

Be Not Soon Shaken in Mind: **Clear Scriptural Proof of a Pre-tribulation Rapture**

by **Jeremy James**



***The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* by J M Turner [detail]**

It is becoming increasingly difficult to find born-again Christians who know the Bible from cover to cover. Though they love the LORD dearly and want in every way to please Him, they are strangely reluctant to study the Word with the dedication and discipline that was so evident among believers in former times. Even pastors and elders today seem to have only a tenuous grasp of many important aspects of Scripture. What is more, due to the ongoing attack on the sufficiency and literal truth of the Bible, they are slow to step forward and publicly refute teachings which they know to be confusing, misleading, or even heretical.

The Enemy is exploiting this deplorable collapse in Bible knowledge with considerable success. Pastors who might have 'stood their ground' only ten years ago are now sliding into a confused state of compromise, vagueness, and tolerance. Lacking the knowledge they need to refute a false teaching, they are taking the soft option and ignoring it, or else pointing to the apparent sincerity and good intentions of the people who promote it. Besides, they say, it would be a great shame to make an issue of something that might only cause dissension.

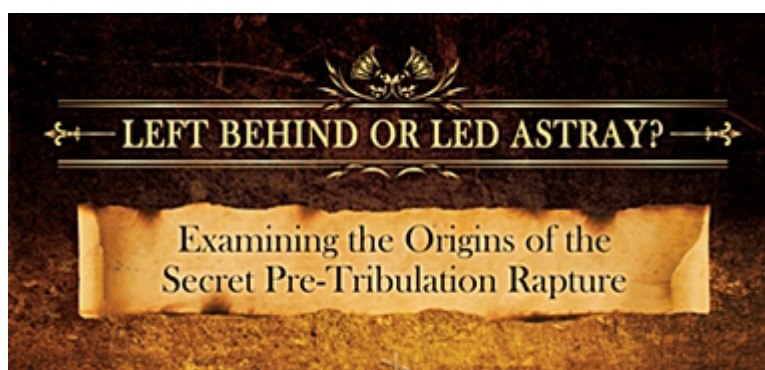
Sound familiar?

The Enemy uses all kinds of devices to infiltrate the church and weaken the flock. He works on the basis that the more 'new' elements he brings in the more confusion he causes. This is a simple, well-proven strategy. Lacking a solid foundation in God's Holy Word, pastors and elders are being carried along by the endless pressure to innovate if they are to remain 'relevant'.

Open Attack on a Pre-tribulation Rapture

This strategy, which has been in operation for several decades, has been so successful that the Enemy is now moving into a new phase and openly attacking certain longstanding Evangelical teachings. One of the main targets in the current campaign is the doctrine of a Pre-tribulation Rapture.

The Enemy has always hated this doctrine, along with the doctrine of Imminence, since it is "the blessed hope" that sustains the believer. Taken together these doctrines teach that Christ could return for his bride at any time, and that he will assuredly do so before the start of the Great Tribulation.



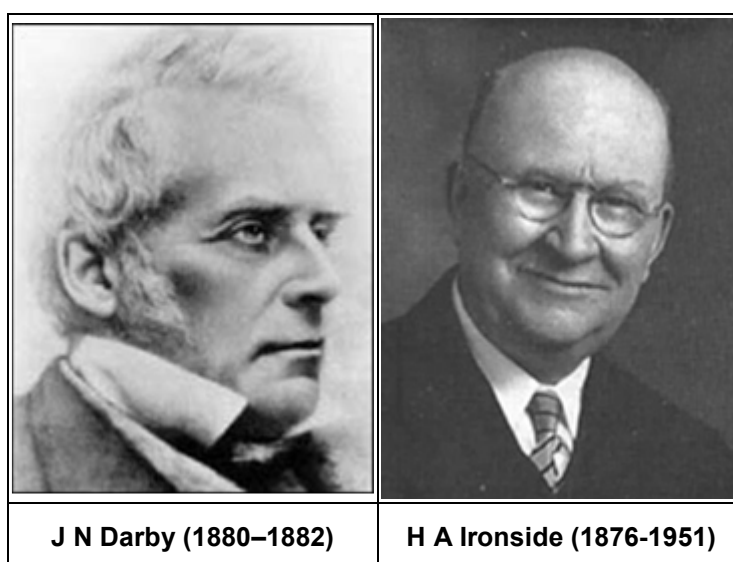
The many sincere Christians of the past who rejected the doctrine of a Pre-tribulation Rapture did so on the basis of Scripture as they understood it. They felt no compulsion to denigrate their brothers and sisters who still held to a Pre-tribulation position. Alas, this attitude is now changing and many Christians today are being told that the doctrine of a Pre-tribulation Rapture is impeding the growth of the church. Its most virulent critics brand it, not just escapist, irresponsible and selfish, but tantamount to heresy.

This new, more abrasive attitude would seem to be spreading in tandem with Dominion theology, which claims that man himself, through the corporate body of the church, will bring in the Kingdom on behalf of Christ and that Christ will return in person **only** when that task is complete.

The case against the doctrine of a Pre-tribulation Rapture is probably stated with the greatest force in a set of DVDs published in 2015 by Good Fight Ministries. The set comprises a series of interviews with noted critics of Pre-tribulationism, supplemented here and there throughout with scholarly quotations, many of which are quite lengthy. The DVDs also include cameo scenes with historical figures whom the documentary claims "invented" the Pre-tribulation doctrine.

The documentary, which runs for an exhausting 4 hours and 24 minutes, is narrated by Pastor Joe Schimmel of Blessed Hope Chapel, Simi Valley, California, and features extensive input from scholars such as Dave MacPherson, Jacob Prasch, David Bennett, Joel Richardson and Mark Patterson.

Given the tone of the documentary and its consistently one-sided presentation, even the makers themselves would likely describe it as a sustained, no-holds-barred attack on Pretribulationism. It never pretends at any point to offer a fair and balanced view of the many issues involved, but from the outset launches into a breathless denunciation of the Pretribulationist view, along the way mauling the character and questioning the integrity of a number of highly respected Christian scholars, including J N Darby and H A Ironside. Just about every theatrical device is used to insinuate that Pretribulationism is a modern heresy. Contributors by turn scowl, scoff, sneer and mock, often in a way that seems contrived.



Outrageously Unbalanced

The documentary is so outrageously unbalanced that it could well be classified as religious propaganda. Pretribulationism is reduced to a doctrine invented in the 1830s by John Darby, who is portrayed as a cult leader, and promoted in the main by people with occult or cultic associations. Even the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons get a mention. Again and again the documentary suggests that the doctrine of a Pre-tribulation Rapture is **demonic** in origin and that anyone who believes it is seriously deceived.

The narrator insists that the documentary was made because the participants "care" about the unfortunate, deluded Christians who foolishly believe in a Pre-tribulation Rapture. They are concerned that the Great Tribulation could come upon them suddenly and find them "unprepared" (At least they have a sense of humor).

Well, that's the stated reason. The real reason is that the Vatican despises born-again Bible-believing Christianity and has identified belief in a Pre-tribulation Rapture as one of its most distinctive and resilient doctrines. A believer who lives daily in the expectation that Christ might return at any time is a believer indeed! How is the Roman Catholic Church to assimilate someone like that? Belief in a **post**-tribulation rapture does not pose the same problem for the architects of the coming One World Religion since, by the time it arrives, they will already have established complete control over the minds and hearts of unregenerate men.

One can only surmise that the makers of this bizarre documentary did not understand the extent to which they were helping to advance the Vatican agenda.

Burden of Proof

As often happens in diatribes of this kind, the documentary places the entire burden of proof on the 'opposition'. The contributors offer only the flimsiest evidence in support of their own post-tribulational position. This consists primarily of two arguments – (a) that the church has consistently and (with very few exceptions) unanimously held to a post-tribulational view since Apostolic times and (b) that a proper exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2 will show that both the great apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin (the Antichrist) must both occur before the Rapture can take place.



This image is used in the Good Fight DVD to represent the so-called *Church Fathers*, whose writings survive primarily – if not solely – because Rome found it expedient to preserve them. They are cited many times on the DVD in support of Post-tribulationism. The same theologians are also cited extensively in the Roman Catholic Catechism in support of Catholic theology, which includes Mary-worship, sacramental grace, salvation by works, purgatory, a priestly hierarchy, prayers to and for the dead, divine bread, etc.

Let's look at the first argument. The church they are speaking about is really the Roman Catholic Church (surprise, surprise). They never admit that very little documentary evidence has survived from Apostolic times to tell us what truly born-again Christians believed or studied up to the Reformation. Rome has always taken care to search out, suppress and destroy the writings of their opponents, except where their dissemination might serve some ulterior purpose. The resulting gap in our knowledge is therefore profound and yet the makers of this lopsided 'documentary' saw fit to ignore this basic fact.

Seriously Flawed Exegesis

Their second argument is based on a seriously flawed interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 -

[1] Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, [2] That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. [3] Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; [4] Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

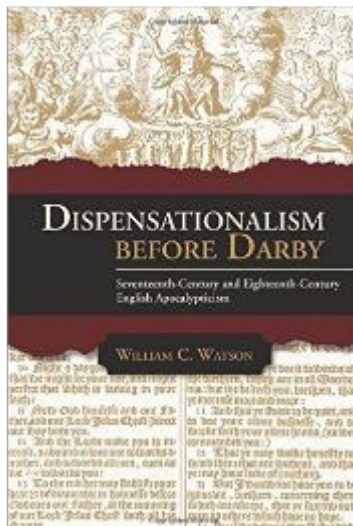
This passage is cited *ad nauseum* on the *Left Behind or Led Astray?* DVD. They claim in their exegesis that Paul is teaching that the Rapture cannot occur **unless** two conditions have already been fulfilled: (1) the great apostasy of the professing church has taken place and (2) the identity of the man of sin, the Antichrist, has been revealed. Ironically, they are guilty of the same error that they so frequently ascribe to others, namely that of lifting a passage of scripture out of context in order to elicit or impose the interpretation they want.

Let's look at the context. The Thessalonians were greatly troubled by rumours that the Rapture had already taken place (verses 1 and 2). Paul tries to reassure them that their concerns were totally unfounded and asks that they never again be "**shaken in mind**" or "**troubled**" by such rumours, whatever their source. In order to set their minds at rest, he points out that, *had* the Rapture already taken place and *had* they been left behind, they would **already** have witnessed the great apostasy (which they hadn't) and learned the identity of the man of sin, the Antichrist (which they hadn't).

Paul was obviously **not** telling them that, before the Rapture could take place, they would first have to witness the great apostasy and learn the identity of the man of sin. Rather, he was saying the **very opposite!** He was telling them that, since the great apostasy had not yet happened and since the man of sin had not yet been revealed, the Rapture could not possibly have taken place.

