

Is There Such A Thing As The **RAPTURE?**

“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

(1 Thessalonians 4)



The Golden Rule Of Interpretation

Created By Dr. David L. Cooper

Trying to understand what the Bible is saying can be difficult. I have discovered a way which has helped many people. It is known as Dr Cooper's Golden Rule. It is the rule that we will follow in this series.

“When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic (i.e. self-evident or unquestionable) and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise.”

“A. Seek the plain, literal meaning of the scriptures.

“B. Seek the figurative meaning only when the facts demand such an interpretation.

“C. Study every statement of the scriptures in context.

“Then study the facts of the context in the light of related passages and axiomatic (*i.e. self-evident or unquestionable*) fundamental truths.

“No prophecy of scripture is of private (special) interpretation (2 Peter 1:20)

“The sum of thy word is truth (Psalm 119:160)

“1. *The Golden Rule of Interpretation* is one of the most important principles governing us in our interpretation of the Scriptures.

“2. If we follow this rule, we shall never go very far wrong; **but if we fail to follow it, we shall never go right.**”

C. H. Spurgeon agrees,

“I wish never to learn the art of tearing God's meaning out of His own Words. If there is anything clear and plain, the literal sense and meaning of (the) passage, (it's) a meaning not to be spirited or spiritualised away. (C. H. Spurgeon Sermon No. 582 on-line source)

(“Cooper's Golden Rule” source: <http://www.messianicassociation.org/ezine19-dc.hermeneutics.htm>)

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Is There Such A Thing As The Rapture? What Is It, And When Is It?

This document introduces a series dealing with the *Rapture of the believing Church*. Using only a single page, the intention is to alert us to this event that is clearly spoken about in the Bible and of its importance.

In years gone by there were regular “*Second Coming Conferences*” when the whole nature of the prophetic word of God was examined. Often it was a whole weekend of discussion.

These days we rarely hear a sermon about these amazing events that are to come upon an unsuspecting earth, **and now upon an unsuspecting Church as well**. So do not be surprised if you know little or nothing about this prophesied event. For those who will accept it, the fact of a “*no second coming message*” in our Churches today is a certain sign that the end days are upon us.

This portion of the *Single Paged Papers* deals with **the claim that the Second Coming of Christ is a two-part event with each part separated by some years**.

The first “instalment” of that two-part event is commonly called “*The Rapture of the Church*” and it could happen at any second. The Rapture teaches that the entire body of believers is removed from the earth “*in the twinkling of an eye*” to meet the Lord in the air. Following that the believers will be “*forever with the Lord*.”

St Paul wrote of this event,
*“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, **In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.**”*

(1Corinthians 15:51-52)

Further we are told
“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you 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 precede them which are asleep. **For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.**”*

(1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18)

This section of the *Single Paged Papers* will examine various passages that teach about the Second Coming of the Lord. Jesus Himself spoke of these events and we will examine His words also. By comparing the various passages side-by-side, in a series of *Single Paged Papers*, we will find

- interesting differences,
- seeming inconsistencies and
- apparent contradictions.

How can this be?

These “*inconsistencies*” will vanish once we realise that the Bible speaks of two separate and distinct events regarding the Second Coming of the Lord.

- In all of these matters our only aim should be to discover the mind of the Lord.
- We must seek the Lord and ask Him to open our hearts and minds to His truth.
- No one wants to be convinced by one human commentator or another.
- We want to be convinced by the Scriptures and so our aim is to let the Scriptures speak for themselves.
- May the Lord Himself lead us into His truth, and that is our hope and prayer.

The Biblical Time Line Of History

Following is a brief Biblical outline of how history unfolds. It provides a time line for the discussion that follows and the next page contains a diagram that may be helpful. This outline is based on the normal understanding of the plain words of the Scriptures and follows Dr Cooper's *Golden Rule*.

We are now living in what is often called "The Church Age" which began at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the Church. The length of the Church Age is not stated, but it will end when the Lord calls His Church "home." That event is called *The Rapture* when the *Bride of Christ* (the Church) is taken from the earth...

