

Rapture vs. Second Coming

Two Separate Events

In less than five years, no fewer than three priests have been to my front door doing door-to-door personal evangelism, inviting me to their churches. I enjoy visitors wanting to talk Bible with them, be they Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, or Roman Catholics. In the past year, I have had missionaries from all three of these at my door wanting to talk to me about the end of the world that is coming soon! By the way, Mormons no longer use that word and have dropped the term “Mormon”, now preferring to be called Latter Day Saints of Jesus Christ! It sounds so ‘orthodox’.

While all of those at my door step were spot on about their topic, shockingly so, none of them knew very much about their Bible. Roman Catholics do not believe in the Rapture of the Church, as do so many mainline Protestant denominations today. The reason for this is due to the fact that they interpret the Bible allegorically, or spiritualize the text rather than to treat it literally and historically. This is known as **“Covenant/Reformed”** theology.

They treat or see the Bible as a 2-covenant book, i.e., 2-testaments, Old and New. This is a gross over-simplification of the Bible and a distorted view of the Biblical message narrative. The early reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin also did not believe in the Rapture of Christian believers. In fact, all branches of the Lutheran Church, do not believe in the Rapture. This is virtually true with all mainline Protestant churches as well, including: Anglican/Episcopal, Christian/Church of Christ, Nazarene, United Methodist, Presbyterian (Reformed, PCUSA), United Church of Christ, and Wesleyan.

A second school of Biblical interpretation is known as or referred to as **“Dispensational”** theology. The Dispensational school of interpretation sees the Bible structured on “dispensations” over a 7,000 year time-span. It is interpreted first in its plain sense reading, that being literal and historical.

These are the two primary theological schools that a specific denomination will identify with or how it interprets the Bible today. The greatest decline in church membership over the past fifty years has occurred in those churches holding to **“Covenant/Reformed”** theology. They simply do not believe in the “Blessed Hope” of Titus 2:13. Contrast that simple fact with where the greatest church growth has been with **“Dispensational”** churches, who do believe in the “Blessed Hope”.

Some might refer to these two schools of interpretation as being defined as their “Biblical World View”. By that I am referring to how one views their outlook world today, the future, and the culmination of history. Each of the two schools of theological thought named above tends to see the world through different glasses. How one perceives their world can and

will have entirely different prospects for the future. A person's outlook toward the future can dramatically affect their choices and decisions about life in general. For example, for the Jehovah Witness views life in terminal terms. When you die that is all there is. Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in an afterlife. However, at the end of the world, the dead will be resurrected and given the choice of living on earth or ceasing to exist. A small remnant will be called to Heaven. In my discussions with Jehovah Witnesses, I like to present the Biblical picture that can impact their life now as well as their future. I like to bring up the topic of the Second Coming of Christ Jesus and proceed to point out that the Second Coming is preceded by the Rapture. I know exactly what to expect their answer to be. I rarely encounter Mormon missionaries, but Jehovah Witnesses are more frequent in my area. Since Pope Benedict launched a Roman Catholic program of evangelism a decade ago, I have been visited three times in the past five years by the local priest. I live in a rural area of Kentucky with a large Catholic population and so in my small village, most of the residents are Roman Catholic. The local Catholic church every year has a community Thanksgiving turkey dinner on a Saturday in November. It draws a large following with a traffic jam on the main highway through town. In fact, the Kentucky State Police provides traffic control and pedestrian oversight for smooth movement in and out of my little 'burg'. The adjacent farmer permits and directs patrons to parking areas surrounding the fellowship hall.

