

RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

SOME BIBLE DESCRIPTIONS OF PROMISED FUTURE EVENTS

One event which is promised in God's Word is the Rapture of the Church. This is the "snatching away" of all the living Saints to join the Lord Jesus in the air. We read in First Thessalonians:

1 THESSALONIANS 4:16 For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump (trumpet) of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1 THESSALONIANS 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them (the resurrected dead) in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The Rapture will be followed by a time of Tribulation upon the earth, culminating in the Battle of Armageddon. There will be two parts to the seven year Tribulation period, the second part being called by many scholars "the Great Tribulation," being much greater in intensity, suffering and affliction. This second half of the Tribulation is termed by Jeremiah "*the time of Jacob's trouble*" (Jeremiah 30:7). This is the same time-frame referred to in Daniel 12:1 as "*a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.*" This period is spoken of by Jesus as follows:

MATTHEW 24:21 For then shall be Great Tribulation (refers to the last three and a half years of the Tribulation), such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (the worst that the world has ever seen).

LUKE 21:22 For these be the days of vengeance (judgement), that all things which are written (in the Word of God) may be fulfilled.

REVELATION 16:16 *And He (this is God) gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue “Armageddon” (a literal place where the Battle of Armageddon will take place).*

REVELATION 19:19 *And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him (refers to Jesus) Who sat on the horse, and against His army.*

The Second Coming of Christ, and the defeat of the Antichrist and his forces at the Battle of Armageddon, will bring the period of Tribulation to an end:

ZECHARIAH 14:4 *And His (Jesus’) feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave (divide) in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove (move) toward the north, and half of it toward the south.*

ZECHARIAH 14:5 *And you (Israel) shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, you shall flee, like as you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah King of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the Saints with you (all the Saints will come with the Lord at the Second Coming - Revelation 19:14,8).*

ZECHARIAH 14:12 *And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people who have fought against Jerusalem (all the armies of the Antichrist); Their flesh shall consume (rot) away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.*

Satan will then be bound and locked into the Bottomless Pit, and Christ will reign upon the earth for a literal 1,000 years (known as the Millennial Kingdom).

REVELATION 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the Bottomless Pit (the Abyss) and a great chain in his hand.

REVELATION 20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years (with the chain),

REVELATION 20:3 And cast him into the Bottomless Pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season (Satan is locked into the Bottomless Pit for the 1,000 years of the Millennium).

REVELATION 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them (refers to the 24 Elders who represent the entire Plan of God, which pertains to the Redeemed of all ages; we aren't told who these men are): and I saw the souls of them who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands (categorizes the Tribulation Saints Who gave their lives for the cause of Christ; the idea is that these will be included in the first Resurrection of Life, and will enjoy all its privileges); and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (This is the Kingdom Age.) (E.S.B.)

After this time, Satan is loosed for “a little season,” and he will again deceive the nations:

REVELATION 20:3 . . . and after that he (Satan) must be loosed a little season (released from the Bottomless Pit).

REVELATION 20:7 *And when the thousand years are expired (finished), Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,*

REVELATION 20:8 *And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog (the main reason the Lord allows Satan this latitude is, it seems, to rid the Earth of all who oppose Christ; George Williams says: “The Creation Sabbath witnessed the first seduction, and the Millennial Sabbath will witness the last”; the “Gog and Magog” spoken of by John is a Hebrew term expressive of multitude and magnitude; here it embraces all nations, “the four quarters of the Earth”) to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea (proclaims the fact that virtually all of the population at that particular time, which did not accept Christ during the Kingdom Age, will throw in their lot with Satan). (E.S.B.)*

REVELATION 20:9 *And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the Saints about, and the beloved city (pictures Satan coming against Jerusalem with his army, which will be the last attack against that city): and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. (Stipulates that the Lord will make short work of this insurrection. In fact, very little information is given regarding this event, as is obvious.) (E.S.B.)*

REVELATION 20:10 *And the devil who deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and brimstone (marks the end of Satan regarding his influence in the world, and, in fact, in any part of the Creation of God). . . (E.S.B.)*

Satan’s ultimate and final defeat is followed by “the Resurrection of Damnation” (John 5:29) and the Great White Throne Judgement, the final judgement of all the unredeemed.

REVELATION 20:11 *And I saw a great white throne, and Him (the Lord Jesus Christ) Who sat on it, from Whose face the earth and the heavens fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

REVELATION 20:12 *And I saw the dead (the unredeemed from all the ages), small and great, stand before God (this concerns the second resurrection, the Resurrection of Damnation); and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the (Lamb's) Book of Life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works (this is the basis of the judgement).*

REVELATION 20:13 *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works (the judgement is just).*

REVELATION 20:14 *And death and hell were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death (eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire).*

After all judgement is concluded, God will establish a new heaven and a new (regenerated) earth:

2 PETER 3:10 *But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night (the conclusion of the Millennium; what will happen at that time will be unexpected, and for a variety of reasons); in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (This does not speak of Annihilation, but rather passing from one condition to another.) (E.S.B.)*

Therefore we should be:

2 PETER 3:12 *Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Day of God (concerns the Coming Eternal,*

Perfect Earth, which will last in that condition forever and forever), wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (“The Day of God” will be ushered in by the cataclysmic events of this Verse. There must be no sin left in the Universe.) (E.S.B.)

