What the Bible Says®

The Rapture



What the Bible Says:

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PREFACE

For many Christians, the Bible is a book of mystery, full of hidden meaning only to be understood by pastors and seminarians who have devoted lifetimes to uncovering the truths found within its pages. Latin was the language of the Bible for centuries, and many still approach the scriptures as if they were written in a foreign tongue. A few stories are learned in Sunday School, a handful of popular verses memorized, but many Christians fear to turn the pages of their Bibles into unfamiliar territory.

But there is no reason to be afraid. The Bible is the easiest book in the world to understand. You don't need to be a pastor or have a seminary degree. God designed the Bible to be understood by everyone, and the truths He intended for us to learn are easily found within its pages.

The "What the Bible Says" booklets are designed to illustrate simple biblical truths on topics that many consider to be particularly difficult to grasp. This book strives to let the Bible speak for itself, and therefore, a comprehensive list of scripture references for each of the topics discussed will be presented. Although it's not necessary to look up each and every reference in order to understand what the Bible is saying on a particular topic, we'll focus on the primary references, and give you a thorough list of supporting scriptures for you to study on your own.

Chapter One

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

Here's the most important rule to follow when studying the Bible: You must take the Bible literally wherever it is at all possible. Obviously, there are times when the language of the Bible cannot be taken literally, and it is then we know it is to be understood figuratively. When this is the case, it is our job to find the literal truth conveyed by the figurative language, just as if it were expressed in literal language without the use of figures.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE

The Bible contains some figurative language. A lot of confusion is caused when literal passages of Scripture are mistakenly understood figuratively, and the same holds true for Scripture that is interpreted as literal, when it is obviously figurative in nature. So what is figurative language in the Bible? How can we recognize it when we find it? Simply put, figurative language, or a "figure of speech" occurs when we use words in a different sense from that which is ordinarily given them. Figures of speech are used to give emphasis and to add attraction and variety to human expression. It is important to note that they are never used for the purpose of doing away with literal truth. Instead, figures of speech set forth literal truth in another form than that in which it could be literally expressed. What we're looking for is the literal truth found in the figurative language. Above all, we must not permit figures of speech to do away with the intended truth. If we fail to understand the literal truth expressed by the figure of speech, then it has failed in its purpose.

Now that we understand figures of speech, how can we tell whether a particular statement is intended to be understood literally or figuratively? It's easy! There's a fundamental rule to keep in mind when determining whether the language is literal or figurative: Every statement in the Bible is to be understood literally, when at all possible, and where it is clear that it is literal; otherwise, it is figurative. In other words, what cannot be literal must be figurative. The subject matter itself will always make this clear.

There are two kinds of figures of speech we find in the Bible: first, there are those involving only a word, as in Gal. 2:9 where Peter, James, and John are called “pillars” of the church; second, there are those involving a thought expressed in several words or sentences, such as the parable, allegory, symbol, type, riddle, fable, and enigma.

GOD’S PROMISES ARE ESPECIALLY SIMPLE

We’ve stated that many people think the Bible is hard to understand. In particular, this belief is held by many concerning the prophecies, the proverbs, and some figures of speech. However, these seemingly difficult parts of the Bible are no more difficult to understand than the sections of the Bible that deal with history, or those that many consider to be “simple.” Prophecy is nothing more than history written beforehand and should be understood in this light. All riddles, allegories, types, symbols, and figures of speech are either explained in Scripture, or are clear in themselves as to their true meaning.

When it comes to the promises of God, there shouldn’t be any misunderstanding about what they say or mean. Every promise of God is a simple statement of obligation to men that God will give them certain benefits when they meet certain conditions. All the promises of God are conditional, as can be seen in the scriptures themselves. If you want to receive the promised benefits, you must accept the promise for what it says and meet the conditions required. You can then depend upon the fulfillment of God’s promise in this life. Since God cannot lie, man is assured that what God has promised He is abundantly able to perform. None of God’s promises need further interpretation. All that we must do is act upon what the Bible says and believe that God’s promise will be fulfilled in our lives. Do not attach any other conditions to God’s promises than what is plainly written. When the conditions are met the blessings will be realized. As the Apostle Paul writes in 2 Cor. 1:20, “For ALL the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”

THE BIBLE IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND

God’s Word presents us with a lifetime of study opportunities, but where are we supposed to start? This chapter is designed to give you the tools you’ll need to study the Bible for yourself. The Bible is a simple book to understand. We’ve

seen that as we've studied a topic that many consider complex and obscure. Even biblical prophecy, an area of Scripture that many assume to be beyond comprehension, is as easy to understand as the accounts of Jonah, Daniel or Joseph. This probably sounds ridiculous to most people, but perhaps considering a few simple facts will change your mind. Consider the following points:

The Bible is a Revelation. The Bible is an inspired revelation from God. A revelation is an uncovering or unveiling so that everyone may see what was previously covered or hidden.

The Bible Contains Many Repeated Truths. Over and over the Bible repeats truth so that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Dt. 17:6-7; 19:15; Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28). Because of this fact, any doctrine that is not plainly stated in Scripture is best left alone. When God says something about a particular topic, it will be found repeated in several places, so we will not be left in doubt as to what God says. Our part is to collect everything God says on a subject—making it so clear that no interpretation is necessary. If we do this, nothing will need to be added to or taken from the Bible in order to understand the truth. All we need to do is to find out where "it is written" and then believe it. We must always make our ideas conform to the Bible and not the Scripture to our ideas.

The Bible is Written in Simple Language. It is intended to be read and understood without interpretation. All God considers necessary to understand the Bible is childlike faith. God made both man and His Word, and they fit together as a lock and key (Job 32:8; 38:3-6; Jn. 1:4-9). Even the ungodly can understand if they so desire (Rom. 1:16-20).

The Bible is a Simple Book to Understand Because Most of it is Either History or Simple Instructions About How to Live. About 25,007 verses of the Bible—about 80 percent of it—contain simple history, commands, warnings, promises, rebukes, and plain instructions by means of which men may understand the will of God. The remaining 20 percent (or 6,207 verses) are prophecy written in the same simple human language that is used to record history. Of these 6,207 prophetic verses, 3,299 have been fulfilled and are now history. The 2,908 other verses are unfulfilled prophecy.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

It is important to define some of the important terms we'll be using in this book:

INTERPRET: To state the true sense of God's message as He expresses it; that is, give to the reader the exact statements of Scripture without change; to state exactly what God says and where He says it.

HERMENEUTICS is the science or art of interpretation and explanation. It comes from the Greek *hermeneuo*, meaning "to explain," "to expound," and "to interpret" (Jn. 1:38-42; 9:7; Heb. 7:2). It is the science which establishes and classifies the principles, methods, and rules by which the meaning of the author's language is ascertained. The interpretation of any piece of literature will depend upon the nature of the work under consideration. Poetry, history, fiction, and other forms of human expression require a different set of rules. The rules that govern the writing of fiction would not be suitable for historical prose. Accordingly, the rules that govern biblical interpretation depend upon the character of its separate kinds of writings, just as is true of different kinds of writings in other books.

Since the Bible is like other books in that it is written in human language, it must be interpreted like all other literature. If heavenly, supernatural, and spiritual truths are written in human language, we must understand such truths on this basis. The words and expressions found in the Bible must be understood in the same manner as words and expressions found outside of it. There can be no special biblical logic, rhetoric, or grammar. The laws of grammar apply to the Bible as they do to other writings.

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS is the science which establishes and classifies the principles, methods, and rules by which the Word of God is made plain.

EXEGESIS is the application of the rules of biblical hermeneutics to the unfolding of the meaning of a passage of Scripture. Interpretation expresses exactly the mind and thoughts of another and is purely a reproductive process, involving no originality of thought on the part of the interpreter. Exegesis is the use of the science of interpretation in the reproduction of the thoughts of God as expressed in Scripture.

