-Tribulation'... some, that it occurs 'mid-Tribulation,' others that it happens at the end of the Tribulation, 'post-Tribulation' but most Conservative Christians believe that it will happen and it will be sometime before the Millennium, the thousand year reign of the Lord Jesus Christ... pre-Millennial.

There are many Christians who love the Lord Jesus Christ, many who are brilliant scholars with countless degrees covering the walls of their offices, who differ widely on their understandings of these and many other subjects but that doesn't mean that all of their different understandings are good and valid, just because they are highly intelligent people... it simply means that brilliant people can just as surely be wrong about an area of Scripture as can simple or less intelligent people. Correctly understanding Scripture is not the result of having Master's Degrees or Doctorate Degrees or fluency in Hebrew and Greek or in sitting under the teaching of men or women with those degrees. The only real prerequisite for correctly understanding Scripture is having a heart of humility before the Lord, seeking Him, loving His Word and depending on the Holy Spirit to enlighten us; we should study what others have written on a subject and compare their thoughts and opinions with the Words of Scripture but to always remember, God's Holy Spirit inspired every Word of Scripture and God's Holy Spirit is more than able to enlighten our understanding of every Word of Scripture.

Paul wrote: 'For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

'Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? <sup>21</sup>For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup>For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; <sup>23</sup>but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, <sup>24</sup>but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. <sup>26</sup>For you see your calling, brethren, that ***not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.*** <sup>27</sup>But ***God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; <sup>28</sup>and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen,*** and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, <sup>29</sup>that no flesh should glory in His presence. <sup>30</sup>But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, ***who became for us wisdom from God***—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD." 1 Cor 1:18 Jesus, in us, is the Wisdom from God.

There is only one correct interpretation of any part of Scripture and the Holy Spirit will always reveal that to His Child who seeks Him with all their heart; '...then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find *Me*, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD...' JER 29:11

If we seek Him, we will find the Lord Jesus Christ; He is the Word of God and He is the Wisdom of God.

'Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. <sup>4</sup>Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.' Psa 37:3

He will give you the desires of your heart... especially if your heart's desire is to know Him and to understand His Word.

We can know and understand His Word but that doesn't mean that we are, necessarily, to fight or argue or contend for every area of Scripture. Loving other believers can mean giving them the grace to be wrong in areas of Scripture that are not foundational to Salvation... and not holding up our own understanding with an attitude of pride.

Too many Christians have latched themselves onto a certain teacher or preacher and they choose to blindly believe and spout out whatever that particular teacher has to say on any subject instead of searching out the Scriptures for themselves and knowing what God's Word does, in fact, teach us on any given subject.

Never blindly take what I say without having clearly understood it for yourself from your own study of Scripture... unless it is obvious to you that I have clearly, concisely and accurately presented the truth of God's Word, from God's Word.

As we study God's Word about prophecy and eschatology, the study of last things, God does want us to understand clearly and correctly. Every Word we read and study was inspired by God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Word of God and the Holy Spirit enlightens us to its true meaning.

Peter wrote, 'For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. <sup>17</sup>For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased" and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. **So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place**, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup>But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.' 2 Pet 1:16

Peter is saying, 'We actually saw Jesus Christ in His fully glorified state, up on the Mount of Transfiguration, but even though we saw it with our eyes... the prophetic Word... the prophecies pointing to Jesus Christ are even more sure than our eye witness testimony... we have God's Word, which is more reliable than even having seen Him with our eyes.' Peter is also saying, 'We actually saw it... you can believe us.'

John wrote, 'And he (an angel) said to me, "These are true words of God." <sup>10</sup>Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. **For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**

All of prophecy, Old Testament and New, point to the Lord Jesus Christ, either to His first coming and His finished work of Redemption and Salvation or to His second coming, His Judgment and Eternal Rule and Reign with us, His Bride, ruling and reigning forever with Him.

God's number one plan in all time and eternity is, the Glory of God. The plan of God is to fully and completely Glorify His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in all things. And all Scripture is woven together into one great eternal tapestry, telling the 'story'... His story... History... the plan of God to Glorify His Son. All of Scriptural History and all of secular History... every bit of true History in every book ever written... it all weaves together into the plan of God to Glorify His Son and then to also glorify us, His children, who are fellow heirs with Jesus Christ. Only His children, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, have eyes to recognize it.

In many areas of Scripture God gives us clues as to what happened or will happen but He does not come right out and tell us plainly. It's the same reason He, Jesus, taught in parables; However, if we are willing to search out enough of His clues, we can develop a good idea of what God is telling us.

'And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. <sup>12</sup>For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. <sup>13</sup>Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. <sup>14</sup>And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,  
And seeing you will see and not perceive;  
For the hearts of this people have grown dull.  
*Their* ears are hard of hearing,  
And their eyes they have closed,  
Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears,  
Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,  
So that I should heal them.'

But blessed *are* your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; <sup>17</sup>for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous *men* desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*.

Then He explained the Parable of the Sower: (the same is true today as it always has been and especially significant in these Last Days)

Jesus said: 'Therefore hear the (*explanation of*) the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup>When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one*(*demons*) comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. <sup>20</sup>But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup>yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. <sup>22</sup>Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. <sup>23</sup>*But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."* Matt 13:10

For example: from our perspective, we can see that God scattered many clues, given through His Prophets, as to the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah. Peter wrote, '... Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup>receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls. ***Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*** <sup>12</sup>To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, ***but to us*** they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things which angels desire to look into.' 1 Pet 1

Just as God provided many clues to Jesus Christ's first appearance, He has also given us many clues throughout the entire Bible regarding His Second Coming.

They say that fully one third 1/3 of the Bible is Prophecy. Actually, the truth is, fully three thirds 3/3 of the Bible is Prophecy in one way or another. From Genesis to Revelation, everything interacts together in that Grand Tapestry to point to the Lord Jesus Christ. Man and his redemption is not the main theme of the Bible. The Bible's one, major, overarching theme is one thing and one thing alone: the Glory of God, God's plan to Glorify His Son. The creation of man, his sin and his redemption fits snugly into God's one, eternal plan: to glorify Himself before two audiences: all the angels, both elect and fallen and all mankind, elect and fallen.

One of His major works in accomplishing His plan is the creation of angels with the rebellion and rejection of God by one third of them and the creation of man, his rejection of God and God's miraculous, unbelievable intricate plan to save and redeem for Himself a chosen remnant of mankind, drawn from every tribe, tongue and family group of humans since the creation.

Since every area of Old Testament Prophecy pointing to Jesus Christ's first coming was all fulfilled precisely, accurately and exactly, even to the very day in some cases, we can have full assurance of the complete fulfillment of every Prophecy, Old Testament and New, that points to His Second Coming and the culmination of all God's plans and purposes into Eternity.

Next week we will begin to examine where we are in God's timetable and how we know that we are deep into the End Times and Last Days. If you want a head start, read over Ezekiel 36 and 37 as well as Matthew 24 and Daniel 9:24-27. We are definitely right in the middle of the End Times and Last Days.

## 2: Last Days, End Times

Tom Tillman

Today we begin our journey to uncover God's truth regarding the End Times, the Last Days, the time just before His return to Earth at Armageddon when He will come in all His Majesty and Glory as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Then, all the Earth will see Him as never before, no longer the Suffering Servant Who willingly came to die on a Cross to pay the complete penalty for the sin of all who would trust Him fully as their Savior, as their Substitute on Whom God the Father poured out His Wrath for their sin, on the only Man Who had never sinned.

*'For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.'*  
2 Cor 5:21

*'For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit...'* 1 Pet 3:18

When He left, it was promised that He would eventually return: 'Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, <sup>11</sup>who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, Who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." Acts 1:9

But instead of appearing in the same form as they had seen Him go... John wrote, 'Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup>His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. <sup>13</sup>He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. <sup>14</sup>And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. <sup>15</sup>Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. <sup>16</sup>And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Rev 19:11

Now we begin to study how we get from Jesus Christ leaving Earth to His Majestic return at Armageddon to finish the Tribulation and set up His Millennial Kingdom.

Jesus Christ told His followers several signs which would point to His return. Later, Paul, Peter, John and others, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gave us even more signs to watch for.

What we learn to watch for, what we learn regarding the Rapture, the Tribulation, His Second Coming, the Millennium and the Final Judgment are not new theories or make believe stories; they are true and they are sure.

As I said last week, there are many who believe differently in a few or in many aspects of Eschatology, the study of last things, but we will learn what I believe is clearly taught and prophesied in Scripture.

Some claim that the understanding of a Rapture which occurs before the 7 year Tribulation which occurs before Jesus Christ's return to Earth to set up His 1000 year Kingdom, the Millennium, was only thought up and 'invented' by Christians in the 18th and 19th Centuries. That is absolutely untrue.

Not many true believers would discount what is called the Reformation when men like Martin Luther and others began to recognize that Scripture teaches us, *fully contrary to what had been taught by Roman Catholicism* for Centuries, but clearly taught by Paul, that we are ***only saved by God's Grace through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ***. That wasn't some newly *made up* truth but rather it was what God's Word clearly taught but had been denied and hidden by the dominant 'church' for hundreds of years. The Holy Spirit began opening the eyes of His chosen servants to see that they had been lied to by Roman Catholicism which had kept the truth of Scripture hidden from the people and taught that salvation was only available through the Catholic Church and was only gained through many different works of the flesh that were demanded by the Clergy and ultimately, the Pope. Catholicism taught that the Pope stood in Christ's place on Earth and was



without error in all he proclaimed: they call him the 'vicar of christ,' the one who stands, on Earth, vicariously, in place of the Lord Jesus Christ. (the 'christ' he represents is not the Christ of the Bible. God began to re-reveal that every true Christian is a Priest unto God whom God's Holy Spirit can enlighten regarding the understanding of Scripture.

Certainly, some Christians have a greater depth of Scriptural understanding due to study, prayer, intellect and schooling but all of us have the capability to understand Scripture to whatever degree God chooses to reveal and to the degree we honestly seek Him.

The same is true of Scriptural truth regarding the Last Days. Catholicism had gradually adopted the allegorical approach to Bible interpretation, teaching that books like Revelation and Daniel were all allegory and impossible to understand. They allegorized many areas of Scripture and taught that God had actually abandoned Israel as His people and that the Church had taken the place of Israel, that all of God's promises to Israel were now promises for the Church. Many churches today affirm this 'doctrine of demons' that we call 'Replacement Theology,' the '*church*' replacing Israel. Therefore, any belief that Israel would be reborn was completely discounted... They taught that God had completely abandoned Israel and so, lost were the understandings of the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Millennium and even Christ's Second Coming as predicted in Scripture. They began to teach what we call, Dominionism, that the Church would grow, filling the Earth, and taking over all areas of civilization, even by force, until all was good and right and then Jesus could come back to take His rightful place as King. This Dominionism is one of the teachings around which many so called '*christian*' groups and churches are even now beginning to join with Catholicism to the goal of forming the one world religion of the Tribulation time.

The Alpha Conference, in January at Hillsong Church of Phoenix, will feature a mass by a Roman Catholic priest, further promoting the One World religion of the Last Days.

Just like He had done in the 16th and 17th Centuries, opening the eyes of His chosen instruments like John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, John Calvin and others to once again see the truth of Salvation by God's Grace alone, so He did a little later regarding the truth of a consistently literal interpretation of Scripture in regard to Prophecy and the Last Days, only recognizing allegory in Scripture when allegory is clearly and obviously used. Those whom God used to regain the true understanding of *Last Things* were men like John Nelson Darby, Clarence Larkin, Cyrus Scofield and others. We have them to thank for a restored understanding of Eschatology, the Doctrine and study of 'Last Things,' just like we have Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin and others to thank for our restored understanding of Soteriology, the Doctrine and study of Salvation.

Ultimately, of course, we have the Holy Spirit to thank for His work of opening His people's eyes to the truth of all Scripture.

As we begin our adventure, mining for gold and jewels in God's Word that point to His return, the first thing we must do is orient ourselves; where are we and what are the sign posts that tell us where we are.

First, we should recognize that our nation, the USA, is nowhere to be found in Scripture or Prophecy. The only place we are possibly seen is in Ezekiel 38:13 where he writes, '...Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and ***all their young lions*** will say to you, 'Have you come to take plunder?' This, which we will study later, is in regard to a military coalition attempting to invade Israel. Tarshish is thought to be the ancient designation of Great Britain, whose symbol is, the lion and the 'young lions' would be those nations colonized by Great Britain like, the US, Canada and Australia. Other than that, the Bible is silent regarding the USA. That seems odd, since the USA is currently the most powerful and prosperous nation the World has ever known. The reason may be that, at the Rapture, so many Americans are taken in the Rapture, including many in leadership, that the economy completely collapses and another nation like China, Russia or others from which not many in leadership are removed in the Rapture, invades and conquers the USA... but we just don't know, we aren't told our nation's destiny.

Our goal throughout the quarter(s) is to see what God's Word actually teaches us... not the fantasized imaginations of today's false prophets and false teachers.

As we study Scripture to learn the future, our first and most significant sign post is Israel; where is she and how does she reveal what's coming?

**Matthew 24:** 'Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.' (They were impressed. Jesus was not impressed. The Herod who refurbished that Temple was the same who tried to have Jesus, as a baby, killed; he ordered all the baby boys up to 2 years old to be murdered. Everything about this Temple was carnal and Earthly. God's Holy Spirit did not dwell in this Temple. In Ezekiel 10 we see that God's Spirit had left the Temple hundreds of years before.)

**Verse 2:** And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." (When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, about 37 years later, they burned the Temple; it is thought that gold, throughout the Temple, melted and ran down into the cracks. The Romans, to find all the gold, ripped apart everything.)

Later, up on the Mt. of Olives, Jesus continued, 'Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? (the destruction of the Temple) And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"' (*They asked 2 different questions, the answers to which, unbeknownst to them, would be separated by almost 2000 years; They were expecting Him to set up His Kingdom right away; they didn't expect Him to go through the Crucifixion... He doesn't tell them that the Temple will be destroyed in 37 years; He begins, instead, to tell them of the signs of the End of the Age and His coming*)

**Verse 4:** And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and *will deceive many*. (spiritual deception will be the hallmark of the Last Days) <sup>6</sup>And you will hear of *wars and rumors of wars*. See that you are not troubled; for *all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet*. <sup>7</sup>For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be *famines, pestilences, and earthquakes* in various places. <sup>8</sup>*All these are the beginning of sorrows*. <sup>9</sup>*"Then* they will deliver you up to **tribulation** and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. (*If Jesus was telling them this would happen in the near future when the Temple was going to be destroyed in AD 70... how could they be hated by all nations for His Name's sake? The Gospel would not have gone any further than the very near Middle East.*) <sup>10</sup>And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. (this is happening in other countries now... Christians are being betrayed by friends and family) then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. <sup>12</sup>And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup>But he who endures to the end shall be saved. (*He is speaking to the Saints during the Tribulation; they, like the OT believers, would have to remain true until death or the Second Coming... they would have to resist taking the Mark of the Beast... obviously the elect, even during the Tribulation certainly will be strengthened, by the Holy Spirit, to remain true*) <sup>14</sup>And this **Gospel of the kingdom** will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

*The **Gospel of the kingdom** was what Jesus preached while on Earth and what will be preached by the 144,000 during the Tribulation. Today, during the time of the Church, we preach **Paul's Gospel of Salvation by Grace**. The **Gospel of the Kingdom** said, 'behold, the Kingdom of God is at hand; you can have it by receiving the true Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ as your King... Israel did not receive her King and so, God set them aside and created the new, unknown, never even prophesied, True Church, the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, Paul said, 'the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.' 1 Cor 2:8 The True Church was the unknown and unexpected result of the Crucifixion... unexpected by Satan and demons and unexpected by the Jewish leadership.*

*The same '**Gospel of the Kingdom**' will be preached again during the Tribulation: 'The Kingdom of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, is coming soon... be ready for Him, turn to Him or be sent to Hell.'*

This time of God's **setting aside Israel and creating the Church** is the c2000 year gap of time between the end of the 69th 'week' and the beginning of the 70th 'week' of Daniel's incredible prophecy, '**The 70 Weeks of Daniel**,' chapter 9. We'll study that later.

Jesus continues: “Therefore when you see the ‘**abomination of desolation**,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, (*this is of the Antichrist at the half way point of the Tribulation*) standing in the holy place” (entering the Temple and the Holy of Holies) whoever reads, let him understand, (*false teachers say this refers to when Antiochus IV Epiphanes went into the Temple... which is pretty foolish since Jesus is speaking of the future and A. E. did so about 200 years before.*)<sup>16</sup> “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.<sup>17</sup> Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.<sup>18</sup> And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.<sup>19</sup> But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!<sup>20</sup> And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.<sup>21</sup> For then there will be *great tribulation*, (*the second half of the 7 year Tribulation*) such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Whatever evil we have seen in the World or read about... none of it even compares to what will happen during the second half of the Tribulation; that is what awaits all those who do not trust in the Lord Jesus Christ now, before the Rapture)<sup>22</sup> And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened. (In other words, Jesus will return in the nick of time, before an all out nuclear war, to save the elect who are still alive and to destroy all His enemies)<sup>23</sup> “Then (at the last part of the Tribulation) if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here *is* the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe *it*.<sup>24</sup> For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.<sup>25</sup> See, I have told you beforehand.<sup>26</sup> “Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. (*This is the Second Coming at Armageddon... every eye will see Him... this is not the Rapture about which He says, then, He will come in like a thief in the night... in and out like a thief who has come in to quickly take what He came for and immediately leave*)<sup>28</sup> For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together... we will see, later, that this refers to the unbelievable number of dead bodies left after the Battle of Armageddon.

**Verse 29:** ‘Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.<sup>30</sup> Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven **with power and great glory**.<sup>31</sup> And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (*This is the Second Coming when every eye will see Him... soon He will switch gears and foretell of the Rapture... the time when He will come in the clouds like a thief in the night.*) Here, referring to the Second Coming... He sends His angels out to gather all the Elect who are still alive. At the Rapture, 7 years before, He Himself comes for us in the clouds and personally receives us up unto Himself to take us back to the place that He has prepared, for us, in His Father’s House.

### **\*The Parable of the Fig Tree \***

<sup>32</sup> “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: (Coming right here as it does, the ‘parable of the fig tree’ seems to be a key to understanding what He has said before this.) ‘Now learn this **parable from the fig tree**: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near.<sup>33</sup> So you also, **when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!**<sup>34</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. (What generation? The generation that sees the fig tree coming back to life.)

What generation... beginning at what point? A generation must have a certain number of years attached. Is a generation 60 years? 70? 75? 80? 90? 100?

After telling so much ‘future History’ He commands us to ‘**Learn the parable of the Fig Tree!**’ Why did He always teach in parables? Remember, He told His disciples, ‘I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.’ Matt 13:13

He meant for those with ears to hear and eyes to see and hearts that understand... to see what He is saying in His parables.

Now Jesus switches gears and foretells the Rapture: (this is obviously a different time than He has just described which was a time of great tribulation followed by His Majestic Second Coming with every eye seeing Him.

He continues... <sup>36</sup>“But of **that day and hour no one knows**, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. <sup>37</sup>But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>38</sup>For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup>and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. *(Unlike the horrific end of the Tribulation and His Second Coming, the time leading up to the Rapture will be life just going on as normal... no one will expect anything... He will come in to gather us like a thief in the night: in and out before anyone knows He's been there... the time before His Second Coming, at Armageddon.... will be completely different; there will be no normal life as usual... no eating, drinking, marrying... it will all be desperately hiding to stay alive... it will be the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist, the Mark of the Beast, billions dying... obviously, that is not the time He is speaking of here... eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage)* He goes on: <sup>40</sup>Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup>Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>42</sup>Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup>But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. <sup>44</sup>Therefore you also be ready, **for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.** *(His Second Coming at Armageddon will not be a surprise to anyone who is watching; they will be able to calculate the exact day from the time of the signing of the 7 year treaty and from the time of the Antichrist's entry into the Temple at the halfway point... both Daniel and Revelation tell us that from the time that the Antichrist sets up the 'Abomination of Desolation' there will be exactly 1260 days until the end of the Tribulation when Jesus Christ returns in His full Glory)*

He seems to clearly say that the generation which sees the 'fig tree' coming back to life and spreading out its branches will not pass until everything is completed. Since Jesus is speaking here while still in Old Testament times and His Earthly ministry before the Cross is in Israel and to Israel... He is speaking here to Israel. The generation of whom He speaks is Israel and it has to be the generation of Israel which 'comes back to life' after having been 'dead' and scattered throughout the whole World.

The fig tree is often used as a symbol for Israel. In one of Jesus' miracles He curses a barren fig tree and causes it to wither. This was His only miracle recorded that didn't help anyone; all His others were done to help, not to harm. This miracle was unique and noteworthy and can be understood only in light of Jesus' other parable of the barren fig tree: He said, “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup>Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, **for three years** I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ <sup>8</sup>But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.” Luke 13:6 This parable was unfinished and just before it, He had said, "Except you repent you shall likewise perish." The explanation of this parable was obvious to the listeners. The owner of the vineyard is the God. (Isa 5:7). The keeper is the Messiah, Who, three years into his ministry, would continue digging and fertilizing and encouraging the nation of Israel to bring forth fruit unto God. When He gave this parable, He still had half a year of His gardening work left. The cursing of the fig tree seems to be the finishing of this unfinished parable.

After his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the end of His ministry was coming soon... it was the last week.

It says, 'Now in the morning, (the next morning) as He returned to the city, He was hungry. <sup>19</sup>And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away.' Matt 21:18. This miracle was unique; in Mark, he adds that, "the time for figs was not yet" Mark 11:13, so Jesus and His disciples knew that in the natural, there would never be figs on the tree before the proper season. Jesus was seeking fruit on the fig tree just as He

was seeking fruit in the Nation of Israel; even His own miraculous and spectacular 3 1/2 year ministry had not seen the desired fruit on either.

The fate of the fig tree was decided; it withered and died. The fate of Israel was decided; in a few days they would crucify the Lord of Glory and in just a few years, the Romans would completely destroy Israel and they would be cast to the nations and lost... as a nation they would be dead.

This miracle of cursing the Fig Tree happened on the same day that He spoke His 'Now learn the parable of the Fig Tree.' This was no accident; He fully intended for His disciples, and us, to see the connection between both and the connection to His previous 'unfinished' parable.'

Six months earlier, Jesus told the seemingly unfinished parable of the fig tree whose Owner gave the 'gardener' a final short time more to cause it to bear fruit.

Six months later, after His Triumphal Entry, after offering Himself as King of Israel which was rejected, He cursed the Fig Tree and it died. Later that day, He gave another parable of a Fig Tree, this one, having to do with its coming back to life in the future.

The Israel of the Old Covenant, with the Temple, the Priests and the Sacrifices was going to die in 35 years as Rome destroyed it all. The Newly resurrected Israel would not begin to come back to life for more than 1900 years and it would not come all the way back to life, to true Life Eternal, until they all turned to their Messiah when He would return at Armageddon.

They, the Nation of Israel, symbolized by the Fig Tree, would die and not come back to life for more than 1900 years but the generation of Israelites who saw their Nation come back to life, those who saw the miracle of God restoring the dead Fig Tree, will not 'pass' until everything, including the Return of Jesus Christ and the full restoration of Israel as the most important Nation of Earth in His Millennial Kingdom, is completed and fulfilled.

The beginnings of Israel coming back to life began in the 1800's; they came back into more full life in 1948 and even more when they finally took control over all of Israel in 1967's 6 day war. (Gaza, Sinai, Samaria and Judea which is 'called' the West Bank and also the Golan Hts.

Israel coming back to life; that was what 'officially' began the Last Days.

Perhaps God's countdown for the final generation began in 1948; if so, then the generation from 1948 until Jesus Christ's Second Coming would be 78 years, if the Rapture happened today. If the Rapture doesn't occur for another 5 years, then that 'generation' will have been 83 years... if in 10 years, then 88 years. Only God knows for sure but whatever number of years God has chosen to give, in His love and patience, to the 'last generation,' we can see that undoubtedly we are well into the Last Days.

Israel as 'Figs': among others, Hosea wrote: 'I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness, I saw your fathers as the *first ripe in the fig tree* in her first time." Hos 9:10. Jeremiah saw the vision of two baskets of figs, which represented Israel: "*Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah*" Jer. 24:5.

Next time we will see God's Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones, given to Ezekiel in chapter 37, even more of God's promise of Israel's coming back to life.

In this we are laying our foundation for all of our study of Eschatology.

### 3. Last Days, End Times

Tom Tillman

We are believers, we are saved because of the Lord Jesus Christ... but also... we are saved because our faith is bolstered by the Old Testament. We can believe what the New Testament tells us about the Lord Jesus Christ because the foundation for our faith was laid throughout the 4000 years of the Old Testament in that His first coming, at Bethlehem and beyond, fulfilled hundreds of Old Testament Prophecies.

If it were not for the Old Testament's hundreds of fulfilled prophecies, there would be no reason to believe the New Testament... it would seem like the ravings and ramblings of deluded dreamers.

It does not take faith to believe that Jesus Christ lived or that He was crucified or even that He rose again. All of those are borne out by many eye witnesses. We can choose to disbelieve the eyewitnesses but it does not take faith to believe the truth of what they all saw... just as it doesn't take any faith to believe that Paul lived or that George Washington lived and died. We have eyewitnesses for all of that.

Here is false teaching going around these days... many false teachers are teaching that our faith is in the resurrection... that we will be resurrected because we have faith in His resurrection... that is false. Our saving faith is not our faith in the resurrection... Our saving faith is in His sacrificial death on the Cross... that He died for me... that is saving faith.

The faith that is necessary for salvation is that we, by faith, choose to believe that Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection was sufficient to pay the full penalty for all our own, individual debt of sin for which we stand guilty before God.

No one is saved by believing that Jesus Christ lived or that He died or even that God raised Him from the dead... we are only saved by believing that, in addition to especially believing that He died in our place which God sees as wholly and sufficiently covering all our guilt.

Gal 4:4 says: ***'But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son...'***

God spent thousands of years laying the foundation for the coming of His Son. Thousands of years of prophecy pinpointed to the Lord Jesus Christ and to no one else. He was the One... no one else fulfilled all of the hundreds of O. T. prophecies, of the coming Savior, from the very first one in Gen 3:15, directly after the sin and fall of Man as God spoke His curse upon Satan who had taken the form of the serpent:

'And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And ***between your seed and her Seed;***  
***He shall bruise your head,***  
And you shall bruise His heel.'

...to the last prophecy given to Malachi which prophesied of the coming of John the Baptist to prepare the way for the Messiah:

"Behold, I send My messenger,  
And he will prepare the way before Me.  
And the Lord, whom you seek,  
Will suddenly come to His temple,  
Even the Messenger of the covenant,  
In whom you delight.  
Behold, He is coming,"  
Says the LORD of hosts. Mal 3:1

Because the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled hundreds of Old Testament prophecies, given over thousands of years and fulfilled all of them exactly, in His First Coming, anyone reading, unless their hearts are darkened by choosing to disbelieve, can clearly see the truth of Who the Lord Jesus Christ really is and can then know with certainty that what is read in the New Testament is also true.

Prophecy fulfilled is the absolute proof of the veracity of all Scripture, both Old and New Testaments in total.

The same is true regarding God's choice and preservation of His people, Israel. After most of the New Testament had been written, Israel was destroyed as a nation, by Rome, in AD 70. For all intents and purposes, they no longer even existed and yet, Scripture is filled with promises and prophecies of God's continued love, faithfulness and future glorification of the nation of Israel.

Of Israel, Paul wrote: 'Concerning the gospel *they are* enemies for your sake, but **concerning the election they are beloved** for the sake of the fathers. <sup>29</sup>***For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.***' Everything God has promised, done, given and planned for Israel is irrevocable! He will never 'take back' any of it. He made eternal promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and He has eternal plans for their descendants as His Own, personal Nation. God created the Nation of Israel, He has preserved it and He will glorify it in the future.

We, the True Church, are God's Own personal people, we are the heavenly people of God. Israel is the Earthly nation and people of God.

To Daniel, God gave the Prophecy of the '**70 Weeks of Daniel**' which foretold exactly when the Messiah would come the first time and then also described the last 7 years before His Second Coming, times that were separated by an undetermined amount of time in between. So far that gap of time has been 1987 years.

To Isaiah, He gave many prophecies about Israel's eternal glory while being ruled by the resurrected King David.

*This thought just came to me: throughout history, Earthly kings have been revered almost as 'gods.' During the Millennium and beyond... individual kings, like David ruling over Israel... really will be almost as gods because they... possible some of us even... will have glorified, eternal bodies like that of the Lord Jesus Christ while those over whom they rule will be still normal, humans.*

To Ezekiel, God gave the wonderful prophecy concerning when Israel would be 'brought back to life' after having been essentially dead for nearly 1900 years.

**Ezekiel 37:** 'The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and indeed *they were* very dry. <sup>3</sup>And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know."

<sup>4</sup>Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup>I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD." <sup>7</sup>So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. <sup>8</sup>Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but *there was* no breath in them.

<sup>9</sup>Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." <sup>10</sup>So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

<sup>11</sup>Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'

*(Even much of Israel believed they were forever forsaken... it's easy to see how the Church might have believed that God had completely forsaken Israel and that the Church had taken her place... if not for all the prophecies that promised a future for Israel.)*

**Ezekiel continues:** 'Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your

graves. <sup>14</sup>I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* and performed *it*," says the LORD."

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, <sup>16</sup>"As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: 'For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.' Then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel, his companions.' <sup>17</sup>Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.

<sup>18</sup>"And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, 'Will you not show us what you *mean* by these?' — <sup>19</sup>say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand." ' <sup>20</sup>And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.

<sup>21</sup>"Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "***Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; <sup>22</sup>and I will make them one nation in the land,*** on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, ***nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.*** <sup>23</sup>They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

Under the kings David and Solomon, Israel had been one unified kingdom... all 13 tribes living together. (Remember, to honor Joseph for his faithfulness in preserving Israel, instead of one tribe called Joseph, he became two tribes named for his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.) Soon after Solomon's death, the Northern 10 tribes broke off to form the Northern Kingdom of Israel which God calls, Ephraim. The Southern two tribes, Judah and Benjamin formed the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Levites, the priestly tribe, were scattered throughout both kingdoms

After the Northern kingdom, Israel, was invaded and destroyed by the Assyrians, they never returned but were '*lost and scattered to the world.*' When the Southern kingdom, Judah, was destroyed by the Babylonians, they did eventually return after 70 years but were later destroyed and dispersed by the Romans in AD 70, from which they, also, never returned. From that time, all Israel was lost and scattered to the Nations of the World until God finally drew them back to their own land, beginning in the 1800's.

Paul writes in Romans 11: 'For if their being cast away *is* the reconciling of the world, what *will* their acceptance *be* ***but life from the dead?***' ... like the scattered bones being brought back to life.

***Ezekiel continues:*** (*here, God is speaking of the Millennial Kingdom when Jesus Christ will rule the World and the resurrected King David will rule Israel.*) <sup>24</sup>"David My servant *shall be* king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. (just like all the rest of the World) <sup>25</sup>Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, ***forever;*** (\*\*) and My servant David *shall be* their prince ***forever.*** <sup>26</sup>Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an ***everlasting covenant*** with them; ***I will establish them and multiply them,*** and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. <sup>27</sup>My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>28</sup>The nations also will know that I, the Lord, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore."

The first part of this great Prophecy, of God bringing the seemingly dead, lost and scattered Israel back to life, is the prophesied fulfillment of what we studied last week about the Parable of the Fig Tree. This is the fulfillment of the first part of that prophecy: '*Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.*' For its branch to have become tender and put forth leaves... ***it had to first come back to life from a cut down stump.***



This prophecy in Ezekiel 37 is the prophesied '*coming back to life*' of what had been dead for 1900 years. After God finished His first or second part of bringing them up out of their graves and back into the land, then He could do His next part by reestablishing them as a Nation in 1948. He will continue to draw them back to Israel, into the Tribulation, as persecution of the Jews in other countries continues to escalate. The same would be true for the Church if the Church had a country of its own... but it does not. We are not Earthly, we are Heavenly. ***Israel is the Earthly people of God. The True Church is the Heavenly people of God.***

Here is something most of us have not seen in God's Word and have not contemplated. Remember... God gave us imaginations and the wisdom to see the clues that He has given us in His Word.

In Isaiah He said, concerning Jesus Christ's Eternal Kingdom: 'Of the ***increase*** of His government and peace there will be no end...' (It will continue to 'increase' forever) Isa 9:7 His Kingdom will continue to expand forever. After His thousand year Kingdom on Earth, He will create a New Heavens and a New Earth. We, the True Church, will receive glorified, eternal bodies at the Rapture, bodies like that of the Lord Jesus Christ and we, the True Church will rule and reign with Him throughout the Millennium and forever. Those promises, eternal, glorified bodies and ruling forever with Him are only given to the True Church and to those who will have been killed for their faith during the Tribulation... and, I think, to the O.T. saints whom Jesus took up to Heaven just before His Resurrection. That promise is not given to Israel or to those who live through the end of the Millennium.

Look at Revelation 22: after the Millennium, after the Great White Throne Judgment, after God creates a New Heavens and New Earth: 'And he showed me a ***pure river of water of life***, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. <sup>2</sup>In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.'

You'll notice that there, in New Jerusalem, coming out from God's throne is the River of Life and the Tree of Life. Apparently, some people need the water from the River of Life to sustain their eternal lives and the nations are in need of healing from the leaves of the Tree of Life. What is a River of Life for, if not to give life to what needs life from it? What are healing leaves of a Tree of Life for, if not to give healing to something that is in need of healing?

Throughout the entire Bible are many prophecies that speak of Israel being in their land forever, of David being their king forever, of ***all the nations of the Earth*** being blessed because of Israel... forever.

Contrary to what many of us have thought... we will not just all be one huge crowd... living together in Heaven... waving palm branches and praising God... forever. God has such bigger, better, more unimaginable plans for us than that.

Zech 14 says, 'And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. <sup>17</sup>And it shall be *that* whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. <sup>18</sup>If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they *shall have no rain*; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. <sup>19</sup>This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.'

Obviously there will be human, mortal nations filling the Earth during the Millennium. We saw in Rev. 22 that human, mortal Nations will fill the New Earth also, nations that will need the healing properties of the leaves of the Tree of Life. At the end of the Millennium, the Bible never says that those who live through to the end of the Millennium, who have been faithful to worship the King, Jesus Christ... it never says that they will die or that they will be given eternal bodies... the implication is that these will be the ones who are in need of the Water of Life and the healing Leaves of the Tree of Life... forever.

(\*\*) Remember what it said above... 'Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, ***their children, and their children's***

***children, forever;*** 'they, their children, their grandchildren... forever! This seems to imply continuously multiplying generations.

Remember what God said to Abraham in Gen 15: Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and ***count the stars if you are able to number them.***" And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." Also, in Gen 22 God reaffirmed to Abraham: 'blessing I will bless you, and multiplying ***I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore...***' God does not speak in hyperbole... He does not exaggerate... He says what He means and means what He says.

