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M I S P L A C E D
R A P T U R E

The Rapture is always associated with the coming tribulation period. The question is does it occur BEFORE, DURING or AFTER the tribulation period?

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The Return Of Jesus

We live in a world that is unaware;
Yea, they don't even seem to care
That the day is perhaps very near
When Jesus is going to appear.

We live in a world that has little concern
That one day Jesus is going to return.
They're too busy searching for earth's treasure
And forbidding nothing that brings them pleasure.

We live in a world where there is little fear
Of the day when Jesus will suddenly appear;
'cause their minds are evil and their souls are black,
They couldn't care less that Jesus is coming back.

We live in a world that struggles each night and day;
Each one making a life in his own helpless way.
Their mortal bodies are tired and their spirits sour
Yet aren't consoled by His return at some soon hour.

Aids And Explanations

I wish to apologize for any mistakes to be found in this book. I wish there were none but that is unlikely. Some mistakes may be mine while others will occur in the production process. I hope that any grammar, punctuation, or typographical errors will not detract from the value of the information or your enjoyment.

Following are the explanations of terms used throughout this book.

Tribulation period refers to the **last seven years** just prior to Christ's return to earth to set up His Millennial Kingdom (1,000 years of earthly rule in Jerusalem).

Pre-tribulation means **before** the tribulation period begins.

Pre-tribulation rapture suggests a rapture which occurs **before** the tribulation period begins.

Pre-tribulationists are those who believe that the rapture of the church will happen **before** the tribulation period begins.

The below examples show how to read Bible references used in the book.

Revelation 19 refers to Revelation Chapter 19

Revelation 19-21 means Revelation Chapters 19 thru 21

Revelation 19,21 means Revelation Chapters 19 and 21

Revelation 19:21 means Revelation Chapter 19 verse 21

Revelation 19:21-24 means Revelation Chapter 19 verses 21 thru 24

Revelation 19:21,24 means Revelation Chapter 19 verses 21 and 24

Revelation 19:21-24,30 means Revelation Chapter 19 verses 21 thru 24 and verse 30

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We begin with the assumption that the reader knows what the rapture is and that it is always linked to the tribulation period. The proper placement of the rapture in relation to the tribulation period remains a problem for many. Some place the rapture before, some during and others after the tribulation period. One thing is certain. The rapture happens only once.

A Christian lady once said to me, "It doesn't matter when the rapture happens as long as it does." In one sense that is true. The time of the rapture really is unimportant to all who die before the tribulation period. However, it will be of great concern to Christians when the tribulation period begins. Will they enter the tribulation period or will they be taken to heaven by the rapture prior to it?

Most Christians' belief echoes that of their pastor or Christian friends. That is fine if these people are correct but if they are wrong your future may be different than you imagine. Many Christians have a strong belief about the time of the rapture but cannot prove it with the Bible. Still, others use the Bible to prove their belief but are wrong because of misinterpretation and misunderstanding of Bible prophecy.

If you believe that the rapture comes before the tribulation period you are in the majority which will soon be the minority. The pre-tribulation rapture belief is losing favor. Why? Bible prophecy clearly conveys a rapture that comes AFTER the tribulation period. We are going to scrutinize the Bible verses used by those who teach a pre-tribulation rapture.

Think on these questions. Do you believe that the rapture comes before the tribulation? Why do you believe so? If you were asked to prove your belief from the Bible could you do it? Any Bible references which you may use probably are in the following list which we are going to examine. We have divided the Bible references into two groups.

Group 1 Bible verses which address the rapture directly

Group 2 Bible verses which do not address the rapture directly but are used to promote a pre-tribulation rapture

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GROUP 1 RAPTURE VERSES

John 14:2-3 *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.*

Jesus told His disciples that He was going to heaven to prepare a place for them (the church). He also told them that He would come again *and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also*. The words *receive you unto myself* speak of the rapture.

Jesus told of His appearing in the sky at the rapture in Matthew 24:30-31. There He sent His angels to "gather together his elect." This is equivalent to Jesus' promise to *receive you unto myself* in John 14:3. It is also our *gathering together unto him* which Paul wrote in II Thessalonians 2:1.

Jesus promised the rapture in John 14:2-3. Now the big question. Did Jesus promise that He would *come again* before the tribulation period? No, He did not. He made no association of His return to the tribulation period. Therefore there is no proof of a pre-tribulation rapture in John 14:2-3.

I Thessalonians 4:16-17 *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump Of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

These are dynamite rapture verses and are vigorously cited as proof of a pre-tribulation rapture. Several elements of the rapture are named here but the time of the rapture is our concern. Read those verses again very carefully. Now the big question. Do they tell us that the rapture happens before the tribulation period? No, they do not. Proof of a pre-tribulation rapture will have to come from somewhere else.