THE TRUE METHOD OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION

The fundamental principle is to gather from the scriptures themselves the precise meaning the writers intended to convey. It applies to the Bible the same principles, rules, grammatical process, and exercise of common sense and reason that we apply to other books. In doing this, one must take the Bible as literal when it is at all possible. When a statement is found that cannot possibly be literal, as Jesus being a “door” or of a woman being clothed with the sun and standing on the moon and on her head a crown of twelve stars, or of land animals coming out of the sea, and other statements which are obviously not literal, then we know the language is figurative. In such cases we must get the literal truth conveyed by the figurative language, and the truth intended to be conveyed will be as literal as if it were expressed in literal language without the use of such figures. After all, figurative language expresses literal truth as much as if such figures were not used. In a general sense, the true method of Bible interpretation embraces the following ideas:

1. The primary meaning of words and their common use in a particular age in which they are used, and the importance of synonyms.

2. The grammatical construction and idiomatic peculiarities of the languages of the Bible, and the meaning of the context, both immediate and remote.

3. Comparison of parallel passages on the same subject.

4. The purpose or object of each writer.

5. The historical background of each writer and the circumstances under which he wrote.

6. The general plan of the entire Bible, and its moral and spiritual teachings.

7. The agreement of Scripture in its several parts, and its prophecies and their fulfillment.

8. The manners and customs of the particular age and land of each writer.

9. Understanding of how to interpret prophecy, poetry, allegories, symbols, parables, figures of speech, types, and all other forms of human expression.

When all these facts are kept in mind by the student and all scriptures interpreted in harmony with all these principles, there cannot possibly be any

misunderstanding of any part of the Bible.

GENERAL RULES OF BIBLE INTERPRETATION

1. The entire Bible came from God and possesses unity of design and teaching. We shall, therefore, consider both Testaments together as being equally inspired.

2. It may be assumed that no one resorts to speech or writing without having some idea to express; that in order to express that idea he will use words and forms of speech familiar to his hearers or readers; and that if he uses a word or figure of speech in a different sense from what is commonly understood he will make the fact known.

3. The Bible cannot contradict itself. Its teachings in one part must agree with its teachings in another part. Therefore, any interpretation which makes the Bible inconsistent with itself must rest upon false principles.

4. No meaning should be gotten from the Bible except that which a fair and honest, grammatical, and historical interpretation yields.

5. Language is an accumulation of words used to interchange thoughts. To understand the language of the speaker or writer, it is necessary to know the meaning of his words. A true meaning of the words is a true meaning of the sense. It is as true of the Bible as of any other book.

6. Often to fully understand a passage of Scripture, the scope or plan of the entire book must be known. Sometimes the design of the books are made clear, as in the case of Proverbs (1:1-4); Isaiah (1:1-3); John (20:31); Revelation (1:1); etc. If the definite purpose of the book is not stated, the purpose of the book must be gotten from the contents and from the design of the Bible as a whole, as is clear in Jn. 5:39; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17. Some seeming contradictions are cleared up when this rule is observed. The difference between Paul and James is easily understood when the design of their books is understood and recognized. In Romans, Paul seeks to prove that a man is not saved by works, while in James he seeks to show that a man cannot remain saved unless he brings forth good works.

7. Sometimes the connection is obscured through the use of virtual dialogue

between the writers and unseen persons, as in Ps. 15; Isa. 52:13; 63:1-6; Rom. 3; etc.

8. One of the most fundamental rules of interpretation is that of comparing Scripture with Scripture. It is by a strict and honest observance of this rule that the true meaning can be gotten when every other thing has failed to make clear the meaning. Before arriving at the whole truth, be sure that all the scriptures on a subject are collected together and read at one time. If there is any question left after you have done this, then go over the whole subject carefully until every question is cleared up.

9. In some places a statement on a subject may be very brief and seemingly obscure and will be made perfectly clear by a larger passage on the same subject. Always explain the seemingly difficult with the more simple scriptures. No doctrine founded upon a single verse of Scripture contains the whole of the subject; so do not be dishonest and wrest with Scripture or force a meaning into a passage that is not clearly understood in the passage or in parallel passages on the same subject.

10. The progressive character of revelation and the gradual development of truth should be recognized. Some truths found in germ in the Old Testament are fully developed in the New Testament. For example, the idea of blood sacrifices was developed from the time of Abel until it was fully culminated and made eternally clear in the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

11. The meaning of a word or phrase in the New Testament must not be carried back into Old Testament doctrine unless such is warranted by both Testaments. For example, water baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and other New Testament doctrines are not found in the Old Testament at all. It is not proper to ask whether David was baptized in water, or whether Saul was a Christian, because these are New Testament terms.

12. Passages obviously literal should not be spiritualized. For example, making the natural blessings of Canaan the spiritual blessings of Heaven; regarding the ark of Noah as salvation through Christ, and hundreds of like interpretations.

13. The dispensational character of Scripture should be noted so that one can pigeon-hole every passage of Scripture in some definite period in God’s plan.

14. The three classes of people (the Jews, the Church, and the Gentiles) dealt

with in Scripture should be noted. Up to Genesis 12, the race as a whole is dealt with. From Gen. 12 to the New Testament the Jews and the Gentiles are dealt with; and in the New Testament these and the Church of God, made up of Jews and Gentiles, are dealt with (1 Cor. 10:32).

15. In all study of doctrine the practical aspect must be kept in view (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

16. The comparative importance of truth should be emphasized. The positive truths should be studied more than the negative. It is more important to have faith instead of unbelief; to know God better than Satan, etc. So one should learn more about faith and God than unbelief and Satan.

17. General familiarity with the Bible as a whole is very important. Keep reading the Bible over and over until its contents as a whole are familiar. The more one can remember here and there what he has read, the clearer the Bible will become.

18. The words of Scripture must agree with the content and the subject matter in the passages where found. No meaning should be given to a word that would be out of harmony with any Scripture. For example, the word “seen” in John 1:18 should be understood to mean “comprehended” in order to harmonize with all scriptures that state men saw God with the natural eyes.

19. Careful attention should be paid to connecting words that connect events with each other, as the words “when,” “then,” etc., in Mt. 24:15-16, 21, 23, 40; 25:1.

20. Careful attention should be paid to prepositions, definite articles, names of different persons and places with the same name, same persons and places with different names, and the names of different persons and places that are spelled differently by different authors in different books.

21. Ascertain the exact meaning of the words of Scripture. The way a word is used, the subject matter, and the context often determine the true meaning.

22. Hebrew and Greek idioms should be noted. Sometimes a person having a peculiar characteristic, or subject to a peculiar evil, or destined to a particular destiny is called the child of that evil or destiny (Lk. 10:6; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:3). The word “father” is applied to the originator of any custom or to the

inventor of something (Gen. 4:20-21; Jn. 8:44). It is also used for “ancestor” (1 Chr. 1:17). The words “son” and “daughter” are sometimes used of descendants or in–laws. (Gen. 46:22; Lk. 3:23). The words “brother” and “cousin” are sometimes used of relatives and countrymen (Gen. 14:16 with 11:31; Lk. 1:36, 58). Names of parents are used of posterity (1 Ki. 18:17-18).

23. Preference is sometimes expressed by the word “hate” (Lk. 14:26; Rom. 9:13).

24. A peculiar idiom concerning numbers must be understood. Sometimes round numbers rather than the exact number are used (Judg. 20:35, 46). This will explain seeming contradictions between numbers. Failure to understand this idiom may have caused copyists and translators to misunderstand the numbers of some passages which seem erroneous and very large. For example, in 1 Sam. 6:19, we read the Lord smote in a very small town 50,070 people, which, in the Hebrew text reads, “seventy men two fifties and one thousand” or 70–100–1,000, or 1,170 people.

25. Careful attention should be paid to parenthesis, the use of italics (meaning these words are not in the original but supplied in English to make sense), the use of capital letters, marginal notes, references, summaries of chapters, chapter and page headings, the division of the text into chapters and verses, punctuation, obsolete English words, the rendering of the same original words by different English words, and other things about the English translations. All these things are human additions to the original text and should not be relied upon. For example, the running of references to prove a doctrine is sometimes misleading. The references may not be on the same subject, as can be easily detected by the reader.

