

REVEALING THE RAPTURE-THE BLESSED HOPE!

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"AND THEY SHALL BE MINE, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS, IN THAT DAY WHEN I MAKE UP MY JEWELS AND I WILL SPARE THEM, AS A MAN SPARETH HIS OWN SON THAT SERVETH HIM." (Mal. 3:17.)

1. THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING!

July 26, 1971, was a memorable day when at 9:34 a.m. three astronauts blasted off from Cape Kennedy. As they sped toward the moon, newsmen made the incredible statement that the energy expended to lift the gigantic ship from the launching pad equalled the power of all streams and rivers of the nation, if harnessed.

What an achievement for those astronauts as they raced to the moon.

Man's astounding venture into space is weak and insignificant, however, in comparison to the space trip that Christians will take when Jesus comes. Known as the **RAPTURE**, many believers eagerly anticipate the return of Christ which could take place at any moment. His coming will be sudden and unannounced and all believers will then be taken up into the air and will be forever with the Lord.

What is The Rapture?

The Rapture Can be described as God's Evacuation or Rescue Plan for true Bible Believing Christians, from the earth, to Heaven.

It was originally taught by the Apostle Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to the church in Thessalonica. The Thessalonians were the first ones to receive the Holy Spirit inspired teaching of **"The Blessed Hope"**. The Blessed

Hope as the teaching was originally called, was taught by the Apostle Paul starting in the First century AD. (I Thessalonians 4-5)

Other apostles such as John, Matthew, Luke also made inference to "**The Blessed Hope**". Also see: (John 14:2-3) (I Cor. 15:52)

The other inferences to "**The Blessed Hope**" are referred to in: (cf: Matt. 24:42, Matt. 25:13, Luke 12:36-48, Acts 1:11, Phil. 3:20-21, Titus. 2:11-13)

The Teaching of "**The Blessed Hope**" was deeply entrenched and taught in the early Church, for the first two centuries, starting with the Apostle Paul, and referenced to also by Matthew, John, and Luke.

So what happened to the original teaching of "**The Blessed Hope**"?

Well in the last ten years of the second century and all through out the third century, We had the rise of a heretical church and the heretical school of theology at Alexandria, Egypt. They advanced the erroneous principle that the Bible should be interpreted in a nonliteral or allegorical sense. The result of their heresy was that the original teaching of "**The Blessed Hope**" was done away with because they couldn't understand or visualize it. They just didn't want to believe it.

They had no faith in the teaching - they were so arrogant - their minds were so small and their ego's so big, that they couldn't picture or understand the Lord returning to remove or Catch away all the true living Believers at some future date. God Himself said in **Jeremiah: 32:27: "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?"**

This same God, The God of all creation, The God of All "**POWER**", that could raise the dead back to life, can He not also rapture, lift or snatch up the Living from off of the earth, as He did with Enoch and Elijah and in the same manner as Jesus rose up from off of the earth and into the sky, when He returned to the Father?

Jesus Talked about those, "**Having a form of godliness, but denying the POWER thereof: from such turn away.**" (2Tm:3:5)

A Great Majority of Professing Christians today deny that God has the **POWER** to Rapture the True and Faithful Bible Believing Christians from off of of the earth. Jesus says, "**...from such turn away.**"

The original apostles were now all dead and were not available to fight back against this heresy. A Small number of the faithful and True Believers made every attempt to keep the teaching of The Blessed Hope alive, but were soon outnumbered and out gunned by this new and heretical unbelief.

This went on through out all the centuries and on into and through what we call the Dark Ages.

The revival of the original teaching of **The Blessed Hope**, did not start to make a significant comeback until the last several centuries.

To date, we still have a significantly large number of professing Christians, that follow and believe the heretical teachings that began with and were so widely propagated by the heretical church and the heretical school of theology at Alexandria, Egypt.

And so the battle continues to this day. To believe the original teachings of **"The Blessed Hope"** by Paul and the Apostles that they so vehemently taught to the early church or to abandoned these teachings and accept the heretical teachings of **"No Hope"** of a divine intervention - a catching away -a rescue- a removal of all living believers by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Who would you rather believe? - the original Apostles inspired by the Holy Spirit - or Some heretical theologians that decided to do away with the original teachings of the Apostles and replace it with a doctrine of **"No Hope"**

Let me say this, if you have decided not to believe in the pre-tribulation, pre-millennial rapture of all the true and faithful Bible Believing Christians and have instead, in your unbelief, decided you would rather go through the tribulation, the Armageddon war and would rather come under the terrible persecution and rule of the Antichrist - God will oblige you and honor your request. **What You Say Is What You Will Get!**

You will be **"Left Behind"** to suffer and to be martyred under the rule of Antichrist. If this is what you prefer and want, He will allow it to happen and you will be **"Left Behind"**. He will honor your decision. The choice is yours. As for myself and the multiple millions of true and faithful Bible Believing Christians that do believe in the rapture, we would rather be removed, evacuated, rescued and snatched out of the way so we don't have to suffer the tribulation, the Armageddon war, the terrible persecution and death that will occur under the rulership of the Antichrist.

