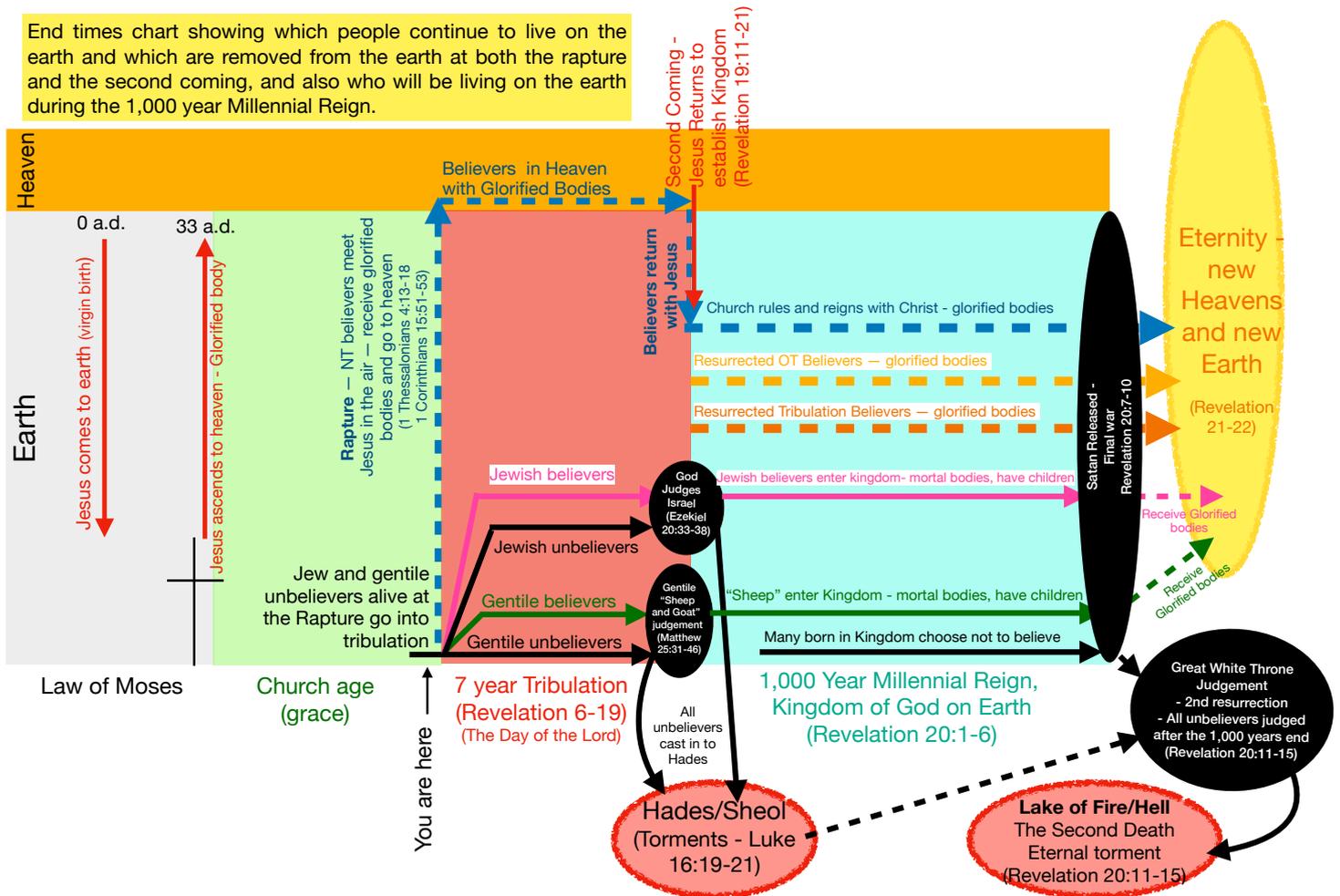


## Revelation 4:1-2 - The Rapture of the Church - Part 2

We will revise the last two dispensations (6. Grace or church age and 7. Millennium) including the tribulation period and who goes into the tribulation and who goes into the Millennial kingdom. The following chart shows who goes where at the time of the rapture and at the sheep and goat judgement which follows Christ's Second Coming:



### meta tauta: the turning point in the book of Revelation

Last week, we saw that Revelation 4:1-2 are a turning point in the book of Revelation. If we compare it to a screen play or a script, it's a plot point, it's a complete turning point in the message that the book of revelation presents. We saw this by going back to Revelation 1:19 which is an outline for the book.