26. Seeming contradictions in Scripture should be considered in the light of all the principles stated above. It must be kept in mind that the Bible records sayings of men under pressure of trials who said things that they never would have said otherwise. It records sayings of backsliders and rebels against God. It records statements of Satan and demons, and the words of such rebels should never be taken as the words from the mouth of God. They should not always be held as truth, for sometimes they are lies. Inspiration guarantees that these rebels said those things, but it does not guarantee that what they said is truth. Sometimes such statements contradict those of God and good men under divine utterance. Enemies of God take such contradictions between what God says and

what rebels against God say and use them to prove the Bible contradicts itself. Naturally, such contradictions are found in the Bible, but they are not contradictions between statements made by God. The only statements that can be relied upon as truth are those that come from God and men who speak for God as the Spirit gives utterance, and in these there is no contradiction.

The Bible also records the changes of God's will and plan in a later age over that of an earlier one. Such changes have been taken by the ungodly as contradictions, but such have had to be made by God because of the sin and rebellion of the people to whom He promised such things and for whom He made a certain plan. For example, in Gen. 1:31 God saw everything that He had made and it was good, but in Gen. 6:6 God repented that He had made man. In the meantime, between the two passages, sin and rebellion had entered, which made it necessary for God to have a changed attitude toward man. God has had to change his plan temporarily because of man's sin, but the original and eternal plan of God for creation has never been changed and never will be. God will finally realize His original purpose; that is the reason for His present dispensational dealings. God deals with each generation as circumstances demand. Sometimes God has had to change His promises to a certain group because they refused to meet the conditions for the fulfillment of these promises.

27. The seeming contradictions in the New Testament will also vanish and will be cleared up if men would be as fair with God as they will want God to be with them in the judgment. Always look for an explanation and it will be found. For example, men criticize the Bible for lack of harmony between the temptations of Christ in Mt. 4, and those in Lk. 4. But when we consider the fact that there were two separate sets of temptations during the forty days, and that after the first set of tests in Luke, Satan was dismissed "for a season," and after the last set of tests in Matthew, Satan was dismissed for good, there is no contradiction. The seeming contradictions between the sermons of Mt. 5 and Lk. 6 are cleared up when we see that there were two sermons—one on the mount and the other "in the plain." The so-called contradictions of the Bible are unreal and imaginary. Because of the lack of information as to the time, places, circumstances, etc., men cannot always judge concerning them. So it would be best always to give God the benefit of the doubt, since He knows all things and was there when things happened. If He did not see fit to give all details so as to make every small detail clear, that is His wisdom. It should not detract from faith in God and His revelation.

All seeming contradictions in the Bible are easily cleared up with a better knowledge of the text, by correct translation, by knowing the manners and customs of the age and the country in which the books were written, by a wider application of historical facts, and by a fair and sane application of the rules of interpretation given above.

Chapter Two

THE RAPTURE

The Fact and Manner of the Rapture

There are about fifty scriptures in the New Testament and some related ones in the Old Testament that explain the rapture and tell us how it will occur. These scriptures also reveal when the rapture will take place in connection with various end-time events. The following quotations are certainly not all the scriptures pertaining to a definite rapture (a separate and distinct event from the Second Advent), but they are enough to prove the doctrine of the rapture beyond doubt.

> 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 (Lk. 21:36)

"All these things" that worthy saints will escape are the events surrounding the signs of the Second Advent listed in Lk. 21:4-11, 25-33; Mt. 24:4-28; Mk. 13:4-27; 2 Th. 2:1-12; and Rev. 4:1–19:21. In other words, we are to pray that we will escape "all these things that shall come to pass." How will the saints escape these things? They escape them by being raptured to stand before the Son of Man. First, they will meet with Him in the air (1 Th. 4:13-18), then they go to Heaven to meet with the Father in Heaven itself (Col. 4:4; 1 Th. 3:13; 5:23; Jas. 5:7-8; Rev. 5:8-10; 19:1-10).

> In my Father's house [i.e., the Holy City in heaven where He lives] 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 (Jn. 14:2-3)

If we are going to be received by Christ to Himself; if we are going to be received into the Father's house to live in mansions so that where He lives we may live also; and if all of this takes place at the time Christ comes from Heaven to take us up to Heaven, then there is truly going to be a rapture before the

Second Advent. It is absolutely necessary in order for us to eat a supper—the marriage supper of the Lamb in Heaven (Jn. 14:1-3; Rev. 19:1-21)—before the Second Advent begins, before we are predicted to come back with Him at the time of His Second Advent. "But every man in his own order [company or rank]: Christ the firstfruits; afterward [at the next general rapture] they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:23).

This shows us that there are different orders or ranks and companies of resurrected people, and means that every man who belongs to Christ will go in his own company.

> Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead [in Christ, 1 Th. 4:16] shall be raised incorruptible, and we [the living in Christ, also 1 Th. 4:16] shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (1 Cor. 15:51-56)

When this Scripture is fulfilled the saints will be raptured to meet the Lord in the air (1 Th. 4:13-18), and then they will be taken on to Heaven to be presented before God (1 Th. 2:19-20; 3:13; 5:23; Jas. 5:7-8; Col. 3:4).

There are many fallacies that have been taught about the rapture. We'll try to address some of the most common misconceptions that you might have heard with scriptural truths.

Fallacy: The rapture takes place at the seventh trumpet of Rev. 11:15, and this is the same as the last trumpet of 1 Cor. 15:51-54.

Truth: There is not any relationship or similarity between these two scriptures. On the contrary, they could not possibly refer to the same event, because:

> 1. The trumpet of Rev. 11:15 is that of an ordinary angel (Rev. 8:2), while the one in 1 Cor. 15:51-54 and 1 Th. 4:13-18 is the trumpet of God.
>
> 2. The trumpet in Rev. 11:15 is to announce a great woe upon men (Rev. 8:13; 10:7-8; 11:14; 12:7-12), while the one in 1 Cor. 15:52 and 1 Th. 4:16

will announce a great blessing—the resurrection of the dead.

3. The trumpet of Rev. 11:15 will be blown at least 3½ years after the rapture and 3½ years before the Second Advent, whereas the trumpet of 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians will be blown at least 3½ years before the seventh trumpet of Rev. 11:15 and at least seven years before the Second Advent. Proof of this is that every detail of Rev. 4:1–22:5 must be fulfilled after the churches (Rev. 1:19; 4:1). The trumpet of Rev. 11:15 is a "middle of the Week" detail that must happen after the rapture of the Church and before any of Rev. 4:1–22:5 begins to be fulfilled. One trumpet appears in the middle of these things which must be after the churches and the other must be blown before any of these details begin.

4. The trumpet of 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians will herald an event that will take place "in a moment" (1 Cor. 15:51-54), whereas the seventh trumpet of Revelation will herald an event that will be "days" in duration (Rev. 10:7-8). Also, the "last" trump of 1 Cor. 15:51-53 is not the last trumpet that will ever blow, as some teach, for years later at Armageddon and at the Second Advent trumpets will blow (Mt. 24:31; Joel 2:15; Zeph. 1:16; Zech. 9:14). Furthermore, others will sound at all the feasts of trumpets and at other events eternally (Ezek. 45:17-25; 46:14).

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:27)

This refers to the personal visible meeting of Christ and His saints in the air, at the time when He comes to take them to Heaven to their mansions, as stated above in the discussion on Jn. 14:2-3.

