

# WHAT ABOUT THE RAPTURE?



**Is it sound Bible doctrine,  
or false teaching?  
If true, when will it occur?**

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## Introduction

Dear reader, when people hear the term “Rapture” in a religious setting, there is usually an enormous amount of confusion and/or skepticism. Moreover, some individuals are unequivocally opposed to the idea altogether. For example, one friend of your author has heard his internet preacher loudly proclaim numerous times before his online audience: “The Rapture is a *lie!*” That minister, who has stated he **used** to believe in the Rapture, now scoffs at such a notion. Others contend, just as fervently, that the Rapture is indeed a Biblical teaching. Yet, among those who accept it as a real event, there is much disagreement as to **when** the Rapture will happen. We simply cannot imagine how complicated and discouraged people have become here. It is just one of *many* tragedies in Christendom.

Doubtless, the Rapture is a **controversial** topic—and this is an understatement, to say the least. As noted already, much of the dispute involves its timing (though some have argued about its participants). If the Rapture is sound Bible doctrine, what exactly is it **according to the Scriptures**—and, above all, **when** does it occur? If the Rapture is false doctrine, what are our reasons for rejecting it? These are serious Bible questions, and we must face them head-on. If not already, we will encounter this issue in our Christian life and/or local church at some point. Unless we have believed sound Bible doctrine in our hearts, we **will** be swept away in the flood of errors—and, by the Devil’s design, there are *plenty* of spiritual inaccuracies to destroy us if we are not careful!

Let us begin by affirming that we have **no interest whatsoever** in quoting “scholars” or “Christian bestsellers.” ***We cannot stress this point enough.*** Unfortunately, whatever people know about the Rapture is usually based on dialog they heard in films or words they read in popular “Christian” books. Even if someone happens to use Bible verses to support **any** sort of Rapture view, these passages are frequently taken out of their rightful contexts and forced to teach something the Holy Spirit **never** intended. Dear friend, please do not misunderstand. Surely, many people are genuinely trying to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and teach His Word. However, denominationalism, ignorance, and other inhibitions have greatly prevented them from seeing the Holy Scriptures in their purity (remember pitiful Apollos in Acts 18:24-26?!). Your writer here was in such denominational darkness for over a decade, a Christian who was but a baby in the Bible. For nearly 17 years now, he has been recovering himself out of the snare of the Devil in accordance with 2 Timothy 2:24-26! This is especially true as touching the Rapture controversy, about which he was confused for a very long time.

As we said before, so say we again. Spiritual ignorance abounds without **and even within** our churches. A good portion of the blame must be assigned to a large number of seminary professors, preachers, and teachers who have **utterly failed—utterly (!) failed(!)**—to educate their people in the purpose and plan of God. They have been filling the hearts and minds of their millions of church members with **useless** information—the speculations and traditions of fallible men, instead of the eternal words of the infallible Creator God! Furthermore, as with religious leaders, **not** everyone is sincere: a certain

number of them know they are serving their sinful flesh, and thus doing's Satan work for him (remember Israel's corrupt religious leaders during Christ's earthly ministry?!). Their interest is ***not*** to worship the Lord or honor His words, only lord over His people and teach what ***they*** want. We must always bear this in mind when we find ourselves in religious contexts.

In celebration of our **10<sup>th</sup>** anniversary here at “For What Saith the Scriptures?,” we offer this, our special-edition **1000<sup>th</sup>** Bible Q&A article, to answer the questions associated with the Rapture. Is there **really** a Rapture of the Church the Body of Christ? Or, is it just a misunderstanding of the Lord Jesus Christ's **one** Second Coming? If there is a Rapture, who will be part of it? When will it occur with respect to Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week (commonly called “the Tribulation”)? Should we be looking for the Antichrist—or the Lord Jesus Christ? Most importantly, we inquire, “*For what saith **the Scriptures?***”

# I. Confusion About the Rapture

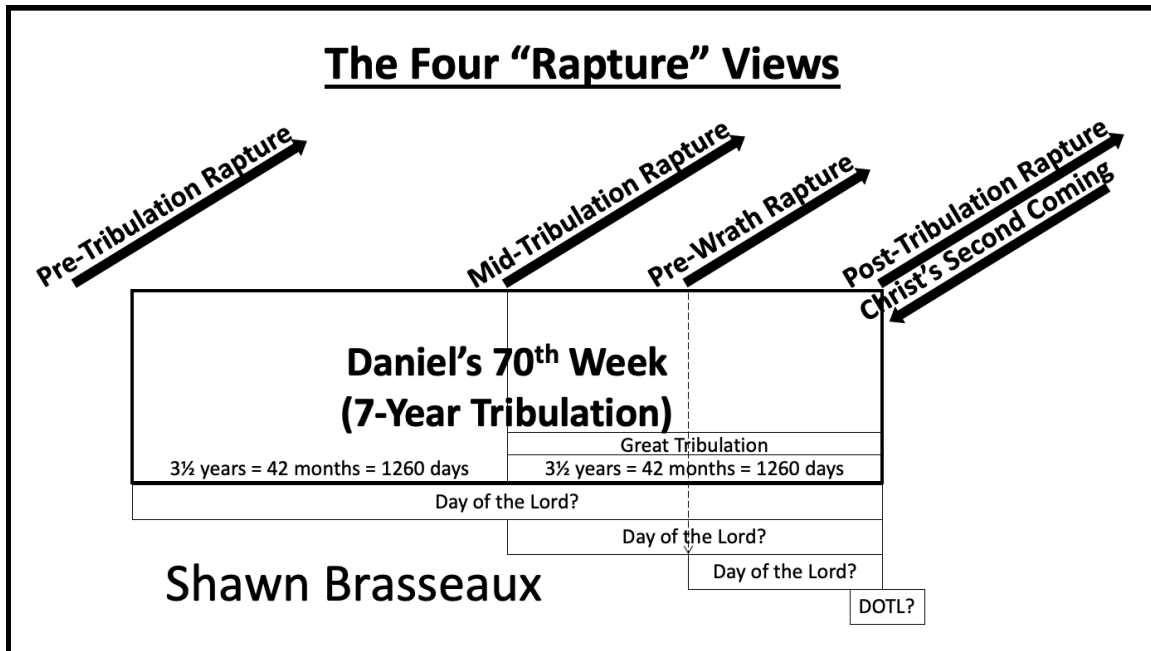
Part I of this treatise is a “brief” survey of terms, concepts, and Bible verses that generally crop up in Rapture discussions. While some critical remarks will be made here, certain commentary will be withheld until Part II. Your patience, dear reader, will be *greatly appreciated* as we present this foundational information.

## A. Four Basic Rapture Positions

We will consider these views in greater detail later in this study. In the meantime, we wish to familiarize ourselves with basic vocabulary. Overall, there are just three major Rapture positions, with a minor position listed last:

1. **Pre-Tribulation Rapture (commonly abbreviated “Pre-Trib.”)**: The Lord Jesus Christ will come for His Church, His Body, **before** Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week (commonly called “the Tribulation”). Hence, this position is known as the “Pre-” (before) “Tribulation” view. The Body of Christ will experience **none** of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week.
2. **Mid-Tribulation Rapture (commonly abbreviated “Mid-Trib.”)**: The Lord Jesus Christ will come for His Church, His Body, **during** Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week (commonly called “the Tribulation”). Hence, this position is known as the “Mid-” (middle, midst) “Tribulation” view. The Body of Christ will experience **the first half** of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week.
3. **Post-Tribulation Rapture (commonly abbreviated “Post-Trib.”)**: The Lord Jesus Christ will come for His Church, His Body, **after** Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week (commonly called “the Tribulation”). Hence, this position is known as the “Post-” (after) “Tribulation” view. The Body of Christ will experience **all** of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, with the Rapture being almost simultaneous with the Second Coming.
4. **Pre-Wrath Rapture**: The Lord Jesus Christ will come for His Church, His Body, **sometime during the second half** of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week (commonly called “the Tribulation”). The Body of Christ will experience **at least the first half** of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. NOTE: \*This view has never had many adherents.

In order to present these views as simply as possible, your author has prepared for your convenience the following simple diagram (which you should refer to often as you read this dissertation):



As sanctified common-sense dictates, if there is a Rapture, **only one** of these positions is correct. All **cannot** be right. Yet, strangely, **Bible verses** have been used to support **all four viewpoints!** These varying positions have, understandably, resulted in (disheartened) people denying the Rapture altogether. To say there is **no Rapture whatsoever** is the easiest route to take: sidestepping all the disagreement about its timing is most tempting, is it not?! Our goal in this thesis is to evaluate the evidence **in light of the Holy Scriptures rightly divided**. We must look at the verses cited and be sure to leave them in their respective contexts. It is also noteworthy to comment again that we have **no** denominational agenda whatsoever to promote, **no** "scholarship" whatsoever to uphold, and **no** seminary or professor whatsoever to defend. **No** peer pressure is on us to maintain ties with institutions or wealthy donors, so we do **not** fear offending anyone or incurring their displeasure. "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2:15). **We seek God's approval alone!**

### ***B. A Miserable Failure to Rightly Divide the Word of Truth***

Observe the words of God the Holy Spirit as given through the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:14-18: "[14] *Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. [15] Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. [16] But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. [17] And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; [18] Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.*"



According to these Scriptures, men were “*striving about words to no profit*” (engaging in fruitless fights, pointless debates, or worthless speculations). In doing so, they were “*subverting*” (Greek, “*katastrophe*”) their listeners. Since these individuals were not “*rightly dividing the word of truth*” (verse 15), they were teaching how the resurrection was “*past already*” (indicative of a timeline, a sequence or order of events). It is **not** that they were **denying** resurrection altogether; instead, they were **misplacing** it on the Bible timeline. The Holy Spirit styles this type of false teaching as a “*canker*” or cancer (Greek, “*gaggraina*,” from which our English word “gangrene” is derived). It is an evil, corrupting influence that is difficult to eradicate. They “*erred [blundered, stumbled] concerning the truth*” because they **failed to rightly divide the word of truth**. This is precisely the inherent downfall of theological and denominational circles! By not embracing dispensational truth, they were “*overthrowing [overturning; see verse 18] the faith of some.*” To wit, “The resurrection of Christians has taken place **without you!**” The insinuation is that the audience was **not** a group of Christians. In other words, the timing of the resurrection of the believers of this age was controversial long ago (2,000 years back).

We find amplification for 2 Timothy (above) in Paul’s words in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3: “[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;...*” The Thessalonians were suffering great persecution for Christ’s sake (see 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-9). If we look at the context of 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 (which we will examine in greater detail in Part II, Section D), it is apparent the Thessalonians had been led to (**wrongly**) believe they were now living during the horrors of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week (commonly called “the Tribulation”).

One of the last inspired statements the Apostle Paul made is preserved for us in 2 Timothy 1:15: “*This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.*” While awaiting his execution in Rome, Paul had heard the terrible news that his converts in Asia (Asia Minor, or modern Western Turkey) had now forsaken him **35 years** after he had first reached them with the Gospel of Grace. They had **not** left **the Lord**—but they had abandoned **Paul**. In other words, they had deserted Paul’s doctrine... exactly as he had foretold in Acts 20:28-32 many years prior. We see other examples of this in Acts 15:1-5, Romans 16:17-18, Galatians 1:6-11, Galatians 3:1-3, Galatians 4:9-21, Galatians 5:1-12, Philippians 3:2, Philippians 3:16-19, 1 Timothy 4:1-5, 1 Timothy 6:3-6, 2 Timothy 2:16-18, 2 Timothy 3:1-9, and 2 Timothy 4:1-5. Departure from Paul’s doctrine happened long ago. The Church the Body of Christ was apostate, fallen from the truth, **20 centuries back!** We can survey the ghastly results even now—the Message of God’s Grace pushed aside in favor of a law-based acceptance system, Paul’s ministry conflated with Peter’s ministry, the Body of Christ mixed with the nation Israel, and so on. It also applies to confusion concerning prophecy.

In 2 Timothy 2:14-18, we read the words “*more ungodliness.*” This “*ungodliness*” is

actually countless groups and ideas stemming from a primary one. Imagine the errors **multiplying**—a few increase to become an innumerable amount. As touching the Rapture, we have already seen there are **three** different major Rapture positions—Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, and Post-Tribulation—plus a minor “Pre-Wrath” view. They cannot all be correct. **All positions except one are steps toward additional doctrine that dishonors the God of the Bible and does violence to that Bible. Dear friend, we simply cannot dismiss this as “mere difference of opinion!”** As we will discover in this study, either we return to **the Lord’s ministry through the Apostle Paul**, or we are **hopelessly doomed** to further apostasy and ignorance!

Two passages of Scripture often helpful in clarifying verses are Acts 3:21 and Romans 16:25-26. We would do well to look at them—and even memorize them if we have not already done so.

Firstly, Acts 3:21: *“Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”* The Apostle Peter is talking about Jesus Christ in relation to **prophecy**, what God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. This can be called ***the prophetic program***—a sequence of events God has planned and made known since He placed Adam on the Earth.

Secondly, Romans 16:25-26: *“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:....”* The Apostle Paul is writing about Jesus Christ relative to **mystery**, what God has **not** spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. This can be titled ***the mystery program***—a series of events God has planned but **not** made known since He placed Adam on the Earth. God kept the mystery program a secret until He revealed it to the Apostle Paul.

The Apostle Paul alone writes about “*mystery*” truth with respect to the Church the Body of Christ:

- Romans 11:25: *“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 16:25: *“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the **mystery**, which was kept secret since the world began,....”*
- 1 Corinthians 2:7: *“But we speak the wisdom of God in a **mystery**, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:....”*
- 1 Corinthians 15:51: *“Behold, I shew you a **mystery**: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,....”*
- Ephesians 1:9: *“Having made known unto us the **mystery** of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:....”*

- Ephesians 3:3: “How that by revelation he made known unto me the **mystery**; (as I wrote afore in few words,....”
- Ephesians 3:4: “Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the **mystery** of Christ)....”
- Ephesians 3:9: “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the **mystery**, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:....”
- Ephesians 5:32: “This is a great **mystery**: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”
- Ephesians 6:19: “And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the **mystery** of the gospel,....”
- Colossians 1:26: “Even the **mystery** which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:....”
- Colossians 1:27: “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this **mystery** among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:....”
- Colossians 2:2: “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the **mystery** of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;....”
- Colossians 4:3: “Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the **mystery** of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:....”
- 2 Thessalonians 2:7: “For the **mystery** of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.”
- 1 Timothy 3:9: “Holding the **mystery** of the faith in a pure conscience.”
- 1 Timothy 3:16: “And without controversy great is the **mystery** of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

In other words, Paul shares with us information God kept totally secret from man prior to Paul’s ministry. If we do not pay enough attention to Paul’s ministry, we will be unfamiliar with these secret truths. If we ignore Paul’s ministry entirely, we will be totally ignorant of these secret truths. Much of Christendom actually finds itself in one of these two wretched categories. There is perhaps no greater indication of the **spiritual ignorance** amongst church members than their assorted beliefs about the Rapture. Religious tradition could **not** have done a better job in confusing the masses about a multiplicity of topics. In this treatise, we will see just how spiritually immature “church people” are with respect to end-times events. It is our hope and prayer that we can point at least some of them in the right direction, that they graduate to spiritual adulthood.