In their clumsy exegesis of this passage, the critics chose to ignore the context in which Paul was speaking and blundered horribly.

Interestingly, these verses *can* be used to support the view that the time interval between the Rapture and the emergence of the Antichrist may be no more than a year or two, and definitely within the lifetime of most adults left behind at the time.



Forgotten Writings

We would note in passing that many of the claims and accusations against Darby by Schimmel and his team, which maintain that he "invented" the doctrine of a Pre-tribulation Rapture, were shown to be without foundation in a recent work by William Watson, professor of history at Colorado Christian University. Through a careful inspection of reputable theological works published in England in the 17th century, he was able to show that the doctrine was already well understood and substantially developed more than 200 years before Darby.

The 17th century had barely commenced when Thomas Draxe, an English theologian, published the following:

Here we may note and observe God's goodness, and the constancy of his eternal love in Christ to his children; whom he loves once, he loves forever, he does not for the unthankfulness of many or most, break off all occasion to do good to his (though never so few in number, and never so odious and contemptible in the world). If there be but one Noah and his family in the world that truly serves him, he will remember and save them, when all the world besides perishes. If there be but one Lot in Sodom, he shall be preserved when all the rest are consumed; though Christ's flock be a little flock, yet they shall inherit a kingdom: and they whom the Lord shall find awake and well doing at his coming (albeit they be never so rare) they shall be blessed.

The reason is, God's covenant is unchangeable, and reaches unto a thousand generations, and the infidelity of men cannot make his faith and truth in performance of his promises of none effect: Secondly God is just, and does not (as we see among men) punish and condemn the just for the unjust.

- quoted from *The World's Resurrection, or the General Calling of the Jews*, by Thomas Draxe, 1608 [The full text of this work may be found at Early English Books Online]

Draxe is clearly teaching a Pre-tribulation Rapture and doing so with all the passion of someone who has studied the matter in detail. As William Watson's book reveals, many other works appeared in the course of the 17th century – by English, French and American theologians – which echoed Draxe's view of a Pre-tribulation Rapture.

Watson notes:

"Very little of what John Nelson Darby taught in the mid-nineteenth century was new. None of the sources cited in this paper [*i.e. chapter 7*] have been cited in the recent debate on the rapture. Most likely this is because they have not been read for centuries." – William Watson (p.177) *Dispensationalism Before Darby*, 2015

A Scriptural Examination of the Rapture

We will now do what this strange 'documentary' shamefully failed to do and examine what Scripture **actually** says about the Rapture.

Before doing so, however, we will first need to consider two fundamental doctrines of Biblical Christianity – the doctrine of the Church and the doctrine of the Great Tribulation. It is evident from the debate to date concerning a Pre-tribulation Rapture that many believers have a muddled understanding of both doctrines.

What is the Church?

All kinds of problems arise when we confuse one group – all who are saved from the beginning to the end of time – and the entity known as the *ecclesia* or church. The word *ecclesia* ("the called out ones") is used numerous times in the Bible (including the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament which was made before the birth of Christ) to denote nothing more than an assembly of people. However, in several places in the New Testament it takes on a very special meaning, namely all who are saved through faith in Christ Jesus. In that context the word *ecclesia* means all who have heard and responded to the call to repent and accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. As such they are truly the called out ones, having been called out the world unto salvation.

The formation of the church began when the first souls were indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit came in a special, hitherto unknown way on that glorious morning to commence a process that will continue until His mission is complete. At that stage the church will comprise everyone – both Gentile and Jew – who came to Christ between the day of Pentecost and the day of the Rapture.

We can see from this that the church does not comprise all who are saved throughout history – sometimes called "the elect" – but a subset only. This means that the souls who come to faith before Pentecost or after the Rapture will not be part of the corporate body known as the church. They will be saved, of course, but their role in God's wonderful Plan will not be identical with that of the church, the Bride of Christ.

It is only when we consider the church as the Bride of Christ that we can see why she must be a unique and finished creation by the time Christ arrives to take her home. At present she is still being formed, much like a babe in the womb, "**fearfully and wonderfully made.**" After she comes forth, she will be forever complete. She was conceived at Pentecost and will leave the world fully formed at the Rapture.

Whatever their shortcomings and failings as individuals, church-age believers will constitute in the fullness of time a corporate being of astounding beauty, the bride and consort of the incarnate Son of God: "**... it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helpmate for him**".

The church is the consort or helpmate that the LORD, through the Holy Spirit, gave to His Son. Christ went through the ordeal of Calvary "**... for the joy that was set before him**" (Hebrews 12:2).

When Christ returns for his bride, she will remain thereafter by his side, his helpmate and companion in eternity. It will be a time of exceedingly great joy, far surpassing anything our limited minds can understand.

The marriage ceremony itself will take place in heaven, where no doubt the LORD Himself will officiate, while the wedding feast, to which all believers ("the elect") will be invited, will take place on the earth at the start of the Millennium.

Psalm 45 gives a truly remarkable picture of these events. We would urge our readers to study it carefully and discover within its sparkling verses a deeper understanding of what Christ himself sees when he looks upon his bride, "**the queen in gold of Ophir**" -

- [1] **My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.**
- [2] **Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.**
- [3] **Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.**

- [4] **And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.**
- [5] **Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.**
- [6] **Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.**
- [7] **Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.**
- [8] **All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.**
- [9] **Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.**
- [10] **Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;**
- [11] **So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.**
- [12] **And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.**
- [13] **The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.**
- [14] **She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.**
- [15] **With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.**
- [16] **Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.**
- [17] **I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.**

This Psalm depicts Christ as he descends to earth, bearing a sword ("**Gird thy sword upon thy thigh**") to destroy the wicked ("**thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things**"). He has been sent by the LORD ("**God, thy God**") to carry out this terrible mission. His bride, whom he married in heaven, is by his side ("**upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.**") He greatly loves his bride ("**So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty**") and she is asked by the LORD to love His Son truly in return ("**for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.**") Following his great victory over the wicked he will host a wedding feast. All the righteous of the earth will attend this feast and "**the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.**" From among the saints the Lord will have selected a number to wait upon his bride ("**the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee**") and will abide with her ("**they shall enter into the king's palace.**") Many individuals from within the church ("**thy children**") will rule the earth during the Millennium ("**whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.**") And his kingdom will endure forever.

What is the Great Tribulation?

Despite all that has been written and said about the Great Tribulation, the majority of professing believers today have little understanding of what it really is. The rise of Dominionism – which is heavily promoted by the lukewarm Laodicean church – has greatly obscured the reality of the Judgment to come.

Even where believers accept that the Great Tribulation may be an actual event, they see it primarily in terms of the war and turmoil experienced intermittently throughout history, but on an awesome scale. As dreadful as that would be, however, the Great Tribulation will be unimaginably worse – more severe, more barbaric, more horrendous than anything we have ever seen or known.

The LORD in His mercy gave us a 'preview' of the wrath to come when he included in His Holy Word a detailed account of the Flood.



Biblical chronology indicates that this momentous event took place around 2350 BC. Apart from the eight people on the Ark and its complement of animals and birds, everything on earth that had breath died. Everything. Those who fled to the mountains or who found refuge for a time on floating debris died within a very short time. Apart from insects and fish, nothing was left alive across the entire face of the earth: "**All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.**" (Genesis 7:22)

How many people are we talking about? If we make the *very* conservative assumption that, 100 years after the creation of Adam and Eve in 4000 BC, there were a hundred adults living on earth, and that the population of mankind increased at a very modest rate of 1.5 per cent per annum, then there were at least a billion people on earth at the time of the Flood. Apart from eight individuals, they ALL died within a few weeks.

Now that is judgment, that is tribulation, that is God's wrath!

This is the time that the prophets warned about, when the merciful forbearance of the LORD is exhausted, when the age of grace comes to a sudden and dramatic end and the wrathful judgment of God is poured out with great fury upon the entire earth.

It is **not** a time of chastening or sanctification. It is **not** a time of purification. Rather it is a completely new era in earth history, a time of vengeance, a time of punishment, when the LORD God of all creation pours out His righteous anger upon the wicked masses of humanity.

It is absurd to believe that the church will be on earth when this happens!

The bride of Christ will not go through the Great Tribulation since Christ has ALREADY taken the wrath of God upon himself on her behalf. That was what our Lord achieved for us on Calvary! How then can the church be required to pay a debt that the Son of God has already paid?

It is a mark of how far the professing church has departed from Biblical truth that so many fail to understand either the Bride of Christ or the Great Tribulation. As a result, they are tricked into believing the sarcastic nonsense promoted by the *Left Behind or Led Astray* cabal and others of the same mentality.



***Jewish Wedding in Hebron* by Eduard Gurevich [detail]**

The Rapture and the Second Coming are Separate Events

Much confusion also arises when Bible scholars fail to distinguish clearly between the Rapture (being the first part of the Second Coming) and the event known as the 'Second Coming' (being in reality the second part of the Second Coming). Scripture makes it very plain that these are two distinct events, separated by an unspecified period of time:

– The Rapture as a distinct event –

At the Rapture Christ does not return to the surface of the earth but catches up believers to meet Him above the earth, taking them directly to heaven:

"I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

**"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them [i.e. the resurrected dead] in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."
(1 Thessalonians 4:17)**

At the Rapture there will occur also a bodily resurrection of all church-age believers who had died:

"the dead shall be raised incorruptible" (1 Corinthians 15:52-53)

"the dead in Christ shall rise first..." (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

At the Rapture the bodies of living believers (like the bodies of resurrected believers) will instantly become immortal:

"We shall not all sleep [i.e. die], but we shall all be changed...the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [who are living] shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)

"we which are alive...shall be caught up together with them [the resurrected church-age believers]...to meet the Lord in the air [in immortalised bodies]" (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

At the Rapture the earth is in a state of relative calm and nobody is expecting judgment from God:

"And as it was in the days of Noah [when the world was not expecting judgment of any kind] ... they did eat, they drank ... married wives ... were given in marriage ... Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded ... Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke 17:26-30)

This was the case right up to the day that Noah entered the Ark and Lot departed from the city. Scripture also states -

**"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."
(Matthew 24:36 and 44)**

The Rapture could occur at any time.