"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess 4:16-17)

Then follows the most horrific time the earth will ever know. We mostly call it the *Great Tribulation*. Jesus warned about it saying,

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

This horrific event is also prophesied in the Old Testament where it is called *The Time of Jacob's Trouble* because it totally involves Israel. *"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."* Jeremiah 30:7

The Great Tribulation

Much of St John's Revelation gives detail of the Tribulation as does Daniel and other prophets. The Tribulation has two halves each being 1260 days (or 3 1/2 years) in length. It tells of the arising of the Antichrist who, at first, is accepted by the Jewish people and they enter a seven year "peace" covenant with him. In the middle of that agreement Antichrist sets himself up in the Temple as St Paul warns ...

"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 (Antichrist) be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

Daniel calls this event "*the abomination of desolation*" because it pollutes the Temple. Jesus also used those same words when issuing a warning to the Jewish people who will be living in

Israel when this horror takes place. He appeals to them saying,

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." (Matthew 24:15-18)

The believing people flee because the second half of the Tribulation is a time of appalling horror and it spreads over the entire earth. Jesus warned ...

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matthew 24:21-22)

The world's armies, led by Satan, set themselves to oppose the Lord and, in their attack, are destroyed,

"And I saw the beast (Antichrist), and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him (Jesus) ... And the beast (Antichrist) was taken, ... These ... were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." (Revelation 19:19-21 selected)

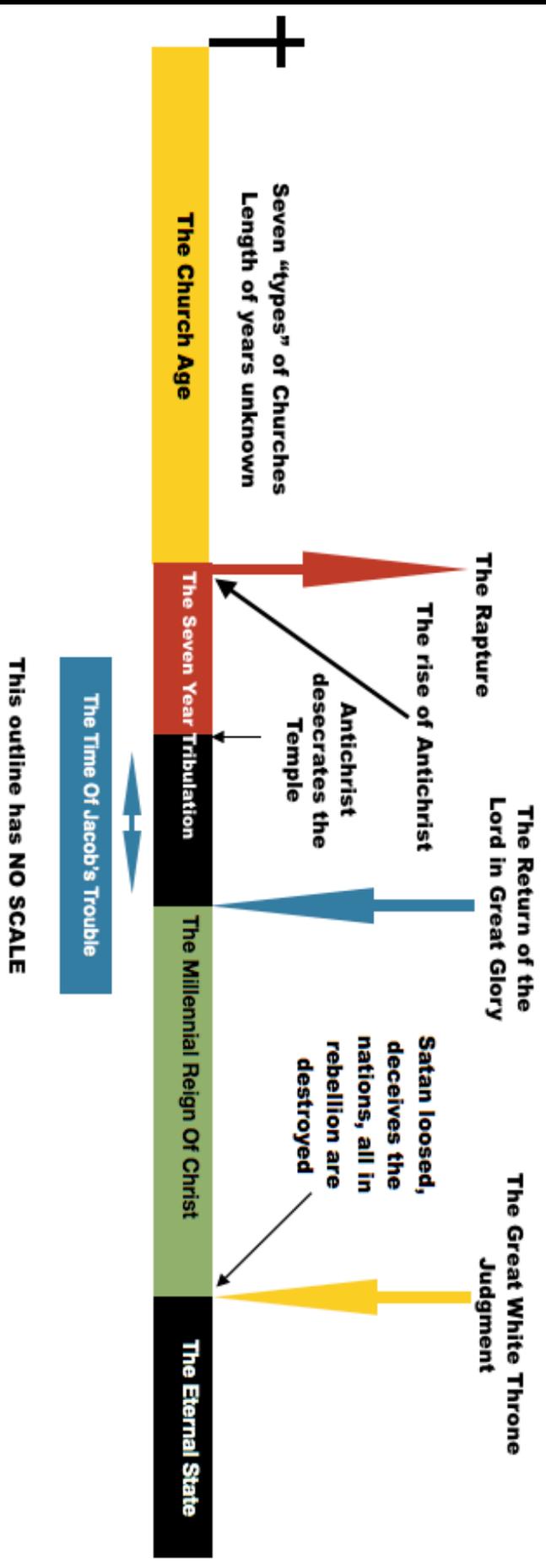
This scene is a part of the second coming, when He comes in the clouds with great glory. It is the time when *"every eye shall see Him, even those who pierced Him."* (Revelation 1:7)

This is followed by the glorious reign of Christ on the earth (the Millennial Reign) when idyllic conditions prevail on the entire earth. At the end of the millennial reign Satan is loosed and, believe it or not, he again raises up an army who challenge the Lord. This is a group who have only lived during the Lord's benevolent rule, **but they are not the Lords**. They find that sin is still deceitful and, under Satan's leadership they rise up, and are destroyed.