See Also: [Revealing Those That Will Be Left Behind!](#)

We call the teaching of "**The Blessed Hope**" the "**Rapture**" today. The word Rapture is From the Latin Word "**Rapio or rapturo**" which means a "**snatching away or to be Caught up and taken away quickly**"

Just think of this glorious fact! Jesus Christ Himself is literally returning to reclaim His own. We read His own promise in **John 14:2-3**, "**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. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself: that where I am, there ye may be also..**"

Jesus said, "**I will come again.**" But so many do not seem to understand this blessed hope truth. Charles Spurgeon once said, "**We cannot see how a subject so clearly revealed in the Word, is so seldom taught in the world.**"

Death is Not the Second Coming!

There are some who tell us that the coming of the Lord takes place every time a believer dies. But this is not true according to the simple teaching of the Bible.

First, the events of **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** do not take place at death, "**For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.**"

These events do not take place whenever a person dies and therefore death is not the second coming of Christ.

It is also stated in these verses that those who are alive at His coming "**shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.**" Therefore at least one generation, the final generation will be alive when our Lord returns. We also see this in **1 Corinthians 15:51**, "**We shall not all sleep.**" If all are not dead then the second coming does not take place at death.

Secondly, Christ definitely says in **John 14:3**, "**I will come again.**" - He is coming to us, but at death we go to Him.

Thirdly, we cannot substitute the word "**death**" in passages which refer to the coming to our Lord. In **Philippians 3:20** we read, "**For our conversation is in**

heaven; from whence also we look for" - death? - No! "the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Other passages would be just as absurd if we tried to substitute death for the second coming.

Pentecost is not the Second Coming!

Some (**Amillennialists**) would have us believe that the prophecies concerning the return of Christ were fulfilled at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came. This is not true to the Bible.

First, the events of **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** did not take place at Pentecost. The Lord did not descend from Heaven with a shout, the dead did not rise, and those who were alive did not go to be with the Lord. No one was caught up in the air. Pentecost was not the return of our Lord.

Secondly, if Christ's coming took place at Pentecost, why are there so many new prophecies made after the descent of the Holy Spirit concerning His coming, such as **Philippians 3:20, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, and James 5:7,8**? If Christ had come in the person of the Holy Spirit these later promises would never have been made. Christ has not come back yet, but said, "**I will come again.**"

The Fall of Jerusalem Is Not the Second Coming!

Preterists have taught that our Lord returned at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

But this is not true to the Word;

First, the events of **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** did not take place during the destruction of Jerusalem.

Secondly, after Jerusalem fell in 70 A.D. the Church was still looking for Him. John prayed in **Revelation 22:20** after the time of the fall of Jerusalem, "**Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**" Christ's coming was still in the future.

His Coming Prophesied

When we speak of the Lord's return, we refer to His personal return to this earth. This is the testimony of the angels in **Acts 1:11**, "**Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.**"

Notice the words, "**this same Jesus.**" It is not the spirit of Christ who is returning but this same Jesus whom the disciples saw going up into heaven. He shall come in like manner— physically and we shall know Him as the Son of God. The coming of Christ is not an influence or a moral force but a personal, bodily appearing.

The coming of the Lord is not just a doctrine to store in our heads or to confess with our mouths. Rather it is the blessed hope of every believer. **Titus 2:13, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. "**

We are looking for Christ to return. While it is true that the darkness surrounds us, and the night cometh, let us remember that the morning comes also. This hope is to give us glad hearts as we wait and pray, "**even so, come, Lord Jesus.**"

I remember an illustration given by Louis Talbot to present the reality of this blessed hope. I quote from his sermon, " **When I left Australia years ago, I said to my mother, 'Mother, if God spares me, I will come back to see you. 'For years she waited. Had anyone said to her, 'Mrs. Talbot, what are you waiting for?' she would have replied, 'My boy in America is coming back.' And suppose this person said to her, 'Coming back? What do you mean? Surely you don't expect a personal, visible, actual coming!' Yes,' she would have replied, 'That's the way he's coming.' Possibly her friend might have said, 'Did you ever get letters from him? Do you ever receive gifts? Well, that is what he meant - he is coming in all these things.' My mother would have answered, Why, that isn't what he meant, for he said that HE would come back! 'Some years afterward, I did cross the ocean, walked down the gangplank from the steamer, and said, 'Mother, here I am.'"**