At the Rapture the professing church is sleeping and there is little general expectation of the Lord's return:

**"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept"
(Matthew 25:5)**

**"Watch ye therefore...lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping"
(Mark 13:35-36)**

Now let's see how the return of Christ for his bride is very different from the occasion some years later when he returns in great glory with the angels and saints to punish the wicked:

– The 'Second Coming' as a distinct event –

At the 'Second Coming' Christ returns to the earth (at the Mount of Olives) to rule both Israel and the entire world from the throne of David in Jerusalem:

**"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives,
which is before Jerusalem on the east..." (Zechariah 14:4)**

**"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest:
and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father
David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever;
and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32-33)**

At the 'Second Coming' the resurrection of the dead, which is referred to in the Book of Revelation (20:4), does not occur until after the Antichrist is defeated. The dead in question are those who came to Christ during the Tribulation and were martyred for their faith:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4-6).

This passage is describing two of the three groups that form "the first resurrection", namely (i) the saints caught up in the Rapture (both living believers and dead church-age believers) and (ii) all who were martyred for their faith during the Great Tribulation. The third group, the Old Testament saints (including John the Baptist) will seemingly be resurrected at the start of the Millennium (see Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2-3, and Hosea 13:14).

At the 'Second Coming' all of the church-age saints will return to earth with Christ:

**"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee."
(Zechariah 14:4-5)**

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." (Revelation 19:11-14)

The armies referred to cannot be the angels alone since reference is made to the clothing of the saints ("**fine linen, white and clean**"). Therefore the Rapture must have taken place before the Second Coming and must constitute a completely separate event.

At the 'Second Coming' the world is nearing the end of the greatest period of turmoil in history, where countless millions have died through famine, war and disease and the entire earth has been subjected to appalling devastation: "**For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.**" (Matthew 24). Every one of the Seal, Trumpet and Vial judgments described in the Book of Revelation will have been poured out upon the earth before the Lord comes to defeat the Antichrist.

We will now consider those passages of Scripture which show that, not only are the Rapture and the 'Second Coming' two entirely separate events, but that the Rapture will take place before the Great Tribulation commences.

Verses confirming a Pre-tribulation Rapture

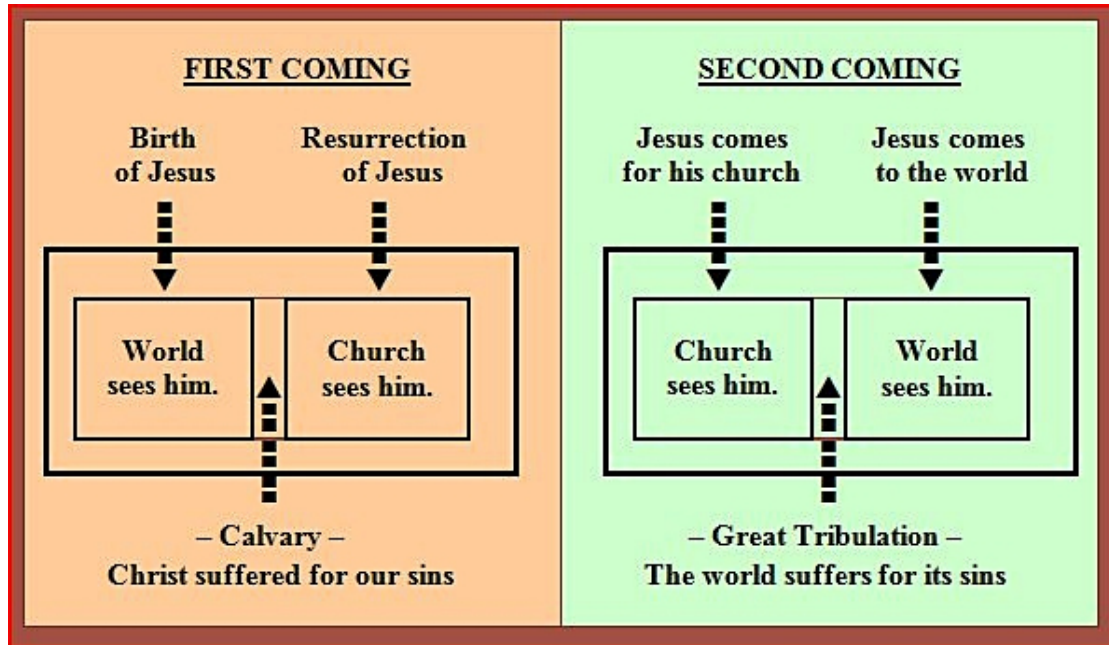
1. The Morning Star

Proof Verse:

2 Peter 1:19

In a previous paper, *The Morning Star – Christ Came Twice at His First Coming*, we looked at Christ as the Morning Star. We would urge the reader to consider the Scriptural evidence set out in that paper [A copy is included as an **Appendix** to this paper for ease of reference].

The chart below shows the relationship between the first and second comings of Christ. At each coming he makes both a selective and a general appearance:



Christ came twice at his first coming. It is surprising that so little attention has been given to this rather obvious fact. Why then should we be surprised that he will also come twice at his second coming?

2. The Day of Christ

Proof verses:

- Amos 5:18
- 1 Corinthians 5:5
- 2 Corinthians 1:14
- Philippians 1:6
- Philippians 1:10
- Philippians 2:16
- 1 Thessalonians 5:2
- 2 Thessalonians 2:2

The Apostle Peter was referring to the first part of the Second Coming when he spoke of the "day star" (Christ) dawning in the hearts of all true believers – "...until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19)

The apostle Paul referred to this event as "**the day of Christ**" or "**the day of the Lord Jesus**". Paul chose these terms in order to distinguish the day in question from the day of the LORD, which throughout the Old Testament referred to the day of God's wrath upon the unrepentant masses of humanity.

Joel called this day of wrath "**the great and the terrible day of the LORD**" (Joel 2:31), while Zephaniah called it "**the great day of the LORD**":

**"The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly."
(Zephaniah 1:14)**

There is no doubt that the day of the LORD is the Great Tribulation. Here is how Isaiah referred to its destructive impact on Babylon in the End Time:

"Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty." (Isaiah 13:6)

"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." (Isaiah 13:9)

Is there anything about "**the day of the LORD**" that we should be looking forward to? Absolutely not. Listen to Amos:

"Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light." (Amos 5:18)

Now let's compare "the day of the LORD" with "**the day of Jesus Christ**" as Paul called it in Philippians 1:6. He used this term or its equivalent on seven occasions in total. We will examine each in turn:

— 1. —

**"To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."
(1 Corinthians 5:5)**

Context: Paul is rebuking the church at Corinth for tolerating fornicators in their midst and asks that they expel a certain individual – both for his own good, as well as that of the church. It was possible that he would come to his senses and repent of his sin "**that the spirit [of the individual] may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.**" Thus he is not speaking here of judgment in that day, but the very opposite.

The *day of the Lord Jesus* is not the day of the LORD (implying wrath) but rather the day of the Resurrection/Rapture (implying salvation) that precedes the day of the LORD.

— 2. —

**"As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing,
even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus."
(2 Corinthians 1:14)**

Context: Paul is reminding the church at Corinth, in the opening stage of his epistle, that he is obliged to endure "tribulation" as he goes about spreading the Gospel of salvation. He takes comfort in the knowledge that the church at Corinth, to whom he preached the Gospel initially, will be received by Christ "**in the day of the Lord Jesus**", that is the day of the Resurrection/Rapture. When he says "**even as ye also are ours**" he is referring to the fact that the believers at Corinth came to Christ through the missionary work of Paul, and that Christ will acknowledge this valuable service when determining Paul's reward at the Bema (which will take place immediately after the Resurrection/Rapture). As Barnes states in his commentary:

Even as ye also are our's. Or, as you will be our rejoicing in the day when the Lord Jesus shall come to gather his people to himself. Then it will be seen that you were saved by our ministry; and then it will be an occasion of abundant and eternal thanksgiving to God that you were converted by our labours.

— 3. —

**"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work
in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6)**

Context: Paul is addressing the believers at Macedonian Philippi and letting them know that he has been praying for them consistently since the day he first preached the Gospel to them. He is reminding them that the work of sanctification that began the hour they were saved will continue until they stand before Christ. Since the "good work" that Christ performs in each believer is complete at the Rapture, this verse is clearly stating that "the day of Jesus Christ" is the day of the Rapture.

— 4. —

**"That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere
and without offence till the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:10)**

The Apostle is exhorting them to attend diligently to their calling as saints in Christ and to produce the fruits of righteousness that bring glory and praise to God. Having established this as their standard, they should continue faithfully along that course until the day they stand before Christ, which is the day of the Rapture.

— 5. —

"Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." (Philippians 2:16)

Context: Paul is urging them to shine as lights in the world, preaching the Gospel, and bearing witness to its truth by their blameless, exemplary lives. When in due course they all stand with him before the Bema, the judgment seat of Christ, he is certain to take great delight in seeing how Christ will reward them. Once again, we can see how **"the day of Christ"** is a day of rejoicing and celebration, not a day of wrath and tribulation.

— 6. —

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." (1 Thessalonians 5:2)

Here Paul does something unusual; he uses the term "the day of the Lord" where previously he had used "the day of Christ" (in Philippians). However "the Lord" he has in mind is Christ, not the LORD God. Therefore we should understand this verse to read, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord Jesus so cometh as a thief in the night." We know from the context that he cannot mean "the day of the LORD" since **that** day will not come like a thief in the night, but **"with fury poured out"** (Ezekiel 20:33-34).

Scholars sometimes forget that the Greek text of the New Testament uses "Kyrios" to translate both "LORD" (YHWH) and "Lord" (Adonai). Consider, for example, the Greek rendering in Matthew 22:44 of the Hebrew verse cited from Psalm 110:

"The LORD [YHWH] said unto my Lord [Adonai], Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psalm 110:1)

"The LORD [Kyrios] said unto my Lord [Kyrios], Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?" (Matthew 22:44)

The Greek word 'Kyrios' is used twice in Matthew 22:44, but in the first instance it means LORD (YHWH) and in the second Lord (Jesus).

— 7. —

**"That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand."
(2 Thessalonians 2:2)**

What a wonderful verse! The Apostle to the Gentiles is exhorting the Thessalonians of his time, as well as Christians of all future generations, to be steadfast in adhering to the doctrine of the Rapture and not be shaken by the many attacks that will be made against it. The day of Christ, the Rapture, will come as a thief in the night – with no particular event to signal its imminent arrival. In short, a Pre-tribulation Rapture.

3. Blessed Hope

Proof Verses:

1 Corinthians 16:22

Revelation 22:20

Amos 5:18

" If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." (1 Corinthians 16:22)

The words "Anathema Maranatha" mean 'let him be accursed, the Lord is coming.' The technical meaning of Anathema is *set apart by God for destruction*, being the natural condition of all who reject the gift of salvation. Thus Paul is not asking that they be accursed but that their awful condition be acknowledged. At the same time he reminds them of their own blessed state, that as heirs to salvation they should be ever mindful that the Lord Jesus is coming.