The second time God said this to Abraham it wasn't dependent upon Abraham's limited ability to count the stars he could see. God specifically said that the number of Israelites would be 'as the stars of the heavens.' I don't think it was arbitrary or by accident that God compared them to the unimaginably large number of stars in the heavens... not just heaven singular but heavens... I think God was alluding to just what I'm saying here. It does not seem logical to think that the humans inhabiting the nations forever will not be continually 'multiplying.'

Someone will say, 'But Jesus said that in Heaven, they neither marry nor are given in marriage.' That's true... but humans on Earth are not in Heaven nor have they ever been.

The New Earth will be a marvelous place but the people populating it and ***spreading out from Earth*** will continue to be mortal humans who continue to live eternally because of the River of Life and the Tree of Life. I think too many of us fail to grasp the unbelievable blessing God has bestowed on us... the True Church. We have been chosen and elected by God to be the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ, fellow-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ, adopted children of God and co-regents with the Lord Jesus Christ. Without thinking about it... we can assume that the same is true of every person who is 'saved.' It's not true of all. We will rule and reign with Him forever and we will rule and reign over someone and something. National Israel will forever be blessed as the chosen, elevated Nation of God, but they will always be ruled over... by David and Jesus Christ. They are never called fellow-heirs, the body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, co-regents... none of our unbelievable blessings apply to them... they have their own set of blessings... Earthly blessings... and, I think... spreading out throughout the star of the Heavens... Who were the prominent scientists who developed the atomic bomb... the rockets and satellites... and so many more marvelous inventions that will seem like child's play to those living and working during the Millennium and beyond... they were Jews... Jews have been foremost in most every human endeavor.

Great things are in store for the Jews... far above every other nation... yet all nations will be blessed because of the Jews.

Obviously none of what awaits us is because any of us deserve any of it in any way... it is simply and marvelously how God planned it from Eternity Past.

If we can get past the hurdle of realizing that our blessings are different that the blessings of National Israel and of the saved who inhabit the New Earth, then we can begin to imagine and understand far more than we might otherwise.

How many have read Randy Alcorn's book, ***Heaven***? He wrote a few things that I don't agree with, but he wrote many things that I always thought no one else, beside me, had ever before contemplated... I don't mean that in a prideful manner... I mean that things I imagine, and have thought through, have seemed like they would be too far out for anyone in their right mind to actually put down on paper.

If I just said many things I think that I know to be true... others would resist and say that I'm nuts. Now, of course, that isn't necessarily untrue but the fact remains... since Randy Alcorn, a pillar of Christian authorship says certain things... some of the same people who would call me nuts would instead think... 'hmmm... I wonder... maybe so...'

I believe what I am saying here is true but I don't say it dogmatically nor do I take issue with anyone who would disagree. But, as usual, I have gotten a little far of field from my point of the rebirth of Israel being the number one signification of the 'End Times.'

But... since we're already out on this limb... here are a few of the things that Randy Alcorn agrees with me... Men and women... then, with eternal, glorified brains, working and thinking together, will invent unimaginable things quite quickly after the Second Coming... and that one of the things will be interstellar space travel to the far corners of the Universe.... God may have created other 'sentient' beings around the Universe, other than humans... that's enough to think about, for now.

One thing I didn't read, that Randy Alcorn doesn't seem to be in agreement with me... he didn't say, one way or the other... regarding humans continuing to procreate and spread out across the Universe eternally. He did think that we would spread out across the Universe throughout Eternity... but he didn't say about continuing to procreate.

Here's one reason why I think that the mortal humans will continue to procreate, spreading out forever... we, the True Church, will be rewarded then, for our faithfulness now. We will rule and reign over something or someone... forever. In just our own Milky Way Galaxy there are thought to be c.200 billion stars like our own Sun... with each one perhaps having its own handful of planets orbiting around it. That would be perhaps one trillion (1000 X Billion) planets, just in our own Galaxy. There are thought to be c.100 Billion Galaxies which would be 100 billion trillions of individual stars... meaning perhaps 10 times that many planets.

What would be the point of all that huge Universe if not to 'house' the eternally-increasing government of the Lord Jesus Christ... think about it... we are talking about ***forever***, don't forget. Forever really is forever.

Even if there were 10 billion 'saved' people throughout History, the government of the King of kings could not expand even out past our own single Galaxy without 'running out of people... one person per planet'

Once the Millennium is over, there will never again be any sin or any rebellious people... only faithful people, living in holiness and righteousness, filling God's Universe.

Israel, being brought back to life, by God's miraculous intervention is the spark that kicked off the countdown of the End Times which will eventually lead to everything we've been saying here.

Most of our teaching and learning during this next quarter or two will not involve much of this kind of imagination and speculation but will, rather, be digging out what God's Word clearly teaches us about where we are in His timetable and what is soon coming for us, for Israel and for the World.

We have been laying the foundation for all of the rest of what we will learn, together.

The singular event that fulfilled Scripture and led into the End Times was the rebirth of Israel as a Nation.

Next in God's revealed timetable will be 3 events that seem to be predicted to occur very near each other and perhaps almost simultaneously: the removal from the Earth of the True Church, in the Rapture, the miraculous protection by God, of Israel when she is attacked by a multinational coalition, seen in Ezekiel 38... the very next chapter from the prophecy of Israel coming back to life in the Last Days in Ezekiel 37, the 'Dry Bones,' and thirdly, the appearance of Antichrist... not necessarily his coming to full power, but his appearance on the World scene. We will study all three of those events but one thing must come first: the 'Great Falling Away,' the Great Apostasy. We will look at that next week... the Great Falling Away IN the church. The True Church will never fall away but the false church will be characterized by great apostasy; it is happening now and has been for many years. The dividing between the True Church and the false church is being forced even now and it will be forced on every one of us unless the Rapture occurs first. This country is the last refuge of the freedom to worship freely and it is fast disappearing.

Next Week: the Great Apostasy... I think...

## 4 Last Days, End Times: Apostasy

Tom Tillman

Recently, a friend asked me why I believe Eschatology, the study of Last Things, the End times, is so important that I talk about it often and bring it into much of what I teach.

Paul wrote to Titus, 'For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, (always) **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...**' Tit 2

To the Philippians He wrote, 'For many (false teachers) walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they *are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and whose glory *is* in their shame—**who set their mind on earthly things.**

**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior,** the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it **may be conformed to His glorious body...**' Phipp 3:18

To the Colossians he wrote, 'If then you were raised with Christ, (*and we were...*) **seek those things which are above**, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. **Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died**, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ *who is* our life appears, then **you also will appear with Him in glory.** Col. 3

When He appears to us, in the Rapture, we will also be glorified with Him.

God's will for each of us, His children, is that we set our hearts and minds on Heavenly, Eternal things... not on Earthly, temporal things.

Long before God laid the foundation of the World, long before Lucifer rebelled, birthing sin in his own heart, long before anything that is... was... He knew me, He loved me and He chose me for Himself. Out of the billions of people who had ever lived... He chose me.

**It's as if...** through very bad living I had accumulated a crushing load of debt... like untold millions of dollars... a debt I would never be able to pay off. My debt was so great that I would be condemned to spend forever in the deep dark dank debtor's prison.

But then one day a distant relative, a Kinsman Redeemer, someone I didn't even know, went before the judge and paid off all my crushing debt and on top of that, he even opened a bank account for me with a balance of \$40,000,000 so that I would never again have any debt at all. After all that, he wrote to me that one day, soon, he didn't say when, exactly, but he told me some signs to watch for which would clearly point to the general time of his return when he would come for me and fly me, in his private jet, to an incredible set of islands in the Pacific where I could live in a paradise, forever.

The only thing he wanted me to do, in light of his great kindness and generosity, was to tell others, the people I knew and those I would meet, of what he had done for me and that he was willing to do the same for anyone who asked. But He warned that once he finally did return for me and for anyone else who believed his offer... once he did return to take us away to our own private Island Paradises... that would be it. His offer to freely pay anyone's great debt would no longer be available.

I could hardly believe it... what incredible kindness, grace and mercy... that he would do that for me!

Now... back to reality... To Him, to the Lord Jesus Christ, I am one in a million... of the millions and billions who will refuse His offer, He chose me and came to find me, and He called me to Himself.

He brought me to a small gate; He invited me to come through it and to begin a long journey, walking along a narrow, difficult path but He promised that He would always be with me no matter how difficult the journey; He promised to never leave me, to never forsake me and He promised to lead me safely to the end of the path and finally to come for me in the air and to receive me up to Himself; He would take me back to His Father's house to the place He had been preparing especially for me.

He called me to enter through the small, narrow gate which leads to a long, narrow, difficult road that leads, finally, to Heaven and to His Throne... for every one of us who have heard and answered His call, there might be many thousands who pass by that small narrow gate, continuing on, walking, skipping and running on the wide open, broad highway that eventually leads to a cliff that drops off into Hell.

The most vivid example of the many millions who thoughtlessly, heedlessly run headlong to destruction on that broad highway is in the many Carnival, Marti Gras celebrations around the World like New Orleans, Rio de Janeiro, Venice and many other cities with a strong Catholic heritage.

Marti Gras, from the French, means 'Fat Tuesday.' It dates back thousands of years to pagan celebrations of spring and fertility, like Saturnalia and Lupercalia.

When Caesar Constantine made Christianity the official religion of Rome, in the early AD 300's, many pagan festivals and gods/goddesses were incorporated into the new '*faith*.'

Fat Tuesday is the day before Ash Wednesday when the season of Lent begins, the 40 days of fasting and penance between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. They would binge and gorge themselves on all the rich, fatty foods, meat, eggs, milk, lard and cheese that remained in their homes. Then, for 40 days, they would 'fast,' eating only fish or other plain, bland foods. However, instead of being just about foods, it came to be weeklong celebrations of debauchery of every kind, leading to Ash Wednesday when the priest would absolve them of all their sins.

The reason I bring up Marti Gras is that it, along with so many 'Gay Pride' parades, which are actually fashioned after Marti Gras parades, to a degree, are perfect examples of people in the World, seemingly doing their best to flaunt their sin, heedless of any restraint whatsoever, throwing off any and all constraints that might be anything related to God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Like those 'celebrations,' the World is becoming more and more rotten, more and more debauched each day.

To Ezekiel, He said, "Son of man, ***I have made you a watchman*** for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me. When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' ***and you give him no warning***, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, ***to save his life***, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but ***his blood I will require at your hand***.<sup>19</sup> Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul." Again, when a righteous *man* turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, ***he shall die; because you did not give him warning***, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the righteous *man* that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul." Ezekiel 3

***God has called every one of us to be a Watchman***. We are to first, watch carefully over our own souls: 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. <sup>9</sup>Resist him, steadfast in the faith...' 1 Pet 3... and we are to carefully watch, guarding our families and whatever 'flock' God has placed under our care.

Regarding the future, I see what's coming very quickly and very soon. Most of what's coming, from the moment of the Rapture, because of God's Word, is opened up before me and what I see is a mostly clear, concise, focused panoramic picture or video; for the most part, it is not cloudy or mysterious.

As I study, as I read His Word, as I pray, I constantly ask for wisdom and understanding and I believe that He is faithful to give me wisdom and understanding.

I am not more intelligent than anyone else... I have simply been 'gifted' in certain areas of understanding that are different than the areas in which God has specially gifted some others.

Paul wrote, 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup>There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup>And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. <sup>7</sup>But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*: <sup>8</sup>for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, <sup>10</sup>to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. 1 Cor 12

What I somewhat understand, I teach. What I don't yet understand, I study.

If others believe or teach differently than I... what we believe about Eschatology does not affect whether or not we

are saved, **Eschatology should never be dogma.**

Eschatology is not something that should cause us to argue or divide... but the study of End Times should birth in us an excitement, a thrilling expectation, a longing for His return to be hastened... a longing for His return to be today!

Before we leave '*why Eschatology is important,*' here is a little thought experiment for us: we just read from Titus 2: 'For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...**'

Regarding the first half of that verse: Paul wrote to Titus, 'For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age... no one would think it wrong if this thought, this exhortation was brought into all our teaching... no one would argue that (denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age) no one would argue that this is not implied in all of God's Word. Then, connected to the same sentence, Paul continues that we are to be (**looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**). Why wouldn't that be in all our teaching!

The Greek word Paul used for 'looking for' is *prosdchomai*; it means to 'receive unto oneself, to receive one, to accept a thing offered, to expect.' The idea is to consider it an accomplished fact.

Here is another example of the same thing: 2 Peter 3:11 '...what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup>looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God...'

No one would think, teaching that our conduct ought to be holy and godliness, shouldn't be in all our teaching... why wouldn't we also think that Paul intends that 'looking for the coming day of God' to permeate all his, and our, teaching?

Paul wrote to the Philippians, 'I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus... Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind... Brethren, join in following my example... For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body...'

Paul says, 'follow my example, press on toward the goal... our citizenship is in Heaven and **we eagerly wait for the Rapture** when He will transform our mortal bodies into immortal, glorified bodies.

**We eagerly wait.** The Greek word is *apekdechomai* which means to eagerly wait with assiduous attention. Assiduous means persistent, untiring, devoted, constant, unremitting attention.

This is how Paul desires us to understand what it means to look for the Rapture, to look for His soon return.

In other words, it means to be watching and waiting for His return with all eagerness at all times.

Here, I think, is what's different in my understanding of Eschatology from that of some others... for me... the future, from the moment of the Rapture on... and all that is leading up to the Rapture... for me it's alive and active. I see the events of the future as if they happened yesterday, or they are happening today. One reason is because, in addition to studying the future... I also carefully study the past and all that is happening in the present... all around the World. To me, history is alive... all of it... some of it just hasn't happened yet. As I watch how each 'piece,' throughout history, fell into place according to God's will and I watch the present, with each piece falling right into place where it should, it's like watching a multidimensional chess game and having a program written out in front of you, telling you every move that is coming. As you follow along... when you see each and every piece, every move following the 'script' exactly... then you can have confidence that every move coming up will also fit exactly as the 'script' is written. The more moves that have fallen into place in the past along with all that is happening in the present, the clearer and with ever more clarity you can watch and even predict what move is coming next... little is a surprise. Obviously I don't know nor can I predict everything... some is hidden... but just not nearly as hidden as many people seem to think.

A good example: even if we couldn't recognize the 'Great Apostasy,' the great falling away within the 'church,' we could still have confidence that it is, in fact, happening all around us today. Since we 'live' within the confines of a still alive and active Church... we might not even give thought to the Apostasy throughout the 'church.' But... since we have a program already written out within chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, we can see how the history of the

True Church and the false church have fallen into place, just as pre-recorded for us.

The glorified Lord Jesus Christ dictated to John, in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, seven letters to seven different Churches in Asia Minor. Not only were they letters to specific Churches of that day but they also provided a panoramic prophetic picture of the coming history of the Church until the time of the Rapture, almost 19 centuries later. Then, at the beginning of chapter 4, John is taken up into Heaven in a picture of the Rapture. From that time on... there is no more reference to the Church at all until it (we) accompany Jesus Christ when He returns at Armageddon.

The final two letters are to the Churches at Philadelphia and Laodicea, which are representative of the latter part of the Church as it has progressed during the past century.

Philadelphia, the next to last Church, represented the End Times faithful Church; it says:

<sup>7</sup>“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,

‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”’: <sup>8</sup>“I know your works. See, **I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it;** for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. <sup>9</sup>Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. <sup>10</sup>Because you have kept My command to persevere, **I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly!** Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. <sup>12</sup>He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him* My new name.

Beginning around 100 years ago, God opened many doors around the World and many missionaries went through those open doors to take the Gospel to all the World. Here, Jesus Christ says, of the Last Days True Church, **I will keep you from** the hour of testing which shall come upon the whole world.’

A time of 'testing' of the whole World has never before occurred. Even in World War II, many places in the World were not affected at all. This clearly refers to the 7 year Tribulation, under Antichrist, which will begin soon after the Rapture. The word Jesus used here for: I will **keep you from** the hour of testing... the Greek words are: 'tereo ek' which means: 'to carefully guard and keep and to take away from a specific location.'

The next event in God's timetable is the Rapture. It will happen at any moment... when we least expect it. It will not happen in conjunction with a 'blood moon' or any other supposed 'harbinger' of His coming. In fact, Jesus told us it will happen when everything is going along as normal. He said it will happen when we are eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage... like right now... or tomorrow... or next month or next year... but there is one thing and *possibly* two things that He said would precede His coming... but only that one or two things. Paul wrote, 'Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, (the Rapture) we ask you, <sup>2</sup>not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. <sup>3</sup>Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition...' 2 Thes 2

Paul is writing to the Thessalonians to comfort them. He had taught them that the Rapture would happen at any time, that they should always live their lives as if He were coming **today.** Apparently someone, a false teacher or false prophet, had taught them that the Rapture had already taken place and that they had been left behind... and probably that Claudius, Caesar was the Antichrist. But, you'll notice Paul said one and *possibly* two things must happen before the Rapture occurs...

1. The 'falling away' and *possibly*, also, 'the appearance of Antichrist (the man of sin, the son of perdition).

The reason I say 'possibly' the appearance of Antichrist is because many believe and teach that the Antichrist will not come to power until after the Rapture but, if you'll notice what Paul wrote, it really looks like he is saying that the Rapture will not take place until both of those things happen... the 'falling away' and the appearance of the Antichrist.

The appearance of Antichrist does not mean he will necessarily have come to complete power or that he will even

be recognized by many. When was the 'appearance,' of Jesus Christ? When did He come on the scene? The appearance of Jesus Christ was when He was baptized by John and then He was immediately led, by the Holy Spirit, into the wilderness where He was tempted by Satan. No one paid any attention at all, only John.

The only people who might have known anything were whatever few people happened to be at the Jordan River at the moment He came up out of the water with His Father's Voice saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' and even then, those who heard it probably didn't understand it; another time when God's voice spoke, verifying who Jesus Christ really was, those hearing thought it had been thunder.

The 'appearance' of Antichrist will not necessarily be something recognized by many people although, I think some believers who are carefully watching World events, as they line up with Scripture, will actually recognize him for who he really is.

There is no question, however, that the 'falling away' will occur before the Rapture. It is happening all around us now and throughout the World; there is a great falling away, both from the Church and in the Church; many are leaving the Church and there is a great falling away within the church as more and more false teachers bring in their false teaching, heresies and doctrines of demons.

Apostasy was happening when the Church began allegorizing the Word, especially books like Revelation. No longer did the Bible say what it meant and mean what it said but now it could be allegorized to mean anything at all and apostasy began to come in as they began to deny the reality of the Rapture. Those who believe that He could return at any moment are much more likely to **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.**

Paul wrote of: 'enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction...**who set their mind on earthly things.**

The Church is filled and filling with people who have set their minds and hearts on earthly things. It would be difficult to count all the TV type mega-church '*pastors*' who have set their hearts and minds on Earthly things, on multimillion dollar homes and cars and jets and have been teaching their *flocks of goats* to do the same.

They teach that Salvation means letting Jesus be your friend or in doing good works, etc.

When they preach, when they give their 15-20 minute weekly pep talk, they no longer speak of sin or guilt before God... talking about the shed blood of Jesus is just too messy.

They use disco lights and smoke machines; they spend the first hour singing meaningless mind-numbing love songs to an imaginary Jesus boyfriend.

I checked out a charismatic website that said heresy is having a focus on prophecy... not that it might lead to heresy but that it is heresy... amazing!

The false teachers throughout the Church have stopped teaching that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ is coming soon and could be right around the corner; instead, they have been teaching that a great end-times revival is coming and is just right around the corner. Number one... this is absolutely false; there is no great revival coming **until the World is into the Tribulation.** Then God will bring in huge numbers of people, most of them will have to die for their faith.

Instead of teaching the truth that the Antichrist and False Prophet will soon rule over all the World establishing the coming One-World Religion, they teach Dominionism which says that the Church will eventually conquer and govern all the World to prepare the way for Jesus Christ to return... absolute heresy.

One TV type false teacher says that we are saved by having faith in the Resurrection. Another says, 'The only requirement is that we believe He is Who He says He is.

The extent of apostasy throughout the Church is far too much to write down... we'd be here till next week and as soon as I begin to name names I would doubtless step on the toes of someone's absolute favorite TV type guy or gal so I'll just name 3 who are most obvious and with the largest following.

Brian Houston, of Hillsong, believes, and says, that we and Muslims worship the same God, just by different names: Jehovah for us and Jews and Allah for Muslims. That is so foolish and so wicked, on its face, that no further exposition is necessary.

Joel and Victoria Osteen teach their masses of followers that we are seeking to 'live our best lives now.' They rarely, if ever, mention sin, hell or coming judgment for all those they lead astray. To think we are living our best



lives now completely negates the truth of all that awaits, for Eternity, the true child of God.

Bill and Beni Johnson, of Bethel Church, in Redding, have imported all the excesses, and far more, from the most outlandish false revivals like Toronto Vineyard Church, Brownsville and Lakeland, Fl. They teach those in their School that they can lie upon the graves of past 'revivalists' and 'soak up' residual anointing that still seeps from their buried bodies.

I really could go on and on... there are so many false teachers infesting and infecting the Church today. Millions believe they are saved because they follow and believe what they are taught and are completely unaware of what they are not taught: what it really means to be a believer and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and what constitutes true conversion and salvation.

Here are just a few of the warnings God gave Israel and us, the Church:

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. Jer. 23:16

For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 2 Tim 4:3

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them Acts 20:28.

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. 2 Pet 2:1

We all must be careful of what we hear and who we listen to.

Now that we recognize that the Apostasy really is raging all around us, next week we will take up the next scene in God's unfolding drama for the Last Days: The Rapture.

Finally, Jesus Christ gave His warning to the Church of Laodicea, the falling away, apostate Church. This is the last thing Jesus said to the Church before He gave John the final Revelation of Daniel's 70th Week, The Tribulation:

"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: <sup>15</sup>"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. <sup>16</sup>So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. <sup>17</sup>Because you say, '**I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing**' (that clearly describes **many false teachers and false churches today**) and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— <sup>18</sup>I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. <sup>19</sup>As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup>Behold, I stand at the door and knock. (***He is knocking on the door of the Church, inviting unbelievers within the Church to come to Him while there is still time.***) If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. <sup>21</sup>To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. Rev 3

Since this subject is so very important to our understanding of God's love for us, we won't hurry through but will cover it over 2 class sessions.

The Rapture is clearly taught throughout Scripture but it is not something that the wise Christian should heatedly argue or divide over. Unfortunately many do choose to hold their understanding of the Rapture to be the thing which most defines and characterizes themselves. We should not do so.

Paul writes, 'Behold, **I tell you a mystery**: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup>For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."' 1 Cor 15:51

We will study and learn, the Bible clearly teaches that the Rapture will occur, 'Pre-Tribulation.' It will occur before the Tribulation begins.

Some believe it will occur 'Mid-Tribulation,' in the middle of the Tribulation, while others believe it will be 'Post-Tribulation,' at the end of the Tribulation and some believe there will be no Rapture at all.

Here is why a post-Tribulation view of the Rapture could not be correct: When Jesus Christ returns at Armageddon, at the end of the Tribulation, He will bring us with Him, having been Raptured 7 years before at the beginning of the Tribulation.

When He returns at Armageddon He will destroy all His enemies, all who have rejected Him.

If He destroys all the unbelievers... and if all of the believers are Raptured up to meet Him and given immortal glorified bodies, and then immediately turn around and accompany Him back... who is there to repopulate the Earth during the Millennium, who is there for us to rule and reign over?

The Bible teaches us that the Church will rule and reign with Him over the Earth during that 1000 years but it also teaches that the Earth will be repopulated and filled by mortal humans: they will fill up the Earth... all the nations of the Earth. The Earth will be repopulated by all those who will have come to faith in Jesus Christ during the Tribulation but were not killed for their faith... those who live through to the end.

The believers who live through the Tribulation until the end will go into the Millennium and repopulate the Earth. All of the unbelievers who live through the Tribulation until the end will all be killed immediately upon Jesus Christ's return at Armageddon.

Jesus Christ, Paul, Peter, John and even Moses and Isaiah all teach us the truth of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the True Church. A correct understanding of this truth is as important as any Scripture to the Child of God's understanding of the depth of God's love for the Bride He has chosen for His Son.

A correct understanding of the Rapture is not something upon which our salvation rests but it is important to our understanding of the relationship God has chosen to give to us, a relationship of absolute love.

We find The Rapture clearly taught in Scripture, that it can and will happen **at any moment** without **any warning** with no other prophecy having to be fulfilled before the Rapture takes place. If we disbelieve the reality of the Rapture, all of our understanding of the End Times will be in error. It is a crucial piece of the entire puzzle of the End Times. If it is missing, the entire picture will be incomplete.

The Feasts of the Lord point to the Rapture. The Jewish Wedding points to the Rapture. Enoch points to the Rapture. The Flood of Noah points to the Rapture. The Israelites safely crossing the Red Sea points to the Rapture. Sodom and Gomorrah point to the Rapture. Isaiah points to the Rapture. Jesus Christ points to the Rapture. Matthew, John, Peter, Luke, Jude and Paul all point to the Rapture.

Paul teaches, throughout his letters, that it is coming and that it can happen at any moment. He tells us that those who believe and look for Jesus Christ's soon coming, at any moment, will receive a special reward. Those who disbelieve the Rapture, or that it can happen at any moment, will still go up in the Rapture, but they will not gain that special reward: Paul wrote, 'Finally, **there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness**,

which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but **also to all who have loved His appearing.**' 2 Tim 4:8 There is a **crow**n of righteousness but it is not gained by living an extra righteous life... no one lives a righteous life... we are all sinners but all true Believers are holy and righteous in God's sight because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. Paul says a crown of righteousness is laid up for some and here he tells us for whom... all those who love His appearing... all who are looking and waiting for Him.

There are 2 main reasons that this is so important for us, the Children of God to know and understand... the first being that when we understand the reality of the Rapture we can, even more, begin to understand God's love for us and the very special relationship we, the Church, the Body of Jesus Christ have with Him.

Also... as we begin to understand that we will stand before Him at any moment, we are much more apt... **if we are wise**... to seek to live lives that are pleasing to Him... **at all times** because we could very well be taken up into the clouds to meet Him before I finish my next sentence.

Not every Christian believes in the reality of the Rapture or that it will happen at any moment.

Some believe that the Church must go through tribulation to be purified... to be made holy and ready to meet Jesus Christ. However, God's Word tells us plainly that the true Church, every born again child of God, are already completely purified, at the Cross, by the blood of Jesus Christ... He paid the penalty for all our sin... past, present and future... forever.

'But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup>from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. <sup>14</sup>For by one offering **He has perfected forever** those who are being sanctified.' Heb 10:12 We have already been perfected and purified forever... it is an accomplished, finished act. On the Cross, Jesus said, 'It is finished!'

Paul wrote, '*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...' Rom 8:1

We **now stand** before God, holy, perfected, righteous, in the full righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, only. Jesus Christ does not require His Bride to be purified, something that He, Himself has already accomplished.

Some teach that the Rapture is a new concept... that the Rapture is not even in the Bible.

True... the **word**... Rapture... **isn't** in the Bible... but **neither is Trinity**... neither is the cross...or any **other**... English Word... the bible was written in Hebrew and Greek... along with a little Aramaic.

Here is one of the main verses for Paul's teaching of the Rapture: 1 Thessalonians 4:17

'For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with **the trumpet of God**. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive *and* remain **shall be caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup>Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The word for '*caught up*', in the Greek, the original writing of most of the NT is **harpazo**... it means to seize, to carry off by force/ to snatch out and away /to seize upon/ to claim for one's self eagerly.

The **same word**... **snatched away**/caught up... is used in Acts, when **Phillip preached to the Ethiopian** Eunuch.. Phillip was lead to him by the Holy Spirit... Phillip led him to salvation and then baptized him... then the bible says... right after that... Phillip was '**caught up**' and carried away by the Holy Spirit... same word... harpazo... he was raptured away.

'Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the **Lord caught Philip away**, so that the eunuch saw him no more,' Acts 8:39 **Same word: harpazo!** Phillip was Raptured away!

We're told when **Paul was 'caught up' to heaven** to receive revelation and instruction directly from God... he writes that he was... harpazo... he was raptured up to Heaven...

'I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was **caught up** to the third heaven... And I know such a

man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—<sup>4</sup> how he was **caught up** into Paradise...' 2 Cor 12:2 **Same word x2: harpazo!** Paul was raptured up to Heaven.

Also in Acts: 'Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and **take him by force** from among them, and bring *him* into the barracks.' Acts 23:10 **Same word: harpazo!** The soldiers Raptured Paul away.

No one would argue that the words, 'caught up' are not in the Bible... no one would ever argue that the Greek word, 'harpazo' is not in the Bible but many are quick to argue that the word, Rapture is not in the Bible.

If people had chosen to call the Rapture 'the great catching away,' those who argue could argue no more.

So where do we get the word... Rapture... Though we don't find that word in the English Bible, it is in the **Latin Bible** which was translated by Jerome in the early 400's and was the main Bible of the Church until the reformation in the 1500's and then, shortly thereafter we received the King James Version... in English... In Latin, the Greek word harpazo was translated, **RAPTUS** from the same root as Raptor... because that kind of **snatching away** is what a Raptor does to its prey... a raptor is a hawk, an eagle, an owl... they are raptors...

Have you ever seen video of an Eagle flying over a lake... he sees a fish near the surface... he dives down claws bared... and **snatches it up by force** and carries it away... the fish is being raptured by the raptor. Then from the Latin... raptus into the English becomes Rapture... the Eagle is a raptor... he does raptus the fish... he does harpazo the fish... the fish is **'caught up' into the heavens.**

Those who disbelieve the truth of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture say... 'When Paul writes that the Rapture will begin with the 'last trumpet... the trumpet of God... it really means the 7th trumpet... in Rev when 7 angels are blowing trumpets to announce God's judgments.'

**The Last Trump...** 1 Cor 15: '...but we shall all be changed—<sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet.** For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.'

also: 1Thes 4:16: 'For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the **trumpet of God.** And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup>Therefore **comfort one another with these words.**'

What kind of 'comfort' would it be if Paul were referring to the 7th trumpet of Revelation, after all of those plagues?

'You will have to go through the terrible tribulations of the Tribulation, you will be hunted down and probably beheaded for your faith and your family will likely be killed with you... so comfort one another with these words...' not very comforting...

*With the Trump of God... at the last Trumpet... this is not referring to the 7th Trumpet of Rev. 11:15 which is a common mistake people make...*

It is the **trumpet of God**, not the trumpet of an angel... this is the only time it is found in Scripture... but it is probably also the same as in Exodus 19 where God tells Moses that 'the Trumpet will sound...'

The 7th Trumpet of Rev. is blown by an angel in Heaven, announcing the beginning of the 2nd half of the Tribulation... the Great Tribulation, and is never called the last trumpet or a trumpet of God.

Exodus 19 is the giving of the Law on Mt Sinai... these are the only 2 occurrences of the Trumpet of God. God blew the First Trumpet of God in **Exodus 19** in preparation for the giving of the Law. He will blow the Last Trumpet of God to initiate the Rapture **and the beginning of the Tribulation.**

*There are 4 named trumpets in Scripture... the first trumpet, the last trumpet, the great trumpet and the trumpet of God*

As further proof of the soon coming rapture... let's very briefly look at the **7 feasts of the Lord...**

There are 4 spring feasts... a gap of summer months... and then the final 3 feasts.

The spring feasts are, Passover, next day is Unleavened Bread and the third day is First Fruits, and 50 days after Passover is Pentecost.

Then you have about a 4 month gap until the final 3 fall feasts... Feast of Trumpets, 10 days later the Day of Atonement and 5 days later the Feast of Tabernacles.

You have the 4 spring feasts, fulfilled exactly... to the day... by the Lord Jesus Christ, you have a 4 month gap followed by the 3 final feasts which will also be fulfilled exactly by the Lord Jesus Christ.

God gave the 7 feasts in anticipation of the coming Messiah, and also as a picture of His complete work of Salvation.

The first 4 feasts... were fulfilled by Jesus Christ about 1980 years ago...

That Summer gap between the two groups of feasts represents the time we are living now... the Church Age.

The first feast after that summer gap is...

The Feast of Trumpets ... also called the Wedding of the Messiah...

The feast of Trumpets involves a sequence of trumpet blasts... none of which have anything to do with the trumpet judgments of Rev. 11...

We will study these 7 feasts and their fulfillment another time.

But the feast of trumpets... also called The wedding of the Messiah... Jesus used the picture of **the Jewish wedding** in many of His parables and teachings... culminating with His promise to us in John 14...'In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.' John 14:1

Does this sound like His return at Armageddon as a Warrior to destroy all His enemies?

No! It sounds like His coming to receive His Bride.

That word, receive, in the Greek is paralambano... it means, **to take to, to take with one's self, to join to one's self**... that's the picture of the Rapture, His coming for His bride... **not** His return at Armageddon.

The first stage in the Jewish Wedding is the betrothal.... the groom would negotiate the bride price... in our case, the price He agreed to pay for us was His crucifixion, His shed blood and death...

After the bride price was paid, she was considered married to Him... we are one with the Lord Jesus Christ now... from then on, the bride was sanctified, set apart exclusively for her groom... we have been sanctified and set apart for our groom, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then... the marriage covenant was ratified through the drinking from a cup of wine together... ... our observance of communion is a continual reminder of what He has done for us... that He chose each one of us for Himself and set us apart for Himself.

Then, the groom would leave His bride at her parent's house and go back to His Father's house to prepare a special bridal chamber for them to share during the bridal week.

Jesus said, 'I go to prepare a place for you'... our special bridal chamber.

At the end of the preparation time... usually 12 months.. the groom would return for his bride... usually at night... to take his bride away, back with him to his father's house... although the bride was expecting her groom to return for her... she did not know exactly when... she was expected to be ready to meet him at all times... when he did come, he would shout... and she would be gathered unto him to accompany him back to his father's house, to that special place he had prepared for her. They would enter the bridal chamber alone together and there... finally... physically consummate their marriage which had already been a reality since their betrothal a year before.

...'In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.' John 14:1

After consummation... all of the guests would join the bride and groom for a great wedding feast of 7 days... our bridal week, our wedding supper of the lamb with our bridegroom... a week of years... 7 years... during which He will give us our rewards and we will all celebrate together. During that same 7 years, down here on Earth, the world will be going through the Tribulation with the Antichrist, many judgments, the mark of the beast etc... the 7 seal judgments, the 7 trumpet judgments and the 7 bowl judgments... and finally, Jesus Christ's physical return to Earth at Armageddon, as a Warriorr, with us, His bride, accompanying Him.

God gives us a picture of the Rapture in 2 Kings 2: 'Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire *appeared* with horses of fire, and separated the two of them (Elijah and Elisha); and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

The first one to clearly teach about the Rapture is Paul; he learned about the Rapture after he, himself, was raptured up into Heaven to be taught personally by the Lord Jesus Christ.

'I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was **caught up** to the third heaven. <sup>3</sup>And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— <sup>4</sup>how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. <sup>5</sup>Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. <sup>6</sup>For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me *to be* or hears from me.' 2 Cor 12:2 Paul was harpazo... he was raptured, caught up to the third Heaven.

The Old Testament prophets didn't teach the Rapture... they didn't know it. Jesus Christ taught it but not in depth; His teaching was to the house of Israel... In Matt 15:24... Jesus said... I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He only touched on it for our sake. Israel is not the Bride of Christ; we are.