Then follows the *Great White Throne* judgment when all the wicked stand before the Lord and are cast out. Then we read ...

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ... And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev 21: 1-4) Thus begins the eternal state.

A Broad Outline Of Prophetic Events



Comparing Scripture To Scripture We See That There Must Be Two Events When The Lord Returns

Event 1: There are several descriptions in the Holy Scriptures regarding the return of the Lord. Here is one of them ...

*“13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep (deceased). 16 **For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.**”* (1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18)

Paul spells out several things here,

1. The dead believers will return with the Lord when He comes again. v 14 and 16b
2. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout v16,
3. with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God v16:
4. and the dead in Christ shall rise first: v16
5. The living believers will be caught up also. v17

That passage presents a straightforward account of what will happen. Paul gives more detail ...

“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-56)

So we see that this event will happen *“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”* It is an instantaneous event according to St Paul. In summary then we see that

1. the believing dead will be raised “incorruptible”
2. and the living believers will also be *“caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* 1 Thessalonians 4:18)

This is a description of the Rapture, or the snatching away of the believers, and it happens instantly, indeed as fast as your eye can twinkle. **It is not a public spectacle.**

Event 2: Let us compare this with another quite different description of the return of the Lord.

*“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. **And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.***

(Revelation 19:11-14)

Jesus spoke of this event also ...

*“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: **And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**”* (Matthew 24:29-31)

This second scene differs widely from the earlier scene because they are describing separate events. Any plain reading of these events will show that they are totally incompatible. **The first** makes no mention of armies and cataclysmic events as it is totally a personal event for all believers.

In the second we see the armies of heaven pure and clean and mounted on white horses led by Jesus the Saviour, but now in His role as the all-conquering *Lion of Judah*. The whole universe shudders in His presence, the sun is darkened and the moon fails, and stars fall. The unbelieving world *“mourns”* as they know the time of judgment is upon them **as they see** our Lord Jesus Christ coming in the clouds with power and great glory. Here we are shown a majestic scene that includes worldwide cataclysmic events that all people witness, even those who *“pierced Him.”* We read, *“Behold, He comes with clouds; **and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all peoples of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.**”* (Revelation 1: 7)

Scene one describes the very personal Rapture of all believers who are snatched away silently. The **second scene** is a world wide spectacle, a very public and majestic event, as the Lord comes in great glory. Two incompatible scenes are described here, and therefore two quite different events.

Jesus said, *“As it was in*
The Days Of Noah And Lot
Even so shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed”

Jesus was involved in yet another confrontation with the Pharisees. They asked Him when, “... *the kingdom of God should come?*” Jesus essentially responded to His disciples saying,

“And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” (Luke 17:26-30)

Jesus is describing an event that takes the entire world by surprise. The word picture that Jesus paints tell of a normal world just as we know it to be. He tells of an average everyday sort of world where all things are going on as always. Before the flood people were living “*normal*” lives. Wickedness abounded, as it does today, but Jesus said they **“knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”** (Matt 24:38-39)

Similarly for the people of Sodom. Life was the same as always. A normal life in Sodom was probably quite different from the life that we know, but it was normal for them. Jesus said,

*“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: **But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.**”* (Luke 17: 28-30)

So we see that Jesus speaks of a sudden intervention by God into what was for those people their normal life. **This is the first picture.**

Here is the second scene also painted by Jesus Himself. We read in Matthew 24 that Jesus was responding to comments about the grandeur of the Temple (v7). Jesus told His disciples that the impressive building would be destroyed, “*There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*” History records that it was demolished by the Romans in AD 70. However the rest of the description that Jesus gave **does not fit** the times of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Nowhere does history record the horror of the cataclysmic events that Jesus spoke about,

so the comments by Jesus **do not fit** the Roman destruction.

In fact, the answer that Jesus gave was far reaching for He gave a description of the world's events that would herald His return in great glory.

This is what He said in Lukes account,

*“And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven ... And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. **And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.**”* (Luke 21: 11, 25-27)

What a contrast exists between this description and the scene Jesus painted in His references to Noah and Lot. Yet in both cases Jesus is responding to similar questions. Jesus was outlining, in both instances, certain events that would lead up to what we now call the *Second Coming of Christ*. However Jesus paints two incompatible pictures.