Over the years I have found some of the most vocal critics of the Rapture to be either Catholic or former Catholics. The reasons for this can be found at the close of this article and I chose to address this issue at the end of the article. This article will include the largest list of specific reasons differentiating the Rapture from that of the Second Coming. You will not find a more comprehensive analysis of the distinctions between the two events elsewhere.

| <u><i>The Rapture</i></u> | <u><i>The Second Coming</i></u> |
|---|---|
| At the Rapture, Jesus comes FOR His Church. (John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17) | At the Glorious Appearing (Second Coming), Jesus comes WITH His Church. (Zechariah 14:5, Colossians 3:4, Jude 14, Revelation 19:14) |
| At the Rapture, Christians are caught up to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) | At the Glorious Appearing, Jesus' feet touch the earth (Zechariah 14:4, Revelation 19:11-21) |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>At the Rapture, Christians are taken up but unbelievers are left behind. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)</p> | <p>At the Glorious Appearing, the unsaved wicked (tares) are taken up, but the righteous (wheat, i.e., the tribulation saints) are left behind. (Matthew 13:28-30)</p> |
| <p>At the Rapture, Jesus will gather His Bride, the Church, unto Himself in preparation of the Marriage of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:6-9)</p> | <p>At the Glorious Appearing, Jesus will execute judgment on the earth and establish His Kingdom. (Zechariah 14:3-4, Jude 14-15, Revelation 19:11-21)</p> |
| <p>The Marriage of the Lamb takes place in Heaven AFTER the Rapture of the Church. (Revelation 19:6-9)</p> | <p>War on earth comes AFTER the Marriage of the Lamb at the Glorious Appearing when the King of Kings and Lord of Lords lays the smackdown on evil! (Revelation 19:11-21)</p> |
| <p>The Rapture will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (Blink. It's over!). (1 Corinthians 15:52)</p> | <p>The Glorious Appearing will be a slow coming. Everyone will see Jesus coming with great power and great glory! (Zechariah 12:10, Matthew 24:30, Revelation 1:7)</p> |
| <p>At the Rapture, only those who are looking for Him (Christians) will see Him. (1 John 3:2, 1 Corinthians 15:52)</p> | <p>At the Glorious Appearing, every eye will see Him and those who have rejected Him will wail. (Revelation 1:7)</p> |
| <p>At the Rapture, Jesus will descend from Heaven with a shout (calling for the saints at the resurrection). (1 Thessalonians 4:16)</p> | <p>At the Glorious Appearing, no shout is mentioned, although the Lord does slay the wicked with the sword of His mouth. (Revelation 19:11-21)</p> |
| <p>The <u>“First Resurrection” of Revelation 20:6 includes 5 separate resurrections.</u> At the Rapture, the third of these resurrections occurs. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Corinthians</p> | <p>At the Glorious Appearing of Jesus Christ, the final of these 5 (of the First Resurrection) will happen. (Daniel 12:2 contrasts the saved with the unsaved, speaking of both the</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| 15:51-54. The First Resurrection is only for born-again believers, that is, Christians) | First and the Second Resurrection. The Second Resurrection is only for the unsaved damned) |
| At the Rapture, a resurrection will take place. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 Corinthians 15:51-54) | At the Glorious Appearing, there is no resurrection spoken of. (Zechariah 12:10, Zechariah 14:4-5, Revelation 1:7, 19:11-21) |
| The Rapture can happen at any time...maybe even now which is why we are to be WATCHING for the return of Jesus Christ! (Revelation 3:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6) | The Glorious Appearing will occur at the end of the seven-year tribulation period. (Daniel 9:24-27, Matthew 24:29-30, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8) |
| At the Rapture, no angels are sent to gather the Church. | At the Glorious Appearing, angels will be sent to gather people together for judgment. (Matthew 13:39, 41 & 49, Matthew 24:31, Matthew 25:31, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10) |
| At the Rapture, those who died in Christ will return with Jesus to recover their resurrected bodies. (1 Thessalonians 4:14-16) | At the Glorious Appearing, Christians will return with Jesus already in their resurrected bodies, riding on white horses wearing white linen. (Revelation 19:11-21) |
| At the Rapture, Jesus doesn't return riding a white horse. | At the Glorious Appearing, Jesus will return riding a white horse. (Revelation 19:11) |
| The Rapture will bring with it a message of hope and comfort. (1 Thessalonians 4:18, Titus 2:13, 1 John 3:3) | The Glorious Appearing will bring with it a message of judgment. (Joel 3:12-16, Malachi 4:5, Revelation 19:11-21) |
| World is deceived. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12) | Satan is bound. (Revelation 20:1-2) |