Oh, friends, what a day it is going to be when Christ returns for His own. He is coming! Horatius Bonar lived in the light of this blessed hope and penned these immortal words:

I know not in what watch He comes Or at what how He may appear, Whether at midnight or at morn, Or in what season of the year; I only know that He is near. The centuries have come and gone Dark centuries of absence drear; I dare not chide the long delay, Nor ask when I His voice shall hear; I only know that He is near. I do not think it can be long Till in His glory He appear; And yet I dare not name the day, Nor fix the solemn Advent year; I only know that He is near.

Our Saviour says, "**Occupy till I come**" (Luke 19:13). He bids every believer, "**Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel**" (Mark 16:15). "**Ye**

shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

When I see so few believers witnessing for Christ and showing so little concern for souls I cannot believe that they love the Saviour and look for His return. There are so many still lost in sin who can honestly say, "**No man careth for my soul.**" We have lost the reality of a lost soul, of Hell, and of the coming of the Lord.

If you knew the Lord would come tonight: Is there something you ought to do today? Then, do it now!

Is there some debt you ought to pay today? Then, do it now!

Is there some quarrel you ought to make up? Then, do it now!

Is there a sinner you ought to warn? Then, do it now!

Christ is coming! Perhaps tonight!

2. THE CERTAINTY OF HIS RETURN

The New Testament proclaims three great certainties:

- (1) Christ, the Son of God, has been to this earth and has gone away.**
- (2) The Holy Spirit has come down to this earth and is still here.**
- (3) The Son of God is coming back again to this earth.**

"These are the three great subjects unfolded in the New Testament scriptures. We shall find that each of them has a double bearing: they have a bearing upon the world, and a bearing upon the Church; upon the world as a whole, and upon each unconverted man, woman, and child in particular; upon the church as a whole, and upon each individual member thereof, in particular. It is impossible for anyone to avoid the bearing of these three great facts upon his own personal condition and future destiny" (Papers on Lord's Coming by C.H.M.).

Let us now consider these facts:

First, Christ came to this earth and has gone away. What a marvellous thing! This world was visited by its Creator. His glory was veiled when He took upon Himself the form of a slave. He was made in the likeness of sinful men, yet without sin. He went to the Cross when He was "delivered****

by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). Now Christ is absent. Why? Because the world rejected Him: but the heavens received Him. Men despised Him: but God highly exalted Him.

Secondly, God the Holy Spirit has come down to this earth and is still here. God continued to deal with the world in mercy and grace. "**Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound**" (Romans 5:20). The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and indwells every true believer. For the world, the Holy Spirit is here to convict of sin - the sin of rejecting and crucifying the Son of God (John 16:8-11). For all true believers, the Holy Spirit takes the place of the absent Christ. He is here to quicken (John 6:63), to teach (John 14:26), to comfort (John 16:7), and to empower.

Thirdly, the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again. The first promise that was given to fallen man speaks of His return to bruise Satan's head (Genesis 3:15). The last recorded words of our Lord are "**Surely I come quickly**" (Revelation 22:20). From the beginning of the Bible to the end we are presented with the fact of His return. Every time we fellowship with the Lord around His table we are reminded of His coming, "**For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come**" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Let us notice that just as the first coming of our Lord was literal, and just as the coming of the Holy Spirit was literal, as the second coming of Christ will be a literal coming. So many want to take these prophetic verses symbolically or figuratively; but Jesus said, "**I will come again.**"

The coming of our Lord will be in two stages. Unless we distinguish these two stages of Christ's return there will be much confusion in our study of the prophetic scriptures.

The first stage of our Lord's coming will be in Love, Grace and Mercy: the second will be in Judgement. The first stage will be in the air: the second will be to the earth. The first stage will not be seen by the world until after it happens: the second will be seen by every eye. The first stage will be Christ coming as "**the Morning Star**" (Revelation 22:16); the second will be His appearing as "**the Son of Righteousness**" (Malachi 4:2). At the first stage He comes **FOR** His saints: at the second He comes **WITH** His saints (John 14:3; Jude 14).

No signs remain to be fulfilled before the first stage. Many signs are to be fulfilled before the second stage. The first stage is Christ coming as our

Saviour (**Hebrew 9:28**): the second is His coming as King (**Revelation 19:11,16**). The first stage will be followed by the Judgement (**Bema or Reward**) Seat of Christ, when believers will be rewarded according to their works (**2 Corinthians 5:10**) the second will be followed by the Throne of Glory upon which shall sit the Son of Man to judge the nations of the earth.

