

THE MYSTERY OF THE RAPTURE...

1 Study Book



GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

Before reading and understanding this publication, please ask the Lord to give you the Spirit of revelation [Eph 1:17-18] and for the Holy Spirit to lead you into all the truth [John 14:26 and John 16:13].

Dear reader,

Ever since I became a Christian 25 years ago, I have sought to understand the "seizing or catching away" of the Church, an event commonly known as the Rapture. This study of "The Mystery of the Rapture Unravelled" will hopefully clarify the confusion and controversy there frequently is concerning the subjects of the Rapture and the Second Coming of Jesus.

In the Church today there are many who

- have no knowledge at all about the Rapture.
- think "meeting the Lord in the air" is the Second Coming.
- don't believe at all in the Rapture.
- think the Church will have to endure the Tribulation (referred to as the Great Tribulation in Matthew 24 vs 21.)

After much study and prayer for revelation I believe totally in the surety of the Rapture - as I know do thousands of other believers. Although the word "rapture" does not occur in the Bible, this Study Book will explain its origin and the biblical passages referring to it.

My prayer is that Christians will "...be ready to give an answer to every man that asks us a reason of the hope that is in us." (1 Peter 3 vs 15.) I trust that this study will help you and others to do this, as well as expressing our true and assured hope of eternity in heaven, as you see more clearly what a wonderful "hope" the Rapture is.

I humbly and prayerfully submit this study to you and would welcome your comments and feedback. Any non-Christian reader would, I hope, find this to be interesting and challenging.

Please feel free to share this study book with others so that they too may be blessed, encouraged and perhaps comforted.

May the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

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WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

In **1 Cor 15:51** Paul refers to the Rapture as “a mystery.” He also expresses in **1 Thes 4:13** his desire for, and therefore the importance of, this “mystery” being understood: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren...”

The English word “rapture” comes from the Latin word “RAPIO.”

Rapio in Greek is the word “HARPAZO” which means “to snatch away/ to seize away/ caught away/ caught up.”

The Greek word “[HARPAZO](#)” is used in several passages in the New Testament. The following are of particular interest:-

- ◆ In **Mat 13:19** in the Parable of the Sower: “...then cometh the wicked one and [catcheth away](#) that which was sown in his heart.”
- ◆ In **Acts 8:39-40**, after Philip baptised the Ethiopian Eunuch: “And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord [caught away](#) Philip that the Eunuch saw him no more... but Philip was found at Azotus preaching.”
- ◆ In **1 Thes 4:17** Paul writes about the Rapture of the Church from verses 13 to 18: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be [caught up](#) together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, so shall we ever be with the Lord.”
- ◆ In **Rev 12:5** John refers to the Church caught up to God: “...and her child (*the Church*) was [caught up](#) unto God and to his throne.” (See the page entitled [THE CHURCH IS SAVED FROM THE TRIBULATION](#) for a fuller explanation of this passage.)

In order for us to understand the relevance and reason for the “catching away” or “Rapture” of the Church, we need to establish that...

THE CHURCH IS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

...soon to be taken up to heaven for the
MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

“...for the marriage of the lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.” **[Rev 19:7-8]**

In **2 Cor 11:2**, Paul speaks of the Church as being a wife to Jesus: “...for or I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” And in the passage in **Eph 5:22-end** concerning husbands and wives, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” [vs. 32]

God’s desire for a wife for Jesus is also seen in the Old Testament. Jews today who believe that Jesus is their Messiah are part of the Church with the Gentiles.

“Thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is his name...” **[Isa 54:5]**

“...as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” **[Isa 62:5]**

Also the book of Song of Songs represents the beautiful picture of Jesus and His bride.

We also need knowledge and understanding about...