Let us read Ephesians chapter 3, the primary passage about Paul and the mystery program: “[1] For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, [2] If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: [3] How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, [4] Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) [5] Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

*“[6] That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: [7] Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. [8] Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; [9] And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: [10] To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, [11] According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:....”*

The resurrected, ascended, and glorified Lord Jesus Christ revealed the mystery to the Apostle Paul (verse 3). This special ministry or apostleship of Paul, and its associated teachings, **must** be rightly divided from the rest of Scripture (2 Timothy 2:15). The vast majority of controversies, heresies, and misunderstandings concerning the Bible throughout church history all stem from a failure to separate Paul from the remainder of Scripture. Harmonizing Paul’s message with the rest of the Bible has contributed to unanswerable confusion, extensive destruction, and downright lies from the pits of Hell! Unless we start using God’s Word God’s way, we do **not** have a hope or a prayer of understanding or enjoying it. Our only fate will be spiritual kindergarten. No one will want to listen to us. We will be unusable to God the Holy Spirit.

To begin, we must understand the Church the Body of Christ is **strictly** a Pauline revelation. It **cannot** be found outside of Paul’s ministry and message. Observe:

- Ephesians 5:23: *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of **the church**: and he is the saviour of **the body**.”*
- Colossians 1:18: *“And he is the head of **the body, the church**: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”*
- Colossians 1:24: *“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for **his body’s** sake, which is **the church**:....”*

Dear friend, please be sure you get that terminology straight in your mind: it is “the Church the Body of Christ” (as we will discover later, that precise wording is **extremely** important). The Church the Body of Christ is the group of believers resulting from Paul’s ministry, the present-day assembly of Christians. They are not just church members, but people who have believed Paul’s Gospel in their heart: *“Christ died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again the third day”* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). This is known as *“the Gospel of the Grace of God”* (Acts 20:24). Believers in this Gospel message are members of the Church the Body of Christ. For other references to this “body,” see Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14,27; Ephesians 2:16; Ephesians 3:6; Ephesians 4:4,12,16; Ephesians 5:30; Colossians 2:19; and Colossians 3:15. Unless we are mindful of the fact the Church the Body of Christ is **exclusively** a Pauline revelation, we will get ourselves into deep trouble trying to find the Church the Body of Christ **outside** of Paul’s ministry.

### ***C. Complicating the Controversy***

Unfortunately, as is often the case in religious circles, people have employed vague or erroneous terminology concerning the Rapture. In doing so, not only have they complicated an already highly confused topic, they have inadvertently (hopefully, not intentionally!) made it more challenging to establish ***what the biblical position even is***. Therefore, any subsequent appeal to the Holy Bible for help seems hopeless and useless. What further contributes to the complexity and perplexity is that, even if people are using Bible vocabulary, their definitions are faulty. For example, whatever is given as Scriptural proof of a “Pre-Tribulation” Rapture is usually a passage taken out of context. This kind of approach fails to withstand the scrutiny of critics, causing them to become even more opposed to the possibility of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture (and more willing to follow alternative views such as “Mid-Tribulation,” “Post-Tribulation,” or “Pre-Wrath”—which ideas are **also** based on misapplied Bible passages). If we are to make sense of the matter, and reach a sound conclusion, we had better learn to be **more precise** in what we are saying and **more careful** in what we are quoting. This advice will become more appreciated as our investigation proceeds.

At this point, we want to delve into the specific Bible verses and other comments that frequently appear in Rapture discussions.

### ***D. Does Revelation 4:1 support a Pre-Tribulation Rapture?***

*“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, **Come up hither**, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter”* (Revelation 4:1). Here is perhaps the most worn-out verse in the Rapture discussion, so we have selected it as the first “proof-text” to examine here. (The other passage is Revelation 3:10, to be deliberated a little later.) As a sample of the error taught using Revelation 4:1, Dr. Scofield’s footnote in his eponymous study Bible reads: “This call seems clearly to indicate the fulfillment of 1 Thes. 4. 14-17. The word ‘church’ does not again occur till all is fulfilled.”

For more than 100 years now, a great many ***so-called*** “dispensationalists” have repeated Dr. Scofield’s comment here. We must **vehemently disagree** with them. Dr. Scofield is **mistaken**. They are **wrong**. Firstly, who is being taken to Heaven in Revelation 4:1? According to chapter 1 and verse 4, **the Apostle John** is the writer of the Book of the Revelation. **John** was temporarily brought into Heaven for the purpose of receiving prophetic information to write down here in Revelation 4:2ff. There is **nothing** in this context about a **group** of believers brought into Heaven. Revelation 4:1 is clearly speaking **of John alone**. Those who reject the Pre-Tribulation Rapture point out how faulty the Revelation 4:1 argument is—and they are correct in exposing the error. **Revelation 4:1 has nothing—absolutely nothing (!)—to do with a Pre-Tribulation Rapture!** We do unspeakable violence to Scripture when we interpret John’s experience as a “hint” of or “veiled reference” to the Church the Body of Christ being raptured into Heaven **before** Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week begins.

Using Dr. Scofield's logic, someone attempting to prove a Pre-Tribulation Rapture will argue how the words "*church*" and "*churches*" appear in the first three chapters of the Revelation (1:4,11,20; 2:1,7-8,11-12,17-18,23,29; 3:1,6-7,13-14,22) and the final chapter of Revelation (22:16), but never in the intermediate chapters (4–21). This is offered as evidence that "the Church" will ***not*** go through any part of the Tribulation or Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week (Revelation chapters 4–18). To augment their case, they rely on Revelation 4:1 (John called up to Heaven) as a picture of the Rapture. Unfortunately, here is likely the only so-called "Pre-Tribulation Rapture" defense the average Bible student has—***if he is even able to articulate one at all!*** The fact of the matter is—and we will learn this as we proceed—the Book of the Revelation **in no way** fixes the timing of the Rapture (whether Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, Post-Tribulation, or Pre-Wrath).

One of the most common **myths (falsehoods!)** amongst Bible users or professing Christians is the notion that there is **only one church in Scripture**. If we have any hope of ever understanding God's words, we had better **quickly abandon** this erroneous idea. To be sure, "*church*" is a Bible term and it is a good word, but it must be **properly** defined. While it carries the basic meaning of "called-out assembly" (Greek, "*ekklesia*," "to call out/from"), the context restricts it to a **specific crowd** (and that group varies from context to context, obviously). To make the term "*church*" in the Bible **always** refer to one group (such as **us**) is nothing but juvenile or childish thinking. It is **irresponsible** Bible handling and teaching, what has generated an **unfathomable** amount of false doctrine through the decades and centuries. Let us try to clear up the misunderstandings.

In Acts 7:38, we read the following in the King James Bible: "*This is he, that was in the **church** in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:...*" Of course, Stephen is speaking of the Israelites who have just escaped Egyptian slavery. According to this verse, Israel is a "*church*." Using the **faulty/limited** "only-one-church-in-Scripture" mentality, people have objected to the translation "*church*" here: their reasoning is, "Surely, **since we are the church**, Israel in the wilderness cannot be rightly called a 'church!' They therefore change the Bible text—and, whether they know it or not, they have stepped into **darkness** rather than **enlightenment**."

As noted earlier, the Greek word is "*ekklesia*" ("called-out assembly"), and it is usually (115 times) translated "*church*" in our New Testament. It was also thrice rendered "*assembly*" (Acts 19:32,39,41). Just as we are "called out of the world" to join the Body of Christ by faith in Christ Jesus alone, so Israel was "called out of Egypt" via Moses' ministry (Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1). "*Church*" is derived from the Greek "*kuriakon*" ("Lord's," or "belonging to the Lord"); "*kurios*" is "lord" in Greek. Israel leaving Egypt was God's people (separated from Egypt/world); we the Body of Christ are also God's people (separated from the world). Both we and Israel can rightly be called a "*church*." That is the **mature** way of viewing the matter, but if we want to be ignorant (correcting the Bible, having a poor or no understanding of words and definitions), we can unite with the childish masses and be ignorant!

Like Israel called out of Egypt is a church, just as we are a church (Body of Christ

made of believers called out from the world's nations), so God called out a believing remnant from Israel. This is the Messianic Church, all those Jews who trusted Jesus as Messiah/Christ: *"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:16-18). Now we understand the origin of the "churches" in Revelation chapters 2–3 and Revelation 22:16. This believing remnant in Israel is divided into individual local groups of believers scattered throughout Asia (modern Western Turkey). Remember our prior comments: there is **no** Church the Body of Christ in the Book of the Revelation, for the Body of Christ is strictly a **Pauline** revelation.

As touching Revelation 4:1, we are **not** to be looking for mystery truths (such as the Body of Christ) in the prophetic program. We must keep reiterating this. Furthermore, as **true** dispensationalists, we understand how the Apostle John was a member of the Little Flock or Israel's believing remnant, **totally isolated** from the Church the Body of Christ. Therefore, John **cannot** symbolize or represent the Body of Christ in **any** way **whatsoever!** Whatever happened to John is completely **unrelated** to us. **Leave Revelation 4:1 out of any future Rapture discussions.**

By the way, one final note here about "church." The expression "Church Age" should be **avoided entirely** because it is based on the **faulty** assumption there is only one church in the Bible. What people call "the Church Age" is better termed "the Age of Grace." See Ephesians 3:2,5. God is pouring out His grace in a particular manner, and has been doing so since the salvation and commissioning of Saul of Tarsus (the Apostle Paul) in Acts chapter 9. First Timothy 1:12-16: *"[12] And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; [13] Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. [14] And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. [15] This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. [16] Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."*

### ***E. Does Revelation 3:10 support a Pre-Tribulation Rapture?***

*"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). Like Revelation 4:1 (which we considered in the previous section), Revelation 3:10 has been tirelessly quoted as a "Pre-Tribulation Rapture" verse. If someone has a "Pre-Tribulation" position, they will frequently use either this or Revelation 4:1. Using that **defective/limited** "only-one-church-in-Scripture" mindset that we discussed earlier, they conclude that *"the church in Philadelphia"* (in Revelation 3:7)

must be **us the Church the Body of Christ**. Since God promises to “*keep*” the church in Philadelphia “*from the hour of temptation*” (that “*hour*” assumed to be Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, the Tribulation), we the Body of Christ will be removed **before** Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. This comment then generates an endless debate.

Is “*keep*” in the sense of “**protection while in the Tribulation**” (Mid-Tribulation and Post-Tribulation views) or in the sense of “**total removal from the Tribulation**” (Pre-Tribulation view). Put another way, “**Protected within the Tribulation?**” or “**Taken before the Tribulation?**” People have argued along these fine lines for years, so we need to set the record straight once again. Israel’s believing remnant will go through **all of** Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week (see Jeremiah 30:7—“*saved out of it,*” **not** “*saved from it*”), so **no one** in Revelation 3:10 is being **spared** Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. The believing remnant is to “*be kept from the hour of temptation*” in that they survive it because God guards them from the testing and deception during it (Matthew 24:23-30 and Mark 13:20-26).

Revelation 3:10 has been taken to mean God has promised to “*keep*” us the Church the Body of Christ from the Tribulation. This is a **complete misunderstanding** of the passage. There is **no** Body of Christ church here in this passage in the first place. According to verse 7, this is addressed to the angel of the church in Philadelphia (Western Turkey, or Asia Minor). As we noted already, the Apostle John is writing (Revelation 1:4). Based on Galatians 2:9, we know John ministered to “*the circumcision*” or believing Israel (whereas the Apostle Paul preached to everyone else, unsaved Jews and unsaved Gentiles, as recorded in Acts chapters 9–28). John, writing the Book of the Revelation, would have had **no need whatsoever** to inform the circumcision saints about the Rapture—because **only** Paul’s converts (Body of Christ) would participate in the Rapture anyway. **There is no Rapture in Revelation 3:10 at all, so avoid this verse when deliberating the timing of the Rapture.**

#### ***F. Are not we believers in Christ promised “tribulation?”***

A challenger of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture might contend that, while we the Body of Christ will not go through the Great Tribulation (**second** half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week—Matthew 24:21), we will experience **some** tribulation—and that “tribulation” includes the **first** half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. Let us look at the following passages used to advocate this position:

- John 16:33: “*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have **tribulation**; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*”
- Acts 14:22: “*Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much **tribulation** enter into the kingdom of God.*”
- Romans 5:3: “*And not only so, but we glory in **tribulations** also: knowing that **tribulation** worketh patience;....*”
- Romans 8:35: “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall **tribulation**, or*



- distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”*
- Romans 12:12: *“Rejoicing in hope; patient in **tribulation**; continuing instant in prayer;....”*
  - 2 Corinthians 1:4: *“Who comforteth us in all our **tribulation**, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”*
  - 2 Corinthians 7:4: *“Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our **tribulation**.”*
  - 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4: *“That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer **tribulation**; even as it came to pass, and ye know.”*
  - 2 Thessalonians 1:4: *“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and **tribulations** that ye endure:....”*

It is suggested that, since the Bible teaches we will have tribulation (trouble, difficulties) as believers in Christ (see verses quoted above), this substantiates the suggestion we will go through at least some portion of **the end-times Tribulation Period**. Not only is this a childish or simplistic way at looking at the Scriptures (remember the absurd idea, “only-one-church-in-Scripture?”), **it is a complete failure to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15)**. Of course we are not immune from problems or trouble (tribulation). All of us could list difficulties we are facing at this present moment. We suffer because: (1) we are under the curse of sin and therefore grow sick and old and undergo physical death, (2) we and others make stupid decisions so we reap the bitter consequences, and (3) we are Christians and thus targets of Satan’s evil world system. However, there is a special type of “tribulation” or trouble in the ages to come, and that **end-times Tribulation Period** has **absolutely nothing** to do with our mystery program that God has in effect today.

*“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be **a time of trouble** [same as ‘tribulation’], such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Daniel 12:1). “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of **Jacob’s trouble** [same as ‘tribulation’], but he shall be saved out of it” (Jeremiah 30:7). The **end-times Tribulation Period** is styled as “Jacob’s trouble.” It is **Israel’s** trouble, **Israel’s** Tribulation, not our trouble as members of the Church the Body of Christ. For those who want to see it, it is as plain as day.*

*“For then shall be great **tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.... Immediately after the **tribulation** of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:...” (Matthew 24:21,29). “But in those days, after that **tribulation**, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,...” (Mark 13:24).*

Recall how the Thessalonian saints were suffering intense persecution for being members of the Church the Body of Christ. Apparently, some had even been slain or murdered! Their dire predicament then gave non-dispensationalists a chance to teach the same useless doctrine we hear at this present hour: “The cause of your suffering is that you are living in the Tribulation Period, or Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, right now!” The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul responded to these false accusations by writing 1 Thessalonians chapters 4–5 and 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. Notice:

- 1 Thessalonians 3:4: *“For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer **tribulation**; even as it came to pass, and ye know.”*
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14: *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep [physically dead—perhaps even killed?], that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”*
- 2 Thessalonians 1:4: *“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and **tribulations** that ye endure:....”*
- 2 Thessalonians 1:6: *“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense **tribulation** to them that trouble you;....”*

In Part II, Section H, we will address more fully Paul’s comments about the tribulation in Thessalonica during the but now, versus the end-times Tribulation Period in the ages to come. General tribulation or troubles must **not** be confused with the troubles of prophecy.

### ***G. Will we be delivered from the “Great Tribulation” only?***

Those who want to assign a date to the Rapture (assuming there is one) may also seize upon Revelation 7:14: *“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, **These are they which came out of great tribulation**, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”* Their argument would go something like this: Believers are coming out of “*great tribulation*,” and that must be us. Again, this is to be totally ignorant of a Jewish believing remnant in the ages to come. We the Church the Body of Christ are **not** the only believers on the Bible timeline. There is also the Little Flock, which we discussed in Section D! This Little Flock is that group of people in Revelation 7:14, Israel’s believing remnant converted under the 144,000 (see verses 4-8)—a Jewish remnant taken from the foreign lands to which they were scattered (see verse 9 and cross-reference it with Acts 2:5).