| | |
|--|---|
| Focus: Lord and Church. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) | Focus: Israel and Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) |
| No signs precede Rapture. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3) | Signs precede Second Coming. (Luke 21:11,15) |
| Tribulation begins. | Millennial kingdom begins. |
| Manifestation of Antichrist. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) | Manifestation of Jesus Christ. (Malachi 4:2) |
| Jesus claims His bride. | Jesus comes with His bride. (Revelation 19:6-14) |
| Marriage Supper Of The Lamb follows the Rapture. (Revelation 19:9) | The Great Supper of the wicked follows the Tribulation. (Revelation 19:17) |
| The world will not see Jesus at the Rapture; but rather, believers ascend go to meet Him in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:17) | Jesus will descend bodily and visibly for all to see, just as He ascended bodily and visibly. (Acts 1:9-11) |
| The Judgment Seat Of Christ follows the Rapture. (2nd Corinthians 5:9-11) | The Judgment of the Nations follows the Tribulation (Matthew 24:32-46) |
| Believers receive a new, immortal, glorified body fashioned like unto the Lord's. (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54) | Saints saved during the Tribulation enter into the Millennial kingdom with their earthly bodies. (Isaiah 65:20) |
| The Antichrist is revealed after the Rapture. (2 Thessalonians 2:8) | The Antichrist is defeated and cast into the Lake of Fire at the Second Coming. (Revelation 19:20) |
| Israel is persecuted during the | Israel is regathered. (Jeremiah 23:5- |

| | |
|---|--|
| Tribulation. Two-in-three Jews in Israel are killed. (Zechariah 13:8-9) | 8) |
| The timing of the Rapture is unknown. It is a secret. No man, nor the angels, not even the Son, know when this time shall be (Mark 13:32). Only a pretribulation Rapture position supports this vital Biblical truth. | The timing of Christ's Second Coming is known, which is at the culmination of the 7-year Tribulation (or, Daniel's 70th week). The Rapture starts the calendar clock for Daniel's 70th week. |
| World government (New World Order) follows the Rapture. (Revelation 13:15) | Christ's reign and government follows the Second Coming. (Daniel 2:34-35) |
| The <u>Lord</u> gathers the saints (2nd Thessalonians 2:1) | The <u>angels</u> gather the saints (the elect, Matthew 24:31) |
| Both the <u>living and the dead</u> saints are gathered (1st Thessalonians 4:16-17) | <u>Only the living</u> saints are gathered (Matthew 24:31) |
| The <u>trumpet shall sound</u> multiple times, and at THE LAST TRUMP (trumpet blow), we (believers) shall all be changed, glorious resurrected with an incorruptible body (1st Corinthians 15:52; 1st Thessalonians 4:16) | The Lord's voice is <u>as a trumpet</u> (Revelation 1:10-11). There is no trumpet mentioned at Christ's Second Coming. |
| World famine, pestilence, war and sorrow follow the Rapture. (Matthew 24:6-10; Luke 17:31) | World peace follows Christ's Second Coming when He reigns from Jerusalem (Isaiah 11:6) |

Clearly there is absolutely NO WAY that the Rapture can happen AFTER the Tribulation! The serious and diligent Bible student who considers all of the preceding 32 differences and distinctions between the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ can only conclude a Pre-Tribulation Rapture!!!

IS THE CHURCH RAPTURED BEFORE, DURING, OR AFTER THE TRIBULATION PERIOD?

The Timing of the Rapture

The Church Age began on the Day of Pentecost, over 2,000 years ago, and will end with the Rapture. The Rapture will begin the 7 years of tribulation, which will end with Christ coming to the Earth and establishing His Kingdom for 1,000 years. I will list some of the false claims and show from Scripture why they are not true.