JEWISH WEDDING TRADITION

...because this BRINGS REVELATION concerning Jesus and his bride, the Church.

| Jewish tradition in Biblical times | Jesus and the Church as his bride |
|---|---|
| <p><i>The fathers, having arranged the marriage, agreed on the sum of money paid to the bride's father for his daughter. The couple then met (the bride veiled) and, at this meeting, the fathers signed the Marriage Contract. A cup of wine was shared between the couple and they were now espoused (betrothed) to each other. Thus they were committed but not married.</i></p> | <p>Father God has arranged the marriage of his son, Jesus, to his bride, the Church. The price for purchasing the bride, each believer, was the shed blood of Jesus. At conversion, or new birth, the believer is immediately betrothed to Christ and set apart for the future wedding. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the pledge or sealing similar to our present day engagement ring (see 2 Cor 1:22)</p> |
| <p><i>The bridegroom left his fiancée and returned home with his father to build and prepare a house for her.</i></p> | <p>Before the crucifixion, Jesus said to his disciples in John 14:2, "I go to prepare a place for you." He left the disciples, i.e. the bride, and returned to his home in heaven with God, his Father. (see John 14:12,28)</p> |
| <p><i>The bride began to prepare herself for the wedding. The time from the betrothal to the wedding was between nine and fifteen months. Unlike today, the bride never knew the exact day of the wedding, only the approximate date. She got everything ready and waited expectantly.</i></p> | <p>"And the bride has made herself ready."[Rev 19:7b] From the engagement day (being born again) the Christian believer grows, "works out their salvation," is "transformed" and "perfected," "from one degree of glory to another" to be ready, and sanctified "at the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ," [1 Thes 5:23] her espoused husband.</p> |
| <p><i>When the father of the bridegroom was satisfied that the house was prepared sufficiently, he gave permission for his son to go and collect his bride and bring her back to her new home.</i></p> | <p>Speaking of "that day," Jesus says in Matt 24:36 "But of that day and hour no man knoweth, no not the angels in heaven, but my Father only." Only Father God knows the time when he will tell Jesus to come for his bride, the Church. The bride should be waiting, ready and expectant.</p> |
| <p><i>The bridegroom went, with very little warning, to the bride's home and brought her back to their newly prepared house where they consummated the marriage.</i></p> | <p>Jesus said in John 14:3 "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also." This is when Jesus comes again in the clouds to fetch his bride, the Church, from her home, the earth.</p> |

SO THE RAPTURE IS...

JESUS COMING TO COLLECT HIS BRIDE

...for the WEDDING IN HEAVEN!

It is interesting to note the Greek word "[PARALUMBANO](#)" which has two meanings:

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| { | To receive to oneself as a wife. |
| | To take alongside. |

...and is used in these scriptures:

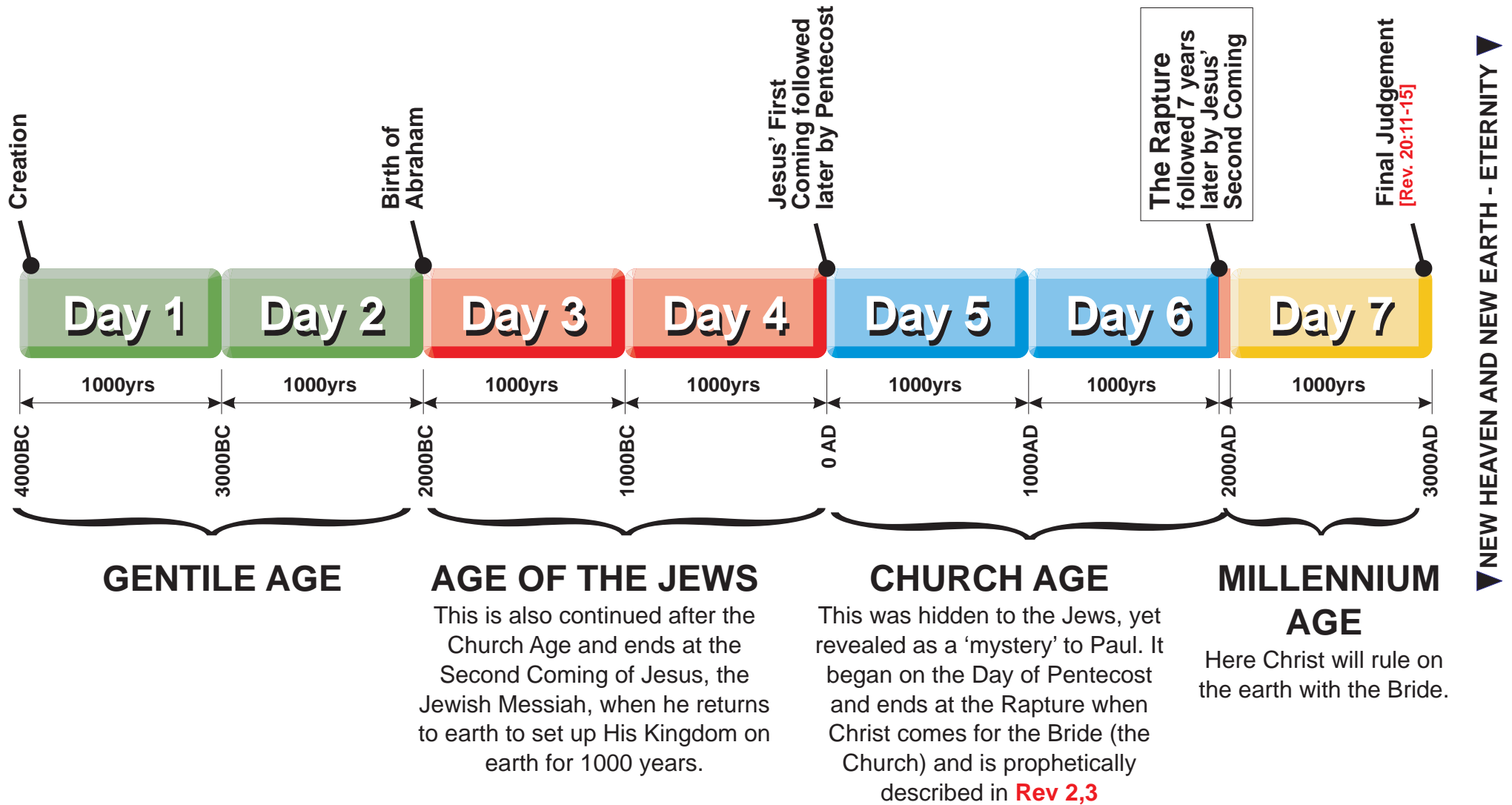
- ◆ In **Matt 1:20** "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not [to take](#) unto thee Mary thy wife."
- ◆ In **John 14:03**, Jesus said, "...I will come again and [receive you](#) unto myself."
- ◆ In **Matt 24:36-42*** concerning the coming of the Son of Man (Jesus), verses 40 and 41 say
"Two shall be in the field; the one shall [be taken](#), and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall [be taken](#), and the other left."
Sadly, the one left behind will be the unbeliever left to face and endure the terrible seven year period on earth called The Tribulation.

* Note: this passage is often attributed to the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of The Tribulation, but the word "paralumbano" used here surely tells us that it refers to the Rapture of Jesus' bride.

**DON'T BE LEFT BEHIND! BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
AND YOU WILL BE SAVED! [Acts 16:31]**

WHEN IS THE RAPTURE IN GOD'S CALENDAR?

“Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing that ONE DAY IS AS A 1000 YEARS TO GOD.” [2 Peter 3:8 - see also Psalm 90:4]



**THE RAPTURE ENDS THE CHURCH AGE BEFORE THE TRIBULATION
(THE CONCLUSION OF THE AGE OF THE JEWS)**

Note: The dates given above are only approximate, i.e. the Rapture could be around the year 2000.

THE TWO MAIN RAPTURE PASSAGES IN SCRIPTURE

Note three important points concerning the Rapture:

- ◆ It is a mystery - “Behold, I show you a mystery...” [1 Cor 15:51]
- ◆ It is by the word of the Lord - “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord...” [1 Thes 4:15]
- ◆ Paul (and therefore God) doesn't want us ignorant concerning the Rapture - “But I would not have you to be ignorant brethren...” [1 Thes 4:13]

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

[vs 16] “For the Lord himself shall come down from heaven with a word of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ will rise (*again**) first.

[vs 17] Then we who 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 CORINTHIANS 15:51-57

[vs 51] “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 a trumpet shall sound (*not the trumpet as most translations have*) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed.”

These two passages reveal the mystery and secrets of the Rapture but need to be put together to see the sequence of events. A close scrutiny of the Greek text also reveals clues to unravel and understand this mystery:

* The original Greek in 1 Thes 4:16 includes the word “again” between the words “rise” and “first.” The word “again” implies a second or repetition of something previous. In this case it indicates that the “dead in Christ” have two risings! See the next page for the explanation in [THE RAPTURE SEQUENCE](#)

The correct Greek text shows that there are three trumpets sounded.