#### Revelation 1:19 NKJV

**Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this (*meta tauta*).**

Chapter 1 is "the things that you have seen"—Jesus revealing Himself to John.

Chapters 2 and 3 represent the church age, "the things which are".

Now we move onto the next part of verse 19: "and the things which will take place after this."

v 19 **after this**: After what? After the church age. The church age must end before the Tribulation can begin. The church age only ends when the church is removed.

The two Greek words translated as “**after this**” or “**after these things**” are *meta tauta*. So here is the plot point. Here is where the story changes. Let’s turn to Revelation 4:1

### **Revelation 4:1 NKJV**

**After these things [meta tauta] 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 [meta tauta].”**

Like we learned last week, the Greek words *meta tauta* are repeated twice in Revelation 4:1. We should be thinking, hey, I’ve seen those words before. I read those words in Revelation 1:19. This must be the place where things change. Now God is showing us what happens after the church age.

So, here is the change. Here is where the church is taken out of the world—“**Come up here**”—this is when the church goes extraterrestrial. The idea of the church being caught up to heaven is commonly called the rapture. Last week we started looking at how other passages also refer to the rapture; when some of those who who believe, and live, will never die (see John 11:26).

This week we will continue to look at other New Testament references to the rapture, what it is and when it happens. Last week we learned that there are various points of view about when or even if the rapture happens. It’s important that we have a biblical understanding of what it is and when it happens. *I’ll do my best to prove from the scriptures that the church is caught up to heaven before the 7 year tribulation period. It’s up to you to put Acts 17:11 into practice and search the scriptures daily to see if what I’m saying is true.*

Let’s start with one of the most obvious and clear scriptures that refer to the rapture.

### **1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 NKJV**

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.

*Here we have a very clear description of the great snatch, when God, by stealth, takes us away. It will happen so quickly that it will appear that all the born again believers will seem to simply disappear from the earth.*

## **What is the resurrection?**

We’ll start by taking a step back and learning about the resurrection. **We are talking about the rapture, and the rapture is when we get our resurrection bodies.** So what does the bible have to say about our resurrection bodies and why do we need resurrection or glorified bodies?

1 Corinthians 15:42-50 NLT paraphrase

It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to **live forever**.<sup>43</sup> Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be **raised in glory**. They are buried in weakness, but they will be **raised in strength**.<sup>44</sup> They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as **spiritual bodies**. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.

<sup>45</sup> The Scriptures tell us, “The first man, Adam, became a living person.” But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit.<sup>46</sup> What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later.<sup>47</sup> Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven.<sup>48</sup> Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man.<sup>49</sup> **Just as we are now like the earthly man [mortal body], we will someday be like the heavenly man [immortal, resurrection, or glorified body].**

<sup>50</sup> **What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying [mortal] bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.**

Look at the contrasts between our mortal, human, flesh and blood body, versus our new resurrection, glorified or spiritual body.

- Die vs live forever
- Broken vs glory
- Weakness vs strength
- Natural vs spiritual
- Natural comes first (what we are born with), spiritual body comes later (at the rapture — which we will see as we continue reading this chapter.)
- New body is the same as Jesus glorified or spiritual body.

Notice verse 50: **What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying [mortal] bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.**

This is the most important reason that we need a new physical body. The mortal physical body my spirit and soul occupy now is a temporary body, one that is designed to live for a while here on earth. However, the new spiritual or heavenly physical body that my spirit and soul will someday occupy will last for eternity.