In his message to the church at Thessalonika, he told them that many other churches drew strength from the example set by its members, who serve the living and true God and who **"wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."** (1 Thessalonians 1:10). We can see how this verse combines both ideas, that of Anathema and that of Maranatha [Interestingly, *Anathema* is Greek while *Maranatha* is Aramaic]. The wrath to come is for those who are Anathema, set apart for destruction, while those who are saved live daily in the prayer of rejoicing, *Maranatha* – the Lord is coming or, as the Book of Revelation puts it, **"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."** (22:20).

He refers to these believers in his second letter to Timothy as **"all them also [like Paul himself] that love his appearing."** -

"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." (2 Timothy 4:8)

He points again to this same glorious moment in his epistle to Titus:

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13)

We know that the Maranatha prayer implies a Pre-tribulation Rapture because church-age saints are forbidden to pray for vengeance or wrath upon their enemies. If the Rapture was a post-tribulational event, then every time the believer prayed *Maranatha!* he would be calling on God to expedite the punishment of the wicked.

The prophet Amos was making the same point when he said it was wrong to pray for the day of the LORD...

**"Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you?
the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light." (Amos 5:18)**

For those who hanker after one or two verses on which to hang an entire doctrine (which is seldom a wise course) then these two verses – Amos 5:18 and Revelation 22:20 – can be cited as sufficient Scriptural proof of a Pre-tribulation Rapture.

The Maranatha period

Some verses in the New Testament suggest that this 'Maranatha period' will be longer than many believers might have expected:

**"For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come,
and will not tarry." (Hebrews 10:37)**

**"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers,
walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the
promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3:3-4)**

This has led some translators to interpret the Greek word *tachy* in Revelation 22:20 to mean "quickly" or without delay instead of "suddenly" or without warning, which the Greek allows:

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

The word *tachy* is clearly intended to mean "suddenly" (in addition, perhaps, to "quickly") in Revelation 2:5 -

**"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent,
and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly
[i.e suddenly], and will remove thy candlestick out of his
place, except thou repent." (Revelation 2:5)**

The first reference that Christ made to the blessed hope in the Book of Revelation was in verse 3:11:

**"Behold, I come quickly [i.e. suddenly]: hold that fast
which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."
(Revelation 3:11)**

Then, in the last chapter of Revelation – being the closing chapter of the Bible – Jesus placed unusual emphasis on the blessed hope when he pointed to it no fewer than three times – in verse 22:7 ("**Behold, I come quickly** [suddenly]"), in verse 22:12 ("**And, behold, I come quickly** [suddenly]"), and again in verse 22:20 ("**Surely, I come quickly** [suddenly]").

As many Bible expositors have noted, when something is stated once in the Bible, it is important; when it is stated twice, it is very important; but when it is stated three times, we know for certain that it is of very great importance and ought to be well understood and accepted by all who are truly born again.

The words "**Come, Lord Jesus**" (**Revelation 22:20**) constitute a prayer, but the church is forbidden to pray for wrath and destruction. This shows conclusively that, in her joyful expectation of the second coming of Christ, the church is awaiting and praying for "**the day of Christ**" and not "**the day of the LORD.**"

The Bible is clearly teaching a Pre-tribulation Rapture.

4. Comfort

Proof verses:

1 Thessalonians 4:18
1 Thessalonians 1:9-10
1 Thessalonians 5:1 and 5:9
Titus 2:13
Luke 12:35-36

**"Wherefore comfort one another with these words."
(1 Thessalonians 4:18)**

The Rapture can be a comfort only if it occurs before the Great Tribulation.

To be "**delivered from the wrath to come**" (see below) means to avoid the trials of the Tribulation:

**"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."
(1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)**

The following verse confirms that the church, the bride of Christ, will not face the wrath of the Great Tribulation:

**"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night...For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."
(1 Thessalonians 5:1 and 9)**

This comfort, this blessed hope, is grounded in the return of Christ for his Bride:

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13)

The following enjoins believers to be ready for the return of Christ for his Bride, which could occur at any time:

**"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;
And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord..."
(Luke 12:35-36).**

These five verses unequivocally teach a Pre-tribulation Rapture. One has to do violence to both the verses themselves and the context in which they are spoken to extract any other meaning.

5. The Church is Reconciled to God

Proof verse:

Romans 1:18

The Tribulation is the ultimate expression of God's wrath:

"The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land [i.e the earth]." (Zephaniah 1:14-18)

The wrath of God, which will fall upon the entire earth, is described as **"the great day of the LORD."** It is being held patiently in reserve by Him until the End Time. The apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear that the wrath of God will be directed only at those who hold the truth in unrighteousness: **"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18)** Furthermore, it will come **"upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."** (Revelation 3:10) Since the church does not hold the truth in unrighteousness she cannot possibly be on earth during the time of His wrath, when **"the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy."**

The LORD sees the church exactly as His Son sees her, **"... a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing..."** (Ephesians 5:27).

Given that the church is already the body of Christ, the view that she might nonetheless be subject to the wrath of God, if only in part, is in direct conflict with the completeness and perfection of the Substitutionary Atonement.

As the apostle Paul says, "**There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...**" (Romans 8:1) In what sense, then, does the church need to 'go through' the Great Tribulation in order to be 'purified' in the eyes of God? In no sense whatever! The very idea conflicts utterly with all that the Bible teaches about the church and about our loving Father, "**whose mercy endureth forever**".

[Note: The above section was revised 10/2016 to reflect the observations made in our later paper, *Why the Enemy Hates the Pre-Tribulation Rapture*.]

6. The Holy Spirit as the Restrainer

Proof verses:

2 Thessalonians 2:7-8

**"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming."
(2 Thessalonians 2:7-8) [NKJV]**

Very shortly before He destroyed the earth in the Flood, the LORD said, "**My spirit shall not always strive with man...**" (Genesis 6:3). The LORD made a similar declaration in relation to the Great Tribulation when He said He would remove "**He who now restrains**." The striking parallel between these two great Judgments would strongly suggest that "**My spirit**" and "**He who now restrains**" are the same. This is consistent with the view that the Holy Spirit alone is capable of restraining the full power of Satan.

The above verse is therefore stating that the Holy Spirit, Who has dwelt in the church since the day of Pentecost and Who currently restrains the power of lawlessness and iniquity, will be "**taken out of the way**" before the Great Tribulation begins. The departure of the restraining power of the Holy Spirit will be necessary if the Antichrist is to pursue his course unhindered. Since the Holy Spirit dwells in the church, then the church too must be taken from the earth (in the Rapture) before the Great Tribulation begins.

7. The Philadelphian Church

Proof verses:

Revelation 3:10

The church on earth is discussed at length in chapters 2-3 of the Book of Revelation, but she is not seen or mentioned again between the start of chapter 4 and the end of chapter 18. This would suggest that the church will not be present during the Great Tribulation, as described in chapters 4-18.

Christ also promised the church at Philadelphia that he would keep her **"from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."** This implies that the church at Philadelphia will be removed from the earth before the commencement of the Great Tribulation. Since the church, the body of Christ, cannot be divided into segments, this promise must apply to the Bride as a whole, namely the sum of all living church-age believers:

"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)

It has been noted that the Greek word for "dwell" in the phrase **"dwell upon the earth"** has an important connotation not found in its English counterpart. The more usual Greek word is *oikeo*, which means simply to dwell, while the word used by John is *katoikeo*, which means to dwell permanently. It is used, for example, to describe the fullness of the Godhead that dwelt in Christ (Colossians 2:9). Therefore **"them that dwell upon the earth"** are those who see the earth as their true home. As such they are citizens of the earth by choice, in contrast to church-age believers whose **"citizenship is in heaven"** (Philippians 3:20) [NKJV].

8. The Absence of Signs

Proof verse:

1 Thessalonians 5:2

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." (1 Thessalonians 5:2)

The Second Coming of Christ (where he defeats the Antichrist) is preceded by very specific signs, as set out in the Book of Revelation and elsewhere. However the Rapture of the church-age saints can come at any time, **"like a thief in the night,"** with no warning or sign of any kind – which is **why** the Thessalonians were greatly concerned that it may already have taken place! This implies that the Rapture must occur before the startling phenomena that will signal the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

It is significant that the Thessalonians were not the only ones to be taken in by rumours that the Rapture had already taken place. In the latter part of his ministry Paul wrote to Timothy warning him of the harm being done to the faith of some by Hymenaeus and Philetus, two purveyors of *profane and vain babblings*:

"But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." (2 Timothy 2:16-18)

As we know, the Resurrection of church-age believers will take place on the same day as the Rapture. These false teachers were trying to convince the churches in their locality that, since this momentous event [the Resurrection] had supposedly taken place, then so too had the Rapture. This is further evidence that the Rapture could occur at any time and will not be announced by prophetic signs.

9. The 70 Weeks of Daniel

Proof verses:

Romans 11:25

Daniel 9:24

**"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."
(Romans 11:25)**

The "*blindness*" of Israel will persist until "*the fulness of the Gentiles*" has run to completion. This phrase, *the fulness of the Gentiles*, apparently refers to the period during which the Gentile nations would exercise dominion or control over Israel (in whatever manner) after the fall of Jerusalem – "...and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:24) Since Gentile interference in the internal affairs of Israel continues to this day, the "*fulness*" has not yet been reached.

The prophetic clock, as it relates to the End Time prophecies of the Old Testament, is on hold (like the sun in the sky in Joshua 10:13) and will not restart until the age of the Gentiles has reached its "*fulness*" at or close to the time of the Rapture.

The Great Tribulation is concerned with both the judgment of rebellious Israel (from which a remnant will be preserved) and the judgment of rebellious Gentile nations (from which a remnant will be preserved). The church has no role or place in either of these tumultuous programs.

The LORD operates His prophetic clock in relation to Israel only. The prophet Daniel described this clock in his prophecy concerning the "seventy weeks" -

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." (Daniel 9:24)

Christ remarked that, had the leaders of Israel kept their attention on this prophecy, they would have known the "**time of [their] visitation**" (**Luke 19:44**), namely the day their Messiah would enter Jerusalem on a donkey, as Zechariah had prophesied.

The first 69 weeks of Israel's prophetic calendar ran from 445 B.C. to the week of the Crucifixion. The clock then stopped and will not resume, according to Daniel, until the final seven year period commences, being the time of the Great Tribulation, called by Jeremiah "**the time of Jacob's trouble**" (**Jeremiah 30:7**).

A detailed note on the 70 prophetic weeks of Israel may be found in **Appendix B**.