I Corinthians 15:51-52 *Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling*

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of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

It is necessary to identify exactly what Paul is describing in these verses. First, we must realize that the rapture involves several distinct actions. They are:

1. The appearing of Christ in the air with His angels
2. The resurrection of deceased Christians with their new bodies
3. The transformation of the living Christians (changed bodies)
4. The sending of the angels to gather the Christians
5. The transportation of the Christians to meet the Lord in the air

In the above verses Paul mentions two of the five actions of the rapture. First, the resurrection of the dead in their new bodies. Second, the transformation of the bodies of the living Christians. *We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.* Now the big question. Did Paul at all indicate that these two actions will happen before the tribulation period? No, he did not. To see a pre-tribulation rapture in I Corinthians 15:51-52 is to see something that is not there.

Acts 1:9-11 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go to into heaven.

This is Luke's story of the Lord's ascension into heaven after His resurrection which His disciples witnessed. Standing by them were two angels who comforted the disciples with the promise that Jesus would return in the same manner as they saw Him leave. It is mutually agreed among prophecy preachers that this future return of Christ is the rapture of the church.

Now the big question: Can it be determined from the angels' message that Christ is to return before the tribulation period? Absolutely not. We are

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only given the promise that He *shall so come* but not when. There is no pre-tribulation rapture to be found in Acts 1:9-11.

Titus 2:13 *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.*

The prophecy pundits disagree as to which event this is. Some say it is the Lord's second advent (return to earth) while others believe it is His appearing at the rapture. It was proven in the previous chapter that the word "appearing" makes this the rapture.

Paul's *glorious appearing* of Jesus Christ matches Jesus' description of His appearing in Matthew 24:30. There Jesus said, *they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.* Paul and Matthew testified of the same event, the rapture.

Now the big question: Did Paul place the *glorious appearing* before the tribulation period. No, he did not. He simply urged the church to be looking for the *glorious appearing* of the Savior Jesus Christ. There is no pre-tribulation rapture in Titus 2:13.

Hebrews 9:28 *So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without Sin unto salvation.*

We know that the word *appear* makes this Christ's appearing at the rapture. Paul told the Hebrew Christians that Christ will *appear* to those who look for Him and deliver them by the rapture. Question (1) Did Paul say when Christ would *appear the second time*? No, he did not. (2) Did Paul mention the tribulation? No. (3) Did Paul give any time for Christ's appearing at the rapture? No. How then can this verse be thought to teach a pre-tribulation rapture?

We have looked at six Bible references which deal directly with the rapture. None of them give the time of the rapture. None of them place the rapture in relation to the tribulation period whether it be before, during or after. They therefore cannot be proposed as Biblical proof of a pre-tribulation rapture.

Comfort And Hope

One highly celebrated prophecy writer tries to rationalize a pre-tribulation rapture with emotional arguments. We are emotional beings and are prone to being influenced by our emotions. Many Christians have been persuaded into believing a pre-tribulation rapture by improper emotional appeals.

Paul verbalized an exciting picture of the rapture in I Thessalonians 4:16-17. He followed that by instructing Christians to *comfort one another with these words*. What words? Paul's words of the rapture in verses 16-17. The promise of the rapture is be a source of comfort for Christians because it is our ticket out of this hopeless and dying world and into eternal life with Jesus Christ.

Is the rapture a comfort to Christians because it comes before the tribulation period? No, because Paul gave absolutely no hint of the rapture coming before the tribulation period. Christians will NOT be comforted by a pre-tribulation rapture. How then does the rapture bring comfort to Christians? To know that we must understand what prompted Paul to write I Thessalonians 4:16-17.

If we will go back and read the preceding three verses we will see what moved Paul to explain the rapture as he did.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. I Thessalonians 4:13-15

These verses convey the fact that the Christians at Thessalonica misunderstood the rapture. They thought that Christians who died beforehand would have no part in the rapture thereby never seeing them again. They ignorantly believed that the rapture was only for living Christians. Paul corrected their misunderstanding with I Thessalonians 4:13-17. Paul taught them the following rapture truths.

1. The spirits of dead Christians will come with Jesus at the rapture.

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verse 14

2. Living Christians will not leave before the dead Christians. verse 15
3. The bodies of the dead Christians will be resurrected first. verse 16
4. The living Christians will join the resurrected Christians and they will ascend together into the clouds to meet Jesus. verse 17

Many Christians are comforted knowing that they will see their deceased loved ones again in heaven. That truth comforts millions of Christians every day, me and my wife included. Our five year old son, Scott, was accidentally killed by a car. How often my wife has expressed comfort knowing that one day she will see Scott in heaven. That is the comfort Paul meant in I Thessalonians 4:1

The author who rationalized that only a pre-tribulation rapture could be of comfort applied the same emotional rationale to the “blessed hope” which Paul hailed. *Looking for that **blessed hope**, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.* Titus 2:13