2 PETER 3:13 Nevertheless we (Christians), according to His promise, look for (look forward to this) new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness (this is what is promised - Revelation Chs. 21, 22).

REVELATION 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth (“New” in the Greek is “kainos,” and means “freshness with respect to age”; when it is finished, it will be new, as is obvious, but the idea is it will remain new and fresh forever and forever because there is no more sin : E.S.B.): for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away (changed not annihilated); and there was no more sea (giant oceans).

After the earth is restored to its original perfect state, the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, will come from heaven to earth to be the eternal dwelling place of God and all His Saints from throughout the ages. Thus God’s actual throne will descend to the earth and peace will reign for eternity.

REVELATION 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem (containing all the Saints), coming down from God out of heaven (God’s throne and His headquarters will then be on the earth), prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (The city is the eternal home of the Redeemed.)

REVELATION 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, “Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. (Finally proclaims that which God intended from the beginning). (E.S.B.)

REVELATION 21:4 *And God shall wipe away all tears (every teardrop) 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 (all the effects of the Fall will be no more)."*

REVELATION 21:5 *And He Who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said unto me, "Write: for these words are true and faithful." (God will bring all this to pass, as He has promised.)*

REVELATION 21:6 *And He said unto me, "It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him who is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. (This relates to the present time.)*

REVELATION 21:7 *He who overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son (a joint-heir with Christ - Romans 8:17)."*

This is the order in which these events will take place. When everything is concluded, there will be no more curse and no more evil, only the continuing blessing of God's presence and glory. God's servants, the glorified Saints, will reign with God and Christ forever. We will be with Him and serve Him and see His face:

REVELATION 22:3 *And there shall be no more curse (because sin will no longer be present in any capacity): but the throne of God and of the Lamb (this term reminds us of the Cross and the price paid) shall be in it (the New Jerusalem); and His servants shall serve Him (gladly):*

REVELATION 22:4 *And they shall see His face; and His Name shall be in their foreheads (speaks of ownership, having been bought with a price).*

REVELATION 22:5 *And there shall be no night there (in the City); and they need no candle, neither light of*

the sun; for the Lord God gives them light (“the Lamb is the light thereof ” - Revelation 21:23): *and they (the Saints) shall reign for ever and ever.*

The order of these events is based on the futurist view of Revelation, for there are various schools of thought regarding the end-time period or apocalypse, as outlined in the Book of Revelation. Some believe the events of Revelation have already taken place, some believe Revelation contains no literal reality (being all allegory), and some believe Revelation refers to the time when Christ will return to the earth to overthrow all the powers of evil. We believe that this last view, the futurist view, is that which the scriptures reveal, with a literal interpretation of the detail of the Book of Revelation being both appropriate and required. On this basis, Revelation Chs. 4 through to 22 deal with events which will take place after the Church Age. In fact Revelation Chs. 6 through to 19 relate to the seven year period called the Tribulation. The Rapture or “*the first resurrection*” (Revelation 20:6), signalling the end of the Church Age, will take place before the Tribulation, and will occur between the events of Revelation Ch.3 and Revelation Ch.4. The future literal 1,000 year reign of Christ, called the Millennium (the Kingdom Age), will take place after Armageddon and the casting of Satan into the Abyss. This is detailed in Revelation Ch.20.

REVELATION 20:4 and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

***REVELATION 20:5 But the rest of the dead* (pertains to the second resurrection - all the unredeemed, those whose souls and spirits are currently in hell) *lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.* (The first resurrection pertains to all the Redeemed, every Saint of God who has ever lived from Adam to the end of the Tribulation. All will receive glorified bodies. Also note that these verses tell us that the Resurrection of Life and the Resurrection of Damnation will be separated by 1,000 years.)**

REVELATION 20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection: on (over) such the second

death (which refers to being cast into the Lake of Fire) has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

This is the Premillennialist world view of the interpretation of Revelation, i.e., that we are living in a time which is prior to the Millennium, the literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth. After the 1,000 years, Satan will be released for “*a little season*” (Revelation 20:3), to again deceive the nations. God will destroy this last rebellion, with Satan being permanently cast into the Lake of Fire. “*The Resurrection of Damnation*” and the Great White Throne Judgement will then take place (Revelation 20:11-15), after which the New Jerusalem will descend to the earth and God will dwell with His people forever (Revelation Ch.21).