*Notice that they are both physical bodies, just different.* You could touch Jesus’ resurrection body. He could eat, drink, you could put your finger in His scars etc, yet He could walk through walls, disappear at will, and enter different dimensions—eternity, heaven. What an amazing body God is preparing for us. Are you looking forward to it?

Another thing about the resurrection is that it only applies to our physical bodies. We are a triune being - body, soul and spirit. All three parts need to be redeemed. Let’s look at when this happens.

Think of it this way, redemption is a three stage process—here’s how it works from the perspective of someone who has already been born again and is still alive on earth:

1. **Justification:** my Spirit was redeemed when I was born again—I am justified.

2. **Sanctification:** my soul *is being* redeemed. It started the day I was born again, and will be completed either the day I die or I am raptured (see Philippians 1:6). **I *am being* sanctified.**
3. **Glorification:** my body *will be* redeemed at the rapture. All New Testament believers (the church) will get their new bodies (their resurrection or glorified bodies) at the rapture. **I *will be* glorified.**

Let's go through them again and add some more detail:

1. **Justification:** my spirit is redeemed when we accept Christ as our Lord and Saviour—I have been justified, made right with God (it's **just-if-I'd** never sinned). My Spirit is the part of me that communicates with God.
2. **Sanctification:** my soul is finally redeemed the day I die, when Christ finishes the good work that He started in me when I first believed (Philippians 1:6). This is called sanctification—I am being transformed into Christ's image. I am new person, a new creation, with new godly desires and attitudes. My soul is who I am—my mind, emotions, will etc.
3. **Glorification:** my body will be redeemed (glorified) at the time of the rapture when Jesus comes back to get me and take me back to heaven. My body is just the shell that my spirit and soul live in. We use our bodies to help us to communicate etc. The redemption of my bodies is called glorification. *All New Testament believers, dead or alive, will get their new bodies at the same time when Jesus comes back to get those who are still alive at the Rapture.* The soul and spirit of believers who die before the rapture go directly to Heaven to be in the presence of God, but, they have not received their new glorified bodies yet. Again, as we have previously read in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, every believer who is a part of the church age receives their new bodies at basically the same time, at the rapture.

Now let's continue reading on in 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. The verses we just read showed us that we need a new body to live forever in Heaven. Now Paul is about to tell us some great news concerning how it will happen.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 NLT paraphrase

<sup>51</sup> But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret [mystery]. **We will not all die, but we will all be transformed!** <sup>52</sup> **It will happen in a moment**, in the blink of an eye, **when the last trumpet is blown.** For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. <sup>53</sup> *For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal [glorified or resurrection] bodies.*

<sup>54</sup> Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.

<sup>55</sup> O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

<sup>56</sup> For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. <sup>57</sup> But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>58</sup> So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

## Overcoming the fear of death

Finally, death will be defeated. Did you know that we are all born with a fear of death?

Hebrews 2:14-15 NLT paraphrase

<sup>14</sup> Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could He die, and only by dying could He break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. <sup>15</sup> **Only in this way could He set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.**

Think of Adam and Eve, just kicked out of the garden of Eden, and God clothes them in animal skins. They had never seen death before. In that simple action, Adam and Eve saw that the consequences of their sin caused the death of an innocent substitute, the substitute of God's choice. Again, they understood that it was their sin that caused the death of an innocent animal—an animal that had to die solely because of their rebellious choice. The consequence of sin is death.

Also, we inherit this basic fear of death, because we know, even if we don't admit it, that sin brings judgement. But Jesus Christ willingly allowed Himself to be hung up on the cross and willingly died in your place and mine. Jesus took the penalty of every sin we will ever commit when He died in our place. And He did it when He knew that most of the world would never thank Him for it, acknowledge Him, or even receive the gift that He gave His life to give.

Romans 5:8 NLT paraphrase

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

This is the hope of the resurrection. God has broken sin's power over us and defeated death when Jesus died on the cross, paying the penalty for our sins, and then rising again. We literally have nothing to fear. The more we learn about who we are in Christ and what we have in Christ, the less we will fear death. It doesn't matter if we die or are raptured—our bodies will still be resurrected. Praise God for His goodness and grace!