As these perilous last days unfold Christians are longing more earnestly for the *appearing* of Jesus Christ which is our *blessed hope*. In strained logic based on emotionalism this author claims that Jesus’ appearing (rapture) could be a *blessed hope* only if it occurred before the tribulation period. Well, all but one of the twelve apostles plus many of the seven deacons plus Paul and his companions and many of the early church all died as martyrs *looking for that **blessed hope**.*

The *blessed hope* lies in the FACT of the *glorious appearing* not WHEN. Titus 2:13 gives only the promise of the *glorious appearing* not the time of it. How then can it be suggested that Christ’s *glorious appearing* (rapture) could be a *blessed hope* only if it came before the tribulation period? Would not Christ’s appearing be a *blessed hope* to the Christians at any time? Will not Christ’s appearing be a *blessed hope* to the Christians of the tribulation period? You bet it will.

Christ’s appearing is a *blessed hope* NOT because of WHEN it happens but because it WILL HAPPEN. God’s prophecy is not formulated in respect to human emotion and reason. Bible prophecy reveals God’s design for human history according to His foreknowledge, plan and will.

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The idea that the rapture can offer neither comfort nor hope unless it comes before the tribulation period is man's philosophy not God's prophecy. The Bible does not teach a pre-tribulation rapture. Jesus Himself, as it has been pointed out, placed the rapture after the tribulation of the last days. (Matt 24:29-31)

GROUP 2 NON-RAPTURE VERSES

We will now work with verses which do not specifically present the rapture but are often used to promote a pre-tribulation rapture. There are several of them and we will address them all. The tribulation period is drawing near and Christians must be doubtless as to the time of the rapture.

Escape Or Endurance

Luke 21:36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Pre-tribulationists really grab a hold of this verse. They interpret Luke's words as teaching that the church will escape the tribulation period by the rapture. This is one of those times when a simple reading of the verse may not capture the truth. A little word study will uncover the truth of Jesus' message.

The word *escape* is key to understanding Jesus' admonition to Christians. The original Greek word "ekpheugo" was translated into the English word "escape" in Luke 21:36. The Greek "ekpheugo" means to flee "out of" or "away from." Fleeing would be our responsibility - the Christian's responsibility. Therefore, Jesus could not have been talking of the rapture because Christians will not be able to flee "out of" or "away" from tribulation to heaven.

What we have here is a translation problem. The fact is there are a few "word" translation issues with the Bible. Our English Bible was translated from Greek manuscripts which presented translation problems. The word *escape* in Luke 21:36 is such a problem. Some Bible scholars and translators believe that instead of "ekpheugo" the Greek word "katischuo" is correct.

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“katischuo” means to prevail or to persevere. Bible manuscripts other than the King James use the Greek word “katischuo.” Prophetically it does fit the situation better. Jesus ended His tribulation sermon by urging the disciples (church) to watch and pray. Why? Not to *escape* the tribulation by the rapture, not to *escape* by fleeing but that they might *escape* by persevering. By watching (remaining faithful) and praying they would prevail through the tribulation period.

Christians who persevere (remain faithful) during tribulation are overcomers. Overcomers are victorious. John wrote in his first letter that faith is the power of an overcomer. *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* I John 5:4-5

In each of His letters to the seven churches Jesus promised rewards to *him that overcometh*. (Revelation 2:7,11,17,26 and 3:5,12,21) Who is an overcomer? An overcomer is a Christian who remains faithful to Jesus Christ unto the end. The end can be at one’s death or, in the case of the tribulation period, unto the rapture.

Back to Luke 21:36. Jesus admonished the disciples to watch and pray for two reasons. First, that they might escape (prevail, persevere) during the tribulation period. Second, that they might confidently *stand before the Son of Man*. That refers to the church at Christ’s appearing at the rapture which marks the end of the tribulation period. (Luke 21:27, Matthew 24:30)

The word *escape* cannot rightly signify a pre-tribulation rapture because it would contradict the Bible’s otherwise perceptible teaching of a post-tribulation rapture. The Word of God is not confused but man can be and too often is.

Escape Or Protection

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 Jesus spoke this to the church at Philadelphia.

This verse is a pillar in the belief of a pre-tribulation rapture. Many

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prophecy voices say that this is the Lord's promise of a pre-tribulation rapture. If we construe Jesus' promise to *keep thee from the hour of temptation* as teaching a pre-tribulation rapture we have a problem.

How then do we reconcile what Jesus promised the church at Smyrna with that which He promised the Philadelphians? To Smyrna Jesus wrote,

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.
Revelation 2:10

Jesus warned the Christians at Smyrna that they would go through *tribulation*. To the Philadelphia church He promised to keep them from tribulation as some interpret it. Literal and futuristic Bible preachers view the seven churches of Revelation as being representative of all churches in the Church Age. If that be true how do we square the seemingly contradictory promises of tribulation and deliverance from tribulation?