The Amillennialist world view interprets Revelation 20:1-6 figuratively, and so rejects the whole idea of Jesus reigning on the earth for 1,000 years after the Second Coming. Amillennialists major on the present rule of God within Believers and ignore the future Kingdom of God, spiritualizing the first resurrection (Revelation 20:6) while considering the second one to be literal (Revelation 20:11-15)!!

The Postmillennialist world view interprets Revelation 20:1-6 to mean the figurative purification of the world by God through the Church. They have a similar interpretation of Daniel 2:34-35 which is the stone in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The idea is that once the Church has covered the earth fully with the Gospel and changed it from glory to glory, then the Lord will return to rule over it. Therefore a golden age of 1,000 years will precede Christ’s Second Coming! Some even believe that Satan was bound when the Lord died on the cross. This view suffers when it becomes blatantly obvious that despite the presence and influence of the Church, earthly conditions seem to be worsening, not improving. However the current “**Kingdom Now**” movement is adding its doctrinal weight to this view - that the Church will be presented as a spotless, faultless Bride to Christ on His return. This is not scriptural for it denies the Rapture. The two views mentioned are erroneous because they have been derived from faulty hermeneutics, namely the spiritualizing of that which is meant to be taken literally.

THE RAPTURE

Background Reading: 1 John 3:1-3

As Christians we have much to look forward to in this life with the resurrection power of the Divine Nature at work in us. We also have eternal life and an eternal home with God in heaven. Jesus said in John 14:1-3:

JOHN 14:1 “***Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe (have faith) also in Me.***

JOHN 14:2 ***In My Father’s house are many mansions (heaven is very expansive): if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.***

JOHN 14:3 ***And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself (here the Lord is referring to the Rapture of the Church); that where I am, there you may be also.”***

Jesus is preparing a mansion for every person who responds to His love and receives His gift of salvation. But Jesus also stated, “*If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.*” He refers, in these scriptures, to the redemption of our mortal bodies. Therefore at the appointed time, the scriptures tell us that Jesus will return to “rapture” (“snatch away”) His Church of all true Believers, and take them to heaven. At this time all the Saints, both those who are physically dead and those who are physically alive, will be gathered together to meet with the Lord in the air and will receive, as God’s Word tells us, glorified immortal bodies. This wonderful event is called “the Rapture.”

Although the word “rapture” is not found in the Bible, the event itself is described in detail. Indeed Paul spoke of this promise to the Church throughout his writings.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:14 ***For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again (the very Foundation of Christianity is the Death and Resurrection of Christ; it is the proof of***

life after death in a glorified state for all Saints in that life; which incidentally will never end), even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. (This refers to the Rapture of the Church, or the Resurrection of all Believers, with both phrases meaning the same thing, even as Paul describes in I Corinthians , Chpt. 15. At death, the soul and the spirit of the Child of God instantly go to be with Jesus [Philippians 1:23], while the physical body goes back to dust. At the Rapture, God will replace what was the physical body with a Glorified Body, united with the soul and the spirit. In fact, the soul and the spirit of each individual will accompany the Lord down close to this Earth to be united with a Glorified Body, which will then make the Believer whole.) (E.S.B.)

1 THESSALONIANS 4:15 *For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord (presents the Doctrine of the Rapture of the Church as the “Word of the Lord”), that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord (all Believers who are alive at the Rapture) shall not prevent them which are asleep. (This refers to the fact that the living Saints will not precede or go before the dead Saints.) (E.S.B.)*

1 THESSALONIANS 4:16 *For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout (a word of command which will reverberate through the spiritual world - all heaven and hell will hear it), with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump (trumpet) of God: and the dead in Christ (all born-again Believers who have died) shall rise first:*

1 THESSALONIANS 4:17 *Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them (the resurrected dead) in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air (the lower atmosphere): and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

1 THESSALONIANS 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words (the amazing things that those in Christ have to look forward to).

The term “caught up” is derived from the Greek word “harpazo.” The root meaning of this verb denotes a sudden swift grab - “to snatch,” “to catch away.” “When it does happen, both the dead in Christ and the ones still alive “will be seized” (harpagesometha) suddenly. This verb speaks of the irresistible power of God that will be realized in suddenness and in force when Jesus vocalizes His authoritative utterance.”ⁱ Thus the Rapture of the Church will take place within the twinkling of an eye, at which time all the Saints, those both physically dead and physically alive, will be gathered together to meet with the Lord in the air.

Note: Our English usage of the word “rapture” conveys the meaning not so much of the action which will take place but the emotion which will accompany it.