“...a trumpet will sound” [1 Cor 15:52]
“...the trump of God” [1 Thes 4:16]
“...the last trump” (“last” indicates other trumpet sounds went before) [1 Cor 15:52]

THE RAPTURE SEQUENCE

taken from **1 Thes 4:13-18** and **1 Cor 15:51-57**

This is the first “rising” of the dead in Christ or those “asleep.”

Is this the resurrection of the dead referred to in **1 Cor 15:42**?

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption: it is raised in incorruption.”

(see **Rev 20:6**.)

“A trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible.”

[1 Cor 15:52b]



“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” [1 Thes 4:16]

Is the “voice of the archangel” “the cry” announcing the bridegroom in **Matt 25:6**? And could the archangel be Gabriel who announced to Mary Jesus’ first coming? [Luke 1:26]. Is the “trump” the call to get ready to “assemble” and “move camp” from earth to heaven? (see **Numbers 10:2** and **2 Thes 2:1**)

This “rising again” is up to heaven.

The first rising was at the first trumpet when the dead in Christ came out of the graves to the earth.

“...and the dead in Christ shall rise again first.”

[1 Thes 4:16]



“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them (*the risen “dead in Christ”*) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” [1 Thes 4:17]

In the clouds, we will hear the “last trump” and all be changed into our glorified bodies ready for our entry into heaven! [1 Cor 15:53-54]

1 Thes 4:15 says “...we which are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord shall not go before them which are asleep.” The dead in Christ rise up in the air first - then the living believers join them and are “together with them in the clouds.” Jesus only comes as far as the clouds - he does not come onto the earth as he does at his Second Coming.

“...we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump.” [1 Cor 15:51-52a]



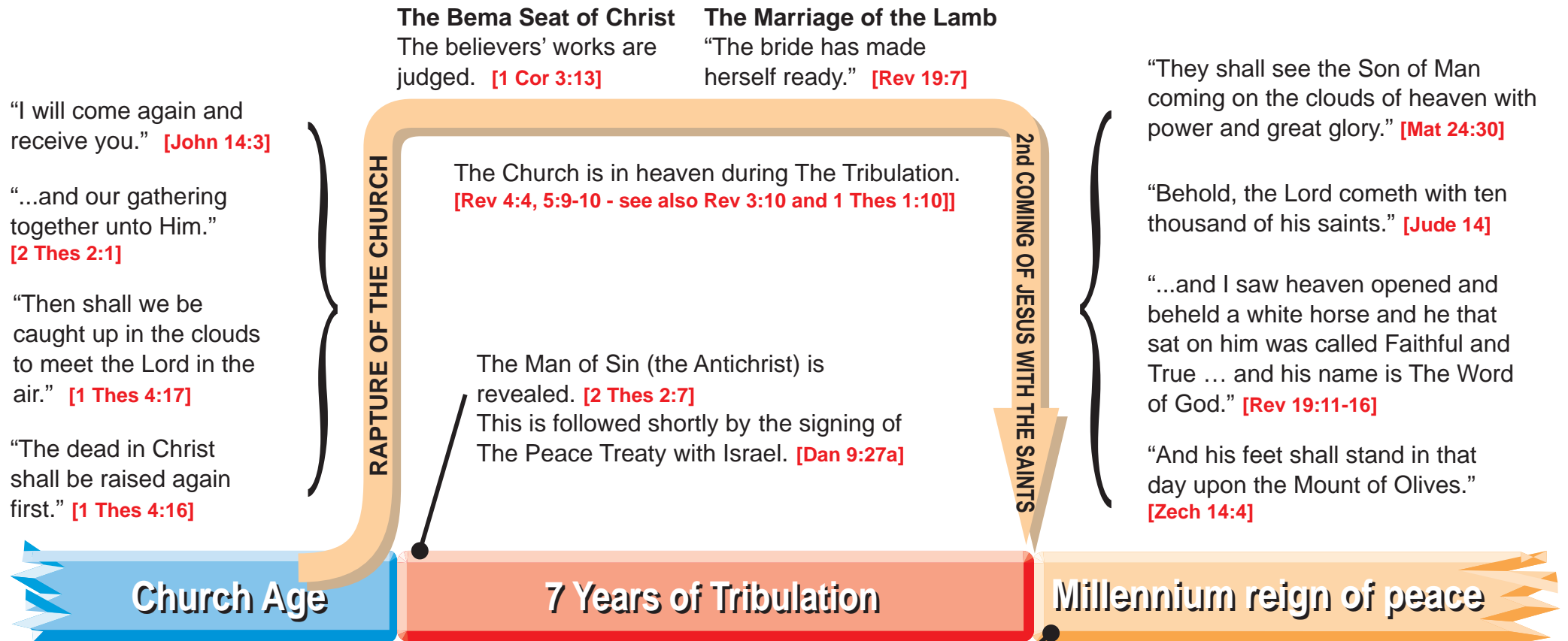
“...and so shall we ever be with the Lord!”