1. The Rapture Is Not The Same Event As The Coming of Christ at The End of The Tribulation.

There are some who teach the Rapture takes place at the end of the Tribulation Period. This has confused many, leading them to believe in what is called the “Post-Tribulation Rapture”; i.e., the Rapture does not take place until after the 7-Year Tribulation Period of God’s judgment. Therefore, it combines the Rapture and the Revelation both as one event.

2. Refutation:

First of all, at the Rapture, ALL the saved are “**caught up**” to be with Christ in the air. - (1st Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: -(vs.16) 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.” -(vs. 17)

In Matthew, Chapters 24, 25, we have Christ coming to the Earth and judging the nations, which takes place AFTER the Tribulation Period. Matthew 25:40 is used by some, falsely, saying it is the Rapture. As we shall see, it cannot be the Rapture.

“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”

Notice, as we quote Matthew 25:31-34, it becomes perfectly clear that this judgment involves 3 things:

1. Christ comes to the earth,
2. He will sit on His throne,
3. He will separate the saved from the lost.

a. Matthew 25:31-34.

“When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall he sit upon the throne of His glory:” -(vs. 31).

“And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth His sheep (saved) from the goats (lost):” -(vs. 32).

“And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.” -(vs. 33).

“Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, INHERIT THE KINGDOM prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

b. Matthew 25:41 Tells Us What Happens To the Lost.

“Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, DEPART FROM ME, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

1. Notice carefully, the difference between the Rapture spoken of in 1st Thessalonians 4:16, 17, and Christ’s Coming, spoken of in Mathew, chapters 24, 25.

2. At the Rapture, Christ does not come to the Earth, as we are caught up to meet Him in the clouds.

“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 4:17)

3. Whereas, in Matthew, Christ COMES to the Earth to establish His Kingdom.

4. Notice carefully, at the Rapture in 1st Thessalonians, the saved are the ones taken to Heaven; while the ones left are the lost.

5. Just the opposite takes place in Matthew. Those that are taken are the lost, cast into the Lake of Fire; while those that are left are the saved who enter into the Kingdom in their earthly bodies.

“Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, COME, YE BLESSED of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:” -(Matthew 25:34)

Therefore, it is imperative for the Bible student to understand that these two events are entirely different; being separated by the Seventieth Week of Daniel, known as the 7-Year Tribulation Period. Without acknowledging the difference between Christ’s coming for His Church and His coming to establish the Kingdom, one will only be led into more error concerning Bible prophecy.

Note: A good principle to remember is, whenever Christ's Return is spoken of in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, it is never the Rapture; but, rather, the return of Christ at the conclusion of the Tribulation to judge the nations. The Rapture was a **mystery**, revealed unto the Apostle Paul after the Church Age had begun. -(Ephesians 3:1-10) The Church does not go through, or into, the Tribulation Period!

A Pre-Tribulation Rapture Is What the Bible Teaches

Now let us examine the proof: The Church Is Delivered from the Wrath of The 7-Year Tribulation as we learn from 1st Thessalonians. 1:10,

"And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, WHICH DELIVERED US from the wrath to come."

In examining this verse there are three things we need to recognize: Paul was writing to Christians -(1:1 and 5:25).

1. They were already delivered from the wrath of Hell. -(John 3:36)
2. Notice ***"which delivered us"*** is translated in the past tense. This is incorrect, as the Greek has it in the future tense. It should read as ***"who delivers us,"*** or, ***"which will deliver us."***
3. The ***"wrath to come"*** is not in reference to Hell, as they were already delivered from Hell; but, rather, to the Tribulation Period as stated in Revelation 6:17.

"For the great day of his WRATH is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

Therefore, the Christians that are alive at the Rapture will not go into the Tribulation, known as the ***"day of his wrath."*** Notice the word ***"us,"*** which includes all Christians, the spiritual and the backslider. As many say, "The Church is not ruptured; but, raptured!"