Someone suggested the solution that the tribulation promised to the church at Smyrna was for only ten days and that no future tribulation period was in view. That solution does not fly because the church has seen several periods of cruel persecution and tribulation since that announced for Smyrna. Terrible tribulation is smothering the church in many parts of the world today. It will not stop until Jesus returns to claim His bride, the church.

It has also been proposed that the tribulation which Jesus announced for the church at Smyrna was for that church alone. Wait one minute! If what Jesus promised the Smyrna church was only for them then what He promised the Philadelphia church was for them alone. That would mean that only the Christians at Philadelphia would escape the coming tribulation. We know that that cannot be. The truth is that Jesus' prophecies to the seven churches project to the Revelation tribulation period and beyond.

Our problem boils down to the meaning of the word *temptation* in Revelation 3:10. Pre-tribulationists interpret *temptation* to mean tribulation. **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible** and **Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** and **The New Century Dictionary** give no such meaning. Temptation is not tribulation and tribulation is not

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temptation. Tribulation is life's troubles and trials. Temptation is the spiritual battle between sin and righteousness within all mankind.

Jesus did not promise deliverance from tribulation in Revelation 3:10. He promised deliverance from temptation - from yielding to sin. The truth is Jesus promised to *keep thee* (the church) from succumbing to a particular temptation during the tribulation period. That temptation is the mark of the beast (Antichrist) during the tribulation period. (Rev 13) How are they kept from taking the mark of the beast? God seals all of His servants, Jews and Christians, with His mark first. (Revelation 7)

Continuing with our interpretation difficulties, Jesus said, *I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation...* The preposition *from* is problematic also. Bible translators are at odds as to the correct translation of the Greek word "ek" which was translated *from*. Some say it means "out of" as being removed or taken away. Others say it means "through" as in going through by enduring or persevering.

It must be concluded that Jesus did not promise deliverance from the tribulation period to the church at Philadelphia in Revelation 3:10 because:

1. we have conflicting promises. (Revelation 3:10 and 2:10)
2. tribulation is never defined as temptation or vice versa.
3. the preposition *from* more aptly carries the meaning "through" rather than "out of."

Jesus' promise to *keep thee from the hour of temptation* was not one of escape but one of protection. He promised to *keep* (prevent) the church from faltering in an extraordinarily difficult time of temptation (the mark of the beast) during the tribulation period.

Falling Christians

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... II Thessalonians 2:3

One prophecy writer viewed the words *a falling away first* as the rapture

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which allows that *man of sin* (the Antichrist) to rise to power. Frankly, that is an unscholarly and unacceptable rendering of that verse.

Paul was writing to the church at Thessalonica who were mixed up about the Day of Christ. They thought they had missed the rapture because they were suffering tribulation. Paul instructed them that *our gathering* (the rapture) which begins the Day of Christ would not happen before these two events: (1) *a falling away* and (2) *that man of sin be revealed*.

Paul's *man of sin* is John's beast of Revelation - the last world ruler - the Antichrist. Paul told the church at Thessalonica that the Day of Christ would not come until *that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition*. Before the *man of sin* appears Paul said there would be *a falling away*.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible and **Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** were used to gain definition of *falling away*. Here is W. E. Vine's definition of the Greek word "apostasia" which was translated as *falling away* in II Thessalonians 2:3.

"a defection, revolt, apostasy, is used in the N.T. of religious apostasy;... In 2 Thes 2:3 "the falling away" signifies apostasy from the truth."

Apostasy, the falling away from or the forsaking the truth, has always been a danger to God's people. Apostasy was Israel's biggest problem. God indicted Israel for their apostasy by the prophet Isaiah. *...they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward*. Isaiah 1:4

In the spiritual sense Paul's *falling away* and Isaiah's *gone away backward* are the same. Israel became estranged from God by their "going away backward" - walking away from God's Word. Today the church is divorcing itself from God through apostasy - a spiritual *falling away*. Apostasy is like a cancer. It spreads and sickens the church which is the body of Christ.

Paul's *falling away* is taken by some preachers as that of Israel. Not so. Paul is addressing the church at Thessalonica not Israel. Also, the context of Paul's teaching concerns the Day of Christ and the rapture. These are matters of the church not Israel. Lastly, the church is warned several times of the coming apostasy - of Christians abandoning Biblical faith. Here are

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two.

I Timothy 4:1 *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils...* It is a sad commentary but there is a mass exodus from Biblical doctrine by Christians of all denominations in these last days. Christians who forsake Biblical doctrines are at the mercy of *seducing spirits and doctrines of devils*.

II Timothy 4:3-4 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*

Many disciples left Jesus never to return because they did not like His teaching. John wrote, *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.* John 6:66 Jesus would empty many large churches today if He were to preach in them. Worldly Christians do not want the meat of the Word. They want spiritual fluff.