### ***H. Does not the Antichrist execute “saints” for their faith?***

The Antichrist will indeed put to death the saints for refusing to worship him and his image:

- Revelation 7:14: “And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are **they which came out of great tribulation**, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”
- Revelation 6:9: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar **the souls of them that were slain for the word of God**, and for the testimony which they held:....”
- Revelation 11:7: “And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit **shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.**”
- Revelation 12:11: “And they [saints, believers] overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and **they loved not their lives unto the death.**”
- Revelation 13:7: “And it was given unto him to make war with the **saints**, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”
- Revelation 13:10: “He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the **saints.**”
- Revelation 14:12: “Here is the patience of the **saints**: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”
- Revelation 20:4: “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.”

To be sure, the Antichrist’s government will execute believers in Christ, but does that automatically indicate the Church the Body of Christ will be on Earth during the Antichrist’s time? No! We need to understand one critical point. As noted earlier about the common, immature misconception that there is only one church in the Bible, readers of Scripture are equally confused about the word “saints.” The fact of the matter is, when we see the term “saints” in Bible verses, we should **not** routinely assume they must be ***us members of the Church the Body of Christ.***

For example, because God’s angels are set apart for His purposes, these “*elect angels*” (1 Timothy 5:21) are called “saints” (Deuteronomy 33:2; Jude 14-15) or “*holy*” angels (Matthew 25:31; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Revelation 14:10); they are **not** to be confused with the “*the devil and his angels*” in Matthew 25:41. Would ***angels*** be members of the Church the Body of Christ? Of course not, yet angels are called “saints.” Therefore, when we read about believers or “saints” dying under the Antichrist’s merciless regime, we should **not** automatically assume they are us members of the Church the Body of Christ. Israel’s believing remnant, the “*Little Flock*” of Luke 12:32, is ***another*** group of saints. They are ***the Messianic Church, totally separate and distinct from the Church the Body of Christ.*** The Body of Christ is **not** Israel at all, and the Body of

Christ is **not** the Little Flock at all. Be sure to keep them “*rightly divided*” (2 Timothy 2:15)!

### ***I. Is not the Church the Body of Christ “the elect” of Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20?***

Many years ago, a Christian contacted your writer and explained how his preacher denied a Pre-Tribulation Rapture on the basis of Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20. (That preacher was once a Pre-Tribulation Rapture supporter, by the way!) Since the Bible calls the Church the Body of Christ “*the elect*” in places such as Colossians 3:12 and 2 Timothy 2:10, the “*elect*” of Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20 must be the Church the Body of Christ:

- Matthew 24:22: “*And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for **the elect’s** sake those days shall be shortened.*”
- Mark 13:20: “*And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for **the elect’s** sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.*”

Additionally, Matthew 24:29-31 is used to augment this position: “[29] ***Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: [30] And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. [31] And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.***” Since there is “*tribulation*” (verse 29) followed by a “*gathering together [of] his elect*” (verse 31), it is supposed that, if there is a Rapture, it must be Post-Tribulation (after the Tribulation, after Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week).

As with “*church*” and “*saints*,” we need to have a **better** definition of Bible words. There is **more than one** “*church*” in Scripture, **not** just the Body of Christ. There is **more than one** group of “*saints*” in the Bible, **not** just the Body of Christ. There is **more than one** “*elect*” assembly in Scripture, **not** just the Body of Christ. We must **always** remember that the nation Israel’s believing remnant, the Little Flock, is **another** “*church*” in the Bible, **another** group of “*saints*” in Scripture, and **another** “*elect*” assembly in the Bible. Again, we have to leave behind our juvenile thoughts and graduate into the deeper things of God’s Book, or we do **not** have a hope or prayer in the world of ever understanding and enjoying Scripture.

Observe how Israel is also God’s “*elect*,” a group chosen for His service:

- “*For Jacob my servant’s sake, and **Israel mine elect**, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me*” (Isaiah 45:4).
- “*And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and **mine elect** shall inherit it, and **my servants** shall dwell there*”

(Isaiah 65:9).

- “They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of **my people**, and **mine elect** shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (Isaiah 65:22).
- “**Elect** according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (1 Peter 1:2).
- “The church that is at Babylon, **elect** together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son” (1 Peter 5:13).
- “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and **election** sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:...” (2 Peter 1:10).
- “The elder unto the **elect** lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;...” (2 John 1).
- “The children of thy **elect** sister greet thee. Amen” (2 John 13).

Concerning the gathering of God’s elect in Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27 at Christ’s Second Coming, it is **not** the Church the Body of Christ but rather **the nation Israel scattered throughout the world and now returned to the Promised Land**. See Deuteronomy 30:4; Isaiah 43:5-7; Isaiah 54:7; Jeremiah 23:3; Jeremiah 29:14; Jeremiah 31:8-10; Jeremiah 32:37; Ezekiel 11:17; Ezekiel 20:34,41; Ezekiel 34:13; Ezekiel 36:24; Ezekiel 37:21; Micah 2:12; Micah 4:6; Zephaniah 3:19-20; Zechariah 10:8-10. Also, notice the “wheat” gathered in Matthew 3:12, Matthew 13:30, and Luke 3:17.

**No, Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20 have nothing to do with the Church the Body of Christ.**

***J. Did Jesus ever speak of the Rapture during His earthly ministry? What about Matthew 24:36-41, Luke 17:34-37, and John 14:3?***

Rapture deniers maintain, “Jesus never talked about the Rapture in Matthew to John, some secret coming of His, but only a **public** coming. Therefore, the Rapture cannot be true.” Is there any weight to this case? No. We start here by reminding ourselves Jesus **never** spoke about the Church the Body of Christ during His earthly ministry. He also **never** spoke about His return to save Saul of Tarsus in Acts chapter 9 either. He also **never** spoke about saving Gentiles without national Israel’s conversion.

How truly tragic it is that, by trying to defend a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, or any Rapture at all, some individuals (so-called “dispensationalists” at that!) have countered the argument “Jesus did not talk about the Rapture” by appealing to verses in Matthew chapter 24, and/or Luke chapter 17, and/or John chapter 14 to contend Jesus **did indeed** talk about the Rapture. Although sincere, they have aggravated the situation by contributing even more confusion.

Matthew 24:36-41: “[36] But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. [37] But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the

*coming of the Son of man be. [38] For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, [39] And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. [40] Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. [41] Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”*

Luke 17:34-37: *“[34] I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. [35] Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. [36] Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. [37] And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”*

Dear friend, as you can probably guess, the above passages have been utilized to teach Jesus spoke about the Rapture. Allegedly, those who were taken were brought up to Heaven (raptured) but the rest were left on Earth. This interpretation does **great** violence to Scripture. It is eisegesis, reading something into the verse that is **not** actually there. The context is **not** salvation but judgment. There is **no** deliverance here, only **wrath**. What is under discussion in these passages is unbelievers being taken away in judgment, just as the Great Flood of Noah’s day destroyed the unbelievers while the believers were preserved (see Genesis chapters 6–8; 1 Peter 3:20-21; 2 Peter 2:5; 2 Peter 3:5-6). The people taken in Matthew chapter 24 and Luke chapter 17 are **not** brought to Heaven! *“Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together”* (Luke 17:37). These corpses are collected for the birds of prey to feast upon in Revelation 19:17-21.

*“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 14:3). Here is yet another misapplied Scripture. The Lord Jesus is **not** referring to coming again to receive the Church the Body of Christ at any Rapture. **He is talking about returning to receive the nation Israel’s believing remnant.** This is His Second Coming of Revelation chapter 19. There is **no** Church the Body of Christ in John 14:3 either.

**Leave Matthew 24:36-41, Luke 17:34-37, and John 14:3 out of any future Rapture discussions, for they do not provide any light on the subject!**

### ***K. Should we not distinguish between the various “wraths” in Scripture?***

Those who differentiate between God’s wrath, man’s wrath, and Satan’s wrath have made a clever case. When the Bible promises us Christians that we are saved from *“wrath”* and *“the wrath to come”* (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:9), these people will argue that the wrath here is Hell or the Lake of Fire, or Satan’s wrath during the first half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, or just the wrath at Christ’s Second Coming itself. (We will discuss this more fully in Part II, Section B.) In other words, they place us the Church the Body of Christ into at least some—or perhaps even all—of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week.

*“Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain”* (Psalm 76:7-10). This psalm is prophetic, looking toward Christ’s Second Coming, the Battle of Armageddon, and believing Israel’s deliverance into the Millennial Kingdom (see Revelation 19–20). The *“meek of the earth”* is the Little Flock going into Christ’s earthly kingdom at His return (see Matthew 5:5 and Psalm 37:11). Scripture says the wrath of men will praise God. What man means for harm, God will use for His purposes and thus be glorified.

Firstly, sinful man is always given over to what he wants (Romans 1:18-32)—which includes being handed over to God’s judgments or wrath in response to those sins. Secondly, sinful man during the end-times will join forces with the Antichrist in hopes of destroying Israel and annihilating the Jewish people (see Psalm 83:1-18, which also includes the prayer for Christ to come back and save believing Israel!).

Allegedly, God’s wrath is not throughout Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week but only during its second half. This is how people can bypass a Pre-Tribulation Rapture and wind up with what is called a “Pre-Wrath Rapture.” We go through the opening years of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, but we are taken before God’s wrath (which is supposedly limited to the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week). They teach this based on Revelation chapter 6: *“[15] And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; [16] And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from **the wrath of the Lamb**: [17] For **the great day of his wrath** is come; and who shall be able to stand?”*

Frankly, to say God’s wrath is only a portion of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week is **shoddy** or substandard Bible study. ***The Antichrist himself is God’s wrath against an apostate nation Israel***, and the Antichrist comes to **start** Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. We will say more about this in Part II, Section E. Revelation 6:16-17 in **no** way suggests God’s wrath begins right here, halfway through Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. Rather, that Divine wrath is intensifying, worsening, strengthening. It is no longer simply the “*day*” of His wrath, but “*the great day*” of His wrath. The anguish of the judgments of Revelation 6:1-17 is nothing compared to what is coming up until chapter 19 with Christ’s glorious Second Coming!

It has been argued that the seal judgments (see Revelation chapter 6) are man’s wrath not God’s wrath. Supposedly, we the Church the Body of Christ will be spared God’s wrath, but not man’s wrath—meaning we will be on Earth to suffer the seal judgments, before being raptured sometime after them. To be blunt, this is **foolishness**. The first four seals involve the arrival of the Antichrist and his activities—and the Antichrist is God’s wrath or judgment on apostate Israel (see John 5:43 and 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). We will look at this further in Part II, Section E.

Furthermore, how can man's sinful activity result in an earthquake, the stars of heaven falling to earth, and every mountain and island moving from their places? These are the consequences of the sixth seal of Revelation 6:12-14. It is therefore silly and even disingenuous to claim the seal judgments are "man's wrath against man, not God's wrath against man." Someone is looking for a sneaky excuse or alibi to place the Rapture **within** Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week!

The following question has been posed: "If the seal judgments are truly God's wrath, then how can God be pouring out judgment on His own saints and letting them be slaughtered in Revelation 6:9-11?" It is not He who is judging them, but rather He is judging their killers. The God of the Bible values free will, so if people do not want to follow His plan, He will let them do their own thing and reap the consequences. The prime example is Romans 1:18-32. The Antichrist and his supporters are given over to spiritual error and darkness, which results in them taking the lives of believers in Jesus Christ. It will happen in Revelation 6:9-11 and Revelation 13:7, for example.

***L. Does not Jesus Christ come back and stand on the Earth? Why would He come to meet Christians "in the air?"***

Some years ago, your writer was watching a program on "Christian television" (HA!) when he heard a famous "scholarly" preacher claim the only "Rapture" was when believers would be gathered to meet the Lord in the air as He descended to Earth at His Second Coming. In other words, he (a Post-Tribulationist) combined 1 Thessalonians 4:17 ("*caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air*") with verses such as Zechariah 14:4 ("*And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives*"). This is so ludicrous it merits little comment. Why would believers on Earth go up to join the Lord Jesus Christ in the air only to almost immediately come down back to Earth with Him? Is this not pointless? Such is the nonsense of denominationally-minded people. How horrifying it is to realize that well-known minister had a 50-year ministry misleading believers and training preachers around the world!

***M. Does Ezekiel 13:17-23 disprove the Rapture?***

Once, your author happened upon the television program of a certain pastor who strongly denied any Rapture at all. Your writer was already quite familiar with that pastor's unorthodox theology (denial of the Trinity or Godhead, for example). According to the television preacher, Ezekiel 13:17,20 taught that God hated the idea of "flying souls." "*Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them,.... Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly.*" Do these verses disprove the Rapture?



A general rule for Bible study is: “**Never** take an obscure or unclear verse and pit it against a plain and clear verse.” It takes a truly desperate person to disobey that principle, someone who will go to great lengths (even dishonest ones!) to defend their denominational system. As touching the women in Ezekiel, the exact nature of their “ministry” is unknown. They were, evidently, false prophetesses (women preachers) who used witchcraft or occultic practices and charms (pillows, kerchiefs, veils, bands?) to deceive the Jewish people to have a false sense of security. The Lord GOD swore He would deliver His nation from these evil women. The flying of souls might be a reference to physical death. Regardless of what Ezekiel’s words are about, this passage has **no bearing whatsoever** on the Rapture discussion. **Leave the passage out of the Rapture conversation.**

***N. Is the “last trump” of 1 Corinthians 15:52 the same as the seventh trumpet of the Book of the Revelation? What about the “trumpet” of Matthew 24:31?***

*“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”* (1 Corinthians 15:52). This “Rapture” verse is then forced into Revelation 11:15: *“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”* Revelation 11:15 is the sounding of the last of seven trumpets introduced in Revelation 8:2,6. Seven angels each blow a trumpet with respect to introducing a judgment. By the time of chapter 11, the seventh and final angel blows his trumpet. People assume this “last trumpet” (sloppy terminology, not Bible terminology) of Revelation corresponds to the “*last trump*” of 1 Corinthians 15:52. To wit, any Rapture would have to take place in Revelation chapter 11, around verse 15. This would rightly be called a Mid-Tribulation Rapture, for Revelation chapter 11 is halfway through the seven years. Is it sound Bible study to pair 1 Corinthians 15:52 with Revelation 11:15? **Absolutely not!**

As we have stated numerous times already, it is extremely important that we do **not** rip words, verses, or chapters from their contexts. Trying to match 1 Corinthians 15:52 with Revelation 11:15 is another example of how people—even sincere souls—have so carelessly treated God’s Book. They are looking for mystery truth (Rapture) in prophetic truth (Revelation). It is a **complete failure** to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). Unless they start growing up in the Scriptures, they have neither a hope nor a prayer in being delivered from satanic darkness.

First Corinthians is totally silent about judgment. It indeed mentions the “*last trump*,” **not** as a series of trumpets blowing to signal wrath, but rather a single trumpet blowing at least twice. Read 1 Corinthians 15:52 again: *“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”* This is **one trumpet** that, apparently, emits **two sounds**. One blast (“*trump*”) will call the deceased Christians from the grave, and the final blast (“*last trump*”) will physically transform living Christians. Furthermore,

whereas angels are blowing the trumpets of Revelation, the trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52 is known as “*the trump of God*” in the companion passage of 1 Thessalonians 4:16. God blows this trumpet; He originates this sound. The trumpets of the Book of the Revelation are **unrelated** to 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Furthermore, only one angel—an archangel—is mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

A tangential comment can be offered as touching Matthew 24:31: “*And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*” We gave a treatment of this back in Section I. Christ in Matthew describes Israel’s believing remnant being re-gathered into the Promised Land in fulfillment of prophecy. The Body of Christ is ***not*** in view here in Matthew. We **cannot** take this trumpet and connect it to 1 Corinthians 15:52 or 1 Thessalonians 4:16, for that would be **most irresponsible** of us. **We therefore need to keep Matthew 24:31 and Revelation 11:15 out of the Rapture discussion.**

### ***O. When does the Day of the Lord begin?***

Does the Day of the Lord start when Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week begins? Does it begin sometime toward the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week? Has it already begun?