Paul also referred to the Rapture as the “blessed hope” of the Church:

TITUS 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (which is the “blessed hope”);

At the Rapture, the dead in Christ shall rise first, being “resurrected” with glorified bodies. This means that the spirit-man of each Saint who has gone home to be with the Lord will be clothed with a glorified body. Thus “*the dead in Christ shall rise first*” and come with Him. Then the bodies of the living Saints at that time will be instantly and miraculously changed to immortal glorified ones. So in an instant of time, all the living Saints will also join the Lord Jesus in the air.

It will be a time of great joy, as corruption puts on incorruption and mortality is replaced by immortality.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood (as we are now) cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51 *Behold, I show you a mystery (a new Revelation given by the Holy Spirit to Paul concerning the Resurrection, i.e. Rapture); We shall not all sleep (at the time of the Resurrection [Rapture], many Christians will be alive), but we shall all be changed (both those who are dead and those who are alive), (E.S.B.)*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:52 *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (this will happen quickly), at the last trump (of the Church Age): for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead (Saints) shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (each will have a glorified body).*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:53 *For this corruptible (this mortal body influenced by the sin nature) must put on **incorruption** (a glorified body without the influence of the sin nature), and this mortal (a body being subject to death) must put on **immortality** (a body never to die).*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:54 *So when this corruptible shall have put on **incorruption**, and this mortal shall have put on **immortality**, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory** (Isaiah 25:8 - we will then be partakers of the full benefits that Christ won for us through the Atonement).*

PHILIPPIANS 3:20 *For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven (this is where we belong); from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (at the Rapture):*

PHILIPPIANS 3:21 *Who (the Lord) shall change our vile body (at the Rapture), that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body (we too will be given a glorified body like His), according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself (according to His mighty power).*

This is what we and all other Saints from all the past ages can look forward to - receiving glorified, immortal bodies. Then so shall we be forever with the Lord, to live with Him and to serve Him for eternity. There will be no more sickness or pain, no more combating the desires of the flesh or the sin nature, no more suffering and no more ageing. Hallelujah!

When this event takes place, millions of people, i.e. all true Believers, will suddenly disappear from the earth. This will happen “*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*” (1 Corinthians 15:52), which describes how long it will take for this amazing change to take place. The scriptures point to the nearness of the Rapture, and we should be prepared for this glorious and exciting event.

When the Lord returns to collect His Church from the four corners of the earth, there will not be just a few denominations involved. This will be a complete gathering of all the living Saints from every land, every race and every nation, regardless of denominational loyalty. This wonderful event will certainly be a time of great joy for the Body of Christ, a time when the living Saints will meet, in the air, those who have already gone home to be with the Lord. Then, in heaven, all the Saints will be gathered together. Finally, after Christ has judged the works of every Christian at the Judgement Seat of Christ, and everything has been properly dealt with and completed, we will celebrate with Christ our King the Marriage Supper of the Lamb:

REVELATION 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the Marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife (the Redeemed of all the ages) has made herself ready. (This will take place just before the Second Coming of Christ)

Note: The “*Marriage of the Lamb*” is the ceremonial formalisation of the spiritual union between Christ and the Redeemed of all the ages up to that point in time. It will occur at the end of the seven years, just prior to the Second Coming.

REVELATION 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is (stands for) the righteousness of Saints.

REVELATION 19:9 *And he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are they who are called unto the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (this term for Christ reminds us of His sacrifice on the altar of the Cross). ' " And he said unto me, "These are the true sayings (Words) of God."*

Note: The Rapture is a separate event entirely to the Second Coming of Christ. At the Rapture, Jesus will not appear on the earth. At the Second Coming He will come to the earth and will plant His feet on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4). During the Rapture, only His Church will see Him, but at the Second Coming, Jesus will be seen by all (Matthew 24:30; Luke 21:27; Revelation 1:7). At the Rapture He will come for His Saints, and He will not stay (1 Thessalonians 4:17). At the Second Coming He will come with His Saints (Zechariah 14:5b), and He will set up His Millennial Kingdom here on earth.

THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Background Reading: Romans 14:8-12

At some point after the Rapture, all Believers will stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). The purpose of this judgement will not be to decide upon acquittal or condemnation - for we who are in Christ have been clothed with His righteousness and have passed from spiritual death to spiritual life. Rather, this judgement will be in regard to our service to Christ, to determine the reward due to each Believer for their works of faith and love while they were on the earth. The Apostle Paul spoke of this in his first epistle to the Corinthian Church:

1 CORINTHIANS 3:11 *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ (Who He is - God in the flesh - and what He accomplished - redemption through His death in which His Blood was shed).*

1 CORINTHIANS 3:12 *Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay,*

stubble (these are symbols of man's works; the first three are materials which will stand the test of fire, the second three won't);

1 CORINTHIANS 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest (at the Judgement Seat of Christ): ***for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire*** (symbolic of God's judgement according to the standard of His Word); ***and the fire shall try (test) every man's work of what sort it is*** (by what motive and means the work was done).