Remember... Jesus Christ is not walking around teaching and preaching in the New Testament... the Gospels are still the O.T... He is preaching the '**Gospel of the Kingdom**'... later, Paul is teaching us the '**Gospel of Salvation**' and the imminency (at any moment) of the Rapture is a very important part of our Salvation.

**The Rapture is not a reward for the really good Christians. It is the completion of the Salvation of every Christian, every true Child of God; it is the culmination of all that Jesus Christ paid on the Cross.**

Daniel saw the Tribulation and the Antichrist, etc. but God did not show him the Rapture.

But then, Paul tells us he is revealing to us a secret, a mystery... something not previously known.

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—we... who is 'we'... us, the True Church! He continues... in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.**

**Then... in 1 Cor. 2:6-8** He tells us **WHY** it was kept a secret, a mystery.

<sup>6</sup>However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages **for our glory**, which none of the rulers of this age knew **for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

Satan probably kicks himself every day! He slaps his head...'*If I had only known what crucifying Him would mean for those miserable little creatures... that they would be able to live forever, that one day they would changed, like the worms they are... into butterflies, to have a body like His... I never even had a body like His... ohh what misery, what degradation... ohhh the unfairness of it all!!!*

Jesus being crucified was God's plan from the very beginning... Here is that secret... without notice or warning, the Lord Jesus Christ will come down from Heaven, into our atmosphere... in the clouds... and we will immediately, in a moment... we will instantaneously be changed; our mortal bodies will become like His powerful, eternal body. We will be caught up to meet Him in the air and accompany Him back to Heaven where we will be with Him during the 7 years of the Tribulation on Earth. Those who have died in Christ... the

bodies of born again believers... will go up first and then we who are alive will be caught up to join them all. It will happen so fast, so quickly that it's referred to as 'in the twinkling of an eye'.

First we will hear the **shout of God**, and the **voice of an archangel**... and the **trumpet of God**...not the trumpet of an angel... that's very important.

One moment we will be eating or sleeping or driving our car... and **in an instant**... we will be snatched away... harpazoed away... raptured away... to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds! '...and so shall we ever be with the Lord!'

In **1 Cor. 13:12** Paul said that we will 'know' as we are known... we will recognize Him and each other...

John said in **1 John 3**: '**...for what we will be, is not yet known, but we know that when He appears we will be like Him! We don't yet know what our eternal bodies will be, but they will be like His.**

***I believe we will have the same abilities and capabilities as He demonstrated after His resurrection... we will be like Him! Our glorified, eternal, immortal bodies will be like His... we will be like Him!***

He was not bound by time, space or distance... not even physical walls.

***Let's look at the clear references to the Rapture...***

**John 14:1-3** "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup>In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. Jesus is not talking about coming at the battle of Armageddon to destroy all His enemies... He is referring to that very special time when He comes to receive His bride... us!

**1 Thess 4:16-18** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup>Therefore comfort one another with these words.... comfort one another with these words...

**Comfort one another with these words....** How comforting would it be if we were telling each other... hang on... the Tribulation is really going to be terrible and you and your family will probably be killed for your faith, and your body will begin to rot in the grave... but eventually after all that... Jesus will come back... comfort one another with these words?

**Philippians 3:20-21** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body!

**Rev 3:10-11** Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup>Behold, I am coming quickly!

The words 'keep you from... in the Greek... it is *tereo ek*... it means, out of... away from... 'I will keep you out of and away from the hour of testing of the whole World. It does not mean, I will keep you and protect you as you go through it.

Never before has the whole World, at once, had Tribulation except the time of the Flood.

**1 Thess 5:9** For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ!

**Matt 24:40-42** Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup>Two *women* will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>42</sup>Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

**1 Thess 1:9b-10** how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, <sup>10</sup>and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. From the wrath to come... the Greek word is APO... it means.. of a state of separation, that is of physical distance, of distance of place temporal, of distance of time... He will put DISTANCE between us and the wrath to come. See all these places where God promises to keep the True Church FROM the wrath to come, the Tribulation.

I don't see how anyone who truly wants to know truth can come up with anything different.

**1 Thess 5:2-4** For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup>For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, (not US) as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. <sup>4</sup>But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should *overtake* you as a thief....

**Catch this!!!** The word in that verse... that day will not *overtake* you... in the Greek it is... *katalambanō*... it means... to lay hold of so as to make one's own... to obtain, attain to, to make one's own, to take into one's self, to appropriate or to seize to seize upon, take possession of... see the similarity of this word with *harpazo*... where the Holy Spirit will seize upon us... here the opposite... that day will not seize upon us... as it will the world... We will not be here to be seized upon by that day.

We will be raptured/captured/harpazoed/snatched away, by the Lord Jesus Christ but the Day of the Lord will not capture us as it will the whole World.

**1 Thess 5:9-11** For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep,(whether we are alive or have died) we should live together with Him. <sup>11</sup>Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Comfort each other with the knowledge that we have not been appointed to Wrath.

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## Part 2:

Some believe the study of Last Things, the Rapture in particular, is a relatively unimportant subject and not as useful to a Christian's growth as other areas of study. In reality, it is a most important area to study and understand. Our clear understanding of the Rapture is the thing that should, more than anything else, inspire us to live lives pleasing to God in every way; the understanding that we will be taken up to meet Him at any moment should cause us to walk circumspectly and carefully in all we do.

John and Paul call the Rapture our 'blessed hope.' John says, 'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. <sup>3</sup>And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.' 1 John 3:2 Paul: 'looking for the *blessed hope and glorious appearing* of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,' Titus 2:13 Our hope is not in the Rapture; the Rapture is simply the vehicle used to draw us up to our blessed hope who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hope is in Him; we believe Him that He will do for us all that He has promised and the first thing we will receive in the final installment of our Eternal Salvation will be our new, eternal, glorified bodies, like His own, which will be ours, in the twinkling of an eye, at the Rapture.

**We are living in the time just prior to the Rapture; the time which demands a careful understanding of all of God's Word, especially regarding the study and understanding of Last Things. It's in virtually every book!**

Jesus' return for us, His Bride, will happen at any moment, without any warning; no other prophecy needs to be completed before He comes for us, which could even be now.

When we understand and believe this truth, we are much more likely to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and worthy of the calling with which we've been called. Col. 1:10, Eph 4:1

Some hold to an understanding that the Rapture will happen around half way through the Tribulation, a belief which they call 'pre-wrath,' that the Rapture will occur before God's Wrath is poured out. They believe that does not happen until the midway point of the Tribulation. The judgments and plagues which happen before that point, they call, 'Satan's Wrath,' and that 'God's Wrath' doesn't begin until the midway point of the Tribulation.



**Now what about that 'wrath' which some believe does not begin until well into the seven year tribulation... and that the Rapture does not happen until then. Instead of a 'Pre-Tribulation' Rapture, they believe in a 'Pre-Wrath Rapture; let's see where they say is the beginning of God's Wrath being poured out on the Earth:**

**Rev 6:16** When the 6th seal is opened, there is a great earthquake and people have gone into caves to hide; it says, 'and (they) said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup>For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'

The 'day of God's Wrath,' just because unsaved men in the midst of the Tribulation say that the day of God's Wrath has 'now' begun, doesn't mean it's true. The day of God's Wrath, the Day of the Lord... encompasses the entire 7 year period of Daniel's '70th Week,' the Tribulation.

People's understanding of Revelation and the End Times becomes faulty if they refuse to accept and believe the most important aspect of the 7 year Tribulation: that it has nothing to do with the Church whatsoever. It is the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of 70 Weeks; 70 x 7year periods. It is the time that God resumes and finishes His chastisement of Israel, His Own, special, chosen nation, the only nation He created and chose just for Himself. Israel is not like any other nation on Earth and all of Earthly history revolves around Israel alone. Israel is the Earthly people of God. We, the Church are the Heavenly people of God. His work of saving and setting apart for Himself the chosen Bride for His Son was a finished and completed work at the Cross. Actually, it was a finished work in God's mind even before Creation. Paul writes to Timothy: '*(God,) who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.*' 2Tim 1:9 When He finally finishes adding Gentiles and Jews to His Bride, the Lord Jesus Christ will come for us, remove us from the Earth and then, and only then, will God resume and finish His work with Israel.

Revelation is the blueprint for the Tribulation. After Rev. chapter 3, the Church is gone from the Earth. There is no more mention of the Church, at all, until chapter 19 when we return with Him to Armageddon.

**If we look at the first four Seal Judgments in the first part of Rev. chapter 6, it is obvious that God has been pouring out His Wrath on the World for quite some time before the 6th Seal is opened. In the first 4 Seals opened, we see the four horses and their riders... we see the Antichrist rising up in power conquering, peace being taken from the Earth at the very beginning of the 7 year Tribulation, great famine and then death of 1/4 the World's population... God's wrath and judgment began to be poured out from the beginning of the seven year tribulation... gradually increasing in intensity and ferocity.**

**If He was planning to leave His Bride in that terrible place and time... He would have warned us many times throughout the N.T. There is never any mention of such a thing.**

**If the Bride of Christ had been living in Sodom... isn't it obvious that He would have gone to rescue her before He destroyed the city... like He did Lot? Was Lot more precious to Him than His Bride?**

**Rahab is also a picture of the Rapture... Rahab, in Jericho, received and hid the spies. Because of her faith in the God of the Israelites, she and all her family were rescued before destruction came to the city and all who were in it. She laid out a scarlet rope... a picture of Jesus' blood... and she became the bride of Salmon; she became the mother of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David... Jesus Christ is the 'Son of David.'**

**Do you think Rahab the Harlot was more precious to Him than His Bride?**

**Salmon means: 'garment.' Who is our garment of righteousness? Jesus Christ.**

**Rahab, who was rescued before Tribulation came to Jericho, became the bride of 'garment.'... another picture of the Bride of Christ being rescued before Tribulation.**

**The World will certainly be receiving Judgments from God during the first half of the Tribulation. The Bible often teaches us that God Rescues the Righteous... never judging them with the wicked.**

**Luke 17:26-29** Jesus told us what to look for in the end times... He said, 'And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it also be in the days of the Son of Man: <sup>27</sup>They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.'

(Nothing special happened to give any warning... eating, drinking, marrying... life as usual.) Jesus continues: 'Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; <sup>29</sup>but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed *them* all'... again... no special warning whatsoever... no sign to look for... a complete surprise!

It's important to recognize that Jesus, in Luke 17 and Matthew 24, is telling us about 2 separate comings. One, He will only come down as far as the clouds and it will be a complete surprise to the World. We, who are watching and waiting for His coming... will not be completely surprised... it will be a marvelous shock, the moment it happens that we are instantly harpazoed upward... the first thing I think many of us will say as we are on our way up to meet Him in the clouds... will be 'I knew it!!! This is what I've been waiting and watching for!' We won't be looking down, afraid of heights, we will be looking up at Him... we will see Him as He is and we will be changed, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, and we will be like Him! He will receive us unto Himself that where He is... there we will be also... with Him forever.

Both Noah and Lot... both the pre-flood world and after, Sodom & Gomorrah... are types/pictures for the present sinful world system and our removal from it, before God's judgment of the world in the Tribulation.

Noah and his family were sealed into the Ark of safety before judgment came on the world.

We have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, into our Ark of Safety, the Lord Jesus Christ.

They were taken up and away from the God's judgment... in their Ark of safety.

We will be taken up and away from the judgment to come in our Ark of safety, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lot was forcibly taken and removed out of and away from Sodom before judgment. He was forcibly taken out... the angel said to Lot... hurry! Move it! ... for I cannot do anything... I cannot bring judgment on Sodom until you are out of the way, out and away from here...

Do you see... God is saying through all these many examples... that when He judges the World through the 7 years of the Tribulation... He will not begin... until He has taken us up, out of and away from here and has carried us back to Heaven, to our Groom, the Lord Jesus Christ, to finally consummate our marriage to Him and then to enjoy our 7 year bridal week with our groom as He showers us with unimaginable eternal rewards which we will have earned during our time while we've been waiting for Him.

If our attitude has been one of faithfully watching and waiting for His return... like a child or a puppy anxiously waits at the window searching for the first glimpse of daddy's car coming around the corner... if that has been our attitude, Paul says that the Crown of Righteousness will be ours. 2 Tim 4:8

God never judges the righteous with the wicked, the saved with the unsaved... His children of light, with the children of darkness. In fact, no judgment awaits us except regarding our works and our rewards.

See, again, how Peter almost says the same thing that Jesus did: '**For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; <sup>5</sup>and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah... bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; <sup>6</sup>and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; <sup>7</sup>and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked... <sup>9</sup>then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trials, (out of and away from, (EK, the Greek word)... and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment... Out of trials ... the same word again EK!! Out of... away from... distance from a specific time and place. 2Pet 2:4-10**

He never punishes His children and He will never judge Us... He corrects and disciplines His children... because He loves us but He never judges or punishes His children.

Peter was teaching us from Lot and Noah that **this is God's character...** not isolated incidents ... it is to convey a general principle. The Greek word translated 'out of' is again... **EK** meaning 'out of' 'away from' the specific time and the specific place of the event described...

**Isaiah 57:1:** *The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; **devout men are taken away**, and no one understands that the **righteous are taken away** to be spared from evil.*

No word in any part of Scripture is there by accident... God says what He means and He means what He says. Here, in Isaiah, the Hebrew word translated "taken away" is '**acaph**: it means 'to gather in, receive, take away remove and withdraw.' God will not allow the righteous to be punished with the wicked. Here, in Isaiah, He says, the righteous are gathered in, received, taken away, removed and withdrawn... to be spared from evil. Enoch was raptured up, out of and away from... before the flood.

'Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. <sup>22</sup>After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. <sup>23</sup>So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. <sup>24</sup>And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.' Gen 5:21

Noah and his family... rode in the Ark, **up and out, away from**... before the flood.

Lot was forcibly **taken up, out of and away from** Sodom, a picture of the World, before destruction.

The Revelation teaches us of the Rapture: **Revelation is divided, by God, into 3 distinct sections...**

**Chapter 1.... Chapters 2-3... Chapters 4-22.**

In Rev. 1:19 The Lord Jesus Christ says to John... **'What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia... Write the things which you have seen: 1... and the things which are: 2... and the things which will take place after this: 3.**

1. The things you have seen... In chapter 1 John saw the Lord **Jesus Christ glorified in Heaven.**
2. The things which are... Chapters 2-3... the **times of the Church Age... Us, the Church... the 7 letters to the 7 specific churches of that time, that also represent a map of the entire time of the Church, about 2000 years.**
3. And then... the things which will take place '**after this**' after the time of the Church Age... that is, **the 7 year Tribulation and then the Millennium and then Eternity.**

*(John saw the Lord Jesus Christ glorified: 'I saw One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. <sup>14</sup>His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; <sup>15</sup>His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters.' Rev 1:13 **'We will see Him as He is and we shall be like Him.'** 1 John 3:2)*

The things which are: Rev 2-3... Seven letters to seven churches... seven specific churches... **at that time...** but also prophetically... concerning different time periods of the entire church age... from beginning to end... starting with the Church at Ephesus, representing the current Church of John's time...

The last 2 Churches... **Philadelphia and Laodicea represent our time...**

Philadelphia... the true Church of the last days.

Laodicea... the Apostate, falling away Church we see all around us.

The Church at Philadelphia is often called The Church of the Rapture because of the Lord's promise **to 'keep us from the hour of trial that's going to come upon the whole world.'** (Rev. 3:10). <sup>10</sup>**Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup>Behold, I am coming quickly!** That trial then begins in the next chapters.

**Notice that He does refer to His Wrath or Judgment... but He includes all of it by referring to it as simply... the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole World... Then He says, Behold I am coming quickly!**

This is the Lord's personal confirmation to John... to the Church... to us...of a pre-tribulation Rapture.

There is no such promise of rescue to **Laodicea**, the apostate, fallen away Church we see all around us today...

The 7 years of the Tribulation, in Revelation and Daniel, is the culmination of the great prophecy in Daniel 9, the '70 weeks of Daniel': the prophecy of the history of God's dealings with Israel. The 7 year Tribulation is the 70th week... of that plan... but in that gap of time, nearly 2000 years, between the end of the 69th week and the beginning of the 70th week, God planned to establish and grow the Church, the Bride He had chosen for His Son. That gap of time between the 69th and 70th 'weeks,' in which the Church has lived and grown, will end when God is ready to begin His final 7 years of dealing with Israel for her sin and rejection of their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are His body and He has promised to take us home before He finishes His work with Israel and judges the whole World. We will study the 70 Weeks of Daniel later.

*(Something we overlook, because God has been so gracious with us in His complete grace, mercy, patience and forgiveness of all our sin, all praise and thanks to Jesus Christ's finished work on the Cross... that same grace and mercy is not poured out on Israel. He has been scourging them for 2000 years because of their rejection and crucifixion of His Son and He will finish that work during the 7 years of the Tribulation. He has never fully rejected or thrown them aside but He has preserved them until His final work of the salvation of Israel at His return at Armageddon.)*

After those first three chapters of Revelation, **after the time of the Church in Chapters 2-3, it says in Rev. 4:1, 'After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.** Notice that God's voice is like a trumpet.

After these things... After what... after the time of the Church on the Earth... John sees an open door... the voice says, '**Come up here!**'... after that, there is no more mention of the Church at all throughout the entire tribulation period. After the Church is gone from the Earth, it's all Tribulation... all Israel... until Jesus Christ returns at the battle of Armageddon... accompanied by us... the Church, His Bride and His Saints.

During all the rest of The Revelation, the entire book... **God finishes His dealing with Israel...** Not the Church... we are gone... He will have completed all His dealings with the Church. Jews and Gentiles will believe during the Tribulation but they are not part of the Church and most will be killed for their faith... they are the ones to whom Jesus said... He who stands firm to the end will be saved...

When we study Daniel chapter 9... the 70 weeks of Daniel... we will see even more clearly how all of Rev. chapters 4-19 is **God's completion of His dealings of chastising and scourging of Israel... a 7 year period,** the final week of the '70 weeks' Vision given to Daniel... the final 7 year period with absolutely no mention of the Church at all... only Israel.

If the Church were going to go through the Tribulation, even part of it... isn't it obvious that Paul would have warned us, prepared us, instead of telling us to be comforted?

Now we come to another obvious and important proof that the Rapture will take place **before** the Tribulation. In Rev 4, John is taken up into the throne room of God where He sees God the Father seated on His throne and where he receives the rest of the Revelation of Jesus Christ to John:

Rev 4:2-4 'Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and **One sat on the throne.** <sup>3</sup>**And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.** **Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.**

**Here, John is giving us 4 more proofs of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.**

**Who are these Elders and why are they here?** The obvious answer is that probably... 12 represent Israel... maybe patriarchs and/or prophets... and 12 represent the Church... maybe the 11 disciples and Paul.

There have been other visions of God's throne room to other prophets but none saw these 24 Elders.

I Kings 22:19... Then **Micaiah** said, 'Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left...' No extra thrones and no 24 elders.

**Isaiah** 6: 1-3... In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. ... the angels cried: "Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts; The whole earth *is* full of His glory!" Neither Micaiah nor Isaiah see extra thrones or 24 elders. They are not there yet in the O.T.

**Ezekiel** 1... Ezekiel sees a vision of God on His Throne; he saw the four living creatures... and he saw God sitting on His throne... but no extra thrones... and not the 24 elders.

**Daniel however**, unlike these previous 3 Prophets... is seeing into the same time as John: the Tribulation... and **Daniel does see thrones** and people seated on them in the throne room of Heaven...

Daniel and the Revelation go together but Daniel's vision was limited, he saw less than John.

Dan 7:7-10, 21... Daniel talks about seeing World kingdoms and about the rise of the Antichrist...

Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days...

<sup>9</sup>"I watched **till thrones were put in place**,

And the Ancient of Days was seated;

His garment *was* white as snow,

And the hair of His head *was* like pure wool.

His throne *was* a fiery flame,

Its wheels a burning fire; (sounds like what John saw in Revelation)

<sup>10</sup>A fiery stream issued

And came forth from before Him.

A thousand thousands ministered to Him;

Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. (100 million)

**The court was seated**, And the **books were opened**.

It appears that this court, Daniel sees, which has been seated on thrones are the 24 Elders John sees.

The court was seated... remember, we will rule and reign with Him.

Daniel continues: <sup>21</sup>"I was watching; and the same horn (Antichrist) was **making war against the saints, ... and prevailing against them...**' How do we know this isn't the Church being 'beaten'? hold on...

Daniel continues:

<sup>24</sup>The ten horns *are* ten kings *who* shall arise from this kingdom.

And another shall rise after them; (the Antichrist)

He shall be different from the first *ones*,

And shall subdue three kings... **the rise of the Antichrist**

<sup>25</sup>He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High,

**He shall persecute the saints** of the Most High,

And shall intend to change times and law.

**Then the saints shall be given into his hand**

for a time and times and half a time.... 3 1/2 years

<sup>26</sup>**But the court shall be seated,**

**And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy it forever...**'

He, the Antichrist, will be judged by this court...

This vision is of the Tribulation and the Saints being persecuted and subdued are not the Church; they are the Tribulation Saints. How do we know?

Jesus said, 'and on this rock **I will build My church**, and the gates of hell **shall not prevail against it.**' Matt 16:18

The True Church is always victorious: 'Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ' 2 Cor 2:14

In the tribulation, **there is no Church** and the gates of hell **do prevail against** the Saints, for a time, times and half a time... the final 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation.

**Rev 4:4 The 24 elders...** When John arrived at the throne room of God... he saw a group never before seen in any of the Bible's pictures of God's throne previous to the time of the Tribulation... neither Isaiah, Ezekiel nor Micaiah reported seeing any other thrones or any others seated in the throne room and yet Daniel and John, both seeing visions of the **tribulation time**, saw extra thrones and people seated on them.

Nothing in God's Word is by accident! Never forget that!

**Who are they?** They have thrones, so they ruling and reigning. They surround the Throne of God, so they're assisting Him. **We, the true Church, are the only ones to whom it is promised that we will rule and reign with Him for 1000 years and forever.**

**Rev. 1:5 says,** 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Tribulation Saints, those martyred for their faith during the Tribulation, serve the Lord in His Temple. Rev 7:14  
Theirs is a priestly role but they are never referred to as kings, never ruling.

Only the Church is given the status of royalty: 'But you *are* a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people...' **1 Pet:9)**

Only we are granted a seat at the Lord's side on His Throne:

'But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup>and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.' Eph 2:4

'For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup>saying with a loud voice:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain

To receive power and riches and wisdom,

And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

"Blessing and honor and glory and power

Be to Him who sits on the throne,

And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.' Rev 5:10

We are the ones who are around the Throne, there in Rev. 5, worshipping God the Father and His Son, the Lamb of God. The plagues of the Tribulation have not yet begun. They all start in chapter 6.

We will come back to Revelation at a later time.

Paul writes to us, about us in 1 Cor 6:2: '**Do you not know that the saints/the Church/will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you/the Church/ are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters (among yourselves)? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that we/the Church/shall judge angels?'**

We will rule and reign with the Lord Jesus Christ forever; we will judge the World and we will judge angels.

The 24 Elders: they are **dressed in white**, designating righteousness.

We have been made righteous... by the shed blood of Jesus Christ...

Rev 3:5 He, of the Church, who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments...

Who is the overcomer... the true born again Child of God...

**'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (Our saving faith) <sup>5</sup>Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:4**

The 24 Elders are **wearing crowns**...they have **already received their rewards** from Jesus Christ...

Rev 22:12 "And behold, I am **coming quickly**, and **My reward is with Me**, to give to every one according to his work.' Remember... Salvation is free... we can't earn or deserve it... it is all God's work... However, **rewards are always in relation to faithful service**... different **Crowns are part of different rewards**.

They have heads that will hold crowns, so they have bodies which they received at the Rapture... this is important... Right now, in Heaven, Christians who've died are born again, living Souls living within Spiritual bodies. Only Jesus Christ has been given His glorified Eternal Body... they... and we, **will not receive our glorified, eternal bodies until the Rapture!**

No one in Heaven now, except Jesus Christ, has a physical head able to hold a crown.

Paul said this clearly to Timothy: 'Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me **on that Day**, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.' 2 Tim 4:8 Paul knew that when he died, he would go into the presence of the Lord, remember, he said 'to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord,' but he also knew that not until the Rapture would he receive his glorified physical body and the rewards that had been stored up for him, including his Crown of Righteousness... **on that day!** Now, here in Revelation 5, Paul is probably one of the 24 Elders with crowns on his head... now having his rewards and a physical body capable of holding those rewards.

**Rev 5:9-12** And they sang a **new song**, the **song of the redeemed**... ...never before has this song been sung by anyone... because the redeemed have never before been in Heaven in fully redeemed bodies.

They, we, are singing...

'Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup>And they **sang a new song**, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll,

And to open its seals;

For You were slain,

And have **redeemed us to God by Your blood**

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

<sup>10</sup>And have made us **kings and priests** to our God;

**And we shall reign on the earth.**"

This is the interim period **after the Rapture** but **before** any events of the Tribulation.

**The Rapture**... the **Pretribulation Rapture is clearly taught** throughout the writings of **Paul, Peter, John, Jude, the Gospels**... including Jesus and much of the Old Testament.

God wants us to understand this reality and to be patiently but expectantly watching and waiting for Jesus Christ to return for us in the clouds at any moment.

**'Be ye therefore ready for in such an hour as you think not... your lord cometh...'** Matt 24:44

**'Surely I am coming quickly... even so... come Lord Jesus...'** That is the very end of the Bible!

Some believe the study of Last Things, the Rapture in particular, is a relatively unimportant subject and not as useful to a Christian's growth as other areas of study. In reality, it is a very important area to study and understand. Our clear understanding of the Rapture is the thing that should, more than anything else, inspire us to live lives pleasing to God in every way; the understanding that we will be taken up to meet Him at any moment should cause us to walk circumspectly and carefully in all we do.

John and Paul call the Rapture our 'blessed hope.' John says, 'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. <sup>3</sup>And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.' 1 John 3:2 Paul: 'looking for the *blessed hope and glorious appearing* of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,' Titus 2:13 Our hope is not in the Rapture; the Rapture is simply the vehicle used to draw us up to our blessed hope who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hope is in Him; we believe Him that He will do for us all that He has promised and the first thing we will receive in the final installment of our Eternal Salvation will be our new, eternal, glorified bodies, like His own, which will be ours, in the twinkling of an eye, at the Rapture.

**We are living in the time just prior to the Rapture; the time which demands a careful understanding of all of God's Word, especially regarding the study and understanding of Last Things. It's in virtually every book!**

**Jesus' return for us, His Bride, will happen at any moment, without any warning; no other prophecy needs to be completed before He comes for us, which could even be now.**

**When we understand and believe this truth, we are much more likely to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and worthy of the calling with which we've been called. Col. 1:10, Eph 4:1**

Some hold to an understanding that the Rapture will happen around half way through the Tribulation, a belief which they call 'pre-wrath,' that the Rapture will occur before God's Wrath is poured out. They believe that does not happen until the midway point of the Tribulation. The judgments and plagues which happen before that point, they call, 'Satan's Wrath,' and that 'God's Wrath' doesn't begin until the midway point of the Tribulation.

**Now what about that 'wrath' which some believe does not begin until well into the seven year tribulation... and that the Rapture does not happen until then. Instead of a 'Pre-Tribulation' Rapture, they believe in a 'Pre-Wrath Rapture; let's see where they say is the beginning of God's Wrath being poured out on the Earth:**

**Rev 6:16 When the 6th seal is opened, there is a great earthquake and people have gone into caves to hide; it says, 'and (they) said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup>For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'**

The 'day of God's Wrath,' just because unsaved men in the midst of the Tribulation say that the day of God's Wrath has 'now' begun, doesn't mean it's true. The day of God's Wrath, the Day of the Lord... encompasses the entire 7 year period of Daniel's '70th Week,' the Tribulation.

People's understanding of Revelation and the End Times becomes faulty if they refuse to accept and believe the most important aspect of the 7 year Tribulation: that it has nothing to do with the Church whatsoever. It is the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of 70 Weeks; 70 x 7year periods. It is the time that God resumes and finishes His chastisement of Israel, His Own, special, chosen nation, the only nation He created and chose just for Himself. Israel is not like any other nation on Earth and all of Earthly history revolves around Israel alone. Israel is the Earthly people of God. We, the Church are the Heavenly people of God. His work of saving and setting apart for Himself the chosen Bride for His Son was a finished and completed work at the Cross.

Actually, it was a finished work in God's mind even before Creation. Paul writes to Timothy: '(God,) *who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.*' 2Tim 1:9 When He finally finishes adding



Gentiles and Jews to His Bride, the Lord Jesus Christ will come for us, remove us from the Earth and then, and only then, will God resume and finish His work with Israel.

Revelation is the blueprint for the Tribulation. After Rev. chapter 3, the Church is gone from the Earth. There is no more mention of the Church, at all, until chapter 19 when we return with Him to Armageddon.

**If we look at the first four Seal Judgments in the first part of Rev. chapter 6, it is obvious that God has been pouring out His Wrath on the World for quite some time before the 6th Seal is opened. In the first 4 Seals opened, we see the four horses and their riders... we see the Antichrist rising up in power conquering, peace being taken from the Earth at the very beginning of the 7 year Tribulation, great famine and then death of 1/4 the World's population... God's wrath and judgment began to be poured out from the beginning of the seven year tribulation... gradually increasing in intensity and ferocity.**

**If He was planning to leave His Bride in that terrible place and time... He would have warned us many times throughout the N.T. There is never any mention of such a thing.**

**If the Bride of Christ had been living in Sodom... isn't it obvious that He would have gone to rescue her before He destroyed the city... like He did Lot? Was Lot more precious to Him than His Bride?**

**Rahab is also a picture of the Rapture... Rahab, in Jericho, received and hid the spies. Because of her faith in the God of the Israelites, she and all her family were rescued before destruction came to the city and all who were in it. She laid out a scarlet rope... a picture of Jesus' blood... and she became the bride of Salmon; she became the mother of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David... Jesus Christ is the 'Son of David.'**

**Do you think Rahab the Harlot was more precious to Him than His Bride?**

**Salmon means: 'garment.' Who is our garment of righteousness? Jesus Christ.**

**Rahab, who was rescued before Tribulation came to Jericho, became the bride of 'garment.'... another picture of the Bride of Christ being rescued before Tribulation.**

**The World will certainly be receiving Judgments from God during the first half of the Tribulation. The Bible often teaches us that God Rescues the Righteous... never judging them with the wicked.**

**Luke 17:26-29 Jesus told us what to look for in the end times... He said, 'And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it also be in the days of the Son of Man: <sup>27</sup>They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.'**

**(Nothing special happened to give any warning... eating, drinking, marrying... life as usual.) Jesus continues: 'Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; <sup>29</sup>but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed *them* all'... again... no special warning whatsoever... no sign to look for... a complete surprise!**

**It's important to recognize that Jesus, in Luke 17 and Matthew 24, is telling us about 2 separate comings. One, He will only come down as far as the clouds and it will be a complete surprise to the World. We, who are watching and waiting for His coming... will not be completely surprised... it will be a marvelous shock, the moment it happens that we are instantly harpazoed upward... the first thing I think many of us will say as we are on our way up to meet Him in the clouds... will be 'I knew it!!! This is what I've been waiting and watching for!' We won't be looking down, afraid of heights, we will be looking up at Him... we will see Him as He is and we will be changed, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, and we will be like Him! He will receive us unto Himself that where He is... there we will be also... with Him forever.**

**Both Noah and Lot... both the pre-flood world and after, Sodom & Gomorrah... are types/pictures for the present sinful world system and our removal from it, before God's judgment of the world in the Tribulation.**

**Noah and his family were sealed into the Ark of safety before judgment came on the world.**

**We have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, into our Ark of Safety, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**They were taken up and away from the God's judgment... in their Ark of safety.**

**We will be taken up and away from the judgment to come in our Ark of safety, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Lot was forcibly taken and removed **out of and away from** Sodom before judgment. He was forcibly taken out... the angel said to Lot... hurry! Move it! ... for I cannot do anything... **I cannot bring judgment on Sodom until you are out of the way, out and away from here...**

Do you see... God is saying through all these many examples... that when He judges the World through the 7 years of the Tribulation.... **He will not begin... until He has taken us up, out of and away from here** and has carried us back to Heaven, to our Groom, the Lord Jesus Christ, to finally consummate our marriage to Him and then to enjoy our 7 year bridal week with our groom as He showers us with unimaginable eternal rewards which we will have earned during our time while we've been waiting for Him.

If our attitude has been one of faithfully watching and waiting for His return... like a child or a puppy anxiously waits at the window searching for the first glimpse of daddy's car coming around the corner... if that has been our attitude, Paul says that the Crown of Righteousness will be ours. 2 Tim 4:8

God never judges the righteous with the wicked, the saved with the unsaved... His children of light, with the children of darkness. In fact, no judgment awaits us except regarding our works and our rewards.

See, again, how Peter almost says the same thing that Jesus did: '**For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; <sup>5</sup>and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah... bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; <sup>6</sup>and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; <sup>7</sup>and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked... <sup>9</sup>then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trials, (out of and away from, (EK, the Greek word)).. and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment... Out of trials ... the same word again EK!! Out of... away from... distance from a specific time and place. 2Pet 2:4-10**

He never punishes His children and He will never judge Us... He corrects and disciplines His children... because He loves us but He never judges or punishes His children.

Peter was teaching us from Lot and Noah that **this is God's character...** not isolated incidents ... it is to convey a general principle. The Greek word translated 'out of' is again... **EK** meaning 'out of' 'away from' the specific time and the specific place of the event described...

**Isaiah 57:1: *The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil.***

No word in any part of Scripture is there by accident... God says what He means and He means what He says. Here, in Isaiah, the Hebrew word translated "taken away" is '**acaph**: it means 'to gather in, receive, take away remove and withdraw.'<sup>1</sup> God will not allow the righteous to be punished with the wicked. Here, in Isaiah, He says, the righteous are gathered in, received, taken away, removed and withdrawn... to be spared from evil.

Enoch was raptured up, out of and away from... before the flood.

'Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. <sup>22</sup>After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. <sup>23</sup>So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. <sup>24</sup>And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.' Gen 5:21

Noah and his family... rode in the Ark, **up and out, away from**... before the flood.

Lot was forcibly **taken up, out of and away from** Sodom, a picture of the World, before destruction.

The Revelation teaches us of the Rapture: **Revelation is divided, by God, into 3 distinct sections...**

**Chapter 1.... Chapters 2-3... Chapters 4-22.**

In Rev. 1:19 The Lord Jesus Christ says to John... '**What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia... Write the things which you have seen: 1... and the things which are: 2... and the things which will take place after this: 3.**

1. The things you have seen... In chapter 1 John saw the Lord **Jesus Christ glorified in Heaven.**

2. The things which are... Chapters 2-3... the **times of the Church Age... Us, the Church... the 7 letters to the 7 specific churches of that time, that also represent a map of the entire time of the Church, about 2000 years.**

3. And then... the things which will take place **'after this'** after the time of the Church Age... that is, **the 7 year Tribulation and then the Millennium and then Eternity.**

*(John saw the Lord Jesus Christ glorified: '(I saw One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. <sup>14</sup>His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; <sup>15</sup>His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters.' Rev 1:13 **'We will see Him as He is and we shall be like Him.'** 1 John 3:2)*

The things which are: Rev 2-3... Seven letters to seven churches... seven specific churches... **at that time...** but also prophetically... concerning different time periods of the entire church age... from beginning to end... starting with the Church at Ephesus, representing the current Church of John's time...