The order in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:5 is the Rapture (verses 13-18) will be followed by the Day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:1-5). Consequently, expositors have been correct in fixing the Rapture’s timing according to the Day of the Lord. Yet, either intentionally or unsuspectingly, they have placed the Day of the Lord at various points on the Bible timeline of the future. (See our diagram at the beginning of this study.) If the time of the Day of the Lord can be established, then the Rapture will come before it. However, there is even disagreement about when the Day of the Lord begins, so the timing of the Rapture is still ***not*** fully settled via this approach.

We know the Day of the Lord is a time of destruction and judgment, when God justly punishes sinners—particularly unbelieving Israelites, but all people who have refused to trust Him. Notice the first four instances of the expression in the King James Bible:

- Isaiah 2:12: “For ***the day of the LORD*** of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:....”
- Isaiah 13:6: “Howl ye; for ***the day of the LORD*** is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.”
- Isaiah 13:9: “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.”
- Jeremiah 46:10: “For this is ***the day of the Lord GOD of hosts***, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour,

*and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.”*

The Lord does not sound happy, does He? Read more from Isaiah chapter 13: “[11] *And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. [12] I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. [13] Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.”*

Ezekiel 30:3 adds: “*For the day is near, even **the day of the LORD** is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen [nations, Gentiles].*” The Lord Jesus quoted this in Luke 21:24, with the times of the Gentiles meaning the Gentiles will oppress politically-fallen Israel (and Jerusalem) all the way until His return and kingdom. Historically, then, the Day of the LORD began with the Babylonian Captivity (circa 600 years before Christ). Ezekiel’s main message in chapter 21, verses 25-27, is how David’s sons in Jerusalem will lose his throne to the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar; Jesus Christ will come back to reclaim it. There is **no** Day of the LORD during our Dispensation of Grace (remember to rightly divide prophecy from mystery!!!), but the Day of the LORD will resume after our Dispensation of Grace. More will be said about this later. For now, here are other references to the Day of the LORD:

- Joel 1:15: “*Alas for the day! for **the day of the LORD** is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.*”
- Joel 2:1,11: “[1] *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for **the day of the LORD** cometh, for it is nigh at hand;... [11] And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for **the day of the LORD** is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?*”
- Joel 3:14: “*Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for **the day of the LORD** is near in the valley of decision.*”
- Amos 5:18,20: “[18] *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.... [20] Shall not **the day of the LORD** be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?*”
- Obadiah 15: “*For **the day of the LORD** is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.*”
- Zephaniah 1:7,14: “*Hold thy peace at the presence of the LORD God: for **the day of the LORD** is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.... [14] **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.*”
- Zechariah 14:1: “*Behold, **the day of the LORD** cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.*”

We also read about “*the great and notable day of the Lord,*” “*the great and dreadful day of the LORD,*” and “*the great and terrible day of the LORD.*” This is Christ’s actual

Second Coming, the most intense part of the wrath, but **not** the only time of wrath. *“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before **the great and terrible day of the LORD** come”* (Joel 2:31). *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of **the great and dreadful day of the LORD**:...”* (Malachi 4:5). *“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before **the great and notable day of the Lord** come:...”* (Acts 2:20).

In the above passages, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether these are historical or prophetic from our standpoint. The Old Testament prophets foretold information with both short-term and long-term implications. In some cases, they were speaking of events that would occur within their lifetime (see Isaiah 13:6-22; Ezekiel 30:2-19; Joel 1:15; Joel 3:14; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 1:14-18). Yet, in other instances, these activities might be hundreds or thousands of years later (Joel 2:30-32; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:1,5; Acts 2:20). Peter saw *“the day of the Lord”* as future from the time he wrote 2 Peter 3:10. The prophets could see the judgments of the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivities, which occurred within 750 years before Christ’s **First** Coming (earthly ministry), but they could also see the judgments leading up to His **Second** Coming. These individual prophecies sometimes blend together, since God can view all of it as one continuous narrative (the formation and purging of a literal, physical, visible, earthly people who will become His kingdom of priests when He takes away all sinners from it—that purging covering a period of millennia).

So as to place us the Church the Body of Christ into at least the first half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, some scholars limit the Day of the Lord to the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. They can now promote a Mid-Tribulation Rapture or Pre-Wrath Rapture. Even if the Day of the Lord occurred only during the last half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, it still does **not** detract from the fact we have stated from the start of our study: **all** of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week is prophecy whereas the Church the Body of Christ is mystery. If God is forming the Church the Body of Christ, then prophecy is **not** being fulfilled. If God is forming the Church the Body of Christ, then He is **not** forming the nation Israel. Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week is connected to Israel’s formation, meaning we (the Church the Body of Christ) are **not** involved. We will look at this in greater detail in Part II, Section F.

It is quite hard to believe that, after suffering the events of Revelation 6:1-11 for 3½ years, they would say *“peace and safety”* (1 Thessalonians 5:3). This is what we would be forced to conclude if the Day of the Lord begins halfway into Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. Now, if we make the peace and safety apply to the **beginning** of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, then it makes more sense. After all, the flattering Antichrist will promise them peace and safety when he signs the covenant at the beginning of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week (Daniel 9:27; cf. Psalm 55:20-21; Daniel 11:21,23; Revelation 6:1-2). Yet, this “peaceful” “messiah” will quickly bring about war (Revelation 6:3-4), famine (Revelation 6:5-6), and other fatal disasters (Revelation 6:7-8), including the death of believing Israelites (Revelation 6:9-11).

The future Day of the Lord begins with the signing of the covenant at the beginning of the seven years, making all of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week the Day of the Lord. There is no peace and safety **during** Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, but just prior to it. As the week

unfolds, those supporters of the Antichrist will learn just what kind of a person he is (a traitor who seeks Israel's annihilation—in accordance with Psalm 83). They will ultimately be destroyed with him, the birthing process of Israel's believing remnant resulting in the death of the apostate nation. It all looks toward the judgment at Christ's return. He will then set up the kingdom of Revelation chapter 20.

Let us add one final comment. The Apostle John, writing the Book of the Revelation, told us in Revelation 1:10: *"I was in the Spirit on **the Lord's day**, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,..."* Denominationally-minded people have taken this *"Lord's day"* as a reference to Sunday (the so-called "Christian Sabbath" for legalists!), but they are promoting **Bible ignorance**. What possible relevance would Sunday have to prophecy? It is **so ridiculous!** However, we **do** know the Bible has already spoken about the Day of the Lord with respect to prophecy. Revelation is prophecy. Whatever is in the Book of the Revelation, **that** is the Day of the Lord—or, *"the Lord's Day"* as John called it. This would include **all** of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, plus Christ's Second Coming, plus the Millennial Kingdom, plus the New Heaven New Earth. The Holy Spirit through John provides this final piece to the puzzle. We would do well to believe it.

***P. Does not believing in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture encourage sinful or careless living amongst Christians?***

Supposedly, if Christians believe in a Rapture before Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, that encourages them to pursue sinful or loose lifestyles. However, if we believe in a Rapture during or at the end of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, or believe in no Rapture whatsoever, we are driven to holy living. Frankly, this is **more Bible ignorance**. It is **false doctrine**.

Titus 2:11-15 explains how the grace of God motivates us believers to have good works: *"[11] For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, [12] Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; [13] Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; [14] Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. [15] These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."*

The Christian needs **no** knowledge of end-times events whatsoever to see how God's grace produces good works in his or her life. To "scare" believers into doing good works because they will somehow face Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, is to place them under the law system—and the Bible says **we are under grace not law**. Romans 6:1-2,14-15: *"[1] What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? [2] God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?... [14] For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. [15] What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."* Also, Galatians 5:18: *"But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."* Contrary to popular belief,

legalism will ***not*** encourage righteous living either (see Romans chapter 7).

Secular living amongst believers has **nothing** to do with a faulty view of prophecy. Rather, it is the result of having **no** clear understanding of **God's grace as found in Paul's epistles!**

***Q. How can there be a Pre-Tribulation Rapture if God needs believers to preach during the Tribulation?***

Again, this is **Bible ignorance**. We the Church the Body of Christ are ***not*** the only believers on the Bible timeline. God has the nation Israel—a believing remnant in the nation, known as “*the little flock*” in Luke 12:32 and “*the church*” of Matthew 16:16-18. The Little Flock was the group of saints in Matthew to John and Acts, converted under the ministries of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, the 12 Apostles, Stephen and Philip, and so on. These were all Jewish believers in Jesus as Messiah or Christ—the Gospel of the Kingdom. Eventually, with the Apostle Paul's ministry, the Messianic Church gave way to the Church the Body of Christ. You can read about that in Acts chapter 15 and Galatians chapter 2, which much of today's professing church still has ***not*** grasped.

When God is finished making the Church the Body of Christ, and the Gospel of Grace is over (see Acts 20:24 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4), the Little Flock of believing Israel will resume formation. **This** Little Flock is the group who will preach according to the commissions of Matthew chapter 10, Mark chapter 16, Luke chapter 24, John chapter 20, and Acts chapter 1. It would have originally been the 12 Apostles, but Paul's salvation and ministry and message interrupted prophecy. Now, in light of Paul's 2,000-year-long Dispensation of Grace, it will be believing Israel ***future from us*** to take those commissions as their own. We the Body of Christ are ***not*** bearing witness before the Antichrist. Israel's Little Flock, ***not*** us, will do the work of the ministry in Revelation 6:9-11, Revelation 7:1-17, Revelation 11:1-19, Revelation 12:17, Revelation 13:7, Revelation 14:1-5, Revelation 14:12-13, Revelation 15:2-3, Revelation 16:6, Revelation 17:6, Revelation 18:20, Revelation 18:24, Revelation 19:2, and Revelation 20:4.

Personally, your writer believes the prophetic program resumes, ***not*** by us preaching the Gospel of Grace (or even the Gospel of the Kingdom), but by the two witnesses converting the 144,000—or at least the two witnesses and the 144,000 converting more members of the Little Flock. See Revelation chapters 7, 11, and 14 for more information. The point is we are ***not*** needed. The Church the Body of Christ is ***not*** in these passages. **Leave these verses out of the Rapture discussion.**

***R. Is not a Pre-Tribulation Rapture a form of “escapism”—a way to avoid our problems?***

Regrettably, even Christians who believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture have a tendency to cry out, “I want the Lord to come back because I am tired of suffering and I

am sick of living this sinful world!” This is selfish indeed, but spiritual immaturity amongst believers does **not** detract from the reality of rightly divided Scripture. We may have a shallow understanding of the Bible, and we oftentimes struggle to explain even its simplest doctrines, but that does **not** call its validity into question. Thankfully, the Holy Bible is **always** true, regardless of how infantile or foolish we believers usually are. If there really is a Rapture, could there be another purpose for it (besides delivering us from difficulties)? We will elaborate on this in Part II.

### ***S. Does God need to “test” us in the Tribulation to see if we really trusted Jesus as our Saviour?***

This is a misunderstanding of the purpose of the Tribulation or Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. It is **not** to determine if **members of the Church the Body of Christ** are actually justified before God or loyal to God. Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week or the Tribulation is designed to bring forth the **true nation Israel** (the Little Flock, those Jews who trust Jesus Christ and therefore reject the Antichrist). The apostate nation Israel will be destroyed for following the Antichrist. We will say more about this in Part II, Section E, but we can provide a few notes for now.

In Ezekiel 20:38, God declared He would use wrath to cleanse Israel of unbelievers: “**And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.**” The “*purging from among [Israel] the rebels*” is how lost Israelites are destroyed but believing Israelites are saved to enter the Millennial Kingdom of Revelation chapter 20. The final round of Israel’s purging is Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, commonly called the Tribulation.

“*And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God*” (Zechariah 12:8-9). This is the formation of Israel’s believing remnant leading up to Christ’s Second Coming, with the rest of the nation perishing.

“*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). All 70 weeks of Daniel’s prophecy—but especially the last week of years, commonly called “the seven-year Tribulation”—are designed to purify the Jewish people (“*thy people*”—Daniel’s people; “*thy holy city*”—Jerusalem) of their idolatry. The final steps are to get rid of sin in Israel, apply to them Christ’s shed blood via the New Covenant, and make the nation Israel into God’s kingdom of priests in the Earth.

Again, this concerns **Israel and Jerusalem**. There is **nothing** here about Christians **around the world**, or **any** members of the Church the Body of Christ, being

“tested” to see if they are faithful to Christ. The trial involves who *in Israel* will worship and serve the Antichrist and who will not. For the answer, see Matthew 10:32-42, Matthew 13:1-44, and 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12. Israelites **outside of the Body of Christ** will be given a chance to openly support the Antichrist (and thus publicly deny Jesus Christ), or publicly support Jesus Christ (and thus openly deny the Antichrist). The Church the Body of Christ is ***not*** in view here. Again, we will delve into this matter in Part II, Section E.

### ***T. Are God’s wrath and the Tribulation the same?***

Yes, for simplicity’s sake, this is so. In the context of prophecy, God’s wrath is meted out during the seven-year Tribulation or Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. We will cover this more fully in Part II, Section B. There is an intensification of that wrath, the worst of it being at the Christ’s Second Coming itself (see our earlier statements in Section O). We will save the rest of our comments for Part II, Section E.

### ***U. Did not John Nelson Darby, C. I. Scofield, and other men invent the doctrine of the Rapture?***

This is one of the ***lamest*** excuses for rejecting any and all Rapture positions. Supposedly, the doctrine of the Rapture was developed in the 1800s, with the names Darby and Scofield thrown around as alleged inventors. In light of this, someone once posed this question: “What are we to do with the millions of godly believers who, for the first 1800 years of church history, did ***not*** believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture?”

We think the most suitable rejoinder is an inquiry of our own: “What are we to do with the millions of godly believers who, for the first 1500 years of church history, did not believe in justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone?” If it can be argued Darby and Scofield invented the Rapture, then it must **also** be true Martin Luther invented Salvation By Grace Alone Through Faith Alone in Christ Alone. Did Luther originate the Gospel of Grace? **Of course not! We would advertise Bible ignorance once again if we said he did.** Frankly, Darby and Scofield did ***not*** invent the Rapture any more than Luther devised Salvation By Grace Through Faith Apart From Works.

Organized religion **for 1,500 years** buried justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. There were Bible-believing Christians who shared Luther’s view of justification who lived centuries before him, yet they were largely ignored. They also lived contemporary with him, but they were societal outcasts. Luther had been a Roman Catholic priest, which prominent status enabled him to reach a wider audience and allow his beliefs to become more noticeable than those of mere commoners (who agreed with him). The Roman Catholic Church was passed off as “Jesus’ true church” and those who disagreed with “Mother Church” were essentially nobodies. It is like this right now. Even the largest Protestant denomination does ***not*** rival the billion-strong Roman



Catholic membership. Roman Catholic doctrine—even a trace of it—influences just about every seminary, Bible college, school, “Christian” publishing company, religious book, government, and so on.

