

# - THE RAPTURE -

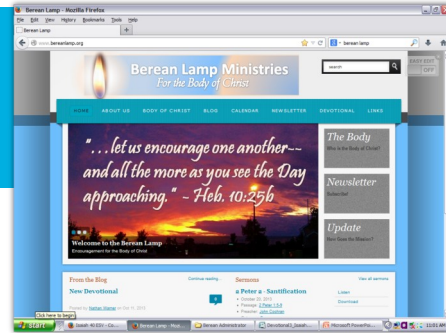
*"Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."*

*(1 Thessalonians 4:17)*



**Berean Lamp Ministries**  
*For the Body of Christ*

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The Berean Lamp Ministry seeks to:

1. Encourage and strengthen the Body of Christ by providing the means for each of its members to share their spiritual gifts with one another, rooted in the Word of God, thereby growing into deeper union with one another and with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
2. Minister to non-believers; be a witness for Christ and a testimony to His Body in the world.

We would appreciate your help in contributing to the content and in spreading the work of this ministry. Thank you, and God bless.

- Pastor Scott Moller

Visit [www.bereanlamp.org/lampstand/](http://www.bereanlamp.org/lampstand/) for an explanation of the cover art.

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## Are You Ready?

By Scott Moller

When I was only a boy, about eight years of age, I heard my first sermon about the Rapture. The pastor kept asking the question that night, “Are you ready?” That night I heard what Jesus had promised in John 14:3: “*And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back and take you to be with Me** that you may be where I am*” (NIV). I learned that Jesus was coming back for Believers to take them to be with Him, but I was not ready for His return because I had not put my faith in Him as my Savior. That very night I asked Jesus Christ to my personal Savior, and I have been looking for the Rapture ever since.

One of the clear Biblical warnings about the Rapture is that it is imminent. It can happen at any time without warning. Therefore one must be prepared and ready for the Rapture before it occurs. Jesus states in Luke 12:40, “***You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.***” There will be no time for preparation during or after the Rapture. It will be too late and you will have missed it. Paul also warns us when he says, “*Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come **like a thief in the night***” (1 Thess. 5:1-2). He adds, “*Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed*” (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

The Lord’s return will be like a thief coming in the night. It will happen in a flash and as quickly as an eye twinkles.

John reminds us to remain faithful as we wait for His coming in 1 John 2:28: “*And now, dear children, **continue in Him**, so that when He appears we may be confident and un-*

*ashamed before Him at His coming.* In addition, John states that the hope of His appearing will cause us to purify ourselves 1 John 3:2-3: “*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. **Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure.***”

Peter warned us that in the last days people would mock the coming of Jesus: “*First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this coming He promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation’*” (2 Peter 3:2-4). It is understandable that the world would scoff at the Rapture of the church but sadly today many who claim to be follows of Christ also scoff or seem bored at the notion. Let us not weary in looking for the return of our Lord. Put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior so that you will be ready. Then continue in Him and purify yourself so that you will be unashamed before Him at His coming.



*"In My FATHER'S house  
are many DWELLING  
PLACES; if it were not so, I  
would have told YOU; for I  
go to PREPARE a place for  
YOU..."*

*...If I go and  
PREPARE a PLACE  
for you, I will COME again  
and RECEIVE you to  
Myself, that WHERE I am,  
there you may be ALSO."*

*(John 14:2-3)*

By Natalie Warner

## The Raptured Bride

By Nathan Warner

God has given us a beautiful context in His Word to help us understand the reality of the Rapture—the “catching away” of the Church to Jesus. This is found in the Bride (or Wife) of Christ. Scripture regularly refers to the Church as Christ’s Bride: *“For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church”* (Eph. 5:29-32 NASB).

From creation, God established the institution of marriage (Genesis 2:24), and He uses the concept of marriage to directly describe the Church’s relationship to Jesus as a reality, not as an imperfect analogy. We don’t understand all the details of implications of this “mystery” as Paul calls it. In many ways, it is like the mystery of marriage to a young man and woman who are preparing to enter into it together – they know about the concept of marriage, but they have yet to experience it.

Looking at the New Testament Jewish wedding ceremony (like the wedding that Jesus participated in at Cana) can help us understand this Scriptural context for the Rapture.

### THE JEWISH MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Every story of “how I met your mother” began with a man seeking a bride. When he found a woman he liked, he would go to his father and say, “I want to marry *so-in-so* who lives in *such-and-such* house.” His father would go to the father of that woman and negotiate to pay the required “bride price” (purchase price) for the bride, paid to her father. This “payment” changed her status and set her free from her responsibility to her family, so

she could be married. After this was agreed, the man and the woman entered into the betrothal agreement that signifies the start of the betrothal period (Kiddushin, which means “period of sanctification”). Every Jewish marriage ceremony was initiated with a “betrothal,” just as Mary was betrothed to Joseph. The man and the woman are now legally husband and wife, but they cannot yet live together or consummate their marriage for very good reasons, as we shall see. Furthermore, the only way to annul the betrothal period was with formal divorce proceedings.

At this point, the bridegroom and the bride would perform “Mikveh” – a ritual immersion in water, symbolizing their cleansing of themselves for each other – their sanctification for their union. After this, the bridegroom must leave his bride, but before he does, he gives his wife a bridal gift or pledge of his love, which will be a reminder to her of him while he is away (this could be a ring, for example). The bridegroom would leave his bride for at least a year during this betrothal period to prepare a home for them to start their life together. Neither the bridegroom nor the bride knew how long this would take.

Even though the bridegroom was working on preparing their home (often additional rooms added onto his father’s house), it wasn’t up to him to decide when it was finished. His father would determine when it was ready and when the bridegroom could leave to get his bride and bring her to her new home.