The *falling away* in II Thessalonians 2:3 pertains to the church and not Israel. This apostasy will occur before the Day of Christ. The Day of Christ begins with our *gathering together unto him* - the rapture. Here is the sequence of the events Paul discussed in II Thessalonians 2:1-3.

1. A falling away (apostasy) II Thessalonians 2:3
2. The man of sin (Antichrist) will be revealed II Thessalonians 2:3
3. The Day of Christ (II Thessalonians 2:2) begins with *our gathering together unto him* (the rapture) II Thessalonians 2:1

Think about this. If the rapture starts the Day of Christ and the Day of Christ comes AFTER a time of apostasy and AFTER the Antichrist how is it possible to have a pre-tribulation rapture?

Holy Spirit Departs?

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. II Thessalonians 2:7

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This follows Paul's description of the Antichrist in II Thessalonians 2:3-4. Paul explains that the Antichrist will not appear until *he who now letteth* is removed or taken out of the way. The word *letteth* means to prevent. *he* will prevent the Antichrist from coming to power until the proper time and then *he* will be removed or taken out of the way.

There are differing opinions as to who or what *he* is. Many Bible scholars and preachers see the rapture here because they interpret *he* as the Holy Spirit. They theorize that if the Holy Spirit is taken from the earth then the church must also be removed by the rapture. This makes way for the *man of sin* - the Antichrist. Here are several arguments against that thinking.

First argument. The verse reads *until he be taken out of the way* NOT taken away from the earth. The presence of *he* will prevent the Antichrist from coming to power until *he be taken out of the way*. This verse does not say that the preventing power (*he*) leaves the earth thereby necessitating the removal of the church from the earth by the rapture.

Second argument. The idea that the earth could be free of the presence of the Holy Spirit is unbiblical. Like God the Father the Holy Spirit is omnipresent (everywhere present). The Holy Spirit was involved with earth's creation. (Genesis 1:2) The Holy Spirit is present on earth during the tribulation period. (Revelation 11:11) The earth can be no more absent of the Holy Spirit than it can be of God.

Third argument. If the Holy Spirit is removed from the earth before the tribulation period how do we get the tribulation Christians? It is the Holy Spirit who draws lost souls to Jesus Christ. He indwells believers as the seal of their salvation. He teaches and leads Christians in the way of Jesus Christ. The role of the Holy Spirit will be extremely vital during the tribulation period.

Many believe that the tribulation Christians are not Christians of the church. That is hard to believe when one considers what is said of them. They are born again, washed in the blood, faithful witnesses, servants of God, suffer for their faith and are martyred for Jesus Christ. You cannot be any more Christian than that. There is no Biblical distinction between the tribulation Christians and the church. Only an ill conceived pre-tribulation

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rapture makes them different.

The tribulation period will be prime time for the Holy Spirit. Many people will be saved because of His wooing. They then will need His indwelling, His sealing, His teaching and His leading in that trying time. The Holy Spirit's role will make Him indispensable in the tribulation period. It is untenable that *he* of II Thessalonians 2:7 is the Holy Spirit.

Fourth argument. If Paul meant the Holy Spirit with the pronoun *he* why did he not say the Holy Spirit? Five times in his two short letters to the church in Thessalonica Paul named the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost. Why did he choose the third person pronoun *he* in II Thessalonians 2:7? He chose it because he meant someone else other than the Holy Spirit.

If *he* is not the Holy Spirit then who is *he*? Once again **Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** serves us. Here are selected excerpts from Dr. Vine's explanation of *he*.

" Lawlessness is presented as being restrained or prevented to some degree by a restrainer, "he." That restrainer, who now letteth or prevents the overspreading of lawlessness, will be removed or taken out of the way. This will create a social atmosphere of unchecked lawlessness and immorality.Verse 6 speaks of a principle: "...ye know what withholdeth..." It is the "what" that prevents or restrains "he" from coming to power. (It seems to Dr. Vine and other Bible scholars that this principle could be the rule of law.) In verse 7 we have that principle, the rule of law, expressed in terms of "he" which can be embodied in a single person or a series of persons. Therefore, "he" in respect to the rule of law can be a single law giver, such as a king, or a body of law givers, such as the constituted government of a country or nation."

This author concurs with Dr. Vine's judgment that *he* in II Thessalonians 2:7 is a code word for the Roman Emperor or Roman Government. Why did Paul not name the Emperor or specify the Roman Government? He could have written, "only the Emperor Nero who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." Paul chose discretion over foolhardiness. He did not want to invoke retribution upon himself or the church from the Roman Government. A few years later Paul was beheaded by the Emperor Nero.

Two thousand years of history adds insight to Paul's understanding. Paul

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was correct in that Roman rule had to go before the Antichrist could appear but it was not to be a Roman Emperor of Paul's time. It will be the multiple governments of the Revived Roman Empire that will be taken out of the way (made powerless) by democracy. What irony. Democracy (people rule) will put the Antichrist in power and he will become an absolutely evil monarch.