The Church Is "Delivered" From Wrath -(1st Thessalonians 5:9)

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath (Tribulation wrath, same as 1:10); but to obtain salvation (i.e., "deliverance") by our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Greek word for "salvation" is ***"SOTERIA"*** and denotes "deliverance, preservation, salvation." For example: In Acts 27:34, the word "health" is translated from the Greek ***"soteria."*** In other words, in verse 33, we find the sailors had gone 14 days without eating. In verse 34 Paul said,

"...take (or eat) some meat: for this is for your health, (i.e. "your deliverance)."

...from getting sick, or dying. Also, in Philippians 1:19, “salvation” should have been translated “deliverance,” since Paul was speaking about his deliverance from prison from where he had written to the Philippians. A literal translation of Verse 9 would read,

“For God hath not appointed us (Christians) to the wrath of the tribulation, but to obtain deliverance from it, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes for His Church.”

In 1st Thessalonians 4:13-18, we have the Rapture. Chapter 5 continues with Christ’s Return at the Rapture, assuring all Christians that they will be delivered from the Tribulation Period.

Spiritual and Carnal Christians Are Raptured At The Same Time!

The following Scriptures refute the erroneous and false teaching that only the spiritual Christians will be raptured; while the carnal Christians will have to go through the Tribulation. We will continue, as we examine and analyze the next verse in 1st Thessalonians 5:10.

“Who died for us, that, whether we WAKE or SLEEP; we should live together with Him (Christ).”

We will look at three important words in this verse.

a. “Wake.” It is the same Greek word “**gregoreo**” as translated “watch” in verse 6.

“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us WATCH and be sober.” -(1st Thessalonians 5:6)

b. “Sleep.” The Greek word for “sleep” in verse 10 is the same as that for “sleep” in verse 6.

“Therefore let us not SLEEP, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” -(1 Thessalonians 5:6)

Therefore, “sleep” is in reference to those Christians who are “lying down on the job” and not serving the Lord. Some perverted minds try to proclaim that “sleep” here is referring to “death.” If that were true—how would you “watch and be sober” if you were dead? Preposterous!

c. “Together.” The Greek word is “**hama**” and means “together at the same time.” (Vine’s Dictionary of New Testament Words). Now, let us put verse 10 together and write it out, including the meaning of each of the 3 words we have examined.

“Who died for us, that, whether we WAKE (watching and serving the Lord); OR, SLEEP (not serving the Lord), we should live TOGETHER (AT THE SAME TIME) with Him (CHRIST).” -(1st Thessalonians 5:10)

These Scriptures clearly set forth the truth that ALL Christians, those serving the Lord and those who are not, will be raptured together at the same time.

No Partial Rapture

This is Satan’s trickery to lead one to believe that you must suffer and/or have good works to complete God’s salvation. One must remember that the completion of our salvation is the redemption of our bodies at the Rapture! Notice Romans 8:23,

“...even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY.”

At the Rapture our salvation is completed. Those who have died receive their resurrected bodies from the grave; while those that are alive have their bodies transformed as they go up to be with the Lord.

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:” (vs. 20)

Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” - (Philippians 3:20,21)

The word “conversation” is the Greek **“POLITEUMA”** and means “citizenship.” It is said of the heavenly status of believers, and should have been translated as such. Those who propagate a partial Rapture have succumbed to Satan’s subtlety. -(Genesis 3:1 and 2nd Corinthians 11:3, 13-15). If Satan cannot convince you that good works are necessary for salvation; then, he will attempt, through his ministers, to convince you that those that are backslidden must go into the Tribulation. All false teaching is satanically inspired! Catholicism is perhaps the biggest abuser of teaching works-salvation, and fear as an instrument of control.

Some that hold this view have told me that, this is to have them suffer for their disobedience and give them a chance to redeem themselves. Thus showing God they are really Christians by now being faithful while being persecuted. Sounds good—EXCEPT it contradicts God’s Word!

This damnable philosophy denies the Judgment Seat of Christ for all Christians,

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” -(2nd Corinthians 5:10)

Therefore, they do not believe one is saved eternally; but, rather, must have good works in order to maintain their salvation. This is very cunning; as, they accuse God of being a liar and unfaithful to His Word when He promised the believers they would ***“never perish, but have everlasting life.”*** -(John 3:16).