While her husband was away working on their home during the betrothal period, the bride would put aside the things that she had been doing to learn the things she would need to know as a wife. Another huge task for her to complete while waiting for her husband’s return was the preparation of her wedding garment. She needed to be focused and eager as she had to be ready at all times to leave immediately when her husband appeared (he could show up at any moment without warning). She was to be watchful for her bridegroom’s appearing, for when he came for her, he would precede his arrival with a loud shout or trumpet blast to alert her that he had come for her.

She needed to come out to him as quickly as possible. In this way, she would put on her wedding garment, veil her face, come out of her father's house, and meet her bridegroom outside. He would then take her away to his father's home, where they would enter their chambers for a 7-day honeymoon. Inside this chamber, the bride would remove her veil for the first time, and at the end of the honeymoon, the bride and groom would come out of the chamber. Then the wedding guests would see the bride unveiled and glorious with her husband for the first time. At this point, the wedding feast would commence with all the guests to celebrate the union of the husband and wife.

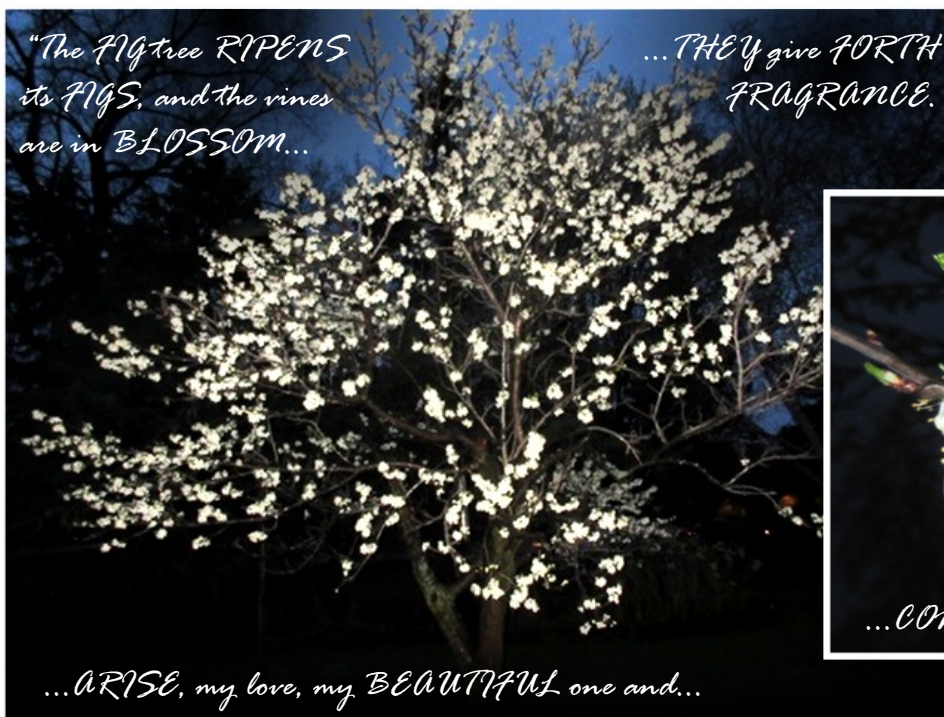
### THE HEAVENLY MARRIAGE CEREMONY

**THE BRIDE PRICE**—Before we became the Church, we were in bondage to the elemental things of the world, enslaved to our false father, satan, through sin and death. God in His love and mercy sent His Son to pay the price for the Church's freedom, so that we could become the Bride of Christ. This is why when the Church eagerly looks for the Rap-

ture, we are "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:13-14). The price God paid for the Church was Jesus' very life. Paul explained this to the Elders of the Church: "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). John confirmed this when he saw a vision in Heaven where "they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation'" (Revelation 14:3). Therefore, we are told, "You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20) during your time waiting for Christ's return – the Church's betrothal period: our period of sanctification.

**THE BETROTHAL PERIOD** (called Kid-

dushin—Literally "sanctification")—It is important to note that "sanctification" means "to be set apart" for something. In a betrothal, the man and



By Betty Harstad

woman were setting themselves apart for one another, “cleansing” themselves from all other desires, purposes, plans, and interests. They would then remain faithful to one another throughout the betrothal (sanctification) period before they would be married. The Church is betrothed to Christ as Paul described, “*For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin*” (2 Corinthians 11:2). Just as this was symbolically initiated through the “Mikveh” (a ceremonial immersion in water, symbolizing the initiation of sanctification – cleansing the body to be set apart for one another), Jesus was baptized for us, and we are to be baptized for Him, as a symbol of our new life in Him.

Baptism is a symbol of our being sanctified for Jesus – for Believers, sanctification is a process that continues throughout our lives here on earth. Jesus said concerning His disciples, “*For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth*” (John 17:19). Paul, therefore, encouraged us with this message: “*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass*” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). Paul also commands: “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless*” (Ephesians 5:25-27). So, we are not sanctifying ourselves, but we are being sanctified by the Word of God and by His Spirit in us: “*You were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God*” (1 Corinthians 6:11b).

**BRIDEGROOM’S PLEDGE**—Just as a bridegroom would give his bride a pledge to be a comfort and reminder of his love for her

while he was away preparing a place for them, so “*He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge*” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). “*In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory*” (Ephesians 1:13-14). Just as the pledge would bring to the bride’s remembrance all the promises and words that the bridegroom had told her, Jesus told us that “*the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you*” (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit is Christ’s pledge to us that we belong to Him—a living pledge in us—God’s own Spirit. Thus, in longing desire for Jesus’ return, “*the Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come’*” (Revelation 22:17a) until He appears!