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 [have died] 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 [precede] them which are asleep [dead]. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God [not the trump of one of the seven trumpet angels of Revelation]: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then

> we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Th. 4:13-18, emphasis added)
>
> For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [hinders] will let [hinder lawlessness and hold back the coming of Antichrist], until he [the hinderer of lawlessness] be taken out of the way. And then [and not before] shall that Wicked [the lawless one, the Antichrist] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming (2 Th. 2:7-8, emphasis added)

This says plainly that the one who "hinders lawlessness" will continue to hinder until he is taken out of the way to hinder no more; then and only then will the "man of sin" be revealed. This refers to the rapture of the Church before the revelation of Antichrist, and there can be no doubt of this.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 we have a clear proof that the Church and O.T. saints will be raptured before the Day of the Lord, that is before the Second Advent, and before the revelation of the Antichrist, before Daniel's Seventieth Week, before the future Tribulation, and before the last seven years of this age which ends with the Second Advent of Christ to the earth.

In 2 Th. 2:1-4 Paul beseeches saints not to be deceived by any means or by anybody, as to the coming of the Day of the Lord, or the Second Advent. The two things that were to precede the Day of the Lord are:

1. "A great falling away"
2. "That man of sin be revealed"

Besides these two things Paul revealed that a third great event would take place, this one to precede the Day of the Lord or Second Advent, and also precede the revelation of the man of sin. He said,

> . . . he who now letteth [hinders] will let [hinder] until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed (2 Th. 2:7-8)

Thus it is clear that the hinderer of lawlessness will be taken out of the way before the Antichrist can come. "Our gathering together unto him" of 2

Thessalonians 2:1 and the hinderer of lawlessness being “taken out of the way” of verses 7-8 refer to the same event—the rapture of the Church and O.T. saints before the revelation of the Antichrist. And then—when he who hinders lawlessness is taken out of the way—shall that Wicked be revealed.

Seven Other Facts About the Rapture in 1&2 Thessalonians

1. The Church waits for Jesus to come from Heaven (1 Th. 1:10).
2. The Church will be taken to glory (1 Th. 2:12; cf. Col. 3:4).
3. Soul winners will have great joy at this coming (1 Th. 2:19-20).
4. The saints will be established unblameable before God in Heaven (1 Th. 3:13).
5. Both the dead and living in Christ will be raptured to Heaven to live with Christ (1 Th. 4:13-18; cf. Jn. 14:1-3; Phil. 3:21).
6. God has appointed all saved men to escape His latter-day wrath on men (1 Th. 5:1-11; cf. Lk. 21:34-36).
7. Saints will be made whole in body, soul, and spirit at the rapture (1 Th. 5:23; cf. Phil. 3:21).

The Rapture Not a Part of the Second Advent

The common theory that the Second Coming of Christ is in two parts and that it will take place in two stages, or in two phases, and that there is only one coming of Christ out of Heaven, is completely false and unscriptural. There are two definite comings of Jesus Christ out of Heaven and not two parts of one coming. The rapture is the coming of Christ from Heaven to the clouds surrounding the earth, but He does not come to the earth at that time. He simply resurrects the righteous dead and catches them up to Himself in the clouds and then takes them on into Heaven with Him to remain there during the tribulation period after which He and the resurrected righteous ones will return to the earth and land on the earth at the Second Advent. At His first coming He literally landed on earth to live here and die for men. At His Second Coming He will also literally land on the earth again, and live here to reign (Zech. 14:4). The rapture, then, could

never be the Second Coming, and it should never be called the Second Coming of Christ. Furthermore, no one will be raptured at the Second Coming.

The rapture is a complete round trip for Jesus—from Heaven to the clouds around the earth, and back again to Heaven. It is the time when He comes for the saints in the air, and when they are caught up to the clouds with Him. He then returns with them to Heaven to live there at least seven years before the Second Advent begins. All raptures will be completed before the Second Advent begins. They will take all the saints to Heaven, whereas the Second Advent will bring them all back from Heaven to the earth to set up a kingdom to be ruled by Christ, His angels, and the raptured saints.

The Time of the Rapture

The time of the rapture, like that of the Second Advent, is not definitely known as to the day or the hour, but we do know that it will take place before the Tribulation, before the reign of Antichrist, before the fulfillment of Mt. 24-25; Rev. 4:1-22:5, and before the fulfillment of many other prophecies.

Two Future Comings of the Lord From Heaven, But Only One to the Earth

Let’s review what we’ve learned so far. What many Christians consider to be a single event—the coming of the Lord for the saints and the battle with the Antichrist at Armageddon—is actually two seperate and distinct events. They are:

1. A coming of the Lord out of Heaven for the saints to meet them in the air and to take them to Heaven without coming to the earth (1 Th. 1:10; 2:19-20; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11, 23; 2 Th. 2:1, 7-8; Jn. 14:1-3; Lk. 21:34-36; Col. 3:4; Eph. 5:27; Jas. 5:7-8; Rev. 5:8-10; 19:1-10).

2. A coming of the Lord out of Heaven with His previously raptured saints to bring them to the earth to fight at Armageddon and to set up a kingdom in the world forever (Rev. 19:1-21; Jude 14-15; 2 Th. 1:7-10; 2:7-8; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Mt. 16:27; 24:29-31; 25:31-46; Zech. 14:1-5; Dan. 2:44-45; 7:9-14, 18, 22, 27).

Twelve Truths Known by the Thessalonians

1. That it was possible to be deceived about the rapture and the Second Advent (2 Th. 1:1-3).

2. That the Day of the Lord, or the Second Advent, was not at hand and therefore, it was not the time for the Lord to be here reigning on earth (2 Th. 2:3).

3. That they were not to permit themselves to be deceived by any means

(2 Th. 2:3).

4. That the Day of the Lord would begin only at the Second Advent (2 Th. 2:3; Zech. 14:1-5).

5. That the Day of the Lord could not have already come, because the great apostasy and the revelation of the "man of sin" had not come (2 Th. 2:3).

6. That the "man of sin" will take over the Jewish temple at Jerusalem and declare himself to be God (2 Th. 2:4). See Rev. 13; 14:9-11; 15:1-4; 20:4-6; Dan. 9:27; Mt. 24:15-22, 29-31.

7. That the "man of sin" (the Wicked one or Antichrist) has a definite time to be revealed (2 Th. 2:6-8).

8. That "he" who hinders lawlessness and holds back the "man of sin" will be entirely removed before he will fully come (2 Th. 2:5-8).

9. That the mystery of lawlessness is already at work in the world (2 Th. 2:7).

10. That Paul's doctrines had not changed regarding the rapture and the Day of the Lord, as false teachers had reported, even forging a letter in his name (2 Th. 2:2, 5).

11. That the "man of sin" (Antichrist) would be destroyed by Christ at the Second Advent when the Day of the Lord begins (2 Th. 2:7-8). See Dan. 7:11; Rev. 19:20; 20:10.

12. That Antichrist will come after the working of Satan with power and

deception (2 Th. 2:8-12). See Mt. 24:24; Rev. 13:1-18; Dan. 8:24-25; 11:37-45.

Who or What is the "Hinderer of Lawlessness"?

Paul definitely said that the hinderer of lawlessness would continue to hinder lawlessness "until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed," whom the Lord shall destroy at His Second Advent (2 Th. 2:7-8). If the question of who or what the hinderer of lawlessness is can be settled, the time of the rapture will be automatically settled.

Three Things Hindering Lawlessness in the World Today

1. Human governments (Gen. 9:1-8; Rom. 13; 1 Pet. 2:14).
2. The Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:16; 15:26; 16:7-11).
3. The Church (Mt. 5:13-16; 1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Pet. 4:10-19).

In neither of Paul's two books to the Thessalonians did he mention governments or the Holy Spirit as being taken out of the world, but he repeatedly referred to the Church as being raptured out of the world and from the earth (1 Th. 1:10; 2:19-20; 4:13-18; 5:1-11, 23; 2 Th. 2:1, 7-8). We must, therefore, conclude that the Church is the hinderer of lawlessness, and for the following reasons.

1. Human governments will never be taken out of the world to permit the revelation of the Antichrist. He will even reign over the ten kingdoms when he comes (Rev. 17:8-17). And many other governments will be here in other parts of the earth throughout all the days that the "man of sin" (Antichrist) will be here (Dan. 2:44-45; 7:9-14; Rev. 16:13-16; Zech. 14:1-5).