The last 2 Churches... **Philadelphia and Laodicea represent our time...**

Philadelphia... the true Church of the last days.

Laodicea... the Apostate, falling away Church we see all around us.

The Church at Philadelphia is often called The Church of the Rapture because of the Lord's promise **to 'keep us from the hour of trial that's going to come upon the whole world.'** (Rev. 3:10). **<sup>10</sup>Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup>Behold, I am coming quickly!** That trial then begins in the next chapters.

**Notice that He does refer to His Wrath or Judgment... but He includes all of it by referring to it as simply... the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole World... Then He says, Behold I am coming quickly!**

This is the Lord's personal confirmation to John... to the Church... to us...of a pre-tribulation Rapture.

There is no such promise of rescue to **Laodicea**, the apostate, fallen away Church we see all around us today...

The 7 years of the Tribulation, in Revelation and Daniel, is the culmination of the great prophecy in Daniel 9, the '70 weeks of Daniel': the prophecy of the history of God's dealings with Israel. The 7 year Tribulation is the 70th week... of that plan... but in that gap of time, nearly 2000 years, between the end of the 69th week and the beginning of the 70th week, God planned to establish and grow the Church, the Bride He had chosen for His Son. That gap of time between the 69th and 70th 'weeks,' in which the Church has lived and grown, will end when God is ready to begin His final 7 years of dealing with Israel for her sin and rejection of their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are His body and He has promised to take us home before He finishes His work with Israel and judges the whole World. We will study the 70 Weeks of Daniel later.

*(Something we overlook, because God has been so gracious with us in His complete grace, mercy, patience and forgiveness of all our sin, all praise and thanks to Jesus Christ's finished work on the Cross... that same grace and mercy is not poured out on Israel. He has been scourging them for 2000 years because of their rejection and crucifixion of His Son and He will finish that work during the 7 years of the Tribulation. He has never fully rejected or thrown them aside but He has preserved them until His final work of the salvation of Israel at His return at Armageddon.)*

After those first three chapters of Revelation, **after the time of the Church in Chapters 2-3, it says in Rev. 4:1, 'After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.** Notice that God's voice is like a trumpet.

After these things... After what... after the time of the Church on the Earth... John sees an open door... the voice says, **'Come up here!'**... after that, there is no more mention of the Church at all throughout the entire tribulation period. After the Church is gone from the Earth, it's all Tribulation... all Israel... until Jesus Christ returns at the battle of Armageddon... accompanied by us... the Church, His Bride and His Saints.

During all the rest of The Revelation, the entire book... **God finishes His dealing with Israel...** Not the Church... we are gone... He will have completed all His dealings with the Church. Jews and Gentiles will believe during

the Tribulation but they are not part of the Church and most will be killed for their faith... they are the ones to whom Jesus said... He who stands firm to the end will be saved...

When we study Daniel chapter 9... the 70 weeks of Daniel... we will see even more clearly how all of Rev. chapters 4-19 is **God's completion of His dealings of chastising and scourging of Israel... a 7 year period**, the final week of the '70 weeks' Vision given to Daniel... the final 7 year period with absolutely no mention of the Church at all... only Israel.

If the Church were going to go through the Tribulation, even part of it... isn't it obvious that Paul would have warned us, prepared us, instead of telling us to be comforted?

Now we come to another obvious and important proof that the Rapture will take place **before** the Tribulation. In Rev 4, John is taken up into the throne room of God where He sees God the Father seated on His throne and where he receives the rest of the Revelation of Jesus Christ to John:

Rev 4:2-4 **'Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. <sup>3</sup>And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. <sup>4</sup>Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.**

***Here, John is giving us 4 more proofs of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.***

***Who are these Elders and why are they here?*** The obvious answer is that probably... 12 represent Israel... maybe patriarchs and/or prophets... and 12 represent the Church... maybe the 11 disciples and Paul.

There have been other visions of God's throne room to other prophets but none saw these 24 Elders.

I Kings 22:19... Then **Micaiah** said, 'Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left...' No extra thrones and no 24 elders.

**Isaiah** 6: 1-3... In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. ... the angels cried: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" Neither Micaiah nor Isaiah see extra thrones or 24 elders. They are not there yet in the O.T.

**Ezekiel** 1... Ezekiel sees a vision of God on His Throne; he saw the four living creatures... and he saw God sitting on His throne... but no extra thrones... and not the 24 elders.

**Daniel however**, unlike these previous 3 Prophets... is seeing into the same time as John: the Tribulation... and **Daniel does see thrones** and people seated on them in the throne room of Heaven...

Daniel and the Revelation go together but Daniel's vision was limited, he saw less than John.

Dan 7:7-10, 21... Daniel talks about seeing World kingdoms and about the rise of the Antichrist...

Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days...

<sup>9</sup>"I watched **till thrones were put in place**,

And the Ancient of Days was seated;

His garment was white as snow,

And the hair of His head was like pure wool.

His throne was a fiery flame,

Its wheels a burning fire; (sounds like what John saw in Revelation)

<sup>10</sup>A fiery stream issued

And came forth from before Him.

A thousand thousands ministered to Him;

Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. (100 million)

**The court was seated, And the books were opened.**

It appears that this court, Daniel sees, which has been seated on thrones are the 24 Elders John sees.

The court was seated... remember, we will rule and reign with Him.

Daniel continues: <sup>21</sup>“I was watching; and the same horn (Antichrist) was **making war against the saints, ... and prevailing against them...**’ How do we know this isn't the Church being 'beaten'? hold on...

Daniel continues:

<sup>24</sup>The ten horns *are* ten kings *who* shall arise from this kingdom.

And another shall rise after them; (the Antichrist)

He shall be different from the first *ones*,

And shall subdue three kings... **the rise of the Antichrist**

<sup>25</sup>He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High,

**He shall persecute the saints** of the Most High,

And shall intend to change times and law.

**Then the saints shall be given into his hand**

for a time and times and half a time.... 3 1/2 years

<sup>26</sup>**But the court shall be seated,**

**And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy it forever...**

He, the Antichrist, will be judged by this court...

This vision is of the Tribulation and the Saints being persecuted and subdued are not the Church; they are the Tribulation Saints. How do we know?

Jesus said, 'and on this rock **I will build My church**, and the gates of hell **shall not prevail against it.**' Matt 16:18

The True Church is always victorious: 'Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ' 2 Cor 2:14

In the tribulation, **there is no Church** and the gates of hell **do prevail against** the Saints, for a time, times and half a time... the final 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation.

**Rev 4:4 The 24 elders**... When John arrived at the throne room of God... he saw a group never before seen in any of the Bible's pictures of God's throne previous to the time of the Tribulation... neither Isaiah, Ezekiel nor Micaiah reported seeing any other thrones or any others seated in the throne room and yet Daniel and John, both seeing visions of the **tribulation time**, saw extra thrones and people seated on them.

Nothing in God's Word is by accident! Never forget that!

**Who are they?** They have thrones, so they ruling and reigning. They surround the Throne of God, so they're assisting Him. ***We, the true Church, are the only ones to whom it is promised that we will rule and reign with Him for 1000 years and forever.***

***Rev. 1:5 says, 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.***

Tribulation Saints, those martyred for their faith during the Tribulation, serve the Lord in His Temple. Rev 7:14  
Theirs is a priestly role but they are never referred to as kings, never ruling.

Only the Church is given the status of royalty: 'But you *are* a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people...' **1 Pet:9)**

Only we are granted a seat at the Lord's side on His Throne:

'But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.' Eph 2:4

'For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup>saying with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain  
To receive power and riches and wisdom,  
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power  
Be to Him who sits on the throne,  
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.’ Rev 5:10

We are the ones who are around the Throne, there in Rev. 5, worshipping God the Father and His Son, the Lamb of God. The plagues of the Tribulation have not yet begun. They all start in chapter 6.

We will come back to Revelation at a later time.

Paul writes to us, about us in 1 Cor 6:2: '**Do you not know that the saints/the Church/will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you/the Church/ are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters (among yourselves)?** <sup>3</sup>**Do you not know that we/the Church/shall judge angels?'**

We will rule and reign with the Lord Jesus Christ forever; we will judge the World and we will judge angels.

The 24 Elders: they are **dressed in white**, designating righteousness.

We have been made righteous... by the shed blood of Jesus Christ...

Rev 3:5 He, of the Church, who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments...

Who is the overcomer... the true born again Child of God...

**'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (Our saving faith) <sup>5</sup>Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:4**

The 24 Elders are **wearing crowns**...they have **already received their rewards** from Jesus Christ...

Rev 22:12 “And behold, I am **coming quickly**, and **My reward is with Me**, to give to every one according to his work.’ Remember... Salvation is free... we can't earn or deserve it... it is all God's work... However, **rewards are always in relation to faithful service**... different **Crowns are part of different rewards**.

They have heads that will hold crowns, so they have bodies which they received at the Rapture... this is important... Right now, in Heaven, Christians who've died are born again, living Souls living within Spiritual bodies. Only Jesus Christ has been given His glorified Eternal Body... they... and we, will **not receive our glorified, eternal bodies until the Rapture!**

No one in Heaven now, except Jesus Christ, has a physical head able to hold a crown.

Paul said this clearly to Timothy: 'Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me **on that Day**, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.' 2 Tim 4:8 Paul knew that when he died, he would go into the presence of the Lord, remember, he said 'to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord,' but he also knew that not until the Rapture would he receive his glorified physical body and the rewards that had been stored up for him, including his Crown of Righteousness... **on that day!** Now, here in Revelation 5, Paul is probably one of the 24 Elders with crowns on his head... now having his rewards and a physical body capable of holding those rewards.

**Rev 5:9-12** And they sang a **new song**, the **song of the redeemed**... ...never before has this song been sung by anyone... because the redeemed have never before been in Heaven in fully redeemed bodies.

They, we, are singing...

'Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup>And they **sang a new song**, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll,

And to open its seals;

For You were slain,

And have **redeemed us to God by Your blood**

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

<sup>10</sup>And have made us **kings and priests** to our God;

**And we shall reign on the earth.**"

This is the interim period **after the Rapture** but **before** any events of the Tribulation.

**The Rapture...** the **Pretribulation Rapture is clearly taught** throughout the writings of **Paul, Peter, John, Jude, the Gospels...** including Jesus and much of the Old Testament.

God wants us to understand this reality and to be patiently but expectantly watching and waiting for Jesus Christ to return for us in the clouds at any moment.

**'Be ye therefore ready for in such an hour as you think not... your lord cometh...'** Matt 24:44

**'Surely I am coming quickly... even so... come Lord Jesus...'** That is the very end of the Bible!

Since this subject is so very important to our understanding of God's love for us, we won't hurry through but will cover it over 2 class sessions.

The Rapture is clearly taught throughout Scripture but it is not something that the wise Christian should heatedly argue or divide over. Unfortunately many do choose to hold their understanding of the Rapture to be the thing which most defines and characterizes themselves. We should not do so.

Paul writes, 'Behold, **I tell you a mystery**: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup>For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."' 1 Cor 15:51

We will study and learn, the Bible clearly teaches that the Rapture will occur, 'Pre-Tribulation.' It will occur before the Tribulation begins.

Some believe it will occur 'Mid-Tribulation,' in the middle of the Tribulation, while others believe it will be 'Post-Tribulation,' at the end of the Tribulation and some believe there will be no Rapture at all.

Here is why a post-Tribulation view of the Rapture could not be correct: When Jesus Christ returns at Armageddon, at the end of the Tribulation, He will bring us with Him, having been Raptured 7 years before at the beginning of the Tribulation.

When He returns at Armageddon He will destroy all His enemies, all who have rejected Him.

If He destroys all the unbelievers... and if all of the believers are Raptured up to meet Him and given immortal glorified bodies, and then immediately turn around and accompany Him back... who is there to repopulate the Earth during the Millennium, who is there for us to rule and reign over?

The Bible teaches us that the Church will rule and reign with Him over the Earth during that 1000 years but it also teaches that the Earth will be repopulated and filled by mortal humans: they will fill up the Earth... all the nations of the Earth. The Earth will be repopulated by all those who will have come to faith in Jesus Christ during the Tribulation but were not killed for their faith... those who live through to the end.

The believers who live through the Tribulation until the end will go into the Millennium and repopulate the Earth. All of the unbelievers who live through the Tribulation until the end will all be killed immediately upon Jesus Christ's return at Armageddon.

Jesus Christ, Paul, Peter, John and even Moses and Isaiah all teach us the truth of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the True Church. A correct understanding of this truth is as important as any Scripture to the Child of God's understanding of the depth of God's love for the Bride He has chosen for His Son.

A correct understanding of the Rapture is not something upon which our salvation rests but it is important to our understanding of the relationship God has chosen to give to us, a relationship of absolute love.

We find The Rapture clearly taught in Scripture, that it can and will happen **at any moment** without **any warning** with no other prophecy having to be fulfilled before the Rapture takes place. If we disbelieve the reality of the Rapture, all of our understanding of the End Times will be in error. It is a crucial piece of the entire puzzle of the End Times. If it is missing, the entire picture will be incomplete.

The Feasts of the Lord point to the Rapture. The Jewish Wedding points to the Rapture. Enoch points to the Rapture. The Flood of Noah points to the Rapture. The Israelites safely crossing the Red Sea points to the Rapture. Sodom and Gomorrah point to the Rapture. Isaiah points to the Rapture. Jesus Christ points to the Rapture. Matthew, John, Peter, Luke, Jude and Paul all point to the Rapture.

Paul teaches, throughout his letters, that it is coming and that it can happen at any moment. He tells us that those who believe and look for Jesus Christ's soon coming, at any moment, will receive a special reward. Those who disbelieve the Rapture, or that it can happen at any moment, will still go up in the Rapture, but they will not gain that special reward: Paul wrote, 'Finally, **there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness**,



which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but **also to all who have loved His appearing.**' 2 Tim 4:8 There is a **crow**n of righteousness but it is not gained by living an extra righteous life... no one lives a righteous life... we are all sinners but all true Believers are holy and righteous in God's sight because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. Paul says a crown of righteousness is laid up for some and here he tells us for whom... all those who love His appearing... all who are looking and waiting for Him.

There are 2 main reasons that this is so important for us, the Children of God to know and understand... the first being that when we understand the reality of the Rapture we can, even more, begin to understand God's love for us and the very special relationship we, the Church, the Body of Jesus Christ have with Him.

Also... as we begin to understand that we will stand before Him at any moment, we are much more apt... **if we are wise**... to seek to live lives that are pleasing to Him... **at all times** because we could very well be taken up into the clouds to meet Him before I finish my next sentence.

Not every Christian believes in the reality of the Rapture or that it will happen at any moment.

Some believe that the Church must go through tribulation to be purified... to be made holy and ready to meet Jesus Christ. However, God's Word tells us plainly that the true Church, every born again child of God, are already completely purified, at the Cross, by the blood of Jesus Christ... He paid the penalty for all our sin... past, present and future... forever.

'But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup>from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. <sup>14</sup>For by one offering **He has perfected forever** those who are being sanctified.' Heb 10:12 We have already been perfected and purified forever... it is an accomplished, finished act. On the Cross, Jesus said, 'It is finished!'

Paul wrote, '*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...' Rom 8:1

We **now stand** before God, holy, perfected, righteous, in the full righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, only. Jesus Christ does not require His Bride to be purified, something that He, Himself has already accomplished.

Some teach that the Rapture is a new concept... that the Rapture is not even in the Bible.

True... the **word**... Rapture... **isn't** in the Bible... but **neither is Trinity**... neither is the cross...or any **other**... English Word... the bible was written in Hebrew and Greek... along with a little Aramaic.

Here is one of the main verses for Paul's teaching of the Rapture: 1 Thessalonians 4:17

'For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with **the trumpet of God**. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive *and* remain **shall be caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup>Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The word for '*caught up*', in the Greek, the original writing of most of the NT is **harpazo**... it means to seize, to carry off by force/ to snatch out and away /to seize upon/ to claim for one's self eagerly.

The **same word**... **snatched away**/caught up... is used in Acts, when **Phillip preached to the Ethiopian** Eunuch.. Phillip was lead to him by the Holy Spirit... Phillip led him to salvation and then baptized him... then the bible says... right after that... Phillip was '**caught up**' and carried away by the Holy Spirit... same word... harpazo... he was raptured away.

'Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the **Lord caught Philip away**, so that the eunuch saw him no more,' Acts 8:39 **Same word: harpazo!** Phillip was Raptured away!

We're told when **Paul was 'caught up' to heaven** to receive revelation and instruction directly from God... he writes that he was... harpazo... he was raptured up to Heaven...

'I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was **caught up** to the third heaven... And I know such a

man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—<sup>4</sup> how he was **caught up** into Paradise...' 2 Cor 12:2 **Same word x2: harpazo!** Paul was raptured up to Heaven.

Also in Acts: 'Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and **take him by force** from among them, and bring *him* into the barracks.' Acts 23:10 **Same word: harpazo!** The soldiers Raptured Paul away.

No one would argue that the words, 'caught up' are not in the Bible... no one would ever argue that the Greek word, 'harpazo' is not in the Bible but many are quick to argue that the word, Rapture is not in the Bible.

If people had chosen to call the Rapture 'the great catching away,' those who argue could argue no more.

So where do we get the word... Rapture... Though we don't find that word in the English Bible, it is in the **Latin Bible** which was translated by Jerome in the early 400's and was the main Bible of the Church until the reformation in the 1500's and then, shortly thereafter we received the King James Version... in English... In Latin, the Greek word harpazo was translated, **RAPTUS** from the same root as Raptor... because that kind of **snatching away** is what a Raptor does to its prey... a raptor is a hawk, an eagle, an owl... they are raptors...

Have you ever seen video of an Eagle flying over a lake... he sees a fish near the surface... he dives down claws bared... and **snatches it up by force** and carries it away... the fish is being raptured by the raptor. Then from the Latin... raptus into the English becomes Rapture... the Eagle is a raptor... he does raptus the fish... he does harpazo the fish... the fish is **'caught up' into the heavens.**

Those who disbelieve the truth of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture say... 'When Paul writes that the Rapture will begin with the 'last trumpet... the trumpet of God... it really means the 7th trumpet... in Rev when 7 angels are blowing trumpets to announce God's judgments.'

**The Last Trump...** 1 Cor 15: '...but we shall all be changed—<sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet.** For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.'

also: 1Thes 4:16: 'For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the **trumpet of God.** And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup>Therefore **comfort one another with these words.**'

What kind of 'comfort' would it be if Paul were referring to the 7th trumpet of Revelation, after all of those plagues?

'You will have to go through the terrible tribulations of the Tribulation, you will be hunted down and probably beheaded for your faith and your family will likely be killed with you... so comfort one another with these words...' not very comforting...

*With the Trump of God... at the last Trumpet... this is not referring to the 7th Trumpet of Rev. 11:15 which is a common mistake people make...*

It is the **trumpet of God**, not the trumpet of an angel... this is the only time it is found in Scripture... but it is probably also the same as in Exodus 19 where God tells Moses that 'the Trumpet will sound...'

The 7th Trumpet of Rev. is blown by an angel in Heaven, announcing the beginning of the 2nd half of the Tribulation... the Great Tribulation, and is never called the last trumpet or a trumpet of God.

Exodus 19 is the giving of the Law on Mt Sinai... these are the only 2 occurrences of the Trumpet of God. God blew the First Trumpet of God in **Exodus 19** in preparation for the giving of the Law. He will blow the Last Trumpet of God to initiate the Rapture **and the beginning of the Tribulation.**

*There are 4 named trumpets in Scripture... the first trumpet, the last trumpet, the great trumpet and the trumpet of God*

As further proof of the soon coming rapture... let's very briefly look at the **7 feasts of the Lord...**

There are 4 spring feasts... a gap of summer months... and then the final 3 feasts.

The spring feasts are, Passover, next day is Unleavened Bread and the third day is First Fruits, and 50 days after Passover is Pentecost.

Then you have about a 4 month gap until the final 3 fall feasts... Feast of Trumpets, 10 days later the Day of Atonement and 5 days later the Feast of Tabernacles.

You have the 4 spring feasts, fulfilled exactly... to the day... by the Lord Jesus Christ, you have a 4 month gap followed by the 3 final feasts which will also be fulfilled exactly by the Lord Jesus Christ.

God gave the 7 feasts in anticipation of the coming Messiah, and also as a picture of His complete work of Salvation.

The first 4 feasts... were fulfilled by Jesus Christ about 1980 years ago...

That Summer gap between the two groups of feasts represents the time we are living now... the Church Age.

The first feast after that summer gap is...

The Feast of Trumpets ... also called the Wedding of the Messiah...

The feast of Trumpets involves a sequence of trumpet blasts... none of which have anything to do with the trumpet judgments of Rev. 11...

We will study these 7 feasts and their fulfillment another time.

But the feast of trumpets... also called The wedding of the Messiah... Jesus used the picture of **the Jewish wedding** in many of His parables and teachings... culminating with His promise to us in John 14...'In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.' John 14:1

Does this sound like His return at Armageddon as a Warrior to destroy all His enemies?

No! It sounds like His coming to receive His Bride.

That word, receive, in the Greek is paralambano... it means, **to take to, to take with one's self, to join to one's self**... that's the picture of the Rapture, His coming for His bride... **not** His return at Armageddon.

The first stage in the Jewish Wedding is the betrothal.... the groom would negotiate the bride price... in our case, the price He agreed to pay for us was His crucifixion, His shed blood and death...

After the bride price was paid, she was considered married to Him... we are one with the Lord Jesus Christ now... from then on, the bride was sanctified, set apart exclusively for her groom... we have been sanctified and set apart for our groom, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then... the marriage covenant was ratified through the drinking from a cup of wine together... our observance of communion is a continual reminder of what He has done for us... that He chose each one of us for Himself and set us apart for Himself.

Then, the groom would leave His bride at her parent's house and go back to His Father's house to prepare a special bridal chamber for them to share during the bridal week.

Jesus said, 'I go to prepare a place for you'... our special bridal chamber.

At the end of the preparation time... usually 12 months.. the groom would return for his bride... usually at night... to take his bride away, back with him to his father's house... although the bride was expecting her groom to return for her... she did not know exactly when... she was expected to be ready to meet him at all times... when he did come, he would shout... and she would be gathered unto him to accompany him back to his father's house, to that special place he had prepared for her. They would enter the bridal chamber alone together and there... finally... physically consummate their marriage which had already been a reality since their betrothal a year before.

...'In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.' John 14:1

After consummation... all of the guests would join the bride and groom for a great wedding feast of 7 days... our bridal week, our wedding supper of the lamb with our bridegroom... a week of years... 7 years... during which He will give us our rewards and we will all celebrate together. During that same 7 years, down here on Earth, the world will be going through the Tribulation with the Antichrist, many judgments, the mark of the beast etc... the 7 seal judgments, the 7 trumpet judgments and the 7 bowl judgments... and finally, Jesus Christ's physical return to Earth at Armageddon, as a Warriorr, with us, His bride, accompanying Him.

God gives us a picture of the Rapture in 2 Kings 2: 'Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire *appeared* with horses of fire, and separated the two of them (Elijah and Elisha); and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

The first one to clearly teach about the Rapture is Paul; he learned about the Rapture after he, himself, was raptured up into Heaven to be taught personally by the Lord Jesus Christ.

'I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was **caught up** to the third heaven. <sup>3</sup>And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— <sup>4</sup>how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. <sup>5</sup>Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. <sup>6</sup>For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me *to be* or hears from me.' 2 Cor 12:2 Paul was harpazo... he was raptured, caught up to the third Heaven.

The Old Testament prophets didn't teach the Rapture... they didn't know it. Jesus Christ taught it but not in depth; His teaching was to the house of Israel... In Matt 15:24... Jesus said... I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He only touched on it for our sake. Israel is not the Bride of Christ; we are.

Remember... Jesus Christ is not walking around teaching and preaching in the New Testament... the Gospels are still the O.T... He is preaching the '**Gospel of the Kingdom**'... later, Paul is teaching us the '**Gospel of Salvation**' and the imminency (at any moment) of the Rapture is a very important part of our Salvation.

**The Rapture is not a reward for the really good Christians. It is the completion of the Salvation of every Christian, every true Child of God; it is the culmination of all that Jesus Christ paid on the Cross.**

Daniel saw the Tribulation and the Antichrist, etc. but God did not show him the Rapture.

But then, Paul tells us he is revealing to us a secret, a mystery... something not previously known.

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—we... who is 'we'... us, the True Church! He continues... in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.**

**Then... in 1 Cor. 2:6-8** He tells us **WHY** it was kept a secret, a mystery.

<sup>6</sup>However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages **for our glory**, which none of the rulers of this age knew **for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

Satan probably kicks himself every day! He slaps his head...'*If I had only known what crucifying Him would mean for those miserable little creatures... that they would be able to live forever, that one day they would changed, like the worms they are... into butterflies, to have a body like His... I never even had a body like His... ohh what misery, what degradation... ohhh the unfairness of it all!!!*

Jesus being crucified was God's plan from the very beginning... **Here is that secret...** without notice or warning, the Lord Jesus Christ will come down from Heaven, into our atmosphere... in the clouds... and we will immediately, in a moment... we will instantaneously be changed; our mortal bodies will become like His powerful, eternal body. We will be caught up to meet Him in the air and accompany Him back to Heaven where we will be with Him during the 7 years of the Tribulation on Earth. Those who have died in Christ... the

bodies of born again believers... will go up first and then we who are alive will be caught up to join them all. It will happen so fast, so quickly that it's referred to as 'in the twinkling of an eye'.

First we will hear the **shout of God**, and the **voice of an archangel**... and the **trumpet of God**...not the trumpet of an angel... that's very important.

One moment we will be eating or sleeping or driving our car... and **in an instant**... we will be snatched away... harpazoed away... raptured away... to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds! '...and so shall we ever be with the Lord!'

In **1 Cor. 13:12** Paul said that we will 'know' as we are known... we will recognize Him and each other...

John said in **1 John 3**: '**...for what we will be, is not yet known, but we know that when He appears we will be like Him! We don't yet know what our eternal bodies will be, but they will be like His.**

***I believe we will have the same abilities and capabilities as He demonstrated after His resurrection... we will be like Him! Our glorified, eternal, immortal bodies will be like His... we will be like Him!***

He was not bound by time, space or distance... not even physical walls.

***Let's look at the clear references to the Rapture...***

**John 14:1-3** "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup>In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there you may be also*. Jesus is not talking about coming at the battle of Armageddon to destroy all His enemies... He is referring to that very special time when He comes to receive His bride... us!

**1 Thess 4:16-18** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup>Therefore comfort one another with these words.... comfort one another with these words...

**Comfort one another with these words....** How comforting would it be if we were telling each other... hang on... the Tribulation is really going to be terrible and you and your family will probably be killed for your faith, and your body will begin to rot in the grave... but eventually after all that... Jesus will come back... comfort one another with these words?

**Philippians 3:20-21** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body!

**Rev 3:10-11** Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup>Behold, I am coming quickly!

The words 'keep you from... in the Greek... it is *tereo ek*... it means, out of... away from... 'I will keep you out of and away from the hour of testing of the whole World. It does not mean, I will keep you and protect you as you go through it.

Never before has the whole World, at once, had Tribulation except the time of the Flood.

**1 Thess 5:9** For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ!

**Matt 24:40-42** Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup>Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. <sup>42</sup>Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

**1 Thess 1:9b-10** how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, <sup>10</sup>and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. From the wrath to come... the Greek word is APO... it means.. of a state of separation, that is of physical distance, of distance of place temporal, of distance of time... He will put DISTANCE between us and the wrath to come. See all these places where God promises to keep the True Church FROM the wrath to come, the Tribulation.

I don't see how anyone who truly wants to know truth can come up with anything different.

**1 Thess 5:2-4** For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup>For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, (not US) as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. <sup>4</sup>But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should *overtake* you as a thief....

**Catch this!!!** The word in that verse... that day will not *overtake* you... in the Greek it is... *katalambanō*... it means... to lay hold of so as to make one's own... to obtain, attain to, to make one's own, to take into one's self, to appropriate or to seize to seize upon, take possession of... see the similarity of this word with *harpazo*... where the Holy Spirit will seize upon us... here the opposite... that day will not seize upon us... as it will the world... We will not be here to be seized upon by that day.

We will be raptured/captured/harpazoed/snatched away, by the Lord Jesus Christ but the Day of the Lord will not capture us as it will the whole World.

**1 Thess 5:9-11** For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep,(whether we are alive or have died) we should live together with Him. <sup>11</sup>Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Comfort each other with the knowledge that we have not been appointed to Wrath.

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## Part 2:

Some believe the study of Last Things, the Rapture in particular, is a relatively unimportant subject and not as useful to a Christian's growth as other areas of study. In reality, it is a most important area to study and understand. Our clear understanding of the Rapture is the thing that should, more than anything else, inspire us to live lives pleasing to God in every way; the understanding that we will be taken up to meet Him at any moment should cause us to walk circumspectly and carefully in all we do.

John and Paul call the Rapture our 'blessed hope.' John says, 'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. <sup>3</sup>And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.' 1 John 3:2 Paul: 'looking for the *blessed hope and glorious appearing* of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,' Titus 2:13 Our hope is not in the Rapture; the Rapture is simply the vehicle used to draw us up to our blessed hope who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hope is in Him; we believe Him that He will do for us all that He has promised and the first thing we will receive in the final installment of our Eternal Salvation will be our new, eternal, glorified bodies, like His own, which will be ours, in the twinkling of an eye, at the Rapture.

**We are living in the time just prior to the Rapture; the time which demands a careful understanding of all of God's Word, especially regarding the study and understanding of Last Things. It's in virtually every book!**

Jesus' return for us, His Bride, will happen at any moment, without any warning; no other prophecy needs to be completed before He comes for us, which could even be now.

When we understand and believe this truth, we are much more likely to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and worthy of the calling with which we've been called. Col. 1:10, Eph 4:1

Some hold to an understanding that the Rapture will happen around half way through the Tribulation, a belief which they call 'pre-wrath,' that the Rapture will occur before God's Wrath is poured out. They believe that does not happen until the midway point of the Tribulation. The judgments and plagues which happen before that point, they call, 'Satan's Wrath,' and that 'God's Wrath' doesn't begin until the midway point of the Tribulation.

**Now what about that 'wrath' which some believe does not begin until well into the seven year tribulation... and that the Rapture does not happen until then. Instead of a 'Pre-Tribulation' Rapture, they believe in a 'Pre-Wrath Rapture; let's see where they say is the beginning of God's Wrath being poured out on the Earth:**

**Rev 6:16** When the 6th seal is opened, there is a great earthquake and people have gone into caves to hide; it says, 'and (they) said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup>For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'

The 'day of God's Wrath,' just because unsaved men in the midst of the Tribulation say that the day of God's Wrath has 'now' begun, doesn't mean it's true. The day of God's Wrath, the Day of the Lord... encompasses the entire 7 year period of Daniel's '70th Week,' the Tribulation.

People's understanding of Revelation and the End Times becomes faulty if they refuse to accept and believe the most important aspect of the 7 year Tribulation: that it has nothing to do with the Church whatsoever. It is the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of 70 Weeks; 70 x 7year periods. It is the time that God resumes and finishes His chastisement of Israel, His Own, special, chosen nation, the only nation He created and chose just for Himself. Israel is not like any other nation on Earth and all of Earthly history revolves around Israel alone. Israel is the Earthly people of God. We, the Church are the Heavenly people of God. His work of saving and setting apart for Himself the chosen Bride for His Son was a finished and completed work at the Cross. Actually, it was a finished work in God's mind even before Creation. Paul writes to Timothy: '*(God,) who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.*' 2Tim 1:9 When He finally finishes adding Gentiles and Jews to His Bride, the Lord Jesus Christ will come for us, remove us from the Earth and then, and only then, will God resume and finish His work with Israel.

Revelation is the blueprint for the Tribulation. After Rev. chapter 3, the Church is gone from the Earth. There is no more mention of the Church, at all, until chapter 19 when we return with Him to Armageddon.

**If we look at the first four Seal Judgments in the first part of Rev. chapter 6, it is obvious that God has been pouring out His Wrath on the World for quite some time before the 6th Seal is opened. In the first 4 Seals opened, we see the four horses and their riders... we see the Antichrist rising up in power conquering, peace being taken from the Earth at the very beginning of the 7 year Tribulation, great famine and then death of 1/4 the World's population... God's wrath and judgment began to be poured out from the beginning of the seven year tribulation... gradually increasing in intensity and ferocity.**

**If He was planning to leave His Bride in that terrible place and time... He would have warned us many times throughout the N.T. There is never any mention of such a thing.**

**If the Bride of Christ had been living in Sodom... isn't it obvious that He would have gone to rescue her before He destroyed the city... like He did Lot? Was Lot more precious to Him than His Bride?**

**Rahab is also a picture of the Rapture... Rahab, in Jericho, received and hid the spies. Because of her faith in the God of the Israelites, she and all her family were rescued before destruction came to the city and all who were in it. She laid out a scarlet rope... a picture of Jesus' blood... and she became the bride of Salmon; she became the mother of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David... Jesus Christ is the 'Son of David.'**

**Do you think Rahab the Harlot was more precious to Him than His Bride?**

**Salmon means: 'garment.' Who is our garment of righteousness? Jesus Christ.**

**Rahab, who was rescued before Tribulation came to Jericho, became the bride of 'garment.'... another picture of the Bride of Christ being rescued before Tribulation.**

**The World will certainly be receiving Judgments from God during the first half of the Tribulation. The Bible often teaches us that God Rescues the Righteous... never judging them with the wicked.**

**Luke 17:26-29** Jesus told us what to look for in the end times... He said, 'And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it also be in the days of the Son of Man: <sup>27</sup>They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.'

(Nothing special happened to give any warning... eating, drinking, marrying... life as usual.) Jesus continues: 'Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; <sup>29</sup>but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed *them* all'... again... no special warning whatsoever... no sign to look for... a complete surprise!

It's important to recognize that Jesus, in Luke 17 and Matthew 24, is telling us about 2 separate comings. One, He will only come down as far as the clouds and it will be a complete surprise to the World. We, who are watching and waiting for His coming... will not be completely surprised... it will be a marvelous shock, the moment it happens that we are instantly harpazoed upward... the first thing I think many of us will say as we are on our way up to meet Him in the clouds... will be 'I knew it!!! This is what I've been waiting and watching for!' We won't be looking down, afraid of heights, we will be looking up at Him... we will see Him as He is and we will be changed, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, and we will be like Him! He will receive us unto Himself that where He is... there we will be also... with Him forever.

Both Noah and Lot... both the pre-flood world and after, Sodom & Gomorrah... are types/pictures for the present sinful world system and our removal from it, before God's judgment of the world in the Tribulation.

Noah and his family were sealed into the Ark of safety before judgment came on the world.