In summarizing, *he* is not the Holy Spirit who will *be taken out of the way* resulting in the rapture in II Thessalonians 2:7 . Paul was informing the church in disguised language that Roman rule had to be removed to allow for the Antichrist. In the next verse Paul wrote, *And then shall that Wicked be revealed...* The capitalized *Wicked* is the Antichrist who Paul described as *that man of sin, the son of perdition*. II Thessalonians 2:8

Mankind's Worst Day

Jeremiah 30:7 Jeremiah wrote, *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.*

Daniel 12:1 Daniel wrote: *...and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time...*

Matthew 24:21 Jesus said, *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

Jeremiah, Daniel and Jesus all described the same time - the tribulation period of Revelation.

Adherents to the pre-tribulation rapture hail Jeremiah's and Daniel's statements as proof that the tribulation period is exclusively for Israel. While it is true that Israel will bear their worst troubles ever in that time that is not proof that the church will not also be present. Let us not forget that Israel and the church have been coexisting and suffering tribulation for the past two thousand years.

- * Daniel and Jeremiah prophesied tribulation for Israel. They did not know of the coexistence of Israel and the forthcoming church.
- * Israel and the church have co-existed for 2,000 years. Both have

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endured hatred, persecution and tribulation during this time of coexistence.

- * Even now both are experiencing tribulation and persecution around the world. This will continue until Jesus Christ returns to rapture the church.
- * The tribulation period will be Satan's last desperate assault on God's people both the church and Israel.

Understandably Old Testament prophecy of the final tribulation period concerns Israel because their prophets had no knowledge of the church. Therefore, their prophecies do not demand the church's absence during the

tribulation period. Also, any prophecy for Israel found in the New Testament cannot be hoisted as proving the church's exclusion from the tribulation period.

The 24 Elders

Revelation 4:1 is a prophetic hammer for the pre-tribulationists. It is here they drive home a pre-tribulation rapture. John was called to heaven and was transported there in the spirit. (Revelation 4:2) He saw God on His throne *And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.* Revelation 4:4

Who are the *four and twenty elders*? Many believe them to be the raptured church which went to heaven in the person of John in Revelation 4:1-2. This gets a little confusing. John's spiritual entry into heaven is seen as representative of the rapture of the church. Then in heaven John sees twenty four elders who also supposedly represent the raptured church.

Who are the twenty four elders? It has been expressed that they represent both the twelve sons of Jacob (Israel's 12 tribes) and the twelve apostles. It is evident that they are allied to the church in some way because:

- * They wear white robes and golden crowns. Revelation 4:4
- * They worship and praise God. Revelation 4:10

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- * The Lamb stood among them. Revelation 5:6
- * They sing a song of salvation. Revelation 5:9

Pre-tribulationists believe that the twenty four elders represent the church which was raptured in Revelation 4:1. They are only partially right. The twenty four elders are a representation of the church but not of a church which is raptured in Revelation 4:1. Further study of Revelation shows that the church and the twenty four elders remain separate. They never become ONE or unified as a single body.

On four occasions John saw great gatherings of Christians in heaven: Revelation 7:9; 15:2; 19:1 and 20:4. On two of those occasions, Revelation 7:9 and 19:1, John saw the twenty four elders also present apart from the Christian multitudes. The truth is that the twenty four elders are an eternal heavenly dimension of the church. This is explained by the example of Israel's tabernacle in the wilderness. In his letter to the Hebrews Paul said this of Israel's tabernacle.

"...We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. and ...Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, THAT THOU MAKE ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN SHEWED TO THEE IN THE MOUNT." (see Hebrews 8:1-2, 5)

Moses had been instructed to build the tabernacle and all furnishings exactly to the pattern God had showed him. That pattern was a copy of the eternal heavenly tabernacle. Why was that so important? Because one day Jesus Christ (High Priest) would enter the holy place in the heavenly tabernacle and sprinkle the mercy seat with His blood from His sacrificial death on the cross.

Paul confirmed that Jesus did just that in his letter to the Hebrews. *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.* Hebrews 9:12 Jesus did not enter the temporary tabernacle which Moses built. He entered God's eternal tabernacle in heaven.

Just as Israel's tabernacle in the wilderness was patterned after a

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heavenly tabernacle, the church on earth is patterned after a heavenly church represented by the twenty four elders. Just as the heavenly

tabernacle has always been in heaven so has the heavenly church in the form of the twenty four elders always been with Jesus Christ. The earthbound church will join Jesus at the rapture.

The twenty four elders are not mentioned after Revelation 19:4. They do not accompany Christ and the church to earth. Nothing is said of them as participating in the Millennial Rule of Jesus Christ and the church. Neither the heavenly pattern of the Jews' tabernacle nor the heavenly pattern of the church (24 elders) leave heaven.