Actually, the first coming of Christ was also in two stages. It was at first secret and then public. The birth of Christ was seen and known by few people like the shepherds, wise men, Anna, and Simeon. The ungodly rulers and unbelieving people did not see Him: but after thirty years He was publicly manifested. So it will be when He comes again.

There are many types in the Bible relating to the coming of our Lord. There is the Day of Atonement (**Leviticus 16**). Primarily this had to do with Israel but it is a type of the Church. Aaron, a type of Christ, was there to offer the bullock sin-offering for himself and for his house. Christ was so identified with His people that He was made to be sin for us (**2 Corinthians 5:21**): and for His house which is described in **1 Peter 2:5** as "**a spiritual house**". The two goats picture the divine and human side of Christ's Cross-work, (1) to provide salvation for lost sinners and (2) to vindicate God. The blood was sprinkled **ONCE** upon the mercy seat and seven times before it (**Leviticus 16:14-15**) which provided a perfect once-for-all salvation.

However, the picture we want to see is that after the atonement was affected, the high priest attired himself in robes of beauty and glory and returned to the waiting congregation in the outer court (**vs. 23-24**). Our High Priest, the Lord Jesus, has already made atonement for our sins by the shedding of His precious blood. He has passed through the veil into the Holy of Holies "**now to appear in the presence of God for us**" (**Hebrews 9:24**). Soon He will take off the sacrificial garments and attired in robes of glory and beauty.

He shall come forth to His waiting people whose sins and iniquities shall be remembered no more forever. (**Hebrews 10:17**).

We read in **Hebrews 9:28**, "**So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation**". This, indeed, is a marvellous type of the coming of the Lord.

In **John 6:15-21** we have the miracle of Christ walking on the water. After our Lord fed the 5,000 He went to a mountain alone.

The disciples started towards Capernaum in a ship. Then **"the sea arose by reason of a great wind."** It was dark and Jesus came to rescue them. He said, **"It is I: be not afraid."** And we read, **"Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."**

Christ praying on the mountain pictures Him as our great High Priest who lives today at the right hand of God to make intercession for us. The restless sea speaks of the world's unrest in opposition to God. The ship in the storm speaks of the attacks of the Devil upon the Church as he tries to destroy its witness before our Lord's return. The rowing disciples in the storm shows the inability of the Church to clean up the mess of this old world's system. The Church may pull the oars but it cannot still the storm.

We are not here to clean up, repair, rebuild, or reorganize and socialize this old world. The storms will continue until Jesus comes. In the dark hour of the night our Lord will come to still the storm and to deliver His people. He will descend from Heaven with a shout of triumph to take the Church out of the world unto Himself. Thus the journey will be over for all believers. Conflicts will be ended. We shall have reached the Harbour to be safe in His presence forevermore.

3. THE RAPTURE

There are two threads running through the word of God; the red thread of the blood atonement and the gold thread of the second coming of our Lord. Both of these truths are absolutely essential to our eternal hope.

One often hears the comment these days, **"I wonder what the world is coming to."** The Bible leaves us in no doubt. The present age will be brought to an end by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven. In the light of this blessed hope we see the swift-moving events of our day falling into place and the story of history more and more becomes **"His Story."**

A small group of Native Indians, newly converted to Christianity, came to a missionary in northwest Canada with the request, **"We are always hearing what God has done, now we want to know what He is going to do."** This was a reasonable request and the answer is that Jesus Christ is coming again. The Bible teaches over 300 times in the New Testament alone that the Lord is coming again. I know this truth is seldom taught and little believed in our day but the fact remains that this is what the Bible says.

The Bible is full of Divine **SHALLS** that must be fulfilled: **"The Lord SHALL descend from heaven."** **"The dead In Christ SHALL rise."** **"We SHALL all be**

changed." "We that are alive **SHALL** be caught up." "So **SHALL** we ever be with the Lord."

The first word dealing with the Second Coming of Christ is the word **parousia** which means arrival or presence. Paul uses this word in speaking of "**the coming of Stephanas**". (1 Corinthians 16: 17). He urges the Philippians to be as obedient in his absence as they were during his presence with them. But **parousia** is used in a special way to describe the second coming of Christ (Matthew 24:3,27,37,39) (I Thessalonians 2: 19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23); (II Thessalonians 2:1,8); (James 5:7,8); (2 Peter 1:16; 3:4,12); (1 John 2:28).