1 CORINTHIANS 3:14 If any man's work abide (remain) ***which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.***

1 CORINTHIANS 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned (revealing works that are useless in terms of eternal value, not being directed or empowered by God), ***he shall suffer loss*** (refers to a loss of reward, not a loss of salvation): ***but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.***

These scriptures tell us that the works of Christians can be divided into six categories - those of "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble." These works will be tested by spiritual fire which represents God's righteous standard. Those which are burned up (i.e. the works of "wood, hay, stubble") will bring no reward to the person who has performed them. The reason for this is because these are inferior (or dead) works, e.g. done in a person's own strength, reluctantly, or for self-gain. Those which do not burn (i.e. those of "gold, silver, precious stones") are works of faith and love and will bring reward of varying degrees.

So we need to remember the Judgement Seat of Christ and consider how we can serve Him in this life so that our works will stand the test of fire. We need always to be operating in love not selfishness, obeying the Lord in our service rather than fulfilling our own desires and ambitions, and doing all we do in faith and in the Lord's strength. Our works need to be performed in faith and

obedience, and for the glory of God, if they are to be acceptable to Him - not for self-gain but for the Kingdom's sake. In this God is pleased, His grace having worked this love in us through the Divine Nature. Then the glory is His and His alone, for the works are not based in self but in Him - "*for in Him we live, and move, and have our being*" (Acts 17:28).

CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

Background Reading: Matthew 24:36-39

Many people have a negative view of the Book of Revelation, perceiving it as difficult to understand and majoring on destruction. It is a book, however, which reveals the glorified Christ. It also gives vital and wonderful information regarding events which will show forth the end of the age and God's dealings with His wayward creation. The word "revelation" is derived from the Greek word "apokalupsis" which means "to reveal." This book thus represents the completion of the canon of scripture and the revelation of that which is to come.

Revelation was written by the Apostle John under the direction of the Holy Spirit. John was James' brother, called "*the . . . Disciple whom Jesus loved:*" John 20:2. An old man when he received the message and the visions of Revelation, he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos, twenty five miles from the coast of Asia Minor.

The major theme of Revelation is JESUS - Jesus and His eternal Kingdom and His victories. We are familiar with Jesus the man. And we know Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, and Jesus as the Head of the Church. However the Book of Revelation reveals to us another dimension of Jesus, for it shows Him to be the Captain of the Host and the Prince of Peace. It tells us that Jesus, as the King of kings and Lord of lords, will triumph over all. He will then rule over His Kingdom here on earth (Revelation 19:11-16), establishing worldwide peace.

The world's perception of peace is totally different to God's definition of peace. The methods which the world uses to try to bring about peace also differ from God's methods. Firstly, individually speaking, vertical peace (with God) must precede horizontal peace (peace with others). This is to establish a proper foundation. The

world's attempts to establish peace are always conducted at the expense of the most important element, that being God's principles of truth. So the world's ways of establishing true peace are doomed to fail, and the evidence in the world confirms this fact. God's way of establishing peace upon the earth is through the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ! His return to the earth will not be in the same manner as He first came - as a baby boy who was placed in a manger. Christ's return will be in power and strength, to judge and defeat the Antichrist, and to set up His Millennial Kingdom. No one left alive on the earth at this time will miss or be able to deny the Second Advent (Revelation 1:7)!

Dake gives us the following insight into the Second Coming:

“10 fold manner of His coming (1:7)

1. As lightning (Matthew 24:27)
2. With destruction (Matthew 24:38-51; 25:31-46; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:8; Jude 14-15; Zechariah 14; Revelation 19:11-21)
3. Visibly (Matthew 24:29-31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 1:7; 19:11-21; Zechariah 14)
4. In brightness and fire (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:8; Ezekiel 38:17-21; Malachi 4:1-6)
5. In vengeance and wrath (Revelation 14:14-20; 19:11-21; Jude 14-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)
6. With power and great glory (Matthew 16:27; 24:27-31; 25:31-46)
7. With saints and angels (Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 24:29-31; 25:31-46; 1 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14; Revelation 17:14; 19:14)
8. With clouds (Matthew 24:29-31; 26:64; Revelation 1:7; Daniel 7:13-14)
9. As Judge and King (Revelation 19:11-21; Isaiah 11; Zechariah 14; Matthew 25:31-46)
10. As a thief (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4; Revelation 16:15).”ⁱⁱ

Let's look at scripture to see how God will bring about true peace upon the earth through the Second Coming.

ZECHARIAH 14:1 Behold, the Day of the Lord comes . . .

ZECHARIAH 14:2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity (be taken by the Antichrist's forces), and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city (being determined to defend Jerusalem to the death - which is a certainty).