Luther **popularized** Salvation By Grace Through Faith Apart From Works, but that is a *far cry* from **inventing** it. Similarly, Darby and Scofield **promoted** a Pre-Tribulation Rapture view—but they did ***not* develop** it. Personally, this author believes Darby and Scofield were like Luther: they were willing to depart from prevailing theological positions of their day, no matter the cost. We too are willing to question organized religion, wealthy institutions, and the “scholarly elite.” Remember, just as Israel’s religious leaders were corrupt during Christ’s earthly ministry, the heads of our denominations are more interested in pleasing people and serving self than actually holding to the truths of God’s Book!

Having delineated and addressed at least some of the misinformation connected to so-called “Rapture” teachings, we can proceed to more substantive and edifying data.

## II. Correction About the Rapture

This writer believes in **the Rapture** of the Saints, so now in Part II he will outline his Scriptural reasons for his position and what he has learned from the rightly-divided Bible with regards to the **timing** of the Rapture. He can only hope and pray you, dear reader, will have an open mind and heart. Think about it!

### *A. The Apostle Paul tells us to look for Jesus Christ, not Antichrist!*

Dear friend, if you want to look for the Antichrist, go right on ahead. If you wish to wait for the Antichrist, do just that. Your author, however, has chosen rather to look for **the Lord Jesus Christ** as per the following verses:

- Philippians 3:20: *“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we **look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ**:...”*
- 1 Thessalonians 1:10: *“And to **wait for his Son from heaven**, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”*
- 2 Thessalonians 3:5: *“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the **patient waiting for Christ**.”* (Modern versions, including NKJV, re-translate this verse, so the teaching is lost.)
- Titus 2:13: *“**Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ**:...”*

Why would the Apostle Paul urge us to await Jesus Christ instead of the Antichrist? Could there be a Scriptural explanation? If we do Bible study, we will arrive at some satisfactory answers—*provided we are willing to let go of our traditions of men, abandon our immature Bible understanding, and forsake our exaltation of self-styled “scholarship.”*

### *B. We believers in Christ are saved from wrath—all wrath!*

The Bible tells us we members of the Church the Body of Christ will be saved or delivered from future wrath. We are spared **all** of God’s wrath, whether Hell and the Lake of Fire, or the prophetic wrath of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week and Christ’s Second Coming. Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week and Christ’s Second Coming—rather than Hell and the Lake of Fire—are in view in Thessalonians.

- Romans 5:9: *“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, **we shall be saved from wrath through him**.”*
- 1 Thessalonians 1:10: *“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 5:9: *“For **God hath not appointed us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,....”*

As we remarked in Part I, Section K, it is unfortunate that people want to segment the future wrath into one part being God's wrath, another part being man's wrath, and another part being Satan's wrath. They do this because they can then place the Church the Body of Christ into at least a portion of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week. Their argument is simple: God's wrath is not in force when Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week begins, but it comes later. Hence, we (the Body of Christ) can still be spared God's wrath and yet go into some of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week. This is the "Pre-Wrath" Rapture view. We hinted at this in Part I, Section K, but we will discuss this Bible ignorance more fully in Section E (when we learn how Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week is God's wrath against sinful, unbelieving Israel).

### ***C. The Lord will call His ambassadors home before His judgment, wrath, and war begin***

Before a nation wages war on another, it calls its ambassadors home. Likewise, we are sure we as Christ's ambassadors are to be spared God's war against sinful man. "*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*" (2 Corinthians 5:20). God has **no** controversy with us His children, the members of the Church the Body of Christ, for we have been reconciled to Him through Christ's finished crosswork. Romans 5:8-11: "[8] *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. [9] Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. [10] For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. [11] And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*" Before the war gets underway, the Dispensation of Grace must (**and will**) close.

### ***D. The end of the Dispensation of Grace will be similar to its beginning***

When you get involved in any type of Rapture discussion (Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, Post-Tribulation, or Pre-Wrath), you will notice almost no one makes any reference to the special events surrounding Saul of Tarsus being converted in Acts chapter 9. They know of his salvation on the road to Damascus, but since a great many of them see a dispensational boundary in Acts chapter 2 (Pentecost) instead of Acts chapter 9, they completely overlook the fact that **Saul's** unique meeting with the Lord necessitates **our** special meeting with the Lord. To put it another way, the Lord Jesus Christ greeting Saul of Tarsus in Acts chapter 9 had **nothing** to do with His earthly ministry (First Coming), for Jesus Himself had already concluded His earthly ministry and ascended to Heaven a year prior.

If we study Christ's earthly ministry (Matthew to John), and even early Acts (chapters 1-7), there is **nothing** about a 2,000-year-long Age of Grace. In prophecy, there is **no** salvation going to the Gentiles through Israel's fall; yet, in Paul's ministry, this is precisely what happened (we will look at Romans 11:11-14 later, but you can do so now).

Saul's salvation and commissioning in Acts chapter 9 was a break in, or a departure from, prophecy. Remember our comments at the beginning of this study about prophecy (Acts 3:21) and mystery (Romans 16:25-26). If we do not rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15), separating prophecy from mystery, we will not extract the profit God placed in His Word. We will be hopelessly confused—just like Christendom!

When Jesus Christ ascended in Acts chapter 1, the next time He would come back to Earth would be in flaming fire, wrath, vengeance, and war—punishing His enemies and ushering them off to Hell. They were anticipating this Second Coming in early Acts, in perfect accordance with Psalm 2 (whose opening verses are interpreted in Acts 4:25-28).

Read Psalm 2:1-6: “[1] *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? [2] The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, [3] Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. [4] He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. [5] Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. [6] Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.*” The events of the prophetic program were, in this order: Calvary, wrath, and kingdom. This was the wrath they were preaching about and expecting during Christ's earthly ministry and even into early Acts.

John the Baptist preached about it in Matthew chapter 3: “[7] *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from **the wrath to come?**... [10] And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and **cast into the fire.** [11] I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall **baptize you** with the Holy Ghost, and **with fire:** [12] Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but **he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**” You may also see Luke 3:7-9,16-17. Be sure to note this is named the “*wrath to come*” and the “*baptism with fire.*”*

Christ Jesus Himself preached about it in Matthew 13:40-42: “[40] *As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. [41] The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and **they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;** [42] **And shall cast them into a furnace of fire:** there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Even the Apostle Peter preached about it in Acts chapter 2: “[34] *For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, [35] Until I make thy foes thy footstool. [36] Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*” This wrathful Second Coming of Christ is in accordance with Psalm 110:1.*

Peter repeated the warning in Acts chapter 3, Christ returning to destroy His enemies (unbelievers): “[20] *And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached*

unto you: [21] Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. [22] For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. [23] And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, **shall be destroyed from among the people.**”

This cautioning reaches its culmination in Acts chapter 7, when Stephen (filled with the Holy Ghost) actually sees Jesus **standing** instead of **sitting**: “[51] Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. [52] Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: [53] Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. [54] When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. [55] But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and **Jesus standing on the right hand of God.** [56] And said, **Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.**” For years, unbelieving Israel has been hearing about this wrath to come. At the time of Stephen’s sermon, it is almost upon them. Instead of repenting and believing his message, they killed Stephen by stoning. **Oddly, no wrath came on Israel!**

Approximately 30 years after Calvary, or 30 years after early Acts, aged Peter writes about mockers who ridicule the idea Jesus will come back and judge them for their unbelief. After all, it has been **three decades** and nothing has happened to them. Peter explains why the wrath is delayed.

Read 2 Peter chapter 3: “[1] This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: [2] That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: [3] Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, [4] And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. [5] For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: [6] Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: [7] But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

“[8] But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. [9] The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. [10] But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.... [15] And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even

*as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; [16] As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”*

Peter’s explanation is simple: God’s wrath is postponed because of Paul’s ministry, the Dispensation of the Grace of God (Ephesians 3:1-2). If we are to understand the delay in or temporary suspension of prophecy, we need to grasp the mystery program. The wisdom given to Paul is the key to realizing why Jesus Christ did not return in wrath as expected during the Acts period. Paul’s salvation and commissioning are the reasons why Christ’s Second Coming has not yet taken place. There was a break or interruption in prophecy, and the Lord Jesus Christ returned in grace, mercy, and peace to save and commission Saul of Tarsus and make him Paul the Apostle in Acts chapter 9.

For example, consider Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 1:12-16: *“[12] And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; [13] Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. [15] This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. [16] Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”*

Paul’s salvation was a “*pattern*.” This is the Gospel of Grace of 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, also known as Paul’s Gospel. The Gospel that saved him, can save us even now. Via the Gospel of Grace these last 2,000 years, God’s attitude toward the world has been grace, mercy, and peace. *“That in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering...”* Something new began with Paul. He was the first member of the Church the Body of Christ. Saul of Tarsus was the first person to whom God was longsuffering in this the Dispensation of Grace. Historically, this was Acts chapter 9. While there is indeed a 30-year transitional period into the Dispensation of the Grace of God—and that transition spans Acts chapters 9 through 28—**no such transition is necessary to close this dispensation**. The purpose of the Acts transition was two-fold.

Firstly, the Acts transition was for **believing** Israel’s benefit, that their spiritual edification be not destroyed with a sudden abolishment of the prophetic program and the immediate institution of the mystery program. Notice how the Apostle Peter in Acts chapter 10 was struggling to come to terms with the concept of “no difference between Jew and Gentile.” It was not until Acts chapter 15 that he and the rest of the Little Flock (believing Israel) began to see Paul’s message was God-given, and how mystery had indeed been ushered in while prophecy was passing away. Even as late as 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter readily confessed he still had some difficulty understanding Pauline revelation.

Secondly, the Acts transitional period was for **unbelieving** Israel’s advantage, that those Jews who had hithertofore rejected Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour

could now have opportunity to believe Paul's Gospel and join the Church the Body of Christ. Paul's "*provoking ministry*" visits to the synagogues during the Book of Acts fit here. Romans 11:11-14 explains: "[11] *I say then, Have they [Israel] stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. [12] Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? [13] For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: [14] If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.*"

The above transitional period of Acts is historical: it has already happened. Prophecy gave way to mystery 2,000 years ago. It was gradual in Acts, true, and we have already provided the reasons for the slow unfolding. Now, as touching mystery giving way to prophecy, this is future. It has yet to be. Something must occur to allow the prophetic program to resume, to take up where it was postponed or paused 20 centuries ago. Our dispensation must end abruptly because we believers in Christ would serve no purpose on Earth by the time the prophetic program comes back to the forefront. The Gospel of Grace would no longer be in effect, for the prophetic program and its Gospel of the Kingdom **are once again in view (as they were prior to Paul)**. In the future, salvation reverts to going through the Gospel of the Kingdom—just as it was in Matthew to John and early Acts (see Matthew 4:23; Matthew 9:35; Mark 1:14-15).

Observe Matthew 24:14: "*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*" The adjective "*this*" in "*this gospel of the kingdom*" indicates the Gospel message preached in Matthew to John will be applicable leading up to Christ's Second Coming. It refers to the good news of Jesus being Messiah or Christ, arriving to found God's literal, physical, visible, earthly, Davidic, Israeli kingdom. This is definitely **not** Paul's Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3-4); Paul's Gospel is no longer in effect at that point. If the preaching of Paul's Gospel forms the Church the Body of Christ, but Paul's Gospel is no longer being preached, then there is **no** Church the Body of Christ. That means the Church the Body of Christ is **not** in Matthew chapter 24 (the "Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week" of Daniel 9:27).

Since there was a **secret** coming of Jesus Christ to convert Saul of Tarsus, with no one but Saul seeing Christ (Acts 9:7)—and this appearance of Christ was to **begin** our Dispensation of Grace and **start** the Church the Body of Christ—it only stands to reason there would be another **secret** coming of Christ, one known only to the members of the Church the Body of Christ, an appearance of Christ designed to **close** the Dispensation of Grace and **end** the Body of Christ. This is how we know the Rapture is **not** in Matthew 24:30 or Revelation 1:7; both of these passages are **another** coming of Christ. How sad it is that we have people referring to the Rapture as the Second Coming, when the Second Coming is prophecy but the Rapture is mystery. Even people who supposedly "*rightly divide the word of truth*" use this imprecise terminology—and all that does is play into the ignorance that already abounds in the minds and hearts of people who lack even the slightest concept of right division.

The Dispensation of the Grace of God began with the start of the Church the Body of Christ, which was Saul of Tarsus' conversion and commissioning in Acts chapter 9. It is separate and distinct from prophecy and the formation of the nation Israel. The Dispensation of the Grace of God will close with the conclusion of the Church the Body of Christ. This is also separate and distinct from prophecy and the formation of the nation Israel. In order to amplify these comments, let us go back to expounding the Scriptural data about Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week and the Antichrist. We will return to discussing the Acts transitional period in Section J.

### ***E. The purpose of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week and the Antichrist***

As we noted in Part I, Section S, it is supposed that the purpose of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week and the arrival of the Antichrist is to manifest or make clear who is really a member of the Church the Body of Christ and who is not, who actually loves God and who does not, who truly wants to serve God and who does not. It is expressed something like this: "The Antichrist will give us the true Body of Christ, allowing us the greatest opportunity to demonstrate our unfailing love and devotion to God, to see who has genuine faith and who does not." Frankly, this is to advertise **Bible ignorance**. People who say such things prove they have not really given much thought or study to those topics.

If we desire to identify God's intention in bringing about Daniel's 70 weeks, we simply read the Bible passage where they are mentioned: "*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). These 70 weeks of years—or 490 years total—involve the cleansing of Israel and Jerusalem. The "*holy city*" is Jerusalem (Daniel 9:16), **not** a Gentile world city. Daniel's people are Israel (Daniel 9:20), **not** Gentiles. Before Christ's literal, physical, visible, earthly coming and kingdom, Israel must be prepared to become His kingdom of priests. All Christ-rejectors need to be identified and removed from Israel. Here is the function of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, a time the Antichrist will initiate with the confirmation or ratification of a seven-year covenant or agreement (see the "*week*" of Daniel 9:27).

Jeremiah 30:7-11 says: "[7] *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. [8] 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: [9] But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. [10] Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. [11] For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet I will not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.*" The tumultuous period leading



up to Israel's re-gathering (verses 10-11) and Christ's literal, physical, visible, earthly, Davidic kingdom (verse 9) is known as "*the time of Jacob's trouble*" (verse 7). It is **Jacob's** trouble, **not** ours. Again, the people are **the nation Israel**, **not** we the Church the Body of Christ.

The nation Israel rejected the Lord Jesus Christ and insisted He be crucified 2,000 years ago. He knew they would do this, so He made a solemn promise to them in John 5:43 before they put Him on Calvary's cross: "*I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.*" With Him absent (resurrected and ascended), an imposter would enter the land of Israel and deceive them. This malicious man is none other than the Antichrist, spoken of in Daniel chapter 11, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, and Revelation chapter 13, among other places.

Second Thessalonians 2:3-4,9-12, for instance: "*[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.... [9] Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, [10] And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. [11] And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: [12] That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*" **In short, Israel did not want the true Messiah (Jesus), so they get the false one!** To repeat, there is **nothing** here about us members of the Church the Body of Christ. It concerns who **in Israel** will worship and serve the Antichrist and who will not, who is Christ's believer and who is not.