And what is the application or encouragement that follows this?

v 58 So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

What gives us the motivation to keep going in the face of hardship? It's the hope of the resurrection, when we get our new bodies and live forever with God and receive reward for all our labours done for Christ that were motivated by love. We have a glorious future, so never give up on serving the Lord.

## What does the bible mean by a "mystery"?

Let's go back to verses 51-52

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 NLT paraphrase

<sup>51</sup> But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret [**mystery**]. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! <sup>52</sup> It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed.

Firstly, what does Paul mean by “a wonderful secret or mystery”?

A mystery in the New Testament means something that has not yet been revealed by God in His progressive revelation of Himself, His purposes, and plans to man.

Paul, for instance, said to the believers at Colosse in:

Colossians 1:27 NKJV

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The Old Testament prophets did not comprehend what it meant that Christ would be in us. The idea of Christ living in us was never mentioned in the Old Testament. It was a brand new idea that was revealed as a part of the new covenant. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit only came upon a relatively few people, usually people in leadership, and then usually only temporarily.

Let's come back to the passage in 1 Corinthians 15, we are introduced to another never-before revealed truth—the rapture of the church,

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 NLT paraphrase

<sup>51</sup> But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret [**mystery**]. **We will not all die [sleep], but we will all be transformed [or changed]!** <sup>52</sup> **It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown.** For when the trumpet sounds, [the bodies of] those who have died will be raised to live forever. **And we who are living will also be transformed.**

<sup>53</sup> For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

So what is the mystery? It's not the idea of the resurrection. That was known back in Abraham's day. That was the hope of the Old Testament believers, that after they died they would be resurrected.

Remember what Job said:

Job 19:26-27 NKJV

<sup>26</sup> And after my skin is destroyed, this I know,

That in my flesh I shall see God,

<sup>27</sup> Whom I shall see for myself,

And my eyes shall behold, and not another.

How my heart yearns within me!

Even Job knew that there would be a physical resurrection. So if resurrection is not the mystery, then what is? The mystery is that:

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 NLT paraphrase

<sup>51</sup> But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret [**mystery**]. **We will not all die [sleep], but we will all be transformed [or changed]!** <sup>52</sup> **It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown.** For when the trumpet sounds, [the bodies of] those who have died will be raised to live forever. **And we who are living will also be transformed.**

<sup>53</sup> For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

v 51, 52 **We will not all die... and we who are living will also be transformed.** Wow, there will be a generation that will be caught up to heaven, snatched away by Jesus to meet Him in the clouds and then be with Him in Heaven. *The mystery is that there is some who will not die, who will be changed or transformed without experiencing death.*

## **Why does the Bible use the word “sleep” to represent death for the believer?**

v 51 **Sleep...** The word “sleep” is a word to describe the death of the body for a christian. The body “sleeps,” as far as God is concerned. But not our soul and spirit, which is the real you and the conscious person you are. Our soul and spirit goes, according to 2 Corinthians 5:6-7, to be in the presence of the Lord, to be face to face consciously with the Lord. But your body “sleeps”. As we talked about before, the resurrection only applies to the body. God is going to raise our bodies into an eternal state—and everybody will be good looking!

Another parallel explanation is that death for believers is like going to sleep; we go to bed tired and then wake up refreshed in the morning. In the same way, we are tired of living on this earth, but when we die, we are in the presence of the Lord, completely refreshed and renewed.

## **The transformation: Metamorphosis**

v 51 When the Bible declares that we will “**all be changed or transformed,**” it means there will be a metamorphosis. “For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.” (1 Corinthians 15:53). All believers will go through a glorious change at the coming of Jesus Christ for His Church, just like an ugly caterpillar is transformed or metamorphosed into a beautiful butterfly.