In a sense there are two interconnected clocks in God's wonderful calendar of redemption. The first is that of Israel, whose prophetic duration is specified, and the second is that of the church, whose duration is nowhere specified. The church's clock started on the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Israel's clock stopped, and will continue until the day the church is taken off the earth in the *harpazo* (Rapture). A short while thereafter (perhaps another period of seven weeks) Israel's clock will restart and will run without interruption until the seven years of the 70th week are complete.

The interconnected clocks are akin to those used by chess players, where one player makes his move and then presses a button that stops his clock. This activates the second player's clock, which will continue to run until he makes *his* move and presses the button on *his* clock, thereby *reactivating* the first player's clock.



10. Those who Endure to the End

Proof verses:

Matthew 24:13
Revelation 7:2-3

The Holy Spirit will leave with the church in a Pre-tribulation Rapture.

Born-again believers in the church age are sealed by the Holy Spirit. For this reason their salvation is secure. Therefore, when the Lord says "**But he who endures to the end shall be saved**" (Matthew 24:13) he is referring to those who turn to Christ during the Great Tribulation, not those who were saved during the church age.

This implies that the Holy Spirit has left the earth (in the special sense that He was present on earth during the church age) and is no longer 'sealing' new believers as He did during the church age. Anyone who tries to save his life by taking the Mark of the Beast will lose it.

It should be noted that the 144,000 Jewish evangelists are sealed by angels, not by the Holy Spirit:

**"And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God... Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."
(Revelation 7:2-3)**

It should be noted also that the attack that Satan launches against Israel (identified with the "woman" in Revelation chapter 12) is directed at the principal representative of Christ on earth. Had the church been on earth at the time, she too would have been a target, but there is no mention of this.

11. Israel will become God's Witness to the World

Proof verses:

Revelation 14:4
2 Kings 2:8-15
Zechariah 9:12
Isaiah 61:6-7

After the Rapture, Israel will replace the church as the witness for God on earth, both during the Great Tribulation and throughout the Millennium. She will perform this task during the Great Tribulation primarily through the 144,000 witnesses, 12,000 from each of the tribes (except Dan). These individual Jews are not church-age believers but the "**firstfruits**" unto God and the Lamb:

**"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.
These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits
unto God and to the Lamb." (Revelation 14:4)**

They are obviously not the first Jews in history to accept Christ, but are rather the "firstfruits" of the *new*, post-Rapture dispensation. This is evidence that no Jews will come to faith in Christ after the Rapture until the 144,000 have been sealed. This in turn would suggest that the time interval between the Rapture and the start of the Great Tribulation will be relatively short.

The Word of God tells us that " **the Jews require a sign...**" (1 Corinthians 1:22). What sign therefore will the 144,000 receive? These men must go through an extraordinary spiritual transformation to convert from Judaism to Christ, all at virtually the same time, and become ardent missionaries and witnesses across the entire earth. It has been suggested that the Rapture of the church is such a sign. The sudden and inexplicable disappearance of millions of born-again Christians, as well as thousands of Jews who had converted to Christianity (known as Messianic Jews), will trigger this momentous event. This almost certainly has to occur very close to the commencement of the seven-year Great Tribulation if the 144,000 are to have enough time to evangelize the entire world and lead many to Christ.

The details surrounding the rapture or translation of Elijah are of particular significance since they prefigure the wider context in which the End Time Rapture will occur:

"And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." (2 Kings 2:8-15)

Elisha asked Elijah for "*a double portion of thy spirit.*" He was not asking for twice as much spiritual authority as Elijah but for the right of the first-born, in this instance the right to be acknowledged by God as Elijah's successor (The first-born traditionally received a "double portion" in recognition of his seniority). Elijah said that this exceptional request was not his to give ("**a hard thing**") but that it would be granted if and only if Elisha actually **saw** him as he was "taken". No doubt, this stipulation was made by Elijah under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Who alone could impart the gift.



This points to the awed recognition by the 144,000 of the true spiritual significance of the Rapture, when millions of born-again Christians, as well as thousands of Messianic Jews, will disappear completely from off the earth. When they **see** this sign, they will awaken to the truth of the Gospel and give their lives to Christ, whereupon a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit will endue them with power. Just as Elisha picked up the mantle of Elijah and continued on from where his mentor had left off, so the saved remnant of Israel, beginning with the 144,000, will pick up the mantle of the Church and continue the work of the LORD.

Two other passages confirm that the saved remnant of Israel will receive a special blessing or anointing at this time:

"Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee" (Zechariah 9:12)

"But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them."
(Isaiah 61:6-7)

12. Avenging Blood

Proof verses:

Revelation 6:10

"And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10)

This is the prayer of the saints in heaven, namely *"the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."* They have just been persecuted unto death ("**our blood**") during the Great Tribulation and are calling for revenge.

Church-age saints would not have made an imprecatory prayer of this kind since they would have known and been obedient to the great commandment that Jesus gave the church, namely to love her enemies and not call down punishment upon them. He rebuked James and John for trying to do this:

"And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." (Luke 9:54-55)

This shows that the saints who died for their faith during the Great Tribulation were not part of the church. And if so, then the church must have been completed and removed from the earth before the Great Tribulation began.

13. The Twenty-four Elders

Proof verses:

Revelation 4:4

Revelation 5:11

"And round about the throne were four and twenty seats [Gr: *thronos*]: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold." (Revelation 4:4)

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Revelation 5:11)

The twenty-four elders in the Book of Revelation are of special significance. Before the events of the Tribulation commence, they are seated on twenty-four thrones and wearing crowns on their heads. The KJV translates *thronos* as "seat" but it is actually a place of distinction, a throne in the real sense.

The crown is given by the Lord as a reward to the saints but **only** on the day of the Bema:

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." (James 1:12)

**"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."
(2 Timothy 4:8)**

The expression "*at that day*" refers to the day of Christ, when the Lord comes for his bride, the church.

The twenty-four elders are the representatives of both the Raptured church and all who died in Christ and were resurrected on the day of Christ. As church-age saints they are all priests of God. Since they are wearing crowns, they must already have gone through the Rapture/Resurrection and been judged by the Lord at the Bema. They cannot be angels since there is no suggestion anywhere in scripture that an angel will receive a crown as a reward. Besides, they are distinguished from the angels, as well as the living creatures ("beasts"), in Revelation 5:11.

The representative nature of the 24 elders is suggested by the appointment of 24 elders by David to represent the entire Levitical priesthood:

**"...the four and twentieth to Maaziah. These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him."
(1 Chronicles 24:18-19)**

14. The Two Witnesses

Proof verses:

Revelation 11:3-4

Luke 9:54-55

Zechariah 4:3

"And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." (Revelation 11:3)

The two witnesses in Jerusalem are the two olive trees that are spoken of in Zechariah 4:3 – **"Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left"** – and mentioned again in Revelation 11:4 – **"These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth."**

They are clothed in sackcloth (a coarse fabric woven from goats hair), which is found only in the Old Testament and never in the New, and are able to call down flaming judgment upon the enemies of Israel. This judicial power is given only to Old Testament saints and never to church-age believers – as we have already noted Christ specifically forbade James and John to think in those terms (Luke 9:54-55).

From this we can see that the two witnesses mark a resumption of Old Testament judgment, which plays no part in the prayers, thoughts or actions of church-age believers. This would suggest that the church had already left the earth before the two witnesses arrived in Jerusalem to commence their remarkable mission.

The two witnesses are also likely play a major role in preparing the 144,000 for their worldwide evangelical program.

15. Noah and His Family

Proof verses:

Genesis 7:1-16

**"And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."
(Genesis 7:1)**

The eight righteous people then living on earth were preserved in the Ark during the Flood. As a foreshadowing of the Rapture, they too were 'lifted above' the catastrophic judgment that would shortly come upon the entire earth.

The Ark was covered within and without with pitch. The Hebrew word for pitch, *kaphar*, occurs 102 times in the Old Testament and in virtually all cases is translated by the word 'atonement' [Strong's H3722]. It was through the atonement of Christ (which lay in the future) that the family of the righteous (Noah's family) was preserved from God's wrath, and it is by the same wonderful atonement that the bride of Christ will be 'lifted above' the earth during the seven years of the Great Tribulation.

Furthermore, in the same way that tens of millions of souls will come to repentance during the Great Tribulation, a great many souls may also have repented during the Flood, between the hour the Ark was sealed – a token of the Rapture (**"and the LORD shut him in."** (Genesis 7:16)) – and the time, possibly a week or so later, when everyone eventually perished.

16. Lot and His Family

Proof verses:

Genesis 19:16

"And while he [Lot] lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city." (Genesis 19:16)

The small number of righteous people living in the region of Sodom and Gomorrah (namely Lot and his family) were also removed from the scene by the mercy of God immediately before His wrath came flaming down with great fury on the cities of the plain.

The New Testament refers several times to the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, clearly to emphasize both the severity and the certainty of the LORD's righteous judgment. We are not saved because of our merits – in God's eyes we have none. We are saved only through our faith in Christ. So we don't 'deserve' to escape the Great Tribulation. However, if the LORD in His mercy has decided to remove the church from the earth before the Great Tribulation begins, then we should humbly rejoice, not only that He will do so, but that, by informing us in advance, He is offering us the comfort of this "blessed hope."

It is tragic that so many professing believers today are both willing and eager to bend Scripture every way they can in order to avoid acknowledging this wonderful gift. Would it not be easier to reflect prayerfully on the many passages in Scripture that speak of His glorious promise and thank Him for His mercy and faithfulness?

17. Rahab and Her Family

Proof verses:

Joshua 6:17

"And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent." (Joshua 6:17)

The term "accursed...to the LORD" means given over to the LORD for complete destruction. As it happened, Rahab and her family were removed from the city before this happened. The city and **all** of its inhabitants had been scheduled for destruction long before the Israelites crossed the Jordan. Rahab knew this and decided to shelter the two spies. This singular expression of faith was her salvation. It even saved her family – "**all that are with her in the house**"

Notice how Noah's 'house' was saved, along with Lot's 'house' and Rahab's 'house'. The church too is a house, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and she too will be saved or removed completely from the coming destruction known as the Great Tribulation.

18. The Time of Jacob's Trouble

Proof verses:

Jeremiah 30:7-9

"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them." (Jeremiah 30:7-9)

The seven years of the Great Tribulation is "the time of Jacob's trouble," when the righteous children of Israel are finally delivered from bondage after a period of intense trial and affliction. We know for certain that Jeremiah is referring to the Great Tribulation because he says "**for that day is great, so that none is like it**".