**THE BRIDEGROOM LEAVES**—In the same way that a bridegroom had to leave his bride to go away and prepare a place for them in his father’s house, so Jesus told us, “*In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also*” (John 14:2-3). Here we have not only the promise that He is preparing a place for us, but that He is returning for us to take us to be with Him in the Rapture and the Resurrection. But as a bridegroom did not know when his father would decide that things were ready for him to leave to retrieve his bride, so Jesus told us, “*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone*” (Matthew 24:36).

**THE BRIDE WATCHES FOR HIS RETURN**—For the young bride, her sanctification period can be a challenging time while she waits for her bridegroom to return for her. She

must endure distractions and temptations, just as she must endure mockery and abuse in her father's house or her hometown, as these things try to prevent her dedication to be prepared and watching for her husband. She always keeps her eyes on the horizon in the direction her husband has gone and from which he will come back for her.

In the same way, every generation of the Church must not tire of looking and longing for the return of Jesus Christ. We are so easily distracted, tempted, and abused by the world we were born into. It still acts like it has power over us and it takes advantage of us, but we have been bought from it with a price. Our abusive "father's household" (the world ruled by satan) no longer has true power over us.

We must watch for our Bridegroom's return! *"Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming"* (Matthew 24:42), and *"watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap"* (Luke 21:34). *"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"* (Mark 14:38).

THE BRIDEGROOM RETURNS FOR HIS BRIDE (called nuptials or "Nisuin"—Literally "elevation")—*"The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away"* (Song of Solomon 2:13). When the bridegroom's father was satisfied that all was prepared properly, then came the time for the bridegroom to leave his father's house to retrieve his bride. Just as the bridegroom would make a commotion with shouts to alert the bride that he was ready to take her away, so *"the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words"* (1 Thess. 4:16-18). Thus, the Church will ALWAYS be with the Lord from that moment on. In the same way, the earthly bridegroom would take his bride, veiled in her wedding garment, back to his father's house where they would enter their closed chambers and consummate their marriage.

THE SEVEN DAY "HONEYMOON"—*"Draw me after you; let us run. The king has brought me into his chambers. [ Others ] We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine; rightly do they love you"* (Song of Solomon 1:4). In the human example, as soon as the bride and bridegroom returned to his father's house, they were hidden from the world in their chamber for 7 days, enjoying their union, while their friends and guests celebrated for them outside. This could



By Elliot Madsen

very well correspond to the 7-year Tribulation period on earth while the Church is “hidden” in Heaven with Christ, as John saw in his vision: *“I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride [wife] has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure’ – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints”* (Rev. 19:6-8).

**EXITING THE MARRIAGE CHAMBERS FOR THE MARRIAGE FEAST**—After their honeymoon, the bridegroom would emerge with his bride for the marriage feast with all the guests. This was the first time that the guests saw husband and wife together, and the bride was seen unveiled in all her beauty beside her husband. In the same way, Paul cheers us with these words: *“When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory”* (Col. 3:4). The Church will no longer be veiled but will be seen sharing the glory of her Lord and Savior forever! *“Then he said to me, ‘Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb’”* (Rev. 19:9). This heavenly marriage feast will occur before Jesus returns to earth to end the 7-year Tribulation period that has been occurring in the world while Jesus has been with His Church in Heaven.

**MARRIED LIFE**—After this, the new husband and wife begin life together as one. In similar fashion, the Church is joined to the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ. He is a conquering King, and He will set out to conquer the earth. The Church accompanies Jesus in His invasion of earth to end the Tribulation and initiate His Millennial reign: *“And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following Him on white horses”* (Rev. 19:14), but like a young queen, the Church is not there to fight for her King in battle – rather, she is there to witness her

King’s victory singlehandedly, for *“from His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords”* (Rev. 19:15-16). From this moment on, the Church will reign with Jesus on the earth, for Jesus has promised, *“He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father”* (Rev. 2:26-27).

**YOU ARE THE BRIDE TODAY**—In this world today, we are enduring the betrothal period, when we are away from our Lord. Yet, we have Jesus’ Holy Spirit as His pledge to us that He will return to take us to Himself. In this world, we are tempted and treated badly by Christ’s enemies, even in our own households because He has made us His Bride and we have taken His name: *“You will be hated by all for My name’s sake”* (Matt. 10:22a).

But, *“since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God”* (2 Peter 3:11-12a). Therefore, *“walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory”* (1 Thess. 2:12).

In this present time, we are to be entirely absorbed with eagerness for Jesus’ return. Yes, at all times to Jesus, *“the Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come’”* (Revelation 22:17a)! Our eyes are to be fixed in the direction that our Bridegroom has gone, eagerly waiting for His return for us. Remember His precious promise: *“Surely I am coming soon”* (Rev. 22:20a). May the precious words, *“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus”* (Rev. 22:20b) be always whispered in our hearts and on our lips. Jesus has promised to take us to Himself. We will never be parted from Him again, and we will be with Him forever, through all Eternity. Even so, Amen.

## Hope That Patiently Endures

By Ginny Larsen

*"Waiting for our **blessed hope**, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."*

(Titus 2:13 ESV)

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*

(1 Peter 1:3)

*"Because thou hast kept the **word of My patience**, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."*

(Revelation 3:10-11 KJV)

In a day when evil abounds and the hearts of men are failing them for fear, the Christian is drawn all the more to see a hope beyond anything this world or this temporal life can offer. Because of our "blessed hope," we learn

to endure patiently, just as Jesus Himself endured patiently *"for the joy set before Him"* (Hebrews 12:2). The Rapture of the Church is such a precious promise to those who are heaven-bound. We know we are citizens of heaven, not this earth, though we walk here now as pilgrims. The more the days grow hostile against the Lord and against those who love Him the more we feel like aliens in a weary land, seeking our home country, longingly, eagerly, fighting the weariness of this life. It's easy to faint. It's easy to lose hope. But our eyes must be on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith: *"And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint"* (Luke 18:1).

The Rapture of the Church produces that hope, that power and strength in our inner being that sustains us. It produces patient endurance and longsuffering toward those we must deal with. It reminds us that He has not forsaken us and just left us into the hands of evil men. It renews our energy when we become weary in well doing. It gives us the "want-to" to keep on "keeping on" for Christ. It invigorates our love for Christ and for one another. It reminds us when our eyes drift to the things happening around us that this has all been foretold by our Lord and that because He has all in

His hands, we can patiently endure, knowing He will fulfill all. We have a "living hope" —one that will never perish or fade away, kept in heaven for us. We have a sure Word of promise. We have a joy that we can rejoice in even now as we go through various trials of our faith.



*"The SPIRIT and the BRIDE say, 'COME.'"*  
(Revelation 22:17a)

By Elliot Madsen



Patience—it is a word we don't really like, because we know patience means waiting, enduring, suffering—all the things that we wish would hurry up and end. Patience is of God and is possible because of His promise and His presence in us. Patience, according to Vine's NT:

1. hupomene (G5281), lit., “**an abiding under**” (hupo, “under,” meno, “to abide”) ...and, “In 2 Thess. 3:5, the phrase ‘the patience of Christ,’ RV, is possible of three interpretations, (a) the patient waiting for Christ, so KJV paraphrases the words, (b) that they might be patient in their sufferings as Christ was in His, see Heb. 12:2, (c) that since Christ is ‘expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet,’ Heb. 10:13, so they might be patient also in their hopes of His triumph and their deliverance. While a too rigid exegesis is to be avoided it may, perhaps, be permissible to paraphrase: ‘the Lord teach and enable you to love as God loves, and to be patient as Christ is patient.’”

If we had no hope, there could be no patience to endure but what we could find of life in this world. Those whose hearts are set on some sort of happiness or fulfillment in this world will be disappointed, and sadly many Christians today are hearing this kind of message of fulfillment in this life, rather than seeing what the Lord has called us to. There is confusion and life becomes a choice between the way of the world and the walk He is calling us to in holiness and love for God. Loving God and obeying His Word comes more and more in contrast to what we desire of this world. Those who are of this world and Christian in name only will compromise with the world and take its side, joining the apostate church which is hostile to the true Jesus, rather than a partner in Christ's sufferings and counted with Him. But what keeps us, what sustains us, what encourages us on in the patience that “remains under” the persecution, the hatred, the enduring evil, is that hope of His return, that promise of our final redemption, knowing that soon this corruption will put

on incorruption, that we will be like Him and with Him where He is forever more. And we know that could be any day, at any moment.

We are to encourage one another with this hope. *“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

How much we lose then, if we do not understand this Rapture of the Church that the Lord fore-told and promised. His assurance of it is a gift given to strengthen, encourage, enliven, sustain, empower, and drive us on until that day. He gives us all we need to live Godly lives in Christ Jesus. We miss out, sadly then, if we do not have our hope in the right place and if we do not see this great thing He has given us. *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; **that where I am, there ye may be also**”* (John 14:1-3).

This is His purpose for His church - that where He is we may be also! And it is His very Spirit He has given to us as a down payment or earnest, sealing us unto that day, giving us the assurance of it. *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory”* (Eph. 1:13-14).

Because of that assurance our hearts are filled with the love and joy that enables us to live for Him with energy and steadfastness as we wait for His coming. May the Lord fill our hearts daily with the strength and hope of His promise as we patiently endure.

## The Pre-Tribulation Rapture

By Jesse Larsen

One argument against the Rapture is that it is a myth, simply because the word “Rapture” is not found in the Bible. But if you really think carefully about what I am going to say next, then you should see that is one of the silliest arguments against the Rapture that someone could possibly use. The word “Rapture” is simply a word that many Christians use to describe the event in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 when the saints will be “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air.

The word “Trinity” is also not found in the Bible, but that does not do away with the words of 1 John 5:7. In the same way, the word “Rapture” is not found in the Bible, but that does not do away with the words of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. We can call it the “Rapture,” we can call it being “caught up,” or we can call it “the Resurrection,” but it makes no difference because the Scriptures are still saying the same thing whether we use the word Rapture or not, and that is what is important.

### Two Distinct Events?

Now let us examine the Bible to find out whether or not the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ are two distinct events. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 explains that the saints will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. So the Lord does not return to earth during that event, but instead we meet Him “in the air.” According to Zechariah 14:1-5, there is also a time when He does return to earth, because verse 4 says, *“in that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives.”* Furthermore, verse 5 mentions that He will come with “all the saints.” So during the Rapture the saints will meet the Lord “in the air,” but during the Second Coming He will return to earth with “all the saints.”

To further clarify these two distinct events, Matthew 24:37-42 clearly indicates that people will be going about business as usual while

some are taken and others are left, not like the coming in Zechariah 14:1-2 in which all the nations will be gathered together to battle against Jerusalem.

If you have read through Revelation then you may already know that there will be many plagues on the earth during the Tribulation period, and things will get worse as time goes by. At one point these plagues will become so great that man will blaspheme God who has power over these plagues (See Revelation 16:8-9). But the Rapture obviously comes at a time when the world is not expecting God’s judgment since they will be going about business as usual.

According to Matthew 24:29-30, the Second Coming happens immediately after this Tribulation period. I highly doubt that people will be *“marrying and giving in marriage”* (Matthew 24:37-39) during the time of such great tribulation, just before Christ returns to earth for the battle at Armageddon. This is revealed very clearly through Revelation 16:3-21. In Matthew 24:21, Jesus referred to this period as a time of *“great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world ...nor ever shall be.”* So people definitely won’t be going about business as usual during this time, as they will be before the Rapture, and as they were in the days of Noah, just before the flood. With all due respect to those who hold to the post-Tribulation Rapture view, many of them don’t seem to grasp just how bad things will get during the Tribulation period.

### “A Thief in the Night”

Jesus warned us to be ready for a very important reason: He is coming at an hour we do not expect as He mentioned in Matthew 24:44. The Believers would definitely be expecting the Second Coming after seeing the events of the Tribulation period take place, so the only time period when we would not be expecting Jesus to come would have to be before the Tribulation period.

In Jesus’ letter to the church in Sardis, He said, *“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are*

dead” (Revelation 3:1). Then when He was speaking to the same church He said, “If you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you” (Revelation 3:3). So those who are “dead” (spiritually) as Jesus referred to that Church will be the ones to whom He will come as a thief.

Now put this together with Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4. Through these Scriptures it also becomes clear that Jesus will come as a thief upon those who have not been watchful. On the other hand, when Jesus was speaking to the church in Philadelphia He said, “Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth” (Revelation 3:10 KJV).

### “God Did Not Appoint Us to Wrath”

Through that verse it becomes clear that this “hour of temptation” was meant to “try them that dwell on the earth,” and that those who have kept the word of the Lord’s patience will be kept from this hour, because “God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,” as it is said in 1 Thessalonians 5:9. Those who have not obtained this salvation can only be the ones who will face the wrath that is to come in the Tribulation period. It is a much-needed process, and God’s final attempt to get the lost to respond.

### No Time to Waste

In Matthew 24:48-51, Jesus told about the portion of the servant who has a “my master is delaying his coming” attitude. Those who are not watching, and those who are too wrapped up in the cares and the pleasures of this life (who are not born-again), will most likely be left in the Tribulation period. Not that we have to merit our salvation (See Ephesians 2:8-9), but it is likely that they have not obtained salvation in the first place if the things of this world are more important to them than the Lord – Romans 8:5-9: “For those who live ac-

*cording to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”*

If “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10), then we do not obey Him to merit His favor, but we obey Him because we love Him, and because we are grateful for the salvation which He has already given us.

Once again, it is clear that the Believers would obviously be expecting the Second Coming after they have witnessed the events of the Tribulation period, but if one was to believe that Jesus could return at any moment, then there would be no time to indulge in sin, and no time to waste in witnessing to the lost. There is **absolutely no time to waste whatsoever for those who believe that our Lord could return at any moment.** So, contrary to what you may have heard from those opposed to the pre-Trib Rapture view, this is a doctrine that has a purifying and motivating effect, which is why 1 John 3:2-3 says, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And **everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**”

### “Blessed Hope”

The Rapture is the “blessed hope” which Paul mentioned in Titus 2:13. The reason I find it important to defend the pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine is because of the fact that it has a purifying and motivating effect on our lives. Revelation makes it very clear that many of the Christians will be killed during the Tribulation period (See Revelation 20:4), and

that no one may buy or sell unless they have the mark of the beast (See Revelation 13:16-17). Obviously, there will be very few Christians left on the earth when Christ returns for the battle of Armageddon. During this time Christians will obviously have a small chance of surviving until the Second Coming. So this interpretation does not go together very well with the "blessed hope" which Paul was speaking of in Titus 2:13.

In Dave Hunt's newsletter titled *Pre or Post-Trib Rapture?*, he made the same point concerning that verse when he wrote, "It makes no sense to suggest that if you can secretly eat out of enough garbage pails to avoid starvation and still keep one step ahead of the Antichrist's world police death squads, 'Blessed hope! You'll be raptured at Armageddon!'" So this "blessed hope" which Paul referred to must be the Rapture of the Church before the Tribulation period, although there will indeed be Tribulation saints after the Rapture.

### Conclusion

God does not demand that we must be Bible scholars in order to obtain salvation, but I still feel that the pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine is a very important topic which needs to be dis-

cussed, because we have other doctrines concerning Christ's return which have been causing confusion in the church.

By Ginny Larsen



*"When  
CHRIST  
who is  
your LIFE  
appears,  
then you  
ALSO will  
appear with  
HIM in glory."  
(Colossians 3:4)*

By Elliot Madsen

## A Scriptural Primer: THE RAPTURE

The Rapture has been a much-debated concept throughout Church history. What is it exactly? When does it happen? Who does it happen to? Why does it happen? There are also many who dismiss the teaching because the word “rapture” does not appear in Scripture; however, it is a Latin translation of the phrase, “caught away,” which Paul uses to describe our meeting Christ in the air in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18. Thus the phrase that the word “rapture” refers to is in the Scriptures.

Those Believers who agree that there is a Rapture event are often divided into three main camps: pre-Tribulation, mid-Tribulation, and post-Tribulation, depending on whether they believe the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation, sometime during the Tribulation, or at the end of the Tribulation.

Let’s look at the Scriptural evidence for the Rapture in its context and also see why there is a great deal of evidence to support the pre-Tribulation view.

### AT LEAST TWO BELIEVERS HAVE BEEN RAPTURED BEFORE

We know from the Scriptures that at least two people have been “caught up” bodily to be with the Lord. The first was Enoch: *“When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. **Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him**”* (Genesis 5:21-24 ESV).

*“By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. And without faith it is impossible*

*to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him”* (Hebrews 11:5-6). Enoch’s body could not be found and he was removed from this life in such a way that people understood he didn’t simply die un-found in the wilderness. He was likely “raptured” in the presence of witnesses.

The second person to be “caught up” was Elijah: *“Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal...Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.’ And Elisha said, ‘Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.’ And he said, ‘You have asked a hard thing; yet, **if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so.**’ And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it and he cried, ‘My father, my father! The chariots of*



*Israel and its horsemen!’ And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. And **he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him** and went back and stood on the bank of the*

*Jordan*" (2 Kings 2:1; 9-13). We cannot tell for sure if what Elisha saw would have been visible to other people or if he was seeing things spiritually, since Elijah told him he might not see his "rapture." Also, Elijah's cloak falling from him as he went up is perhaps where some people get the idea that Believers will leave their garments behind when the Church is raptured. Furthermore, Elijah's "whirlwind" and "chariot" suggests a rapid and dramatic ascent to the Lord.

These "raptures" give us a picture of what *the* Rapture of the Church may be like. Whether or not unbelievers see the Church being raptured is up for debate, but their mysterious and unexplained absence will surely be witnessed as it was with Enoch and Elijah.

#### THE JEWISH VIEW OF ONE RESURRECTION

For all intents and purposes, the Jewish people only looked for one resurrection and did not seem to know about the Rapture: *"Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead"* (Isaiah 26:19). *"At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt"* (Daniel 12:1-2). Speaking to Jesus of her dead brother Lazarus, *"Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day'"* (John 11:24).

We can see here that just as the prophecies concerning the Messiah were "compressed" and the Jews overlooked His suffering and did not see the Church Age, so their knowledge of the Resurrections and the Rapture seems to have been compressed into one Resurrection

"on the last day" with the great Judgment. Jesus sometimes referred to this compressed



view: *"Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment"* (John 5:28-29). But we know from His additional revelation to His apostles that there is substantial evidence for at least three different "resurrections."

#### THE PRE-TRIBULATION RESURRECTION AND RAPTURE

There is a strong testimony of Scriptural passages supporting the idea that the Church is "taken out" of the world in the first resurrection before God's wrath is revealed in judgment upon the earth.

*"So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him"* (Hebrews 9:28). In this way, Jesus comforted His disciples as He was leaving them: *"In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also"* (John 14:3). Jesus ascended into Heaven from the Mount of Olives after His resurrection. He has gone to

prepare a place for His Bride, the Church in His Father's House. We know that the Day of the Lord (or the Second Coming) is when Jesus returns to earth to conquer it and establish His Millennial Kingdom at Jerusalem where He will rule. If the gathering of the Church to Jesus was to occur on the Day of the Lord, there would be no reason for rooms to be prepared in the Father's House, because as Jesus was coming to earth set up His Millennial Kingdom, we would remain with Him. It makes far more sense that the Church will be removed BEFORE the Day of the Lord's return to conquer the earth. In this way, the Church will celebrate the marriage ceremony of the Lamb and the marriage supper in Heaven during the Tribulation and before the Day of the Lord, when the Church will accompany Jesus back to earth to establish the Millennial Kingdom.

This is what we can see in Revelation, for after spiritual Babylon is judged (but before Jesus returns to earth to conquer the Beast at Armageddon) we see this scene in Heaven: *"Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure'—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are the true words of God.' ...Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a name written that no one knows but Himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following Him on white horses.*

*From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords"* (Revelation 19:6-16). Furthermore, the armies of Heaven coming WITH Jesus are arrayed in fine linen, just as the Bride is described. The armies of Heaven will do no battle but will be present to see Jesus' victory over His enemies by the breath of His mouth.

Paul explained the order of things: *"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, **then at His coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death**"* (1 Corinthians 15:20-26). The destruction of His enemies in wrath and judgment comes after the Church is gathered together to Jesus.

This makes sense, for the Tribulation is a time of God's wrath being poured out upon the rebellious world, and it makes little sense for the Church to suffer under God's open wrath upon the entire earth. As Paul pointed out: *"For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, **and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come**"* (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). In this way, Jesus promised the church at Philadelphia, *"Because you have kept My word about patient endurance, **I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth**"* (Revelation 3:10).

Paul explains further: “Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘There is peace and security,’ then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. **For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with Him**” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-10).

“Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God” (Romans 5:9). This wrath is ultimately eternal judgment, but the Tribulation is God’s “all out” judgment of earth through natural means. Will we suffer under the wrath of God? Is not God’s wrath reserved for His enemies? “*The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries and keeps wrath for His enemies*” (Nahum 1:2).

Jesus delivers us from the wrath that is to come upon the earth during the Tribulation, and when He returns to earth in the Day of the Lord to establish His Millennial Kingdom, the Church will appear with Him in His glory: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **When Christ who is**

***your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory***” (Colossians 3:1-4).

Paul gives us one of the clearest pictures of the Rapture: “For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a



The Rapture

cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18). The Rapture will be instantaneous: “Behold! I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

It is also bears mentioning that the “fig tree” frequently refers to Israel in prophecy. In this manner, Jesus told His disciples that the end would be near at hand when the fig tree (Israel) establishes itself: *“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that He is near, at the very gates”* (Matthew 24:32-33). When *“the fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away”* (Song of Solomon 2:13).

Furthermore, Believers have the Holy Spirit in them as a pledge of Christ’ return. Paul states that the Holy Spirit restrains the Antichrist from appearing before his time. But when the Spirit is removed, the Antichrist will be revealed. Surely, we will be removed with the Spirit (in the Rapture) and not separated from the very pledge Christ has given us that He will return for us: *“Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only He who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of His mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of His coming”* (2 Thessalonians 2:1-8).

Will we not be hidden from the day of the Lord’s anger? *“Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation, before the decree takes effect—before the day passes away like chaff—before there comes upon you the burning anger of the Lord, before there comes upon you the day of the anger of the Lord. Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do His just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord”* (Zephaniah 2:1-3). The Rapture is the “catching away” or the hiding of the saints on the day of the anger of the Lord. Just as Enoch “was not” and “was not found” and Elisha saw Elijah “no more,” so the Church will be hidden from the world during the Tribulation.

#### OLD TESTAMENT FORESHADOWING OF THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE

The story of Noah has always been a picture of the Rapture, for before God’s wrath came upon the earth, He “hid” Noah in the ark and shut Him in. *“Then the LORD said to Noah, ‘Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I*



The Flood

*have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation...For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.’ And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded*

him...In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature. They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. **And the LORD shut him in [shut the door].** The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters" (Genesis 7:1-18). God "did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Peter 2:5). Noah preached for hundreds of years and everyone was free to enter God's salvation, but just before the destruction came, God shut Noah and his family into His salvation, while shutting the world out of His salvation. After this, there were at least forty days of "tribulation" upon the earth before the waters prevailed and the struggle of man against God ended with their utter destruction.

Jesus warned that the world would suffer a similar fate in the last days – the Church (represented by Noah) would find salvation from the impending doom, but the world would perish in destruction: "For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so

will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:37-39).

The Church is very much like Noah: "By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith" (Hebrews 11:7). We too have been warned of events as yet unseen, and by our faith in Christ, the world is condemned to Tribulation and destruction.

The story of Lot is also a foreshadowing of the Rapture, for "if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes [God] condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if He rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that



Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment" (2 Peter 2:6-9). Here, Peter is comparing the Church to Lot, who was rescued from a doomed city and taken out of the city before God's wrath fell upon it. In the same way, the Church will be removed from the world before God's wrath is poured out upon it.

## AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST (A PRE-TRIBULATION PERSPECTIVE)

In speaking about our relationship to the world, David told God, *“We are sojourners before You, and tenants, as all our fathers were; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope [abiding, prospect]”* (1 Chronicles 29:15) in the world. A sojourner is someone who is living in a foreign land temporarily—they are aliens (belonging to another nation) but are living side-by-side with the citizens of the land: *“By faith [Abraham] lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land[...], for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God[...], having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them”* (Hebrews 11:9a-16). As people of Faith, Believers are no longer citizens belonging to the world but are aliens to it, for we have renounced it for loyalty to King Jesus. Therefore, you *“are no longer strangers and aliens [to the Kingdom of Heaven], but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household”* (Ephesians 2:19).

But how are we citizens of Heaven, when we are not physically living in the Kingdom of Heaven? Because, *“we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God”* (2 Corinthians 5:20). An ambassador is a citizen of his country sent by his government to live in a foreign land as a representative, serving the interests of his homeland, *peaceably* appealing reconciliation: “don’t risk the wrath of my king.” While living in the foreign land, he is respectful of the customs and laws, unless they require him to do things that harm his king. Ambassadors are

only recalled to their homeland when war is declared, because the time for peaceful appeal has ended—violence now decides the dispute.

In like manner, the Believer remains an ambassador for the Kingdom of Heaven in the world, so long as the “cold war” of the Church-age continues. A “cold war” is a period of hostility between two kingdoms, but as neither one is prepared yet to go to full war, they maintain their embassies and seek to peacefully (yet forcefully) appeal for their interests. The Church-age “cold war” will end when God declares war on the world (the Great Tribulation), pouring out His wrath on the *“god of this world”* (2 Corinthians 4:4) and *“all the kingdoms of the world”* (Matthew 4:8b). **In this moment God will recall all His ambassadors to Him, “catching” us away (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) because our mission in the world is suspended until we return with Jesus when He physically invades and conquers the world.** Then He will give us *“authority over the nations”* (Revelation 2:26b). Until this time, we are to be faithful citizens and loyal ambassadors of the Kingdom of Heaven while we live and work in the world, rejecting its attempts to distract and tempt us to adopt its ways and culture.

## THE TRIBULATION

The Tribulation is a time of man’s self-destructive desolation of earth and God’s wrath poured out in judgment upon the rebellious world. Just as some Germans worked against the Nazi government during WWII, some people will come to serve Jesus during the Tribulation and will be martyred for their faith. These Believers will also be resurrected at the end of the Tribulation.

## END OF TRIBULATION, THE GATHERING OF ISRAEL, AND THE MILLENNIAL RESURRECTION

Much of the Scriptures speaking about the Tribulation and the end of the Tribulation refer to Israel and use the word “elect” to describe

them. *“And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short”* (Matthew 24:22). God must cut short the Tribulation or Israel would be utterly destroyed. *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”* (Matthew 24:29-31). Surely, this is not referring to the Rapture of the Church, but to Israel’s deliverance as in the prophecy of Zechariah: *“And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on Me, on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Haddad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo”* (Zechariah 12:9-11).

We see that the people who believed in Jesus during the Tribulation of earth are also resurrected: *“Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection”* (Revelation 20:4-5).

## END OF THE MILLENNIAL REIGN, THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT, AND THE FINAL RESURRECTION

Yet another resurrection will occur at the end of Christ’s Millennial Kingdom when Satan is cast into the lake of fire, *“then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. From His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done”* (Revelation 20:11-12). These will be the non-believing dead from all history as well as the Tribulation survivors and Israelites that died during Christ’s Millennial reign.

## CONCLUSION

While there is some uncertainty in the interpretation of Scripture concerning the Rapture, there is none in regards to Jesus’ promise that He is coming back for His Church to gather to Himself those who have died and those who are alive. Believers will never again be parted from Jesus for all eternity. This is the promise we have from God Himself, and it is our hope in this life. *“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain”* (Hebrews 6:19). Therefore, Paul says, *“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry”* (2 Timothy 4:1-5). Even so, Amen.



## The Hope of the Rapture

(Based upon 1 Corinthians 15:51–53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17)

The Rapture of the Church will come at long last,  
Beginning with a loud-sounding trumpet blast.  
The LORD will descend from heaven with a shout,  
And an archangel's voice will suddenly cry out.

It's the LORD coming back for those who believe Him,  
And faithful hearts will be glad to receive Him.  
His purpose, to deliver from great tribulation.  
Our job is to be ready with great expectation.

The dead will rise first, and the rest won't die.  
He will glorify our bodies in the twinkling of an eye.  
And, with graves standing empty, as if never used,  
The world we leave behind will be certainly confused.

Maybe some will write this off as an alien attack,  
While others bid, "Good riddance! Now, don't come back!"  
But, with eyes fixed above us, we simply won't care.  
We'll be focused on Jesus so to meet Him in the air.

With senses somewhat heightened, our eyes and ears keen,  
We'll expect to see things no one else has ever seen.  
But nerves will likely tingle and stand at attention,  
When we pass from this world to a brand new dimension.

Escaping earthly judgment to live with God above,  
We will dwell in the presence of perfect peace and love.  
We will sing with the angels and commune with the LORD—  
An existence so awesome we will never be bored.

We will come back to earth when the timing is right,  
Clothed in fine linen that is washed clean and white.  
We'll be coming back with Jesus to rule and reign,  
But we'll never know death or sorrow again.

By Jane Titrud

## What Do I Earnestly Desire?

By Lynn Warner

The following verses outline who is involved in the Rapture – the Lord, the Archangel, and those who are “in Christ.” The verses describe the Rapture as a “catching away” to meet the Lord in the air. And the verses explain that God has ordained the Rapture to comfort and strengthen us, because we are not appointed to wrath but to always be with the Lord. These Scriptures are found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11.

*“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 KJV).

*“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do”* (1 Thessalonians 5:8-11).

More details are found in other Scriptures, like 2 Corinthians 5. Here, we find that parallels can be found between being born again in the Spirit, dying to the flesh (the old nature), being made alive in Christ, and departing from this earthly life to our Heavenly life, whether by physical death or rapture.

In 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, we read, *“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. Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”*

So, in 2 Corinthians 5, we read that our earthly house will be dissolved, and we will be clothed upon with our heavenly house. We are to earnestly desire this heavenly house, to groan for it so that we will not be found naked. We are burdened that mortality may be swallowed up by life. We won’t be found naked, or unforgiven, but clothed by His salvation. We have been given the earnestness of the Spirit and are confident in our salvation. While we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord, but our confidence is that when we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord. The exciting part of this message to me is this: we are not only confident, but we are willing to be absent from the body, so we can be present with the Lord. In Philippians 1:8, Paul states, *“for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* Perhaps Paul felt a sense of duty to the Philippians—that his work was unfinished, because he also states, *“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you”* (Philippians 1:23-24). This is a question we can ask ourselves, whether we depart to be with the Lord by death or by rapture. Are we in a strait between two things? What do we earnestly desire? Are we confident and willing to be with the Lord? Or are we confident and willing to abide in the flesh because of duty to others?

We see from the Scriptures that both the Rapture and death involve departing from this earthly life to our Heavenly life. Either way, we will always be with the Lord, because we are not appointed to God’s wrath (to be without God). One difference between the two is

that in the Rapture, we enter resurrection life immediately, and we are clothed upon with resurrected bodies. But if we depart this earthly life by death, we will be with the Lord, and we also will be the first to be changed in the Rapture when we receive our resurrected bodies before *“those who are alive and remain”* (1 Thessalonians 4:17a).

Finally, we see in 2 Corinthians 5 that the love of Christ constrains us. Jesus loved us, died for us, rose again, and is alive. All of us are dead. But He gives us new life through the Spirit, if we are born again. If we have this new life, we should not live to ourselves but to Him. 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 describes this and shows us that we are new creatures: *“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

We are to die to our old nature, to “the flesh,” and we are to live in Christ. Ephesians 2:10 states, *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* This is a picture of our Salvation, a foretaste of our eternal destiny of being free from sin and death, found “in Christ,” eternally clothed upon with His love, forgiveness, and salvation. We are a “new creature.” And we are to ear-

nestly desire these things, and to comfort and build up each other; for we are not destined for wrath, but for life.



*“Then WE who are ALIVE, who are left, will be CAUGHT up together with them in the clouds to meet the LORD in the air, and so we will ALWAYS be with the Lord.”*  
(1 Thessalonians 4:17)

By Natalie Warner

## July/August Newsletter Theme— GOOD WORKS

**Submission Deadline: July 24**

**Publish Date: August 2**

### Good Works...

- What are good works?
- Why are we called to do good works?
- Are we saved by good works?
- What is the relationship between grace and works?

### Verses on Good Works (from the ESV version)

**Ephesians 2:8-10** — *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*

**Matthew 5:16** — *“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*

**Hebrews 10:24-25** — *“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

**Titus 2:13-14** — *“Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.”*

**James 2:14-18** — *“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”*

**Further Out—Sep/Oct 2016: CHILD OF GOD**