The word **parousia** is a technical word for the arrival of an emperor, a king; or some famous person. When such a visit was anticipated great preparations were made to receive the one who was coming. Often new coins were struck to commemorate the famous visit. But Christ's coming is far more important and significant and certainly all believers should be ready to meet Him in that day.

Another word used in relation to the second coming of Christ is the word **epiphany** which means appearing or manifestation. Paul speaks of this in 2 Timothy 4:8: "**Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.**"

The third word used is the word **apokalypsis** which means revelation. This event takes place after the rapture of the Church when our Lord comes **WITH** His Church to judge the world's ungodly system.

The first great event then will be the rapture of the True Bible Beliving Church. Let us read about this in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, "**But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead In Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.**"

Then in 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 we have the same truth presented, "**Behold, I shew 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 trump: for the trumpet shall**

sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin: and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

I want you to notice that in these days of denial of the miracles of God's Word that the second coming of Christ will be brought about with three outstanding miracles of all time.

First, the coming of the Christ will bring about the miracle of life out of death for the dead in Christ "**shall rise first.**" From all over the world the bodies of believers will be brought forth from their graves. It is estimated that three million believers were buried in the catacombs of Rome. Think of the bodies of believers in the sea, on the mountain side, in lonely graves, in unmarked tombs.

But the Lord knows where the bodies of the saints are, "**and the dead In Christ shall rise first.**"

Secondly, like Enoch, Elijah and the resurrected Christ, all the believers living when Jesus comes will be changed, translated, and will not pass through death. "**We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.**" We shall be given new resurrection bodies - from weakness to power, from mortality to immortality, from humiliation to glory, from our natural bodies to be fashioned "**like unto His glorious body**" (Philippians 3:21).

What if it should be that this is the generation for our Lord's return? What a hope to be numbered among the deathless ones "**who are alive and remain unto the coming of our Lord.**" No death, no funeral, no grave, no earthly separation, no "**earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.**"

We shall not all sleep, but "**WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED.**" The bodies of the dead saints which are "**corruptible**" cannot enter heaven until they have "**put on incorruption.**" The bodies of the living saints which are "**mortal**" will be

changed by putting "on immortality" without seeing death. **"In a moment"** we shall be changed.

Thirdly, we have the exciting, blessed hope of being raptured and **"forever with the Lord."** **"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory"**(Colossians 3:4).

This life is full of separations - separations that have been caused by death, separations caused by distance and circumstances, separations that have caused broken families and broken hearts.

But in that day, every Christian shall be with the Lord for ever.

Christ the Lord will come again, None shall wait for Him in vain: I shall then His glory see; Christ will come and call for me. Then, when the archangel's voice Calls the sleeping saints to rise, Rising millions shall proclaim Blessings on the Saviour's Name. This is our redeeming God! Ransomed hosts will shout aloud; Praise, eternal praise, be given, To the Lord of earth and heaven.

People sometimes ask, **"Shall we know our loved ones in that day?"** Of course we shall. We remember that scene on the Mount of Transfiguration when the disciples saw two others with the Saviour and they recognized them. Nobody told Peter and the others that these were Moses and Elijah. No, the moment they looked at Moses and Elijah they recognized them.

The Bible also says that we shall know even as we are known (1 Corinthians 13:12). How wonderful to be with the Lord forever and to know one another there. This is the blessed hope of every believer. We are here but a short time for this world is not our home. But while we are here we are to lay up treasures in heaven.

We are to witness to the glorious Gospel of Christ. We are to enter into Christ's main plan for this age - the building of His Church.

4 - WILL THE CHURCH GO THROUGH THE GREAT TRIBULATION?

There are various schools of thought regarding the Rapture, the Great Tribulation and the Millennium:

The premillennial view of our Lord's coming teaches the existence of a literal, earthly Millennium of 1,000 years, and that the rapture of the Church precedes it.

The postmillennial view teaches that the Millennium will result from the spread of the Gospel and the salvation of large numbers of the world's population, with Christ returning to the earth at its conclusion.

The amillennial view denies the existence of a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ. It sees the millennial promises as being fulfilled in a spiritual kingdom. Some teach that this kingdom is Christ's rule over His Church here on earth. Others believe It is God's rule over the saints in Heaven.

The pretribulation view holds that the rapture of the Church will not only be premillennial but pretribulational. The rapture will occur before the beginning of the great tribulation and the True Bible Beliving Church will not experience this awful time of suffering and Judgement. This is the view we hold and will seek to prove from the Word of God.

The post-tribulational view agrees that the rapture will be premillennial but teaches that It will take place after the great tribulation. According to them the Church will go through the tribulational period.