In this passage the Great Tribulation is clearly described as an event that centers on Israel. The Bible gives many other prophecies that link "the isles of the sea" – namely the unregenerate Gentile nations – with the tumultuous events leading to Armageddon, as well as prophecies ("burdens") that foretell the fate of specific Gentile nations, including Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Libya. Nevertheless, despite the significant proportion of Scripture dealing with the Great Tribulation, there is not a single explicit reference to the presence on earth of the church during this time.

The Great Tribulation is truly the time of Jacob's trouble, the fateful hour when the LORD calls Israel before Him in final judgment. The trauma will be so great that it will engulf the entire world. All who have not yet been reconciled to God – which is possible only through faith in Christ – will be required to go through it.

Since the church has already been reconciled to God, she is not subject to His wrath and therefore will not – and cannot – be on earth when it comes.

19. Fervent Prayer

Proof verses:

Job 1:12

Job 2:6

2 Thessalonians 2:7-8

We know from 2 Thessalonians 2 that the "**restrainer**" will be taken out of the way in order that Satan and all who are in rebellion against God may exult in their wickedness. If the church was still on earth during the Great Tribulation, she would alert the world to the identity of the Antichrist and his real intentions. The saints would also pray fervently against the works of the Antichrist and thereby hinder him greatly in his deadly program of deception and destruction:

**"For where two or three are gathered together in my name,
there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)**

**"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as
touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them
of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 18:19)**

It should be apparent from this fact alone that the church cannot be on earth when the Great Tribulation begins.

We know also from the Book of Job that, in His sovereignty, the LORD God of Israel can achieve His holy purpose to the smallest detail, even when allowing the Adversary all the freedom that he needs to execute his plans:

**"And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in
thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand."
(Job 1:12)**

**"And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand;
but save his life." (Job 2:6)**

The LORD will give Satan all the advantages that his scheming heart desires and yet His wonderful Son will destroy him utterly and at the same time preserve the righteous remnant of Israel. In this way the Father will be giving even greater glory to His Son. He will also be demonstrating to all mankind the complete futility of evil and the absolute sovereignty of the LORD God of Israel.

20. The Millennial Gentiles

Proof verses:

Matthew 25:31-32

We know from Matthew chapter 25 that there will be a significant cohort of believing natural Gentiles alive on earth at the end of the Great Tribulation:

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:31-32)

The Rapture could not occur at the end of the Great Tribulation because, if it did, then all believing Gentiles alive at that moment would be taken up into the air and given immortalized bodies. This would leave no believing natural Gentiles on earth to repopulate the nations (The *Sheep and Goats* judgment will ensure that no unbelieving natural Gentiles will enter the Millennial Kingdom).

The believing natural Gentiles who survive to repopulate the nations are those who came to faith during the Great Tribulation and were not martyred by the Antichrist regime.

21. The Marriage of the Lamb

Proof verses:

Revelation 19:7-9

John 14:1-4

John 15:15

The Book of Revelation clearly states that the marriage of Christ to His bride takes place in heaven before Christ returns to earth at the Second Coming to defeat the Antichrist:

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." (Revelation 19:7-8)

While the marriage ceremony takes place in heaven, the marriage feast (or supper) will take place on earth at the start of the Millennium:

"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." (Revelation 19:9)

This shows that the Rapture and the Second Coming must constitute two completely separate events. We know also that the Bible draws a clear parallel between the Jewish tradition of engagement, betrothal and marriage, which is a three-phase process, and the special home-building preparations that Christ undertakes after his betrothal in anticipation of the final, marital phase

The 'engagement' of Christ to his bride took place before the foundation of the world:

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4)

Christ claimed his bride legally through betrothal at his first coming and then went to prepare a place for her. The Bible records that he paid the dowry that accompanies the betrothal:

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:20)

According to Jewish custom in Biblical times, the groom would arrive unannounced at his bride's habitation after an interval of a year or two and call her to him. The date was never disclosed in advance and he could arrive at any time of the day or night. His abrupt appearance was announced by a clarion of trumpets and the jubilant clamour of his band of friends.

The parable of the Ten Virgins, which reflects the Jewish marriage custom, speaks of the five who were watching and waiting, as well as the five who were asleep and unprepared. By the time the latter awoke and then scrambled to get ready, the groom had come and gone. The five wise virgins were the true church, while the five foolish virgins (who were not filled with the Holy Spirit) were the professing but unsaved church.

At the formal betrothal ceremony, which had legal standing, the bride and groom would seal their betrothal by drinking wine from the same cup. They would not drink together again until they were married. Christ enacted this ceremony with his Apostles just prior to his crucifixion:

**"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them... I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."
(Matthew 26:26-29)**

**"And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it...Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God."
(Mark 14:23-25)**

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." (Luke 22:17-18)

The Apostles all shared and drank from the same cup, the cup that Christ had given them.

He then informed them that their relationship with him had undergone a fundamental change:

**"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."
(John 15:15)**

During the time of her betrothal the bride would work on her wedding garment. Meanwhile the groom, who lived at his father's house, would construct what was traditionally known as the *little mansion*. This comprised one or more rooms built onto his father's house in which the married couple would live thereafter:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 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. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." (John 14:1-4)

While the groom was working on the little mansion, his father kept track of progress. Only the father of the groom had the authority to determine when the little mansion was ready and the time had come for his son to go forth and bring home his bride. Christ deferred to His Father in this regard when he said:

**"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."
(Mark 13:32)**

When the groom returned home with his bride, the marriage ceremony took place and, after that, the marriage feast. The feast traditionally lasted seven days and was a time of great joy and celebration.

Follow the money...

Before proceeding to our conclusion, we would first like to comment on a peculiar item featured on the Good Fight DVD.

Pastor Schimmel stated on the DVD (final section) that he and his team had offered a \$10,000 check to anyone who could show "just one verse or one passage [of Scripture] that clearly teaches that Jesus Christ would come back seven years before the Second Coming and rapture the church." He said that nobody was able to provide such a verse or passage and, with a satisfied motion, tore up the check in front of the camera.

Here is a verbatim account of what he said:

"At the beginning of this presentation we showed that we wrote a ten thousand dollar check that we offered to anybody who could just show one verse, just one verse or one passage, that clearly teaches that Jesus Christ would come back seven years before the Second Coming and rapture the church – prior to a Second Coming. Not one person was able to show us this. We asked several people, offered it to many, many people, and not one person was able to come forward with any scripture. In fact, this didn't surprise us because, as we had already pointed out, the leading Pre-trib proponents, their leading teachers admit there's not one single verse or passage that clearly teaches the Pre-tribulation Rapture theory. Therefore nobody was able to collect the check [*Schimmel tears up the check on screen*]...and that's good news, not just for our bank account, but it's good news for believers to understand that we don't need to be confused about when the Rapture is. There is no verse that teaches it before the Tribulation. We can understand specifically what Jesus talked about regarding the end of the age and be prepared in hearts and mind should the coming tribulation period happen in our lives and we can look forward to the Second Coming that the church has looked forward to for two thousand years."



Pastor Schimmel displays the \$10,000 check.

It is disturbing to think that preachers of God's Word like Pastor Schimmel and Pastor Prasch saw nothing wrong with making this offer. Did they not see that their challenge was nothing less than an invitation to Christians to profit financially from God's Word and thereby commit the sin of simony? I know of no Christian who seeks or expects a financial reward simply for sharing the truth of Scripture.

There is also a cunning psychological factor at work here. By boasting that the check was never paid – and by tearing it up on camera – the critics were in effect claiming to have destroyed the very foundation of the Pre-tribulation doctrine. If cold, hard cash could not settle the matter – we are expected to believe – then the critics must have been right all along.

As we have seen from our study of Scripture and the many verses that prove the truth of the Pre-tribulation Rapture doctrine, the critics are wrong. For all their sarcasm and showmanship, there is no way to disguise or gloss over their cynical indifference to what Scripture actually says. This DVD is not concerned in the least with the truth or otherwise of the Pre-tribulation doctrine but simply with crushing the opposition.

CONCLUSION

The scriptural evidence presented in this paper (including the Appendices) shows beyond all doubt that the Word of God teaches a Pre-tribulation Rapture. What is more, it is clear that all born-again Christians are invited to look forward daily to the imminent return of Christ for his bride. Alas, the Laodicean sensibility that prevails today within the visible church is unable to accept what the Word of God says about the Rapture.

The doctrine of a Pre-tribulation Rapture is being attacked again and again because it conflicts with everything that the architects of the coming One World Religion are trying to achieve. Anyone who believes in a Pre-tribulation Rapture is increasingly being portrayed as a narrow-minded legalist with a selfish, escapist mentality. Some of the best known advocates of the Pre-tribulation position are being dismissed as cultic purveyors of occult ideas and "doctrines of demons." If this continues, it will not be long before the same slur is directed at all who hold this doctrine.

Very probably we all know a few truly born-again Christians who do not believe in a Pre-tribulation Rapture, but we certainly do not see them as heretics. In light of the many verses in Scripture that support this wonderful doctrine, however, it is difficult to understand why so many born-again servants of God are prepared to forfeit the joy and consolation that springs from this "blessed hope".

The scoffers will scoff, the mockers will mock, and no doubt those who are given to ranting will rant, but we should not be surprised. Rather than allow ourselves to be *shaken in mind*, as Paul put it, we should find in this an incentive to study and understand the Scriptural basis for a Pre-tribulation Rapture and be able "to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isaiah 50:4).

**"Surely He scorneth the scorners:
but He giveth grace unto the lowly."**

- Proverbs 3:34

Jeremy James

Ireland

March 27, 2016

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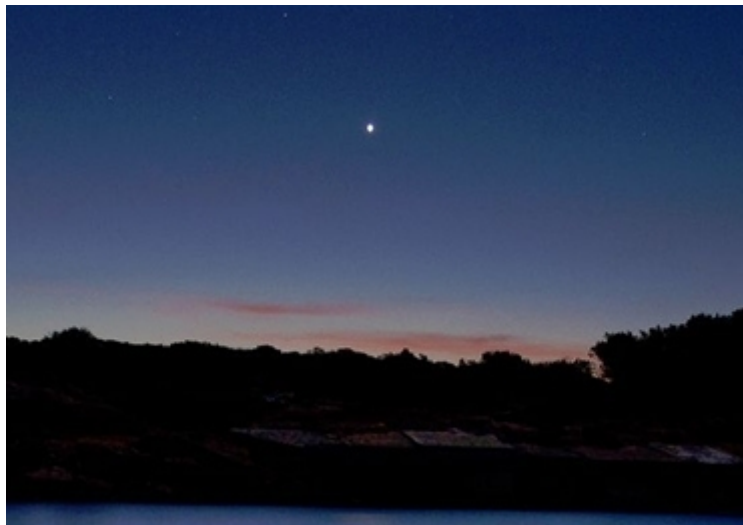
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The Morning Star: Christ Came Twice at His First Coming and will Come Twice at His Second

by Jeremy James



Born-again Christians are blessed who live daily in the expectation that Christ may return at any time. One of the greatest marks of a true Christian is the joy that he or she finds in the imminence of this momentous event.