7. No Partial Rapture (1 John 3:2).

“Beloved, now are WE the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear WE shall be like Him; for WE shall see Him as He is.”

The “we” is all-inclusive of the spiritual and the carnal Christian. No distinction between the two is made here.

8. No Partial Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51).

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but WE shall ALL be changed.”

At the Rapture, ALL, or every Christian, whether serving the Lord; or not, will be changed, i.e., receive their glorified bodies. Notice the last 4 words in Verse 52,

“...and WE shall ALL be changed.”

The “WE” is all-inclusive of every Christian. Again, a partial Rapture philosophy disintegrates in the light of God’s Word.

9. No Partial Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

“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.”

Again, the Holy Spirit uses the word “WE.” This eliminates any distinction between the spiritual and carnal Christian; thus, illuminating the false teaching of a partial Rapture.

A Post-Tribulation Rapture Is Unscriptural and Unfounded In Scripture

The word "post" means "after." Here are some final thoughts which seal the fate of the philosophy of a Post Tribulation Rapture. Follow with me as we look at some basic facts:

1. All raptured Christians receive their glorified bodies -(Romans 8:22,23; and 1st Corinthians 15:50-54).
2. There are no children born to glorified bodies. -(Matthew 22:23-30)
3. All unsaved are cast into Hell before the 1,000 Year Kingdom Reign of Christ. -(Revelation 19:11-21 and Matthew 25:41)

If the Rapture is post Tribulation, several problems arise with impossible solutions. Where do the mortal bodies come from of those that are born during the Millennium and rebel at the conclusion of the Millennium? -(Revelation 20:7-10). There would be no lost people alive to have children, so they cannot come from them. All of the saved have their glorified bodies. No children can be born to them as a result of a Post Tribulation Rapture.

Remember; at the end of Christ's 1,000 Year Reign there are unbelievers who will give their allegiance to Satan in an attempt to defeat Christ. -(Revelation 20:7-10). How would they get their human bodies? Placing the Rapture at the end of the Tribulation and the start of the Millennium makes an impossible situation.

At the Rapture all Christians have their glorified bodies, which do not produce human beings. All the lost are cast into Hell at the end of the Tribulation Period. Therefore, the philosophy of a Post-Tribulation Rapture is impossible.

The Post-Tribulation Rapture philosophy also leads to other false doctrines. Colossians 2:8 is God's warning concerning false teachers,

"Beware lest any man spoil you through PHILOSOPHY and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." -(Colossians 2:8)

Note. If Post-Tribulation Rapture were true; then, the last generation alive would be the only generation in over 2,000 years since the Church Age began to have to go through the Tribulation. Then, we would have to conclude that God is not a fair God.

Note. If the Rapture occurs at the conclusion of the Tribulation; then, why are we not told to be praying for ***"that blessed hope and glorious appearing of that blessed tribulation!"*** Yet, the Word of God tells us, in Titus 2:13, that the Christian is to be,

"Looking for that BLESSED HOPE, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"

Final Proof of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture

In conclusion, we shall examine one more proof of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture as opposed to a Post-Tribulation Rapture. Our text is recorded in 2nd Thessalonians 2:1-9.

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, (vs. 1)

That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. (vs.2)

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; (vs.3)

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing Himself that He is God. (vs.4)

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? (vs. 5)

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in His time. (vs. 6)

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He who now letteth will let, until He be taken out of the way. (vs.7)

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: (vs. 8)

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders," -(2 Thessalonians 2:1-9)

Examination of 2nd Thessalonians 2:3.

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (departure) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." -(2 Thessalonians 2:3)

We are now introduced to the Greek word, "***apostasia***," which is translated as "falling away" in the King James Translation. The basic meaning of the word is "departure." One cannot tell from the meaning of the word, itself, whether it is in reference to the departure, i.e., the Rapture of the Church; or, a "departure from the truth," known as apostasy. "***Apostasia***" translated as "falling away" is quite misleading, as it does not incorporate the meaning "to fall" or "fell."