Premillennialists do not believe it is the mission of the True Bible Beliving Church to civilize the world, to build a physical church or church system [**kingdom building or dominion building**] or to convert the world or even to change the world.

The ministry of the True Bible Beliving Church is to evangelize the world. Our Lord is currently building His Spiritual Church and calling out of this world His Elect, a people for His Name (**Acts 15:14**) This is done through the infilling and receiving of the Holy Spirit. Christ's physical Church or physical government will not be built or established on earth until His Millennial reign. We do not look for any great improvement in the world. "**In the last days perilous times shall come**" (**2 Timothy 3:1**). "**Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse**" (**2 Timothy 3:13**).

We believe there will be no Millennium until Christ comes to earth, and physically takes its government upon His shoulder, and reigns in power over it. We do not believe there can be any real moral improvement on earth until Satan is judged.

It is true that the True Bible Beliving Church will always experience tribulation upon earth. "**In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world**" (**John 16:33**). The True Bible Beliving Church has suffered much down through the years but the "**great tribulation**" of **Revelation 7:14** (the

literal translation is "**the tribulation the great one**") has reference to a particular period in history not to the present tribulation of believers.

The True Bible Beliving Church will not pass through the great tribulation because our Lord has promised to deliver us from that awful hour. "**Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth**" (Revelation 3:10). Philadelphia represents the True Church at the end of the age and our Lord has promised deliverance from the "**hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world.**" It will be a worldwide trial and the True Church will be kept from that "**hour**" which is the whole seven-year period of tribulation.

The True Bible Believing Church will not pass through "**the tribulation the great one**" because the True Church is not appointed to wrath. "**For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ**" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Paul is speaking of the wrath that is coming upon the unsaved at the end of the age. In 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 Paul taught by inspiration that the rapture would be God's method of escape from the wrath of the tribulation. God saved His people in Old Testament times from His wrath. He saved Rahab out of Jericho before Judgement fell upon the city (Joshua 6:25). He saved Lot from Sodom before the fire and brimstone fell (Genesis 19:12-25). Enoch was translated (**a predisposition to the rapture**) before the Judgement of the flood (Genesis 5:24). At the rapture the true Church will be saved from the great tribulation.

The True Bible Beliving Church will not pass through the great tribulation because the True Church is not mentioned where the tribulation is portrayed. Our Lord Himself divides the **Book of Revelation** into 3 distinct parts (Revelation 1:19):

- (1) "**Write the things which thou hast seen**" (chapter 1):
- (2) "**the things which are**" (chapters 2 and 3);
- (3) "**and the things which shall be hereafter**" (chapters 4-22).

The word "**church**" is mentioned 7 times in chapters 1-3. The word "**churches**" is mentioned 12 times in chapters 1-3. But neither word is mentioned in chapters 4-19 where the great tribulation is described. The True Church is seen in Revelations 4 as being in Heaven, represented by the 24 elders.

The True Bible Beliving Church will not pass through the great tribulation because the True Church is to watch for the imminent return of her Lord. The word "**imminent**" means any moment and all believers are to expect their Lord to return at any moment. It implies a state of expectancy. We are not to be looking for the world to get better.

We are not to be looking for the great tribulation. We are to be looking for our Lord.

A casual study of the New Testament will reveal this truth:

1 Corinthians 15:51-52, "Behold, I shew 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 trump."

Philippians 3:20, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, "...ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for His Son from heaven."

James 5:8, "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Revelation 22:20, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surety, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

If the Church must go through the great tribulation, what hope is there for the imminent return of our Lord? The post-tribulation view robs the believer of the imminency of our Lord's coming. The Bible does not teach that we are to look for the great tribulation, or for Antichrist, or for persecution and martyrdom, or for death; but for the imminent return of our Lord.

The True Bible Beliving Church will not pass through the great tribulation because the True Church is to be Judged and married between the rapture and the tribulation.

The Bible teaches clearly that the True Church is to appear before our Lord at the Judgement (**Bema or Reward**) Seat of Christ. This is not a judgement for sins but a judgement of works after salvation with a corresponding gain or loss of crowns and rewards. Then comes the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Some post-tribulation writers think that all of this will take place on the same day that Christ returns, probably only a few moments apart. We believe these important events will take longer than that.

While only a little is written of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb there is much teaching on the Judgement Seat of Christ. **ALL** of this could not take place in just a moment of time. **Read 1 Corinthians 3** and other references to crowns and rewards.

One writer has said, "A quick review of the nature of the Church and the character of the Tribulation, of promises which exempt the Church from any wrath poured out by God, of the shift of viewpoint from earth to Heaven at **Revelation 4:1** revealing crowned and glorified elders who worship Christ and sing the song of the redeemed; such a review should convince any candid mind that the place of the rapture in the chronology of the Revelation and in the order of prophetic events is clearly pretribulational"

The True Bible Beliving Church will not pass through the great tribulation because the The True Church must be removed first before the Antichrist can be revealed.