A few decades ago, most born-again Christians were keen to speak about the Rapture and the Second Coming, but this sense of expectation has waned considerably. Increasingly the Enemy is getting professing Christians to believe instead in one of two unbiblical alternatives.

The first is Dominionism, which is taught by the New Apostolic Reformation, led by C Peter Wagner, Rick Joyner, Bill Johnson and the like. This is founded on the false belief that man himself must claim 'dominion' over the world and transform it – politically, socially and spiritually – before Christ can return. This foolishness is also taught by the Roman Catholic Church, but in a less obvious way.

Dominionism or Kingdom Now theology is a patently rebellious teaching since it rejects the many prophetic statements in Scripture that speak of a worldwide spiritual and moral collapse in the end times. As the Apostle Paul stated: "**This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come...Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.**" (2 Timothy 3).

The End Time apostasy will be more than just a marked departure from Biblical truth but a flagrant perversion of Scripture to accommodate gnostic beliefs. As Isaiah put it, evil will be regarded as good, and good evil.

The other main unbiblical alternative is a Rapture that takes place only at the moment Jesus returns in full view of the entire world. While there are varying views as to the timing of the Rapture, the idea that it will be delayed until the final hours of the Tribulation is plainly wrong.

It is this particular false teaching – the 'final hours rapture' – that we would like to address in this paper.

The Biblical position

Some believers, whose sincerity and devotion are not in question, are very uncomfortable with a Rapture that seems to relieve the church of the need to go through part of the Tribulation. They are concerned that such a belief would cause the church to become complacent or other-worldly, and possibly oblivious to the dangerous forces working against her.

There are two clear answers to this. Firstly, our task is to establish the actual Biblical position. Whether or not we are 'comfortable' with an interpretation that points to an 'early' Rapture is irrelevant. The Bible spells out what God intends to do, and it is our task to study it closely and accept what He is telling us.

Secondly, there is no evidence that belief in an early Rapture would lead to complacency. Rather, the opposite should be expected. A church that lives daily in the knowledge that Christ could return at any time is a vibrant and obedient church, a church whose members count the blessings and opportunities in each passing day. The real cause of complacency in the church today is the false belief that man himself will prepare the world for the return of Christ. Dominionism ignores the wrath of God and the sheer wretchedness of our fallen human condition, replacing it instead with a deluded optimism and a foolish 'we can do it' mentality.



Furthermore, Scripture makes it perfectly clear that the church can undergo persecution at any time. The treatment of our brothers and sisters in Syria is disturbing evidence of this. And yet, even though these appalling atrocities are well known to the church – a church whose members in the main do not believe in an imminent Rapture – complacency at an institutional level could hardly be greater.

Christ came *twice* at his First Coming

One of the most frequently heard arguments against the imminence of the Rapture and the 'silent' return of Christ is that the Bible never speaks of his return in two stages, the first time for the church and the second, some years later, to quell the rebellion of the Antichrist. We will show why this argument is false and why Christians must set aside their opinions and study the scriptural basis for this wonderful event very, very carefully.

It is sad to relate that one of the most compelling reasons for believing in an imminent Rapture is hardly ever mentioned, even by its most ardent defenders. The critics argue that, since Christ came only once at his first coming, he'll come only once at his second. But they are wrong! Why? Because Christ came TWICE at his first coming.

Let's consider the facts. Jesus was born in Bethlehem and died some thirty years later on Calvary. His body was buried for three days and three nights. He then returned when his body was restored to life at the Resurrection. While he was dead he was not with mankind. His spirit was elsewhere and his body lay in the grave. After his Resurrection he spent forty days with mankind before ascending bodily into heaven.

While on the cross, just prior to his death, Jesus cried with a loud voice, **"Father, to Thy hands I commit my spirit;" and these things having said, he breathed forth the spirit.** (Luke 23:46) [Young's Literal Translation].

This marked the end of the first part of his first coming. The second part of his first coming began with the Resurrection and ended with the Ascension.



The Mount of Olives.

Now let's consider another important fact. In the first part of his first coming Jesus was accessible to all mankind. Whoever chose to come before him could do so. The choice lay with the individual. Furthermore, as regards his accessibility, no distinction was made between those who believed in him and those who did not.

However, in the second part of his first coming, he alone decided who would have access to him. Paul lists for our benefit the persons who were blessed with the opportunity to meet with him after his Resurrection:

"And that he was seen of Cephas [Peter], then of the twelve [Apostles]: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James [the brother of Jesus]; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." (1 Corinthians 15:5-8)

The meticulous way these appearances are recorded would seem to imply that the list is complete.

Between his Resurrection and his Ascension, Jesus appeared ONLY to believers. He did not appear to anyone who did not believe in him before his death. In short, he appeared only to the Church. Furthermore the figure, "**above five hundred brethren**," would suggest that he appeared to the full membership of the Church at that time.

Christ will come both *for* and *with* his saints

If we now take what we have learned and apply it to the Second Coming, we will see that Jesus will do exactly what he promised his disciples:

"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." (John 14:2-3)

Here the Lord is declaring that he will come for his saints, the church [specifically the true church].



Scripture also tells us that he will come with his saints. Sceptics contend that the "saints" in question are the angels, and only the angels, since the word in Greek ("**Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints**" - **Jude 1:14**) is *hagios*, meaning "holy ones." Thus *hagios* could mean angels or saints or both. This usage also appears in the Hebrew text, where Deuteronomy 33:2 ("**and he came with ten thousands of saints**") uses the word *qodesh* for "saints", which is generally taken to be a reference to the angels or "holy ones."

These are excellent points and call for a strong response. This may be found in the Book of Revelation where reference is made several times to the 24 elders in heaven at the time of the opening of the seven seals. They are there, with their crowns, before the seven-year Tribulation begins. We know they are men and not angels because -

- (a) they wear crowns (which shows that each has been judged by Jesus and awarded an imperishable crown – there is no reference in Scripture to the awarding of crowns to angels);
- (b) the text notes that they were "**clothed in white raiment**," a detail indicating their imputed righteousness, something that applies only to men and not to angels;
- (c) they sing a song of praise to the Lamb which includes the words, "**...for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood**" (**Revelation 5:9**) (angels are not redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, but men only).

The number 24 is likely a reference to the 24 "courses" or divisions of the Levitical priesthood that were established by David. The head of each course or division was representative of its entire membership. Thus the elders in heaven are representative of the priesthood of all believers, namely the church of Christ.



The Whore of Babylon – illustration from Martin Luther's 1534 translation of the Bible

If they were in heaven before the Great Tribulation began, and had already been judged, clothed in white raiment, and given their imperishable crowns, then they must have been part of the First Resurrection. They had either been resurrected from their graves or taken up in the Rapture. Either way, in order to be judged, they had to have received their immortalized physical bodies.

Scripture tells us that the resurrection/rapture of the church – comprising both the saints who have died or those who are still alive at the time – will take place on the same day, "**in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye**" (1 Corinthians 15:52). If the twenty-four elders are in heaven, then so are all true believers who came to Christ between Pentecost and the Rapture.

Just as Christ called Lazarus from the earth, he will personally call all of his saints from the earth (very possibly by name). In doing so he will fulfil his promise, "**I will come again, and receive you unto myself.**"

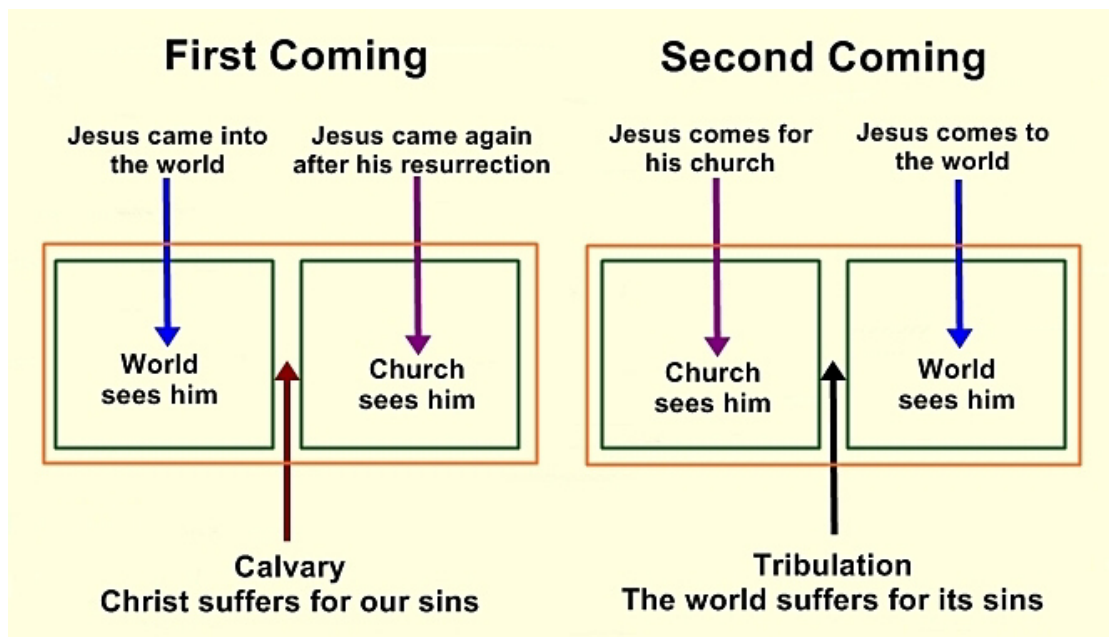
He will come as the bridegroom to take his betrothed to her new home where she will live with him forever:

**"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."
(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)**

This wonderful event is the first part of his Second Coming. Note that it mirrors the second part of his First Coming. Both are concerned only with the Church.

By the same token, the second part of his Second Coming mirrors the first part of his First Coming. Both are concerned with the world as a whole and Israel in particular.

The following diagram illustrates the connection between the First and Second Coming:



Christ spoke of the Rapture

Many professing Christians overlook the explicit reference to the Rapture which Jesus made during his ministry:

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25-26)

Alas, many in the church do *not* believe it.

His words are very plain: Those who believed in him while they were alive, but are now dead ("**though they were dead**"), they shall live again. And those who are alive when he comes, and believe, will never die. The first category is resurrected from the grave and the second is taken up in the Rapture.

The Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness

The Bible also makes reference to the two appearances of Christ at his Second Coming. The first is the Morning Star, when Christ comes for his bride, and the second is the Sun of Righteousness, when Christ appears in glory to rule on earth with a rod of iron.

In Middle Eastern cultures the morning star was the celestial object known as Venus, the appearance of which was traditionally a sign that night was ending, dawn was commencing and the sun would shortly rise.

In the great spiritual darkness of the End Time, during the period of labor pains or birth pangs leading up to the Great Tribulation, Biblical truth will have almost disappeared from off the earth. Everywhere men will ask, "**Where is the promise of his coming?**" (2 Peter 3:4). But faithful Christians will stand firm and patiently await the Morning Star. Before the world is stunned by the "**brightness of his coming**" (2 Thessalonians 2:8), when he rises like the sun ("**the Sun of righteousness**" - Malachi 4:2), Christ will make a less visible appearance – from an earthly perspective – as the "**bright and morning star**" (Revelation 22:16). Just as the morning star heralds the rising of the sun, so the resurrection/rapture, when the saints meet the Lord in the air, will 'announce' the second part, the earthly coming of the Sun of Righteousness.

The Millennium

During the thousand-year period known as the Millennium Christ Jesus will also have the character of a Morning Star as he prepares the earth for entry into the Eternal State – "**behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him**" (Isaiah 40:10 and 62:11). Only then, at the sunrise of a new creation, will our heavenly Father, the Lord God Almighty, appear in and with the New Jerusalem:

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God... And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Revelation 21: 3; 22-23)

The Seven Churches of Revelation

In his letters to the churches in Revelation, Christ speaks of the different characteristics and aspects of the professing church in history. This is not the saved church – the true church – but the broad church, being a mixture of those who are truly born again and those who profess to be Christian but who have not yet given their hearts to Christ. To the former he makes a number of special promises:

"...and I will give thee [Smyrna] a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10)

"... and will give him [Pergamos] a white stone, and in the stone a new name written" (Revelation 2:17)

"...and I will give unto every one of you [Thyatira] according to your works." (Revelation 2:23)

"But that which ye [Thyatira] have already hold fast till I come...And I will give him the morning star." (Revelation 2:25-28).

Of the seven churches, only two were blameless, namely Smyrna and Philadelphia. Since it is unlikely that the latter will not receive any of the special gifts, the gifts themselves must apply generally, where appropriate, to the believing church as a whole. Thus the gift in Revelation 2:28 – the gift of the morning star – will almost certainly be given to all who **"hold fast till I come,"** namely all *true believers* who are alive at the time of the Rapture. They will receive **"the morning star"** when they are taken up to meet the Lord in the air. The Lord himself is the morning star at that glorious moment when he returns for his bride.

Peter referred to this wonderful event at the dawn of the Millennium, when the spiritual darkness of this rebellious age is about to end and Christ, the morning star, arises in our hearts:

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:" (2 Peter 1:19)

Biblically it is significant that a star proclaimed the incarnation of the **"Star out of Jacob" (Numbers 24:17)**. At his first coming Christ gave a token of his glory as our 'Morning Star' when his birth was announced by a **"star in the east."** This must have been a star of unusual brilliance, akin to the morning star. Furthermore, since the members of Herod's court did not see the star (Herod questioned the wise men and **"inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared"**), we can safely infer that the star was not visible to non-believers.



We know that the wise men were believers since they came **"to worship him."** This is how it will be at the time of the Rapture, when only true believers will see the Morning Star. They will be like the wise men who, when they saw the star, **"rejoiced with exceeding joy"** (Matthew 2:10). The second part of his Second Coming, however, when he comes in great wrath to punish the wicked, will be seen by the entire world.

Conclusion

In one of his excellent radio talks, Vernon McGee – whose expository teaching on the Bible was both very accessible and of a consistently high standard – said that, in his opinion, all sermons should refer to the Resurrection. Since the Resurrection of Christ was 'the First Fruits' in God's wonderful plan of redemption for mankind, it was – as the LORD intended – the first phase of a general resurrection of all true believers. In Biblical Israel the presentation of the first fruits was a designated feast day in the LORD's calendar for mankind and a token of the great harvest that would follow. The resurrection-rapture of the church will constitute the second phase of the Resurrection (the resurrection of Christ being the first). The third and final phase of this marvellous ingathering will take place at the start of the Millennium, when all Jewish believers and Tribulation saints will be resurrected.

Dr McGee was emphasizing something of the utmost importance to every true believer. He was painfully aware of the apostasy that was well under way throughout the church even in his day. He knew that, as this got worse, both the Cross and the Resurrection would fade into the background and that the majority of professing Christians would find their greatest comfort in worldly values and goals.

The Apostle Paul taught all new disciples to look to the Rapture. They were to live each day in the expectation of our Saviour's imminent return. They were to prepare and sanctify themselves for this holy occasion. It was to be the center around which their whole world revolved. As true believers it was their privilege to live in the expectation of this wonderful event and to spend the remainder of their time here on earth sharing this good news with others.

As early as chapter 15, the Book of Genesis expressed the awesome truth at the heart of the Rapture:

**"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying,
Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."
(Genesis 15:1)**

Christians have for too long thought of *heaven* as their reward, but the Bible points emphatically to the real reward for all true believers, namely Christ himself. By looking to heaven as their reward, they have been tempted by earthly reflections of the world to come – as they imagine them to be – but there is no earthly reflection of Christ. The Holy Spirit within us points continually to Christ, and Christ alone, and it behoves us to heed what He is telling us. He never points to heaven (or the Bible would have told us so) but always and only to Christ – a truth that will be realized perfectly at the Rapture.

The book of Genesis includes two remarkable episodes depicting the supernatural deliverance of the saints. The first relates to Noah and the second to Lot. While the angels were urging Lot to leave Sodom before the wrath of God fell upon it, one of them made a most revealing statement:

"Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither." (Genesis 19:22)

Abraham had prevailed upon the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ, to spare the cities of the plain if at least ten righteous persons could be found there. During his supplication he asked two very pointed questions: **"Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? ... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:23-25)**

The Lord heard his prayer and sent his angels to remove Lot, the only righteous man, and his family. The angels impressed upon Lot that they could not proceed with the destruction of the city until Lot and his own were safely removed. Lot was so hesitant that the angels actually had to take him and his family by the hand and lead them out. At this point we are given one of the most beautiful verses in God's holy Word: **"And while he lingered, the men [i.e the angels] laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city." (Genesis 19:16)**

Note and hold fast to those wonderful words, **"... the LORD being merciful unto him"!**

We need to reflect deeply on this passage since it is a startling prefiguration of the Rapture of the church before the Great Tribulation. It also foreshadows the perfect protection that the LORD will provide through His holy angels to the righteous remnant of Israel during the **"time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7).**

Today most Bible-believing Christians live in or near the cities of the plain. In the eyes of God, these places are **more** sinful than Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim. Christ revealed this when he sent the seventy disciples, in teams of two, to preach the gospel in towns and villages throughout Galilee and Judea:

"Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city." (Luke 10:11-12)

What is more he said that, had the works he performed in Capernaum been witnessed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.

**"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."
(Matthew 11:23)**

The gospel of the kingdom has been preached for centuries across the length and breadth of the western world, and yet the majority of our population are largely indifferent to its message. Using the criterion given by Christ, our cities are now in greater spiritual darkness than when the LORD destroyed Sodom.

Even the best among us has done nothing to deserve the Rapture. However, just as Abraham interceded for Lot, Christ has interceded for each one of us. The LORD in heaven will do exactly as He promised in His holy Word. He will send His wonderful Son, our morning star, before opening the Seals of His righteous judgment.

When Christ paid our sin debt on our behalf, he freed us from the wrath to come. Instead of doubting the fearful reality of our Father's righteous anger, true believers should be convincing a sceptical world that sin will be judged, and judged severely, all the while highlighting the fate of Sodom as a terrible foretaste of what to expect. The second part of the Second Coming will be a great shock to a world that had envisaged a Lamb but encountered a Lion, **"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).**

These truths are very simple and easy to understand! So why aren't pastors preaching them? Why aren't true believers shouting them from the rooftops?

If anyone thinks he will not be questioned on this at the Bema, let him think again:

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25)

Jeremy James
October 27, 2015

Daniel's 70 Weeks

Daniel 9:24-27

[24] Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

[25] Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

[26] And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

[27] And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

The 70 Weeks started on the day Artaxerxes signed the decree to enable the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (not the Temple). His year of accession (465 B.C.) is well established by historians. The 20th year of his reign was therefore 445 B.C. The month of Nisan is given by Nehemiah. By Jewish custom, the first day of the month is taken as intended if no date is specified. Thus the 70 Weeks began on the first day of Nisan (March 14th), 445 B.C. [This is the calculation made by Robert Anderson in *The Coming Prince*, published around 1900.]

The Two Clocks

Weeks 1-7: Bible scholars have not yet formed a consensus view on the significance of the first seven weeks (49 years). The final year may mark the death of the last Old Testament writing prophet, Malachi, and the commencement of the Great Silence. This explanation is supported by Malachi's prophetic reference to the last Old Testament prophet, John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord.

Weeks 8-69: Christ died on Calvary and was "cut off". Daniel's prophetic clock (which pertains to Israel only) was stopped. The Church clock started at Pentecost and will continue until the Rapture.

Week 70: The clock for the start of the 70th week will re-start on the day the Antichrist signs a 7-year covenant or treaty with the nation of Israel. This will mark the start of the 7-year Tribulation period. Christ will return to the Mount of Olives at the end of the 70th week.

The Time Gap between Week 69 and Week 70

Scripture contains other instances of a major time gap between seemingly contiguous prophetic events. For example, Isaiah 9:6 says, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder". The first part was fulfilled with the birth of Christ but the second has yet to be fulfilled. Christ will only have the government upon his shoulder when he is recognized as their King by Israel at his Second Coming.

Consider also the passage of Scripture that Jesus read in the synagogue in Nazareth:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:18-20)

Note that he deliberately omitted the final part of the prophecy by Isaiah (61:1-2), which reads as follows [text underscored]:

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn"

Christ will proclaim "the day of the vengeance of our God" and "comfort all that mourn" at his Second Coming. There is therefore a long interval between these two sets of events, even though they are cited in a single verse.

Consider also Zechariah 9:9 and the verse that immediately follows it:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from river even to the ends of the earth."

The first part of the prophecy has been fulfilled, when Christ rode into Jerusalem on "a colt the foal of an ass", but the second part has yet to be fulfilled, where Christ will defend Jerusalem, and "speak peace unto the heathen," and where "his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from river even to the ends of the earth". These latter prophecies, like those of Isaiah (cited above), will be fulfilled by Jesus at his Second Coming.

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