The **first** is a normal everyday world with the sudden intervention by God in the flood of Noah, and of the destruction of Sodom at the time of Lot. He concludes those remarks with “*Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.*” The **second** describes a scene of abject horror just before He returns. The pictures Jesus painted are apparently incompatible; **how can both be true?**

In scene one Jesus is describing the rapture of His Church, the true believers. It takes place in a normal everyday world when God intervenes “*in the twinkling of an eye.*” Millions of believers just vanish from the planet. Many of those who are left behind will know about the Rapture and they will realise what has occurred. In that way “*the Son of man (will be) revealed*” (Luke 17:30) to a disbelieving world.

In scene two Jesus describes a world in chaos, a world suffering terror and turmoil, a world that is under the judgment of God. Millions have died. This picture is describing the world when the *Great Tribulation* is taking place, and that occurs seven years after the Rapture of the believing Church.

There is no contradiction here. Jesus in describing both events in plain and unambiguous words and gives impeccable evidence of the rapture of His Church, and of the two part nature of His return.

What Did Jesus Mean When He Said “One Will Be Taken And The Other Left?”

We have been looking at the teachings of Jesus in regard to the end times. We saw that He spoke of the days of Noah and the days of Lot. Jesus then continued saying ...

“I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” (Luke 17: 34-36)

There is very noteworthy information here.

- In v34 Jesus says that it will happen at “night” with some people in bed.
- In v35 the scene shifts to women going about their everyday business.
- In v36 we see men working in a field indicating daylight hours.
- Jesus paints a picture of an everyday world with people going about their regular tasks.
- This description can only apply to a world-wide event, night time somewhere, daylight elsewhere, people sleeping, people working.

Jesus had already told His audience that in Noah and Lot’s time the people were doing everyday things, when suddenly there was the unexpected intervention by God. Jesus here reinforces the everyday nature of life and the unexpectedness of the event. He concludes *“Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”* (Luke 17:30)

If ever there was a description of the Rapture then the words of Jesus spell it out here. Jesus did not explain the Rapture and He could not do so. Here’s why: Jesus was talking to Jewish people prior to His death and resurrection and before Pentecost. In other words it was BEFORE anyone knew about the Church. The Church at that stage was an unrevealed “mystery.” Jesus could not speak of events affecting the Church because His Jewish audience would not have understood Him.

Our position in history gives us much more understanding of these matters than the audience sitting at the feet of Jesus. The events recorded in all four Gospels occurred in the time period BEFORE Pentecost. They are therefore Jewish in nature and deal with Israel. Acts two describes Pentecost and records the birth of the Church.

Jesus never-the-less gave an un mistakeable and unambiguous description of the Rapture. Later St Paul and other inspired authors, then writing after the Church age began, added detail as the Lord

instructed them. The inspired Paul adds detail of the Rapture ...

“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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

(1 Thessalonians 4: 16-18)

Jesus did give the event a distinctive and sombre note when He pointed out that *“some will be taken and others will be left.”* Who then are *taken* and who are *left*? Paul explains that in the verses above teaching that those *“in Christ”* who are already deceased *“will rise first and then all (believers) who are alive (whether asleep or awake) shall be caught up ... to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”*

So what are we seeing here?

- The judgment of Noah’s day did not begin until Noah and his family were removed into the ark.
- The judgment of Sodom did not occur until the godly people were removed. God said to Lot, *“Hurry, escape ... for I cannot do anything until you arrive...”* in the town Zoar.(Genesis 19:22)

Both of these judgments of God illustrate that He will not destroy His believing people, He removes them first. The flood and the events of Sodom tell of the judgment yet to come upon this wicked world.

- The Tribulation period marks the beginning of the judgment of God upon an unbelieving world.
- The judgment of the Lord will not begin until the righteous (the true believers in the Church) are *“caught up.”*

Paul speaks of this

“For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also you do.” (1 Thess 5: 9-11)

When the wrath of God crashes upon an unbelieving world - His Church, the Bride of Christ, will not suffer His wrath. Why? Because there is no wrath for His children *“for the blood of Christ has cleansed us from all sin”* and *“we have passed from death to life”* in Him.

A Difficult Question With A Surprising Answer

There are some difficult questions posed in the Scriptures, with some surprising answers as well. The following is one of them.

Here is a conundrum posed by St Paul regarding the rising to power of Antichrist. Many in the early Thessalonian Church were troubled that the “*day of the Lord*” had already come. St Paul addressed these concerns saying ...