## **In a moment?**

v 52 **In a moment ...** Gk *atomo*

We get our word atom from this Greek word. It basically means that you can't divide it up any smaller. It will be the smallest possible measure or period of time, probably a nanosecond, billionth of a second. In other words in a blink of time that is so short that it can't be measured, we are going to be changed, transformed. It will be instantaneous.

## **What is the “last trumpet”?**

One place where people get stuck sometimes is where it says in v 52, “when the last trumpet is blown.” The reason for the confusion is that there are a series of seven judgements in Revelation called the “trumpet judgements,” which are towards then end of the tribulation.

What some people try to do is link this with the seven trumpet judgments of Revelation and say that the seventh trumpet is the last trump. They see this as proof that the Rapture will not take place until the last trump occurs, which is towards the end of the 7 year tribulation period. If true, it would mean that the church would go through the tribulation.

I see a couple of problems with this. First, the seven trumpet judgments in Revelation are given to the seven angels to sound and to bring in the corresponding judgments upon the earth. When we examine who is blowing each of these trumpets, we see that they are all angels. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Paul is speaking of the Rapture,

1 Thessalonians 4:16 NKJV

“For the **Lord himself** shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with **the trumpet of God**: and the dead in Christ shall rise first”.

The trumpet of the Rapture is not that of an angel—it’s the trump of God! Jesus Himself will blow this trumpet, not an angel.

Another reason that I don’t think that the rapture happens when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet is that, after the fourth angel sounds his trumpet, a voice shouts:

Revelation 8:13b NKJV

“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!”

Then, after the fifth trumpet sounds, the voice says, “One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.”

Revelation 9:12 NKJV

<sup>12</sup> One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.

Clearly, a woe is pronounced to those on earth. **But our being caught up isn’t a woe. It’s glory!** It doesn’t make sense that such a glorious event like the Rapture would be called a woe, and not even mentioned in the text. Remember that in Revelation 4:1, it says, “**come up here**,” which is a clear reference to the church being taken up.

So, if there is a last trumpet, and it’s not one of the angels sounding it, then what was the first trumpet? Well, in Exodus 19, God sounded the first trump when the Jews were gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai to hear the law. The last trump will sound when the church is gathered to meet the Lord in the air and taken to heaven. Thus, the Jews hear the first trump; the church hears the last.

## **Parallels between the verses of the bible that speak of the rapture**

So, the reason I have gone through these verses that talk about the rapture, is because when you look back at Revelation 4:1-2, it parallels these verses.

Revelation 4:1-2

After these things (*meta tauta*) 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 (*meta tauta*).”

<sup>2</sup> **Immediately** I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne.

John was instantly transposed from earth to heaven, and that happened when He heard a voice, like a trumpet, saying “come up here.”

The parallels between Revelation 4:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 are:

- The trumpet will sound
- Instantaneous (immediately and in a moment)
- From earth to heaven
- Stand before the Lord Jesus

## The “elect”, who are they: Christians, Israel, or Jewish Tribulation Saints?

Another thing that I think would be good to understand is who the “elect” are. Elect simply means “chosen ones.” The verses that most people get stuck on are:

Matthew 24:21-22 NKJV

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.

On the basis of this verse, people say “Aha! Here we see the elect (the church??) in the Tribulation”—*failing to realize that the term “elect” refers to three groups of people: Christians (Colossians 3:12), Israel (Isaiah 45:4), and those Jews who will be saved in the Tribulation (Matthew 24:21, 22).*

To which of the elect does Jesus refer in Matthew 24:21? I believe the answer lies in the verse preceding it:

Matthew 24:20 NKJV

<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.

Even to this day, transportation in Israel is shut down on the Sabbath. Since the Sabbath means nothing to Gentile nations, *the application to Israel in the tribulation is clear—the “elect” in Matthew 24:21-22 refers to Israel in the Tribulation.* This is an example of how context makes the meaning of the text very clear, and “how a text out of context is a pretext”.

