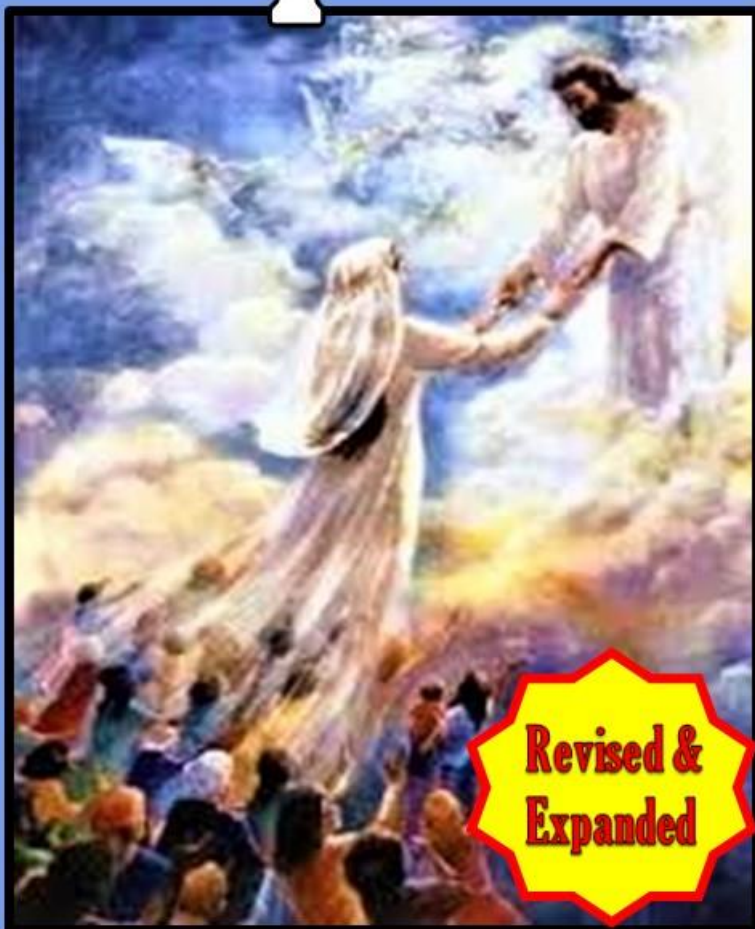


The Rapture



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The Rapture

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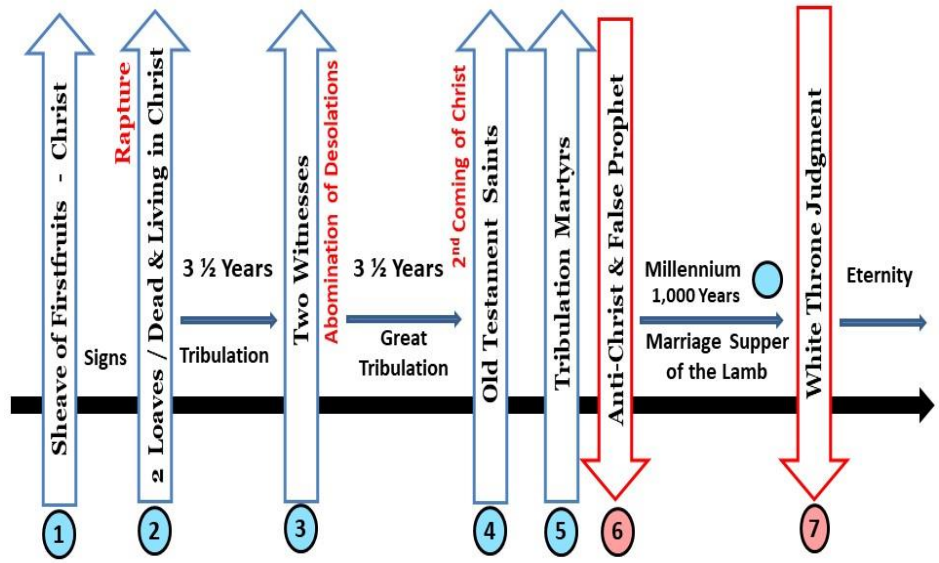
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Order of Resurrections – Laws of the Harvest
 (1 Corinthians 15:23) (Leviticus 23)



● = 1st Resurrection - Judgment Seat of Christ - All Saints - (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Harvest: sheave of firstfruits, 2 wave loaves, corners, gleanings, harvest

● = 2nd Death - Great White Throne - All Sinners (Revelation 20:5)

The Rapture

Intro to a Mystery

Fifty days after the crucifixion of Christ, the church was born on the day of Pentecost. The mystery that the church would include both Jewish and Gentile believers (non-Jews) was not known for about ten years after the day of Pentecost. The rapture of the church and the church as the bride of Christ were mysteries unknown for another 20 years until revealed by the persecutor turned preacher, Saul of Tarsus, aka the apostle Paul. These mysteries were unknown to the Old Testament prophets and saints but became known by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles years after Jesus died. During Jesus' earthly ministry, he transitioned from the Old Testament Law to the new covenant of grace with his shed blood on the cross.