For example, check Matthew 10:29 ("fall"); Matthew 17:6 ("fell"); John 18:6 ("fell"), etc.

These are translated from the Greek word **“pipto,”** not **“apostasia.”** Therefore, only by the context in which **“apostasia”** occurs can it be determined if it is in reference to a departure from the faith; or, the departure of the Church from the world at the Rapture.

It should be noted, that to the best of my knowledge, all seven English translations previous to the King James Translation translated **“apostasia”** either as “departing” or “departure.” Also, the Bible known as the Vulgate, about 400 A.D., was Jerome’s Latin translation. Here Jerome uses the Latin word, **“discessio,”** meaning “departure” for **“apostasia.”**

With this in mind, one can see that this is in perfect harmony with verse 1, which ascribes to the Rapture.

“Now we beseech you brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and BY OUR GATHERING TOGETHER UNTO HIM.”

The Event of the Rapture

This is the same as Paul had previously spoken about in 1st Thessalonians 4:17 concerning the Rapture.

“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.” -(1st Thessalonians 4:17).

In 1st Thessalonians 4:13-17, Paul gives the principles of the Rapture; whereas, in 2nd Thessalonians, Chapter 2, he gives the procedure concerning the Rapture, which is pre-tribulation.

May we make a few more observations which lead us to conclude that the word, **“apostasia,”** in 2nd Thessalonians 2:3, is speaking of the Church departing from the Earth, raptured to meet her Savior in the clouds; and not a departure from the faith.

Notice in Verse 7:

“For the mystery of iniquity doth ALREADY WORK.”

Paul states that apostasy from the faith was already present.

1. Hymenaeus and Alexander were two of them. -(1st Timothy 1:19, 20).
2. There were false teachers of the law. -(1st Timothy 1:4-7).

3. False teachings concerning the Resurrection. -(2nd Timothy 2:16-18).

4. Read Jude; 1st John 2:18; 2nd Peter 2:1-3; 1st John 4:1-3.

...and we could go on and on

In other words, from the time of the offspring of Adam and Eve, there has always been apostasy from the faith. To what do we attribute the Flood? In Israel there were the false prophets and priests. It was the same at the time of Christ and ever since, to the present. Therefore, it would be ludicrous to think that **“apostasias”** in 2nd Thessalonians 2:3 was in reference to “apostasy from the faith;” when there has never been a time when apostasy has not been with us.

Therefore, how would the Thessalonians recognize any apostasy different from the apostasy that already existed and that has always existed in one way or another? From the context, itself, we know the **“apostasias”** in verse 3 is not in reference to departure from the faith, already existent; but, rather, a departure of the Church from the world, or the Rapture. Apostasy already existed as stated in verse 7,

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work...”

We have the same false teachers today, advocating a Partial or a Post-Tribulation Rapture, as those believers in Thessalonica encountered over 1900 years ago. As we have stated previously, the Christian is admonished to be...

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ,” -(Titus 2:13)

...NOT, “the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the Tribulation Period; i.e. the Day of God’s Wrath!

A final note: Many are not aware that the Roman Catholic Church does not believe in the Rapture. Also, the American Lutheran; Evangelistic Lutheran Churches of America (ELCA); the Missouri Synod Lutherans; and the Wisconsin Lutheran Synod deny four basic prophetic doctrines:

1. They deny the Rapture,
2. They do not believe in the Restoration of the Nation of Israel,
3. They deny the literal reign of Christ in His earthly Kingdom on Earth for 1,000 years.
4. All organizations deny that faith in Jesus Christ and His payment for the sins of all mankind is not completely sufficient for the receiving eternal life. Christ’s last words on the Cross in John

19:30 were, ***“IT IS FINISHED.”*** **“Finished”** is the Greek ***“teleo”*** and means “to bring to an end.” It is in the perfect tense, meaning that absolutely nothing can be added to it.