We have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, into our Ark of Safety, the Lord Jesus Christ.

They were taken up and away from the God's judgment... in their Ark of safety.

We will be taken up and away from the judgment to come in our Ark of safety, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lot was forcibly taken and removed out of and away from Sodom before judgment. He was forcibly taken out... the angel said to Lot... hurry! Move it! ... for I cannot do anything... I cannot bring judgment on Sodom until you are out of the way, out and away from here...

Do you see... God is saying through all these many examples... that when He judges the World through the 7 years of the Tribulation... He will not begin... until He has taken us up, out of and away from here and has carried us back to Heaven, to our Groom, the Lord Jesus Christ, to finally consummate our marriage to Him and then to enjoy our 7 year bridal week with our groom as He showers us with unimaginable eternal rewards which we will have earned during our time while we've been waiting for Him.

If our attitude has been one of faithfully watching and waiting for His return... like a child or a puppy anxiously waits at the window searching for the first glimpse of daddy's car coming around the corner... if that has been our attitude, Paul says that the Crown of Righteousness will be ours. 2 Tim 4:8

God never judges the righteous with the wicked, the saved with the unsaved... His children of light, with the children of darkness. In fact, no judgment awaits us except regarding our works and our rewards.

See, again, how Peter almost says the same thing that Jesus did: '**For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; <sup>5</sup>and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah... bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; <sup>6</sup>and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; <sup>7</sup>and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked... <sup>9</sup>then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trials, (out of and away from, (EK, the Greek word)... and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment... Out of trials ... the same word again EK!! Out of... away from... distance from a specific time and place. 2Pet 2:4-10**

He never punishes His children and He will never judge Us... He corrects and disciplines His children... because He loves us but He never judges or punishes His children.



Peter was teaching us from Lot and Noah that **this is God's character...** not isolated incidents ... it is to convey a general principle. The Greek word translated 'out of' is again... **EK** meaning 'out of' 'away from' the specific time and the specific place of the event described...

**Isaiah 57:1:** *The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; **devout men are taken away**, and no one understands that the **righteous are taken away** to be spared from evil.*

No word in any part of Scripture is there by accident... God says what He means and He means what He says. Here, in Isaiah, the Hebrew word translated "taken away" is '**acaph**': it means 'to gather in, receive, take away remove and withdraw.' God will not allow the righteous to be punished with the wicked. Here, in Isaiah, He says, the righteous are gathered in, received, taken away, removed and withdrawn... to be spared from evil. Enoch was raptured up, out of and away from... before the flood.

'Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. <sup>22</sup>After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. <sup>23</sup>So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. <sup>24</sup>And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.' Gen 5:21

Noah and his family... rode in the Ark, **up and out, away from**... before the flood.

Lot was forcibly **taken up, out of and away from** Sodom, a picture of the World, before destruction.

The Revelation teaches us of the Rapture: **Revelation is divided, by God, into 3 distinct sections...**

**Chapter 1.... Chapters 2-3... Chapters 4-22.**

In Rev. 1:19 The Lord Jesus Christ says to John... **'What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia... Write the things which you have seen: 1... and the things which are: 2... and the things which will take place after this: 3.**

1. The things you have seen... In chapter 1 John saw the Lord **Jesus Christ glorified in Heaven.**
2. The things which are... Chapters 2-3... the **times of the Church Age... Us, the Church... the 7 letters to the 7 specific churches of that time, that also represent a map of the entire time of the Church, about 2000 years.**
3. And then... the things which will take place '**after this**' after the time of the Church Age... that is, **the 7 year Tribulation and then the Millennium and then Eternity.**

*(John saw the Lord Jesus Christ glorified: 'I saw One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. <sup>14</sup>His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; <sup>15</sup>His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters.' Rev 1:13 **'We will see Him as He is and we shall be like Him.'** 1 John 3:2)*

The things which are: Rev 2-3... Seven letters to seven churches... seven specific churches... **at that time...** but also prophetically... concerning different time periods of the entire church age... from beginning to end... starting with the Church at Ephesus, representing the current Church of John's time...

The last 2 Churches... **Philadelphia and Laodicea represent our time...**

Philadelphia... the true Church of the last days.

Laodicea... the Apostate, falling away Church we see all around us.

The Church at Philadelphia is often called The Church of the Rapture because of the Lord's promise **to 'keep us from the hour of trial that's going to come upon the whole world.'** (Rev. 3:10). <sup>10</sup>**Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.** <sup>11</sup>**Behold, I am coming quickly!** That trial then begins in the next chapters.

**Notice that He does refer to His Wrath or Judgment... but He includes all of it by referring to it as simply... the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole World... Then He says, Behold I am coming quickly!**

This is the Lord's personal confirmation to John... to the Church... to us...of a pre-tribulation Rapture.

There is no such promise of rescue to **Laodicea**, the apostate, fallen away Church we see all around us today...

The 7 years of the Tribulation, in Revelation and Daniel, is the culmination of the great prophecy in Daniel 9, the '70 weeks of Daniel': the prophecy of the history of God's dealings with Israel. The 7 year Tribulation is the 70th week... of that plan... but in that gap of time, nearly 2000 years, between the end of the 69th week and the beginning of the 70th week, God planned to establish and grow the Church, the Bride He had chosen for His Son. That gap of time between the 69th and 70th 'weeks,' in which the Church has lived and grown, will end when God is ready to begin His final 7 years of dealing with Israel for her sin and rejection of their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are His body and He has promised to take us home before He finishes His work with Israel and judges the whole World. We will study the 70 Weeks of Daniel later.

*(Something we overlook, because God has been so gracious with us in His complete grace, mercy, patience and forgiveness of all our sin, all praise and thanks to Jesus Christ's finished work on the Cross... that same grace and mercy is not poured out on Israel. He has been scourging them for 2000 years because of their rejection and crucifixion of His Son and He will finish that work during the 7 years of the Tribulation. He has never fully rejected or thrown them aside but He has preserved them until His final work of the salvation of Israel at His return at Armageddon.)*

After those first three chapters of Revelation, **after the time of the Church in Chapters 2-3, it says in Rev. 4:1, 'After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.** Notice that God's voice is like a trumpet.

After these things... After what... after the time of the Church on the Earth... John sees an open door... the voice says, '**Come up here!**'... after that, there is no more mention of the Church at all throughout the entire tribulation period. After the Church is gone from the Earth, it's all Tribulation... all Israel... until Jesus Christ returns at the battle of Armageddon... accompanied by us... the Church, His Bride and His Saints.

During all the rest of The Revelation, the entire book... **God finishes His dealing with Israel...** Not the Church... we are gone... He will have completed all His dealings with the Church. Jews and Gentiles will believe during the Tribulation but they are not part of the Church and most will be killed for their faith... they are the ones to whom Jesus said... He who stands firm to the end will be saved...

When we study Daniel chapter 9... the 70 weeks of Daniel... we will see even more clearly how all of Rev. chapters 4-19 is **God's completion of His dealings of chastising and scourging of Israel... a 7 year period,** the final week of the '70 weeks' Vision given to Daniel... the final 7 year period with absolutely no mention of the Church at all... only Israel.

If the Church were going to go through the Tribulation, even part of it... isn't it obvious that Paul would have warned us, prepared us, instead of telling us to be comforted?

Now we come to another obvious and important proof that the Rapture will take place **before** the Tribulation. In Rev 4, John is taken up into the throne room of God where He sees God the Father seated on His throne and where he receives the rest of the Revelation of Jesus Christ to John:

Rev 4:2-4 'Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and **One sat on the throne.** <sup>3</sup>**And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.** **Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.**

**Here, John is giving us 4 more proofs of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.**

**Who are these Elders and why are they here?** The obvious answer is that probably... 12 represent Israel... maybe patriarchs and/or prophets... and 12 represent the Church... maybe the 11 disciples and Paul.

There have been other visions of God's throne room to other prophets but none saw these 24 Elders.

I Kings 22:19... Then **Micaiah** said, 'Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left...' No extra thrones and no 24 elders.

**Isaiah** 6: 1-3... In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. ... the angels cried: "Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts; The whole earth *is* full of His glory!" Neither Micaiah nor Isaiah see extra thrones or 24 elders. They are not there yet in the O.T.

**Ezekiel** 1... Ezekiel sees a vision of God on His Throne; he saw the four living creatures... and he saw God sitting on His throne... but no extra thrones... and not the 24 elders.

**Daniel however**, unlike these previous 3 Prophets... is seeing into the same time as John: the Tribulation... and **Daniel does see thrones** and people seated on them in the throne room of Heaven...

Daniel and the Revelation go together but Daniel's vision was limited, he saw less than John.

Dan 7:7-10, 21... Daniel talks about seeing World kingdoms and about the rise of the Antichrist...

Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days...

<sup>9</sup>"I watched **till thrones were put in place**,

And the Ancient of Days was seated;

His garment *was* white as snow,

And the hair of His head *was* like pure wool.

His throne *was* a fiery flame,

Its wheels a burning fire; (sounds like what John saw in Revelation)

<sup>10</sup>A fiery stream issued

And came forth from before Him.

A thousand thousands ministered to Him;

Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. (100 million)

**The court was seated**, And the **books were opened**.

It appears that this court, Daniel sees, which has been seated on thrones are the 24 Elders John sees.

The court was seated... remember, we will rule and reign with Him.

Daniel continues: <sup>21</sup>"I was watching; and the same horn (Antichrist) was **making war against the saints, ... and prevailing against them...**' How do we know this isn't the Church being 'beaten'? hold on...

Daniel continues:

<sup>24</sup>The ten horns *are* ten kings *who* shall arise from this kingdom.

And another shall rise after them; (the Antichrist)

He shall be different from the first *ones*,

And shall subdue three kings... **the rise of the Antichrist**

<sup>25</sup>He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High,

**He shall persecute the saints** of the Most High,

And shall intend to change times and law.

**Then the saints shall be given into his hand**

for a time and times and half a time.... 3 1/2 years

<sup>26</sup>**But the court shall be seated,**

**And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy it forever...**'

He, the Antichrist, will be judged by this court...

This vision is of the Tribulation and the Saints being persecuted and subdued are not the Church; they are the Tribulation Saints. How do we know?

Jesus said, 'and on this rock **I will build My church**, and the gates of hell **shall not prevail against it.**' Matt 16:18

The True Church is always victorious: 'Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ' 2 Cor 2:14

In the tribulation, **there is no Church** and the gates of hell **do prevail against** the Saints, for a time, times and half a time... the final 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation.

**Rev 4:4 The 24 elders...** When John arrived at the throne room of God... he saw a group never before seen in any of the Bible's pictures of God's throne previous to the time of the Tribulation... neither Isaiah, Ezekiel nor Micaiah reported seeing any other thrones or any others seated in the throne room and yet Daniel and John, both seeing visions of the **tribulation time**, saw extra thrones and people seated on them.

Nothing in God's Word is by accident! Never forget that!

**Who are they?** They have thrones, so they ruling and reigning. They surround the Throne of God, so they're assisting Him. **We, the true Church, are the only ones to whom it is promised that we will rule and reign with Him for 1000 years and forever.**

**Rev. 1:5 says,** 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Tribulation Saints, those martyred for their faith during the Tribulation, serve the Lord in His Temple. Rev 7:14  
Theirs is a priestly role but they are never referred to as kings, never ruling.

Only the Church is given the status of royalty: 'But you *are* a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people...' **1 Pet:9)**

Only we are granted a seat at the Lord's side on His Throne:

'But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup>and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.' Eph 2:4

'For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup>saying with a loud voice:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain

To receive power and riches and wisdom,

And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

"Blessing and honor and glory and power

Be to Him who sits on the throne,

And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.' Rev 5:10

We are the ones who are around the Throne, there in Rev. 5, worshipping God the Father and His Son, the Lamb of God. The plagues of the Tribulation have not yet begun. They all start in chapter 6.

We will come back to Revelation at a later time.

Paul writes to us, about us in 1 Cor 6:2: '**Do you not know that the saints/the Church/will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you/the Church/ are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters (among yourselves)? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that we/the Church/shall judge angels?'**

We will rule and reign with the Lord Jesus Christ forever; we will judge the World and we will judge angels.

The 24 Elders: they are **dressed in white**, designating righteousness.

We have been made righteous... by the shed blood of Jesus Christ...

Rev 3:5 He, of the Church, who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments...

Who is the overcomer... the true born again Child of God...

**'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (Our saving faith) <sup>5</sup>Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:4**

The 24 Elders are **wearing crowns**...they have **already received their rewards** from Jesus Christ...

Rev 22:12 "And behold, I am **coming quickly**, and **My reward is with Me**, to give to every one according to his work.' Remember... Salvation is free... we can't earn or deserve it... it is all God's work... However, **rewards are always in relation to faithful service**... different **Crowns are part of different rewards**.

They have heads that will hold crowns, so they have bodies which they received at the Rapture... this is important... Right now, in Heaven, Christians who've died are born again, living Souls living within Spiritual bodies. Only Jesus Christ has been given His glorified Eternal Body... they... and we, **will not receive our glorified, eternal bodies until the Rapture!**

No one in Heaven now, except Jesus Christ, has a physical head able to hold a crown.

Paul said this clearly to Timothy: 'Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me **on that Day**, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.' 2 Tim 4:8 Paul knew that when he died, he would go into the presence of the Lord, remember, he said 'to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord,' but he also knew that not until the Rapture would he receive his glorified physical body and the rewards that had been stored up for him, including his Crown of Righteousness... **on that day!** Now, here in Revelation 5, Paul is probably one of the 24 Elders with crowns on his head... now having his rewards and a physical body capable of holding those rewards.

**Rev 5:9-12** And they sang a **new song**, the **song of the redeemed**... ...never before has this song been sung by anyone... because the redeemed have never before been in Heaven in fully redeemed bodies.

They, we, are singing...

'Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup>And they **sang a new song**, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll,

And to open its seals;

For You were slain,

And have **redeemed us to God by Your blood**

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

<sup>10</sup>And have made us **kings and priests** to our God;

**And we shall reign on the earth.**"

This is the interim period **after the Rapture** but **before** any events of the Tribulation.

**The Rapture**... the **Pretribulation Rapture is clearly taught** throughout the writings of **Paul, Peter, John, Jude, the Gospels**... including Jesus and much of the Old Testament.

God wants us to understand this reality and to be patiently but expectantly watching and waiting for Jesus Christ to return for us in the clouds at any moment.

**'Be ye therefore ready for in such an hour as you think not... your lord cometh...'** Matt 24:44

**'Surely I am coming quickly... even so... come Lord Jesus...'** That is the very end of the Bible!

Some believe the study of Last Things, the Rapture in particular, is a relatively unimportant subject and not as useful to a Christian's growth as other areas of study. In reality, it is a very important area to study and understand. Our clear understanding of the Rapture is the thing that should, more than anything else, inspire us to live lives pleasing to God in every way; the understanding that we will be taken up to meet Him at any moment should cause us to walk circumspectly and carefully in all we do.

John and Paul call the Rapture our 'blessed hope.' John says, 'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. <sup>3</sup>And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.' 1 John 3:2 Paul: 'looking for the *blessed hope and glorious appearing* of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,' Titus 2:13 Our hope is not in the Rapture; the Rapture is simply the vehicle used to draw us up to our blessed hope who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hope is in Him; we believe Him that He will do for us all that He has promised and the first thing we will receive in the final installment of our Eternal Salvation will be our new, eternal, glorified bodies, like His own, which will be ours, in the twinkling of an eye, at the Rapture.

**We are living in the time just prior to the Rapture; the time which demands a careful understanding of all of God's Word, especially regarding the study and understanding of Last Things. It's in virtually every book!**

**Jesus' return for us, His Bride, will happen at any moment, without any warning; no other prophecy needs to be completed before He comes for us, which could even be now.**

**When we understand and believe this truth, we are much more likely to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and worthy of the calling with which we've been called. Col. 1:10, Eph 4:1**

Some hold to an understanding that the Rapture will happen around half way through the Tribulation, a belief which they call 'pre-wrath,' that the Rapture will occur before God's Wrath is poured out. They believe that does not happen until the midway point of the Tribulation. The judgments and plagues which happen before that point, they call, 'Satan's Wrath,' and that 'God's Wrath' doesn't begin until the midway point of the Tribulation.

**Now what about that 'wrath' which some believe does not begin until well into the seven year tribulation... and that the Rapture does not happen until then. Instead of a 'Pre-Tribulation' Rapture, they believe in a 'Pre-Wrath Rapture; let's see where they say is the beginning of God's Wrath being poured out on the Earth:**

**Rev 6:16 When the 6th seal is opened, there is a great earthquake and people have gone into caves to hide; it says, 'and (they) said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup>For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'**

The 'day of God's Wrath,' just because unsaved men in the midst of the Tribulation say that the day of God's Wrath has 'now' begun, doesn't mean it's true. The day of God's Wrath, the Day of the Lord... encompasses the entire 7 year period of Daniel's '70th Week,' the Tribulation.

People's understanding of Revelation and the End Times becomes faulty if they refuse to accept and believe the most important aspect of the 7 year Tribulation: that it has nothing to do with the Church whatsoever. It is the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of 70 Weeks; 70 x 7year periods. It is the time that God resumes and finishes His chastisement of Israel, His Own, special, chosen nation, the only nation He created and chose just for Himself. Israel is not like any other nation on Earth and all of Earthly history revolves around Israel alone. Israel is the Earthly people of God. We, the Church are the Heavenly people of God. His work of saving and setting apart for Himself the chosen Bride for His Son was a finished and completed work at the Cross.

Actually, it was a finished work in God's mind even before Creation. Paul writes to Timothy: '(God,) *who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.*' 2Tim 1:9 When He finally finishes adding

Gentiles and Jews to His Bride, the Lord Jesus Christ will come for us, remove us from the Earth and then, and only then, will God resume and finish His work with Israel.

Revelation is the blueprint for the Tribulation. After Rev. chapter 3, the Church is gone from the Earth. There is no more mention of the Church, at all, until chapter 19 when we return with Him to Armageddon.

**If we look at the first four Seal Judgments in the first part of Rev. chapter 6, it is obvious that God has been pouring out His Wrath on the World for quite some time before the 6th Seal is opened. In the first 4 Seals opened, we see the four horses and their riders... we see the Antichrist rising up in power conquering, peace being taken from the Earth at the very beginning of the 7 year Tribulation, great famine and then death of 1/4 the World's population... God's wrath and judgment began to be poured out from the beginning of the seven year tribulation... gradually increasing in intensity and ferocity.**

**If He was planning to leave His Bride in that terrible place and time... He would have warned us many times throughout the N.T. There is never any mention of such a thing.**

**If the Bride of Christ had been living in Sodom... isn't it obvious that He would have gone to rescue her before He destroyed the city... like He did Lot? Was Lot more precious to Him than His Bride?**

**Rahab is also a picture of the Rapture... Rahab, in Jericho, received and hid the spies. Because of her faith in the God of the Israelites, she and all her family were rescued before destruction came to the city and all who were in it. She laid out a scarlet rope... a picture of Jesus' blood... and she became the bride of Salmon; she became the mother of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David... Jesus Christ is the 'Son of David.'**

**Do you think Rahab the Harlot was more precious to Him than His Bride?**

**Salmon means: 'garment.' Who is our garment of righteousness? Jesus Christ.**

**Rahab, who was rescued before Tribulation came to Jericho, became the bride of 'garment.'... another picture of the Bride of Christ being rescued before Tribulation.**

**The World will certainly be receiving Judgments from God during the first half of the Tribulation. The Bible often teaches us that God Rescues the Righteous... never judging them with the wicked.**

**Luke 17:26-29 Jesus told us what to look for in the end times... He said, 'And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it also be in the days of the Son of Man: <sup>27</sup>They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.'**

**(Nothing special happened to give any warning... eating, drinking, marrying... life as usual.) Jesus continues: 'Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; <sup>29</sup>but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed *them* all'... again... no special warning whatsoever... no sign to look for... a complete surprise!**

**It's important to recognize that Jesus, in Luke 17 and Matthew 24, is telling us about 2 separate comings. One, He will only come down as far as the clouds and it will be a complete surprise to the World. We, who are watching and waiting for His coming... will not be completely surprised... it will be a marvelous shock, the moment it happens that we are instantly harpazoed upward... the first thing I think many of us will say as we are on our way up to meet Him in the clouds... will be 'I knew it!!! This is what I've been waiting and watching for!' We won't be looking down, afraid of heights, we will be looking up at Him... we will see Him as He is and we will be changed, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, and we will be like Him! He will receive us unto Himself that where He is... there we will be also... with Him forever.**

**Both Noah and Lot... both the pre-flood world and after, Sodom & Gomorrah... are types/pictures for the present sinful world system and our removal from it, before God's judgment of the world in the Tribulation.**

**Noah and his family were sealed into the Ark of safety before judgment came on the world.**

**We have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, into our Ark of Safety, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**They were taken up and away from the God's judgment... in their Ark of safety.**

**We will be taken up and away from the judgment to come in our Ark of safety, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Lot was forcibly taken and removed **out of and away from** Sodom before judgment. He was forcibly taken out... the angel said to Lot... hurry! Move it! ... for I cannot do anything... **I cannot bring judgment on Sodom until you are out of the way, out and away from here...**

Do you see... God is saying through all these many examples... that when He judges the World through the 7 years of the Tribulation.... **He will not begin... until He has taken us up, out of and away from here** and has carried us back to Heaven, to our Groom, the Lord Jesus Christ, to finally consummate our marriage to Him and then to enjoy our 7 year bridal week with our groom as He showers us with unimaginable eternal rewards which we will have earned during our time while we've been waiting for Him.

If our attitude has been one of faithfully watching and waiting for His return... like a child or a puppy anxiously waits at the window searching for the first glimpse of daddy's car coming around the corner... if that has been our attitude, Paul says that the Crown of Righteousness will be ours. 2 Tim 4:8

God never judges the righteous with the wicked, the saved with the unsaved... His children of light, with the children of darkness. In fact, no judgment awaits us except regarding our works and our rewards.

See, again, how Peter almost says the same thing that Jesus did: '**For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; <sup>5</sup>and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah... bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; <sup>6</sup>and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; <sup>7</sup>and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked... <sup>9</sup>then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trials, (out of and away from, (EK, the Greek word)).. and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment... Out of trials ... the same word again EK!! Out of... away from... distance from a specific time and place. 2Pet 2:4-10**

He never punishes His children and He will never judge Us... He corrects and disciplines His children... because He loves us but He never judges or punishes His children.

Peter was teaching us from Lot and Noah that **this is God's character...** not isolated incidents ... it is to convey a general principle. The Greek word translated 'out of' is again... **EK** meaning 'out of' 'away from' the specific time and the specific place of the event described...

**Isaiah 57:1: *The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil.***

No word in any part of Scripture is there by accident... God says what He means and He means what He says. Here, in Isaiah, the Hebrew word translated "taken away" is '**acaph**: it means 'to gather in, receive, take away remove and withdraw.' God will not allow the righteous to be punished with the wicked. Here, in Isaiah, He says, the righteous are gathered in, received, taken away, removed and withdrawn... to be spared from evil.

Enoch was raptured up, out of and away from... before the flood.

'Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. <sup>22</sup>After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. <sup>23</sup>So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. <sup>24</sup>And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.' Gen 5:21

Noah and his family... rode in the Ark, **up and out, away from**... before the flood.

Lot was forcibly **taken up, out of and away from** Sodom, a picture of the World, before destruction.

The Revelation teaches us of the Rapture: **Revelation is divided, by God, into 3 distinct sections...**

**Chapter 1.... Chapters 2-3... Chapters 4-22.**

In Rev. 1:19 The Lord Jesus Christ says to John... '**What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia... Write the things which you have seen: 1... and the things which are: 2... and the things which will take place after this: 3.**

1. The things you have seen... In chapter 1 John saw the Lord **Jesus Christ glorified in Heaven.**



2. The things which are... Chapters 2-3... the **times of the Church Age... Us, the Church... the 7 letters to the 7 specific churches of that time, that also represent a map of the entire time of the Church, about 2000 years.**

3. And then... the things which will take place **'after this'** after the time of the Church Age... that is, **the 7 year Tribulation and then the Millennium and then Eternity.**

*(John saw the Lord Jesus Christ glorified: '(I saw One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. <sup>14</sup>His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; <sup>15</sup>His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters.' Rev 1:13 **'We will see Him as He is and we shall be like Him.'** 1 John 3:2)*

The things which are: Rev 2-3... Seven letters to seven churches... seven specific churches... **at that time...** but also prophetically... concerning different time periods of the entire church age... from beginning to end... starting with the Church at Ephesus, representing the current Church of John's time...

The last 2 Churches... **Philadelphia and Laodicea represent our time...**

Philadelphia... the true Church of the last days.

Laodicea... the Apostate, falling away Church we see all around us.

The Church at Philadelphia is often called The Church of the Rapture because of the Lord's promise **to 'keep us from the hour of trial that's going to come upon the whole world.'** (Rev. 3:10). **<sup>10</sup>Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup>Behold, I am coming quickly!** That trial then begins in the next chapters.

**Notice that He does refer to His Wrath or Judgment... but He includes all of it by referring to it as simply... the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole World... Then He says, Behold I am coming quickly!**

This is the Lord's personal confirmation to John... to the Church... to us...of a pre-tribulation Rapture.

There is no such promise of rescue to **Laodicea**, the apostate, fallen away Church we see all around us today...

The 7 years of the Tribulation, in Revelation and Daniel, is the culmination of the great prophecy in Daniel 9, the '70 weeks of Daniel': the prophecy of the history of God's dealings with Israel. The 7 year Tribulation is the 70th week... of that plan... but in that gap of time, nearly 2000 years, between the end of the 69th week and the beginning of the 70th week, God planned to establish and grow the Church, the Bride He had chosen for His Son. That gap of time between the 69th and 70th 'weeks,' in which the Church has lived and grown, will end when God is ready to begin His final 7 years of dealing with Israel for her sin and rejection of their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are His body and He has promised to take us home before He finishes His work with Israel and judges the whole World. We will study the 70 Weeks of Daniel later.

*(Something we overlook, because God has been so gracious with us in His complete grace, mercy, patience and forgiveness of all our sin, all praise and thanks to Jesus Christ's finished work on the Cross... that same grace and mercy is not poured out on Israel. He has been scourging them for 2000 years because of their rejection and crucifixion of His Son and He will finish that work during the 7 years of the Tribulation. He has never fully rejected or thrown them aside but He has preserved them until His final work of the salvation of Israel at His return at Armageddon.)*

After those first three chapters of Revelation, **after the time of the Church in Chapters 2-3, it says in Rev. 4:1, 'After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.** Notice that God's voice is like a trumpet.

After these things... After what... after the time of the Church on the Earth... John sees an open door... the voice says, **'Come up here!'**... after that, there is no more mention of the Church at all throughout the entire tribulation period. After the Church is gone from the Earth, it's all Tribulation... all Israel... until Jesus Christ returns at the battle of Armageddon... accompanied by us... the Church, His Bride and His Saints.

During all the rest of The Revelation, the entire book... **God finishes His dealing with Israel...** Not the Church... we are gone... He will have completed all His dealings with the Church. Jews and Gentiles will believe during

the Tribulation but they are not part of the Church and most will be killed for their faith... they are the ones to whom Jesus said... He who stands firm to the end will be saved...

When we study Daniel chapter 9... the 70 weeks of Daniel... we will see even more clearly how all of Rev. chapters 4-19 is **God's completion of His dealings of chastising and scourging of Israel... a 7 year period**, the final week of the '70 weeks' Vision given to Daniel... the final 7 year period with absolutely no mention of the Church at all... only Israel.

If the Church were going to go through the Tribulation, even part of it... isn't it obvious that Paul would have warned us, prepared us, instead of telling us to be comforted?

Now we come to another obvious and important proof that the Rapture will take place **before** the Tribulation. In Rev 4, John is taken up into the throne room of God where He sees God the Father seated on His throne and where he receives the rest of the Revelation of Jesus Christ to John:

Rev 4:2-4 **'Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. <sup>3</sup>And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. <sup>4</sup>Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.**

***Here, John is giving us 4 more proofs of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.***

***Who are these Elders and why are they here?*** The obvious answer is that probably... 12 represent Israel... maybe patriarchs and/or prophets... and 12 represent the Church... maybe the 11 disciples and Paul.

There have been other visions of God's throne room to other prophets but none saw these 24 Elders.

I Kings 22:19... Then **Micaiah** said, 'Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left...' No extra thrones and no 24 elders.

**Isaiah** 6: 1-3... In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. ... the angels cried: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" Neither Micaiah nor Isaiah see extra thrones or 24 elders. They are not there yet in the O.T.

**Ezekiel** 1... Ezekiel sees a vision of God on His Throne; he saw the four living creatures... and he saw God sitting on His throne... but no extra thrones... and not the 24 elders.

**Daniel however**, unlike these previous 3 Prophets... is seeing into the same time as John: the Tribulation... and **Daniel does see thrones** and people seated on them in the throne room of Heaven...

Daniel and the Revelation go together but Daniel's vision was limited, he saw less than John.

Dan 7:7-10, 21... Daniel talks about seeing World kingdoms and about the rise of the Antichrist...

Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days...

<sup>9</sup>"I watched **till thrones were put in place**,

And the Ancient of Days was seated;

His garment was white as snow,

And the hair of His head was like pure wool.

His throne was a fiery flame,

Its wheels a burning fire; (sounds like what John saw in Revelation)

<sup>10</sup>A fiery stream issued

And came forth from before Him.

A thousand thousands ministered to Him;

Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. (100 million)

**The court was seated, And the books were opened.**

It appears that this court, Daniel sees, which has been seated on thrones are the 24 Elders John sees.

The court was seated... remember, we will rule and reign with Him.

Daniel continues: <sup>21</sup>“I was watching; and the same horn (Antichrist) was **making war against the saints, ... and prevailing against them...**’ How do we know this isn't the Church being 'beaten'? hold on...

Daniel continues:

<sup>24</sup>The ten horns *are* ten kings *who* shall arise from this kingdom.

And another shall rise after them; (the Antichrist)

He shall be different from the first *ones*,

And shall subdue three kings... **the rise of the Antichrist**

<sup>25</sup>He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High,

**He shall persecute the saints** of the Most High,

And shall intend to change times and law.

**Then the saints shall be given into his hand**

for a time and times and half a time.... 3 1/2 years

<sup>26</sup>**But the court shall be seated,**

**And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy it forever...**’

He, the Antichrist, will be judged by this court...

This vision is of the Tribulation and the Saints being persecuted and subdued are not the Church; they are the Tribulation Saints. How do we know?

Jesus said, 'and on this rock **I will build My church**, and the gates of hell **shall not prevail against it.**' Matt 16:18

The True Church is always victorious: 'Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ' 2 Cor 2:14

In the tribulation, **there is no Church** and the gates of hell **do prevail against** the Saints, for a time, times and half a time... the final 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation.

**Rev 4:4 The 24 elders**... When John arrived at the throne room of God... he saw a group never before seen in any of the Bible's pictures of God's throne previous to the time of the Tribulation... neither Isaiah, Ezekiel nor Micaiah reported seeing any other thrones or any others seated in the throne room and yet Daniel and John, both seeing visions of the **tribulation time**, saw extra thrones and people seated on them.

Nothing in God's Word is by accident! Never forget that!

**Who are they?** They have thrones, so they ruling and reigning. They surround the Throne of God, so they're assisting Him. ***We, the true Church, are the only ones to whom it is promised that we will rule and reign with Him for 1000 years and forever.***

**Rev. 1:5 says,** ' *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Tribulation Saints, those martyred for their faith during the Tribulation, serve the Lord in His Temple. Rev 7:14  
Theirs is a priestly role but they are never referred to as kings, never ruling.

Only the Church is given the status of royalty: 'But you *are* a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people...' **1 Pet:9)**

Only we are granted a seat at the Lord's side on His Throne:

'But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.' Eph 2:4

'For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup>saying with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain  
To receive power and riches and wisdom,  
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power  
Be to Him who sits on the throne,  
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.’ Rev 5:10

We are the ones who are around the Throne, there in Rev. 5, worshipping God the Father and His Son, the Lamb of God. The plagues of the Tribulation have not yet begun. They all start in chapter 6.

We will come back to Revelation at a later time.

Paul writes to us, about us in 1 Cor 6:2: '**Do you not know that the saints/the Church/will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you/the Church/ are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters (among yourselves)?** <sup>3</sup>**Do you not know that we/the Church/shall judge angels?'**

We will rule and reign with the Lord Jesus Christ forever; we will judge the World and we will judge angels.

The 24 Elders: they are **dressed in white**, designating righteousness.

We have been made righteous... by the shed blood of Jesus Christ...

Rev 3:5 He, of the Church, who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments...

Who is the overcomer... the true born again Child of God...

**'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (Our saving faith) <sup>5</sup>Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:4**

The 24 Elders are **wearing crowns**...they have **already received their rewards** from Jesus Christ...

Rev 22:12 “And behold, I am **coming quickly**, and **My reward is with Me**, to give to every one according to his work.’ Remember... Salvation is free... we can't earn or deserve it... it is all God's work... However, **rewards are always in relation to faithful service**... different **Crowns are part of different rewards**.

They have heads that will hold crowns, so they have bodies which they received at the Rapture... this is important... Right now, in Heaven, Christians who've died are born again, living Souls living within Spiritual bodies. Only Jesus Christ has been given His glorified Eternal Body... they... and we, will **not receive our glorified, eternal bodies until the Rapture!**

No one in Heaven now, except Jesus Christ, has a physical head able to hold a crown.

Paul said this clearly to Timothy: 'Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me **on that Day**, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.' 2 Tim 4:8 Paul knew that when he died, he would go into the presence of the Lord, remember, he said 'to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord,' but he also knew that not until the Rapture would he receive his glorified physical body and the rewards that had been stored up for him, including his Crown of Righteousness... **on that day!** Now, here in Revelation 5, Paul is probably one of the 24 Elders with crowns on his head... now having his rewards and a physical body capable of holding those rewards.

**Rev 5:9-12** And they sang a **new song**, the **song of the redeemed**... ...never before has this song been sung by anyone... because the redeemed have never before been in Heaven in fully redeemed bodies.

They, we, are singing...

'Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup>And they **sang a new song**, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll,

And to open its seals;

For You were slain,

And have **redeemed us to God by Your blood**

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

<sup>10</sup>And have made us **kings and priests** to our God;

**And we shall reign on the earth.**"

This is the interim period **after the Rapture** but **before** any events of the Tribulation.

**The Rapture...** the **Pretribulation Rapture is clearly taught** throughout the writings of **Paul, Peter, John, Jude, the Gospels...** including Jesus and much of the Old Testament.

God wants us to understand this reality and to be patiently but expectantly watching and waiting for Jesus Christ to return for us in the clouds at any moment.

**'Be ye therefore ready for in such an hour as you think not... your lord cometh...'** Matt 24:44

**'Surely I am coming quickly... even so... come Lord Jesus...'** That is the very end of the Bible!

## **7 Last Days, End Times Ezekiel 38,39**

Tom Tillman

**Five things are about to happen** very soon, perhaps almost simultaneously: the Great Apostasy, the Rapture, the battle of Ezekiel 38-39, the war of Gog/Magog, the rise of the Antichrist and the signing of a 7 year peace agreement between Israel, her neighbors and the Antichrist which will guarantee Israel's safety and allow for the rebuilt Temple and resumption of sacrifices.