## Conclusion to and summary of our study of the Rapture:

The following eleven reasons are a summary of why I believe this trumpet of God will sound before the Tribulation, that Jesus will come and take the church away before the tribulation starts. Some of them are revision of what we have covered over the last couple of weeks.

### **1. The doctrine of the Rapture is to be a comforting one (1 Thessalonians 4:18).**

1 Thessalonians 4:18 NKJV

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The belief that the Rapture happens after or in the middle of the Tribulation is anything but comforting because it means believers must endure unbelievable agony before they are taken to heaven. The truth is that by the end of the tribulation over one half of the world's population will die, that's at least 3.9 billion people of the 7.8 billion currently alive today. It will be even worse for those who believe during the tribulation, as Satan will be given authority to make war with and overcome the saints during the tribulation period (Rev 13:7).

Revelation 13:7 NKJV

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.

Think of it this way. If the rapture doesn't happen before the tribulation, then there will be precious few people to be raptured as most would have been killed. ***Telling the church to take comfort in the rapture if the church were to go into the tribulation would be like telling the Jews to take comfort because they would go through the intense torture and suffering of the holocaust because a few survivors would be delivered at the end.*** It doesn't make sense. There is no comfort in that scenario. The tribulation will be like a Holocaust for the tribulation saints. We will see this more as we get into the book. This is why we need to get moving and be warning people of the coming judgement—the 7 year tribulation.

### **2. Jesus said that the gates of Hades shall not prevail or overcome the church. (Matthew 16:18)**

This follows on from the previous point. Jesus said in:

Matthew 16:18 NKJV

"...and on this rock **I will build My church**, and the gates of Hades **shall not prevail against it.**"

Yes the church is persecuted by Satan, but the more it is persecuted, then more it grows. It's like the children of Israel in Egypt. The more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied. This is what it means for the gates of Hades to not overcome or be victorious over the church.

Revelation 13:7 NKJV

It was granted to him [antichrist] to make war with the saints [believers] and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

However, if the church really does go through the tribulation, when the antichrist is given authority to make war against and to overcome the saints, it will contradict what Jesus said in Mathew 16:18, because the tribulation saints will be basically wiped out, with God's permission. It sounds cruel, but it is actually an act of mercy because life will be so terrible during those 7 years, especially the last half. It will be better to die than to stay alive—see Revelation 14:9-13 which includes, “*Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’*”

“Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them.”

Simply put, the martyred tribulation saints will be spared the horrors of the Tribulation and will receive comfort when they go to be with Jesus.

### **3. The Tribulation is the outpouring of the wrath of the Lamb—and God has not appointed us to wrath. (Revelation 6:15-17, 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11)**

First let's see where the bible says that the tribulation is the outpouring of the wrath of the Lamb. Revelation 6 is the very start of the tribulation, and look what it says:

Revelation 6:15-17 NLT paraphrase

<sup>15</sup> Then everyone—the kings of the earth, the rulers, the generals, the wealthy, the powerful, and every slave and free person—all hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. <sup>16</sup> And they cried to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and **hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.** <sup>17</sup> **For the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to survive?**”

Now look at what God says about the church not having to endure God's wrath:

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 NKJV

<sup>9</sup> **For God did not appoint us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> **who died for us** [took our punishment], **that whether we wake** [go up at the rapture] **or sleep** [describes a christian's death], **we should live together with Him.**

<sup>11</sup> **Therefore comfort each other and edify one another**, just as you also are doing.

Notice verse 11 above, “therefore comfort each other...”. Compare this to 1 Thessalonians 4:13 in the previous chapter where it says to “comfort one another with these words” in direct reference to the rapture.

The wrath that should have been hurled at you and poured out on me was absorbed by our Hero, our Lord, our Savior on the Cross of Calvary.

The trials and tribulations we face now in the church age are from Satan attacking us. He is our accuser. He is our enemy. He is out to kill steal and destroy the church. **However, in the tribulation it will be God bringing judgements on the earth for the purpose of judgement—the Tribulation will be God punishing the unbelievers, God pouring out His wrath and judgement on an unbelieving world.** Therefore, 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 tells us that not only have we been saved from the Lake of fire, but also from God's wrath in the Tribulation.