[1 Thes 4:17b]

Another Rapture passage is to be found in **Phil 3:20-21**, “For our citizenship is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

The three trumpets and two ‘risings’ are distinctive clues in unraveling the mystery!

THE CHURCH IS SAVED FROM THE TRIBULATION



Key "Us who are alive and remain" [1 Thes 4:17] and "the risen dead in Christ" [1 Thes 4:16] on our journey from earth to heaven!

Note the interesting and often misinterpreted reference to the Church in [Rev 12:5], "And she brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God and to His throne." The word "she" refers to the nation of Israel which brought forth a "man child." This is Jesus, an Israeli Jew, who, in The Millennium will "rule all the nations with a rod of iron." The gender of "man child" is masculine, whereas the "child" in the next sentence is of the neuter gender, indicating that the child is *not* the male child, Jesus, but the Church, which is neither male nor female. Thus the Church is "caught up" or "seized" ("harpazo" in the Greek) up to heaven, which is the Rapture.

The Church reigning with Jesus:

"...and we shall reign on the earth." [Rev 5:10]

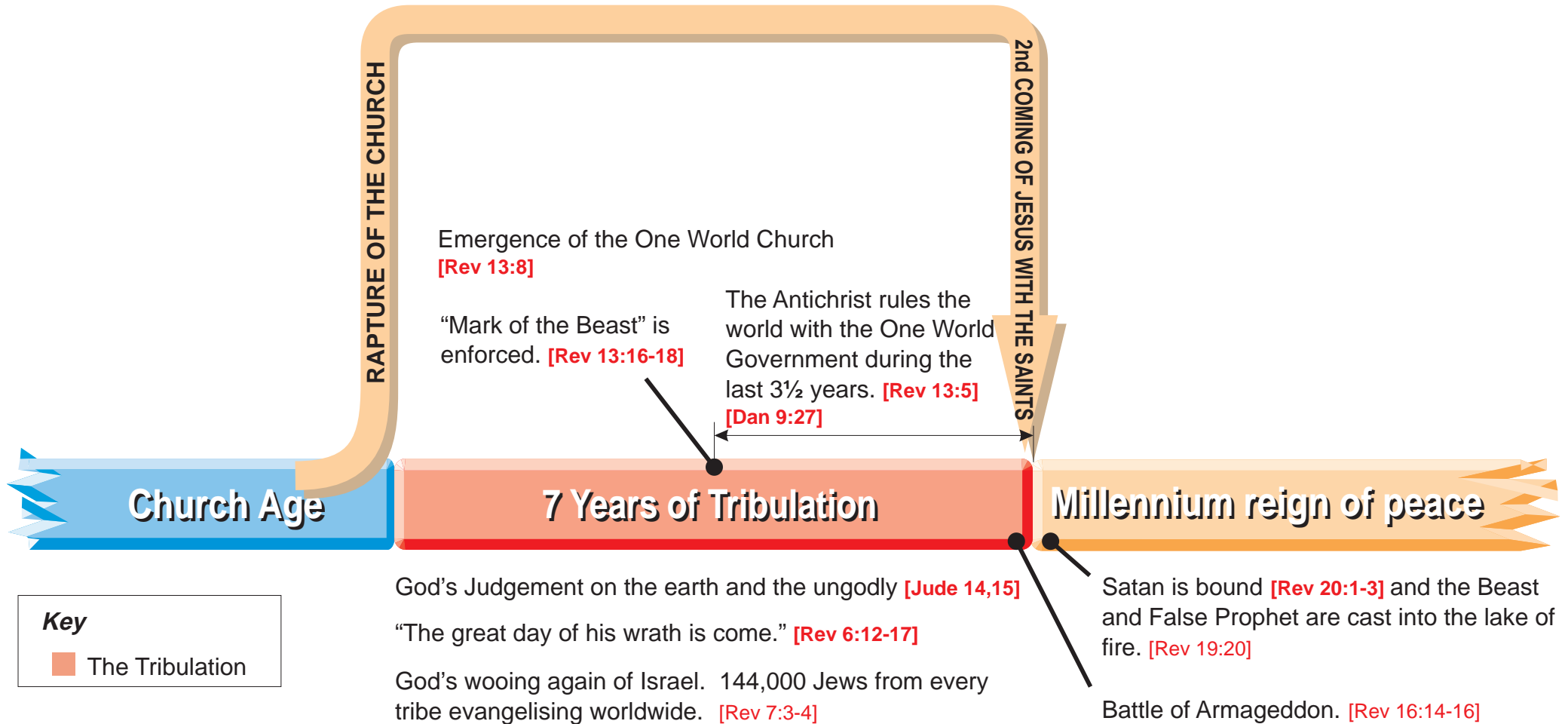
"...and they shall reign with Him a thousand years." [Rev 20:6]

"Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?" [1 Cor 6:2]

"And he that overcometh and keepeth my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations." [Rev 2:26]

WHAT IS THE TRIBULATION?

The Tribulation Period [Rev 4:1-20:3] begins with the Rapture of the Church and ends with Jesus' Second Coming



"Then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor shall ever be."

[Matt 24:21]

These Old Testament references are prophetic to the Jews, not to the Church:

"...the time of trouble such as never was." [Dan 12:1]

"Jacob's Trouble" [Jer 30:7]

Daniel's 70th Week [Dan 9:24-27]

"When thou art in tribulation... even in the latter days." [Deut 4:30]

THE RAPTURE IS PRE-TRIBULATION

There are differing beliefs as to whether the Rapture is Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulation. This study book points to a Pre-Tribulation Rapture and the following points further endorse this:

THE PRINCIPLE OF SALVATION FROM JUDGEMENT

God is holy and just, and sin has to be judged. Jesus on the cross offers salvation from the “wages of sin” which is death and hell. [Rom 6:23] He offers His Righteousness so we can be SAVED FROM JUDGEMENT. God’s grace and mercy is seen in this pattern and is first demonstrated in the Old Testament:

- ◆ Righteous Noah and his family were saved from God’s judgement upon the world (the Flood.) [Gen 6-8]
- ◆ ‘Righteous’ Lot [2 Peter 2:7] and his wife and daughters were saved from God’s judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah. [Gen 19:17-25]

Surely this principle will also apply to the righteous Bride of Christ, meaning that the Church shall be saved and delivered from “the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men (*the Tribulation*).” [1 Peter 3:7]

Jesus will deliver us from ‘the hour of trial,’ and ‘wrath to come!’

“I will keep you from the hour of trial (*the Tribulation*) which shall come upon all the world.” [Rev 3:10]

“...wait from his Son from heaven, ...even Jesus, which delivers us from the wrath to come.” [1 Thes 1:10] (The judgement of God during the Tribulation)

The Greek word for “deliver” in 1 Thes 1:10 and 2 Peter 2:7 (i.e. “...and delivered righteous Lot.”) is “RHUOMAI” which means “rescue.”

“THE THINGS WHICH SHALL BE AFTER THIS...”

Rev 2 and Rev 3 refer primarily to the seven churches (Ephesus, Smyrna, etc.) but they are prophetic of the Church Age from Pentecost to the Rapture. Except in Rev 12:5 the Church is not mentioned again. Rev 4 begins with “After this...,” i.e. after the Church Age.

Rev 4:1 says:

- ◆ “A door was opened in heaven...”
 - ◆ ...a voice speaking like a trumpet which said
 - ◆ Come up here and
 - ◆ I will show you things which must take place after this. (*i.e. after the Rapture.*)“
- } This sounds like the Rapture confirming the passages in 1 Thes 4 and 1 Cor 15.

Rev 4:2 onwards tells us what we shall see in heaven when we, the Bride, are taken up to meet the Lord in the air and be “for ever with him.” Accounts of the “things which must take place after” i.e. the Tribulation on earth, follow and begin in chapter 6.

Note: There are “saints” in the Tribulation - people who have become believers after the Church has been rescued and raptured.