When we studied Ezk. 37 we saw God's promise to once again raise the Nation of Israel up, back to life after having been scattered throughout the nations of the Earth for nearly 2000 years. Ezekiel saw the vision of the Valley of Dry Bones. Jesus said that the primary sign of the End Times and the nearness of His return would be Israel's rebirth; He told the parable of the Fig Tree as the picture of what to look for.

God would bring the Israelites back into their own land and that would be the time to expect the culmination of all God's plans and prophecies.

The very next chapter after Israel comes back to life in her own Land, in the prophecy of the Valley of the Dry Bones is Ezk 38; God tells us of a great Battle where Israel's enemies will invade and God will miraculously protect and preserve Israel from certain destruction. It is this miraculous intervention from God that suddenly turns the heart of Israel back to her God; they don't yet recognize their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, but they do turn back to God. The Temple will be rebuilt and they will resume sacrifices.

Many have made the mistake in thinking that this battle in Ezk. 38 is the same as the Battle of Armageddon; it is not. Armageddon will involve all the nations of the Earth; this battle involves only a few. Armageddon occurs at the end of the 7 year Tribulation; this battle occurs before a certain 7 year period.

The great battle of Ezk. 38-39 will probably be the event that 'kicks off' the time of the Tribulation, the appearance of the Antichrist, the Rapture and the signing of a 7 year peace agreement between Israel and the Antichrist. Those 4 things, I believe, will happen together almost simultaneously.

Any day, any minute could bring the Rapture, the appearance of Antichrist, the Battle of Ezk. 38 and the signing of the 7 year treaty. The Great Apostasy has been happening for 50 years, Israel has been a nation again for 70 years, the Antichrist is probably a current known politician somewhere in the World and the Treaty is probably being worked out even now.

Since the Garden of Eden, two plans were set in motion; God would be preparing for the presentation of our complete salvation in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ while at the same time, Satan would be preparing for the presentation of man's complete destruction in His 'son,' the Antichrist. When we begin to see that everything in History, every detail has been in preparation of those two things, everything else begins to make sense.

Actually, the reality is, there has always been just one plan, God's plan from before time, to glorify Himself in everything. Unrealized by Satan is that all of his plans have always been part of God's plan; Satan has been accomplishing God's plan all along.

If we will begin to view History through that lens, everything, everywhere, always... will begin to make perfect sense. Nothing has ever been just a throw away detail; everything, always has been **part of God's plan**. As example: the worst thing we can remember from not too long past is Adolf Hitler, Nazi Germany and their 'final solution' to what they called, the 'Jewish problem.' Their plan, Satan's plan, was to exterminate every Jew they could. If we can step back and view WW2 and the Holocaust, through the lens of God's Eternal Plan, we would see that God was using all of that to draw the Jews back to their own land, Israel, to cause the World to willingly allow the creation of Israel and to further set the entire World System up for the End Times with the return of Jesus Christ after the coming of the Antichrist.

This battle of Ezekiel 38 is very similar in nature. It will be the thing that finally draws the remainder of the World's Jews back to Israel and it will further prepare the World for Jesus Christ's return after the short reign of the Antichrist.

**Ezekiel 38:** 'Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I *am* against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. ’

God is sending Ezekiel to prophecy against the prince and the people of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. Gog is the chief of the land of Magog. In ancient documents, the Great Wall of China is called, 'the Ramparts of Magog.' The Great Wall was built to keep back the Scythians from whom central Russians are descended today. Magog is an ancient name for parts of Russia, those of Caucasus. Meshech is generally believed to be that from which is derived Moscow. Rosh is the ancient Roshians... Russians. Tubal is ancient Tobolsk.

God is prophesying against Russia and her chief who is currently Vladimir Putin. God says, 'Behold, I am against you, Putin, or the next leader and prince of Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk.

**Verse 4:** 'I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company *with* bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords.'

God said He would put hooks in the Russian leader's jaws, that He would irresistibly pull down a great, well equipped army to the area around Israel in preparation for an invasion. He has already pulled a great army down from Russia which is currently stationed in, and around Syria and in many warships around the area.

**Verse 5:** 'Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them *with* shield and helmet; <sup>6</sup>Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah *from* the far north and all its troops—many people *are* with you.

Persia is present day Iran. Ethiopia and Libya represent many of the Muslim areas of Northern Africa. Gomer was the eldest son of Japheth, son of Noah. The descendants of Gomer were scattered through Southern Russia and into S.E. Europe... many of whom are now Muslims also. The House of Togarmah is present day S.W. Turkey.

God says He will bring down an invading force from Russia, Iran, Northern Africa and South Eastern Europe. All of those peoples are gathered now around Israel. The only thing that holds them back is the Holy Spirit's restraining power which will be removed at the Rapture.

When God says, 'Gog, prince of Rosh, or Russia, I am against you,' He is speaking to the man who leads Rosh, who currently is Vladimir Putin, but He is even more so speaking to the Demonic power who has always led and probably inhabited the mortal 'prince.'

When God sent Gabriel with a message for Daniel, he said, '... Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. <sup>13</sup>But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me...' Dan 10

Paul said, 'For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.'

Of Satan, with Jesus, Luke wrote, 'Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. <sup>6</sup>And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for **this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.** <sup>7</sup>Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.” Luke 4 Notice that Jesus did not dispute what Satan had said.

Satan is the god of this World; he assigns areas of dominion both spiritually and humanly. As with any army, there is a chain of command in the spiritual realm.

Ultimately, God is in complete control over everything and Satan is only allowed to do, or to have done, what fits exactly into God's Plan.

All these seem to indicate that there is a spiritual power, a fallen angel, holding dominion over every nation of the World... the prince of Persia, the prince of Rosh, etc.

**Verse 7:** ' “Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them. <sup>8</sup>After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those

brought back from the sword *and* gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. <sup>9</sup>You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you.” The prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal will be a guard for these many armies. They will all believe that they are protected by the power of Russia.

Israel, the Jews are those brought back from the sword and gathered out of the nations and they are even now living in relative safety. Israel is one of the World's most powerful nations, militarily. Every nation surrounding them knows that Israel could quickly wipe them from the map. But with Russia camped near their borders and willing to attack with them, they are confident that at the right moment, Israel will fall.

**Verse 10:** Thus says the Lord GOD: “On that day it shall come to pass *that* thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: <sup>11</sup>You will say, ‘I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates...’

Obviously God is not saying that there will be no walls or gates or bars anywhere in the country but Israel is a nation wanting peace... all they have ever wanted is peace but it will never come until the true Prince of Peace returns.

**Verse 12:** 'to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places *that are again* inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.'

Until recently there was nothing within Israel worth invading to acquire; there was no plunder or booty but that has all changed; Israel now controls many billions of dollars worth of natural gas reserves and even if the attackers used some sort of nuclear device, the destruction would not affect the underground, undersea natural gas deposits.

Verse 13: 'Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, ‘Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?’

When this attack occurs, some nations will stand back, neither attacking nor defending Israel; they will simply stand back and watch.

This will be a moment of complete change and World realignment.

Sheba and Dedan were sons of Cush, grandsons of Ham. They migrated, after the Flood, to the Arabian Peninsula; they are part of Saudi Arabia.

Tarshish is an ancient name for Briton, the British Isles.

People ask, 'Why isn't the USA in prophecy?' Maybe she is: *the young lions of Tarshish*: The symbol of Great Briton is a lion. The young lions are, very likely, The USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc. They are 'young' lions in that, compared to many other nations, they are very 'young' nations. Our history as a nation is less than 250 years. Briton's history goes back thousands of years. Many nations are nearly as old as the time since the Flood. Briton's young lions are very young by comparison.

**Verse 14:** 'Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know *it*? <sup>15</sup>Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. <sup>16</sup>You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes.” <sup>17</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD: “Are *you* he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them?’

If you look on a World map, almost exactly due North of Jerusalem is Moscow... out of the far North. The only thing farther North is the Arctic. God is referring to what we know of as Russia and Russia just happens to be down in the neighborhood of Israel now.



All of them on horses: God is simply giving Ezekiel words that those of his day would interpret as a fully outfitted, well equipped modern army.

God is going to use this invasion to glorify Himself and to reveal Himself to the World and especially to Israel.

**Verse 18:** ' And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," says the Lord GOD, "that My fury will show in My face.'

Finally, God will have had enough of how these nations have treated His people, Israel and His Son's Bride, the true Church. God has withheld His Wrath and His Fury for thousands of years. He has poured out His Grace, Mercy and Forbearance all this time.

This is the moment that God snaps, as it were. This is the moment when He removes His Son's Bride, destroys the military capabilities of Russia, Iran and several other Muslim nations. This is the moment that God removes His restraining work of the Holy Spirit, in the True Church, holding back the flood of evil planned for the World, and this is the moment that allows Satan to present His 'son,' the Antichrist who will claim to have been the one who has saved the World from a Worldwide nuclear holocaust. He will claim to be 'the christ.' Israel may believe it is true and so, be ready and willing to sign a special 7 year peace treaty. He will be the rider on the white horse of Revelation 6 which then begins the 7 year Tribulation when the Lamb of God opens the first seal on the Scroll of the Tribulation.

This is how I believe it will all come together, how all the pieces fit together to begin the Tribulation... I may be wrong, but I don't think so.

We, the Church, are the Light of the World and the Salt of the Earth. What would you expect to happen when the Light is gone and the Salt is removed? Only darkness and rot will remain but very soon, God will raise up His 144,000 Jewish Evangelists we read about in Revelation.

Why does the USA just stand by when Russia, Iran and others attack Israel? Wouldn't Donald Trump swiftly come to Israel's defense? Of all these events happening almost simultaneously, the first will be the Rapture. Imagine the turmoil throughout this nation when that happens, when millions of Americans just disappear in an instant while at the same time there is a seemingly nuclear war in the Middle East. Many of the leadership of this nation are true Christians; they will disappear. What if Donald Trump is a real Christian, a young, immature Christian? He and Mike Pence would also disappear. Imagine the upheaval. Now, imagine Russia, Iran, etc. invading Israel... those who ultimately pick up the reins of power here would not come to Israel's aid. In fact, the next leadership would be forced to declare Martial Law with so many having disappeared.

**Verse 19:** 'For in My jealousy *and* in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: 'Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, <sup>29</sup>so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who *are* on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.'

The first thing God will do is cause a great earthquake so great that it will be felt around the World. God is going to reveal Himself to His people like He has not done for a very long time.

**Verse 21:** ' I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains," says the Lord GOD. "Every man's sword will be against his brother.

God has done this before; He raised up Gideon, with only 300 men, to defeat the Midianites:

'When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled...' Judges 7:22

He caused the same thing to happen when Saul fought the Philistines: 'Then Saul and all the people who were with him assembled, and they went to the battle; and indeed every man's sword was against his neighbor...'

1 Sam 14:20

**Verse 22:** 'And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who *are* with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.'

In addition to the Russians, Iranians and the rest of their armies turning on each other, God will also rain down flooding waters, great, destructive, falling chunks of ice and then fire and brimstone.

Huge hailstones destroy everything upon which they fall. Great rains cause everything to become a deep, muddy morass. Finally, fire and brimstone will finish the job. This is how God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah so that they were completely erased from the Earth.

The fire and brimstone might be miraculous or it might be 'natural.' It could come from 1000's of Russian and Iranian missiles, some nuclear, exploding prematurely over their own troops or it might even be a storm of huge meteorites that God set in orbit, at Creation to, at this precise time, rain down through the atmosphere becoming flaming, exploding missiles of fire and brimstone.

God is going to almost completely wipe out all the armies of Russia, Iran, Turkey and others which will then also make it far easier for the Antichrist to come to full power. It is likely that after these several near simultaneous events, the only world power to remain will be China which will later come against Israel and the returning Lord Jesus Christ, as the 'Kings of the East' at Armageddon.

Verse 23: 'Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD.'

God will reveal and magnify Himself in the eyes of the World. Many of today's 'nominal Christians' will recognize Him for Who He is and turn to Him in faith but it will have been too late for them to be received in the Rapture. They will have to begin hiding out, running from a World of unleashed evil. The Holy Spirit, up until this time had kept evil on a leash. All of the hatred and prejudice toward Jews and Christians will suddenly have no restriction. All around the World there will be the 144,000 Jewish Evangelists who will be supernaturally protected by God but regular Christians and Jews will have no such protection. Most, over the next 7 years, will be hunted down and killed for their faith.

Just after this great war the Antichrist will appear to have saved the World from certain destruction. He will seem to be a great man of peace, the savior of the World, the new 'christ' for modern man.

The great disruption of the entire World System caused by this WW3 will probably be what is used to explain away the Rapture to those who seek an explanation.

Ezekiel 39 adds more detail to this time:

**Verse 1:** ' "And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; <sup>2</sup>and I will turn you around and lead you on, bringing you up from the far north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel. (the KJV and the Greek say God will destroy all but one sixth of these invading armies: 'And I will turn thee back, **and leave but the sixth part of thee...**') <sup>3</sup>Then I will knock the bow out of your left hand, and cause the arrows to fall out of your right hand. <sup>4</sup>You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who *are* with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and *to* the beasts of the field to be devoured. <sup>5</sup>You shall fall on the open field; for I have spoken," says the Lord GOD. <sup>6</sup>"And I will send fire on Magog and on **those who live in security in the coastlands.**

Perhaps some of the errant, misdirected Russian and Iranian missiles will fall upon other nations as well.

**Verse 6b:** Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD. **So I will make My Holy Name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not let them profane My holy name anymore.** Then the nations shall know that I *am* the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. <sup>8</sup>**Surely it is coming, and it shall be done,**" says the Lord GOD. "This *is* the day of which I have spoken.

This is the beginning of **the Day of The Lord**, of which God has spoken many times throughout His Word. God will have revealed Himself to Israel and to all the World. Israel will believe and begin to turn back to God... not to the Lord Jesus Christ yet, as a nation, but they will rebuild the Temple and reestablish their Priests and the sacrificial system. But since they will still, as a nation, be blinded to the recognition of the Lord Jesus Christ as

their Messiah, they will believe in the Antichrist so as to sign a 7 year peace agreement with him and the surrounding nations.

That 7 year peace plan will be what officially restarts God's countdown to the physical return of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ Who will step down on the Mount of Olives to destroy all His enemies and set up His Kingdom on Earth to rule and reign for 1000 years.

That restarting of God's official 'countdown' will be to the remaining 7 years, or the final 70th Week, of Daniel's great prophecy of the 70 Weeks of Daniel in Daniel 9... the Day of The Lord.

**Verse 9:** 'Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years. <sup>10</sup>They will not take wood from the field nor cut down *any* from the forests, because they will make fires with the weapons; and they will plunder those who plundered them, and pillage those who pillaged them," says the Lord GOD.'

Here is an indication that this war occurs at the beginning of the 7 year Tribulation: all Israel will obtain enough fuel for fires for 7 years, from the scattered armaments left from the destruction of the invading armies. An M1 Abrams Main Battle Tank has a fuel tank holding 500 gallons. Imagine thousands of tanks at 500 gallons each and all the many fuel tankers needed to keep them all running... it will be millions of gallons of fuel... enough for Israel's needs for the next 7 years of the Tribulation.

**Verse 11:** 'It will come to pass in that day *that* I will give Gog a burial place there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea; and it will obstruct travelers, because there they will bury Gog and all his multitude. Therefore they will call *it* the Valley of Hamon Gog.'

They will dig huge, mass graves to the East of the Dead Sea in what is now Jordan. The mass graves will be reminiscent of the mass graves that had been dug for dead Jews during the Holocaust.

**Verse 12:** 'For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. <sup>13</sup>Indeed all the people of the land will be burying, and they will gain renown for it on the day that I am glorified," says the Lord GOD.

It will take Israel 7 months to bury the main part of the armies of Russia, Iran, Turkey and others.

**Verse 14:** 'They will set apart men specially employed as buriers, with the help of a search party, to pass through the land and bury those bodies remaining on the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. <sup>15</sup>The search party will pass through the land; and *when anyone* sees a man's bone, he shall set up a marker by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog. <sup>16</sup>*The* name of the city will also *be* Hamonah. Thus they shall cleanse the land.'

Hamon Gog means, 'multitude of Gog.' Hamonah means, 'multitudes.'

Some will be employed as official, special burying squads. After the burial of the main body of dead, others will be special search parties to comb the desert areas to set up a marker when they find a body or a bone.

**Verse 17:** ' And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field:

"Assemble yourselves and come; Gather together from all sides to My sacrificial meal Which I am sacrificing for you, A great sacrificial meal on the mountains of Israel, That you may eat flesh and drink blood. <sup>18</sup>You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, Drink the blood of the princes of the earth, Of rams and lambs, Of goats and bulls, All of them fatlings of Bashan. <sup>19</sup>You shall eat fat till you are full, And drink blood till you are drunk, At My sacrificial meal which I am sacrificing for you. <sup>20</sup>You shall be filled at My table With horses and riders, With mighty men And with all the men of war," says the Lord GOD.'

**Verse 21:** 'I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them. <sup>22</sup>So the house of Israel shall know that I *am* the LORD their God from that day forward. <sup>23</sup>The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity;

because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. <sup>24</sup>According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them.'

The whole World will see and recognize what God will do for Israel but rather than turn to God in faith and repentance, most of the World will harden their hearts, just like Pharaoh did, and turn their hatred for God, and His Son, toward Israel and those who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

From that time, all Israel will know the truth of Who God is; they will see and they will turn to God but they will not yet, as a whole, recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah. That won't happen for another 7 years. Individual Jews and many Gentiles will turn to Jesus Christ, many through the ministries of the 144,000 Jewish Evangelists.

**Verse 25:** 'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name <sup>26</sup>after they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in their *own* land and no one made *them* afraid. <sup>27</sup>When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, <sup>28</sup>then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer. <sup>29</sup>And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,' says the Lord GOD.

For the next 3 1/2 years Israel will feel relatively secure. God will have destroyed their prime enemies, they will have the rebuilt Temple, Priests and Sacrifices. They will believe they are in the Millennial Kingdom. They may even believe that the Antichrist is the Messiah. Because of the safety within Israel and the continued persecution of Jews around the World, the rest of the Jews will all finally come home to Israel. God will have brought them all back to their land, not leaving any of them out in the World any longer.

God says, 'after they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me.' All these long 2000 years, Jews have been persecuted everywhere they went. God has been dealing with their gross unfaithfulness and unbelief in the face of God's incredible love and faithfulness to them. God says that they have been paying the price for all of that for all these years but finally, when Jesus Christ returns, they will have paid their own price in full and they will recognize the price their true Messiah paid for sin on their behalf. Then God will exalt Israel far above all the other nations of the World. Theirs will be an Earthly glory as the head of the Nations for 1000 years.

**Closing thought:** Israel stands on its own as God's possession... but they are also a **picture of you and me...** and God's love for us... he saved us not because we deserved it but because, just like Israel... **He chose us...** and just like Israel, He promises to **keep us secure** in His eternal Salvation and to bring us **safely home to our own land...** Heaven and back to Earth to rule and reign with Him for 1000 years... He will bring us home either at death or in the Rapture.

Israel's final salvation never depended on them and their faithfulness, they've always been unfaithful... but on God's faithfulness and promise... the same is true for you... and me... our Eternal Salvation has never depended upon our faithfulness but upon God's Love, Grace, Mercy and Faithfulness alone. We have been saved with an everlasting Salvation that will never end but will continue to grow, expand and flourish forever and ever more.

Today we will examine this great prophecy of Daniel chapter 9, given to Daniel in the year 537 B.C.

Almost 70 years earlier, in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar had taken Daniel and many others captive to Babylon. Jeremiah was left in Israel... he sent a letter to the captives soon after they went into captivity.

Jer 29:10... 'For thus says the Lord, When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place...'

Daniel learned from Jeremiah's letter that God would begin to bring them out of Babylon after 70 years.

Daniel was studying and thinking about that time of 70 years as he was in prayer and he realized that it had been almost 70 years since Jeremiah's prophecy...

**Daniel 9:20**

<sup>20</sup> Now... while I was in prayer, the man Gabriel, the angel Gabriel... whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. <sup>22</sup> And he talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. <sup>23</sup> At the beginning of your prayers the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision:

'Seventy weeks are determined  
For your people and for your holy city,  
To finish the transgression,

70x7years (490 years total)  
Israelites and Jerusalem

To make an end of sins,  
To make reconciliation for iniquity,  
To bring in everlasting righteousness,  
To seal up vision and prophecy,  
And to anoint the Most Holy.

to pay the full penalty for all their rebellion  
to bring in the Messiah, the Holy One  
the Ultimate fulfillment of all Prophecy and Vision  
to anoint the Most Holy Messiah as King of Kings

Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem

from the command of Artaxerxes

Until Messiah the Prince,  
*There shall be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks;  
The street shall be built again, and the wall,  
Even in troublesome times.

**until Jesus Christ presents Himself as King,\*\* there will be 49 years and 434 years (only 483 years; still need 7 more)**  
After the first group of 7's: 49 years by Nehemiah and Ezra (Trowel in one hand and a sword in the other: Ne. 4:17)

<sup>26</sup> "And after the sixty-two weeks  
Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;  
And the people of the prince who is to come  
Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.  
The end of it *shall be* with a flood,  
And till the end of the war desolations  
are determined.

After 483 years: 49+434: 7 weeks + 62 weeks = 483 years  
Messiah will be killed but not for His own sin, He had none  
the prince to come is Antichrist; his people are Rome  
Rome will destroy all of Jerusalem  
(God inserts and unknown gap of time between 69 and 70)  
till end of Armageddon desolations for Israel, holocaust etc

<sup>27</sup> Then he shall confirm a covenant with  
many for one week;  
But in the middle of the week  
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.  
And on the wing of abominations shall be  
one who makes desolate,  
Even until the consummation, which is determined,

Antichrist will sign 7 year (1 week) teaty with Israel, others  
(the final 7 years... the 70th week after a gap of time  
after 3 1/2 years, Antichrist will break the covenant  
he will stop sacrifices  
he will desecrate the Temple, maybe slaughter a pig  
he will desolate Jerusalem and the Temple

Is poured out on the desolate.” Dan, 9:24

they will be desolate until the determined perfection comes which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

When God says weeks here... He means groups of 7 years... a week of years. 1 week does not mean Monday thru Friday plus the weekend. A week means 7 years.

When God says 1 year, He means 360 days... not 365 days... 1 prophetic year = 360 days.

How do we know this...

We can prove it by looking at a few areas of Scripture where God actually spells it out for us...

In Gen 7:11, we are told that the flood began on the **17th day... of the 2nd month** ... of Noah's 600th year.

In Gen 8:3, we are told that the flood receded after 150 days on the **17th day... of the 7th month**... **5 months equaling 150 days-each month-30days... 12 months of 30 days each = 360 days for 1 year... 1 prophetic year.**

In Rev 12:6, we read... Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**...

And in verse 14... <sup>14</sup> But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

A time, times and half a time... 3 1/2... years... 3 1/2 times 360 = 1260 days... the second half of Daniel's 70th week... when the Antichrist breaks the treaty, ceases sacrifices and offerings and begins his great persecution of the Jews... the 2nd half of the Tribulation

Then... back to Dan 9:27... we read that this very time... written by John in the Revelation... it is half way through that last week of 7 years... that last seven year period... the Tribulation... 1260 days is exactly half of a 7 year period consisting of 7 years of 360 days each.

When God gives prophecy... He intends for years to be interpreted as 12 ... 30 day months equaling 1-360 day year.

Jesus verifies the book of Daniel by referring to it in Matt 24:15... He said, “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by **Daniel the prophet**, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), <sup>16</sup> “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

All that to explain... when God says 1 year... He means 360 days.

When He says week in Daniel 9... He means 7 years... a week of years.

70 weeks had been determined to:

To finish the transgression,

To make an end of sins,

To make reconciliation for iniquity...

God's intent, at least as far as men and angels knew, was that during these 'final' 490 years, God would finish correcting and disciplining Israel for her continued rebellion throughout the Old Testament and that the Messiah would come to be King over the promised Millennial Kingdom.

Satan believed if he could instigate the Jews to reject their King and even crucify Him, then God's plan would be forever ruined and Satan could save himself from eternity in the Lake of Fire.

He did not know that God had far reaching plans to allow for 2000 years of salvation going out to the Gentiles for the creation of the Church, the Bride of Jesus Christ.

If Israel had received her Messiah, that could have been the end of it, but they did not so they had to continue to receive even more than double for her sins from God's hand for another 2000 years.

Back to Daniel: when Gabriel says sevens, here... he means 70 sevens of years... 70 periods of 7 years...or... a total of 490 years are determined for Israel and for Jerusalem... to end sin, make reconciliation or restitution for iniquity, to fulfill this vision and prophecy... and anoint the most Holy.

Several things are included in this period of 490 years... and these 490 years do not happen in complete succession... the first 483 years do occur in succession... as 49 years immediately followed by 434 years, but then there is a long gap of time until God's countdown resumes for the final week of years, the Tribulation.

Daniel is told that a total of 490 years are determined to accomplish 6 specific purposes or God... 70x7 weeks... 70 weeks of years... 490 years are determined for your people... Israel and your holy city... Jerusalem. First, 7 weeks or 49 years: to complete the restoration of Jerusalem's wall and much of the city.

This would be followed by another 62 weeks of years... 434 years (62 x 7)

That totals 483 years... then the final week of God's fulfillment of His dealings with Israel's sin... after a long gap of time (2000 years)... the 7-year Tribulation.

1. To complete all their transgression...
2. to make an end of all their sinning against God...

Jesus paid the full price for all of our sin, past present and future forever... but Israel, as a nation, has been paying for her sin and rejection of Jesus Christ for 2000 years.

No other nation has had such direct intervention by God Himself, or such display of God's person, power and character and no other nation has so despised all of what God had done and promised and so... no other nation has undergone such chastisement and punishment as Israel has for the past 2000 years.

In Isaiah 40, we read prophetically about Israel...

This is still future... when Jesus Christ returns...

**40 "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" Says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins."**

Daniel says, '70 weeks are determined to make an end and completion of sin and transgression...'

3. to make reconciliation for iniquity... or, atonement for iniquity
4. To *bring in everlasting righteousness*, Messiah.
5. *To seal up vision and prophecy; the fulfillment of all Prophecy is ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ.*
6. *And to anoint the Most Holy* The most Holy Place in the new Temple

To bring in the Kingdom of everlasting righteousness and glory, to finally complete and fulfill all prophecy... it all points to the Lord Jesus Christ... and then to anoint Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and to anoint the most holy place... the new temple to be built in Jerusalem for His 1000 year reign on Earth.

All of this will be fulfilled and completed within that 490 year period. But because Israel rejected her Messiah and crucified Him... a gap of time was inserted by God of about 2000 years between the end of the 69th week and the beginning of the 70th week of years.

Now, continuing on in Daniel 9...

Listen... understand... when a command is given, allowing more of the Jews in Babylon to return from captivity, to rebuild Jerusalem **and its walls**... you can count exactly 483 years... to the day... when the Messiah will be revealed... but He will then be rejected and executed... but not for His own sin... and shortly thereafter... Rome will destroy Jerusalem and the Temple... then... later, when the prince of that people, the Antichrist, does come... he will make a 7 year treaty with Israel and her neighbors, but halfway through that time he will break the treaty and cease the offering of sacrifices in the temple. Then terrible times are in store for the next 3 1/2 years... until Armageddon and the return of Jesus Christ.

The Antichrist will appear, but not yet be fully revealed until just before, or after, the Rapture.

Jesus had appeared for 3 years until he was finally revealed as the King of Israel at His triumphal entry on Palm Sunday.

The same can be true of the Antichrist as he imitates the Lord Jesus Christ in as many ways as possible.

Remember, in John 5:43, Jesus said, 'I am come in my Father's **name**, and ye receive me not: if **another** shall come in **his own name**, him ye will receive.' He was speaking of their reception of the Antichrist.

The signing of that 7 year treaty will be the signal for beginning the countdown of the final 7 year period... the Tribulation.

Now... what does he mean by 'the coming of Messiah'... we can count 483 years until the... 'Coming of Messiah'... does he mean when He is born... when He is baptized... when He performs His first miracle... Remember... so many times, Jesus told those He healed to be quiet... do not tell others about it... what did He often say... 'My time has not yet come'! He would not allow Himself to be worshipped as Messiah and King... but finally... the time did come... on that Sunday... five days before He would be crucified... four days before He was in the garden of Gethsemane, agonizing... asking that He not have to go through what was to come... and yet... always saying... 'nevertheless, not My will... but Your will be done, Father... I am here to do Your will.'

What does Gabriel mean by 'the coming of Messiah'?

Let's look at Zech 9:9... in 520 BC, he writes... "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, **your King is coming to you**; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.

So, according to Zech... the time of the Messiah's **coming** ... His presentation... is when He is riding on a donkey's colt... Palm Sunday AD 32, April 6.

**or... in the Jewish Calendar..... 10th of Nissan 3761**

So, we know exactly when Messiah was presented as King...

Now we have to look back and find that particular command allowing the Jews to return to rebuild Jerusalem **and the walls**...

There were 4 possible decrees...

First, the decree of Cyrus, issued somewhere between 538-536 B.C., which concerned the rebuilding of the Temple: 2 Chron 36:22 and the city of Jerusalem Isa 44:28, 45:13.

Second, the decree of Darius in Ezra 6:6 issued in the year 521 B.C., a reaffirmation of the decree of Cyrus.

Third, the decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra in Ezra 7:11 issued in 458 B.C., which contained permission to proceed with the temple service.

Finally, the only decree which specifically concerned **the walls** around Jerusalem was the decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah Neh 2:1, issued in the year 444 B.C.

Nehemiah 2... <sup>4</sup> Then said the king to Nehemiah, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.

<sup>5</sup> And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

<sup>6</sup> Then the king said to me, "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. Furthermore I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors *of the region* beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, <sup>8</sup> and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me **timber to make beams for the gates** of the citadel which *pertains* to the temple, **for the city wall**, and for the house that I will occupy." And the king granted *them* to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.

God told Daniel... from the time of the decree to return to Jerusalem and **specifically to rebuild the walls**... until Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey would be 483 years.

But if we add those two numbers together... 444 B.C. and 32 A.D. they seem to total only 476 years.



Here is the problem... we are trying to arrange God's 360 day years in the parameters of our calendar which is based on years of 365.25 days.

Remember... when God says year, in prophecy, He means 360 days.

We reckon time based on the solar Calendar, the time of one rotation of the Earth around the Sun which is one Solar year: 365 1/4 days.

So, when we add the years from 444 BC to 32 AD, based on our calendar, it seems to be 476 years... not 483. Even if it were only that close, within 7 years, it would still be a pretty cool prophecy...

Our calendar and how we mark time in History... it is all gentile... the time of the gentiles... This prophecy, however, is all about Israel and God's complete program with her.

We say the year now is A.D. 2020 AD is from *Ano Domini* Latin for 'year of our Lord.'

The Jewish calendar says that today is in the year 5780... 5780 years since creation, based as close as they can form the genealogies of the Bible.

So, how does 476 of our years equate to 483 of God's years?

All we have to do is turn both of them into the number of days and we will find that they are the same.

Let's do it...

483 of God's years X 360 = 173880 days

476 of our years X 365.25 = 173859 days... 22 days less

or... 483 of God's years = 476 of our years plus 22 days.

but remember, He didn't say 476 of our years... He said 483 of His years.

so now we will work this out, using His years... 360 days each

When God prophecies of years... His years are different than our years... Our calendar is a Solar Calendar... based on the time it takes the Earth to make one complete revolution around the Sun... **one Solar Year is 365 1/4 days**... 12 set months... except Feb... where we add one day every 4 years... because of that extra 1/4 day every year... which brings it all back into perfect alignment with the Solar system... Therefore, there is no drifting with the Solar Calendar... *the Islamic Calendar is a purely Lunar Calendar... based on the time it takes the Moon to make one complete revolution around the Earth... averaging 29.53 days... **the 12 months of Lunar year=354.1/3 days**... and it drifts terribly through the years... as if our January would drift forward year by year... first in the winter, then in the Spring, then the Summer and so on... through the seasons year by year... taking more than 30 years to come back to its proper alignment.*

*These two calendars were developed by pagans worshipping the Sun, Moon and Stars...*

*God's will was for His people to be different from the World, to be set apart.*

*In the beginning, God said... **Gen 1:14** ... Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: but, of course, not to be worshiped...*

*But then... with Israel... His called out chosen people...*

*Deut 4:19 <sup>19</sup> And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. <sup>20</sup> But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day.*

*So God's people and their calendar were to be different...*

**Almost exactly between the 365 day Solar year and the 354 day Lunar year is God's 360 day Prophetic year..**

When God gives prophecy... He intends for years to be interpreted as 12 ... 30 day months equaling 1-360 day year.

The Jews... the Pharisees... knew all of this and they knew exactly when to expect Messiah to come... and they knew how it corresponded to Daniels prophecy... that it said... (and He shall be cut off, but not for Himself...)

Remember what Caiaphas, the High Priest said after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead...

John 11:49... 'And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that **it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people**, and not that the whole nation should perish." Now this he did not say on his own *authority*; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.'

But they knew He was the Messiah... Remember what the Pharisee, Nicodemus said in John 3 when He came to Jesus by night... 'There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, **we know that You are a teacher come from God**; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

The fact that they knew the truth and still rejected the Lord Jesus Christ is why they were sentenced to 2000 years to 'make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, etc.'

So... here it is... hundreds of years before the time of Jesus, Daniel was given a prophecy whereby the Jews could pinpoint exactly, to the day... when their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ would come as King...

The prophecy said... after a certain command is given to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, **including the wall**, you can count exactly 49 years, probably the time it took to rebuild the walls, plus another 434 years... (that's exactly 483 years) to when the Messiah will be presented as King... then He will be rejected and executed, but not for His own sin.

After that Rome will destroy Jerusalem and the Temple and then... after an unspecified length of time... a length of time between the 69th and 70th weeks... after that, there would be one final week, a 7 year period, the 70th week... during which the (future coming prince, the Antichrist) would appear and sign a 7 year treaty with Israel and others which he will break in the middle of that final 7 years... the 70th week... during which time, 7 years, God will finish and complete all that He started with Israel... the second half of which would be very terrible for the Jews, leading up to the return of their Messiah... at the battle of Armageddon.

The signing of a 7 year treaty is probably how we (true believers) will be able to recognize the Antichrist... even though he appears as a great man of peace. (if, in fact, it occurs before the Rapture)

Do you understand the incredible impact of this prophecy? This actually proves beyond any doubt, to anyone willing to understand and believe truth, the reality of God Almighty, the God of Israel, and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and the truth of the Bible and the Gospel.

This prophecy offers absolute proof beyond doubt for any honest person.

The Jewish leaders all knew exactly what was happening, but they still chose to reject and crucify the Lord Jesus Christ because they were more afraid of Rome than they were of God... biggest mistake, of the many mistakes... they ever made.

Now, in conclusion... let me show you how Daniel's incredible prophecy works out exactly to the day of Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem...

I didn't seek to understand this prophecy to see if it was true...