And, both organizations will tell you that Christ paid for our sins, thus, our salvation; BUT, Christ will not give you His salvation until you are baptized. I will let each organization speak for themselves:

First, I will quote from the official document of the Roman Catholic organization, their Catechism. This is found on page 312, #1213. *“Through baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God...Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.”*

Second, Luther states in his “Small Catechism”, page 16, and II. *“What does Baptism give or profit? It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the Devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this...”*

How did they come to these conclusions in denying major portions of the Word of God? It is very simple. In the case of the various branches of the Lutheran Church, their teachings were founded by a man named Martin Luther, who has been dead over 460 years! (Luther, 1483-1546). Maybe they are not familiar with the middle verse of the Bible, Psalm 118:8, ***“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.”***

In the case of the Roman Catholic Institution, it was another man, by the name of Augustine bishop of Hippo, North Africa. **St. Augustine**, also called **Saint Augustine of Hippo**, original Latin name **Aurelius Augustinus**, (born November 13, 354, Tagaste, Numidia [now Souk Ahras, Algeria]—died August 28, 430, Hippo Regius [now Annaba, Algeria]; feast day August 28), bishop of Hippo from 396 to 430, one of the Latin Fathers of the Church and perhaps the most significant Christian thinker after St. Paul. Augustine’s adaptation of classical thought to Christian teaching created a theological system of great power and lasting influence. His numerous written works, the most important of which are *‘Confessions’* (c. 400) and *‘The City of God’* (c. 413–426), shaped the practice of biblical exegesis and helped lay the foundation for much of medieval and modern Christian thought. In Roman Catholicism he is formally recognized as a doctor of the church.

Both modern Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity owe much to Augustine, though in some ways each community has at times been embarrassed to own up to that allegiance in the face of irreconcilable elements in his thought. His fame notwithstanding, Augustine died a failure. When he was a young man, it was inconceivable that the Pax Romana could fall, but in his last year he found himself and his fellow citizens of Hippo prisoners to a siege laid by a motley army of invaders who had swept into Africa across the Strait of Gibraltar. Called the Vandals by contemporaries, the attacking forces comprised a mixed group of “barbarians” and adventurers searching for a home. Hippo fell shortly after Augustine’s death and Carthage not long after. The Vandals, holders to a more fiercely particular version of the Christian creed than any of those Augustine had lived with in Africa, would rule in Africa for a century, until Roman forces sent from Constantinople invaded again and overthrew their

regime. But Augustine's legacy in his homeland was effectively terminated with his lifetime. A revival of orthodox Christianity in the 6th century under the patronage of Constantinople was brought to an end in the 7th century with the Islamic invasions that permanently removed North Africa from the sphere of Christian influence until the thin Christianization of French colonialism in the 19th century.

Christian leaders prior to Augustine were for the most part were Dispensational, as they believed in the literal 1,000 year reign of Christ Jesus as noted in Revelation 20. Augustine was himself early on of this school of thought; however, his fancy led him to spiritualize or allegorize much of Scripture. His stature within the Christian community became a factor in the church adopting his theological beliefs and constructs. To this present day, Augustine is revered even within the mainline Protestant denominations that came out of the Reformation. This is why it is called "**Covenant/Reformed**" theology. Along this line of understanding, I should note that Dr. Andy Woods just came out with a new book, *'Ever Reforming: Dispensational Theology and the Completion of the Protestant Reformation'*. I would expect Dr. Woods to address the Reformation that began with Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others. Those of us knowledgeable of Reformation Church History are well aware of the failed aspects of the Reformation period. Martin Luther began the process of what became larger than life itself. It has been said by many that Luther brought forth a still-born birth that we refer to as the October 31, 1517 Reformation. The Protestant community today is still divided in many ways, such that it failed to fully reform the 16th century church. Luther's 95 theses nailed to the doors of Wittenberg Church included other issues than that of "Justification by Faith".

Comfort and Blessings to all, the Blessed Hope is about to happen!

Pastor Bob,
Evanteachr@aol.com