

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. ⁵³For 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, ¹³from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴For 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. ¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷Then 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. ¹⁸Therefore 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—⁴ 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—⁵² 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. ¹⁷Then 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. ¹⁸Therefore **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. ³And 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. ³And 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. ³And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— ⁴how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. ⁵Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. ⁶For 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 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.

⁶However, 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. ²In 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. ³And 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. ¹⁷Then 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. ¹⁸Therefore 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, ²¹who 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. ¹¹Behold, 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. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴²Watch 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, ¹⁰and 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. ³For 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. ⁴But 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. ¹¹Therefore 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.

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. ³And 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! ¹⁷For 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: ²⁷They 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; ²⁹but 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; ⁵and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah... bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; ⁶and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; ⁷and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked... ⁹then 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. ²²After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. ²³So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. ²⁴And 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. ¹⁴His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵His 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). ¹⁰**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. ¹¹Behold, 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.** ³**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...

⁹"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)

¹⁰A 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: ²¹"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:

²⁴The 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**

²⁵He 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

²⁶**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, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷that 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, ¹²saying 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)? ³Do 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) ⁵Who 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. ⁹And 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,

¹⁰And 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. ³And 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! ¹⁷For 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: ²⁷They 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; ²⁹but 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; ⁵and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah... bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; ⁶and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; ⁷and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked... ⁹then 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. ²²After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. ²³So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. ²⁴And 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. ¹⁴His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵His 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). **¹⁰Because 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. ¹¹Behold, 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. ³And 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. ⁴Around 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.

1 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...

⁹"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)

¹⁰A 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: ²¹“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:

²⁴The 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**

²⁵He 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

²⁶**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, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ 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, ¹²saying 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)?** ³**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) ⁵Who 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. ⁹And 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,

¹⁰And 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!