I sought to understand it because I knew, without doubt, it is true.

I don't need this or any prophecy to help me believe what I know to be reality....

Explain BC---AD.

If we count from March 14, 444 BC to April 6, 32AD...

1. Add 7 + 62 *weeks of years* = 69 *weeks of years* in this prophecy of Daniel.

2. Multiply 69 (weeks) x 7 (to get the total number of *years* in this prophecy) = 483 years, and then an additional final week: 7 years.

3. There are 360 days in each of those 483 prophetic years... so we multiply 483 *years* x 360 = 173,880 *days*  
Now... to convert those 173,880 days into our 365.25 day... *solar years* ... we simply divide 365.25 days into 173,880 days and we get.... 476 of our solar years plus 22 days... 476 of our solar years plus 22 days equals 483 of God's prophetic years... It takes you exactly from March 14, 444 BC to April 6, 32 AD, the Triumphal Entry of the Lord Jesus Christ, 5 days before His Crucifixion.

Do you see the incredible impact of this reality... This is why I always wanted to clearly understand this prophecy... even though I always knew it... now, I can actually prove God's reality even beyond His obvious revelation of Himself in all of Creation

No demon... and no human could have ever predicted this... something nearly 500 years into the future... to the exact day!

Daniel said... in essence... from the going forth of the command on March 14, 444BC, it will be exactly 173,880 days until the presentation of Messiah on Palm Sunday 32AD, which was on April 6. How many days between March 14 and April 6... 23 days. Remember He said 483 years would be completed... then... Messiah would come.

That was the *only day* that Jesus Christ *ever* allowed Himself to be honored as Messiah and King (Mark 11) the people laid out their coats on the ground in front of Him... they waved palm branches... crying out... "Hosanna to the Son of David... blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" **from Psalm 118** ... and this was just 5 days before He was executed just as *Daniel and Isaiah prophesied*.

Daniel prophesied that **after** Messiah was rejected and executed, ***Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed which was fulfilled by the Romans in 70 AD, 38 years later.***

Right after His "Triumphal Entry," Jesus *wept* over Jerusalem ... knowing the leaders and people of Israel would discount this prophecy... in fact all of the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah which were *so specific* that God held the Jews completely accountable! This is why the Temple was destroyed and the Jews were scattered all around the world for 2000 years . . . that's why Daniels prophecy said... **to make reconciliation for iniquity**... they have been making reconciliation for their iniquity for 2000 years... because... Remember... they all cried out... 'Let His blood be on our heads and on our children's heads'... as they demanded His crucifixion for having done absolutely... nothing wrong...at all... but they did not cry out... let His blood cover our sins!

On that day, 'Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things *that make for your peace!* But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, <sup>44</sup> and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'" Luke 19:41

And, just 38 years after Jesus Christ prophesied this... and was Crucified, cut-off, but not for Himself... Jerusalem *was* besieged and completely destroyed when Titus Vespasian, and several Roman Legions *did* lay siege to Jerusalem... building an embankment against the wall around the city, starving and killing over a million Jews. Then they pulled down the Temple, one stone after the other, completely to the ground... the gold in the Temple had melted down into the ground, through the cracks, when the Roman soldiers had set it on fire, the dug the gold out, fulfilling Jesus' prophecy... *not leaving even one stone upon another.*

The Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ has two Earthly missions... first as the sacrificial Lamb of God to pay the penalty for our sin... and secondly... as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah... coming as Conqueror... as King of Kings and Lord of Lords...

The Bible also tells us that He would **return** twice...

First... in the clouds... as a thief in the night... coming for us, His Church... in the Rapture, and then again, very visibly, when every eye would see Him... as He returns in Glory to destroy His enemies at the Battle of Armageddon and to begin His Earthly 1000 year reign with us at His side, ruling and reigning with Him forever.

*If we could sit down with about 500 ancient... yearly calendars... we could begin to count off the days from March 14, 44BC... till April 6, 32AD... and when we had counted out the 173,880 days... we would land... on Palm Sunday 32AD.*

*Any Atheist, any Jew, any Muslim, any Buddhist, Sikh or Hindu could do this simple math problem on their own... but, regarding the Atheist... The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God... and as for the rest... 'because they did not love the truth, God gave them over to a strong delusion, that they would believe the Lie and could not come to the knowledge of the truth found only in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*But to us... His Children... He has chosen to reveal His will... His plans, purposes... and His secrets... because He loves us.*

*His intention is... that as we understand His Word... and as we come to understand Him... we will be transformed... more and more into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

## **9 Last days, End Times: Revelation** (pt 1)

Tom Tillman

The title of this book is, The Revelation, which comes from the first word: the Greek word, ***apokalypsis***, which means, unveiling, the revealing of Jesus Christ. Satan has blinded the minds of the World, causing them to believe that ***the apocalypse*** means the end of the World, the destruction of the World; but the culmination of this book and the entire Bible is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in all His Glory and Majesty. For us, it is the revelation of what will happen during the 7 years after we have been removed in the Rapture. For everyone else, left behind, who comes to faith in Jesus Christ, it is a map; it is their lifeline of hope in Jesus Christ. Our blessed hope is in His coming for us. Their blessed hope will be in His coming to them. Some of us will die before He comes for us, many of them will die before He comes to them.

We have been able to discern, from God's Word, the general time of the Rapture... the signs to watch for. They will be able to determine, from God's Word, exactly when He will come. Then, as now, all who refuse to believe God's Word will die in their sin.

**Chapter 1:** The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John, <sup>2</sup>who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. **<sup>3</sup>Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy**, and keep those things which are written in it; for **the time is near**.

<sup>4</sup>John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, <sup>6</sup>and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>7</sup>Behold, He is coming with clouds, and **every eye will see Him**, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

<sup>8</sup>"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, **the Almighty**."

<sup>9</sup>I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. <sup>10</sup>I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

<sup>12</sup>Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup>and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. <sup>14</sup>His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; <sup>15</sup>His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; <sup>16</sup>He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength. <sup>17</sup>And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup>I *am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. <sup>19</sup>Write the **things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this**. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches

Revelation is the unveiling of Jesus Christ and of His plans and purposes for the Church, for Israel, for the unbelieving World and for Satan and his fallen angels. He showed it to John who would write it

down for us. He promises a special blessing for all who read it. We will be blessed together.

This is the unveiling of all that has been hidden for thousands of years.

The first thing John sees the Lord Jesus Christ Who dictates letters to seven Churches; seven is God's number of completion and perfection. These seven churches represent the totality of the Church from its beginning at Pentecost to its completion at the Rapture. Jesus is in the midst of seven lampstands... He walks in and among His Church always. He is the faithful witness of Who and What God is while we are to be faithful witnesses of Who and What Jesus is.

He is the firstborn from the dead. He died and came back to tell us about it, to give us great and glorious promises of Eternity. He has made us kings and priests who will rule and reign with Him forever.

At His return to Earth, all will see Him.

When He returns for His Bride, only we will see Him.

He is God Almighty, the Eternal One.

His voice is like a trumpet; we will hear Him shout at the Rapture.

He appeared to John in His Glory: His eyes like fire, His feet shining like brass. He shone like the Sun.

He alone holds the keys to hell and death. We will see what happens, at the end of Revelation, when He allows an angel to open the bottomless pit.

**Chapter 2:** "To the angel of the church of **Ephesus** write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; <sup>3</sup>and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. <sup>6</sup>But this you

have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

<sup>7</sup>"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

<sup>8</sup>"And to the angel of the church in **Smyrna** write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: <sup>9</sup>"I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. <sup>10</sup>Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. <sup>11</sup>"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."

<sup>12</sup>"And to the angel of the church in **Pergamos** write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: <sup>13</sup>"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne *is*. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. <sup>14</sup>But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. <sup>15</sup>Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

<sup>17</sup>"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*."

<sup>18</sup>"And to the angel of the church in **Thyatira** write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: <sup>19</sup>"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and *as* for your works, the last *are* more

than the first. Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup>And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. <sup>22</sup>Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her **into great tribulation**, unless they repent of their deeds. <sup>23</sup>I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

<sup>24</sup>“Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. <sup>25</sup>But hold fast what you have till I come. <sup>26</sup>And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations <sup>27</sup>‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’ as I also have received from My Father; <sup>28</sup>and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Jesus Christ told John to write: 1. what he had seen 2. the things which are 3. the things which shall be after.

He had seen Jesus Christ is His Glory. Now he will address the things which are: the time of the Church.

These 7 letters are to specific Churches but are also a mosaic of the entire time of the Church's history.

To **Ephesus**: So soon after the time of Jesus Christ on the Earth other things were already crowding Jesus Christ out of His Church even though they were still resisting the Nicolaitans which would become nascent Catholicism. The word means, Nike: victory, Laity: victory over the laity, it means the professional, hierarchical clergy like Catholicism, Anglican, Episcopal and others.

The Ephesians were doing good works outwardly and they were watching out for evil within but all of that got in the way of a simple love relationship with their Savior, their first love. The most important thing any Church can have is love: love

for Jesus Christ, love for each other and then outwardly love for the lost.

From the very beginning, Jesus was warning that entire Churches could look good but without love, be lost.

To **Smyrna**: The Church was about to begin experiencing harsh persecution during the 2nd and 3rd Centuries so this was a letter of comfort and hope.

To **Pergamos**: The Nicolaitans, Catholicism was beginning. Constantine made it the religion of the Empire: it was gaining regal power and glory.

To **Thyatira**: Catholicism is built on good works but it was beginning to go into idolatry, it became a mixture of truth and paganism... the worship of statues, Mary, Saints and angels. It will continue until the Rapture and go into the Great Tribulation but here is also indication that there are those who are born again in Catholicism who have repented of works based faith.

**Chapter 3**: “And to the angel of the church in **Sardis** write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. <sup>2</sup>Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. <sup>3</sup>Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. <sup>5</sup>He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

<sup>7</sup>“And to the angel of the church in **Philadelphia** write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”’: <sup>8</sup>“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not

denied My name. <sup>9</sup>Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. <sup>10</sup>Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup>Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. <sup>12</sup>He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him* My new name. <sup>13</sup>“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

<sup>14</sup>“And to the angel of the church of the **Laodiceans** write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: <sup>15</sup>“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. <sup>16</sup>So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked <sup>18</sup>I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. <sup>21</sup>To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. <sup>22</sup>“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

To **Sardis**: this represents the time of the Protestant Reformation onward. They came out of Catholicism but it wasn't complete. They held on to many forms of Catholicism. The Protestant Church in Europe is dead. There are many in dead Churches who will miss the Rapture. Their 'Church-going' is just dead formality.

One of the areas where the Reformation did not come far enough, where their 'works' weren't perfect is in the area of Bible Prophecy. Reformed theology maintains that most, or all, of Bible Prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70 with the fall of Jerusalem. One of the things that set 'Philadelphia' apart is that the understanding of a future fulfillment of all Prophecy was regained in the late 18th Century; they were given a more correct understanding of all that God has planned for Israel and the Church.

To **Philadelphia**: around the 17th-19th to mid 20th Centuries. This is the time of the Church's having the fullest and most accurate understanding of Scripture, the most freedom and opportunity in spreading the Gospel and the most success in harvest of the lost coming to Salvation in Christ. This, along with Laodicea is the final chapter of the Church. We are the Philadelphians, maybe not all of us but we/they are scattered throughout the Church around the World. The rest are represented by Laodicea.

To **Laodicea**: This is the very end of the Church on Earth. The final, Laodicean version of the Church is comprised of people who have deceived themselves and each other into thinking that they 'have it all together,' that they are what the Church has been striving to be all along but they are, for the most part, people who are deceived, lost and headed for hell.

We, now, are still living during the time of the Church as seen in chapters 2 and 3, the time of... '*the things which are,*' that Jesus told John to write about. At the end of chapter 3 is when the Rapture takes place and the Church is no longer on Earth and no longer mentioned in The Revelation; we are suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, in a moment, all taken up to Heaven together to receive new, eternal, glorified bodies and to spend the next seven years in Heaven with our Bridegroom. The third section John was told to write about was, '*the things which will take place after this.*'

Chapter 4 begins with these words: 'After these things.' After the time of the Church, after the Rapture... John sees what is just beyond the Rapture, just before the beginning of the Tribulation...



**Chapter 4:** After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “**Come up here**, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

<sup>2</sup>Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne. And He who sat there *was* like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. <sup>4</sup>Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. <sup>5</sup>And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire *were* burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

<sup>6</sup>Before the throne *there was* a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, *were* four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. <sup>7</sup>The first living creature *was* like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature *was* like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:

“Holy, holy, holy,  
Lord God Almighty,  
Who was and is and is to come!”

<sup>9</sup>Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, <sup>10</sup>the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

<sup>11</sup>“You are worthy, O Lord,  
To receive glory and honor and power;  
For You created all things,  
And by Your will they exist and were created.”

The first words of Chapter 4: After '*these things*,' an open door, the voice of Jesus saying, 'Come up here!' A clear indication of the Rapture. To Philidelphia: 'I will keep you from (Greek: *ek*) **'out of and away from'** the hour of testing,' and so many more 'clues' to the reality of the pre-Tribulation Rapture throughout the Bible.

Jesus upbraided the Pharisees for not recognizing His coming from all the clues scattered throughout the O.T., How much more so to those of us who would refuse to see what is right before us!

John sees God, the Father, on His throne.

What we are doing in these last 4 weeks of this quarter is studying a 'survey class' of Revelation. God offers a special blessing to everyone who reads or hears this book and we trust He will give us eyes, ears and the mind of Christ to understand it all well. I believe, as we read it all together, we will discover that it really is self-explanatory using our wisdom from the Holy Spirit. Some things we will gloss over because they are not necessary for our understanding of the 'whole' of Revelation. For example, we will not stop to examine the four living creatures around the Throne or the Throne Room itself.

Suffice to say, John saw God on His Throne and he saw 24 Elders who seem to clearly indicate that the Rapture has already occurred as they have crowns and bodies.

There is non-stop praise of God Almighty. When we are whisked away to His Presence, we'll naturally join right in but that will by no means be all that we do in Heaven.

**Chapter 5:** 'And I saw in the right *hand* of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup>Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

<sup>4</sup>So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. <sup>5</sup>But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”

<sup>6</sup>And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup>Then He (the Lamb) came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

<sup>8</sup> Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down **before the Lamb**, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll,  
And to open its seals;  
For You were slain,  
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood  
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

<sup>10</sup> And have made us kings and priests to our God;  
And we shall reign on the earth.”

<sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain  
To receive power and riches and wisdom,  
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

<sup>13</sup> And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power  
Be to Him who sits on the throne,  
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

Here, in Heaven, is a clear representation of the Trinity in Their fullness. We see God the Father sitting on the Throne; we see the Lamb of God with the seven Spirits, or the seven-fold Spirit of God... all three.

We see the seven-fold Spirit of God in the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 11:

'There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,  
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

**The Spirit of the LORD** shall rest upon Him,  
The Spirit of **wisdom** and **understanding**,  
The Spirit of **counsel** and **might**,  
The Spirit of **knowledge** and of the **fear of the Lord**.

We see the Trinity with the seven-fold Spirit of God.

These 2 Chapters, 4 and 5 have been an interlude of time between the Rapture and the beginning of all that we expect in the Tribulation.

Remember the prophecy in Daniel 9: the 70 weeks. There would be 69 'weeks' of years until Messiah came. There would be a previously unrevealed span of time during which God would create the Bride He had chosen for His Son, the true Church. Then, at God's appointed time, the Church would be removed and He would begin the final week of years, the 7 years of the Tribulation which would begin with the signing of a 7 year treaty between the Antichrist and Israel:

Dan. 9: 'Then **he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week**; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,  
Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.' Dan. 9:27

That 7 year treaty has just been signed although it is not mentioned here in Revelation but now the Tribulation will begin:

**Chapter 6:** The Scroll's Seals will begin to be opened:

## 10 Last Days: Revelation part 2

Tom Tillman

Again, we are going through the entire book of Revelation together in just 4 sections so we won't be studying it in depth... we will develop an overview.

The Lamb of God, Who was sacrificed for our sin, is the only One in Heaven or Earth Who is worthy to take the Scroll and open its Seals, the only One worthy to initiate God's Wrath on the World which has hated God and despised His Eternal Salvation. Only God Himself could do this; the Lamb of God is, in fact, God Himself.

**Chapter 6:** Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." <sup>2</sup>And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

<sup>3</sup>When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see."

<sup>4</sup>Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

<sup>5</sup>When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. <sup>6</sup>And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

<sup>7</sup>When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." <sup>8</sup>So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

<sup>9</sup>When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they

held. <sup>10</sup>And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" <sup>11</sup>Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were*, was completed.

<sup>12</sup>I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. <sup>13</sup>And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. <sup>14</sup>Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. <sup>15</sup>And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, <sup>16</sup>and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" <sup>17</sup>For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

**The 1st Seal**, being opened, releases a rider on a white horse. This is generally taken to represent the rise of the Antichrist. Remember, in the Antichrist, Satan will be imitating the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in every way he can. When Jesus returns he will be on a white horse and wearing many Crowns. He will conquer all His enemies and set up His 1000 Kingdom on Earth. The Antichrist will receive the crowns, the authority and worship from the 10 kings of the Earth, 7 willingly and 3 by force. In a past lesson, we saw that the U.N. has already divided the Earth into 10 political regions. He will gradually force the entire World into submission.

**The 2nd Seal** brings conflict and war. This may represent the Battle of Ezekiel 38 which will bring great upheaval in the World's markets.

**The 3rd Seal** brings great scarcity of food because of the upheaval in World markets. It will take everything a person earns just to have the minimum to eat. If the Battle of Ezek. 38, if that is what this is, is a limited nuclear war, the nuclear fallout would rise up and travel around the World, destroying crops

**The 4th Seal** brings death. War and scarcity of food resulting in 1/4 of the population dying... over 1 billion.

**The 5th Seal** shows us a great multitude, under the Altar, who had been killed for their faith in Jesus Christ. They have been given white robes, signifying that their sins have been forgiven, that they are given righteousness but it seems that they may not have yet been given eternal bodies; it seems that they will wait until the last 'believer' is killed during the Tribulation, just before Jesus Christ's return with them accompanying Him.

**The 6th Seal** reveals great cosmic disturbances.

The timeframe for the first 6 Seals being opened seems to cover most of the first half of the Tribulation. Then the Trumpet Judgments seem to go back in time, filling in more information with the Bowl Judgments doing the same... going back in time to fill in more details.

**Chapter 7:** After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. <sup>2</sup>Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, <sup>3</sup>saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." <sup>4</sup>And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred *and* forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel *were* sealed:

<sup>5</sup>of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand *were* sealed;  
of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand *were* sealed;

of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand *were* sealed;

<sup>6</sup>of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand *were* sealed;  
of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand *were* sealed;

of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand *were* sealed;

<sup>7</sup>of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand *were* sealed;

of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand *were* sealed;

of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand *were* sealed;

<sup>8</sup>of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand *were* sealed;

of the tribe of Joseph twelve

thousand *were* sealed;

of the tribe of Benjamin twelve

thousand *were* sealed.

<sup>9</sup>After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, <sup>10</sup>and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" <sup>11</sup>All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup>saying:

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen."

<sup>13</sup>Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

<sup>14</sup>And I said to him, "Sir, you know."

So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. <sup>15</sup>Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. <sup>16</sup>They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; <sup>17</sup>for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

During this interlude between the 6th and 7th Seals being opened, the Holy Spirit 'seals,' puts His protective presence upon 144,000 Jews who seems to go out as Evangelists. Then we see a great multitude around the Throne who have been 'saved' through the preaching of the 144,000 and then killed for their faith. This is not the Church. We did not come out of the Great Tribulation. These are 'Tribulation Saints.'

These are part of the greatest Revival of all time. We usually think of the Tribulation as 'End of the

World, death and destruction,' but God's plan is that it will be His greatest harvest of all time. Throughout the Revelation, we see millions and billions of deaths but a great many of those are God's chosen.

Again, they are not the Church... only we, during the time of the Church, are the Church, the Bride and fellow heirs, who will rule and reign with Him. Verses 15-17 sound as if they will be resurrected as mortal humans to go into the 1000 year kingdom on Earth, along with Israel, one third of whom will turn to Him in faith at Armageddon. I may be wrong; they may also be resurrected with glorified bodies, but it doesn't sound like it to me.

**Chapter 8:** When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. <sup>3</sup>Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. <sup>4</sup>And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. <sup>5</sup>Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw *it* to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. <sup>6</sup>So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

<sup>7</sup>**The first angel sounded:** And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

<sup>8</sup>Then **the second angel sounded:** And *something* like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. <sup>9</sup>And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

<sup>10</sup>Then **the third angel sounded:** And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. <sup>11</sup>The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

<sup>12</sup>Then **the fourth angel sounded:** And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.

<sup>13</sup>And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "**Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth,** because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

When the final Seal is opened, the Scroll can now be opened and God's punishment on the unbelieving, God hating World... the World that has, from the beginning, hated, persecuted and killed the people of God, begins to really be poured out.

Here is another indication that many are coming to faith 'down there' on Earth. Their many prayers have come up before God. Then the censer, from which the prayers went up, is thrown down to Earth... and so the 7 Trumpet Judgments begin:

**The 1st Trumpet:** a third of trees are burned up and all the grass... there goes a third of the Earth's oxygen production and the food for cattle etc. necessary for human food.

**The 2nd Trumpet:** a third of all sea life dies: there goes much more destruction of food source... as well as a third of all ships... many of them fishing vessels, food transport ships and oil tankers.

**The 3rd Trumpet:** Then, right after one third of all sea life dying, filling the World's oceans with rotting corpses of fish, whales, sharks... just when the World's population thought, 'at least we have rivers and lakes for clean water,' a third of all fresh water becomes blood... not that some kind of red algae makes it 'look' like blood... just like He did in Egypt, 3500 years earlier, God causes it to actually be blood... rotting, putrid, dead blood.

Imagine what the World will be like... this is what will be facing all who reject God's free gift of Eternal Life, who miss being taken away in the Rapture.

**The 4th Trumpet:** A third of light from the Sun, Moon and Stars is darkened. This could be that God miraculously darkens them all... in fact He may have planned, from Creation, that our Sun would

only continue on for a certain number of years before beginning to 'burn out.'. When a star, like our Sun, begins to burn out, its inner fuel of Hydrogen starts to be used up and it becomes a super nova and then a 'red giant star'

The shock/blast from the Super Nova could be what causes the trees and grass on the side of Earth facing the Sun at that moment to burn up.

Also, all the smoke from the billions of burning trees and grasses from the 1st Trumpet would go up into the atmosphere, encircling the Earth and blocking out the light of the Sun, etc.

An angel says there are 3 remaining really terrible plagues he calls, 3 Woes.

**Chapter 9:** Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star (angel) fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. <sup>2</sup>And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. <sup>3</sup>Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. <sup>4</sup>They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>And they were not given *authority* to kill them, but to torment them *for* five months. Their torment *was* like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. <sup>6</sup>In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them. <sup>7</sup>The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces *were* like the faces of men. <sup>8</sup>They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' *teeth*. <sup>9</sup>And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. <sup>10</sup>They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power *was* to hurt men five months. <sup>11</sup>And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew *is* Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.

<sup>12</sup>One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.

<sup>13</sup>Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, <sup>14</sup>saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." <sup>15</sup>So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. <sup>16</sup>Now the number of the army of the horsemen *was* two hundred million; I heard the number of them. <sup>17</sup>And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses *were* like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. <sup>18</sup>By these three *plagues* a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. <sup>19</sup>For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails *are* like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.

<sup>20</sup>But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not **worship demons**, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. <sup>21</sup>And they did not repent of their murders or their **sorceries** or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

**The 5th Trumpet:** Locusts come out of the bottomless Pit. These are demonic locusts but they are still locusts. They are not something from the 21st Century that 'look like' locusts but John doesn't have 1st Century words to describe them: they are not helicopters with missiles coming out of their rear. John tells us exactly what they are. Imagine how terrifying these things will be... helicopters are not terrifying; they are frightening but not terrifying. Imagine these demonic creatures. They are probably larger than normal Locusts, having faces, hair, crowns, terrible teeth and breast plates, flying everywhere stinging with excruciatingly painful stings from their tails. Their leader is the angel from the bottomless pit whose name means, 'destroyer' or 'destruction.'

For 5 months they will torment everyone who has not been sealed by the Holy Spirit, everyone who continues to reject the evangelistic message of the 144,000 Jewish Evangelists. Their stings will only terrify and torment but no one will die from their

attacks so people will wish they could die but they will not.

**The 6th Trumpet:** 4 angels have been bound at the Euphrates River since Lucifer's rebellion, I would guess. When they are released, a demonic army of horsemen is also unleashed upon rebellious mankind.

Like the locusts, they too are terrifyingly evil. These, unlike the demonic locusts, will in fact, be able to kill a full third of what's left of the World's population. These 200 million 'horsemen' are not the Red Chinese army. These are demonic and their purpose is the kill and to terrify. **This is the Great Tribulation**, a time of terror, death and destruction like nothing in all of World History. This is God's retribution poured out on the humanity that has, for 6000 years, hated Him, His Son and His Word. This is God after His patience has finally run out. These two, the demonic locusts and horsemen have been the first 'woe;' two remain.

God is getting ready to finally deal with the Antichrist. In just a few years from this, the Lord Jesus Christ will grab the Antichrist and throw him and the False Prophet down into the Lake of Fire where they will be joined, 1000 years later, by Satan, all the fallen angels and evil spirits and every lost human... they will all spend eternity... forever... in darkness and fire... absolute, abject hopeless torment for eternity. If we thought about it... we might think that we would not wish that on anyone except Satan and his demons but there it is... every lost human will go there... we really should have much more ambitious hearts toward Evangelism.

Satan knows what's coming... the Lake of Fire was created for him... he expects it and it is why he has tried so desperately to defeat Jesus... when He was a baby, in the wilderness, at the Cross, at Armageddon and finally at the end of the 1000 year reign.

Humans deceive themselves into thinking it is all make believe, fables, old wives' tales... but it is coming.

Even after these locusts and demonic horsemen, mankind will refuse to repent or give up their sins, two of which are, 'sorceries and sexual immorality.'

The Greek words for sorcery and immorality are: 'pharmakeia' and 'porneia.' From those Greek words, we get, pharmaceuticals, **drugs and pornography**. Several of the democrats in Friday's debate called for the immediate legalization of all drugs. The legalization of drugs is spreading like wildfire and pornography is available to every child and adult with access to a computer. Drugs and Porn actually involve the interaction with demons. When given the choice, most people choose fellowship with evil spirits over God's Holy Spirit... even many Christians.

**Chapter 10:** I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow *was* on his head; his face *was* like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. <sup>2</sup>He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and *his* left *foot* on the land, <sup>3</sup>and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. <sup>4</sup>Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them."

<sup>5</sup>The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven <sup>6</sup>and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, <sup>7</sup>but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.

<sup>8</sup>Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth."

<sup>9</sup>So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book."

And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth."

<sup>10</sup>Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. <sup>11</sup>And he said to me, "You must

prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”

John heard something from these **7 'Thunders'** that we are not allowed to know of yet and there is no use in speculating on them. This is something He will eventually explain to us but He did not allow for unbelievers to ever know of it.

The end of the Great Tribulation is near... with the 7th Trumpet... the mystery of God would be finished. The mystery of God's love and creation, of sin and evil, of Salvation, of His Grace, Mercy and Patience, and His Wrath will be opened for us, His children, the Bride of His Son. Soon, Jesus Christ will return to set up His 1000 year Kingdom on Earth with us ruling and reigning with Him. Then He will explain everything to us.

What the angel told John sounded sweet, welcome, finally, at last... but then it became bitter when John had to prophecy more tribulation for His people, Israel, and for the World.

**Chapter 11:** Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. <sup>2</sup>But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for 42 months. <sup>3</sup>And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

<sup>4</sup>These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. <sup>5</sup>And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. <sup>6</sup>These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

<sup>7</sup>When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. <sup>8</sup>And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. <sup>9</sup>Then *those* from the peoples, tribes,

tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. <sup>10</sup>And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

<sup>11</sup>Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. <sup>12</sup>And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. <sup>13</sup>In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

<sup>14</sup>The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

<sup>15</sup>Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” <sup>16</sup>And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, <sup>17</sup>saying:

“We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.

<sup>18</sup>The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth.”

<sup>19</sup>Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

This Temple is the Tribulation Temple which will be built shortly before or just after the beginning of the Tribulation. Animal Sacrifices will be reinstated with Temple worship during the Tribulation. This



Temple will probably fall during the great earthquake of the 7th Bowl Judgment of chapter 16.

We'll finish looking at chapter 11 next time.

## 11. Last Days: Revelation pt.3

Tom Tillman

(re: Chapter 11 from pt. 2) This Temple is the Tribulation Temple which will be built shortly after the beginning of the Tribulation. Animal Sacrifices will be reinstated with Temple worship during the Tribulation. I think this Temple will probably fall during the great earthquake of the 7th Bowl Judgment of chapter 16, just before Jesus returns.

Currently the Jews can't build their Temple up on the Temple Mount, where it belongs, because Muslims control it where they've built the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, '*the rock*' being the place from which Mohammed supposedly went up to Heaven on his '*night journey*' but is, in fact, Mt Moriah, the stone where God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac and upon which Solomon built the first Temple. Abraham's offering on Mt Moriah was predictive of God's Son being offered as the sacrifice for sin and also all of the later sacrifices to be offered in the Temple on Mt Moriah pointing to the coming Savior.

In Ezekiel 38, when Russia, Iran, Turkey and others attack Israel, probably just before the 7 year Tribulation, *the 70th Week of Daniel*, God will cause a great earthquake which may destroy both Islamic temples on the Temple Mount, allowing the Jews, in conjunction with the 7 year treaty they will sign with the Antichrist, to rebuild their Temple on the Temple Mount.

All the preparations for building the Temple have been made; materials are ready and priests are being trained in how to offer sacrifices. Allowance of a new Jewish Temple will probably be one of the major points in the 7 year treaty the Jews will sign with the Antichrist. If the Islamic temples are not destroyed, a wall could be built separating the Southern half whereupon sit the Al-Aqsa and the Mosque, from the Northern half where the new Temple could be built. This may be why God commanded John to 'leave out the outer court' which would be trodden by the Gentiles for 42 months.

The 2 witness, who will prophesy for 42 months the first half of the Tribulation, are believed to be Elijah and Moses. Their prophesying will include everything we see in Revelation as well as

whatever else prophecies are in God's Word regarding the End Times.

They will be killed and resurrected after 3 1/2 days.

That will be when the Antichrist enters the Temple and declares himself to be god.

John heard loud voices in Heaven proclaiming, "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!*"

This goes along with what we saw in Chapter 10 where the angel cried out, 'that there should be delay no longer...' The beast which comes up out of the Pit enters the Antichrist and the second half of the Tribulation, begins and God begins, in earnest, to remove the usurper, the false god of this World, and to pour out His Wrath and Indignation on the World that has spurned the God of love, patience, mercy and grace, bringing upon themselves Holy Wrath and destruction.

Now the 7th Trumpet will sound and the 7 Bowl or Vial Judgments will commence.

But first: **Chapter 12:** 'Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup>Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. <sup>3</sup>And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. <sup>4</sup>His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. <sup>5</sup>She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. <sup>7</sup>And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, <sup>8</sup>but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

<sup>10</sup> Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

<sup>13</sup> Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*. <sup>14</sup> But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. <sup>16</sup> But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. <sup>17</sup> And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 12 gives us a series of vignettes of past and future.

The woman, clothed with the Sun and with Stars is Israel. We saw this same picture in Genesis when Joseph tells of his dream in which he had seen the Sun, the Moon and 11 stars bowing down to him. Joseph was a type for Jesus Christ and this shows this woman to be the descendants of Israel, not Mary. Her Son is the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan tried to kill Him, as a baby, by causing Herod to order the death of all baby boys around Bethlehem. He was taken up into Heaven after His Resurrection.

The red dragon is Satan and the stars, his fallen angels, a third of all created.

The 7 heads and 10 horns refer to the Antichrist's ruling coalition. The Earth, divided into 10 regions, as it already has been by the UN, and the 7 heads referring to 7 kings who willingly give their allegiance to the Antichrist. The other three resist and are removed, likely assassinated by the

Antichrist. These are things we also learn of in Daniel.

Michael and his angels defeat Satan and his angels who are cast to the Earth. This, during the Tribulation, is when Satan is finally cast out of Heaven. Even now, today, he still has access to Heaven where he constantly accuses us before God.

The flood could be an army of the Antichrist which pursues those fleeing Jerusalem and God causes the Earth to open up and swallow them all or it could somehow be a flow of water meant to drown them all. Either way, God will miraculously protect the Jews of Judea as they flee. After he fails in killing the Jews fleeing Jerusalem, the Antichrist begins to persecute every believer everywhere, Jews and Gentiles.

Half way through the Tribulation, when the Beast from the Pit inhabits the Antichrist and enters the Temple, proclaiming himself to be god, the Jews flee Jerusalem and go, probably to Petra, in Jordan, where God will care for them for the remaining 3.5 years of the Tribulation.

Isa 16:4 says, 'Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; Be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler.' Moab is modern Jordan.

This is the same time Jesus warned of in Matt 24: "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), <sup>16</sup> "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup> Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. <sup>18</sup> And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. <sup>19</sup> But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>20</sup> And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. <sup>21</sup> For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. <sup>22</sup> And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.'

**Chapter 13:** 'Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.'

Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of* a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. <sup>4</sup> So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?' <sup>5</sup> And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for 42 months. <sup>6</sup> Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. <sup>7</sup> It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. <sup>9</sup> If anyone has an ear, let him hear. <sup>10</sup> He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. <sup>11</sup> Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. <sup>12</sup> And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. <sup>13</sup> He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. <sup>16</sup> He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the

number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number *is* 666.'

This is the same beast seen in Daniel 7: 'The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces. <sup>24</sup> The ten horns *are* ten kings *Who* shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, *and* shall subdue three kings. He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints shall* be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. (3 1/2 years)

The Antichrist's kingdom will be a conglomeration of all the previous World Kingdoms. And just as the rulers of those kingdoms were probably indwelt by Satan, so too will be the Antichrist.

This seems to indicate that the Antichrist will receive a mortal head wound but then come back to life causing all the World to worship him.

The Antichrist's kingdom will finally include the whole Earth for the final 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation. Here is another indication that the Church has been previously removed in the Rapture in that the Antichrist is allowed to overcome the Saints, believers. Jesus said His Church would never be overcome... this is not the Church that we see in Revelation.

The second beast who looks like a lamb but speaks like a dragon is called the False Prophet. When he is in the presence of the Antichrist he is able to work certain miracles. He forces everyone to worship the Antichrist. It may be that the False Prophet is the one who 'heals' the Antichrist. He causes an image of the Antichrist to speak and to kill those who refuse to worship the image of the Antichrist. He forces everyone, everywhere to take a mark of allegiance to the Antichrist; that mark will somehow represent the number 666. Everyone who takes the mark will be surely sent to the Lake of Fire. Those who refuse the mark will be hunted down and killed for their faith.