In Paul's day some were teaching that the day of the Lord or day of Christ had already come (**2 Thessalonians 2**). Paul writes to show them that the day of the Lord follows the rapture of the Church. He says in **verse 3** that this day will not come until there come a "falling away (apostasy) first, and that man of sin (Antichrist) be revealed, the son of perdition." He then speaks of one who is the restrainer (**The Holy Spirit**), the one who "withholdeth" (**verse 6**), and who will be "taken out of the way" (**verse 7**).

Who is this restrainer? Nearly all prophetic Bible scholars believe the restrainer to be the Holy Spirit. He has been responsible for restraining evil all through human history. He has done this through His own people, who in this age form The True Bible Beliving Church, the True Body of Christ or The Bride of Christ.

At the rapture, The True Bible Beliving Church will be removed and in that sense the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer, will be removed with us. Then Antichrist will be revealed, will seduce the nations and will make his Peace covenant with Israel. Then he will quickly bring all nations to war, the Armageddon war. The Big One The Last One. This will occur during the great tribulation period which is identified with the Seventieth Week of Daniel's Prophecy.

5 - Why Do Some Teach that the Church will Endure the Tribulation?

Several incorrect premises have caused some to reject the Pre-Tribulation Rapture and accept the position called the "**Post-Tribulation Rapture.**" The first premise is an emotional contention that it would be unfair for the modern Church to escape to heaven scot free to escape the martyrdom that other believers have experienced. While it is easy to understand such an emotion, it would be wrong to deny the doctrine of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture on this basis alone. The reality is that while many Christians have endured tremendous persecutions and tribulations, untold millions of believers have lived out their lives in times of peace. Furthermore, all of those Christians who died in either peace or persecution throughout history have already escaped the Great Tribulation.

An underlying attitude of many critics is their incorrect and unscriptural belief that the Church will somehow be purified by enduring the wrath of the Antichrist. However, the Scriptures declare that we are purified solely by the completed work of Christ on the Cross. If the Lord delays His return much longer, the rising tide of persecution of Christians will affect the Church across the world. However, this will not constitute the Tribulation period which will be characterized by the wrath of God poured out from heaven on the unrepentant sinners during the final seven years of this age.

Some critics have claimed that those who teach the hope of the Pre-Tribulation rapture are leaving Christians unprepared for the possibility of the coming persecution of the Tribulation period. However, in thirty-five years of teaching Bible prophecy, I have not witnessed Pre-Tribulation Rapture teachers instructing Christians that they are immune from end-time persecution. The prophecy teachers, myself included, who believe God promises that Christians will escape "**wrath of God**" in the Tribulation often warn believers that persecution is coming, even in North America (**As it is now**), if the Lord tarries much longer. However, the Post-Tribulation Rapture position can rob the Church of her blessed hope. Jesus promised, "**I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth**" (Revelation 3:10).

The second and more important reason why some are teaching that the Church will be present during this terrible time is the failure to distinguish between God's plan for Israel and His plan for the Church, especially in the prophecy revealed by Christ in Matthew 24. They often acknowledge that there is strong biblical evidence for a Pre-Tribulation Rapture; however, they inevitably come

back to their interpretation of **Matthew 24**, which seems to indicate that the Rapture follows the events of the Great Tribulation.

In the passage in **Matthew 24**, Christ is on the Temple Mount explaining to His Jewish disciples the events that will occur in Israel and in other nations that will lead to the return of Christ as their Jewish Messiah. The disciples' question that Jesus was answering concerned the coming of Israel's long-promised Kingdom, not the coming of Christ for His Church (**which they did not even know about**). It is easy to forget that, at this point, before the crucifixion of our Lord and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, there was no such thing as a Christian Church.

If you had told one of the disciples during the week before Christ's crucifixion that someday there would be an organization based on Christ's teachings, called the Church, and that 99 percent of its members would be uncircumcised Gentiles who would follow neither Jewish law nor offer Temple sacrifices, he would probably have fallen off his chair in shock and disbelief. One of the classic mistakes in interpretation is to take this conversation between Christ and His Jewish disciples concerning the messianic kingdom and read back into it the reality of the Christian Church which did not come into existence until the Jews rejected Christ and God breathed life into His Body of believers.