*“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 (Antichrist); Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now you know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time. **For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now lets (restrains or hinders) will let (restrain or hinder), until he be taken out of the way.**” (2Thessalonians 2: 3-7)*

Paul assures the Thessalonian Church that the

- The Day of the Lord has not yet come
- It won't come until the *man of sin* (Antichrist) is revealed.
- Evil, *the mystery of iniquity*, already abounds and will continue throughout the age.
- Evil however remains under the control of the “Restrainer” (the Holy Spirit) for it is the Spirit of God that ultimately restrains sin.
- The Restrainer will be taken out of the way
- And then *the man of sin* (Antichrist) will arise.

Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit when telling of His departure and gave these comforting words.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He comes, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:” (John 16: 7-11)

All Christians possess the Holy Spirit and they do speak up against sin in our society, but without the indwelling Holy Spirit our efforts would fail. We need a power beyond ourselves and that power comes from the indwelling might of the Holy Spirit. St John tells of His might when he writes, “*You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: **because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.**” (1John 4:4)*

We know that the Holy Spirit was given to the believers (the Church) at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit

was not indwelling the believers in Old Testament times. He was absolutely influential and active in the world in ancient times, but He came and went in the lives of the believers as the occasion demanded. It is only since Pentecost that the Holy Spirit continually indwells all believers.

We were assured by Jesus that the Comforter will “*never leave us or forsake us*” but St Paul says that a time is coming when the Comforter will be “*taken out of the way.*” How can that be? The *Holy Spirit*, the *Comforter*, the *Restrainer* of sin, was given to the Church: but what will happen if the Church, the true believers, are no longer on the planet?

Consider this:

- the Scriptures clearly teach us that the Holy Spirit began His present role with the creation of the Church
- as a result we know that the Holy Spirit personally indwells all believers,
- but if all of the believers were to suddenly vanish from the planet,
- what must happen?

St Paul tells us that the Restrainer will one day be “*taken out of the way.*” This will be the case in the rapture when all the believers that the Holy Spirit indwells are, “*in the twinkling of an eye,*” taken from the planet.

This does **not** mean that the Holy Spirit ceases His role in the affairs of the world. He is God and remains omnipresent and active in all the circumstances of mankind, but the role of the Holy Spirit will change as St Paul reveals.

This scripture therefore show that the Rapture must occur before the Tribulation period. It is during that time when Antichrist comes to power and prominence in the world and he can't do so until the Restrainer (the Holy Spirit) is removed.

So we see that the Tribulation cannot begin until Antichrist is revealed and he will not be revealed until the Restrainer, the Holy Spirit who is indwelling all true believers, is removed. Once the Restrainer is gone the *man of sin* will come to power and thus the inevitable conclusion is that the Church must be Raptured before the Tribulation.

This teaching may be new to you, for many Churches these days do not teach about it. Please take the time to consider what has been said.

***“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true ...
whosoever things are of good report ...
Think On These Things”***

(Philippians 4:8)

In Revelation 19 we see the apostle John observing a variety of heavenly scenes. He says, “... I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God ...” (Revelation 19:1)

In this wonderful event from Revelation 19 John sees the Bride of Christ “ready” for the marriage. “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: **for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready.**” (Revelation 19:7)

Who is to be the wife of the Lamb? The Church is *the Bride of Christ* as shown in many passages of Scripture. Here St John tells us that he saw the Bride in heaven ready for the marriage. So we are clearly told by the inspired Word of God that the Bride is in heaven having “*made herself ready*” for the wedding.

Then St John paints quite a different scene in the next few verses. He writes, “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called *The Word of God*. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” (Rev19:11-14)

Let us examine the facts given in these two linked pictures painted by the Apostle. John is shown that the Bride of Christ is in heaven because “*the marriage of the Lamb is come.*” (Revelation 19:7) After the wedding John is shown another scene in which he sees Jesus, the newly married Bridegroom, preparing to return to the earth, “*from the wedding.*” (Luke 12:36)

Thus John does reveal that the marriage has occurred, and it happens immediately before Christ’s Second Coming. John, in the very same chapter, records that the Lord is now ready to come in triumph to the earth. John describes that great moment of the Lord’s return.