2. The Holy Spirit will never be taken from the world, for Jesus promised that He would abide with us forever (Jn. 14:16). In Acts 2:16-21; Zech. 12:10–13:1; Mt. 24:14; Rev. 7:14; 19:10 and other scriptures we have much proof that the Holy Spirit will still be here throughout the Tribulation and the reign of Antichrist. Therefore, He could not be the hinderer of lawlessness that will be taken out of the way.

3. The Church will be taken out of the world by rapture, as stated in the above references. It is the only one of the above mentioned three hinderers of lawlessness that is to be taken out of the world, so it must be the hinderer of 2

Th. 2:7-8.

That this “hinderer of lawlessness” will literally be taken out of the world is clear from the Greek statement, *ek mesou genetai*, which means, “out of the midst be gone” (2 Th. 2:7-8). The Greek phrase *ek mesou* literally means “from among” and is so translated in Mt. 13:49; Acts 17:33; 23:10; 1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 6:17; Col. 2:13-14; 2 Th. 2:7. Whatever is referred to as the hinderer is being taken out of the way, not being brought into the midst of men.

Out of 25 versions examined, not one reads “born out of the midst of men” as said by some who teach that instead of referring to the revelation of Antichrist, this passage (2 Th. 2:7-8) speaks of his birth. These versions render the passage in 13 different ways, and the thought in every one is not the birth of Antichrist, but rather the fact that the hinderer of lawlessness is to be literally removed from the earth—from among men—before the revelation of that Wicked one.

The renderings of these versions are: “be removed” from the midst (4 times); “be gone” (once); “be gotten out of the way” (3 times); “taken from the midst” (once); “coming to be out of the midst” (once); “is taken out of the way” (twice); “gone from the midst” (once); “the restraining power removed” (once); “disappear from the scene” (once); “be out of the way” (once); “steps out of the way” (once); “becomes out of the way” (once); “taken out of the way” (7 times).

Even if we believed that the Holy Spirit would be taken out of the world to permit the revelation of the “man of sin”, we could not possibly believe that He would abandon the Church (the body of Christ), leaving it in the world to go through terrible sufferings without Him. Therefore, the Church would be taken out of the world with Him, and thus the rapture of the Church before the Tribulation is proved either way.

Many have stumbled over the use of the pronoun “he” in 2 Th. 2:7 and a great many teachers have not been able to bring themselves to the fact that a masculine pronoun could refer to the Church when it has been universally taught that the Church is the bride of Christ, a woman, a lady, and a virgin. If the pronoun “she” had been used in 2 Th. 2:7 every Bible scholar who teaches that the Church is the bride of Christ would have believed and taught that this “she” identified the Church as the hinderer of lawlessness and would have used this as proof of the Church being taken out of the world before the Tribulation and revelation of the Antichrist.

Chapter Three

THE CHURCH IS NOT THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

That the Church is not the bride of Christ is clear from many scriptures and facts about the Church and about the bride of Christ.

1) Nowhere in Scripture is the Church ever called the bride of Christ, though the fallacy can be found universally in commentaries, Bible textbooks, doctrine books, song books, and other Christian writings. Never once is this idea stated in the Bible itself, though it does mention the bride of Christ and tells us exactly who it is. In Revelation 21:9-10 the angel who said “I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife,” showed it to be “that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (see also Rev. 21:2 and 22:17). The inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem are called “his wife” in Rev. 19:1-10. The idea is that all the redeemed of all ages who will go to live in that city will become a part of the Holy City, which is the bride. But to call any individual, or any company of saints, or any group of Christians “the bride” is unscriptural. As a whole they can be a part of the bride, but no single one of them and no one company of saints in any age can be said to be the bride of Christ. See Jn. 14:1-3; Heb. 11:11-16; 12:22-23; 13:14.

2) It is plain in Eph. 2:14-15 and 4:13 that the Church is a man and not a woman. Being the body of Christ who was a man and the head of the Church, it is only to be expected that His body (the Church) would be referred to as a man and not a woman. It cannot be that the head would be that of a man and the body that of a woman. And so, since the Church is the body of Christ as stated in 1 Cor. 12:13, 27; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18, 24, then the Church is not to be considered a woman. Therefore, the masculine pronoun in 2 Th. 2:7 is proper and the only one to use when speaking of the N.T. Church. It is perfectly scriptural to use the pronoun “he” when referring to the whole body of Christ. The Bible uses it many times when referring to whole companies or nations of people made up of both men and women. For example, all the nation of Israel is called “he” (Dt. 32:15; Isa. 11:16; Josh. 22:22).

3) Not once is the N.T. Church called a woman, a lady, or a virgin. Furthermore, the Church is never referred to by a feminine pronoun. Some think that Eph. 5:22-31 would be an exception to this, but a closer reading of the passage will make the meaning clear. Paul illustrates the headship of Christ to the Church and His relationship with it by comparing this headship and relationship to a similar headship and relationship which exist between a man and his wife. Christ and His Church are one thing and the man and his wife are another, with the feminine pronoun referring to the woman who is the wife of the man, not to the Church as the wife of Christ.

4) Some teachers use 2 Cor. 11:1-2 to make the woman a symbol of the Church, but Paul is not emphasizing the femininity of the Church here. He is simply expressing his desire for his own converts to be pure like a virgin, so that they may be presented in all purity before God. The whole Church is not referred to here at all.

5) Others use Gal. 4:26 hoping to prove that the Church is symbolized by a woman, but again, this is not the intention of the passage. The apostle expresses the idea that the Holy City is the headquarters and the source of all blessings, comparing the city to a mother as the source of blessings to her children. Using the woman of Rev. 12 as a symbol of the Church is missing the mark completely, for this woman is a symbol of Israel as a nation—and not the Church (Gen. 37:9-10). Israel is clearly shown to be the wife of God in Isa. 54:4-9; Hos. 2:14-18.

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:4). This “glory” refers to Heaven itself, not to the earth. So if we go to Heaven at that point, we are ascending to glory rather than descending from Heaven with Christ to the earth as we are predicted to be doing at the Second Advent. Glory indicates the presence of God (Ezek. 10:4, 18-19; 11:22-23; 43:2-5; 44:4). Glory is a heavenly place (1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:17; Jude 24). Glory is also a substance (Rev. 15:8; 18:1; 21:23; Lk. 2:9; 9:32; Jn. 12:41; Acts 7:55; 22:11; 1 Cor. 2:8; Col. 3:4). God is called the King of glory (Ps. 24:8-10). Saints are to go to glory (Ps. 73:24; Col. 3:4). Both God and Christ will appear in glory (Ps. 102:16; Col. 3:4). Raptured saints are to go to Heaven and be there for several years before leaving that glory for the earth with Christ at His Second Advent (Rev. 19:1-21).

For God hath not appointed us to wrath [the tribulation wrath of God of 1 Th. 5:1-11; Rev. 6:17–16:21; 19:15], but to obtain salvation [deliverance from that

wrath by rapture] by our Lord Jesus Christ; who died for us, that whether we wake [live in the body] or sleep [die], we should live [be resurrected in body] together with him (1 Th. 5:9-10)

If God will thus deliver us from the coming wrath, He will do so by the rapture, taking us to Heaven and fulfilling all the scriptures. “Behold, the husbandman [the Father, Jn. 15:1-8] waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain” (Jas. 5:7-8). When will He do this? When Christ comes “to receive us unto” Himself, as He promised in Jn. 14:1-3. Saints will thus be taken to Heaven to be presented to the Father before coming back to the earth with Christ (1 Th. 3:13; 5:23).

As stated before, there are about fifty scriptures that teach the rapture of all saints to Heaven in the first resurrection (1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 3:10-11, 21; 1 Th. 1:10; 2:19-20; 3:13; 5:23; 2 Th. 2:1-12; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13; Heb. 11:10-16; 12:22-23; 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:5, 7, 9, 11, 13; 4:13; 5:1-8; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 24; 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:2; Rev. 5:8-10; 11:7-12; 12:5; 14:1-5; 15:1-4; 19:1-10; 20:4-8; Dan. 12:1; Isa. 66:7-8; Ps. 73:24; 23:6; 102:16; Rom. 8:18).

Let it be remembered that in the fulfillment of the things which must be after the churches of Rev. 4:1–22:5, there are several companies of raptured saints seen in Heaven by John, such as those in Rev. 5:8-10; 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 12:5; 14:1-5; 15:14; 20:4-6 and the two witnesses of Rev. 11:7-12. In Rev. 19:1-10 all these companies of raptured saints are seen in Heaven eating a marriage supper with Christ just before the Second Advent begins (Rev. 19:11-21). They are the ones who will come with Christ all the way between Heaven and earth (Zech. 14:5; Rev. 19:14).

Chapter Four

FOUR RAPTURES BEFORE THE SECOND ADVENT

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There will be no rapture or resurrection of any man at the Second Advent. No one, dead or alive, will be raptured at this point. By this time, when Christ leaves Heaven through the open door of Rev. 19:11, all raptures will have taken place and the first resurrection will be completed. Though there will be multitudes of people on earth who will be classed as “the good,” “the righteous,” “the just,” “the holy,” “the elect,” and “brethren” of Christ—people who have been born again—not one of them will be raptured at His Second Advent. The marriage supper will have taken place before the Second Advent and every person having a part in the first resurrection will have been raptured and will have shared in the supper just before the Second Advent begins. Those “in Christ” on earth at this point will simply go into the eternal earthly kingdom as natural people to be subjects of Christ and the raptured saints who will become rulers of the kingdom (1 Cor. 6; Rev. 1:5; 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:4-5).

There will be four exclusive raptures of four exclusive companies of saints between now and the Second Coming of Christ, as follows:

The First Future Exclusive Rapture

This will be that of the Church and the O.T. saints of Rev. 5:8-10. Among the first twelve scenes John saw in Heaven—scenes that, as he was told, must be after the churches (Rev. 4:1–22:5)—one was the first company of exclusive saints to be raptured to Heaven. John was told to “Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter” (Rev. 4:1), and immediately he was raptured from the Isle of Patmos to Heaven where he saw the first things which must be after the churches. He saw God, the Lamb, the seven lamps of fire, the

24 elders, the four living creatures, the sea of glass, the book with seven seals, the various companies of creatures in worship to God and the Lamb, and finally the first raptured saints in Heaven—all of these being events which must be after the churches. These saints are referred to as being redeemed by the blood of the Lamb from "every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" and as being already made "kings" and "priests" to God to reign on the earth (Rev. 5:8-10).

Every scene in Rev. 4-5 pictures these saints as being already raptured and present in Heaven when the Lamb took the seven-sealed book out of the hand of God so as to break the seals. They were in Heaven to witness every time one of the seals was broken and the contents revealed, and they continued in Heaven while every one of the seven trumpets, and the seven vials, and all the other events of Rev. 4:1–19:10 were being fulfilled before the Second Advent of Rev. 19:11-21, at which time the marriage supper would be over and the Second Advent begun.

The Second Future Exclusive Rapture

The 144,000 Jews are the second exclusive company of saints to be raptured from the earth to go to Heaven to live until the Second Advent begins, which will be after the marriage supper pictured in Rev. 19:1-21. This will be a rapture 3½ years after the Church and O.T. saints are raptured (Rev. 5:8-10) and 3½ years before the Second Advent (Rev. 19:11-21). In Rev. 7:1-8 we see that the 144,000 are sealed to be protected from the plagues of the seven trumpet judgments. It was said to the first four trumpet judgment angels, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Rev. 7:3). And, the fifth and sixth trumpet judgment angels were told to hurt only those men which have not the seal of God (God's name) in their foreheads (Rev. 9:4; 14:1-5). The 144,000 will be raptured to "God and to his throne" as the manchild of Rev. 12:5, and they are next seen in Heaven singing an exclusive song that no man can sing but them—the 144,000 Jews of all these scriptures.

The 144,000 Jews of Rev. 7:1-8; 9:4; 12:5; 14:1-5 are referred to in other prophecies concerning Israel and the manchild. In fact, Isa. 66:7-8 speaks of the nation of Israel bringing forth the manchild at the time of her great travail or tribulation, saying: "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child . . . for as soon as Zion travailed, she

brought forth her children." Verse 8 of this passage refers to Israel being born again as a nation, and verse 7 says "before" this travail of Israel to bring forth she brought forth a manchild. That is, before she travails for her own birth in the Spirit as a nation, she will be delivered of a manchild. That Israel will be born again by the Spirit at the Second Advent of Christ is plainly revealed in Zech. 12:10-13:1; Rom 11:25-29.

Daniel also predicted that every one born again in Israel at the time "Michael stands up" to cast Satan and his angels out of Heaven, every Jew who has his name in the Book of Life will be raptured or delivered (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 7:1-8; 12:7-12). Revelation 7:1-8 and Revelation 14:1-5 tell us how many will have their names in the Book of Life at the time the manchild is raptured—144,000 of them. Both Daniel (Dan. 12:1-7) and Revelation (Rev. 12:1-17) speak of the manchild—the 144,000 Jews—as being raptured 1,260 days before the Second Advent begins after the marriage supper.

This travail or Great Tribulation of Israel is referred to by Moses (Dt. 4:30); Jeremiah (Jer. 30:6-7); Daniel (Dan. 12:1); Jesus (Mt. 24:15-22); and John (Rev. 7:14), but not once is it referred to as happening to the Church or Christians of this present age. The "great" tribulation of Jezebel's followers, and the ten days of tribulation of the church at Smyrna (Rev. 2:10, 22) were local tribulations and are now already in the past, but the "great tribulation" yet to come, as referred to in the above scriptures, will be fulfilled only in Daniel's Seventieth Week, as explained in Chapter 2. We must, therefore, conclude that the 144,000 will be raptured as an exclusive company of saints, not as a part of the Church or any other company of raptured saints.

The Third Future Exclusive Rapture

The tribulation saints will make up the third distinct company who will be saved and raptured out of the tribulation period as a group separate from the Church (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 13:7; 14:12-13; 15:1-4; 17:7; 20:1-4). All these martyrs are to be saved after the Church and O.T. saints have been raptured and are in Heaven (Rev. 5:8-10). The first ones of this tribulation company of saints were told to wait until all who were to be martyred in the Tribulation would be killed, and then their death would be avenged (Rev. 6:9-11). These, without exception, are martyrs of the future Tribulation, and not one will be martyred during the church age. All the scriptures about them are found in Rev. 4:1–19:10, which

must be fulfilled after the churches. Most of these martyrs will be slain by the Antichrist (Rev. 7:14; 13:7; 14:12-13; 15:1-5; 20:1-4). The lesser part will be killed by the great harlot of Rev. 17:6-7.

That they will all be raptured as a separate and distinct company of martyrs of the tribulation period is clear from the fact that they are seen in Heaven singing their own redemptive song, by themselves and toward the latter part of the Tribulation (Rev. 15:1-4). These mainly will be the ones that will get "the victory over the beast (who reigns only the last 3½ years of this age, Rev. 13:5), and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name" (Rev. 15:1-4). They are spoken of as being beheaded for Christ by the Beast (Rev. 20:4-6).

The Fourth Future Exclusive Rapture

The two witnesses of Rev. 11:2-12 will be the fourth and last of the exclusive raptures of the future. They will be partakers of a rapture all by themselves after they are martyred at the end of their 3½ year ministry on earth. A great voice from Heaven will say, "Come up hither," and they will then ascend up to Heaven (Rev. 11:7-12). See other scriptures about their ministry in Mal. 4:5-6; Zech. 4:14; Ezek. 20:33-44. All these separate raptures take place at different points in time—before and during Daniel's Seventieth Week, ending with the rapture of the two witnesses, and before the Second Advent of Christ to the earth with all the raptured saints and angels. We cannot, therefore, teach that there will be no rapture at all until at the time of the Second Advent, for the four future exclusive raptures mentioned above prove otherwise.