Since Christ does not mention the Church to His disciples in this conversation, the plain interpretation is that **Israel** is the primary focus of the Prophecy of **Matthew 24**. **Matthew 24** speaks of the Great Tribulation, and beginning at **verse 15**, Christ states that the Antichrist will set up the "**abomination of desolation**" (**a supernatural statue of the Antichrist**) to be worshiped in the New Jerusalem Temple. In **verses 40 and 41**, Jesus says, "**Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.**" A vital question for students of the Bible is the identity of these people who "**shall be taken.**" Does this prophecy refer to the Church or does it reveal God's plans for the Tribulation Saints who become believers after the Rapture?

This chapter tells us that at the end of the Great Tribulation, God will send His angels and "**they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other**" (**verse 31**). These "**elect**" are the people who become believers during the Great Tribulation of three and one-half years. This gathering together is not the Rapture. This gathering of Tribulation believers takes place at the end of the Tribulation, whereas the Rapture of the Church occurs sometime prior to the beginning of the Great Tribulation when Antichrist sets himself up as "**God**" in the Temple. Notice that the angels "**gather the**

elect" (verse 31), whereas, at the time of the Rapture, **"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first"** (1 Thessalonians 4:16--17). This gathering of the **"elect"** Tribulation Saints will occur at the conclusion of three and one-half years --- a period of time for which there are the most detailed prophecies found in the Bible.

The Bible describes many Tribulation events that must occur prior to the **"gathering"** of the Tribulation Saints and thus, it cannot be correctly described as **"imminent."** These facts have caused many scholars to believe that this **"gathering"** is, therefore, a different event than the **"Rapture"** of the Church. However, when we turn our attention to the coming of Christ for His Church, we find that there are no warnings or signals given to indicate the time of the Rapture. The Rapture can literally occur at any time.

The third reason Post-Tribulationist writers have attacked the Pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine by claiming that it cannot be true because no Church writer or Reformer ever taught this doctrine until approximately 170 years ago until it was introduced by Edward Irvine or John Darby, a Plymouth Brethren. Their argument that no one ever saw this **"truth"** throughout eighteen hundred years of Church history has been very effective, causing many Christians to abandon their belief in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. The only problem is that their assertion that no one in the early Church taught the Pre-Tribulation Rapture has been found to be incorrect.

Obviously the truth about the time of the Rapture can be found only in Scripture. The Protestant Reformation was based essentially on this return to the authority of the Bible. The Latin phrase **solā Scriptura**, meaning **"Scripture alone"** became the rallying cry of the Reformers who ignored centuries of tradition and church councils in their insistence that truth could only be discovered in the Word of God. While the resolution of this issue must be based on our interpretation of Scripture, it is important to answer the errors of our opponents, who disparage **"the blessed hope"** of the Rapture with misinformation about the modern rediscovery of the truth about the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

A Discovery that the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Was Taught in the Early Church

During the summer of 1994, after more than a decade of searching, There was discovered several fascinating manuscripts that contain clear evidence of the teaching of the Pre-Tribulation rapture in the early church.

Ephraem's Teaching on the Pre-Tribulation Rapture

"For all the saints and Elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins." (On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World, by Ephraem the Syrian, A.D. 373)

The early Christian writer and scholar, **Ephraem the Syrian, (A.D. 306 - 373)** was a major theologian of the early Byzantine Eastern Church. He was born near Nisbis, in the Roman province of Syria, near present-day Edessa, Turkey. Ephraem's fascinating teaching on the Antichrist has never been published in English until recently. Some scholars suggested that this manuscript was written several centuries later (**5th or 6th century**) but definitely before the birth of Islam in 622. However William Bousset, one of the greatest scholars on ancient eschatology, concluded in his book **The Antichrist Legend** that it was written by Ephraem the Syrian before A.D. 373. **(1)** Andrew R. Anderson wrote in his book **Alexander's Gate** that he accepted the early date as being valid. **(2)**

This critically important prophecy manuscript from the fourth century of the Church era reveals a very clear statement about the Pre-Tribulational return of Christ to take His elect saints home to heaven to escape the coming Tribulation.

(1) William Bousset, The Antichrist Legend, trans. A. H. Keane (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1896)

(2) Andrew R. Anderson, Alexander's Gate: Gog and Magog and the Enclosed Nations. Monographs of the Mediaeval Academy of America, no. 5. (Cambridge, MA.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1932)

Let Us Pray Together--

PRAY: "God be merciful to me a sinner. Receive me now for Christ's sake. Cleanse me from my sin by your precious blood, shed on the cross for me; lead me to be Baptized and fill me with your Holy Spirit. Teach me to pray each day; to read Your will for my life from your word, the Bible; and help me to worship and serve You in the fellowship of your church. I thank you Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN!