

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE RAPTURE : PART 1

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Defining The Great Tribulation/Jacob's Trouble, Defining The Rapture, Defining Pre And Post Tribulation Rapture Theorists Danger Of Pre-Tribulation Rapture Theory, Defining Apostasy, Endtime Deceivers, Flexibility In Our Understanding, Rightly Divide Word Of Truth, Danger Of Traditional Thought, Having A Balance In Our Views, Judgment Seat Of Christ, Carcase And The Eagles, 666 - The Mark Of Backsliders, Last Seven Years, Length Of Great Tribulation, The Holy Covenant, Volatility Of Mideastern Politics, Wye Memorandum, God Controls Hearts

Due to the very mysterious and oft times cryptic nature of Bible prophecy, as well as our limited human understanding, there are a number of events within eschatology, that is the study of Endtime prophecy and its fulfillment, which have received a variety of interpretations by those who strive to understand God's Holy Word. One of these issues involves the precise timing of, as well as the length of, the period of great suffering commonly known as the Great Tribulation, or Jacob's Trouble. This latter name is derived from the fact that this terrible time of persecution will mostly likely begin in the tiny state of Israel, when the Islamic leader known as the Beast, reneges on the Holy Covenant, and makes war against Israel. I discuss these specific events in such articles as 'The Kings Of The North And The South', and the very revelatory series 'The Seven Heads'. The terms Great Tribulation and Jacob's Trouble find their origin in verses such as the following:

"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." (Jeremiah 30:7)

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Daniel 12:1)

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

"And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:14)

Not only does this disagreement of views involve the exact timing and length of the Great Tribulation, but it also involves the precise timing of the Resurrection of the Dead, as well as the Rapture of the Saints. The word 'Rapture' is

not actually found in the Holy Scriptures. The actual phrase used in the Scriptures is 'caught up', as can be seen by the following verses found in the Apostle Paul's first Epistle to the Thessalonian church:

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

In the previous verses, the phrase 'be caught up' is derived from the Greek word 'harpazo', pronounced har-pad'-zo, which my Greek lexicon defines as to seize, to carry off by force to seize on, to claim for one's self eagerly, or to snatch out or away. This then is what is meant by the Rapture; the carrying away of the Saints, both dead and living, to the Heavenly Realm at the time of the Lord's Coming; and it is this event which has been a great source of debate within Christian circles for many decades. We will further examine these verses, as well as this term 'caught up', in parts five and six of this series.

Concerning the Rapture, today we have two main schools of thought. These are the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists, and the Post-Tribulation Rapture theorists. The former claim that the Body of Christ will be raptured prior to the Great Tribulation, while the latter believe that we will remain here and live through the Great Tribulation. As I point out in other Endtime articles, and as I will be reiterating in this current series, at this time, I align my beliefs with the latter group.

While I currently identify myself as a Post-Tribulation Rapture theorist, or Post Tribber as we are also called, let me clearly state that I would most certainly welcome, and would be overjoyed by a Pre-Tribulation Rapture; however, I believe it is much wiser to prepare ourselves mentally and spiritually for a Post-Tribulation Rapture. The reason for this is quite simple. If events do not unfold according to the understanding of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists, or Pre-Tribbers as they are also called, those who fail to prepare themselves for this possibility may actually feel that God has abandoned them; and Satan may even trick them into believing that they were not found worthy of Eternal Life. If this were to happen, such people might be a part of those who fall away and lose faith, if and when events fail to materialize as they expect. Consider the following verses which discuss this possibility:

"And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed." (Daniel 11:33-35)

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord

Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 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. 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;" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)

While the act of falling may possibly be referring to actual persecution and military defeat in the verses from the Book of Daniel, in the second set of verses, the Apostle Paul is clearly referring to a falling away from faith in the one true God and the Lord Jesus Christ during the Endtime. As I point out in other articles, this phrase 'falling away' is actually derived from the Greek word 'apostasia', pronounced ap-os-tas-ee'-ah, which means a falling away, defection, or apostasy. Our Lord Himself, and Peter also, discussed this very same falling away from the faith during the Last Days when they said:

"...Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8b)

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4)

This is a very serious matter. If you happen to be one who currently adheres to the Pre-Tribulation Rapture position, please consider the following point. If events do not unfold as many Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists believe, this will give the antichrist followers of Satan, many of whom are already in the world, the evidence that they need in order to reinforce their own sin of unbelief. The danger here is that in the process of doing this, they might also lure many current Believers into falling into unbelief. Notice that the Prophet Daniel wrote that 'many shall cleave to them with flatteries'. Rather than continue to appear as fools, some weaker Christians just might be persuaded by these antichrists, that they have believed in vain. As Peter states above, they will be saying 'See; you said it would happen, and it didn't! Your God isn't real! The Bible isn't true! It isn't the Word of God! It is just a silly fairy tale! Jesus isn't coming back for you!'. Beware! Jesus and Paul both warned us that such people are liars and false prophets. They are deceivers of the worst kind:

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."
(Matthew 24:24)

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:13)

The truth of the matter is that these people's faith isn't really in vain; it isn't that Jesus won't really be coming back for them; it is just that some of them are confused by well-meaning teachers who give them a false understanding of

the Endtime prophecies. Some of these instructors probably do it because of their own lack of a proper understanding of the Scriptures, while others may do it intentionally because they are actually hirelings, and wolves in sheep's clothing, who have purposely come into the midst of the flocks of God for the sole purpose of deceiving them, through twisting the meaning of the Scriptures. I have spoken at length on this topic in other of my articles. But as Peter informs us, such people will eventually meet their own destruction at the Lord's Return:

"As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."
(2 Peter 3:16)

One of the best things that we can all do in order to avoid falling into this subtle snare of Satan, is to not become so dogmatic, and so unbending in our personal understanding of the Scriptures, to the point that we reject anything which contradicts our current views regarding them. None of us can claim to possess a monopoly on the Truth. We are all still learning and growing in matters concerning our faith. I can certainly say this for myself. I am constantly learning new things as I continue to delve into the wonders of His Word. We must all trust in the Lord, and not in our own human wisdom in order to try to understand these things. We must put on the mind of Christ, and not try to understand these Scriptural Truths with our carnal minds only. We must be led by the Spirit of the Lord in our understanding. We must all diligently compare Scripture with Scripture, and rightly divide the Word of Truth; as we are advised to do in the following verses:

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."
(1 Corinthians 2:16)

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Romans 8:14)

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." (Acts 17:11)

As long as we all remain spiritually flexible, and do not become overly adamant concerning our personal beliefs and pet theories, the Lord will be able to continue to enlighten us, and to expand our understanding of the mysteries of His Word. As far as the interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy is concerned, any degree of extreme rigidity on our part,

could make us guilty of the very same things of which the Lord accused the Scribes and the Pharisees of old. As I point out in such articles as the series 'The International Jew And The Protocols Of Zion', they had made such a god out of their own rabbinic traditions, that when Jesus came along with the Truth, most of them fully rejected Him and It, as is born out by the following verses:

"And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." (Mark 7:9)

"Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye." (Mark 7:13)

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

In short, our sincere hunger for the Truth, through a correct understanding of the Word of God, should be our primary concern and motivation as we study these Endtime prophecies; as well as any other part of the Bible for that matter. We should not continue to embrace erroneous ideas and interpretations which have been clearly shown to not be in agreement with the Truth found in God's Word. We must not idolize or make gods out of our personal beliefs. We should not continue to vehemently defend our false ideas once we have been shown to be in error. To do so is merely a matter of pride. Of course, there is a balance to be found in my statements. As we are told in the Book of Proverbs, we must be balanced in all things, because a false balance is an abomination to the Lord:

"A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight." (Proverbs 11:1)

Therefore, once we have performed a judicious study of God's Word, and once we do believe that He has revealed His Truth to us, then by all means, we should firmly stand by what we believe He has shown us; keeping in mind, and tempering our beliefs with the thought that we are only human and prone to possible error. This is precisely what Paul taught in his discourse concerning meat eaters and vegetarians found in the fourteenth chapter of his Epistle to the Roman brethren:

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." (Romans 14:5)

In the final analysis, each one of us must live and believe according to our own faith; because it is according to that, that we will each be judged in the Final Day. We will not be weighed in the Divine Balances according to what others believe, or according to what church or organization with which we happened to affiliate ourselves in this current life; but rather we will be judged as individuals when we appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; and indeed we shall all appear for our just reward or punishment as the following verses make clear:

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." (Matthew 12:36)

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14:12)

"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." (2 Corinthians 5:10)

"Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." (1 Peter 4:5)

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17)

Notice that in the previous verses I shared from Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the Apostle employs the use of the phrases 'the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' and 'our gathering together unto him'. This clearly indicate that he is talking about the Endtime; that is, the Last Days in which we are now living. The phrase 'gathering together' is derived from the Greek word 'episunago', pronounced ep-ee-soon-ag-o-gay', which means a gathering together in one place. Clearly then, Paul is referring to the Rapture of the Saints at the Second Coming of the Lord, when we shall all be instantaneously and miraculously transformed, so that we can all meet the Lord in the air, as we saw earlier. Our Lord describes this very same event in the following verses which we will look at more closely later on in this same series:

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together...And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:27-28, 30-31)

Notice that we see that very same phrase 'gather together', which is derived from the very same Greek word 'episunago'. Concerning our Lord's mention of the carcass and the eagles, I have heard a few odd interpretations of what this might mean. Based upon the thrilling Scriptural revelation I just received from the Lord, I am convinced that the Lord is referring to Himself as the Carcass which was hung on the Tree, and to ourselves, the Saints, as the eagles who will be gathered unto Him. This is because we have symbolically fed upon His flesh, precisely as He told us that we must do. In fact, as I explain in other articles, it was because of this very profound teaching, that many of His disciples abandoned Him during the course of His Earthly ministry. They simply did not possess the spiritual discernment to

understand what He meant. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."
(1 Corinthians 2:14)

These truths concerning the significance of the Carcase and the eagles were just made perfectly clear to me by the following verses. Notice that the verse from the Book of Isaiah is both a promise, as well as a prophecy of the Last Days. It is a promise to those who patiently wait for the Second Coming of the Lord, as well as an Old Testament glimpse of what will happen as a result of our patience and perseverance:

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you...From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."
(John 6:53, 66)

"And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre." (Acts 13:29)

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." (1 Peter 2:24)

So you see, we are indeed the eagles who have fed upon the Carcase which was hung upon the Tree. I also find rather significant that those who backslid from the faith, and who no longer walked with Him, were branded with the Scriptural reference of John 6:66, just like the Beast in the Book of Revelation. Is this just a mere coincidence? Personally, I don't think so.

In addition to the controversy which revolves around the exact timing of the Rapture, another widespread belief is that the Great Tribulation, that is, Jacob's Trouble, will last for the full length of what is commonly referred to in prophetic circles as the Last Seven Years. It is because some people misunderstand the timing and length of the Great Tribulation, that they also misunderstand exactly when the Rapture will occur, because these two events are an integral part of each other. This phrase, the Last Seven Years, is based upon the following verse taken from the prophecies of Daniel, where we are told that the political and military leader known as the Beast, will sign a peace treaty for 'one week' with the nation of Israel, the Palestinians, and possibly surrounding Arab nations; and maybe even other third parties such as the United States of America, Russia, etc. At this point in time, it is premature to say exactly who all of the signatories will be:

"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." (Daniel 9:27)

As I explain in some of my other Endtime articles such as 'The Kings Of The North And The South', the series 'The Seven Heads', etc., in the above verse, the word 'week' is derived from the Hebrew word 'shabuwa', which means seven, or a period of seven. Depending upon the specific usage in the Bible, it can mean seven days, or else seven years. In this case, due to other factors which I amply explain in the aforementioned articles, I believe that it is referring to a seven-year period. According to the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists, the gathering together, or Rapture, of the Saints will occur just prior to the beginning of this seven-year period, which as I have already explained, they erroneously understand to be the full length of the Great Tribulation.

While I too believe that this final seven-year period of current world history will begin when the Beast signs the peace accord with Israel, at this point in time, I am not convinced that the Great Tribulation lasts the full seven years. Based upon my understanding of the Scriptures, it only comprises the final three and a half years; that is, forty-two months, according to the ancient Jewish calendar of thirty days per month, or three hundred and sixty days per year. In my view, the Bible makes it very clear that Jacob's Trouble does not begin until the midst, that is, the middle, of the final seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy; after the initial three and a half years of 'plastic peace' have transpired under the phoney peace accord signed by the Beast, the Israelies, the Palestinians and possibly other third parties. Jesus Himself made it very clear that it is when the Beast takes away the daily sacrifice, and places the abomination that maketh desolate, that the Great Tribulation will begin. In other words, it won't begin at the beginning of the Last Seven Years, but rather in the middle of them, at the three and a half year mark, exactly as Daniel prophesied. Here is exactly what our Lord said:

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matthew 24:15-21)

If we remove all of the extraneous descriptions found in each of the previous verses, it becomes very clear what the most important point is that Jesus is trying to help us to understand. Consider the following condensation of our Lord's words:

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place...then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matthew 24:15a, 21)

In my view, this is extremely clear. The Lord is confirming exactly what was written by the Prophet Daniel; and that is that it is in the middle of the Last Seven Years, that the Great Tribulation will actually begin. Contrary to what is believed by some Christians, and their wayward teachers, it is not the full seven-year period. The Scriptures are so clear on this issue if these people would just accept them for what they really say, without adding their private interpretation to them. Like Daniel, the Apostle John also described for us the events which will be transpiring during these final three and a half years of world history. In some places he used the phrase 'a thousand two hundred and three score days; while in others he used the phrase 'forty and two months'. They are both talking about the very same time period; that is, the final three and a half year period known as the Great Tribulation. Please carefully consider all of the following verses:

"And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."
(Daniel 7:25)

"And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." (Daniel 12:7)

"But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." (Revelation 11:2-3)

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days."
(Revelation 12:6)

"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations."
(Revelation 13:5-7)

It is my understanding that the Great Tribulation will start as a result of the Beast reneging on the Holy Covenant; at

which time he will invade the city of Jerusalem, bring an end to the daily sacrifice, or morning and evening oblation, in the soon-to-be-built Third Temple on Mount Moriah in East Jerusalem, and set up the abomination that maketh desolate. We will take a closer look at some of these points shortly. We must remember that the Beast's heart will not really be in this accord with Israel. As we have seen in current negotiations, even though he signs the Holy Covenant, it may simply be a political ploy in order to gain more time, power, influence, and possibly land, for the Palestinians. Consider the following verses which clearly demonstrate that not only will the Beast really be against the peace accord in his heart, but he will even be conspiring against it while he puts on his plastic smile in public:

"Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land...For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant...And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." (Daniel 11:28, 30, 32)

So you see, we really should not be the least bit surprised by this sudden reversal in politics, despite what might be believed on the surface by those who have not discerned the signs of the times. Let me reiterate that it will be a false 'plastic' peace, a phoney peace which will not endure. The recent Wye Memorandum which was signed by both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, is an excellent example of how quickly the political situation can change in the Middle East negotiations. Barely had Netanyahu returned home from Washington, D.C., after signing the agreement, that he immediately, and for several weeks thereafter, reneged on fulfilling his part of the accord. In fact, the Israeli Cabinet refused to even ratify the accord for a while. They cited a number of security points which they felt the Palestinians had not yet met.

Even though the Israelies finally began to fulfill their part of the Wye Accord by initializing withdrawal of Israeli troops from thirteen per cent of the West Bank, as I write this, the arguments regarding prisoner exchange, security issues, etc., have become so severe, that the government of Prime Minister Netanyahu has now completely stopped these troop withdrawals. He claims that Arafat is making a farce out of the Wye agreement. This comes just before American President Clinton is about to visit the Middle East. Let us also not forget that the Wye Memorandum is only an interim agreement. It is by no means the final accord in which the fate of Jerusalem must ultimately be determined; and that of course is the stumbling block which will result in total war sooner or later.

The point is, God knows the true score here. He sees the hearts of both the Israeli and the Palestinian leaders. He sees both of their treachery. In fact, He controls the decisions that they will each make, even though neither of

them may realize this. The following verses prove this point beyond a shadow of a doubt. Notice that the very first verse is dealing with the Middle East peace process, although it is not necessarily referring to Netanyahu and Arafat. I will be explaining this point more thoroughly in the second part of this series:

"And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed."

(Daniel 11:27)

"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

(1 Samuel 16:7)

"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."

(Proverbs 21:1)

"And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said." (Exodus 7:13)

"But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go...But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go."

(Exodus 10:20, 27)

"And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land."

(Exodus 11:10)

In the second part of this thought-provoking series, we will be taking a closer look at some of the major events which will transpire during the three and half year period known as the Great Tribulation. This will include the invasion of Jerusalem and the reasons for it, the removal of the Daily Sacrifice, the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation, the Image of the Beast, great persecution, the two Sackcloth Witnesses, the 144,000, the scope of the Beast's power, the possible identity of the Beast, the Israeli-Turkish military alliance, Hafez al-Assad and his vision for Syria, possible signatories of the seven-year peace accord, and the three broken horns. I trust that you will join me, as we still have a lot of ground to cover.

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THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE RAPTURE : PART 2

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Invasion of Jerusalem, Trodden Under God's Feet, The Daily Sacrifice Removed, The Abomination Of Desolation, Image Of The Beast, Great Persecution, The Two Sackcloth Witnesses, The 144,000, Scope of The Great Tribulation, The Possible Identity Of The Beast, Israeli-Turkish Ties, Pressure On Syria?, Parties To The Treaty, God Wants Us To Understand, Assad's Vision For Greater Syria, The Three Horns, Recap

If we extract the most important information contained in some of the verses I shared in part one of this series, we can obtain a very clear picture of some of the major events which will transpire during the Great Tribulation; that is, the final three and a half years of the Last Seven Years of current world history and the rule of evil men. These events will begin to occur after the subtle Beast mentioned in the Books of Daniel and Revelation, reveals his true nature and identity to the world. The first point we can understand is that the city of Jerusalem will ultimately be invaded and occupied during the full three and a half years; precisely as Daniel, Zechariah and Jesus all predicted. Consider how clear this becomes in the following verses:

"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, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." (Zechariah 14:2)

"And he [the Beast] shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him."
(Daniel 11:45)

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:20-24)

The primary reason why Jerusalem will be trodden under foot of the Gentiles for three and a half years, is because she has for too long rejected the Son of God; and she has become useless, or without salt, to God. In other words, she has not been the witness to the world that the Lord has wanted

her to be; but has in fact fought against the Lord's true children through both her attitude and her actions. American Christians were greatly alarmed earlier this year when it came to their attention that the Israeli government has been attempting to pass a certain piece of legislation which will severely restrict Christian evangelism in Israel. The Jews claim that they only wish to practice their Judaism without being pressured into converting to the Christian faith. Just recently, I learned that this antichrist bill may soon be debated, and ratified, on the floor of the Israeli Knesset.

Thus, because of their stubborn refusal to bow the knee to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, the Jews of Israel shall have no peace; but rather they shall soon face the wrath of an angry God. Notice that in the previous verses from the Gospel of Luke, the Lord used the specific phrases 'the days of vengeance' and 'wrath upon this people'. God Himself is going to take vengeance upon Israel. He is going to let His Wrath be felt because of their rejection of His Son. Please consider the following verses:

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." (Matthew 5:13)

"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29)

"But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." (Revelation 11:2-3)

How ironic that all of those verses discuss being trodden under foot. But you see, just as the anti-Christ Jews have trodden under foot the Son of God, the Lord will likewise trod them under His own feet like useless, flavorless salt during the time of the Great Tribulation; and He will use their Arab enemies to do it, just as He has done many times before throughout Biblical history. The Jews will finally reap what they have sown through their stubborn rejection of the one true Messiah for the past two thousand years.

Upon completing his successful invasion of Jerusalem, as we saw in part one, one of the first things that the Beast will do, is to set up something in the newly-built Temple which is commonly referred to as the Abomination of Desolation. I discuss the possible meaning of this object in the series 'The Seven Heads'. This event will occur three and a half years after he has signed the Holy Covenant. First however, the Beast will stop the Jewish sacrifices in the soon-to-be built Third Temple of Solomon on the top of Mount Moriah, as is made clear by the following verses from the Book of Daniel:

"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." (Daniel 9:27)

"And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." (Daniel 11:31)

"And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." (Daniel 12:11)

As I point out in articles such as 'Mondex And The Mark Of The Beast', at the time that the Beast invades Jerusalem, stops the Daily Sacrifice, and places the Abomination of Desolation, he will also implement the identification and credit system known as the Mark of the Beast. Just as the Lord will be marking, or sealing, His children, Satan, via the Beast, will likewise be marking his followers as well. This is precisely one of the reasons for the coming time of Jacob's Trouble; that is, to purge and test the world; to force everyone to make a decision, either for God, or for Satan. Obviously, being as these events will center around Jerusalem, the unbelieving Jews will be the primary object of the Lord's test of faith. That is why it is referred to as Jacob's Trouble. Everyone who refuses to bow down to the Beast's image, and who refuses to accept his Mark, will become the object of severe persecution, and possible death. As in the days of Moses and Joshua, the Israelies are going to be forced to make a clear choice. Consider these verses:

"And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." (Revelation 13:15-17)

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15)

As we have already seen, Jesus Himself said that the Great Tribulation will be the worst persecution that the world has ever known. Satan, via the Beast and his anti-God forces, will be doing everything within their power to destroy the Lord's children; which is why the Lord said that except those days were shortened by His Coming, no flesh would be saved. Exactly what is meant by the days being shortened is something which I will be discussing in part four of this series. For now though, following are some additional verses on the topic of Endtime persecution of the Saints:

"I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;...And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." (Daniel 7:21, 25)

"And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people." (Daniel 8:23-24)

"And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed." (Daniel 11:33-35)

"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." (Matthew 10:22)

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." (Matthew 24:9)

"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake." (Luke 21:12)

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." (John 15:18-21)

"They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." (John 16:2)

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12)

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? "And white robes were given unto every one of

them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (Revelation 6:9-11)

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." (Revelation 7:13-15)

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death...And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 12:10-11, 17)

"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations." (Revelation 13:7)

Thus we see that it will be a time of great testing for the Lord's children. What we can also learn from some of the verses I shared in part one, is that while the Beast is persecuting the Saints of God during this final three and a half year period known as the Great Tribulation, the two Sackcloth Witnesses will also be prophesying, and causing terrible plagues to fall upon the unbelieving wicked, as is thoroughly described in the Book of Revelation. Eventually, at the very end of this horrible period of slaughter, these two messengers of the Lord will be killed; and their dead bodies will be left laying in the streets of Jerusalem while the world rejoices. However, only three and a half days later, the world will be shocked when their lifeless bodies stand up; and they are called up to Heaven by Him who has power over life and death:

"And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended

up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them."
(Revelation 11:7-12)

If you are interested in reading a more thorough study on the two Sackcloth Witnesses, I encourage you to read my article 'The Two Sackcloth Witnesses Of Revelation 11'. Another important thing we can discover from the verses I have shared thus far, is that exactly as Jesus warned them to do in Matthew chapter twenty-four, as well as in Luke chapter twenty-one, a small portion of the population of Israel, who I believe may be flesh Jews who have converted to the Christian faith, will escape the edge of the sword by fleeing to the mountainous areas outside of Jerusalem, and possibly even further than that. At this current time, I believe that these may be the one hundred and forty-four thousand of the twelve tribes of Israel who are sealed by the Lord in the seventh chapter of the Book of Revelation.

Upon reading this chapter, we discover that prior to the Lord pouring out His Wrath upon the wicked unbelievers, just as the children of Israel had to mark their doorposts with lamb's blood as an act of faith during the first Passover in Egypt when the Angel of Death killed the firstborn of the Egyptians, the Lord is also going to somehow mark a small portion of the Israelies. Whether this mark is meant to be understood symbolically or literally remains to be seen. I discuss this issue more fully in such articles as 'Are You Saved And Sealed And Healed And Filled?', and 'Revelation's Babylon The Great Whore'. Regardless of the actual nature of this seal, these servants of God will be marked, just as the servants of Satan and the Beast will also receive a mark in their right hand or on their forehead, as I explain in 'Mondex And The Mark Of The Beast'. In both cases, it will mean that you either belong to God, or else you belong to Satan; there will be no neutrals then:

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel." (Revelation 7:1-4)

For a more in-depth look at these one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed servants of the Lord, I encourage you to read the two aforementioned articles, as well as 'The Woman In The Wilderness And The 144,000'. It is those stubborn Jews who continue to reject Christ as their Messiah, and who are foolish enough to remain in the city of Jerusalem, and who fight against the Muslim hordes, who will face carnage and inevitable destruction. I also discuss persecution, and how to react to it, in the article 'Civil Disobedience And Christian Persecution' I hope that you will take the time to read it.

At this time, I should point out that the Great Tribulation may not necessarily be global in scope as some of us have been led to believe. We should remember that while these prophecies are written for the edification of the entire Endtime Church, whether we be Gentile Christians or Jewish Christians, some of them will find their fulfillment in the state of Israel and the surrounding region. Those of us who live outside of Israel and the Middle East, may not feel the same repercussions from the power and wrath of the Beast; at least not in the beginning, if ever. Part of this confusion arises from the usage of such Biblical phrases as 'all the world', 'all nations' and 'all' as found in verses like the following:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matthew 24:14)

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." (Luke 2:1)

In the previous verses, three different Greek words are used to denote the word 'all'. These three words respectively are 'holos', 'hapas' and 'pas' and they have a variety of meanings such as all, throughout and everyone. While we can preach the Gospel throughout the whole world, that is, in every country, it does not seem humanly possible for us to reach every single person. This is because new people are being born all the time; and Jesus must return at some point in time. In the case of Caesar Augustus, it cannot literally mean the entire world, because he did not control the entire world. The only ones who could be taxed would be those who were under the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire, which was not the entire physical world.

The same can be applied to the extent of the Beast's power and influence as described in the prophecies of Daniel, as well as in the Book of Revelation. Consider the following two verses:

"And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:" (Revelation 13:16)

"The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." (Revelation 17:8)

When we are told that 'they that dwell on the earth shall wonder', does this truly mean that everyone who dwells upon the entire Earth will wonder, or admire, the Beast; or does it mean those who dwell in the region which comes under the Beast's influence; or does it mean the part of the world which was known in those days to the writer? In like manner,

will the Beast truly 'cause all' to receive his mark in their right hand or forehead; or will it only be those who fall under his sphere of control in the Middle East? These verses may still mean the entire Earth's population, but we should be open to other possibilities as well. As with other Endtime prophecies, time will certainly reveal all things.

As I explained in part one, the political leader known as the Beast will actually be opposed to the Holy Covenant from the very beginning. The Prophet Daniel tells us that he will be an extremely manipulative and deceptive character. As I point out in 'The Kings Of The North And The South', as well as in the series 'The Seven Heads', my current thoughts are that the Beast might arise out of the nation of Syria; and if not there, then most likely from some other part of the region which formerly comprised the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian empires. This would include modern-day Turkey, Iraq and part of Iran; however, I hold Syria as the primary candidate at this time. In my view, it is simply too early to make a clear determination regarding this matter. For now, we should all keep a close eye on Hafez al-Assad of Syria, Saddam Hussein of Iraq, and President Khatami and the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran.

Much to the consternation of other Arab nations, since the beginning of this year, Israel and Turkey have been forging closer military ties in cooperation with the United States of America. This has included joint military exercises in the Mediterranean Sea near Chittim, or what is currently known as the island of Cyprus. It is possible that these exercises were used to send a strong message to Syria. We need to remember that when such military exercises occur around the world, they are for a specific reason. They involve a lot of planning, time, energy and money. When governments engage in these activities, it is because they are flexing their muscles, and sending a message to their adversaries. It may be that this new relationship between Israel and Turkey will be the catalyst which will eventually force Hafez al-Assad into grudgingly signing a peace accord with Israel, even though he rejects the idea in his heart.

If Syria is indeed the King of the North as I speculate, and if the Israeli-Turkish alliance results in a peace accord with Israel, this may be directly related to the prophecies of Daniel. In other words, while many Christians currently look to a bilateral Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement as the most obvious fulfillment of the seven-year peace treaty, this might not necessarily be the case. In fact, based upon my understanding of the Daniel prophecies, I honestly don't see how such an exclusive agreement would fulfill all of the requirements; because Daniel states that this treaty will be between the kings of the north and the south; which I have interpreted as being Syria and Egypt. In other words, Yasser Arafat cannot be the King of the North, and Benjamin Netanyahu cannot be the King of the South according to my understanding.

Thus, we would all be wise to keep our options open to other possibilities. As I explain in 'The Kings Of The North And The South', there might be a larger agreement between Syria, Israel and Egypt which will include terms which would give

the Palestinians complete control of East Jerusalem as their capital, while at the same time permit the Jews to build their Temple there. It might be that this plastic peace will last for three and a half years until Syria reneges on the treaty and shows her true colors; which will result in the Great Tribulation. It is simply too early to interpret these things clearly. There are currently still too many unknown factors. One thing we do know is that the Lord does want us to understand the true significance of these events. He doesn't want us to be in ignorance or to walk in darkness; but sometimes we are just slow in our understanding. Please consider these verses:

"But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these;" (Daniel 2:28)

"Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7)

It is for this very reason that Daniel 11:33 states in part 'And they that understand among the people shall instruct many'. This is precisely what this ministry is all about. I am doing my best to help you the reader to understand these Endtime events, but even my understanding is not yet crystal clear regarding some of them. It is imperative that we all strive to understand these things so that none of us become deceived by the events which will soon unfold on the world stage. Believe me, they are going to be powerfully deceptive in nature; so much so, that Jesus said that even the elect might be deceived by them if they are not careful:

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."
(Matthew 24:24)

While we may not currently possess a full understanding regarding the identity of the kings of the north and the south, once a peace accord is signed which includes a clause for the construction of the Third Temple, not only will we know that we have entered the beginning of the Last Seven Years, but we will also fully recognize these leaders for who they are. Assuming for the present time that King Assad of Syria is truly the King of the North as I've speculated, allow me to share a few additional comments. We already know that the seven-year peace accord will be broken after three and a half years. According to what I have read, one of the reasons for this might be because King Assad's personal goal is to reclaim the power of the ancient Assyrian Empire; either through invasion, neutralization, or subjugation.

It is common knowledge in the Middle East, that King Assad is after more than just the Golan Heights in northeastern Israel. He also wants to subjugate the three nations who have compromised Arab interests by bowing to American and Jewish pressure, by entering peace arrangements with Israel. These three countries are Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. Let us not forget what happened to Anwar Sadat when he made peace with Israel. I can only wonder why Hosni Mubarak hasn't yet

met a similar fate. At this time, there are fundamentalist Islamic elements within Egypt who seek to overthrow Mubarak. King Hussein of Jordan has lost out to both Israel and Syria in the past, so he isn't too happy with either one of them. Lebanon, the land of the ancient King of Tyrus, has also had to compromise with Israel because of her southern border. In essence, Lebanon already takes orders from Syria. In recent weeks, there have again been some serious confrontations in the DMZ, or Demilitarized Zone, which acts as a buffer area between Lebanese and Israeli forces.

We all need to realize that there is no such thing as a neutral. When the pressure is on, everyone shows their true colors. If Syria chooses to go to war against Israel over the issue of the Golan Heights, these three countries are going to have to decide which side of the fence they are on. Are they sold out to the American dollar, or are they loyal to the Arab cause? Until now, I have speculated that Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan might represent the three horns which are subdued by the Beast. If this is indeed the case, then Assad would fulfill his vision of a Greater Syria. Consider the following verses found in the seventh chapter of the Book of Daniel which discuss these three horns:

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things...And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings." (Daniel 7:7-8, 24)

While it is still quite possible that the three horns which are broken by the Beast represent the three aforementioned nations, as I stated a moment ago, there is another possible interpretation which finds support in the Scriptures. For a full explanation of this possibility, allow me to refer you to the article 'The Beast And The Three Broken Horns'.

While I have gone into considerable detail regarding some of the events which will transpire during the Last Seven Years, the main points I wish to emphasize are these. According to my understanding, the seven-year period will commence with the signing of the Holy Covenant by the various signatories, whoever they might be. This accord will make possible the construction of the Third Temple on Mount Moriah. The first three and a half years of this seven-year period will be a time of fragile peace, during which time the Daily Sacrifice will be performed. This peace will be broken when Syria, or whatever country is the home of the King of North, reneges on the Holy Covenant. This event will mark the beginning of the Great Tribulation in the middle of the Last Seven Years; that is, three and a half years after the treaty has been signed. When this accord is broken, Israel will be invaded, the Daily Sacrifice will be stopped, the Abomination of

Desolation will be set up, the Mark of the Beast will be implemented, and great persecution will begin.

Having now firmly established the course of events through a preponderance of Scriptural evidence, in part three of this series, we will begin to examine some of the ideas put forth by the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists. This will include discussions on such topics as not being appointed to wrath, the Sixth Trumpet and the Battle of Armageddon, fleeing to the mountains during the Great Tribulation, slaughter of the wicked, being a witness unto death, faith as gold tried in the fire, and not being ashamed of the Lord. I trust that you will join me.

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THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE RAPTURE : PART 3

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Not Appointed To Wrath?, The Sixth Trumpet Or Vial Of Wrath, Armageddon, Euphrates River, Kings Of The East, The Only Way To Eternal Life, Flee To The Mountains, The Great Slaughter, A Witness Unto Death, As Gold Tried In The Fire, Not Ashamed

As we saw in part one of this series, contrary to my own understanding, Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists believe that the Great Tribulation will commence at the beginning of the Last Seven Years. In addition to this, they believe that the Rapture will occur just prior to this seven-year period. There are a variety of reasons and Scriptures they use to support this view. One of the most common verses which I have heard used to support this belief is the following:

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

In the previous verse, the word 'wrath' is derived from the Greek word 'orge', and is variably interpreted in the Bible as wrath, anger, vengeance or indignation. Depending upon personal interpretation, 'wrath' can be applied to the wrath of the Beast against the Lord's Saints, or to the Last Seven Plagues, also known as the Vials of Wrath, which God shall pour upon the wicked, or to the final reward of the wicked in the Lake of Fire. Let us now closely examine each one of these possibilities in order to discover which one is most successful in passing the Scriptural test. In the first case, we know that it doesn't pass the test, because as we saw in part two of this series, the Saints are going to be subjected to the wrath of the Beast. As I point out in such articles as 'The Children Of God And Politics', and in the series 'The Fruits Of Disobedience', throughout the entire Old Testament, the Lord protected His children when they remained obedient to His will, and He punished them through their enemies when they went astray.

During the coming Great Tribulation, the Lord is apparently going to lift His protection, and allow the Beast and his forces to persecute the Saints. This will serve a variety of purposes; one of which will be to allow the wicked to fill up their cup of iniquity, so that the Lord can righteously judge them. It is my understanding that while the Beast is persecuting the Lord's children, God will also be pouring out His Wrath upon the Beast's kingdom of darkness. Consider the following very revelatory verses found in Psalm Eleven:

"...In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart...The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire

and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." (Psalms 11:1-2, 5-6)

These verses are so amazing that it absolutely thrills me! The Lord is so faithful to reveal new gems to me as I delve into the wonders of His Word! Notice first of all that these verses clearly refer to preparation for a war. David says 'the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string'. What war is King David talking about? Notice also that only a few verses later, we are also told that when they enter the battle, the Lord will also pour out His righteous judgments upon them. How are His chastisements described? David says 'this shall be the portion of their cup'. What cup is David talking about? Might it be possible that the king is referring to the Seven Vials, or Cups, of Wrath found in the Book of Revelation? As I explain in the upcoming article 'The Seven Trumpets And The Seven Last Plagues', it appears that the Trumpets and the Vials, also known as the Seven Last Plagues, are different names for the very same things. This becomes apparent when we put the following verses right after each other:

"And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt." (Revelation 9:13-19)

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." (Revelation 16:12-16)

Now remember, in Psalm Eleven, King David described the wicked drawing back the bow and preparing for battle. In the previous two sets of verses, we have the sixth angel with his Trumpet, and the other sixth angel with his Vial of Wrath. You will immediately notice that both of them are by the Euphrates River; and as I point out in the series 'The

Seven Heads', I suspect that this may be a reference to the area of the Euphrates River which comes down from Turkey and passes through Syria, and not to its length through the country of Iraq, although that is also a possibility. Notice also that we are told in the first set of verses that these angels 'were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year'. Likewise, in the second set of verses, we are told that the Euphrates River is dried up so 'that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared'. It should be clear then that all of these verses are talking about the preparation for the Battle of Armageddon, which King David apparently envisioned thousands of years ago.

Allow me to bring a few more important points to your attention. As I also state in 'The Seven Heads' series, this mention of 'the kings of the east' could be a reference to military forces coming from Iraq, Iran, and further points east as they cross the dried-up Euphrates River on their way to the hill of Megiddo, or Armageddon, in Israel; however, during the course of doing research for the aforementioned series, I discovered that the word translated here as 'east' is actually derived from the Greek word 'anatolia'. This just so happens to be the former name of a country currently known as Turkey! So again, these military forces may in fact originate in Turkey, and/or Syria, and not in Iraq and Iran.

Finally, notice that in Psalm Eleven, in describing God's wrath upon those who have prepared for battle, King David states 'he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest'. The Apostle John uses similar words when he says 'and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths'. It doesn't take very much imagination too see that what John is describing might be modern day warfare in which tanks are used, and other toys of destruction. It seems like the Lord will be fighting fire with fire as the righteous battle against the wicked Muslim hordes.

But let's backtrack in time for a moment, to before the Battle of Armageddon actually occurs. Let's return to a point in time when Jerusalem is first surrounded by hostile Muslim forces; a time which may be in the very near future; perhaps only a few months or a few years from now at best. When this time of persecution known as Jacob's Trouble is about to begin, did Jesus say that the Rapture will occur in order to spare His children from such agony? Some of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists will insist that this is definitely the case. One verse which they sometimes use in order to support this view is the following, which I also shared in part one of this series:

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Daniel 12:1)

Notice that Daniel writes 'at that time thy people shall be

delivered'. Of course, for we Christians, this Deliverance can only be referring to the Second Coming of Christ and the Rapture. That is the only way that any of us are going to be delivered from this world, assuming of course that we all are still alive at that time. As we have already seen, the problem is in our personal understanding of exactly what is meant by 'that time'. Notice also that this verse does not say that all of the Jews of Israel are God's Chosen People as some wayward Bible teachers would have you to believe. I delve into this topic quite deeply in the article 'Is God A Racist?'. As far as I know, the only Jews who are going to be delivered 'at that time', are those who are found written in the Book of Life; and the only ones who will be found in the Book of Life, are those who have accepted the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ Himself; because as He said:

"...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."
(John 6:37)

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."
(John 10:28)

These are the only flesh Jews who will be delivered at that time; that is, those who have come to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. So the point is, did Jesus say that God will take His loved ones out of this world so that they can be spared from the awesome destruction which will be wrought against the city of Jerusalem? Not by any means. Let me again remind you of precisely what Jesus did say regarding this issue:

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:20-24)

Notice again that Jesus says 'flee to the mountains'. If you go back and read those verses from Psalm Eleven, you will see that King David also started his song by saying 'Flee as a bird to your mountain'; which he actually did in real life when he was forced to flee from rebellious King Saul, and hid in the cave of Adullam. Initially, David chose to flee to the camp of Saul's enemies, that is, to King Achish of Gath, the home of Goliath whom David had already slain by this time; but the Philistine king didn't trust David, so David then fled to the cave of Adullam:

"And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands? And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath. And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me? Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house? David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him."

(1 Samuel 21:10-22:1)

As we saw in part two, the Lord's words are a direct warning to the Jews who will be living in the city of Jerusalem in the near future when all of these events begin to occur. If the Rapture occurs before this terrible time of suffering begins, why then does our Lord tell the Jews to flee as quickly as they can with just the clothes on their backs? For me personally, the answer is quite obvious. The Rapture simply does not occur at this time; it happens later. Those Jews who are wise, and who truly understand the Word of the Lord, will do exactly as Jesus tells them to do; they will flee as a bird to the mountains in order to escape the Wrath of an angry God who will severely punish the rest of their countrymen who have not accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour; and the Jewish unbelievers will clearly be in the majority. It will be a very great slaughter; not only of the unbelieving Jews, but also of the many Palestinians who now reside in Jordan, and of the other Arab forces. Consider these descriptive verses written by the Prophet Isaiah which appear to have Endtime implications:

"And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound. Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err. Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty One of Israel. And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod."

(Isaiah 30:25-31)

"Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea." (Isaiah 34:1-6)

Just as the Prophet Jeremiah warned the children of Israel to return to the Lord so long ago, just prior to the final Babylonian invasion, because they will not accept Eternal Life through the Son of God, the Lord Himself will once again chastise the Jews by the hand of their Muslim enemies, who will bring them suffering and death. It will simply be a repetition of history upon a rebellious people who have still not learned their lesson:

"And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey. For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire." (Jeremiah 21:8-10)

The main point I wish to stress is that not being appointed to wrath has nothing to do with escaping the wrath of the Beast. All of the verses I shared in part two emphasize the fact that some of the Lord's children will still be here during the Great Tribulation; and that one of the primary purposes of this persecution will be to purge and to purify the Saints; that is, to make us truly worthy of the glories to be revealed. As the Apostle Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Corinthians:

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

While it is quite possible that one hundred and forty-four thousand Jewish Christians will be sealed during the Great Tribulation, the fact remains that this number represents under two and a half per cent of Israel's current Jewish population of about six million; so many people are still going to suffer and die during the reign of the Beast;

particularly in the state of Israel. In fact, at this time, I am not convinced that being marked with the seal of God necessarily means that the Lord's children will fully escape the wrath of the Beast. Even in our current day, we read of Christian missionaries, and our native Christian brethren in foreign lands, such as Egypt and the Sudan, being persecuted and killed because of their faith in Jesus Christ; so as I pointed out in part two, while receiving the seal of God may offer protection to some of the Saints, it primarily serves as a mark of ownership, whether we live or die in the Lord. If the seal of God offers full protection from persecution and death, then we would not find the following verses in the sixth chapter of the Book of Revelation, right after the description of the woman in the wilderness:

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? "And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (Revelation 6:9-11)

Thus, it seems that as a possible final test of their love for the Lord and lost souls, some of those who are alive at the time of the Great Tribulation, will be called to lay down their lives. Whether or not we American Christians will be the object of the Beast's persecution depends upon the extent of his power and influence. I cannot answer that at this time as I honestly do not know. Again, it depends upon the proper interpretation of such phrases as 'all nations', 'all the world' and 'all'. Perhaps the Beast will indeed have power over the entire Earth as some people envision the New World Order, or One World Government as it is also called, or maybe it will be a more localized event limited to the Middle East. As we saw in part two, one thing of which we can be sure, is that Jesus Himself said, 'The servant is not greater than his Lord'. Please consider the following verses as well:

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." (Luke 9:23-24)

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

"For the love of Christ constraineth us..."
(2 Corinthians 5:14a)

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

So again, perhaps some of the Lord's children, whether they be Gentile Christians, or Jewish Christians, will be so motivated by the love of God in the days and years ahead,

that despite heavy persecution, ridicule and the threat of punishment or death, they will be willing to lay down their lives in order to continue preaching the Gospel and winning others to Christ. Let us hope and pray that none of us will cower in fear like Peter and The Eleven who fled from the Lord the night of His betrayal, and then hid themselves in the upper room for fear of the Jewish Elders:

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."

(John 20:19)

Whatever happens in the future, one fact remains; Jesus and His First Disciples did not escape persecution and death; so what makes some Endtime Christians think that they are any better? Could it be that modern organized religion has become such a religion of convenience and comfort, that many have adopted the erroneous attitude that any possibility of pain and suffering should be rejected as being unscriptural? What makes them think that they are so worthy to comfortably float off to Heaven to sit on some billowy cloud and play a harp for Eternity? Sad to say, this is the erroneous image of Heaven that some deluded Christians seem to have. In the Old Testament and the New, our brethren had to pay a price for their beliefs. Some of us will undoubtedly have to pay the price for ours as well, as some already have. Jesus paid the price for our Salvation, but we are the ones who must work to obtain the rewards; for we will not all shine with the same glory:

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory."

(1 Corinthians 15:40-41)

This idea of being faithful unto death is also emphasized in the following two verses; one from the book of Daniel, and the other from the message to the Church at Smyrna in the Book of Revelation. As I will explain in a moment, being a faithful witness of the Lord's love and Salvation is not the only reason for which many people will undergo persecution:

"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." (Daniel 12:10)

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Revelation 2:10)

Notice that the reason why some of the Disciples at Smyrna were going to be cast into prison and suffer tribulation, was so that they might be tried; that is, so that their faith might be tested. In order to obtain their Crown, they had to remain firm unto death and not deny their faith in

the Lord. It is for these reasons that I strongly feel that those who embrace the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory are in error. If they honestly believe that they are ready to meet their Maker, they are really deceiving themselves. We are all imperfect, and full of all kinds of bad habits, pride and self-righteousness attitudes. The Lord needs to purge us of such things before we will truly merit the full glories of the Kingdom to come. He must get rid of the dross in our lives so that we will be as pure gold. Please consider these verses:

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)

"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God." (Zechariah 13:9)

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."
(James 1:2-4)

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:" (1 Peter 1:7)

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."
(1 Peter 4:12-14)

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."
(Revelation 3:18)

In that set of verses from the Epistle of James, the word 'temptations' is derived from the Greek word 'peirasmos', pronounced pi-ras-mos', which means a trial or proving of one's faith. It is almost identical in meaning to the word 'trial' found in the previous verses from Peter's first Epistle. In those verses, the word 'trial' is derived from the Greek 'purosis', pronounced poo'-ro-sis, which my Greek lexicon defines as follows:

----- Begin Quote -----

- 1) a burning
- 1a) the burning by which metals are roasted and reduced
- 1b) by a figure drawn from a refiners fire

1b1) calamities or trials that test the character

----- End Of Quote -----

Thus, similar to the Apostle Paul, both James and Peter are basically saying that as Christians, we must endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; and be willing to undergo tests of our faith through physical persecution if the Lord so chooses; and choose He might, for as Jesus and Peter also stated:

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12)

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38)

"Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:16-17)

Having now fully examined the possibility that not being appointed to wrath might mean escaping the wrath of the Beast and the False Prophet during the Great Tribulation through a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, I believe we can safely conclude that this is simply not the case. In light of the preponderance of Scriptures that I have provided thus far, it seems clear that the Lord's children will still be here during the time known as Jacob's Trouble.

In part four of this series, we will continue our study by examining the next possibility; and that is that not being appointed to wrath might be a reference, not to the wrath of the satanic Beast, but rather to the actual Wrath of God Himself, also known as the Seven Vials of Wrath, or the Last Seven Plagues. We will be taking a look into the past at a few examples such as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues in Egypt, and Noah's Flood. In addition, we will also discuss the great multitude which John saw in the Book of Revelation, the possibility of a Mid-Tribulation Rapture, and what Jesus may have really meant when He said that the days would be shortened. I trust that you are finding this series interesting, and that you will join me in part four.

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THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE RAPTURE : PART 4

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Seven Vials Of Wrath, The Destruction Of Sodom And Gomorrah, Suddenness Of The Lord's Return, Ashes Under Our Feet, Who Hinders The Antichrist, The Plagues Of Egypt, Obedience And Protection, Written For Our Admonition, Noah's Flood, The Great Multitude, Mid-Tribulation Rapture, The Days Shortened

Let us consider now the second possible definition of what it might mean to not be appointed to wrath. Might this be a reference to escaping the coming Wrath of God when the Seven Vials of Wrath, also known as the Last Seven Plagues, are poured out upon the wicked? While I currently believe that the Vials of Wrath will be poured out during the last half of the Last Seven Years, that is, some time during the Great Tribulation, some people place them after the Last Seven Years, and even after the Rapture, while we are in Heaven enjoying the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. It is with those people who assume that God's Wrath is going to be poured out some time during the Last Seven Years, and not after the Rapture, that the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory is quite popular. In his attempt to convince me of the validity of the Pre-Tribulation escape, one person wrote to me recently and shared the following story found in the Book of Genesis:

"And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar."
(Genesis 19:17-22)

Of course, this is the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In this incident, even after the two Angels had physically removed Lot and his family from the evil city of Sodom, Lot still complained about the hardship of having to flee to the mountain; so the Angels granted them permission to go to Zoar instead. The key words which are used from these verses to support the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory are 'Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither'. In other words, the Angels are saying that they cannot destroy the cities until Lot and his family have been safely removed from the premises. In like manner, Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists suggest that God

cannot pour out His Wrath upon the wicked until His children are safely removed from the Earth via the Rapture. They are basically saying that God's Hands are tied. This idea gives the impression that God is limited in His powers because of the physical presence of His children upon the Earth. I am reminded of the following verse:

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:"
(Isaiah 59:1)

Personally, I feel that there is a substantial difference between these two events. While it is true that Lot and his family had to be physically removed from Sodom, unlike the Rapture where the Lord's children will be totally removed from the Earth, they were only moved to another location upon the Earth; and it doesn't appear as if that place was very far from the cities of the plain. It was apparently just far enough away to provide sufficient protection for Lot and his family. Please also notice that this Act of God resulted in the complete destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The language in the Bible makes this very clear. Notice that in the following set of verses, the plain is described as being as beautiful as 'the garden of the Lord'. This must be a reference to the Garden of Eden; so the plain must have been absolutely breathtaking to behold. It was filled with rivers and streams, and luxuriant plantlife. It is for this very reason that Lot, probably in his own selfishness, chose the better part of the land when given a choice by Abraham. He no doubt figured that his flocks would do very well there:

"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom."
(Genesis 13:10-12)

But now notice how the two cities are described only six chapters later after the Lord's severe judgments have fallen upon them and the surrounding plain. Sodom and Gomorrah were totally obliterated from the face of the Earth. In fact, the entire plain was apparently burned up to such a degree, that it remained completely lifeless and devoid of plant growth. Perhaps it was similar in appearance to an area of the world where a volcano has erupted. Depending upon the severity of the eruption, as well as the volume of the lava flows, the landscape can quickly be transformed into miles upon miles of lifeless barren wasteland. What isn't destroyed through fire, toxic gases, plummeting boulders from the sky, and choking ash, may soon be covered with many meters of deadly, creeping, molten lava. Everything in its destructive path will eventually become permanently entombed in a hard shell of grey and black rock. Only the patient Hand of God Himself will eventually result in new life springing up in the area; and it takes time:

"Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground...And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."
(Genesis 19:24-25, 27-28)

What terrible destruction, and how quickly it came to pass! One hour Lot and his family were enjoying the pleasures of a lavish life in the lush lowland, and shortly thereafter they found themselves fleeing for their lives to the mountains, with only the clothes on their backs! God's Wrath fell so quickly upon those wicked sinners, that no one expected it in the least! In fact, Jesus Himself informs us that His Father's Wrath fell upon those cities in a single day! There was absolutely no room for procrastination, as Lot's wife sadly found out. So also will it be in the day that the Lord returns for His children. When He tells us that it is time to go, there will be no time for goodbyes, or last minute things to do. This is a very interesting point, because the Lord specifically tells us to remember Lot's wife. For me, this seems to imply that there is some kind of a choice in the matter. It might just not be some miraculous automatic flying off into the sky as many Christians believe:

"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife." (Luke 17:28-32)

In his second Epistle, the Apostle Peter also discusses the coming fiery destruction of the wicked. Just like Jesus, in order to add emphasis to his message, Peter also refers to the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In this case, he informs us that they were reduced to ashes; just as our enemies will someday be reduced to ashes under our feet as well:

"And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;" (2 Peter 2:6)

"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." (Romans 16:20)

"And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts." (Malachi 4:3)

The main point I wish to emphasize here is that despite the high level of destruction which occurred to the cities of the plain, the Lord did not have to completely remove His

children from the face of the Earth; He merely moved them to a safer location. Why then do some Christians feel that it is necessary for God to totally remove His Saints from the Earth, via the Rapture, before He pours out His Wrath? That certainly isn't what He did with Lot and his family. We know that the Seven Vials of Wrath are not directed against the Saints; they are directed against the unbelieving world; particularly against the followers of the Beast and the False Prophet. Remember, while some of God's children will be feeling the wrath of the Beast, the followers of Satan will likewise be feeling God's Wrath! Let me also clarify that I am not saying that God is not going to deliver His children from the Great Tribulation, as He most certainly will. The primary issue here is when that time will occur.

Another verse which is quite popular with those who support the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory, is found in the Apostle Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians. As I explain in the article 'Who Is Hindering The Antichrist?', this chapter deals with the arrival of the Jewish false messiah known as Moshiach ben David; whom Paul refers to as the Son of Perdition, who will sit in the newly-built Temple on the top of Mount Moriah. In explaining the conditions which will exist at the time of the arrival of this satanic deceiver, Paul wrote the following:

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 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. 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; 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...For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 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:"

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, 7-8)

As I explain in the aforementioned article, in the previous verses, the phrase 'letteth will let' is derived from the Greek word 'katecho' which is sometimes translated as detain, retain, restrain, hold back or hinder. In other words, Paul is telling us that something, or someone, is holding back the Antichrist from making his appearance on the world stage. If we accept the most common interpretation of this verse, it is referring to the Holy Spirit which dwells in the Body of the Believers. Thus, according to the supporters of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory, this means that once the Church has been removed from the Earth via the Rapture, the Holy Spirit will also be removed; and thus Satan, via his Son of Perdition, the Antichrist, will come to full power, and not before. It is a nice theory, but as I explain in that article, I do not accept this interpretation at this time. My personal study of the Scriptures has convinced me that this somebody is most likely Michael the Archangel, and not the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Body of the

Believers. Please refer to that article for more details.

If my understanding of Paul's words is correct, then this means that the Lord's worldwide spiritual Church will still be here at the time that the Antichrist sits in the Temple in East Jerusalem, and declares himself to be 'God'. As we saw earlier, I believe that it will be at this time that the three and a half years of Great Tribulation will begin, and not before, as the true children of the Lord refuse to bow down and worship the false messiah from hell.

In addition to the story of Lot, another clear example of how the Lord can punish the wicked while at the same time protect His own children, is found in the story of the first Passover in Egypt. The Lord didn't have to physically remove the children of Israel from the Earth before He used Moses and Aaron to punish Pharaoh and his people with the various plagues. In fact, He didn't even bother to move them to a safer location as He had done with Lot and his family. The Lord simply protected them from those chastisements, because the plagues were not directed against the Israelites, but only against the Egyptians; just as the Last Seven Plagues of the Endtime will also be directed against the wicked of the world, and not against the Lord's children. When the final plague of death occurred, the Hebrews were simply instructed to remain in their homes, and to not go outside. They also had to exercise their faith through the physical act of marking their doorposts with the fresh blood of an unblemished lamb; which of course was symbolic of the coming true Lamb of God; Jesus Christ Himself:

"And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it...And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt...And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." (Exodus 12:7, 13, 22-23)

Some time ago when I shared this example with someone who adheres to the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory, I was quite surprised when this person wrote back to me claiming that what happened with Moses and the Children of ancient Israel has absolutely no bearing on the children of God today. No Scriptural support was provided to validate this claim, and I don't think that this person would have found any even if a search had been made. Contrary to this person's comment, the Apostle Paul had the following to say regarding the plight of Moses and the Children of Israel, and how their example relates to our current time:

"Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some

of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1 Corinthians 10:9-11)

In this chapter, Paul deals with the issue of not yielding ourselves to fleshly lusts and idolatry; thus he found it fitting to use the murmuring ancient Israelites as a good example for 'our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.' Clearly then, if the murmuring and wandering in the desert is to be looked upon as an example for us, does it not seem appropriate to consider the entire story of the Children of Israel as well? Does it not seem proper to you that we should consider God's Divine Protection during the time of the plagues in Egypt, and view it as an example of how the Lord can and will miraculously protect His children when He pours out His Wrath upon the wicked? Another very interesting point regarding this story, is that it isn't that God didn't have a time of deliverance prepared for the ancient Israelites; it is just that the time hadn't arrived yet. God poured out His Wrath upon the Egyptians first, and then He delivered His children.

As I point out in the article 'Biblical Cafeteria, Or The Whole Course?', we cannot pick and choose when it comes to our understanding of the Bible. We cannot create a doctrine just by looking at a single verse. We must accept the entire Bible, and prayerfully and carefully compare Scripture with Scripture in order to come to a full knowledge of the Truth. I mentioned in part one that we must rightly divide the Word of Truth. Through the previous two examples of Lot and the story of the plagues in Egypt, it becomes quite apparent that the Lord does not have to remove His children entirely from the Earth, and not even from their current location, before He can pour out His judgments upon the wicked. He can protect them right where they are in some cases, if they obey His instructions. That is the key. Obedience results in Divine Protection. Please consider the following verses:

"The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." (Psalms 34:7)

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." (Psalms 91:5-11)

Of course, these aren't the only examples of the Lord's protection when it comes time to judge the wicked. One of the very first notable examples found in the Bible is that

of the great Flood which occurred during the days of Noah. As with Lot, the Lord didn't have to remove Noah and his family entirely from the Earth before He let His judgments fall upon the evil men of that time; He merely moved them to a new location, a higher location. He lifted up Noah and his family in the Ark, above the flood waters of destruction. As with the story of Lot, Jesus also used the example of Noah to warn us of what the world will be like just prior to the Day of His Return; and to emphasize the suddenness of the destruction of the wicked when they are least expecting it:

"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:26-27)

Thus, in looking at three of the greatest examples of God's Wrath in the Bible, that is, the Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the plagues in Egypt, we see that in every case, the Lord simply protected His own children from His righteous indignation; for as the Apostle Paul wrote, the Lord knows them that are His:

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Timothy 2:19)

Considering these three examples, and there are others, why do the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists continue to insist that God must physically remove us from the Earth before He can accomplish His purposes? The Scriptural evidence I have presented to you clearly shows otherwise. Another set of verses which are often used to support the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory, are the following found in the seventh chapter of the Book of Revelation. Please note that these verses come right after those which describe the sealing of the one hundred and forty-four thousand converted Jews:

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9-14)

Allow me to first mention that while the great multitude may include the one hundred and forty-four thousand, it does not seem to me that they are exactly the same thing. John tells

us quite clearly that this great multitude is so large, that it is something 'which no man could number'. If it can't be numbered, then obviously, it cannot be the one hundred and forty-four thousand converted Jews of Israel, as this is a quantity which can definitely be numbered. Notice also that the multitude is comprised 'of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues'; thus again we see that it cannot be just the saved Jews from Israel; although it is possible that they may be included in this group. I honestly do not know with any degree of certainty. However, in the previous verses, it is the phrase 'These are they which came out of great tribulation' which is commonly used by Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists to support their belief that the Saints will be removed from the Earth, via the Rapture, before the Great Tribulation actually begins.

Let's really think about this for a moment. From a logical point of view, it seems to me that in order to come out of something, one must have gone into it first. I cannot come out of my house, unless I have first gone into it. If we look at our Christian walk with the Lord as a race, as the Apostle Paul did, I cannot be disqualified from running the race, unless I have first entered the race, and then done something worthy of disqualification. In like manner, unless God's children have actually entered the period known as the Great Tribulation, how can they possibly come out of it? This leads us to our next point. While I have primarily focused on the two main schools of thought regarding this issue, that is, the Pre-Tribbers and the Post-Tribbers, in all fairness, allow me to mention that there is a third group of people who we might refer to as the Mid-Tribbers. These people believe that the phrase 'came out of great tribulation' means that the Lord's children will enter the Great Tribulation, but that they will be raptured out of it before it is over. This is where the following verse comes into play:

"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matthew 24:22)

While this idea of a Mid-Tribulation Rapture does have more merit, I still don't believe that it is completely accurate. By the time you have finished reading this series, you will fully understand why I say this; that is, if you haven't done so already. Let me point out that the previous verse does provide us with some vital information which further supports the idea that God's children will indeed go through the period known as the Great Tribulation. If you read it slowly, you will come to understand that what the Lord is saying, is that the whole reason why He must arrive when He does, is to prevent the complete annihilation of His dear children. If none of the Saints are here during the time of Jacob's Trouble, if they have already been raptured before this terrible period begins, then how can they be in danger of being wiped out by the forces of the Beast as this verse clearly indicates? So you see, this verse is a picture of God's Endtime children in the midst of Great Tribulation.

Please bear in mind that the Lord's primary interest is in the fate of His own dear children. While He wishes for all

men everywhere to be saved, as can be seen by the following verse, as I point out in such articles as 'Is The Message Of Salvation Meant For All Men?', He already knows that not all men will accept His free gift of Eternal Life. Some people will proudly and stubbornly deny His Name until the very end. The Apostle Peter made this point very clear. Notice the sharp contrast in attitude between the following two verses from his Epistle. One shows God's loving, merciful attitude, while the other shows sinful man's reaction to the Lord's display of mercy and patience with His rebellious creations:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4)

It is because of the Lord's love for His children, that in the previous verse from the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, we are told that the days of suffering will be shortened for the Elect's sake. As soon as the Lord determines that the evil forces of antichrist have filled their cup of iniquity, He is going to suddenly return, in order to put an end to the terrible slaughter of His little ones. He is going to rescue His Bride-to-be! According to my current understanding of the Scriptures, I believe that the Elect to whom Jesus is referring in the previous verse, is comprised of all saved Christians, be they Jew or Gentile, who have ever lived; except for those who were already resurrected at the time of Christ's own Resurrection. For a more thorough explanation of this topic, allow me to refer you to my article 'Once Upon A Time: A True Story'.

At this point, let us address the issue of what Jesus meant by 'those days should be shortened', and 'those days shall be shortened', as these two phrases have also been used by some people in order to try to justify the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory. As with other arguments we have already discussed, these phrases have been misinterpreted to mean that the Lord is going to shorten the number of days by simply taking His children out of the world before the Great Tribulation begins. As we have already seen, this cannot be correct, as the Lord is going to rescue His children out of a great persecution which has already begun, in order to prevent their complete annihilation.

A second possibility which finds support amongst some of the Mid-Tribulation Rapture theorists, is that the Lord will come to rescue His children before the Great Tribulation has ended, thus shortening the days. While this explanation at first appears to make a lot of sense, if we follow the safe practice of comparing Scripture with Scripture, we quickly realize that this interpretation contradicts everything we have already seen in the Scriptures. As we saw in both parts one and two of this series, both Daniel and John make it

very clear that the Great Tribulation has already been set to a predetermined length of time by the Lord; and that time period is three and a half years, or forty-two months, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days. They all represent the full duration of the Great Tribulation.

If there is one thing I have taught my readers over and over again, it is that God is not the author of confusion. He does not contradict Himself, or His Word. He is not going to say one thing in one place, and then turn around and say something totally contradictory in another part of His Holy Word, thus confusing the faithful student of the Scriptures. As Daniel and John have both stated, it is only when this time of Great Tribulation has reached its conclusion at the end of the final three and a half years of the Last Seven Years, that God's Plan will be finished, and Jesus Christ will return for His own at the sound of the Seventh Trump. Consider again what the Prophet Daniel wrote:

"And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." (Daniel 12:7)

Notice carefully what the Angelic Messenger says to Daniel. When will all of these things be finished? After the Beast has scattered 'the power of the holy people' during the three and a half years of Great Tribulation; that is, the 'time, times, and an half'. I believe that this scattering of power, is a reference to the terrible persecution of the Jews, who will be forced to flee out of Jerusalem, exactly as Jesus told them to do, when the Muslim forces invade Jerusalem, as we saw in earlier installments of this series. That phrase 'shall be finished' coincides with the 'should be finished' in the following verse from the Book of Revelation:

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets."
(Revelation 10:7)

As soon as the three and a half years of Great Tribulation has been completed, from the day that the Holy Covenant is broken in the midst of the Last Seven Years, Jesus Christ will return, in order to rescue His children, and to stop the terrible slaughter, and not a day before. Based upon everything I have shared with you, this is what I believe that Jesus really meant when He said that the days will be shortened; that is, that they will not be any longer than the allotted three and a half years, or forty-two months, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days. If He allowed the Muslim wave of terror and persecution to go longer than that, then no flesh would be saved; particularly no Jews in Israel. This is in perfect agreement with the Scriptures.

Before concluding part four of this series, allow me to point out to you that the Angelic Messenger does mention to Daniel that there are two short time periods which extend

beyond the three and half years of the Great Tribulation. One of these extensions is a thirty-day period, while the other is a forty-five day period which extends even beyond the thirty-day period. In other words, it appears that there are certain undetermined events which occur during the first seventy-five days following the Lord's Return. While we can all speculate what these things might be, at this current time, I do not know with absolute certainty. All I do know is that those who make it through these final seventy-five days are considered blessed by the Lord. Daniel wrote:

"And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." (Daniel 12:11-12)

In the fifth part of this thought-provoking series, we will continue our discussion of the Great Tribulation and the Rapture by looking at such topics as the First Resurrection, the Battle of God and Magog, the defeat of the Satanic Trio, the Second Resurrection, the Great White Throne Judgment and the Lake of Fire, the post-Armageddon Judgment Seat of Jesus Christ, the two raptures theory, all one in Christ, the dead in Christ shall rise first, respect of persons, and the coming transformation of our bodies. I trust that you will join me.

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THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE RAPTURE : PART 5

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First Resurrection, Battle Of Gog And Magog, Demise Of The Ungodly Trio, the Second Resurrection, Great White Throne Judgment, The Lake Of Fire, Method Of Scriptural Research, Judgment Seat Of Christ, Post-Armageddon Judgment, Proper Timeframe Of Paul's Words, Two Raptures?, All One In Christ, Dead In Christ Rise First, Respect Of Persons, Body Change!

Thus far, we have seen how the term 'not appointed to wrath' cannot be applied to the Saints not being persecuted by the Beast during the Great Tribulation, for indeed they shall be as I have clearly shown through a preponderance of Biblical evidence. In like manner, we have also seen how the Lord can still pour out His Wrath upon the wicked, without the need to remove His Saints from the world via a Rapture. This would indeed fit not being appointed to Wrath; however, as with the first possibility, it cannot be successfully used to support a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, as the Lord can still pour out the Vials of Wrath, while protecting His Children from the same.

Another possible way to apply the phrase 'not appointed to wrath', is to suggest that it might be referring to the final Wrath of God against the living at the time of the Battle of God and Magog, found in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation. Obviously, this cannot possibly be referring to the Saints being caught up to Heaven in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, because as the following verses make clear, we will all have been resurrected and raptured one thousand years earlier during the First Resurrection of the dead at the time of Christ's Second Coming. We will be delving into this topic in just a moment. I also discuss it in other Endtime articles such as 'From Armageddon To The New Earth':

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." (Revelation 20:4-5)

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." (Revelation 20:7-9)

You will notice that I have divided the previous verses into two sections. This is to emphasize the fact that the events in the second set of verses occur one thousand years later; and that as such, while the Battle of Gog and Magog indeed represents God's final Wrath upon wicked men remaining on Earth, there is absolutely no way to associate it with the events which transpire one thousand years before. This only leaves us with one possible way in which we can apply the phrase 'not appointed to wrath', and as with the previous example of the Battle of Gog and Magog, it has absolutely nothing to do with being raptured before, or even during, the period known as the Great Tribulation. As I will now conclusively prove, not being appointed to Wrath is directly related to the Lake of Fire, which as we know, is reserved for the totally incorrigibles, as is described by the Apostle John in the following verses:

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 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. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:10-15)

As we have already seen, by the time all of these events occur, all of the Lord's saved children will have been resurrected over a thousand years before. Likewise, the Beast and the False Prophet will have been in the Lake of Fire for one thousand years, as is described in the final verses of Revelation chapter nineteen:

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." (Revelation 19:20-21)

Clearly then, there will be absolutely no need for the rapture of the Saints at the time of the Battle of Gog and Magog, followed by the Great White Throne Judgment, for it will have already occurred one thousand years before. Not only that, but as the previous verses demonstrate, after the Battle of God and Magog, that old serpent Satan will also be cast into the Lake of Fire. The Great White Throne Judgment will be preceded by one final resurrection, in which all of the remaining dead on the Earth will be raised and judged according to their works. Those whose names are not found

written in the Lamb's Book of Life, will face the Wrath of God in the Lake of Fire. For me personally, it is absolutely clear that destruction in the Lake of Fire is the Wrath to which the Apostle Paul was referring when he said that we the Saints are not appointed to wrath; but, as you may be beginning to see, that Wrath does not begin at the Great White Throne Judgment.

For those who require that I leave no stone unturned, I have taken the long route in order to prove that the Lake of Fire can be the only Wrath to which Paul was referring; however, for those of you who have the faith to believe without such a preponderance of Scriptural evidence, there is actually a much shorter Biblical route which one can take in order to arrive at the same sound conclusion. As my readers know, I strictly adhere to the practice of comparing Scripture with Scripture. I've stated before that in trying to understand a verse, we should first look for other verses in the same chapter which might serve to open up our understanding. If an answer cannot be found there, then we should examine other chapters of the same book. If that still does not reveal the truth to us, then we simply need to expand our investigation to include other books of the Bible as well.

In this particular case, I think you will be amazed by how easy it is to arrive at the same conclusion regarding the phrase 'not appointed to wrath', simply by studying the writings of the Apostle Paul. It only makes sense that in some other place in his Epistles, he must have written something which would be associated with that phrase, and which would thus help us to move in the right direction in our understanding of what he meant. As happens on quite a few occasions, because I hungered after the truth regarding this matter, I believe that the Lord has been faithful to reward me with the answer. As I pondered the phrase 'not appointed to wrath', the Lord, by His Holy Spirit, quickened another verse to my mind which I first learned many years ago. When this verse came to me, I was simply amazed by the similarity between these two verses, and how they really do fit together like a hand in a glove. Here they are side by side for your consideration:

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" (Hebrews 9:27)

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

Notice that in both verses, Paul talks about being appointed to something. In the first verse, he talks about how all men are appointed to die, and then must face judgment. It should be obvious that Paul is referring to the Judgment Seat of Christ. As we have already seen, with the majority of the unsaved, this judgment will occur during the Great White Throne Judgment; however, as we have also already seen, this will not be the first time that the Lord judges the wicked. Remember again the words of the Apostle John who wrote 'And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them'. To clarify this vital point for you even further, consider some of the other things that Paul said regarding this issue of judgment, and how it will be carried

out:

"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."
(2 Corinthians 5:10)

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries...It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God...For our God is a consuming fire."
(Hebrews 10:26-27, 31, 12:29)

Notice how Paul very clearly associates this judgment with the fiery Wrath of God 'which shall devour the adversaries'. When Jesus begins to judge the world, and we with Him, this judgment will include the fiery destruction of the wicked; and it will begin the minute the Lord wins the Battle of Armageddon. It is at that time, and not one thousand years later, that the Lake of Fire, the final Wrath of God, first comes into play. As I point out in the article 'Hell And The Lake Of Fire', Jesus Himself referred to this fiery judgment in the Lake of Fire many times during His Ministry, such as in the following verse:

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28)

As I explain in the aforementioned article, in this case the word 'hell' is referring to the Lake of Fire, and is derived from the Greek 'geenna' or 'Gehenna of fire', which was the Greek name applied to the valley of Hinnom, located to the south of Jerusalem, where the Israelites burned their trash, sacrificed their children on the fiery altars of the false god Molech, and burned the bodies of dead livestock and criminals. Jesus was using this valley as a stern warning to the rebellious Jews of what the Lake of Fire would be like for those who rejected Him and His message of Salvation.

Now remember, concerning this fiery indignation of God, Paul used the words 'which shall devour the adversaries'. That is very important when we consider what he said in that second verse above about not being appointed to Wrath. If we read just a few verses earlier in the fifth chapter of his first Epistle to the Thessalonians where that verse is found, we see that Paul is talking about the sudden Second Coming of Christ, and the fiery Wrath of God which will befall wicked men upon their dismal defeat at the Battle of Armageddon. In other words, in those verses, the sudden destruction to which Paul is referring, is the Lake of Fire, in which the Lord 'shall devour the adversaries'. Consider exactly what Paul wrote, keeping in mind that it is only six verses later that he says that we are not appointed to this Wrath:

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden

destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

(1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)

This firmly places this sudden destruction, or Wrath as he calls it in verse nine, precisely at the time of Christ's Arrival, and not before. As soon as the Battle of Armageddon has been won, and as soon as Christ, and we, have sat upon our Earthly thrones in order to begin judging the world, one of the very first things that the Lord is going to do, is to 'devour the adversaries' in the Lake of Fire. Here again are the verses I shared with you earlier which prove this point beyond a shadow of a doubt:

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." (Revelation 19:20-21)

Do you see how clear it all becomes when we put things in their proper context and stop trying to twist the Scriptures in order to fit our own interpretation? This is the fiery indignation, the sudden destruction, and the Wrath of God which the Beast and the False Prophet will face at Christ's sudden Return, when these evil rulers least expect it; and those who follow them into battle will face similar sudden destruction. This is the Wrath to which we the Believers are not appointed; because at that time, we will all be given Thrones, upon which we will judge the world with Christ! It should now be very clear to you that not being appointed to Wrath has absolutely nothing to do with escaping the wrath of the Beast, or even the Wrath of God, during the Great Tribulation through a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. The people who make such claims have totally misunderstand the exact timeframe of the events Paul is describing in his Epistle to the Thessalonians. They are trying to push this Wrath back in time to during the Great Tribulation, when this is definitely not the case whatsoever.

As I point out in the article 'From Armageddon To The New Earth, while the Millenium will be a time of judgment and strict rule by the Lord and His children, as we saw earlier, this will not be the major judgment of the world. That will not occur until a thousand years later at the Great White Throne Judgment. We will further discuss this strict rule in just a moment. As we have already seen, just as the Beast, the False Prophet and their deluded followers will face very certain fiery indignation, sudden destruction and Wrath at Christ's Coming, the very same fate awaits Satan, and the unsaved dead at the final Judgment mentioned by the Apostle Paul earlier. Allow me to share those verses from the Book of Revelation one more time to refresh your memory:

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from

whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 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. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:10-15)

Based upon all of this Scriptural evidence, I am personally convinced that not being appointed to Wrath has absolutely nothing to do with a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, or even with a Mid-Tribulation Rapture, in order to escape the Wrath of God upon the wicked. Neither does it have anything to do with escaping the wrath of the Islamic Beast. Not being appointed to Wrath is referring to the final and worst Wrath of all; that is, the Lake of Fire, experienced by some at Christ's Second Coming, and experienced by the vast majority at the Great White Throne Judgment one thousand years later.

Contrary to the Biblical evidence I have provided thus far, I have learned that there are some Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists who are expecting not one, but rather two raptures to occur. According to this view, the first rapture is due to occur just before the beginning of the Last Seven Years; which as I stated earlier, Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists view as comprising the entire Great Tribulation period. They suggest that this first rapture will include all of the New Testament Saints; that is, everyone who has lived and died believing in Jesus over the past two thousand years. This includes Jews and Gentile Believers alike, since there is no difference, and we are all one in Christ Jesus, as per the following verses from the various Epistles of the Apostle Paul:

"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." (Romans 10:12)

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." (Colossians 3:11)

As if the idea of two separate raptures occurring isn't already confusing enough, the proponents of this theory go on to state that this first rapture will not include all of the Old Testament Saints. They claim that the Old Testament Saints, as well as those Endtime Saints who die during the Great Tribulation, will be resurrected either right at the Lord's Second Coming, that is, right at the end of the Last Seven Years, or else during the seventy-five day period which follows the Last Seven Years, which I described for you in part four of this series. This is apparently what

they are referring to when they talk about a second rapture. To support the idea of a second resurrection and rapture, these people point to the following verse which I shared earlier:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4)

According to this belief, being as all of the New Testament Christians will already have been resurrected seven years earlier in order to participate in the first rapture, I can only assume that this second resurrection and rapture will include people who actually become Christians during the Great Tribulation period. The reason I find it so difficult to accept this point of view, is because, as we have already seen, in the very next verse, not only does John refer to this as the First Resurrection, but he also clearly places it after the Battle of Armageddon during which the Beast and the False Prophet are cast into the Lake of Fire, and their armies slain and devoured by the fowls of the air. This is exactly where this First Resurrection should be:

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."
(Revelation 20:5)

Please notice that John is not saying that the resurrection which occurs a thousand years later after Armageddon is the First Resurrection. That last sentence 'This is the first resurrection' is referring back to what he said in verse four regarding the Saints being resurrected and raptured in order to reign with Christ for a thousand years during the Millennium. If John is saying this is the First Resurrection at the end of the Great Tribulation, we can only wonder how the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists justify the one which they insist will occur just prior to the beginning of the Great Tribulation seven years before. Please don't forget; these people believe that the Great Tribulation will last for the entire Last Seven Years, and not just the final three and a half years as I have already explained.

Obviously, first means first; and John clearly states that the Resurrection and Rapture which occurs at Christ's Return is the first. There is absolutely no way to circumvent this belief. This is not the only fatal flaw in the two raptures theory. We have already seen that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile Christians. According to the Apostle Paul, we will all be resurrected and raptured at the same time. First will be those who have died in Christ, to be followed by those who are still alive at His Coming. Allow me to remind you of the verses I shared in part one from Paul's first Epistle to the Thessalonians:

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we

which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

Here we have a clear picture of the Lord descending from the Heavens as the Elect rises from the Earth to meet Him in the air; exactly as the Lord Himself described it for us in Matthew chapter twenty-four. Notice that Paul says that 'the dead in Christ shall rise first'. The dead are the dead, and we are all one in Christ Jesus. Paul does not make any kind of a distinction between a dead Old Testament believing Jew, a dead Old Testament believing Gentile, a New Testament believing Jew, or a New Testament believing Gentile. If one is dead in Christ, he is dead in Christ. The only difference is that while the pre-Christian era believers looked forward in faith to Jesus' coming Sacrifice, those of us born in the Christian era look back in faith to the same. We are all of the same seed of faith. There is absolutely no distinction.

Therefore, instead of adding our own private interpretation to these verses found in Paul's first Epistle to the church at Thessalonica, in order to support our pet theories, why don't we just accept them for what they really say? These people who say New Testament Christians will be resurrected seven years ahead of dead Old Testament believing Jews are totally contradicting the Scriptures. They are creating an erroneous doctrine through a twisting of the Scriptures. Jesus Christ Himself never once mentioned two raptures in any of His Endtime sermons, and neither did the Apostle Paul or anyone else. If such a thing were true, doesn't it seem likely that the Lord would want us to know about it? Doesn't it seem to you that this would be an important piece of information which would be useful to us in the Endtime? That being the case, why then didn't Jesus mention it in any of His Endtime sermons? He clearly tells us that His Angels will gather the Elect one time at His Coming, and not twice as these people would have us to believe.

If you still doubt that all dead New Testament Christians and Old Testament Believers will be raised together at the very same time, when Christ returns at the end of the Great Tribulation, before those of us who may still be alive at that time, then consider what the Apostle Paul writes in the following verse which comes right before the two I have just quoted:

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." (1 Thessalonians 4:15)

For those of you who may not be familiar with Elizabethan English, that word 'prevent' simply means to come before, to precede, to go before. It is derived from the Greek word 'phthano'. Notice also that Paul is saying that he received this revelation straight from the Lord. This isn't just some strange new doctrine he made up; he received it 'by the word of the Lord'. Jesus Himself revealed this truth to Paul, for as Paul wrote in another place:

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it

of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Galatians 1:11-12)

Therefore, when Paul tells us that the dead in Christ shall rise first three times, it is obvious that we should accept his word as being true. If there was a distinction between Old Testament Jews and New Testament Believers, why didn't the Lord tell Paul to inform us of this? Why didn't John clearly tell us the same; or perhaps Peter? In my mind, the answer is rather obvious and quite simple; because such a difference is non-existent except in the minds of those who wish to escape the suffering of the Great Tribulation, by means of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. They want to pre-empt everyone, including the Old Testament Saints; but again, it is a false doctrine based upon a nebulous understanding of the Scriptures.

To insert a resurrection and a rapture before the Last Seven Years begins, is making three resurrections; in fact four, if you include the one mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew. These people who hold to this doctrine claim to believe that there is no difference between Gentile and Jewish Believers, but then they turn around and totally contradict themselves by saying that there is in fact a difference because the Old Testament Believers had to look forward in faith to Christ's Crucifixion on the Cross. Why does that make them any less worthy than us, so that they have to wait until seven years later before they too are resurrected and raptured? Don't the Scriptures plainly tell us that God is no respecter of persons? Please consider the following verses:

"Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts."
(2 Chronicles 19:7)

"These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment." (Proverbs 24:23)

"To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress." (Proverbs 28:21)

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:"
(Acts 10:34)

"For there is no respect of persons with God." (Romans 2:11)

"And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."
(Ephesians 6:9)

"But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons."
(Colossians 3:25)

"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:" (1 Peter 1:17)

As you have probably understood from the previous verses, when the Bible talks about having no respect of persons, what that means is that we should treat others with the same impartiality as our Heavenly Father treats us. The Apostle James makes this point very clear in the following verses:

"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." (James 2:1-9)

It seems to me that the idea of saying that the Believers of the Old Testament must wait until the end of the Last Seven Years for their resurrection, shows a lack of respect, or honour, for those Old Testament Patriarchs. Showing honour, and being impartial in our views, are not necessarily the same thing. As I point out in other articles, physical time on Earth does not affect the Lord; because He lives outside of it in the Eternal Now, where past, present and future are all blended together as one. In God's eyes, those people were saved already, because they looked forward in faith; even if Jesus hadn't been physically born or died on the Cross yet. They are just as much of the seed of faith as we are, and deserve to be resurrected at the same time as we New Testament Believers, exactly as Paul says they will be.

Sadly, this is not the end of the confusion which surrounds the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory. To make matters even more difficult to understand, it appears that some of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists hold to the belief that those Christian Believers who are still alive at the end of the Great Tribulation, when Christ returns, will continue their existences in their natural bodies right into the Millennium; and not only that, but they will have children as well. Again, this is in total contradiction to everything we have examined thus far. All of the verses I have shared clearly show that when Jesus returns, the dead in Christ will be resurrected, changed and raptured; and then we who are still alive will likewise be miraculously changed and raptured, in order to meet the Lord in the air. As we have already seen, this wonderful event will occur at the sound of the Seventh Trump. Allow me to once again share with you some of the inspiring verses which prove this point:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29)

"And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."
(1 Corinthians 15:49-52)

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."
(2 Corinthians 5:1-4)

"For our conversation 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, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Philippians 3:20-21)

"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." (1 John 3:2)

There should be no doubt about it whatsoever. None of those verses indicate in any way that the Believers will remain in their natural bodies, whether they are dead or alive, at the time of Christ's Second Coming, following the period known as the Great Tribulation. Every single one of us is going to be miraculously transformed together; first the dead Saints, and then those of us who are still alive! It will be the most wonderful event of our entire Earthly lives as we rise in the air in order to join the Saints of ages gone by of whom we have only read, as well as our departed relatives who have died in Christ, and of course the Lord Himself and His Angelic Host, in the clouds of Heaven.

In the final part of this series, we will continue our discussion of the Great Tribulation and the Rapture, by taking a look at the fate of those who survive the Battle of Armageddon and live into the Millenium. This will include additional comments on Christ's rule with a Rod of Iron, Millennial backsliders, the final rebellion at the Battle of Gog and Magog, John's 'Come up hither', female symbolism in the Bible, uniformity in interpretation, the Right Hand of God, the 'caught up' experience, the Mystery of God and the Seventh Trump, and Jesus' indisputable words in Matthew chapter twenty-four. I trust that you will join me.

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Slaughtered At Armageddon, Worldly Leaders Survive, We Shall Rule With A Rod Of Iron, Millennial Christian Backsliders?, Satan Bound And Millennial Learning, Gog: The Final Rebellion John's 'Come Up Hither', The Church And Female Symbolism, Uniformity In Interpretation, On The Right Hand Of God, The Caught Up Experience, Similarities Between Jesus' And John's Words, The Real 'Come Up Hither', Mystery Of God And The Seventh Trump, Matthew Twenty-Four One More Time, Conclusion

It is my understanding that one of the reasons why some Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists embrace the false belief that not all Christians will be miraculously transformed at Christ's return, is because they are under the erroneous impression that everyone in the world is going to be killed during the great Battle of Armageddon. In other words, all of the world, except Christian Believers, are going to bow down to Satan and receive the Mark of the Beast; and all the world is going to be damned to the Lake of Fire. As we saw in part two, this might not necessarily be the case. What John meant when he wrote that 'all' will receive the Mark of the Beast, might not be the same as what some of us have come to understand today. Being as all Endtime prophecies center around Israel, we may be looking at more localized events. Time will certainly tell.

It is because of these ideas, that some Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists believe that the only ones over whom the Lord and His Saints can rule during the Millennium, will be those Christians who haven't yet received new resurrected bodies. For them, this is the only way to fill this void in their understanding; however, once we begin to examine this idea from both a worldly and a Scriptural perspective, we begin to see how unsound this belief really is.

Under the current system of man, when there is a war, under normal circumstances, the entire world does not go to fight in it. The war is usually fought between a limited number of nations who have formed alliances with each other. Neither does a nation send its entire population into battle; but only those men and women who have specifically been trained for military combat. The vast majority of people remain at home leading normal lives. This is how I believe that the Battle of Armageddon may be fought. Not only that, but as I pointed out earlier in this series, I suspect that the war will be primarily fought by the Israeli forces, and the Muslim armies from the surrounding Arab nations. Of course, their Russian and American allies may provide logistical support. As we saw earlier, the Bible is in agreement with these views. The Holy Scriptures tell us that the Beast, the False Prophet, and all those who follow them into battle against the Lord will be destroyed:

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."

(Revelation 19:19-21)

"I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time." (Daniel 7:11-12)

Notice that collectively, John and Daniel tell us that both the Beast and the False Prophet are going to be destroyed at the Battle of Armageddon; and their bodies cast into the Lake of Fire. In addition, we are told that those 'kings of the earth', or military leaders, and their armies who follow the Beast into battle against Christ, are also going to be slain. Notice, however, what Daniel says about the rest of the worldly leaders, or beasts. Are they also destroyed? No. Daniel states that their dominion, that is their sovereignty to rule the Earth, from the Aramaic word 'sholtan', is taken from them, and their lives are prolonged 'for a season and time'. That word 'season' is derived from the Aramaic word 'zeman', which means a set time, time, or season. As we have already seen, the word 'time' means year, and is derived from the Aramaic word 'iddan'. Thus, what Daniel may be saying is that the rest of the worldly leaders will have their lives prolonged for a set time and year. This goes right along with what Daniel tells us only five chapters earlier when he writes:

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Daniel 2:44)

Thus, as I point out in other Endtime articles, we see that while the Ten Horns who follow the Beast into battle against Jerusalem may be destroyed, all of the other governments of the world, which number about two hundred at this time, are going to be stripped of their political and military power; and they are going to become subservient to the one, true, righteous Government of Jesus Christ; and He is going to rule them with a Rod of Iron during the Millenium. Not only that, but as we have already seen, we will rule with Him; if we are faithful, as the following verses verify:

"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

(Psalms 2:8-9)

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."
(Revelation 2:26-27)

"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." (Revelation 12:5)

"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (Revelation 19:15)

Because some of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists either reject these Scriptural truths, or simply do not understand them properly, as we have already seen, they have found it necessary to invent ideas which fill in the gaps in their understanding. According to them, the Christians who survive the Great Tribulation, and who live into the Millenium in their natural bodies, will have children of their own who will likewise have to choose to accept the Lord. They claim that some of these Millennial descendants will choose not to believe, although 'accept' might be a better choice of words being as everyone will be fully aware of who Jesus Christ is; after all, He, and we, will be ruling over them for one thousand years in our new Glorified Bodies. So, it isn't that they won't know and believe in who we are; it is simply that they won't accept our authority over them. This is why we will be forced to rule over them with a Rod of Iron.

According to the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists, it is these rebellious descendants of Post-Tribulation Christians, who will surround the Camp of the Saints in the final Battle of Gog and Magog; led of course by none other than Satan himself; who will be released from the Bottomless Pit, as a final test for the people of the world.

Obviously, I personally do not accept these views concerning the identity of the Millennial survivors, because as I have already made clear, we will all be changed and raptured when Jesus Christ returns at the end of the Great Tribulation. The only ones left on the Earth following the great Battle of Armageddon, will be the non-believers. Being as Satan will be bound in the Bottomless Pit; these people will be free from satanic influence, and they will have a thousand years to repopulate the Earth. Not only that, but they will have an excellent opportunity to learn the ways of the Lord. It seems to me that after the Second Coming, the Rapture of the Saints, the Battle of Armageddon, the Seven Plagues, etc., some of these humans left on Earth are going to enter the Millenium as fearful Believers; after all, they will be able to believe by sight; but they will have missed the greater blessing of having believed by faith; for as Jesus said to Thomas:

"...because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."
(John 20:29)

As I point out in 'From Armageddon To The New Earth', and as we also saw earlier in this series, despite this golden opportunity for learning the wonderful Truth of God's Word, straight from the Word of God Himself, as well as from His resurrected and changed Saints, the minute Satan is released from the Bottomless Pit, these rebellious Earthlings will once again be filled with pride and rebellion; and they will make one final effort to defeat the Saints of the Most High. This demonstrates to me that despite the Lord's strict but fair rule during the Millennium, in their hearts, these wicked people will slowly be hardening their hearts with each passing generation; and eventually, as King David prophesied in the Psalms, they will become so vain in their evil imaginations, that they will actually come to believe once more, that they can defeat the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and His faithful followers at the Battle of Gog and Magog:

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." (Psalms 2:1-5)

Of course, as we already know, by this time, the Lord will have run out of patience; and He will simply consume them all with fire from Heaven. This will be the Lord's final fiery Wrath upon Earthly men. After this will follow the resurrection of all of the dead, and the Great White Throne Judgment in which evil will be snuffed out once and for all in the Lake of Fire:

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Revelation 20:9-10)

While we have temporarily taken a time capsule into the far future in order to explain some of the views held by some of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists, let us backtrack in time now to the main event which these people believe will occur in our near future. In fact, they are convinced that the Rapture is so near, that it could happen at any moment, before all of the events I have described for you in this series. Because they believe that Christ's Second Coming will only be an aerial event which will only be seen by the Believers, it has sometimes been referred to as the 'Secret Rapture'. To add further weight to their Pre-Tribulation Rapture position, they point to the words 'Come up hither', found in the following verse in Revelation chapter four:

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I

will shew thee things which must be hereafter."
(Revelation 4:1)

According to Pre-Tribulation Rapture adherents, because this verse is found at the beginning of the fourth chapter of the Book of Revelation, it is interpreted as meaning that the Church will be raptured before all of the other events which are described between this point, and the final chapter of the Book of Revelation. In other words, it is claimed that the Apostle John is symbolic of the entire Endtime Church; and because he is being told to 'Come up hither', this means that the entire Endtime Church is also being told to 'Come up hither'; but is this really the case? I beg to differ with those who say that it is.

Based upon the preponderance of Scriptural evidence I have shared with you in this lengthy series, I cannot accept that this verse has anything to do with the Rapture of the entire Endtime Church as Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists would have us to believe. The only way that one can possibly come to such an erroneous conclusion, is by totally ignoring the many verses and sequence of events I have already shared with you; and that would be sloppy exegesis. It would not be comparing Scripture with Scripture, or rightly dividing the Word of Truth as Paul described it.

To begin with, I see absolutely no indication here that John is meant to be understood to represent the Endtime Church. As far as I know, there are absolutely no other Scriptures in the entire Bible which support this view. In fact, quite to the contrary, as I clearly point out in such articles as 'Once Upon A Time: A True Story' as well as in 'Revelation's Babylon The Great Whore', from the beginning of its pages, to the very end, the Holy Bible indicates that the Lord's children, His Church, is always represented in the feminine form. Whether we are talking about the ancient Israelites, or the New Testament Church, the Lord uses the very same descriptive terminology. Sometimes the Lord describes her as a rebellious, unfaithful wife who has gone awhoring after other gods, while at others, she is described as a faithful virgin Bride; but the Church is never ever described in the masculine form. Not only that, but when the Lord's Church is discussed, it is normally in the plural form, and not in the singular form, because God has a multiple Bride; just like in the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

It is easy to conclude then, that John cannot represent the Endtime Church as Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists would have us to believe. Read the verse carefully. The Angelic Messenger is simply talking to one man, John; and there is absolutely no mention of the Church, or of the Saints, or of anybody else. Just like a number of other Prophets and holy men of old, one lone man, one Prophet of God, that is, John, is being caught up to Heaven in order to behold his Heavenly visions. Those who insist that this is the Rapture of the Endtime Church are twisting the Scriptures. This verse is describing one man's experience; and they twist it so that it includes the entire Endtime Church. These people are simply grabbing at straws, because in my view, the entire Pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine is built upon a false foundation of nothing but straws; and someday it will be

burned when they see how wrong it really is.

Even if we were to accept this weak argument that John being caught up to Heaven represents the Rapture of the Endtime Church, then we need to apply this same meaning to any other place in the Bible where similar phraseology is used to describe someone being lifted up to Heaven. If we don't do this, then we are not being uniform in our interpretation of the Scriptures. We cannot say that a certain phrase means one thing in one place of Scripture, and then turn around and suggest that it means something entirely different in another. That would be very confusing; and we all know that God is not the author of confusion. His Holy Spirit helps us to understand His Word; it doesn't confuse us further. For example, wherever we see the phrase 'caught up', in order to maintain Scriptural uniformity, we should also assume it is a reference to being raptured up to Heaven; since this is the phrase used by Paul in 1 Thessalonians chapter four to describe the Rapture of the Saints:

"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)

Notice again that this is a pluralistic picture of God's multiple Bride being called up, caught up, raptured up, to Heaven. Now let's take a look at a certain verse found in chapter twelve of the Book of Revelation. Verse five reads:

"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." (Revelation 12:5)

Exactly who the 'she' is in the previous verse, is a matter of speculation. As I explain in my article 'The Woman In The Wilderness And The 144,000', while we can view her as being symbolic of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in a prophetic sense, it is more fitting that she represents the spiritual nation of Israel; that is, the Israel of faith who brought forth the Saviour; of which Mary was indeed a member. Please see the aforementioned article for more details concerning this. The main point to consider here is that this can be none other than Jesus Christ being caught up to God and to His Throne. In other words, this is the Lord sitting down at the Right Hand of His Father, following His Ascension from Earth just prior to the Book of Acts; exactly as was described by both the Apostles Peter and Paul in the following verses:

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."
(Romans 8:34)

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places," (Ephesians 1:20)

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."
(Colossians 3:1)

"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;...But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" (Hebrews 1:3, 13)

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;" (Hebrews 8:1)

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;" (Hebrews 10:12)

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." (1 Peter 3:22)

In light of all of these Scriptures, there should really be no doubt that this man child who is 'caught up unto God, and to his throne', can be none other than Jesus Christ. We have compared Scripture with Scripture, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, and the proper interpretation of them seems quite obvious. Let us take a look at one more example of this phrase 'caught up', as it is used in Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians. In this example, we see Paul discussing a certain man who was caught up to the Third Heaven in order to hear and see marvellous things. Some Bible students have suggested that Paul is actually referring to himself. Due to a lack of strong Scriptural support, I prefer to leave it in the realm of speculation for now:

"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Corinthians 12:2-4)

In all three of the previous examples, I have been quite consistent in my interpretation of the phrase 'caught up'. In fact, no interpretation is really even necessary, because all of those verses speak for themselves. It might interest you to know that these are the only places in the entire New Testament where this phrase 'caught up' is even used. Please note, however, that there is a very big difference in how it is used in each case. As you can see, only one of the three previous examples involves the Rapture of the Lord's Endtime Church, God's Bride, and it is a pluralistic event. In one of the other examples, we have the Son of God singularly ascending to Heaven, as per the Book of Acts; and in the final example, we have a man who temporarily ascends to the

Heavenly Realm, and then apparently returns to Earth. There is no way that Paul could even know this man, or know what the man had experienced, if he hadn't returned. If this man was indeed Paul, then this is even moreso the case.

If we compare these three examples to John's experience, it isn't difficult to understand that it is most similar to the last example. In fact, when I first read Paul's words years ago, I wondered, and still wonder, if perhaps Paul wasn't referring to John; thus suggesting the possibility that John may have had his revelations a few decades earlier than we have been led to believe. Let's be honest. We really don't know, because we weren't there; and it was so long ago. All we have is the word of church historians and Bible scholars. We don't know with one hundred per cent accuracy exactly when John had his revelations, or when he wrote them down. One thing we do know is that some of the books of the Bible were written after the fact, based upon memory and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Perhaps this is the case with the Book of Revelation. Of course, this is only a theory, and I certainly cannot prove it.

The main point I wish to emphasize is this: Considering the similiarity between John's experience, and that of the man in Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, why is it that certain Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists insist that John being called up hither is actually the time of the Rapture? What proof do they have? As I have already shown, they really don't have any, once we really begin to examine the various verses they use to support their wayward doctrine. The only reason they use that verse, is because it just so happens to be in the Book of Revelation, and it is the earliest verse they can find which will appear to add weight to their false doctrine. Let me repeat that the Rapture is always described as being pluralistic in nature, and that the Church is never symbolized by a male figure in the Bible. She is always female, as was ancient Israel.

These are not the only flaws with using Revelation 4:1 as a verse to support the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory. If we adopt the same attitude, and look for the earliest verse in the Book of Revelation where the Rapture might occur, we can very easily use a verse found in the very first chapter of the book. Consider the following verse:

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."
(Revelation 1:7)

We all know that when Jesus returns in the clouds of Heaven, following the three and a half years of Great Tribulation, that is when the Rapture will occur, correct? All we have to do in order to verify that this is so, is to look at a few verses found in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew where the Lord Himself makes it very plain for us to understand:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the

heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:29-31)

Notice the similarities between these two sets of verses. John states 'he cometh with clouds'; and Jesus says 'coming in the clouds of heaven'. John states 'every eye shall see him'; and Jesus says 'they shall see the Son of man'. John states 'all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him'; and Jesus says 'then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn'. Obviously then, Jesus and John are describing the very same events; that is the Second Coming and the Rapture.

Being as John describes these things three chapters before his invitation to 'Come up hither' in chapter four, does this mean that the Rapture occurs in chapter one? I don't believe that it does. Like many writers, John is basically giving a powerful introduction to his book, before he goes into the details and chronological order of the events which will follow. The Rapture can't occur in chapters one or four because the Angel told John to 'Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter'. Please note that my emphasis is on the word 'hereafter'. One of the things which the Angel reveals to John 'which must be hereafter', in other words, after John has been called up to Heaven, is the Rapture itself; and it isn't until seven chapters later! If you doubt my words, please consider the following. There are only two places in the New Testament in which we find the phrase 'Come up hither'. The first one we have already identified. Allow me to share the second one with you:

"And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them." (Revelation 11:12)

As we saw earlier in this series, this is the resurrection and rapture of the two Sackcloth Witnesses, which occurs at the very end of the Last Seven Years, following the three and a half years of Great Tribulation. While John was told to 'Come up hither' on a temporary basis in order to behold his Heavenly Visions, these two witnesses are called up on a permanent basis; because this is the real Rapture! Only one of these can be the real 'Come up hither' of the Rapture; not both; and this one in Revelation chapter eleven is it! You will notice that the two Sackcloth witnesses ascend up to heaven 'in a cloud'; just like the clouds that Jesus and John mentioned in earlier verses. Please notice also that we are told that there is a great voice speaking to them. You may recall from the verses in Thessalonians, that prior to the Saints being caught up to meet the Lord 'in the clouds', they will hear 'the voice of the archangel', and 'the trump of God':

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with

them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

It is the very same voice here in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Revelation, because they are speaking of the very same events. All of the dead in Christ will rise at the same time, followed by the living Saints, exactly as I told you earlier in this series; and this will include the two slain Sackcloth Witnesses. As all of the following verses will reveal, the 'trump of God' mentioned by Paul in the previous verses, is none other than the final Seventh Trump, which will herald the completion of the Mystery of God; that being the Resurrection, Transformation and Rapture of His beloved children at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. That is the Mystery which is revealed in all of the following verses which the unbelieving world refused to accept; that we shall not all sleep forever; we shall arise!:

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

"And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets." (Revelation 10:5-7)

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth." (Revelation 11:15-18)

All of these events clearly occur at the sound of the Last Trump; that is, the Seventh Trumpet of God; there should be no doubt about this whatsoever; thus if we accept that the Rapture of the Saints occurs in Revelation chapter four, we are really saying that the Seventh Trump occurs in chapter four, ahead of all of the events I have described for you in this series. In my opinion, this makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. John is being called up to view these Endtime events which the Angel tells him will occur 'hereafter', yet Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists would have us to believe that they have already all happened since, according to their view, Revelation chapter four is the time of the

Rapture.

Notice how that last set of verses ties together some of the various themes we have discussed throughout this series. We are told 'thy wrath is come', meaning the Lake of Fire for the Beast and the False Prophet, and the destruction of their followers. We are also told that it is 'the time of the dead', in which all of the Prophets and Saints of all time will be raised at the First Resurrection, in order to receive their just reward. The Prophet Daniel wrote of this time when he said:

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

(Daniel 12:2-3)

To complete this series, let us take one more look at the major events of Matthew chapter twenty-four; leaving out the extraneous verses and descriptions. By doing this, we can obtain a very clear, condensed picture of the chronological order of events which lead up to the Seventh Trump, and the completion of the Mystery of God. Please read the following verses slowly and carefully a few times, and you too will see that everything I have shared with you in this series is indeed true. There is no Pre-Tribulation or Mid-Tribulation Rapture. There is only one Rapture which will occur at the end of the Last Seven Years, following the final three and a half years known as the Great Tribulation or Jacob's Trouble:

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place...then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be...Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light...And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven...And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

(Matthew 24:15a, 21, 29a, 30a, 31)

In my view, there is absolutely no way that any honest Truth-seeking person can interpret these verses any other way. They are perfectly clear and can stand on their own, without the need for private interpretation. These verses are clearly talking about the Second Coming of Christ and the Rapture of the Saints, His Bride, at the sound of the Seventh Trump. The Lord clearly tells us that these events will occur 'immediately after the tribulation of those days' and not before; so there can be no Pre-Tribulation or even a Mid-Tribulation Rapture. I believe I have now demonstrated this beyond a shadow of a doubt. There is simply no possible way to twist this verse so that it means immediately before the tribulation of those days. If Jesus said that He will be coming for His children after the three and a half years of Great Tribulation, then that is precisely what He meant.

In conclusion, if you have been led astray by well-meaning but wayward Bible teachers who have tried to convince you of their anti-Scriptural beliefs, I trust that this series will assist you in removing the confusion which has filled your mind and heart. God's Word has spoken clearly. There is no Pre-Tribulation or Mid-Tribulation Rapture. Neither will the Great Tribulation last the full seven years. Neither will the living Saints be changed and resurrected before the dead Old Testament Saints. Please remember that it doesn't matter what I say, or what you say, but rather what God's Holy Word says; and I have done my best to present it to you in a very direct and easily understandable manner for your honest consideration. Won't you please accept it? God bless you!

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