#### **4. Rapture before the Tribulation is illustrated in Genesis 19, where we see angels delivering Lot and his family before the destruction of Sodom.**

How do I know this is a picture of the Rapture? Because in reference to this, Peter writes, “The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations (tribulations)” (2 Peter 2:9). The word translated “temptations” is the same word translated “tribulation.”

2 Peter 2:7-9 NLT paraphrase

But God also rescued Lot out of Sodom because he was a righteous man who was sick of the shameful immorality of the wicked people around him. <sup>8</sup> Yes, Lot was a righteous man who was tormented in his soul by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day. <sup>9</sup> **So you see, the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials [Tribulation], even while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment.**

#### **5. Jesus told us to pray that we would be raptured before the Tribulation. (Luke 21:36)**

In speaking of the Tribulation in His Olivet Discourse, Jesus said:

Luke 21:36 NKJV

Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

How are we accounted worthy? Only one way: We are worthy because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross of Calvary.

#### **6. Pre-Tribulation Rapture makes sense historically/culturally and scripturally—Galilean wedding customs. (John 14:1-3)**

John 14:1-3 NKJV

“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.**

In accordance with Jewish custom, when a man came of age to marry, he would add a room on to his father’s house for himself and his bride. When the addition was complete, and when the father gave the go-ahead, a trumpet would sound, and the bridegroom would go to meet his bride. Following the wedding ceremony, the bridegroom would take his bride to his father’s house, where they would be tucked away for seven days in the newly completed “bridal suite.” At the end of seven days, the bridegroom would come out with his bride and introduce her to the community.

That’s exactly what’s going to happen with us. Jesus, our Bridegroom, is preparing a place for us in heaven, His Father’s house (John 14:2). At the appointed time known only by the Father, a trumpet will sound and Jesus will meet us, His bride, in the air to escort us up to the “Bridal Suite” He has prepared for us. We will remain with Him in heaven for seven years before we are presented to the world, where we will rule and reign with Him. This is a powerful argument that we do not have the time to go into detail with here. However, the documentary “Before the Wrath”, released 2020, does a great job of explaining how Jesus used the cultural traditions that His listeners were familiar with to communicate truth, and the Rapture parallels perfectly with.

## **7. Pre-Tribulation Rapture follows the outline of the Book of Revelation.**

If you don't embrace a Pre-Tribulation view, your understanding of Revelation becomes very convoluted and out of order. Why? Because if you hold to a Mid-Tribulation view then you've got to put Revelation chapters 4 and 5 after chapter 11, and after chapter 19 if you take a Post-Tribulation point of view. *Only a Pre-Tribulation placement of the Rapture allows for a consistent flow of the Book of Revelation, where chapters 4-5 ("come up here" and the church in heaven) follow the church age (chapters 2-3), but come before chapters 6-19 (the Tribulation).*

## **8. Pre-Tribulation Rapture allows for the conditional aspect of the Tribulation. (Revelation 2:22)**

To the church at Thyatira, Jesus said, "If you don't repent, you will experience Tribulation"

Revelation 2:22 NKJV

Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her **into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.**

If the Rapture won't occur until after the Tribulation, what would be the reason for this warning of Jesus? Logic tells us that if the Rapture occurred at the end of the Tribulation, then they would all go through it anyway!

"Well, didn't Jesus say in this world we would have tribulation?" you ask.

Yes, but the crushing the believer goes through in the world is from Satan. The Tribulation of chapters 6–19, on the other hand, is from God as He pours out His wrath on a Christ-rejecting world. God is fair and will not allow anyone to get hit from both sides. **If we experience tribulation in the world because of our faith, we will not experience the Tribulation of those who have none.**

## **9. Pre-Tribulation Rapture allows for the unknown time of the Lord's return.**

1 Thessalonians 5:2 NLT paraphrase

For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.