At this point Israel is involved in mortal combat with the Antichrist and his vast armies. The sentence structure in the Hebrew portrays them fighting with ferocity, determined to defend the city to the last man. However they face certain annihilation, and with two thirds already killed through Armageddon and the Tribulation period:

ZECHARIAH 14:3 Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle (possibly refers to the Lord's deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea).

“Then shall the Lord go forth” refers to the Second Coming.

“Then” is the key word!

1. ***“Then”*** : When Israel will begin to cry to God for deliverance, knowing that He is their only hope.
2. ***“Then”*** : When half of Jerusalem has fallen, and it looks like the other half is about to fall.
3. ***“Then”*** : When it looks like every Jew will be annihilated, with two-thirds already killed.
4. ***“Then”*** : When it looks like the Promises of God made to the Patriarchs and Prophets of old will fall down.
5. ***“Then”*** : When it looks like the Antichrist will win this conflict, which will make Satan the Lord of the earth.

The phrase, ***“Then shall the Lord go forth,”*** refers to the Second Coming, which will be the most cataclysmic event that the world has ever known. ***As the Rapture is the hope of the Church, likewise, the Second Coming is the hope of the world.***”ⁱⁱⁱ

(underlines added)

ZECHARIAH 14:4 And His (Jesus') feet shall stand (literally) in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east (the east side of Jerusalem), and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove (move) toward the north, and half of it toward the south (creating a path through the mountain as He created a path through the Red Sea).

The geographical changes wrought will provide a way of escape for the remaining Jews from the Antichrist and the judgements which will be poured out upon he and his armies.

ZECHARIAH 14:5 And you shall flee to (through) the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, you shall flee (as the earthquake splits the mountain), like as you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah King of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come and all the Saints with Thee (Him).

When Jesus returns to the earth, He will come with “*all the Saints*” - all true Believers from this current Church Age, all the Saints from the past ages and all the martyred and raptured Saints from the seven year Tribulation period. Just prior to the Second Coming, all these Saints will, in heaven, enjoy the wedding feast of the Lamb.

REVELATION 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the Marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife (the Redeemed from every age, all of whom will live in the New Jerusalem) has made herself ready. (This present a scene that will take place in Heaven immediately before the Second Coming. The “wife” is the Redeemed of all ages). (E.S.B.)

REVELATION 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is (symbolic of) the righteousness of (the

Blood-bought) *Saints* (who have entered heaven through the only door - the Cross of Christ).

REVELATION 19:9 *And he* (a man is speaking here to John - Revelation 19:10) *said unto me*, “**Write, ‘Blessed are they who are called unto the Marriage Supper of the Lamb** (once again, the word “Lamb” points to the Cross).’ ” *And he said unto me*, “**These are the true sayings of God.**”

REVELATION 19:11 *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He Who sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He does judge* (His judgement is just) *and make war* (refers to the manner of His Second Coming). (E.S.B.)

REVELATION 19:12 *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. (It is unknowable to man, its depths cannot be plumbed).* (E.S.B.)

REVELATION 19:13 *And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in Blood: and His Name is called “The Word of God.”* (Christ is God the Word, also known as the Captain of the Host.)

REVELATION 19:14 *And the armies which were in heaven* (the Saints of God) *followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean* (as per verse eight - means we will come with Jesus at the Second Coming).

REVELATION 19:15 *And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword* (represents Christ functioning totally and completely in the realm of the Word of God), *that with it He should smite the nations* (all the nations who have gathered to destroy Israel at Armageddon); *and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treads the*

*winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God
(at the Battle of Armageddon).*

***REVELATION 19:16 And He has on His vesture (robe)
and on His thigh a Name written, "KING OF KINGS,
AND LORD OF LORDS."***

God's way of establishing peace at this time within the corruption of this world can be summarized in one word - judgement. We can see a little of this judgement in Zechariah 14:12 and 13, which describe the way the Lord will deal with the armies which have come against Israel at the Battle of Armageddon.

***ZECHARIAH 14:12 And this shall be the plague
wherewith the Lord will smite all the people who have
fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume
(rot) away while they stand upon their feet, and their
eyes shall consume (rot) away in their holes, and their
tongue shall consume (rot) away in their mouth (the
Lord's power is released at His Second Coming to defeat
the armies of the Antichrist).***

***ZECHARIAH 14:13 And it shall come to pass in that
day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among
them (men will be stricken by the Lord with great panic);
and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his
neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand
of his neighbour (they will attack each other, i.e. the
Antichrist's armies will turn on one another).***

Great bloodshed and destruction will characterise the Battle of Armageddon. Possibly millions will die, for the army the Antichrist brings against Israel may well be the largest ever assembled. The Book of Revelation gives us the following chilling account:

***REVELATION 14:19 And the angel thrust in (swung)
his sickle into (on) the earth, and gathered the vine
(grapes) of the earth, and cast it (the grapes) into the
great winepress of the wrath of God.***