At Mount Sinai in Exodus chapter 19, the nation Israel under Moses entered the Old Covenant (Law) relationship with JEHOVAH God: "*[3] And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; [4] Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. [5] Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: [6] And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. [7] And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. [8] And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.*"

In short, this covenant (also known as the Law of Moses) can be summarized as: "Obey God to receive the blessings." Of course, the opposite would also be true: "Disobey God to receive the curses." This system of blessings and curses is laid out in great detail in Leviticus chapter 26 and Deuteronomy chapters 27–28. Be sure to notice the curses or punishments for disobedient Israel include diseases, famine and drought, losing wars with the Gentiles, and eventual deportation from the land of Canaan. We can come up

through Jewish history all the way to Christ's earthly ministry and see just how often Israel has suffered these plights because of her people's habitual unbelief. This hardship is not yet complete. In the future, as described in the Book of the Revelation, Israel will face more wars, famines, and diseases (for the opening of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, see Revelation 6:1-8, which include the Antichrist's rise to power in verses 1 and 2!). God will discipline Israel for breaking the Old Covenant, and that will continue until Christ's return to end Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week. For other examples of these curses during the Tribulation Period, see Revelation chapters 8, 9, 11, 15, and 16. Again, all of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week is God's wrath, not just the latter half or end of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week.

#### ***F. Romans 11:25-29***

As we opened this treatise, so we reiterate our statements. When the Holy Spirit commands us through the Apostle Paul, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2:15), we should listen to Him. The way Paul rightly divided the Word of Truth involved differentiating between "*time past*," "*but now*," and "*the ages to come*."

Ephesians 2:11-13: "[11] Wherefore remember, that ye being in ***time past*** Gentiles in the flesh, who are called *Uncircumcision* by that which is called the *Circumcision* in the flesh made by hands; [12] That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: [13] ***But now*** in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Verse 7 says, "That in ***the ages to come*** he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

In "*time past*," God saw a difference between Jew ("*Circumcision*") and Gentile ("*Uncircumcision*"). However, there is **no** such distinction during the "*but now*" period—God's current dealings with man (this the Dispensation of the Grace of God). In "*the ages to come*," the future, there will be another change in program. The switch from "*time past*" to "*but now*" involves the discontinuation of the prophetic program and the inauguration of the mystery program. This is history—the transition from prophecy to mystery happened in Acts. It is just as important to separate "*but now*" from "*the ages to come*." This is future—what we can call "end-times events" or "last things." The "*middle wall of partition*" (Ephesians 2:14), the distinction between Jew and Gentile, will be back up as before.

Remember Acts 3:21: "*Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*" Peter preached Jesus Christ as viewed in prophecy, what God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. This ***prophetic program*** goes all the way back to Adam. In contrast is Romans 16:25-26: "*Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the*

*everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:....*” Paul preached Jesus Christ concerning mystery, what God has **not** spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. This **mystery program** was kept secret until Christ revealed it to the Apostle Paul.

The prophetic program has **not** been cancelled, just interrupted, delayed, or temporarily suspended. God has momentarily broken away from prophecy in order to operate mystery. Just as there was, during the Book of Acts, a switch from “*time past*” (prophetic program) to “*but now*” (mystery program), there will be a resumption of prophecy, or a switch from “*but now*” (mystery program) to “*the ages to come*” (prophetic program). These clear breaks or divisions are needful, lest endless confusion results. Like there is great perplexity about the transition from prophecy to mystery in Acts, there is matching bewilderment about the transition from mystery back to prophecy. This could have all been avoided had we paid attention to the Holy Spirit’s words preserved in Romans chapter 11!

As touching the “*but now*”—Paul’s ministry and message—the nation Israel is indeed fallen. Read Romans chapter 11: “[11] *I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. [12] Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? [13] For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: [14] If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. [15] For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*” Please note how Israel’s current (fallen) status is **not** final. One day, the nation will reach its “fulness” (verse 12) as God will “*receive them*” again (verse 15). This national resurrection of Israel is described in subsequent verses of Romans chapter 11, which we read now.

*[25] 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. [26] And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: [27] For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. [28] As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father’s sakes. [29] For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”*

Paul did **not** wish us to be ignorant (uninformed) of this “mystery” or secret (verse 25), but most church members are just that because of a miserable failure to apply dispensational Bible study! God is **not** finished with Israel, we have **not** replaced Israel, and we are **not** in Israel’s program. In His own timing, God will return to Israel’s program and He will continue forming her people. However, this is **not** what He is doing today. The formation of the Church the Body of Christ (**no** difference between Jew and Gentile—all are Gentiles) prohibits God from forming the nation Israel (difference between Jew and Gentile). These are mutually exclusive bodies of believers.

Prophecy and mystery **cannot** operate side-by-side. When God is finished working amongst the Gentiles (which includes Jews) via Paul's ministry, He will begin forming Israel again (exactly as Daniel 9:24-27 teaches). We can see the emphasis on Israel versus the Gentiles in the future in passages such as the Book of **Hebrews** (Hebrews 1:1-2), James 1:1, 1 Peter 2:12, 1 Peter 4:3, Revelation 7:4-8, and Revelation 11:2.

As there was a clear break from prophecy to mystery, there must be a well-defined departure from mystery to prophecy (and that is why we **cannot** be open to accommodating any and every Rapture position). If there is even the slightest mixing of prophecy and mystery (whether past or future), then there is room for additional confusion. Again, something important must happen to stop the mystery program so the prophetic program can continue once more. **The Rapture is definitely a real event, and we need to go about fixing its place on the Bible timeline.**

### **G. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58**

One of the chief passages used in defense of a "Rapture" is 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, which you will read now. (The other is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, which you will see later.)

*"[51] Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, [52] In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. [53] For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. [54] So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. [55] O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? [56] The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. [57] But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. [58] Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."*

This passage is pretty straightforward. Its context is physical or bodily resurrection (the entire chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians being dedicated to this theme). However, these verses describe a secret resurrection (see "mystery" in verse 51). It would be quite strange for Paul to refer to bodily resurrection as a secret, for several years prior even the Lord Jesus spoke about that very topic in John 5:28-29: "*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*"

In what sense then was Paul's resurrection doctrine a "mystery?" It was a secret in that it was not known to man until God revealed it to Paul. This would have to be a resurrection of a **secret** group of believers, the Church the Body of Christ being an entity unknown prior to Paul's revelation (see Ephesians 3:1-11). Some of its members will be

alive when Jesus Christ comes back. It was no secret that ***believing Israel*** would be alive when Christ returns to judge and reign (see Matthew 24:42; Matthew 25:13; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 21:27-36; cf. Zechariah 12:10). However, the resurrection Paul outlined was unknown until his ministry (see 1 Corinthians 15:51). This designation of a “*mystery*” resurrection should cause us to consider why it has been singled out.

We should point out an objection people have made to any alleged “Rapture resurrection” in 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. It has been suggested that, since Revelation 20:4-6 speaks of “*the first resurrection*,” there could have been **no** resurrection prior such as in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. If anything, the resurrection of 1 Corinthians would have to be identical to the resurrection of Revelation 20:4-6. Still, we must remind ourselves this argument holds no weight, especially since “*the first resurrection*” occurring in Revelation 20:4-6 would automatically mean the Lord Jesus Christ never resurrected (for He definitely is not among the dead of Revelation chapter 20, is He?!). We should ***not*** take “*the first resurrection*” of Revelation chapter 20 to mean no one was resurrected before that (for that would deny Christ’s resurrection!!). It is “*first*” in that it comes before the resurrection of the lost souls as laid out in Revelation 20:5-15.

The “*moment*” resurrection of 1 Corinthians 15:52 will span an “*atomos*” (Greek) of time, the smallest indivisible time period—with the closest approximation being the “*twinkling*” (blink) of an eye. This will be the duration of our bodily resurrection and transformation as members of the Church the Body of Christ! Where will this happen on the Bible timeline?

### ***H. 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:10***

We just considered 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. Now, we will look at the other primary Rapture passage, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18—but we will read it with a large portion of chapter 5 for further clarity.

*“[4:13] But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. [4:14] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. [4:15] For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. [4:16] 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: [4:17] 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. [4:18] Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

*“[5:1] But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. [5:2] For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. [5:3] For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. [5:4] But ye,*

*brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. [5:5] Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. [5:6] Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. [5:7] For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. [5:8] But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. [5:9] For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, [5:10] Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.”*

We should **not** separate these two passages, though the chapter division encumbers us here. One particular scholar claimed chapter 4 was indeed a rapture of some kind, but he could not see how the verses indicated any relation between this Rapture and the Tribulation. Perhaps he was just ignorant, or maybe he was willfully dishonest. ***All he had to do was go to chapter 5 to see the Rapture’s connection to the Tribulation—but his article did nothing of the sort because he had some denominational system or theological position to uphold!***

Indeed, the word “*rapture*” does **not** appear in the English Bible, but it is based on the equivalent translation (“*rapturo*”) found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 in the Latin Bible. In short, “*harpadzo*” is the idea of being “*caught up*” (as here in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 or Revelation 12:5) or “*caught away*” (thus translated in Acts 8:39). Someone is being snatched away, plucked, pulled, teleported, or moved to another location. See how “*harpadzo*” was also rendered “*take by force*” in Matthew 11:12, John 6:15, and Acts 23:10; “*catcheth away*” in Matthew 13:19; “*catcheth*” in John 10:12; “*pluck*” in John 10:28-29; and “*pulling*” in Jude 23. As per 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the members of the Church the Body of Christ (whether deceased or alive) will be physically taken up into Heaven.

As we laid out in Part I, Section B, the Thessalonian saints were suffering immense persecution for Christ’s sake (read 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 2:14, 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8, and 2 Thessalonians 1:4-9). In fact, it seems as though some of them had even been killed for being Christians (see their deaths, “*them which are asleep [physically deceased],*” in 1 Thessalonians 4:13)! Such casualties would have prompted the Thessalonians to wonder if these dead brethren had somehow missed the blessing of Christ’s coming. No, as Paul reassured them, these deceased saints would participate in the catching up by means of physical resurrection. This was Paul’s purpose in writing 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, which you might need to re-read. After the dead Christians would be given glorified resurrection bodies, the living Christians would be physically transformed too, all of them being caught up (Raptured) into Heaven to meet the Lord in the air to ever be with Him. Such would give great comfort to these believers who were uneasy or agonizing (verse 18). Please note how there are **no** accompanying “*signs*” here with this “Rapture” coming of Christ in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4; compare this to Christ’s Second Coming and its signs for Israel (Matthew 24:29-30; Luke 21:25-28).

Chapter 5 of 1 Thessalonians opens with a change in pronouns. Whereas chapter 4, verses 13-18, had “*we*” as the focus, the subject is now “*they*” in chapter 5: “[5:1] *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. [5:2] For*

*yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. [5:3] For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."*

The "times and seasons" (1 Thessalonians 5:1) refers to the future of the prophetic program (Daniel 2:21; Acts 1:6-7), not just the second half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week. It is in prophecy, **not** mystery, that God is appointing earthly rulers (the classic example is Daniel chapter 2). After all, prophecy involves His creation of an earthly people. The Antichrist receives earthly power at the beginning of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, not at the middle or toward the end. He is wearing a crown at his appearance, the first seal judgment, the start of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week (see Revelation 6:1-2); by the middle of the Week, the Antichrist has 10 crowns (see Revelation 13:1). Nowhere in Paul's epistles, Romans through Philemon, do we read how God is appointing political leaders now. This is another example of prophecy and mystery are separate programs, never to be combined. We the Church the Body in Christ and our mystery program can **in no way** overlap with Israel and her prophetic program in the future. We have been removed from Earth prior to Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week.

Paul referring to "the day of the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 5:2) links his words here to the Old Testament Prophets' "Day of the LORD" that we looked at in Part I, Section O (which see). This Day of the Lord is said to "come as a thief in the night"—suddenly or without warning, just like Christ's Second Coming itself (Matthew 24:43-44; Luke 12:39-40; Luke 21:34-36; Revelation 3:3; Revelation 16:15). "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:3). This is **not** about us, the Church the Body of Christ, but about those living at the time of the Antichrist. Judgment is coming upon **them**, especially when Jesus Christ is physically present on Earth. The pregnant woman travailing in pain loops to Matthew 24:8 and Isaiah 66:7-8, suggesting the re-birth of the nation Israel.

The Day of the Lord begins when they say "Peace and safety," and this is at the start of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week. According to the prophets, the Antichrist will use flattery, a peace policy, to promise security to his supporters such as lost Israelites (see Psalm 55:20-21; Daniel 11:21,23; Revelation 6:1-2). This "pacific" "messiah" will soon bring about war (Revelation 6:3-4), famine (Revelation 6:5-6), and other fatal disasters (Revelation 6:7-8), including the death of believing Israelites (Revelation 6:9-11).

In contrast to the lost people of 1 Thessalonians 5:2 (who will undergo the Day of the Lord and face the Antichrist to their eternal doom), Paul concentrates on believers or the members of the Church the Body of Christ for the remainder of the chapter. Re-read 1 Thessalonians 5:4-10: [4] *But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. [5] Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. [6] Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. [7] For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. [8] But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. [9] For God hath not appointed*

*us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.”*

Considering the Divine wrath that will come upon sinful unbelievers in the ages to come, should we who are believers in Christ not have lives that reflect our identity in Him (Romans 13:11-14; Ephesians 6:11-18)? It only makes sense for us to be awake, spiritually aware of our surroundings (1 Corinthians 15:33-34; Ephesians 5:14-21), walking by faith in God’s grace to us as described in Paul’s epistles, Romans to Philemon. We are “*children of light*” (2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 5:8-21; Colossians 1:13), not lost people of the darkness (John 3:19-21; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 4:17-18). Therefore, we should walk according to God’s light in the Person of Jesus Christ (John 8:12; John 12:35-36,46; 1 John 1:5-7).

*“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ...”* (1 Thessalonians 5:9). This “*salvation*” is that of 2 Thessalonians 2:13, which we will examine in our next section. We will be spared God’s wrath—**all of it**—in the ages to come.

### ***I. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-14***

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-14: *“[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. [5] Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?*

*“[6] And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. [7] For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. [8] And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: [9] Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, [10] And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. [11] And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: [12] That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

*“[13] But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: [14] Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

In verse 2, Paul identified the occasion or reason for his penning these Scriptures:



*“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.”* False teachers (even feigning themselves to be the Apostle Paul in written form, forging his name on a letter!) have misled and upset the Thessalonians (verse 3), thus disrupting their Christian thought and life—especially about end times (prophecy, future events). Even now, there is an unfathomable amount of confusion in our churches concerning the things to come. The Holy Spirit writing through Paul went to great lengths to prevent the confusion, but we (like the Thessalonians) have either inadvertently or deliberately overlooked the simple truths contained in these verses. Let us digress for a second to address a pertinent textual matter.

We notice how our King James Bible, following the majority of Greek manuscripts, reads *“the day of Christ”* in 2 Thessalonians 2:2. Modern Greek and English Bibles follow a minority reading from Egypt—*“the day of the Lord.”* Supposedly, our King James Bible is wrong. However, as people of faith, we are definitely **not** going to appeal to pagan, unbelieving, philosophy-worshipping, Catholic-sympathizing “scholars” from heathen Alexandria (worldly Egypt!) for the correct reading. To be sure, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 is about “the day of the Lord” (hearkening back to 1 Thessalonians 5:2), but Paul is using a term (*“the day of Christ”* in verse 2) as the false teachers have utilized it. In other words, we believe our King James Bible to be right, the original reading, for ***Paul was quoting the phrase of the false teachers he referenced in verse 2.*** What they were calling *“the day of Christ”* was in fact “the day of ***the Lord,***” but Paul did **not** call it “the day of the Lord” simply because he had to mention it by the name the Thessalonians had come to know it through the false teachers.