There are a number of scriptures in the Bible that make it crystal clear that the rapture will take place before the Tribulation. Here are a few examples from Christ and the N.T. writers.

1) Jesus Christ plainly urged us to "watch . . . and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things [i.e., things of the tribulation of Lk. 21:1-11, 25-33] that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Lk. 21:36). It would be a false promise of Christ to His disciples of this whole church age if no "worthy" saints are to escape the last day events of the Tribulation. It would be truly needless and give a false hope for anyone to pray to escape "all these things" if nobody is to escape them. The promise is clear

here that all worthy ones will escape going through all these things and will literally be “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air and “to stand before the Son of man.” Saints could not possibly stand before the Son of man until the time when He comes to receive us to Himself (Jn. 14:1-3), and to “meet the Lord in the air,” which will be at the time of the rapture (1 Th. 4:13-16).

2) Paul said that the Church—the hinderer of lawlessness—will be removed before the revelation of the Antichrist (2 Th. 2:5-10).

3) John was definitely told by Christ to “come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter;” that is, after the churches (Rev. 4:1). Another proof of the rapture of the Church and O.T. saints before the Tribulation is found in Rev. 1:19 and 4:1. All the dead and living in Christ at this point in time will be raptured to meet the Lord in the air to be taken to Heaven to live in mansions, in the Father’s house with Christ eternally (Jn. 14:1-3; Lk. 21:34-36; 1 Cor. 15:23, 51-56; Eph. 5:27; Col. 3:4; 1 Th. 2:19-20; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11, 23; Jas. 5:7-8; Heb 11:10-16; 12:22-23; 13:14; Rev. 5:8-10; 19:1-10). Christ made clear to John (in Rev. 1:19 and Rev. 4:1) all the details of every prophecy in Rev. 4:1–22:21. This is confirmed without controversy in the threefold division of the book of Revelation.

Chapter Five

PURPOSES OF THE RAPTURE

An “Out-Resurrection” From the Dead

In Phil. 3:11 the rapture is called “the resurrection of the dead,” or literally, “the out-resurrection,” meaning the resurrection of some of the dead from among the dead. A general resurrection of all the dead at one time without a time between the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust seems to be taught in Dan. 12:2; Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 24:18, but in the final revelation on the subject we learn that there will actually be one thousand years between the first resurrection of the just, and the second resurrection of the unjust (Rev. 20:11-15). We can now, at the present time, have a choice regarding which resurrection to be in—whether we want to be saved and in the first, or lost and in the second (Mk. 26:15-16; Jn. 3:16). This is what Paul had in mind when he wanted to be in the “out-resurrection” from among the wicked dead (Phil. 3:11).

Forty Purposes of the Rapture

1. For Christ to receive the saints of all past ages to Himself (Jn. 14:1-3).
2. To take all raptured saints to Heaven (Jn. 14:1-3; 1 Th. 3:13; 4:13-18).
3. To meet the saints in the air (1 Th. 4:13-18).
4. To settle the saints in their mansions (Jn. 14:1-3; Heb. 11:10-16; 12:22-23; 13:14).
5. To bring great joy to soul winners (1 Th. 2:19-20; 2 Cor. 1:14).
6. To present the saints to God in Heaven (1 Th. 3:13).
7. To make the saints whole in body, soul, and spirit (1 Th. 5:23).
8. To judge the saints at the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Phil. 3:10-11; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8).
9. To confirm saints blameless (1 Cor. 1:8; 1 Th. 3:13; 5:23).
10. To assign positions as kings and priests to rule all creations (1 Cor. 6:1-3; Lk. 22:30; Rev. 1:5; 2:26-27; 5:10; Dan. 7:1-27).
11. To resurrect all saints of the N.T. and O.T. times (1 Cor. 15:23, 35-44; 2

Cor. 4:14; Phil. 3:11; Dan. 12:2; Jn. 5:28-29; 1 Th. 4:13-18; Rev. 20:4-6).

12. To change saints from mortality to immortality (1 Cor. 15:51-56; Phil. 3:21).
13. To reward saints with different glories (1 Cor. 15:23, 35-44).
14. To give saints victory over death, Hell, and the grave (1 Cor. 15:51-56).
15. To give saints everlasting life (Gal. 6:7).
16. To show saints God's eternal riches and grace (Eph. 2:7; 3:11).
17. To give saints their inherited kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 5:5-6; Gal. 5:19-21).
18. To present the Church to Himself (Eph. 5:27).
19. To complete the work started in saints (Phil. 1:6).
20. To change the vile bodies of saints (Phil. 3:21).
21. To appear with saints in glory (Col. 3:4).
22. To permit the coming of the "man of sin" (2 Th. 2:7-8).
23. To give saints a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8).
24. To give saints the reality of the blessed hope (Titus 2:13).
25. To take saints to the New Jerusalem to live (Heb. 11:10-16; 12:22-23; 13:14; Jn. 14:1-3).
26. To receive the fruit of the early and latter rains (Jas. 5:7-8).
27. To give saints final salvation and grace (1 Pet. 1:5, 7, 9, 13).
28. To give saints a reckoning day (1 Pet. 4:5-6).
29. To reveal the glory of God and Christ to saints (1 Pet. 4:13).
30. To give saints an abundant entrance into the kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11).
31. To make saints confident and unashamed (1 Jn. 2:28).
32. To make saints like Christ (1 Jn. 3:2).
33. To reveal Christ to saints as He actually is (1 Jn. 3:2).
34. To fulfill with saints all the promises to believers (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26-27; 3:5, 11-12, 21; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:20).
35. To take saints out of the earth for the duration of the Tribulation (Lk. 21:34-36).
36. To end the church age and make it possible for God to deal more exclusively with Israel to fulfill with them the latter-day prophecies (Dan. 9:27; 11:4-45; Zech. 12:1–14:15; Mt. 24-25; Lk. 21:1-11, 25-33; 2 Th. 2; Rev. 1:19; 4:1).
37. To free saints from the coming wrath of God (1 Th. 5:1-11).
38. To take the hinderer of lawlessness out of the world (2 Th. 2:7-8).
39. To give church saints at least seven years to live in Heaven, to become acquainted with the future life, and prepare for earth rulership (Jn. 14:1-3; Dan. 9:27; Eph. 2:7; 3:11).

40. To have the saints in Heaven to partake of the marriage supper and to accompany Christ back to earth to fight at Armageddon (Rev. 19:1-21; Zech. 14:1-5; Mt. 24:29-31; 2 Th. 1:7-10; 2:7-8; Jude 14-15). If there would be no rapture until the Second Advent, then all of these purposes would be canceled.

Ten Qualifications for the Rapture

1. One must be in Christ: “The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive [in Christ] and remain shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Th. 4:16-17). To be “in Christ” means that we are “a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself” (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

2. One must belong to Christ: “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:23). To belong to Christ means that we “have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24).

3. One must do good: “. . . 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” (Jn. 5:28-29).

4. One must be blessed and holy: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ” (Rev. 20:6; cf. Heb. 12:14).

5. One must be worthy: “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things [Lk. 21:6-11, 25-33; Mt. 24-25; Rev. 4:1–18:24; 2 Th. 2; 1 Th. 5; etc.] that shall come to pass [in the Tribulation], and to stand before the Son of man” (Lk. 21:36).

6. One must be in the Church: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles” (1 Cor. 12:13, 27; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18, 24).

7. One must be pure: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet

appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 Jn. 3:2-3).

8. One must be without spot, wrinkle, or blemish: "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

9. One must live and walk in the Spirit: ". . . ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh," (Gal. 5:16). "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like . . . they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21)—and will not go up in the rapture.

10. One must walk in the light: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:7; Col. 2:6-7).

Chapter Six

EVENTS FOLLOWING THE RAPTURE

After the Church Age

1. Events in Heaven that John saw after he arrived there, as in Rev. 4:1, including the raptured Church and O.T. saints who were seen in Heaven by this time, being a fulfillment of things revealed here, for the first time, as happening after the churches (Rev. 4:1–5:14). The raptured church saints are definitely pictured as being in Heaven at this point (Rev. 5:8-10).