According to Daniel's prophecy, three and a half biblical years (a Biblical year being three hundred sixty days) from the day Antichrist enters the temple and demands worship midway through the Tribulation, the Lord will return. Consequently, if believers were on earth during the Tribulation, they would be able to predict the exact time of the Second Coming—three and a half biblical years, or forty-two months, or one thousand two hundred sixty days after Antichrist enters the temple. The problem is, 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and Matthew 24:36 make it clear that no one knows the hour of His coming. Therefore, it follows that the Rapture can't be at the second coming when Jesus comes back, as then the time would not be unknown.

## **10. The Tribulation is not for the church, it is for Israel. (Deuteronomy 4:30-31, Jeremiah 30:7)**

Deuteronomy 4:30-31 NLT paraphrase

<sup>30</sup> “In the distant future, when you are suffering all these things, you will finally return to the Lord your God and listen to what he tells you. <sup>31</sup> For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon you or destroy you or forget the solemn covenant he made with your ancestors.

Jeremiah 30:7 NKJV

<sup>7</sup> Alas! For that day is great,  
So that none is like it;  
And it is the time of Jacob’s trouble,  
But he shall be saved out of it.

In the Old Testament, the Tribulation is referred to as the time of Jacob’s trouble. The Tribulation targets Israel, for through it she will be awakened and at last see Jesus as the Messiah (Deuteronomy 4:29-31). The promises God made to Abraham and to the Jewish people have not been forgotten. God will work with Israel in the days of the Tribulation. He will make Himself known to them—and they shall indeed be saved.

Those are ten reasons I believe the Rapture will occur before the Tribulation. But the most important one is the following:

## **11. A Pre-Tribulation Rapture viewpoint encourages believers to seek first the kingdom. (Matthew 24:42-47)**

Matthew 24:42-47 NLT paraphrase

<sup>42</sup> **“So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming.** <sup>43</sup> Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. <sup>44</sup> **You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.**

<sup>45</sup> “A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them. <sup>46</sup> If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. <sup>47</sup> I tell you the truth, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns.

Who is the one who will have authority and purpose in eternity? He who is watching for Jesus’ coming. But this is, I believe, much more difficult for those who believe the Tribulation comes before the Rapture. Why? Because they must first watch for Antichrist, then the rebuilding of the temple, and finally the Abomination of Desolation when Antichrist demands to be worshiped as God.

Two factors kept the early church on fire: the empowering of the Holy Spirit and the belief that Jesus would return during their lifetime. “But He didn’t come back in their day,” you say. And you’re right—but do you think those early believers are in heaven now, saying, “We didn’t get bogged down in materialism or trivial pursuits. We sought the Lord. We witnessed fervently. We lived for the kingdom. If only we knew He wasn’t coming, we could have played more football”? No! They’re ecstatic that they chose to do what Jesus says to do in every generation—to watch, to be ready, to live for His coming.

Whether or not you believe in a pre-Tribulation Rapture will not affect where you'll ultimately end up. If you're a believer, you'll be in heaven no matter what position you hold. But your viewpoint concerning the Rapture very definitely affects how you live your life this side of eternity. If you do not believe in a pre-Tribulation Rapture, you cannot look for Jesus Christ coming at the rapture, because, according to your eschatological viewpoint, Antichrist must appear first. Therefore, you find can yourself scanning the news, checking out current events, watching the global scene for Antichrist rather than for Jesus. And this puts believers in a "survivalist" mentality. "We're going through the Tribulation," they say. "We better get ready." Is this what Jesus meant? Does He want us storing gold and guns? Or does He want us living every day in hopeful anticipation that today could be the day we go to heaven?

"I want you looking for Jesus every day," John said, "because he who has the hope of the imminent, sudden appearing of Christ and the Rapture of the church purifies himself" (see 1 John 3:2-3). That is why I believe your view on the Rapture is so important. Live in constant expectancy of Jesus' soon return. Be watching and be ready.

1 John 3:2-3 NKJV

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 [eager expectation] in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.