For instance, if I say, “Let us talk now about forgiveness of sins by means of paying money,” in no way am I suggesting sins can be forgiven through the giving of physical wealth. I am merely referring to something certain people believe (though their position is false, I am treating it as true for the sake of argument so as to disprove it). This is how Paul used *“the day of Christ”* in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 (and preserved in our King James Bible). Some scribe—possibly well-meaning (we hope, anyway!)—from Alexandria then took it upon himself to “fix” Paul’s supposed error by changing *“of Christ”* (***“Christou”***) to “of the Lord” (***“Kuriou”***). If the Alexandrian reading stands, Paul is no longer referencing a lie but the truth, for the scribe has destroyed the thrust of Paul’s argument. *“The day of Christ”* has a positive connotation (Philippians 1:10; Philippians 2:16), since it is the Judgment Seat of Christ (we will examine that later in this section). It is also known as *“the day of Jesus Christ”* (Philippians 1:6), *“the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 1:8), and *“the day of the Lord Jesus”* (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14). The false teachers in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 are misapplying the phrase *“the day of Christ”* to what is properly called “the day of the Lord,” and Paul is drawing attention to the fact the Thessalonians fear an expression (*“the day of Christ”*) that they should **not**.

As touching the arrival of *“that man of sin, the son of perdition”* (2 Thessalonians 2:3)—who is more commonly known as *“the antichrist”* (1 John 2:18; also see his predecessors in 1 John 2:22, 1 John 4:3, and 2 John 7; moreover, read Matthew 24:23-25,

Mark 13:5-6, Mark 13:21-22, and Luke 21:8), or one who stands in place of so as to oppose Christ—Paul makes something clear. Prior to this wicked man’s entrance, there must be *“a falling away first.”* While some have used questionable methods to re-translate this Greek word as “departure” (and, by extension, see it as the Rapture—the Body of Christ departing Earth prior to the Antichrist), it is far better to interpret *“falling away”* in light of the fact it is **“apostasia,”** or a defection from the truth. As you might have guessed, our English word “apostasy” is based on it. This Greek term is in Acts 21:21, which our King James translators rendered *“forsake”* there—that is, Jews abandoning Moses’ commandments from God. It is in this sense that we should understand *“falling away”* in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Israel leaves God’s revelation (Jesus is Messiah/Christ) and thereby takes up Satan’s error (Antichrist is Messiah/Christ). This loops back to John 5:43 (which see), and loops forward to 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 (which see).

Israel apostatizes or falls away from the truth to the point where they enter the seven-year treaty with the Antichrist (remember Daniel 9:27, the commencement of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week)—which God had warned they should not do! While they have formally rejected Messiah Jesus at the cross 2,000 years ago, making themselves vulnerable to the false messiah (John 5:43; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12), they have not yet accepted that false messiah (for he has yet to arrive and offer to be their political and spiritual savior). The Antichrist is *“that man of sin”* for the first half of the seven years, and *“the son of perdition”* for the second half. *“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”* (2 Thessalonians 2:4). This counterfeit Messiah/Christ is God’s method of exposing the unbelievers in Israel, for they will accept him to their eternal doom (see Revelation 14:9-11).

*“Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?”* (2 Thessalonians 2:5). When Paul had first visited the Thessalonians back in Acts 17:1-9, he won them to Christ and also taught them about Bible prophecy. *“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ”* (Acts 17:1-3).

How could Paul use the Old Testament to identify Jesus as Messiah/Christ **and** teach them about the Antichrist at the same time? Personally, your author would suggest Paul was reading passages such as Daniel 9:24-27 (which we looked at in Section E). Paul would have shown the Thessalonians how the schedule of Daniel 9:25-26 mandated *“Messiah the Prince”* or *“Messiah”* would die 69 weeks of years (or 483 years) after the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem (see Nehemiah 2:1-5). Jesus died according to this schedule, proving He was the Messiah/Christ of Daniel chapter 9. The *“prince that shall come”* (Daniel 9:26) is the Antichrist, the false messiah, who will ratify a seven-year (week-long) treaty with Israel and her enemies (see verse 27). In other words, Paul would have proven Jesus as Christ and told the Thessalonians about a counterfeit messiah coming afterwards.

*“And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way”* (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7). Again, Paul had taught the Thessalonians this information, for he says they knew it. *“And now ye know....”* Recall also 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2. However, the false teachers of 2 Thessalonians 2:2 had caused them to lose sight of the sound Bible doctrine he had taught them in-person in Acts chapter 17. Something was holding back or preventing the appearance of the Antichrist, the false messiah. Once that something would be removed or taken away, then—and only then—would the Antichrist be revealed.

Imagine a dam retaining water behind it, the water cascading downward once the dam is demolished. Some have taken the withholder to be the Holy Spirit; others believe it is human government such as the Roman Emperor (who was in power when Paul wrote); still others see it as Michael the archangel. However, considering what we have studied in this treatise thus far, it is easy to see the deficiencies in these answers. On the other hand, dispensational Bible study gives us a satisfactory answer as to the identity of the restrainer. The mystery program prevents the prophetic program from resuming. The formation of the Church the Body of Christ keeps in abeyance or suspension whatever God will do with Israel (that is, use the Antichrist to purge the nation of unbelievers).

Verses 13 and 14 of 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 amplify this: *“[13] But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: [14] Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* It is most unfortunate, but Calvinists have hijacked verse 13 to serve as their proof text that God from before the foundation of the world has selected who will trust Christ and therefore go to Heaven. The *“beginning”* in verse 13 is **not** that of Genesis 1:1, but rather the beginning **of Paul’s Gospel** (verse 14)! Paul’s Gospel has not always been preached; hence, it is called **his** Gospel (Romans 2:16; Romans 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8). It was the Gospel message entrusted to him—the Gospel of the Grace of God (Acts 20:24). This Gospel is most clearly defined in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: *“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:....”*

From the beginning of Paul’s ministry (Acts chapter 9), from the beginning of the Dispensation of Grace given to him (Ephesians 3:2), God has chosen to save a group of believers known as the Church the Body of Christ. The *“salvation”* of 2 Thessalonians 2:13 is **not** salvation from sins or Hell. As the context demands, it is deliverance or rescue from the deception connected to the Antichrist (the entire 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel’s prophecy). This is the *“salvation”* of 1 Thessalonians 5:9: *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,....”* Again, Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week is **Israel’s** period of time, **not ours**. We the Church the Body of Christ **cannot** enter Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week at all, for it is the prophetic program—and if it is the prophetic program, then the mystery program **cannot** be in operation. God has chosen us the

Church the Body of Christ **not** to be involved at all with the Antichrist, for these times and seasons do **not** apply to us (recall 1 Thessalonians 5:1).

*“Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thessalonians 2:14). We are taken from Earth before Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week begins, for God has a special appointment for us to keep as members of the Church the Body of Christ. We will share in Christ’s glorification in the heavenly places (see Ephesians 2:6-7; cf. Ephesians 1:9-10,20-23; Colossians 1:16-20; 2 Timothy 4:18), just as redeemed Israel will participate in His glorification on earth (see Matthew 5:5; Revelation 1:5-6; Revelation 5:9-10). Before we can rule and reign with the Lord Jesus in Heaven, we must appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ as described in Romans 14:10-12, 1 Corinthians 3:9-15, and 2 Corinthians 5:9-10.

*“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God”* (Romans 14:10-12).

*“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire”* (1 Corinthians 3:9-15).

*“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (2 Corinthians 5:9-10). Christian service is **not** simply doing what the preacher said, what the church said, what denomination said. **True** Christian service is the result of sound Bible doctrine believed in the heart or soul. Jesus Christ will judge what was done *“in our body”*—not “by” but “in our body.” This is an internal matter, **not** external. It is much more than “going through the motions”—moving lips, hands, feet, legs, and arms. Are what we are saying and doing the results of sound Bible doctrine (good information) or ignorance (bad information) in our soul?

During the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Lord Jesus Himself will review our Christian service and doctrine as members of the Church the Body of Christ. The *“sort”* or quality (**not** quantity but quality!) of the doctrine we stored in our inner man will be the basis for our role or job in Heaven’s government. If we walked by faith in God’s grace to us in Christ as detailed in Paul’s Books of Romans to Philemon, we will receive a reward. However, if it is not God’s grace to us in Christ, but the law system or some other non-

rightly divided Scripture, or no Scripture at all, then we will suffer loss of reward. When the Judgment Seat of Christ is finished, and all members of the Body of Christ have been reviewed and assigned a task or role in Heaven's governments, our actual appointments to those offices of government will get underway. Michael the Archangel and his angels will prepare Heaven's offices for us by vacating outer space of Satan and his evil angels.

See Revelation 12:7-9: “[7] *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, [8] And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. [9] And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*” With Satan and his angels evicted from outer space, their “*place*” found there no more, we occupy those “*places*” for God’s glory (see Ephesians 2:6-7). No longer is there “*spiritual wickedness in high [heavenly] places*” (Ephesians 6:12)!

Before we leave this section, we need to add more clarification about 2 Thessalonians 2:8, where we read: “*And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:....*” It has been argued that the Antichrist will not actually be “*revealed*” until midway through the 70<sup>th</sup> Week, meaning the Body of Christ would be removed only just before this. However, the Antichrist is “*revealed*” at the **beginning** of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week. He is brought on the scene to start the week, exactly as foretold in Daniel 9:27. We see him, mimicking Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:11), in Revelation 6:1-2: “*And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*”

The Antichrist is “*revealed*” by coming to power (2 Thessalonians 2:3), for, we know he is “*that man of sin*” for the first half of the seven years and “*the son of perdition*” for the second half. Notice how these seven years are divided into two periods of 42 months each (Revelation 11:2; Revelation 13:5), or 3½ years each (Daniel 12:7; Revelation 12:14), or 1260 days each (Revelation 11:3; Revelation 12:6). Revelation chapters 10–13 describe the events leading up to the midpoint, the midpoint itself, and the events following the midpoint. The “*abomination of desolation*” is dividing line between the two halves of those seven years (see Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14), when the Antichrist demands Israel stop offering sacrifices in the newly-rebuilt Jerusalem Temple and start worshipping him there (see Daniel 7:25; Daniel 9:27; Daniel 11:31,36-38; Daniel 12:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:1-18).

Surely, as those seven years pass, it becomes more and more apparent who the Antichrist really is and what he planned all along, but apostate Israel accepts him at the beginning without such knowledge (re-read 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). It is after apostate Israel follows him that he shows himself to be a traitor—but, by that time, it is too late for them to renounce him. Believing Israel, however, was never fooled. Lost Israel wanted the lie, and God granted them their wish! The “*peaceful*” “*messiah*”—lacking arrows in his

bow (Revelation 6:2), obtaining his kingdom using flatteries (Daniel 11:21)—will turn out to have war in his heart (Psalm 55:20-21; Daniel 8:20-25; Revelation 6:3-4) and eternal damnation in his future (Revelation 19:19-20; Revelation 20:10)! He will take unbelieving Israel down with him to everlasting flames (see Revelation 14:9-11). **None of this has anything to do with us, the Church the Body of Christ.**

### ***J. The Acts transition period vs. The Future transition***

Paul's salvation did ***not*** occur ***within*** the prophetic program (for Paul's salvation in prophecy was impossible in light of Matthew 12:31-32 and 1 Timothy 1:13). It happened ***outside*** it. Christ's initial appearance to Paul in Acts chapter 9 occurred ***in mystery not prophecy***. Therefore, Christ's coming for us must be ***within mystery not prophecy***. There can be **no** mystery program operating ***within*** the prophetic program (whether past [Acts] or future [Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week]). The two programs do ***not*** overlap! We **cannot** endure ***any*** part of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, for Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week is **entirely** the prophetic program (remember Daniel 9:24-27). The Book of Daniel is prophecy, ***not*** mystery. As there was ***within the mystery program a transitional period from prophecy to mystery***, there will be a (future) transitional period from mystery to prophecy—but that transition from mystery to prophecy is ***within the prophetic program***. The future transition is ***not*** for **our** sake, but for **Israel's** sake. Therefore, our participation in that future transition is **totally unnecessary**. We Christians are ***not*** on Earth by the time Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week begins.

A transition from prophecy to mystery was required for the own good of believing Israel (the Little Flock, or the Messianic Church) who was still present on the Earth (during Acts). However, with the conclusion of the mystery program, there will not be any believers left on Earth because they were the Body of Christ, which has since been taken up to Heaven (before prophecy resumes). Only after the mystery program closes does the prophetic program begin again. The Church the Body of Christ is a mystery program truth. Let us say it again: mystery and prophecy **cannot** operate simultaneously. When the Body of Christ began with Saul's conversion in Acts chapter 9, there was **no** longer any prophetic program functioning. In the future, for prophecy to resume, the mystery program must cease. Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week (prophetic program) cannot begin until the mystery program (us) ends. It is really is that simple.

In Acts chapter 15, at the Jerusalem Conference (held during the Acts transitional period), even the Apostle James admitted whatever God had been doing with Israel had been interrupted because of Paul's ministry, but God would one day go back to forming Israel. Mystery is in effect, but ***not*** forever because prophecy will resume when mystery stops. See Acts 15:13-18: *"[13] And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: [14] Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. [15] And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, [16] After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: [17] That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles,*

*upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. [18] Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”*

The distinction goes **far beyond** simply groups of believers (Israel versus Body of Christ), and extends to bodies of truth or Divine programs (prophecy versus mystery). Either the prophetic program is operating, or the mystery program is operating. With Paul’s salvation in Acts chapter 9, the mystery program was functioning. For 30 years, Paul’s “Acts” ministry was to provoke lost Israel to jealousy to the point of them trusting his Gospel and joining the Body of Christ (Romans 11:11-14). There was **no** prophetic program operating with Paul, just a time (Acts) when certain practices were carried over from Israel’s program (water baptism, speaking in tongues, physical healing, et cetera) so as to signal to Israel their program had been paused and Israel’s God was doing something different with Paul and the Gentiles (salvation going to the Gentiles through Israel’s fall, Gentile salvation **without** Israel’s national conversion—the secret committed to Paul’s ministry).

### ***K. Sincere—but sincerely wrong!***

Though not original to this writer, here is an explanation to describe what we are seeing today among the Mid-Tribulation, Post-Tribulation, and Pre-Wrath people. The way they talk, they want the opportunity to prove their love for the Lord Jesus Christ by surviving the Antichrist’s persecution or even dying under his regime. They desire to suffer a portion or all of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week so they can brag about their dedication, perseverance, or faithfulness. (Recall our remarks in Section E!!!) Although sincere, they are sincerely wrong. How zealous they are, but how ignorant they are too! If they wish to serve the Lord Jesus Christ now, they can do it while the Dispensation of Grace is in operation. They need to get over to Romans to Philemon and renew their mind with grace doctrine, that they have a **reward** at the Judgment Seat of Christ instead of a **loss** of reward!

### ***L. Where self-styled “dispensationalists” exacerbated the misunderstandings***

Unfortunately, what lies at the heart of the Rapture timing controversy (like so many other issues in Christendom) is a **miserable failure** to “*study... rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15). It was that very fact that led, long ago, to the near-total abandonment of the **proper** Rapture view in the first place. (Religious tradition reigned, though a few believers—social “outcasts”—maintained the **correct** Rapture position. The same is true even now regarding a host of other Bible topics, including justification [forgiveness of sins] and sanctification [victorious Christian/grace living].)

Roughly two centuries ago, denominationalists who saw dispensational distinctions in Scripture they had never paid attention to prior, began abandoning their denominational systems in favor of purer doctrine (separating Peter and Paul, dividing Israel from the Body of Christ, parting prophecy from mystery, and so on). Martin Luther,

a few centuries before them, had noticed how to separate a pure Gospel of Grace from counterfeit gospels. It was a start, and they built on his understanding. **However, none of them (Luther included) ever moved far from a great portion of their original errors**—they did **not** apply dispensational Bible study **consistently**. Protestants everywhere have never progressed beyond what limited light the Reformers had 500 years ago. While **not** corrupting the Scriptures to the degree those remaining in denominationalism did, **they still imagined mystery truth in at least some prophetic passages**. To wit, their understanding did not reach full maturity. They would continue to take certain parts of **Israel's** doctrine and force them onto us—although to a lesser extent than their denominational counterparts. For instance, they would put us the Body of Christ in **Christ's earthly ministry**.