REVELATION 14:20 *And the (grapes in the) winepress was (were) trodden without (outside) the city, and blood came (poured) out of the winepress, (reaching) even unto the horse bridles, by the space of (for a distance of) a thousand and six hundred furlongs (about 200 miles / 330 klms.).*

The city is Jerusalem. The slaughter will be terrible, the blood running “*even unto the horse bridles*” for a distance up to 200 miles (330 kilometres). “*God does not bring judgement on a person or a nation until all hope of Repentance is gone. During this time the Earth cannot say “we were not warned” . . . The world little knows or understands the wrath of God. It has experienced His Mercy and His Grace from the very beginning. But at the Battle of Armageddon, planet Earth will, for the first time, in full fury, know and realize the wrath of God. This horror is likened to a great winepress where the grapes are squeezed, and the juice spurts from the crushed grapes. It is an apt illustration!*”^{iv}

Thus the day will come to pass when the Lord returns to destroy the armies which have come against Jerusalem, the holy city, and her people, the Jews. On this day of judgement, God will establish peace on the earth, and usher in the Lord’s Millennial Kingdom. The Lord, the Prince of Peace, will then reign over the earth in peace for a thousand years.

As announced by the angel blowing the seventh trumpet, “*The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever*” (Revelation 11:15). Amen and amen.

OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE TILL THE RAPTURE

Background Reading: Mark 16:15-20

We have established that the Rapture could occur at any time, for Bible students generally agree that there is nothing of a prophetic nature left to be fulfilled before the Rapture of the Church can take place. It is the Rapture of the Church which will then clear the way for “*that man of sin,*” “*the son of perdition*” (2 Thessalonians 2:3) to be revealed, and the events of the Tribulation to unfold. As we have

seen, during this time evil will increase and abound, for God's hand of protection which is holding back the wickedness that is to come, will be lifted. Death and destruction will then occur on an unimaginable scale.

The wars of today and those of past ages which people have considered to be horrific will bear no comparison to that which is to come. Even the amount of sin in the world will be multiplied far beyond its present level after the Church is removed from the earth. This will take place because, following the "catching away" of the Church, lawlessness, or rebellion against God's Laws, will rule the day. When lawlessness dominates the world to this degree, every conceivable abomination will take place.

If you have a brother, a sister, a mother, a father, or a friend who is not saved on the day when the Church is raptured, they will be left to face this terrible period of evil and judgement first hand.

There is no guarantee that they will be saved during this time, for you will not be there to bear witness to our Lord's saving grace. Therefore we must do it now while we have the opportunity, for the time is short and there is much that God wants to accomplish and so many who need salvation. He needs men and women of faith to work through. Will you be one of these people of faith?

If you have a heart of love towards God and your fellow man, listen to what the Lord is saying through these words.

We are to bring as many people as we can into the Kingdom by helping them receive God's free gift of grace through Jesus Christ. This is our primary purpose while we are here on earth - this is what Christianity is all about. We do not become Christians just to be blessed and to walk in good health, protection and prosperity, even though these promises are part of our Covenant. True Christianity is being concerned for the eternal welfare of others and meeting their needs by the power of God's Word. Indeed the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation of body, soul and spirit, and God's Word is the sword of the Spirit, a real spiritual sword which can sever all ties to the enemy when it is spoken in faith.

We need to follow Jesus' example and lay down our lives for the sake of others. This involves, as has been stated so many times previously, taking up the cross of self-denial and putting others first - in other words becoming true Disciples of Christ.

LUKE 9:23 *And He said to them all, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross (of self-denial) daily, and follow Me. (These are the conditions of discipleship.)*

LUKE 9:24 *For whosoever will save his life (living it outside of Christ and His grace) shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it.*

LUKE 9:25 *For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? (To gain the whole world and lose one’s soul is no gain.)*

LUKE 9:26 *For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My Words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.”*

LUKE 14:27 *And whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after Me (this is to seek first the Kingdom of God, in other words, His will - Matthew 6:33), cannot be My Disciple.*

We need to be fully committed to serving the Lord in these last days. We need to be grounded and established in God’s Word, displaying God’s love to the world as walking epistles of Christ.

When the Rapture takes place, it will be wonderful for those of us who are in Christ. But we will not then be able to do any more for those who are left behind.

So when is the time to share the Gospel? Now is the time. Today is the day of salvation, for tomorrow may be too late. Remember that eternity for every person can be but one heart-beat away.

ROMANS 13:11 *And that, knowing the time (the Believer is to do everything with the Judgement Seat of Christ in view), that now it is high time to awake out of sleep (spiritual apathy and lethargy must be shaken off): for now is our Salvation nearer than when we believed*

(actually speaks of the coming Rapture of the Church, and the Believer at that time being Glorified). (E.S.B.)