WORDS OF COMFORT

The first letter to the Thessalonians has many Rapture references [1 Thes 1:10,2:19,3:13,4:13-end,5:9-10,23] and twice Paul tells the Church to be comforted concerning the Rapture (1 Thes 4:18 and 1 Thes 5:11). It is certainly not comforting to know that one would be going through the Tribulation!

“For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” [1 Thes 5:9] We escape the Tribulation!

CAN YOU NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES?

[Matthew 16:3]

“...there shall come in the last days scoffers... saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning... but the heavens and the earth now... are kept, reserved for fire at the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men... The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is longsuffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” [2 Peter 3:3-9]

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should surprise you as a thief!” [1 Thes 5:4-6]

Only if we are NOT watching will the day come as a thief!

Rev 3:3 tells us this: “If therefore you will not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.”

God reveals before an event comes to pass:

- ◆ “Before it came to pass I showed it to you.” [Isa 48:5]
- ◆ “Surely the sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing it to his servants (e.g. Daniel, Paul and John concerning the Rapture)” [Amos 3:7]
- ◆ “And now I have told you before it is come to pass...” [John 14:29 and Matt 24:25]

We do not know “the day and the hour“ [Matt 24:36] - but maybe we could know the month or the year? Like the Jewish bride we shall know the season and therefore “wait for his Son from heaven... who will deliver (*rescue*) us from the wrath to come (*the Tribulation*).” [1 Thes 1:10]

So... “LOOK UP AND LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, FOR YOUR REDEMPTION* DRAWS NEAR!” [Luke 21:28]

* The Greek word for “redemption” here is “APOLUTROSIS” which means “a loosing away” - i.e. a loosing away of the Church from the earth up into heaven!

SO, WHAT IS THE BIBLE TELLING US TO DO?

WAIT

“Wait for His Son from heaven ... who will deliver (*rescue*) us from the wrath to come. (*i.e. the Tribulation*)” [1 Thes 1:10]

GET READY

“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for God then... has called us to holiness, that we may be blameless and harmless, as a chaste virgin to Christ.” [Phil 2:12, 1 Thes 4:7, Phil 2:15 and 2 Cor 11:2]

BE READY

“Be ready always to give an account to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you (*i.e. the hope of deliverance from the Tribulation*)” [1 Peter 3:15]

LOOK FOR...

“Look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned to his glorious body.” [Phil 3:20-21]

LOOK UP

“Look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption (*loosing away*) draws near.” [Luke 21:28]

“The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ ” [Rev 22:17]

“and Jesus answers, ‘Surely I come quickly.’

‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus.’ ” [Rev 22:20]

Amen.

FURTHER READING

and other scriptures of interest relating to the Rapture.

The coming of Jesus.

One of the Greek words for “coming” is “[PAROUSIA](#)” which means “presence” or “in the presence of.” See **1 Thes 5:23, 2:19, 4:15** and **1 John 2:28**.

The timing of the Rapture. (i.e. Pre-Tribulation)

“As in the days of Noah and Lot.” See **Matt 24:36-39** and **Luke 17:26-30**. The Rapture will take place when life is normal, not for instance, at the Battle of Armageddon, nor possibly midway through the Tribulation.

The trumpets.

Trumpets were used as commandments for the Children of Israel. In **Num 10:2** they were used for “calling of the assembly (an appointed meeting) and for moving camps.” (Note the trumpet was made of silver and silver speaks of the redeemed, i.e. the Church.)

The sequence of the Rapture.

See **1 Cor 15:22-23**. The word “order” in the Greek is “[TAGMA](#)”, a military term signifying “that which has been arranged in order.”

The believers who have died.

The “dead in Christ” or those who are “asleep in Jesus” rise. See **1 Thes 4:14b**: “...will God bring with him (*Jesus*).” Also **1 Thes 5:10**: “...whether we are wakeful” i.e. we who are alive and remain, “or sleep” (dead believers), “we should live together with him (*in heaven*).”

The Bridegroom (Jesus) and the subject of fasting.

See **Mark 2:18-20**.

Will YOU be rescued from God’s judgement of the Tribulation? Will YOU spend eternity in heaven or hell? If you are not sure, then contact a local bible-believing church who will be able to help and guide you.

- ◆ “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” **[Acts 16:31]**
- ◆ “Neither is there salvation in any other name, for there is no other name (*the name of Jesus*) under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved.” **[Acts 4:12]**
- ◆ “Except a man be born from above he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.” **[John 3:3]**