These “old-time” or bygone dispensationalists then influenced those of the early to mid-20th century (Clarence Larkin, C. I. Scofield, Lewis Sperry Chafer [founder of Dallas Theological Seminary—which has been **unbelievably apostate for decades** thanks to Neo-Orthodoxy and textual criticism], Charles Ryrie, among others). With these men came a **popularization (not invention!)** of dispensational Bible study, but they too did **not** rightly divide **adequately**. Therefore, they saw the Church the Body of Christ in Matthew 16:18, Acts 2:47, 1 Peter 2:9-10, 1 John, Revelation chapters 2–3, et cetera. They did **not** follow the Apostle Paul's ministry **exclusively**; they “picked and chose” what they wanted from Paul, ignored the rest of Paul, and supplemented Paul with Christ's earthly ministry (Matthew to John) and Hebrews through Revelation. (Even into the 21<sup>st</sup> century this perversion of Scripture occurs in countless so-called “dispensational” circles. What is usually passed off as “dispensationalism” is light or extremely basic. There is almost no **Pauline** dispensationalism, which is a cure for so many of our ecclesiastical woes and debilitations!!

The men who trained under these aforementioned preachers and teachers were already accustomed to placing the Body of Christ in the prophetic program **in time past** (that is, Christ's earthly ministry and early Acts), so it did not take long for these students to be open to placing the Church the Body of Christ in the prophetic program **in the ages to come** (either a portion, or all, of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week). In the midst of all this confusion, there are many so-called “dispensationalists” who have moved from a Pre-Tribulation Rapture (before the seven years) to embrace a Mid-Tribulation Rapture (halfway through the seven years), or a Post-Tribulation Rapture (at the end of the seven years), or a Pre-Wrath Rapture (sometime during the second half of the seven years). **They were on shaky theological ground in the first place, having never possessed a clear understanding of what right division actually is anyway!**

Dear friend, we need to **consistently** rightly divide the Word of Truth—careful **not** to combine Peter with Paul, or Law with Grace, or prophecy with mystery, or Israel with the Church the Body of Christ, or but now with the ages to come. There is **no** Church the Body of Christ until Paul's salvation and commissioning in Acts chapter 9. Paul alone writes about the doctrine, duty, walk, and destiny of the Church the Body of Christ. Looking in Matthew to John, early Acts, or Hebrews to Revelation, for God's words to and about us, **is a recipe for disaster, deception, and discouragement.**



Some 2,000 years of church history bear record to that fact. Unless we start rightly dividing the Word of Truth as **the Apostle Paul** does—and **stop** rightly dividing the Word of Truth according to Doctor “So-and-So,” Brother “So-and-So,” Pastor “So-and-So”—we have neither a hope nor a prayer in the world of ever understanding or enjoying the Bible. *It really is that simple.*

### III. Conclusion About the Rapture

Let us summarize, here in Part III, the main thrust of our study, and wrap up this treatise!

#### ***A. Does this really matter? Is it worth dividing over?***

Strangely, those who contend “the timing of the Rapture should not divide brethren,” often end up writing books and advocating a particular view about it—all the while claiming “they are not entirely sure” about their own position. If we “should not divide over it” (as they claim), if it “does not matter” (as they claim), ***then why are they even bothering to speak and write about it so extensively?!*** Apparently, even they see it is an **important** topic, something that must be settled. If we are to be “tolerant of other Rapture views” (as they beg us), ***that means they are sheepishly admitting even their position is subject to doubts.***

Unfortunately, while they are zealous, they are ***not*** according to God’s knowledge (Romans 10:2). Such is foolishness, plain and simple. It is natural-man thinking, that which competes the Holy Spirit’s teaching ministry: *“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:13-14).

Let us make something quite clear. Sound Bible doctrine unites, but false teachers and false teaching divide: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple”* (Romans 16:17-18). We are ***not*** divisive if we *“Abhor [Dislike, despise] that which is evil”* and *“cleave [stick, adhere] to that which is good”* (Romans 12:9). People teaching evil doctrine are the wrongdoers. Those who expose them are ***not*** at fault. **Unless it is a Pre-Tribulation (Pre-70<sup>th</sup>-Week) Rapture, it is false. Advocates of a Mid-Tribulation Rapture, a Post-Tribulation Rapture, or a Pre-Wrath Rapture are all dangerous in their doctrine and unstable in their understanding. They are “divisive,” serve their own “bellies” (appetites, lusts), and serve ***not*** our Lord Jesus Christ. Those are some strong words, but they are true words. We make no apologies. Let it offend whomever it offends.**

As we already pointed out in 2 Thessalonians 2:2, the Thessalonians were being alarmed or scared out of their wits because of the erroneous end-times view of false teachers (who did not rightly divide the word of truth, separating Peter from Paul, Law from Grace, Israel from the Body of Christ, prophecy from mystery). Such sensationalism plagues the professing church right now—these are the people promoting a Mid-Tribulation Rapture, a Post-Tribulation Rapture, or a Pre-Wrath Rapture (all of which have the Body of Christ entering at least part of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week). In fact, some people

suggest we are living in the Tribulation, Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, this very moment. This was the nonsense Satan was using to bother the Thessalonians. Yet, here we have "scholarly" people reassuring us we should **not** be dogmatic or nitpicky about which Rapture position to take. If their claim is accurate, then it was pointless for the Holy Spirit to write the two Thessalonians epistles through Paul!

Anyone who says it really does not matter what we believe about the timing of the Rapture, is someone advertising **Bible ignorance**. They may have attended seminary or Bible college, learned church history and doctrinal statements and patristic positions (writings of church fathers), examined and translated Hebrew and/or Greek and/or Latin texts, and been in "ministry" for decades, but what they have been studying is not the Scriptures alone. If they have done personal Bible study, it was through the "lens" of their denominational system or theological persuasion. They were educated in foreign language manuals, textbooks, commentaries, and "scholarly" journals. It was men using their intellect in a **failed attempt** to analyze and comprehend what the Holy Spirit alone has inspired, preserved, and taught **only those souls willing to submit to Him!** It is truly frightening to realize we have such unqualified people in church leadership positions all over the world. No wonder the professing church is so mixed up and languishing in doctrinal ruin!

We can debate the finer points of the prophetic program, for the Holy Spirit has given us liberty here. However, if we begin taking events or terms unique to the prophetic program and try to harmonize them with the mystery program, we are hopelessly confused. **Never** should we use obscure or debatable verses from the prophetic program to attempt to see the Rapture's relationship to them. The Mid-Tribulation Rapture, Pre-Wrath Rapture, and Post-Tribulation Rapture supporters have done just this. They appeal to prophetic (non-Pauline) verses to shed light on Pauline truth (the Rapture), which is contrary to God's will and command that we rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). They see similarities between Pauline and non-Pauline verses, and instead of keeping them separate, they blend them to the extent of saying, "There is but one future coming of Christ. Paul cannot be speaking of yet another coming." **Bible ignorance!**

Mark these words well, dear friend:

1. If we do not place the Rapture **where it rightly belongs on the Bible timeline (Pre-Tribulation [Pre-70<sup>th</sup>-Week])**, then we have allowed the prophetic program and the mystery program to overlap, confounding God's purpose and plan for Earth (Israel) with His purpose and plan for Heaven (us, the Body of Christ).
2. Therefore, to be non-dogmatic (open to various positions) concerning the timing of the Rapture is to do nothing more than announce, "We do not mind if prophecy combines with mystery, we do not care if Israel and the Body of Christ are confused with each other, we do not mind if Earth and Heaven are not separated, we do not care if law and grace are confounded. If you want to ignore dispensational boundaries in Scripture, we are **comfortable** with that and we will not make a big deal about it because we tolerate all views!"

The timing of the Rapture **does** matter, as shown in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-14 and 2 Timothy 2:15-18. If we do not establish anything meaningful, we are left with doubts and ignorance. To say “the timing of the Rapture does not matter”... is to claim “the timing of the Rapture should not divide believers”... which is just as careless as asserting... “It makes no difference whether or not we separate Peter from Paul”... which is just as silly as declaring... “It does not matter if we divide the nation Israel from us the Church the Body of Christ.” Second Timothy 2:15 becomes increasingly overlooked. Any failure to rightly divide the Word of Truth is one step closer to spiritual darkness and blindness. We have to start taking Bible study more seriously than we have, or we do **not** have a hope or a prayer in the world of understanding or enjoying the Bible.

### ***B. What is the value of our theological system?***

Once, your author was reading a Bible study “help.” This book, written by a famous Bible preacher and teacher, has been used in seminaries and Bible colleges to train people for the ministry over the course of several decades. The preacher, when commenting on Paul’s two Thessalonian epistles, was unsure as to what position to take with regards to the Rapture. If asked about if he believed in the Rapture, he declared how he would **avoid** answering. At the time of his writing, he had no specific Rapture view—and he expressed concerns that, if he did espouse one belief, it would only distract his readers from what was really important! In other words, despite all his years of Bible college training, pastoring and teaching, and even purported personal Bible “study,” he still had not arrived at anything certain about the Rapture’s timing (or, he was too cowardly to share his views, fearing he might offend someone with his dogmatism!).

If we believe the Body of Christ will remain on Earth during the continuation of the prophetic program—or even a part of the prophetic program (including some or all of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week)—we have **failed miserably** to understand one of the most basic divisions in Scripture. Our theological system is utterly worthless; we would do well to abandon it and never give it another moment of our time or attention. We are **not** rightly dividing the Word of Truth: we are **not** dividing prophecy from mystery, we are **not** separating Peter and Paul, we are **not** distinguishing between Israel and the Body of Christ, we are **not** dividing Law from Grace. The Body of Christ has **no** reason to be here on the Earth as the prophetic program resumes, for the prophetic program has its own group of believers (Israel’s Little Flock restarted). God does **not** need us as His witnesses by that point. Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week is a time for Israel to be purged of unbelievers, **not** the Body of Christ (made up of believers only).

That is, the nation Israel has lost and saved alike in it, but the Body of Christ is composed of just believers. Hence, the Antichrist’s ministry is **not** intended to identify who is part of the Body of Christ and who is not, but rather who is a “true Jew” (member of Little Flock, Israel’s believing remnant) and who is “*of the synagogue of Satan*” (apostate, counterfeit Israel—possessing a physical circumcision and having experienced a physical birth connected to Abraham, but lacking a spiritual circumcision in the heart

and a spiritual birth [born again as in John chapter 3]). It is as plain as can be if we just approach the Scriptures dispensationally.

***C. If the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is the only valid position Bible-believing Christians should take, are its rejecters intentionally deceiving others?***

As we opened this study, so we have come “full circle” regarding the extensive misinformation about the Rapture. Surely, there are many people who just need to be taught sound Bible doctrine: like poor Apollos in Acts 18:24-28, they are ***not*** consciously believing or knowingly promoting false teaching. We should definitely make an effort to educate them, for they do not rightly divide the Word of Truth but should (2 Timothy 2:15). However, just as there are people who are ***deliberately serving the Lord***, fully aware that they are obeying God’s will, there are people who are ***intentionally helping the Devil***, having learned the truth and then wholeheartedly ***refused*** it because they wanted to pursue another course in life and thought. We need to avoid this latter group of people, for nothing we say to them will change them. They have outright repudiated whatever truth they knew.

When asked about the timing of the Rapture, one famous (“scholarly”) preacher responded on his website by writing eight simple sentences. He supports a ***Post-Tribulation Rapture*** (that is, we are “caught up” just as the Lord comes down to Earth at His Second Coming to close Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week). The ***only*** verse he quoted in his tiny “article” was 1 Thessalonians 4:17, ***and that says nothing about the timing***. Just imagine all the people this “world-renowned” “spiritual authority” has influenced with his ***opinion***—and an ***opinion*** is the only basis for his position. If he does not have Bible verses to verify his claim, ***he is offering nothing but idle speculation***. We find it difficult to believe he did not know any better.

Earlier in this study, we mentioned it, but we will do so again. A Bible teacher, commenting on this subject, remarked that ***nothing*** in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 indicated any time for the Rapture. He ***conveniently ignored*** the opening verses of chapter 5, for those words of God would have nullified or cancelled the ***Post-Tribulation Rapture*** view he was trying to promote in his studies. It is extremely unlikely this “scholar” was unaware of the next chapter.

Several years ago, your writer was watching a “Christian” celebrity and televangelist sell large containers of food during his broadcast. According to him, these were supplies that members of his in-studio and television audience ***would find useful during the Tribulation***. Listening to the sales pitch, your writer thought to himself, “That man will never get anyone to buy anything if they believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.” Apparently, that preacher had thought of that before he even recorded his program: after peddling his buckets of food, he had a guest speaker to appear on-camera and address the audience. This speaker had written a book on why there was ***no*** Pre-Tribulation Rapture, ***proof enough that people needed to purchase the televangelist’s food products and survivalist kits***. Clever indeed! (The Lord handled

such people in “ministry” 20 centuries ago! Please check Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46, and John 2:13-17.)

Here is just a sample of the idiocy in Christendom concerning end-times (prophecy) preaching. It is extremely hard to believe these “doctorate” (seminary-trained) men, considering their decades in “Bible ministry,” are **accidentally** confused. Like with many leaders of false religious systems, they **have** to know the truth—but they are unwilling to concede how their theological system is wrong and the Scriptures are right. They must know more than what they are telling their audience. This was just like the false teachers (“*deceivers*”) misleading the saints in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, and quite similar to Hymenaeus and Philetus confusing others in 2 Timothy 2:17-18 (which verses we presented a few times in this our dissertation!). They are not “*rightly dividing the word of truth*,” thus causing multimillions of people to go astray with their widespread errors.

Most souls do not have—and never have had—a firm understanding of what the Rapture is anyway. Therefore, it is not hard to fathom why they have misplaced it on the Bible timeline, or no longer believe in it altogether. In fact, Roman Catholics, Mormons, and Seventh-Day Adventists do not hold to **any** Rapture view whatsoever: to them, it is but fiction! If we do not rightly divide the Word of Truth, we will eventually find ourselves in their camp.

#### ***D. What final words of caution can be given?***

More than three decades ago, there was a local “Bible” church—quasi-dispensational (of the “Acts 2” persuasion, if you must know)—whose new pastor had a reputation for false teaching and highly questionable activities. He was a suspicious character even when he was being considered as a pastoral candidate there, but the deacon board (six or seven men, one individual doubting the preacher) chose him to be their pastor. After having served the assembly for just three years, this pastor made the following public announcement: a new “Christian bestseller” he had read had caused him to drastically shift his eschatological (end-times) views. Having held to a “Pre-Tribulation Rapture,” he was advocating a Rapture in the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week. He was even contemplating changing the church’s doctrinal statement to reflect his new position!

This local church, consisting of approximately 80 members, split. One-fourth of the congregation permanently left because of that false teaching and never returned. Among those who fled that heretical assembly were ***your writer’s parents*** (at the time, he was only three years old, and his brothers were teenagers). Over 30 years have passed since **our** local church fragmented, and most of the individuals involved ***never*** recovered from the emotional pain and spiritual suffering. Today, the church remains—having fallen into more apostasy! Considering this, ***never*** let anyone convince you the timing of the Rapture does not matter. They are only fooling themselves. Do ***not*** grant them the permission to fool you!