Let us therefore not be asleep, confident of our own salvation but complacent concerning the eternal fate of others. We need to make full use of that which God has given to us - the Word of God and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We need to be open to the Spirit of Truth so that we can know and understand God's perfect will for our lives and so that He can empower us to live in His perfect will and obey Him in every area. This includes of course the seeking of the lost - those outside the Kingdom.

Let us then allow His truths to be burned into our hearts so that we can be cleansed and empowered vessels, fit for our Master's use.

Let us seek the Lord daily so that He can reveal to us what He wants us to do. Then as we act in faith on what we know to be true, we will be readied to bring the message of salvation to those who would open up to the Lord's love, through Christ.

May you have the victory in Christ. Amen!

REVIEW OF TEACHING BOOKLET

Fill in the blanks.

1. To know what major events will take place in the future, we look to the of
2. The of the Church will occur before the time of great destruction called the
3. The Tribulation is a time of judgement, when God's, as well as the wrath of, will be poured out upon the earth as a punishment for man's sin.
4. The Tribulation will last years, and will be a period marked by the rise to power of a man called the
5. This man will be empowered by to a greater extent than any man previously, and he will attempt to wipe the nation of from the face of the earth.
6. The Tribulation period will be brought to an end by the of, when the Antichrist and his forces will be defeated at the of
7. Christ will then rule the earth for years. This period is known as the Kingdom.
8. At the beginning of the 1,000 years, will be bound and locked into the
9. After the 1,000 years, Satan will be loosed again for a "....." : Rev.20:3. He will then again the nations, but will be defeated and cast for eternity into the

10. After Satan's defeat, the will take place. This only involves the unsaved, only those whose names are not written in the of

11. Judgement here will consign all these people to the of for eternity.

12. Then God will regenerate the and come to reign upon the earth

13. The Saints of all the ages will then dwell on earth in the heavenly city called, and there will be no more, neither nor, neither shall there be any more: Rev. 21:4.

14. When the Rapture takes place, all the Saints of all the ages will be gathered together with in the

15. At this time each Saint will receive a body which will last for eternity.

16. The dead in Christ shall rise, then the living Saints will also instantly join with the Lord in the

17. After the Rapture, all those involved in it will return to heaven where they will celebrate with Christ, the of the Lamb.

18. The Rapture of the Church, where meets the Saints in the air, is a completely separate event to the of Christ, where returns to plant His feet upon the Mount of Olives.

19. At the, some seven years after the Rapture, Jesus will appear again on the earth, coming with His to defeat the and his armies at the Battle of

20. This great battle will usher in Christ's 1,000 year Kingdom.

21. At some point after the Rapture, every Christian will stand before the of Christ to receive reward for their earthly works of service: Rom. 14:10-12.

22. Works of value (gold, silver, precious stones) will survive the test of, and bring reward, while inferior works (wood, hay, stubble) will be burned up: 1 Cor. 3:12-15.

23. Our works must be performed in and, and for the glory of if they are to be acceptable to Him.

24. When Jesus returns, the Battle of will be raging, and the nation of will be facing certain obliteration. A remnant who remain will recognize Jesus as the crucified, and they will be delivered and saved.

25. God's perfect judgement will usher in at this time, Jesus being called the Prince of

26. The Rapture of the Church will remove the Body of Christ from the earth; then the horrors of the will follow for those who are left. This knowledge gives us incentive to to our friends and relatives, while we have opportunity. This should be our primary purpose while we remain on earth.

27. Tomorrow may be too late. The scriptures tell us that "..... *is the day of salvation*": 2 Cor. 6:2.

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH - Answers

1. Word, God
2. Rapture, Tribulation
3. wrath, man
4. 7 / seven, Antichrist
5. Satan, Israel
6. Second Coming, Christ, Battle, Armageddon
7. 1,000 / one thousand, Millennial
8. Satan, Bottomless Pit
9. little season, deceive, Lake of Fire
10. Great White Throne Judgement, Lamb's Book, Life
11. Lake of Fire
12. earth, forever
13. New Jerusalem, death, sorrow, crying, pain
14. Jesus, air
15. glorified
16. first, air
17. Marriage Supper
18. Jesus, Second Coming, Jesus
19. Second Coming, Saints, Antichrist, Armageddon
20. Millennial
21. Judgement Seat
22. fire
23. faith, love, God
24. Armageddon, Israel, Messiah
25. peace, Peace
26. Tribulation, witness
27. Today

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

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- i Dr.B.Rossier, "A Study Through The Books of I and II Thessalonians etc., Vol.8, pg.39.
- ii Dake, F.J., Dake's Annotated Reference Bible, pg.230, New Testament.
- iii S.B.C. Vol.6, Hosea through Malachi, pg.528.
- iv S.B.C. Revelation, pg.372.