This image is the fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream which Daniel interpreted in Chapter 2: 'Daniel said, to Nebuchadnezzar: "You, O king,

were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. <sup>32</sup>This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup>its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. <sup>35</sup>Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

This is the final World Kingdom upon which that stone, the Lord Jesus Christ, will fall and crush to powder, establishing His own World Kingdom which will fill the whole Earth and never end... even after the heavens and Earth are destroyed and made new.

**Chapter 14:** Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him 144,000, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. <sup>3</sup>They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth. <sup>4</sup>These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb. <sup>5</sup>And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

<sup>6</sup>Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people— <sup>7</sup>saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

<sup>8</sup>And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has

made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

<sup>9</sup>Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, <sup>10</sup>he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

<sup>12</sup>Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. <sup>13</sup>Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”

<sup>14</sup>Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat *One* like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. <sup>15</sup>And another angel came out of the temple crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

<sup>17</sup>Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

<sup>18</sup>And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.” <sup>19</sup>So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God. <sup>20</sup>And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

These are the 144,000 we saw back in chapter 7; they have all been killed now... no longer protected by God. Remember, before the 'first woe,' the demonic locusts who came up out of the Pit... they

were not allowed to go out tormenting unbelievers for 5 months until the 144,000 had been Sealed on their foreheads. That Seal of God's protection was only meant to be temporary, just a few years. Now they have all been killed for their faith. They still have God's Name written on their foreheads but now they are in Heaven singing a new song and following the Lamb wherever He goes. Notice that they were 'first fruits to God.' The 144,000 were apparently the first to be killed for their faith, the first fruits of God's huge harvest of Souls to come out of the Tribulation.

At the beginning of the Tribulation, the 144,000 came to faith and then apparently went out as Evangelists... they led many to faith in Christ during the 1st half of the Tribulation while at the same time the 2 witnesses were prophesying, in Jerusalem, against the Antichrist and his kingdom. Unbelievers around the World are dying by the millions but believers are being protected from the 4 'horsemen' plagues, the 200 million demonic horsemen and they are being protected from the 'Seal' Judgments and the 'Trumpet' Judgments.

At the halfway point of the Tribulation, the Antichrist receives a mortal head wound, he is healed and Satan enters him; he goes into the Temple, declaring himself to be god, which is the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel and Jesus Christ, the Jews flee to Petra and the Antichrist begins his reign of terror, hunting down and killing... first, the 144,000 and then other believers, both Gentiles and Jews, many of whom will be hiding out, on the run until Jesus returns at Armageddon and those believers still alive at that time will 'enter' Christ's Kingdom and to repopulate the Earth under Christ's Rule.

These 144,000 are then, the 'first fruits' of God's greatest harvest of Souls in all of History. Now God will begin, in earnest, harvesting the Souls of His Elect and pouring out His Wrath upon His enemies. 3 Angels are flying, calling out warning to people below; God is supernaturally warning humans even now as He is pouring out His Wrath.

The first Angel is telling forth the Gospel and warning everyone, everywhere.

The second Angel is calling out God's Judgment on Babylon. Babylon represents the World System,

both the governmental and religious system that has ruled the World, under Satan, the god of this World, since the time, just after the Flood, when Nimrod built Babylon and it became the first World Empire. Religious Babylon is the move toward one World Religion finally ruled by the False Prophet... the opposite of God's plan of a One World Religion which worships the Lord Jesus Christ for 1000 years and forever. Governmental Babylon is the movement toward a complete One World Government ruled by Antichrist... the opposite of God's plan of a One World Government ruled by Jesus Christ for 1000 years.

Hitler was an antichrist, a forerunner of the final Antichrist. He sought to kill all the Jews and genuine Christians and his short reign, The Third Reich, was planned to be The 1000 year Reich. It was a portrayal of Babylon. Many believed that Hitler was the Antichrist and that the World had been plunged into the Tribulation... it had to have made those who looked for the Rapture to really wonder.

The third Angel calls out warning to all who will listen: 'Above all else, Do Not Take the Mark of the Beast! If you do, you will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire!' This will be God's final warning.

First, the Lord Jesus Christ begins His harvest of the Earth; bringing to Himself all the millions who are being killed for their faith: 'Blessed are those who die in the Lord, from now on.'

Then, an Angel begins his harvest of the millions who are dying from the various plagues sent from God but his harvest is thrown into the great winepress of the wrath of God. This is actually the Battle of Armageddon of which we will learn soon. And in the Valley of Megiddo the blood from those killed, thrown into the winepress of the Wrath of God, it will run 5 feet deep for 200 miles... possibly 200 square miles which would be an area of 10 miles by 20 miles since Israel is only about 260 miles long total. The Jezreel Valley, wherein lie Megiddo and Armageddon, is about 146 sq miles.

In any case... the blood from Armageddon will be beyond imagination with the numbers killed there when Jesus Christ returns, accompanied by us, His Bride.

**Chapter 15:** Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. <sup>2</sup> And I saw *something* like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark *and* over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. <sup>3</sup> They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying:

“Great and marvelous *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true *are* Your ways, O King of the saints! <sup>4</sup> Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For *You* alone *are* holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.”

<sup>5</sup> After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. <sup>7</sup> Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. <sup>8</sup> The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues (7 Bowl Judgments) of the seven angels were completed.

This is the prelude to the 7 final 'Bowl Judgments.' We see the 7 Angels who will begin the grand finale of God's Wrath finally being poured out in full measure. This actually goes back in time to before Armageddon which is the final ending. We just saw a picture of Armageddon before seeing these final judgments to be poured out which lead to Armageddon. Not recognizing that Revelation skips back and forth giving a full picture of the Tribulation but not in a straight line of events is what leads some to be overly confused by the Book. When we allow God to give us the picture He wants us to have, in the order He wants to give it... then the Book of Revelation becomes clear.

Here we see God's great harvest of Souls and it says they have had victory over the Beast, the Antichrist and over the 'Mark of the Beast.' They didn't have victory by 'beating' the Antichrist; they had victory by resisting the Antichrist and the order

to take the Mark of the Beast. The same is true for us, as we saw in Ephesians with the 'Armor of God.' We are victorious through resisting the attacks of demons, by standing still and resisting... not by going out to do battle with demons, not by seeking out demons and supposedly thinking we can 'rebuke them' and 'send them to the pit' or some such thing. We have not been equipped to do any of that; we have been equipped to resist the devil and he will flee from us.

**Next we will see the exciting grand finale of God's Wrath poured out on the Antichrist and his kingdom.**

In Chapter 13, we saw that all those whose names had not been written in the Lamb's Book of Life will worship the Beast. Someone asked me about the Book of Life and where Jesus says, to Sardis in chapter 3, 'I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life.' Jesus is not saying He ever will do that... He is saying He never will do that to him who overcomes. John tells us that the overcomer is simply every child of God, everyone who has saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our faith is what overcomes the World and the Devil. God wrote the names of every one of His Elect in His Book of Life, before the foundation of the World. No name will ever be removed. During the 1st Century, each city kept citizenship roles; the names every citizen of the city, in a book. If someone committed a crime or other antisocial behavior, their name would be blotted out from the Book of Citizenship of the City. Jesus was saying, 'I'm not like Earthly leaders. When I give life, it is Eternal, not probationary.' Remember, He said that everyone God had given Him would come to Him and He would not lose even one and He would never cast any of them out.

If someone, a loved one, seems to have turned away from their Life in Christ, one of two things is true: either they never really put saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ or they are like the Prodigal Son who will eventually come back into fellowship. Millions of those who have not trusted Christ before the Rapture will be among the vast multitudes who do trust Him as soon as they recognize that the truth really is the truth which they cannot deny any longer.

## 12 Last Days: Revelation part 4

Tom Tillman

**Chapter 16:** Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth."

<sup>2</sup>**So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth**, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

<sup>3</sup>**Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea**, and it became blood as of a dead *man*; and every living creature in the sea died.

<sup>4</sup>**Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers** and springs of water, and they became blood. <sup>5</sup>And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. <sup>6</sup>For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." <sup>7</sup>And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* Your judgments."

<sup>8</sup>**Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun**, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. <sup>9</sup>And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

<sup>10</sup>**Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast**, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. <sup>11</sup>They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

<sup>12</sup>**Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates**, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. <sup>13</sup>And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. <sup>14</sup>For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, and keeps his

garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

**Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air**, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. <sup>21</sup>And great hail from heaven fell upon men, *each hailstone* about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

**First Bowl:** Terrible sores break out on everyone who has taken the Mark of the Beast and worshipped the Antichrist. There will be those who actually worship the Antichrist and there will be those who have simply taken the Mark of the Beast for the convenience of being able to exist in that society; it will make no difference; all will be judged the same.

**Second Bowl:** The waters of the 'Sea' will become thick, gooey, sludge-like blood... horrible! All the sea life will die. It is not clear if this means all of the Oceans.

**Third Bowl:** The salt water Oceans become blood and then the fresh waters become blood. Horrible! Bottled water will be more valuable than gold! During this time, all around the World there will, doubtless, be pockets of believers hiding out from the Antichrist's forces; they will be in wild areas, deep forested areas and the like. I'd guess that where they are, whatever water supply they 'camp' near, the water will remain drinkable for their sake, proving God's care for them as they try to wait out the remaining years, months or days until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Fourth Bowl:** The weather will become so hot that it will actually burn people. Real global warming.

**Fifth Bowl:** It will be complete darkness with great pain. Imagine the misery as they receive a



foretaste of what their eternity will be like...  
darkness, misery, pain and heat.

**Sixth Bowl:** The Euphrates River dries up so that the 'Kings of the East' can come to Armageddon. The Kings of the East will likely include China, Korea, Viet Nam and others East of the Euphrates. In addition to the Kings of the East, 3 demon spirits go out and draw all of the armies of the World to Armageddon: North, South, East and West. Never before has there been such a gathering of World armies; hundreds of millions will come into Israel, thinking that they will defeat Jesus Christ. That will finally be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 2 *'Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? <sup>2</sup>The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup>“Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.” <sup>4</sup>He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: <sup>6</sup>“Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.”*

Then, in verse 15, Jesus Christ slips in a message to us, the Church, reminding us that He is coming for us, as a thief: in and out, to take what He came for, before the World knows He's even been there. He knew that the Church would be reading this message for the next 2000 years while often fearing that these plagues were meant for us also; He was once again assuring us, 'Do not fear; none of these plagues are meant for you; you will be gone and in Heaven with Me while it is all happening; you will be with Me when I return to take my full vengeance on the World.' Obviously, He would not have been referring to His second coming to Earth, at Armageddon, because that return will be nothing like 'a thief.

**Seventh Bowl:** 'It is done!' This completes God's Wrath being poured out. The greatest earthquake, ever, shakes the entire World. Jerusalem will be divided into 3 parts. Great hailstones weighing about 100 lbs; great chunks of ice falling that are larger than 12 gallons of water; they will completely destroy everything and everyone they fall upon.

Now, Jesus backs up in time and again fills in a little more important information; this time, it's about Babylon.

**Chapter 17:** Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, <sup>2</sup>with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” <sup>3</sup>So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. <sup>4</sup>The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. <sup>5</sup>And on her forehead a name was written:

**MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**

<sup>6</sup>I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

<sup>7</sup>But the angel said to me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. <sup>8</sup>The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

<sup>9</sup>“Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. <sup>10</sup>There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, *and* the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

<sup>12</sup>“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. <sup>14</sup>These will

make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful.”

<sup>15</sup>Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. <sup>16</sup>And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. <sup>17</sup>For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. <sup>18</sup>And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

The Harlot represents the Worldwide false religious system which began in Babylon and has continued and grown until it will become the religious system worshipping the Antichrist. It will be a conglomeration of all the World's false religions but its heart will be that fabulously wealthy religious system centered in Rome, the city on 7 hills, whose priests are adorned in scarlet and purple who hold up a golden chalice of abomination and which has been responsible for the death of countless true Christians throughout the centuries.

For years now, the current Pope has worked tirelessly for a coming together of all the World's religions and for a one world government. The 'head' of this coming one world religion will be the False Prophet; that might be the current Pope, no one has worked more tirelessly for the One World Government and Religion, or it might be someone else

The beast 'she' is riding is the Antichrist which represents a unity, a 'oneness' between the Babylonian, one world government and religion. What is a harlot, really? It is a false, imitation wife or bride. I would imagine that many men who go into a prostitute are imagining the she is a wife or bride who truly loves him but, in reality, they both actually hate each other. The same will be true here; the Antichrist who had this evil relationship with this harlot church will hate her; all the kings who have given their allegiance to the Antichrist will hate her and they will all destroy this false

church as they also seek to destroy any and all true believers.

Several supposedly 'christian' churches today are harlots, false, imitation brides. Catholicism, the mother of so many false brides, offers false hope of forgiveness of sins through the abomination of the Eucharist and bowing down, praying to idols...

Mormonism offers false hope of 'ruling and reigning over one's own planet... JW's offer false hope of being numbered among the 144,000 with kingdom citizenship... as well as the many World religions that don't even pretend to be Christian.

**Chapter 18:** After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. <sup>2</sup>And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! <sup>3</sup>For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”

<sup>4</sup>And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. <sup>5</sup>For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. <sup>7</sup>In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit *as* queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’ <sup>8</sup>Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong *is* the Lord God who judges her.

<sup>9</sup>“The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, <sup>10</sup>standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’

<sup>11</sup>“And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise

anymore: <sup>12</sup>merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; <sup>13</sup>and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. <sup>14</sup>The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. <sup>15</sup>The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, <sup>16</sup>and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! <sup>17</sup>For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance <sup>18</sup>and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' <sup>19</sup>"They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'<sup>20</sup>"Rejoice over her, O heaven, and *you* holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!" <sup>21</sup>Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw *it* into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. <sup>22</sup>The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. <sup>23</sup>The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. <sup>24</sup>And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

Every false religion is a dwelling place of demons and foul spirits seeking worship from deluded

humans being led to destruction by their priests. We've gone into the temples of some of the World's false religions and they are completely demonic from the idols worshipped to the offerings of food, money and incense.

Remember, back in the 7 letters to Churches, Jesus said that He hated the Nicolaitans, those establishing a ruling, priestly class having 'victory over the laity.' Every false religion has such a priestly caste.

This destruction of Babylon sounds like the result of a great bomb, perhaps nuclear.

Think of Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries following the discovery of the New World. Everyone who had a ship wanted to sail across the Atlantic to fill up their holds with gold, silver and copper... and where did most of that wealth end up? The 'church,' the Catholic church, the church that was killing true believers by the 10's of millions. Everyone with a connection to the 'church' was getting rich. It will be even more so during the Tribulation with the Babylonian one World religion.

It may be that God uses the Antichrist and his minions to destroy the last days 'church' but it will happen suddenly and completely.

**Chapter 19:** After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power *belong* to the Lord our God! <sup>2</sup>For true and righteous *are* His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants *shed* by her." <sup>3</sup>Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" <sup>5</sup>Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" <sup>6</sup>And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! <sup>7</sup>Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." <sup>8</sup>And to her it was granted to

be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

<sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." <sup>10</sup>And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See *that you do not do that!* I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

<sup>11</sup>Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup>His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. <sup>14</sup>And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. <sup>15</sup>Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**

<sup>17</sup>Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, <sup>18</sup>that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all *people*, free and slave, both small and great."

<sup>19</sup>And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. <sup>20</sup>Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. <sup>21</sup>And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

This could be saying that our actual marriage ceremony, to the Lamb, occurs just before He returns to Earth at Armageddon accompanied by us, His Bride. It could be that we will have spent most of the past 7 years with all of us receiving our rewards, enjoying them and each other, getting to know our ancestors from way back, practicing and getting used to our new, eternal glorified bodies and exploring Heaven and some of the Universe. As pertains to our new bodies... it will be like someone who has always driven a 1956 Volkswagen Bug suddenly receiving a new Ferrari or a fighter Jet. It would take some time to get used to it so as not to crash it into the side of a building. I'm sure He will want to give us some time to test it out, learn how to use it, before He brings us back to Earth to help Him set up His Kingdom and to rule and reign with Him for 1000 years. Those 'blessed ones' invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb are probably those who will have been martyred during the Tribulation. Perhaps they are blessed because they, too, receive eternal bodies while those believers who will not have been killed will continue to live within mortal bodies throughout the 1000 years of the Millennium.

Then the Heavens open up, being rolled back as a scroll and The Lord Jesus Christ, sitting on His great white stallion rides down to Armageddon along with all of us, His Bride, also on white horses... just imagine... really... try to imagine such a thing... we're allowed to use our imaginations and to set our minds on these things.

The Antichrist and the False Prophet will be captured alive; we will watch as they are thrown, alive, into the Lake of Fire where they will spend eternity. All the rest of the World's armies and all who had received the Mark of the Beast will be killed with the Sword coming from Jesus Christ's Mouth. This is probably symbolic of the fact that they will all be killed with just a Word from Jesus Christ. He will speak and they will all be killed. What is the Sword of the Spirit? The Word of God. Who is the Word of God? The Lord Jesus Christ. Just as He can heal with only a word... so can He kill with only a word... or... of course, it really could be a Sword that comes out of His mouth and flies around killing everyone... we'll see. The souls of all

these many millions being killed will go down to Sheol, Hades, the place of the dead, to await their resurrection, 1000 years later, to the Great White Throne Judgment when they will also be condemned to eternity in the Lake of Fire.

**Chapter 20:** Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup>He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; <sup>3</sup>and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

<sup>4</sup>And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup>But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup>Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

<sup>7</sup>Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison <sup>8</sup>and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup>They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. <sup>10</sup>The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

<sup>11</sup>Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

<sup>12</sup>And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book* of

Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. <sup>13</sup>The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. <sup>14</sup>Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup>And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Remember the Angel with the Key to the Bottomless Pit who released the demonic hordes of locusts ... here he opens it to imprison Satan for 1000 years. All during the Millennium, people will not be tempted by Satan or demons; we assume his fallen angels are also imprisoned with him.

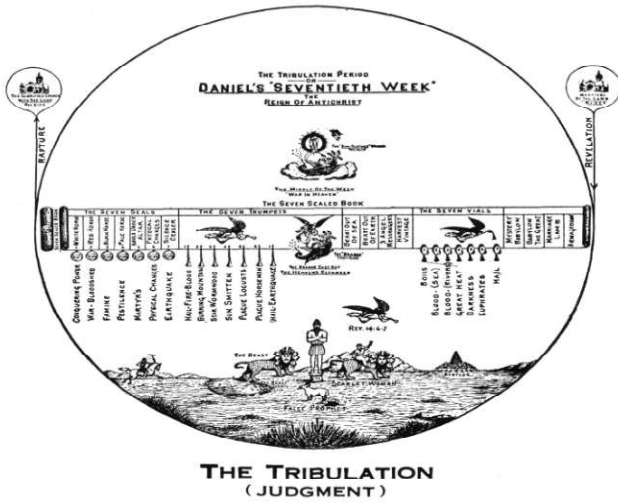
Satan will be bound for 1000 years. We will rule and reign with Christ for that same 1000 years. Those who were killed during the Tribulation are not the Church, the Bride of Christ; they will be raised to reign for 1000 as priests unto God but only the Church is promised to reign **and rule** with Him for those thousand years as the Bride of Christ, as Children of God, as fellow-heirs with Him.

After the 1000 years, Satan is loosed for a short time and he immediately returns to trying to defeat the Lord Jesus Christ. Even after living for 1000 years in a Kingdom of Peace and Righteousness, even then there will be huge numbers of mortal humans who will have been secretly hiding sin and rebellion in their hearts and will follow Satan to sure destruction. Fire will come down from Heaven and kill them all.

Finally, every lost person from all time will be resurrected to stand before Jesus Christ to be judged according to their works. Every one of them had the opportunity to be judged not according to their works but, rather, according to the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ but since all have sinned and fall short of the Righteousness of God, all will be condemned to eternity in the Lake of Fire. Their names will not be found in the Book of Life so they will be judged according to what was recorded of their lives in the other books. Death and Hades will be cast into the Lake of Fire. From that time onward, to forever, no one and nothing else will ever die again. People, animals, plants... nothing living will ever die except what is used as food. Will we eat throughout eternity? I

don't see why not... we certainly did eat, in our eternal bodies, during the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, didn't we... just imagine...

Next time we will use our imaginations to see Eternity as we finish Revelation and then move into 2 Peter.



### 13 L.D.E.T. Revelation Conclusion

Tom Tillman

**Chapter 21:** <sup>1</sup>Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. <sup>2</sup>Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. <sup>4</sup>And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." <sup>5</sup>Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

<sup>6</sup>And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. <sup>7</sup>He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. <sup>8</sup>But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

<sup>9</sup>Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." <sup>10</sup>And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, <sup>11</sup>having the glory of God. Her light *was* like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup>Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: <sup>13</sup>three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

<sup>14</sup>Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. <sup>15</sup>And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. <sup>16</sup>The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. <sup>17</sup>Then he measured its wall: one hundred *and* forty-four cubits, *according* to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. <sup>18</sup>The construction of its wall was *of* jasper; and the city *was* pure gold, like clear glass. <sup>19</sup>The foundations of the wall of the city *were* adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation *was* jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup>the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. <sup>21</sup>The twelve gates *were* twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city *was* pure gold, like transparent glass.

<sup>22</sup>But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup>The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb *is* its light. <sup>24</sup>And ***the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.*** <sup>25</sup>Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). <sup>26</sup>And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. <sup>27</sup>But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.'

We know what the Earth is like right now; some parts are still very nice and some parts have become very trashy. We can only imagine how wonderful the Earth was when God created Adam and Eve... magnificent! During the Tribulation, there will be great destruction all over the Earth... much of plant life will be destroyed; billions of dead bodies will cover the Earth, to be eaten by scavenger birds.

To that horrific landscape the Lord Jesus Christ will return to Earth to set up His 1000 year Kingdom over which He will rule and reign and we, too, will rule and reign with Him, as His Bride. During that time the Earth will be refurbished and come back to life. Plants and trees will have hundreds of years to grow tall and strong but Nature will still be groaning under the Curse from Adam's sin. Mortal people growing and multiplying during the Millennium will still have sin natures and when that time is finished there will be one final rebellion; a huge number of people gathered from all over the Earth will be gathered, by Satan, for one final attack to

defeat the Lord Jesus Christ; all of them will be destroyed by fire coming down from Heaven. All the unbelievers from all time will be raised to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ in final Judgment and then be cast into the Lake of Fire to join the Antichrist, the False Prophet, Satan and every demonic spirit where they will all be forever. After that, God will destroy the present Heaven and the present Earth and create a New Heaven and a New Earth.

He will not simply restore or refurbish the present Earth and then combine Heaven and Earth into one, as some teach, but God's Word makes clear that He will destroy the present Earth, along with every trace of sinful man and the kingdom of darkness. He will also destroy the present Heaven... maybe not all of Heaven, maybe not the 3rd Heaven where God, the Father sits on His Throne... and maybe not the Universe where sin and Satan have not been to pollute, perhaps only destroying the part of Heaven to which Satan had access as he has accused us day and night, but God's Word is clear, they will be destroyed.

Peter wrote, 'But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.... the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.' 2 Pet 3:7

That is clearly the destruction of this Earth. After the 1000 year reign of Christ on Earth, John writes: 'Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, **for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.**'

Jesus said, '**Heaven and earth will pass away**, but My words will by no means pass away' Matt 24:35

Concerning the New Earth, we cannot even imagine because but whatever we do imagine, the reality will far exceed our wildest imagination. The plants, the trees, the animals, the absolute beauty and astonishing wonder... anything we can imagine is only a fraction of the true reality. Everything will be alive like we have never seen.

Every part of this creation has been marred and affected by Adam and Eve's sin; everything became part of the kingdom of darkness. During the Millennium, the lords of the Kingdom of Darkness will be shut up in the Bottomless Pit, but Creation will still be under the curse. All of the mortal humans living and reproducing during that time will be just like we are now with sin natures handed down from generation to generation with some believing and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation while others will choose to reject the truth that leads to Salvation. Even though Jesus Christ will be physically on the Earth reigning from Jerusalem and even though we, the Bride of Christ, in our eternal, glorified bodies we received at the Rapture, that may even glow with the glory of God, as we, also, rule and reign... even then... multitudes throughout those 1000 years will hide sin and rebellion in their hearts. The Lord Jesus Christ will know exactly who is whom but still, they will blend in just like false Christians blend in now in every Church body around the World.

After the Millennium, everything will be erased and everyone rejecting Jesus Christ will be sent to the Lake of Fire.

In the New Heaven and New Earth there will be light everywhere, no darkness and no shadow. I believe everything will shine and glow as it reflects the Glory of God. Now, mostly just a few bugs and fish glow in the dark. Then, all of plant and animal life will be brand new like we've never experienced; it, too, will all reflect the glorious imagination and creative genius of God. Imagine the plants God can imagine: beautiful, glowing tall trees with hanging balls that show forth light, attracting birds and bees... beautiful birds and huge, friendly bees that will land on our shoulders bringing us little cups of honey. Think of the strange animals we know of now: the giraffe, zebra, platypus, flamingo, hummingbirds and on and on... everything will be newly imagined and marvelously created by God. Animals will no longer fear us; they will want to come near to the Children of God as we reflect the Glory, the Majesty, the Peace and Joy of God; they will want to walk with us and play with us, to fly around and land on us... all manner of birds and flying bugs; the bugs will be huge and they, too will want to be near us. Imagine a huge beautifully colored, flying beetle wanting to play fetch with a pine cone. I believe the plants will move toward us as they do now toward Sunlight.



Just imagine how plants, bugs and animals of the New Earth will respond to Jesus Christ Himself; that is how they will respond to us as the beloved Children of God, as coheirs with the Lord Jesus Christ, His Bride, ruling and reigning with Him over all that is, over the entire Universe... spreading out, planet by planet, star by star, galaxy by galaxy until the increase of His government has filled the Universe while He continues to create more and more and more... all for us to enjoy, to rule and reign over, all for Him to delight in sharing with us, His Bride.

'Of the **increase of His government and peace there will be no end**, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice *from that time forward, even forever.*' Isa 9:7 It is good to imagine all of this because the reality is far beyond anything we could imagine. He told us to set our minds on the things above, not on the things of the Earth; He meant on Heavenly things but also on the glorious future He has planned for us.

This place, New Jerusalem, is the ultimate, the pinnacle of God's ability to create wondrous surroundings for His Children. This will be God's ultimate 'showing off' all His creative skills. Imagine if you had a budget of 80 billion dollars to create and decorate your huge condominium in this place. Your imagination would be like a slum compared to God's imagination of the living space He will create for us in the New Jerusalem. It's being built for Jesus' Bride, the true Church.

When Jesus said, In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.' John 14:2. This is that place to which He will take us when He comes to receive us unto Himself at the Rapture.

New Jerusalem is huge. 1500 miles x 1500 miles x 1500 miles.... 3,375,000,000 cubic miles. If there will have been 1 billion Christians throughout the time of the Church, it will large enough for each of us to have an apt. 1.5 miles wide, long and high with each one fabulously, individually, personally decorated by the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, according to what will be the greatest blessing to each one of us.

Or, if there have been 3.375 billion believers, each apt could be 1 mile on every side. Or maybe they're just cozy little places 1/2 mile on each side.

Whatever size each of our personal areas are... they will be unbelievable. Each one will contain something like the Garden of Eden. It will be the place where the Lord Jesus Christ walks and talks with us every day... our place of 'personal time' with Him... and He will be able to have that special individual time with each and every one of us all at the same time... He is God... He can do anything.

The entire city is pure, transparent gold; God's glory will shine, illuminating everything. Even if sinful people were ever allowed into New Jerusalem, they would immediately search to find a way out because there are no dark corners in which to hide, in which to do their hidden sinful acts. They love darkness because their deeds are evil and there is no darkness at all in New Jerusalem.

New Jerusalem is the living place for the Bride of Christ, the Children of God.

Here are 3 groups I see living in Eternity:

1. **The Bride of Christ**, with members from every tongue, tribe and people group on Earth... ruling and reigning with the King, the Lord Jesus Christ, forever... all living in New Jerusalem.
2. **Tribulation Saints**, from every people group who were martyred and resurrected: they serve as priests unto God and serve Him in His Temple forever. He talks about servants, living and serving God forever. The Word makes clear that the Bride of Christ, we are not servants. We are One with Him, somehow, in Spirit and Body; we are fellow heirs with Him, co owners of all that is. A groom, a righteous groom, does not ever think of his bride as his servant. A master of a great house never thinks of his son, even his adopted son, as a servant. Jesus said, 'No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends...' John 15:15
3. **Millennium Saints**, who lived through the Tribulation and the Millennium: Jews and Gentiles still living as 'normal humans' living, working, playing, multiplying, coming yearly to Jerusalem to honor the King... Israel as the head of the nations and every other Gentile nation, every language and people group that God separated,

giving them their own languages and tribal identities when He scattered them all at the Tower of Babel who I believe continue to live on the New Earth, worshipping God, multiplying and colonizing out into the Universe forever. These are those to whom it has been granted to eat from the Tree of Life... it looks as though they must do so 'periodically.'

How do I know that we, the Bride, the Church, will not be those who need to drink of the Living Water and eat from the Tree of Life? Jesus said, of us, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup>He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' <sup>39</sup>But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; (the Church) for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.' John 7:37 Also, 'Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.' John 6:35

I think it's unreasonable to think that the people living on and filling the New Earth in every Nation would not be marrying and giving in marriage, having children, raising them to love and worship God, filling the Earth and moving out into the Universe of God's Creation. (They are not *in Heaven* where they neither marry nor are given in marriage)

I talk about people multiplying and colonizing to the uttermost parts of the Universe, inventing wondrous things, interstellar space ships to cross the Universe and so much more.

Do you remember what God said, when He scattered man and confused his languages at the Tower of Babel? 'And the LORD said, "Indeed the people *are* one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; ***now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.***' 'Nothing will be impossible to them if they come together to think, plan and invent together as one. At Babel, those were people with brains and bodies that had been degraded, with sin natures, for 2000 years since the time of Adam's sin. How much more so, after the Millennium, when people begin to live forever with new brains, not marred by sin and disease while being ruled over by the Bride of Christ whose members will have glorified eternal bodies like that of the Lord Jesus Christ... with brains far more brilliant than rooms full of computers today.

Why is it important to imagine God filling the Universe with His Creation? The larger, the more vast we can imagine regarding God, His purposes and Creation, the more we are glorifying God. As we believe that He is capable of far more than we can think or imagine, the more we are glorifying God in our own minds... even without realizing we are doing so. If we believe that God is only capable of picking up the pieces of Man's shattered existence while utilizing only this planet... we are greatly diminishing God in our own estimation and robbing Him of the Glory He is rightfully due.

Which father is more glorified: the one whose son says, 'I think my dad can probably pick up that 50 lb rock.' or the one whose son says, 'Well my dad can juggle 5 of those puny 50 lb rocks with one hand tied behind his back!' The difference is, our Dad really can do far more than we can think or imagine! So, the greater we can imagine, the greater the Glory to God. The fact that I am not embarrassed to imagine, in front of you, but willing to voice my imaginings... God is glorified in and through me.

What if our eternal rewards are somehow limited by our imaginations of what God can do, our unwillingness to believe He can do the unbelievable?

Here, we see that there are those who visit New Jerusalem to eat of the Tree of Life and Drink of the Water of Life but it doesn't appear they live there. Apparently some will need the revitalizing work of that miraculous fruit and water but it won't be the Bride because obviously the Lord Jesus Christ will not need it and John said we will see Him as He is and we will be like Him; our eternal bodies will be like His... truly eternal.

In verse 7 He said, 'He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.' Here He is speaking to us, the Bride He chose for His Son. We are coheirs with Him; we will inherit everything; we are His sons and daughters... not servants.

We are the ones who have overcome. Remember the 7 letters to 7 Churches in chapters 2 and 3. At the end of each one, God gave promises to those who would overcome. Then, this same John, in 1 John 5:4, explained who it was who overcame: 'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has

overcome the world, **our faith**. <sup>5</sup>Who is he who overcomes the world, **but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?** Every born again child of God is an overcomer: not through any work of our own but, rather, it is our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which overcomes the World and the Devil.

Here is some of what the Lord Jesus Christ has promised to God's children, not His servants: that we will inherit all things... 'to him I will give power over the nations; 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron... I will give him the morning star... he shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels... I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him* My new name... (then, tattoos really will be cool!) I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne...'

**Chapter 22:** And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. <sup>2</sup>In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. **The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.** And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and **His servants shall serve Him.** <sup>4</sup>They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

<sup>6</sup>Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.

<sup>7</sup>**"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."**

<sup>8</sup>Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

<sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, "See *that you do not do that*. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." <sup>10</sup>And he said to me, "**Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.** <sup>11</sup>He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."

<sup>12</sup>"And behold, **I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work.** <sup>13</sup>I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last."

<sup>14</sup>Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, **that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.** But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

<sup>16</sup>"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

<sup>17</sup>**And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"** And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. **Whoever desires let him take the water of life freely.**

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; <sup>19</sup>and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

<sup>20</sup>He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly."

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

Here we see the River of Life proceeding from the Throne of God and of the Lamb; it flows out and down the middle of the Main Street; on either side of the River is the Tree of Life, the original Tree of Life, last seen in the Garden of Eden, to which access was denied to Adam and Eve, lest they eat of its fruit and live forever in their sinful state. I envision a huge tree, large enough to straddle the entire Boulevard, and River, with gigantic branches, heavy with fruit hanging down low and then multiple Trees of Life going down both sides of

the Avenue. People from around the World, from all the Nations, are allowed to enter into the City to do and accomplish everything righteous people do in a City but this City is where God has set His Throne and where they come to honor Him and eat and drink of the River and the Trees of Life. It sounds like either there are 12 different trees, each having different fruit in their own month of the year or each tree yielding 12 different fruits each month. Notice that God will still be differentiating time by months. God will still mark time for us and we will mark time. The idea that in Eternity there will be no more time is not a Biblical concept. We, the Bride and Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, may have the ability to exist 'outside of time' but it seems, time itself will continue. Even though it says the light of the Sun will not be needed, it doesn't necessarily mean that the Sun, Earth's star, will no longer exist.

Previously I said that even during the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ, on the old Earth, Creation was still under the Curse. Now, here, finally, in the New Creation there is no more Curse. All is righteousness and holiness and glorifying to God.

The Lord Jesus Christ reminds us; once again, that He will soon come for us in the Rapture and that for those during the Tribulation reading this, He is coming... hold on... continue to keep His commandments... stay true to the end.

“Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

'And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to everyone according to his work.'

'Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.'

Then, to those in the Tribulation: <sup>14</sup>Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, **that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.** We, the Bride, the Church, are never told to do His commandments; we are commanded to believe; He kept the commandments for us.

Regarding the verse: '*outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie,*' I don't know. This verse is parallel to the previous chapter's verse 8: 'But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.'

Perhaps, there will be a place where we can look down, over the wall of New Jerusalem, into the Lake of Fire, seeing Satan, the Antichrist, the False Prophet and a sea of wicked people but probably not specifically remembering past loved ones who are there but surely always being reminded of what God has done for us and sheltered us from... forever... always being reminded that it could have been us down there had God not chosen, called and drawn us for Himself, giving us the faith to believe... always being reminded that God's great Salvation was all His work and His work alone.

Finally He ends with His message to we who are waiting and looking for His return: “Surely I am coming quickly.”