“And I saw the beast (Antichrist), and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast (Antichrist) was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he

deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.” (Revelation 19: 19-21)

We are presented with certain facts here in the very same chapter of Revelation. The *Bride of Christ* is shown to be in heaven for her wedding and that happens **IMMEDIATELY BEFORE** the glorious second coming of Christ. How did the Bride get there?

The answer must be that God took the Bride there and we are told elsewhere how that occurred. Here it is in the description of the Rapture of the Church saints, who are the *Bride of Christ*.

“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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

(1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)

We are faced with certain facts here according to St John. He reports

- seeing the *Bride of Christ* in heaven, that is the believing Church, preparing for marriage because “*the marriage of the Lamb is come.*” (Revelation 19:7)
- Then he observes the Almighty Warrior riding out in judgement of a wicked world
- And then we read of the destruction of the Antichrist and those who oppose the Lord.

In this passage it is confirmed that there are two elements, in the Return of the Lord.

- **Part One** John sees the Church in heaven awaiting the wedding following the Rapture.
- **Part Two** John then records the return of the Lord in great glory and majesty showing the second part of Christ’s return.

In fact the *Rapture* of the Church (Part One) and the *Glorious Appearing of Christ* (Part Two) are separated by seven years of earth history. This seven years is the time when the wrath of God is measured out upon the earth.

The Judgment Of God Begins

“Chaos Shall Reign Where'er The Sun Does Its Successive Journeys Run”

How many true believers are there in our world today? It is an impossible question to answer, however Google, that fount of “knowledge”, says *“As of 2010, Christianity was by far the world's largest religion, with an estimated 2.2 billion adherents, nearly a third (31 percent) of all 6.9 billion people on Earth.”* (Pew Report internet source)

Within that 2.2 billion nominal Christians reside the true believers, the born-again saints of God. Let's say that only 5% of them are true believers. The real number will be much higher, but for the sake of this example let's use that figure. That works out to show 100 million true Christians on our planet now. Even that low estimate is a significant number of believers, but only the Lord truly knows *“those that are His”* (2 Timothy 2:19) on the earth today.

Genuine believers, according to Jesus, are *“the salt of the earth”* (Matthew 5:13) and also *“the light of the world.”* (Matthew 5:14) That means that we believers can and do have a significant effect on the affairs of the world.

- Who is it that stands against and is vocal about the sins of the world?
- Who is it that exposes and opposes wickedness?

It is true that some non-believers may also oppose evil, but it is only the believers who can know the *“Mind of God”* and they are the only ones with true wisdom that comes from *“fearing God.”* (Proverbs 9:10)

We have already looked at the Scriptures that show how the Holy Spirit indwells all believers. We also saw that a day is coming when the *Restrainer*, the *Holy Spirit*, who is indwelling all believers, will be withdrawn from the earth with the Rapture of the Church.

What will happen on the earth when 100 million or more people just vanish? It will cause chaos. Seconds after the Rapture someone on Facebook will write,

“I was talking to my friend in our lounge room and she just vanished, where is she now? I don't know what to do! It's scary, what's happening?”

Every TV programme will be instantly interrupted with *“breaking news,”* and wild will be the speculation by breathless reporters. There will also be those who will know exactly what has happened, and many of them will be Church people. Some of these “churched”, but non

believing people, will have heard about the Rapture and will fearfully recognise it as the intervention of God. The Scriptures do teach that the Rapture will result in *“the Son of man being revealed”* to an unbelieving world (Luke 17: 30), and so the real significance of the event will be realised by some.

The Rapture of the Church marks the beginning of the wrath of God being poured out upon an unbelieving world. We believers will not be here for God declares that *“Jesus has delivered us from the wrath to come.”* (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

Every nation will be affected and panic will overtake the planet. No government will know what to do. It is through this political vacuum, and the chaos that it causes, that the *Beast*, the Antichrist, will arise. He quickly comes to prominence and would probably be already well-known politically in the world.

Prior to the Rapture he will be around somewhere, but he was held back by the Holy Spirit (the Restrainer) working through the body of believers. The world will welcome a strong man, a saviour, and Antichrist will be that man. We are told that he is *“... after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders...”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9)

Even today many of the world's leaders are speaking of a one world government and the Rapture seems likely to be the precursor of it. Whatever the case, the Bible tells that Antichrist quickly comes to political and financial power.

Antichrist (aka the Beast) will seem to have all the answers. We are told that the entire world is deceived and ...

“... worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies ... And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him...” (Revelation 13 selected.) There will be many people who become believers in this tribulation time and they will not worship Antichrist. (More on this later.)