2. Events of Daniel's Seventieth Week, or the last seven years of this age between the events which John saw in Heaven in Rev. 4 and 5 and the Second Advent in Rev. 19:11-21. This period covers all the seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, and all other details regarding the two witnesses (Rev. 11:3-12), the woman and the manchild (Rev. 12), the two beasts (Rev. 13:1–14:20); and the great harlot (Rev. 17).

3. The marriage supper of the Lamb and the Second Advent (Rev. 19:1-21).

4. The Millennium—the 1,000–year reign of Christ to put down all rebellion on earth (Rev. 10:1-6; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Eph. 1:10).

5. Events ending the 1,000–year reign of Christ including the renovation of the heavens and the earth by fire (Rev. 20:7-15; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; Heb. 1:10-12; 12:26-29).

6. Events of the eternal New Heaven and the New Earth (Rev. 21-22; Isa. 65:17; 66:22-24; 2 Pet. 3:10-13).

From the above we can see that it would be wrong to make historical events a part of things yet to happen, which includes the seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, the woman and the manchild of Rev. 12. For example, it would be erroneous to say that the ascension of Christ that took place 65 years before John

wrote the book of Revelation was actually the ascension of the manchild (Rev. 12:5) in the middle of events which must be after the churches. In comparing 25 versions with the King James Version, the author has found that every one is in agreement with the fact that the prophecies of Rev. 4:1 on through the 22nd chapter of the book are to be fulfilled in detail after the churches; that is, after the church age—and this is in agreement with the threefold division of Revelation as stated above.

To quote various renderings of Rev. 4:1 one says, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place hereafter”; another says, “what must come to pass after this”; and others say, “which are to happen in the future”; and, “what things must come to pass”—all referring to what should happen after the churches which John had just completed writing about in the second division of his book (Rev. 2:1–3:22).

Chapter Seven

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The Three Divisions of Revelation

1. “Write the things which thou hast seen.” That is, as the first division of this book write the vision that you saw of me (Christ) in the midst of the candlesticks in Rev. 1:11-18 (Rev. 1:19). This John did in the first chapter of the book.

2. “Write the things which are.” That is, in the second division of the book of Revelation write the things that I (Christ) will tell you to write about concerning the churches, or concerning the Church on earth. This John did in Rev. 2:1–3:22 (Rev. 1:19).

3. “Write the things which must be hereafter.” That is, as the third and last division of the book of Revelation write the things that I (Christ) will show you after you have completed things concerning the churches. These last things do not concern the things of the churches—they concern events after the church age. These things to happen after the church age were recorded by John in Rev. 4:1–22:21 (Rev. 1:19).

The Key to the Book of Revelation

If one will accept this simple threefold division of Revelation, as in the above, and keep every detail of the events in the proper division as revealed, this will truly serve as the key to an understanding of the entire book. All that is required for an understanding of these events is to take them literally as things to happen on the earth from John’s day forward into all eternity to come, making sure above all else that each event is put in its proper place or order of events as they are revealed—each in its own division, not mixing those things concerning the Church with those things which must be after the churches.

We have in the things concerning the churches, and the events which must be after the churches two separate and distinct series of happenings that cover two separate and distinct periods of time—one period covering the church age (Rev. 2:1–3:22), and the other covering the time from the end of the church period, or church age, into all eternity to come (Rev. 4:1–22:5). Whenever we see that “the

things which are" belong to the church age, and that "the things which must be after the things which are" belong to the period from the close of the church age on into all eternity, then the entire book becomes as simple to understand as John 3:16. The main thing to keep in mind is that Rev. 4:1–22:21 will be fulfilled after the church age, and, therefore, after the rapture of the Church. Not one of these latter–day details has anything to do with the church age.

Chapter Eight

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6)

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1)

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord (Jas. 1:5-8)

Whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23)

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (Eph. 6:16)

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward . . . Now the just shall LIVE BY FAITH: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him (Heb. 10:35-39)

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing ye shall receive (Mt. 21:21)

If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth (Mk. 9:23)

Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore, I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them (Mk. 11:22-24)

These scriptures, which clearly set forth the importance of faith, need no interpretation. They plainly promise all men that they can get whatsoever they have faith for. There are no limitations or qualifications concerning known needs of this life or the life to come; so do not limit them. They are clear that faith is absolutely necessary to get what is desired in life. No man should expect to get anything from God if he refuses to have faith. There is no such thing as the impossibility of having faith, so the fact that one does not have faith is his own choice and responsibility. Jesus commanded men to “Have faith in God,” and such is possible, or it would not be mandatory.

It is all–important to have faith, because no prayer will be answered without it—God cannot be pleased without it; man will not get anything from God without it—and he will be disobedient to God without it. If faith is commanded, then not to have faith is to break the law of God and commit sin. If believers would realize this fact they would become desperate about this law-breaking, as much as they are about breaking other laws of God. If they could only realize that it is sin to have unbelief and to doubt God they would at least become moved to the point of action against such law-breaking. The trouble all along has been that most men consider unbelief and doubt as part of human nature and something to be expected and not to be changed. The attitude has been that of being indifferent about it. When it is easy to believe there is no problem, but when it becomes a struggle and hard to believe it is passed off as something that cannot be helped at all. This is where the devil has got the upper hand of men who pray. He makes them think that not all men can believe God and that if one cannot do so, then it is perfectly right to live in unbelief and to doubt and waver all that one pleases.

If prayer is not answered, most men take it for granted that it is not the will of God to grant any answer. They are quickly turned aside from the purpose of getting an answer and are satisfied to be defeated. Blame for such defeat is laid upon God and is considered the will of God without any question, while the truth is that this attitude is surrender to the devil and evil spirit-forces who oppose the answer to prayer. It is so habitual for the average Christian to be defeated that he gives little thought to it. It is taken for granted when the prayer is offered that its not being granted will be all right, and that this failure of God to grant the answer reveals that it is His will not to answer.

This condition in the lives of praying people has been created by wrong teachings in the churches for years upon years. The average preacher, if he reads

our arguments, will be quick to defend such failures and such teaching of failures as being perfectly biblical and the best will of God. This proves that we are right in stating that the preachers are largely to blame for such a condition of unbelief and such resignation to defeat in prayer. If each preacher would wake up to acknowledge truth and wage aggressive warfare against satanic forces, Satan would soon be defeated. If they would teach the truth as it is plainly written in scriptures, faith would soon be built up so that people would not take no for an answer to prayer. At least it would stop all defense for unbelief and failure. If all men could only be honest enough to refuse to excuse their unbelief by such failures the Christian world would be better off.

Too many times such failures are taken to prove that it is not God's will to answer. The plain Word of God is entirely ignored as proof of anything. The failure to get an answer is the main proof for everything, it seems, although the truth can be found by means of more diligent search of Scripture and more humility in acknowledging defeat to be of satanic and human sources instead of from God. The truth is that because of unbelief and doubting God, prayers remain unanswered and that such a result is never the true will of God.

Suppose God does not answer prayer; does this do away with His promises and make null and void His Word, or does it prove that man failed to have faith? What does the Bible say? If it says that God will always answer faith, then the lack of an answer simply shows unbelief. When the disciples asked Jesus, "Why could not we cast him out?" The answer was, "Because of your unbelief" (Mt. 17:14-21). Not one Scripture says that unanswered prayer indicates any other cause. When we try to excuse our unbelief and blame God for the failure, we sin against Him.

In Heb. 12:1-2 we are told,

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, AND THE SIN which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith

Unbelief is the sin that so easily overthrows the saints. It is not the major sins of the flesh that we permit to dominate us, but it is the sin of constantly doubting God. If none would doubt God there would be no failure to obtain an answer to prayer every time one prays for anything that is covered by the promises of God.

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