TRUTH: The twenty four elders DO NOT represent the raptured church in Revelation 4:1.

Rapture Or Revelation

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

This verse commands considerable attention. To those who espouse a pre-tribulation rapture this verse looms large. They imagine the angel's call to John *Come up hither* to be the rapture. Here are several rebuttals to that perverted prophecy.

Rebuttal 1 Rapture language. Not another time in the Bible do you find a "door" associated with the rapture. Let us read some well known verses which convey the rapture.

Matthew 24:30 *And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven....they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven...*

Matthew 24:31 *he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect...*

John 14:3 Jesus said: *I will come again, and receive you unto myself...*

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I Corinthians 15:52 *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.*

I Thessalonians 4:16 -17 *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout... we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...*

II Thessalonians 2:1 *by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our Gathering together unto him*

Rev 1:7 *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him...*

No door! Of the variety of words used to convey the rapture only "trumpet" is found in Revelation 4:1 but it is not the rapture trumpet. This trumpet is a voice, *and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me.* The *first voice* is that of Christ's angel who greeted John in Revelation 1:10. He heard a trumpet-like voice not an actual trumpet. No trumpet (instrument) is blown in Revelation 4:1.

If Revelation 4:1 is void of the usual rapture language why is it believed by many that the rapture occurs there? Maybe this is the reason. If it were not for the supposed rapture in Revelation 4:1 there would be no textual evidence of a rapture in Revelation before the tribulation begins in Revelation 6.

Rebuttal 2 The absent church. Pre-tribulationists eagerly point out that the church is not named after Revelation 4:1 until Revelation 19 Which proves that the church was raptured in Revelation 4:1. Actually, the church is not named either in Revelation 4:1 or Revelation 19.

If the omission of the title "church" in Revelation prophecy makes it unrelated to the church then we have a larger problem. The church is not named in nine New Testament books: Mark, Luke, John, II Timothy, Titus, II Peter, I & II John and Jude. Are we to believe that these books are not relevant to the church because it is not specifically named? Of course not.

"Church" is not named from Revelation 3:22 until Revelation 22:16. Notwithstanding, who would deny that the martyred souls under the altar in

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Revelation 6 are the church? Who would deny that the saved throng in Revelation 7 is the church? Who would deny that it is the church that returns with Christ in Revelation 19? Who would deny the church's presence with Christ in the Millennial kingdom in Revelation 20? Who would deny that it is the church which inhabits the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21? Yet it is not so named.

There are many words, terms and descriptions which clearly indicate the presence of Christians (the church) in Revelation. Examples:

- 1 The title "saints" is used 10 times. Christians are New Testament saints. Saints are mentioned thirteen times in Revelation.
Pre-tribulationists classify them as "tribulation saints" as opposed to church saints. A study of the tribulation saints reveals there is no difference in their faith from that of the church. There is no scripture that divides saints into church saints and tribulation saints. There is one class of saints, the church, and one rapture.
- 2 The title "servant" appears 3 times. (Revelation 7:3; 11:18; 15:3) Christians are New Testament servants of God and Jesus Christ.
- 3 Prayers of the saints rise up before God. (Revelation 5:8; 8:4) Christians communicate with God through prayer. These saints are on earth because saints in heaven have no need for prayer.
- 4 We see those who were *slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held*. (Revelation 6:9) Martyrdom is Christianity's brightest badge.
- 5 Those who came out of great tribulation *washed their robes, and made Them white in the blood of the lamb*. (Revelation 7:14) Christians are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ.
- 6 *a great multitude...stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb*. (Revelation 7:9-10) What group can praise God For salvation other than the church?
- 7 *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death*. (Revelation 12:11) These are Christian martyrs during the tribulation period.

Here is a question for those who think that the church will not be in the tribulation period. Why would God keep the church from the tribulation period and then save millions during that time?

God's Two Witnesses

The incident of God's two witnesses in Revelation 11 casts much doubt on a rapture in Revelation 4:1. John described the two witnesses as, *These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.* Revelation 11:4 The two designations, *olive trees* and *candlesticks*, have swayed many to identify the two witnesses as Jewish prophets to Israel. Olive oil was used to anoint prophets, priests and kings. The candlesticks are seen as lamp stands which were placed in the temple for light.

The two witnesses are more than Jews if we consider Jesus' definition of the *candlesticks* to John. Jesus said, *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.* Revelation 1:20

John described the two witnesses as the *two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.* First is the "olive tree" symbolism. Throughout the Bible olive oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. Also, the olive tree speaks of a spirit led Israel. We can safely interpret the *two olive trees* as being two spirit filled Jews with a message to Israel from God.

Beside *two olive trees* God's two witnesses are called *two candlesticks*. We do not need to wonder as to who the *candlesticks* are. Jesus definitely defined "candlestick" as the church in Revelation 1:20. It must be concluded that God's two witness are Christian preachers ordained for ministering to the church during the time of tribulation.