- **This marks the “beginning of sorrows” for the people of the earth**
- **but great and abounding joy will be the lot of all who have their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- **Is that you? If not, turn to the Lord today.**

What Happens After The Rapture?

The Lord God is not finished with mankind, but the Rapture of the Church marks the completion of the Church Age. God then starts “a new mission” through Israel. Technically speaking, it marks the beginning of the 70th Week of Daniel’s ancient prophecy. This 70 Week statement is included for the sake of completeness. Most people these days know little or nothing about Daniel’s wonderful prophecy. (Click here <https://www.thesinglepagedpapers.com/the-prophecy-of-the-70-weeks>)

God had been working in the world through the Church, that body of people who were true believers in Christ. The Church is gone in the Rapture and now God begins to deal with Israel once again. The whole focus of world events will then be centred on Israel.

Israel is in the news almost every day and the subject is the “*how to create some sort of peace*” in that country. Recently I came across this statement by the Israel Public Security Minister Gil’ad Erdan. He was speaking at a gathering of the *Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organisations* in Jerusalem (Feb 2017) and said,

*“I believe that peace is possible. Every time Israel had a real partner for peace, we were willing to take far-reaching steps. **If we have a true partner for peace ... we can make a deal...**”*

And that is precisely what the Bible says will happen. It is Antichrist who brokers a peace deal with the Israelis, and the other parties in conflict with Israel. It is a deal that guarantees peace. Somehow the whole earth believes this deceitful man who presents himself to a fragile world by exhibiting “... *the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders...*” (2 Thessalonians 2:9) Most are deceived by him, but not all.

In Revelation we read of a spiritual stirring in Israel where the Lord God raises up an army of witnesses and they are all Jewish. Revelation chapter seven describes this group revealing that they are from the twelve tribes. These are God’s evangelists and through their ministry many are converted to Christ.

God also raises up “*two witnesses*” (Revelation 11) who prophesy (or preach) for 1260 days. They are mighty men under God and have all sorts of powers that, until then, were unknown among men.

The “peace deal” that Antichrist makes is finally broken by him at the halfway mark. It was a seven year agreement but we read that “*in the middle*” of that agreement Antichrist sets himself up as god in the temple.

St Paul writes of this moment saying that Antichrist

“... exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

Daniel calls this event “*the abomination of desolation*” and it creates a panic in Israel. It marks the beginning of the “*time of Jacob’s trouble*.” It begins the persecution of the Jewish people that makes the efforts of Hitler seem amateurish at best.

Jesus warned of this ...

15 When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:) 16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: 17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: 21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

(Matthew 24: 15-21)

The antichrist has some victories. We read ...

“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Revelation 13: 7-8)

He kills the “*two witnesses*” but they are raised up by God after three and a half days (Revelation 11:11) and transported to heaven in the sight of the world, probably by satellite TV. Antichrist then rules the earth by terror but he comes to a fearful end. In Revelation 19 we read of the glorious return of Christ. It is a scene of great majesty when He comes “*with the armies of heaven*.” He comes to “*rule the world with a rod of iron*.”

We then read of Antichrist’s demise. Look what happens to him and to all who oppose our Lord ...

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken (and) cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19:19-21)

More details of these events are available in other sections of *The Single Paged Papers*.

Glossary Of Terms Used

Replacement Theology aka Supersessionism. *Does the Church Replace Israel?*

This is a doctrine that promotes the idea that God is now and forever finished with Israel. This doctrine promotes the idea that Israel has been “*replaced by the Church*” and so the promises to Israel now devolve upon the Church. It is the basis of the doctrines of the Anglicans, the Roman Catholics, the Presbyterians, some Baptist Churches, the Uniting Church, Churches of Christ and others. This whole subject is dealt with in another series of these “*Single Paged Papers*.” Here is the link <https://www.thesinglepagedpapers.com/replacement-theology>

The Great Tribulation also known as “The time of Jacob’s trouble.” (Jeremiah 30:7)

The above two terms are used in Scripture to describe this period of turmoil and destruction that comes upon the whole of the earth. It is “*a time of great fear and trembling*” when “*men’s hearts fail them for fear*.” It is a time when God’s wrath will be poured out on wicked mankind. It leads to the glorious moment when Israel at last recognise Jesus as their Messiah. From that moment on the Lord fights for Israel.