The two witnesses will be persons of both Judaism and Christianity. Special notice is made of their wearing of sackcloth which points to the somber spirit of their message. For three and a half years they will preach repentance, salvation and judgment. As soon as their preaching is finished they will be killed by the Antichrist. Their dead bodies will be left to decay in the street for three and a half days while the world rejoices.

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Their celebration is suddenly squelched when the two witnesses are resurrected and rise toward heaven in a cloud of glory. It is during this most troubling time in the history of the church that God shows them visual proof of the coming rapture. It is as if God is reassuring the church that they too will be taken up by the rapture very soon.

We have seen much textual evidence (terms, phrases, descriptions) which positively identifies the church in Revelation 4-14. The omission of the word "church" is no indication that the church experienced a pre-tribulation rapture in Revelation 4:1.

Rebuttal 3 The call to heaven. John's call to heaven, *Come up hither*, in Revelation 4:1 is repeated on another occasion. We just talked about God's two witnesses in Jerusalem in the tribulation period.

They are killed by the Antichrist and left in the street. After three and a half days God revives them and calls them to heaven with *Come up hither*. Revelation 11:12 The calling to heaven of God's two witnesses resemble the rapture of the church far better than John's call to heaven in Revelation 4:1. For example:

- * The two witnesses are killed and resurrected.
- * They ascended up into the clouds of heaven.
- * The people watched the two witnesses rise into heaven.

The two witnesses were called to heaven bodily but not so with John. He never physically left the island of Patmos. He was transported to heaven in the spirit. Four times John indicated that his reception of Revelation was a spiritual experience. He said, *And immediately I was in the spirit*. Revelation 4:2 (see also Revelation 1:10; 17:3; 21:10)

Once John spoke particularly of having a vision. (Revelation 9:17) It is probable that in each of his "in the spirit" experiences John had a vision. The point is that John was not given The Revelation in heaven. He received the Revelation on the Island of Patmos while in the Spirit - in the spirit of worship.

Rebuttal 4 The purpose. The trumpet-like voice of Christ's angel called

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John to heaven with *Come up hither*. Pre-tribulationists think this to be Christ's call at the rapture and John represents the church body. If we will notice the purpose for the call it does not stand that it is the rapture. Four times we are told explicitly the purpose of the Revelation.

Revelation 1:1 Jesus told John that the purpose of Revelation was to *Shew unto his servants **things which must shortly come to pass***.

Revelation 1:19 Jesus commanded John to *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the **things which shall be hereafter***.

Revelation 4:1 Christ's angel called John to heaven with *Come up hither and I will shew thee **things which must be hereafter***.

Revelation 22:6 John was informed that God had sent his angel to *shew unto His servants the **things which must shortly be done***.

There is no room for doubt or disagreement as to why John was called to heaven in Revelation 4:1. Four times it is clearly stated that Jesus wanted His servants (the church) to know the future - to know what was coming. The Revelation is a prophetic book given to the church by Jesus Christ for them to know the future.

God has never been a God of surprises concerning His dealings with mankind. Neither has He kept His works, good or bad, secretly from us. God wants us to know what lies ahead as He affirms in these verses.

Isaiah 48:3,5 *I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee.*

Daniel 2:28 *But there is a God in heaven that revealed secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.*

Amos 3:7 *Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his Secret unto his servants the prophets.*

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Mark 13:23 *But take ye heed: behold, I have **foretold** you all things.*
Jesus said this to His disciples as He was giving them His tribulation prophecy.

Therewith we have the purpose of the Revelation prophecy. God revealed the future for the world, Israel and the church. John was called and taken to heaven in the Spirit for the purpose of receiving the Revelation of the future.

Concluding Wisdom

We close with a quote taken from a commentary on Revelation written by Dr. William M. Smith, D.D. Writing on the issue of a rapture in Revelation 4:1 he wrote:

“John now beholds a door opening in heaven, and hears a voice saying, “Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter.” Many commentators place the rapture of the Church between Chapters 3 and 4 of this book, but inasmuch as the text itself is silent on such a subject, one questions the wisdom of even discussing it here.”

Several Biblical arguments have been given disclaiming the idea that the rapture is presented in Revelation 4:1. There is no textual basis for a rapture there and to put one there makes it man’s prophecy rather than God’s prophecy. It becomes a misplaced rapture.

T H A N K Y O U ...

...for reading this short book on the rapture. I hope you enjoyed it and learned from it. I would consider myself as failing if you did not.

There is much more to be learned about the rapture which is presented in the following e-books offered on this website.

1. The Lord’s Rapture
2. A Secret Rapture ?
3. Seventh Trumpet Rapture

C O N T A C T M E

I would be very pleased to hear from you. Your comments, questions and suggestions would be most welcomed. You may contact me as follows:

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Again, thank you and GOD BLESS YOU..... **Phil Jellerson, Author**