After his resurrection, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the helper and comforter, to guide and equip the church. But Jesus prepared his disciples for the transition, although they only fully understood it much later. When Jesus taught parables, he gave his disciples keys to spiritual understanding that had never been revealed before. After the multitudes left from hearing Jesus speak, his disciples came to him and asked him to give them the meaning of his parables.

Jesus said Blessed are your eyes for what you see and your ears for what you hear, many prophets and righteous men of all previous generations desired to see and know what you are experiencing, but they did not. Jesus was revealing secrets hidden from the beginning of time to his disciples. Most of the New Testament reveals the spiritual truths behind the symbolisms of the Old Testament.

There were around 100 prophecies regarding Jesus' first coming. But there are around 800 prophecies about the end times and Christ's second coming. So, how blessed are our eyes to see what the prophets foretold from Enoch, who was raptured before the flood in the first book of the Bible in Genesis [Genesis 5:24; Jude 14], to the apostle John in the last book of the Bible in Revelation.

Matthew 13:10-17 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "**Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ... "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; "for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.**

Some spiritual things are outside the boundaries of human comprehension, and only after the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of our understanding so we can perceive and grasp them. Those who are not born again cannot see the things of God and they are foolish to them,

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**"

1 Corinthians 2:6-14 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not **the wisdom of this age**, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. **But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory**, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord

*of glory. ... These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches **but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.***

The rapture of the church is the resurrection of those who have died "in Christ" and those who are alive and "in Christ" when Jesus returns. In this resurrection, the Spirit-filled saints will be caught up in the air and receive their eternal resurrection bodies while ascending to heaven. That will include millions of people simultaneously disappearing worldwide, having their physical bodies transformed and transported to heaven in the blink of an eye. That sounds ridiculous to unbelievers, just like believing that somebody who died 2,000 years ago can save you from your sins today. The rapture is a mystery that many, even those who call themselves "Christians," will never understand or believe.

*1 Corinthians 15:51 **Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.** 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:16 **For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus, we shall*

always be with the Lord.

Philippians 3:20 *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 **who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,** according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

That will be a literal miracle of Biblical proportions beyond anything in human history, and that is the blessed hope of all true disciples of Jesus.

John 11:25 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.*

Titus 2:11-13 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, **we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,***

Some religious people hear the teaching about the rapture and mock it [2 Peter 3:3-4]; others ignore it. But to the people who read and believe the Bible, the resurrection of the dead and eternal life are a driving force and motivation for how they live. The rapture gives believers an urgency and desire to live in a constant state of readiness because Jesus could come at any time.

The apostle Paul expounded on the mysteries of the church, called the bride of Christ, who would get snatched off the earth and caught up into heaven to meet Jesus in

the air, similar to how Jesus explained mysteries to his disciples. Paul prayed to God to open the spiritual eyes of his readers so they could comprehend the revelations of the church and the special resurrection for the bride of Christ, called the rapture.

Ephesians 1:15-19 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, **may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power**

The only way the mystery of the bride of Christ and the resurrection of saints at the rapture can impact a person's life is if they grasp it by faith with the conviction of the Holy Spirit, not just head knowledge with human intellect. Only the Holy Spirit can open our eyes to the spiritual reality of our times to produce the fear of God, watchfulness, and the urgency to fully surrender to Christ and reach the lost with the gospel. With all the craziness in the world today, it's not hard to see that we live in the end times, and all who profess Christ should live like they believe Jesus is coming.

Church/Body/Assembly

One of the most popular Bible verses, John 3:16, says, "For **God so loved the world** he gave his Son," but a lesser-known verse says that **Jesus so loved the**

church that he gave himself for her.

Ephesians 5:23-32 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church (ekklesia); and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So, husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Part of the mystery of the rapture is that it is only for the born-again, Spirit-filled followers of Jesus, who are found "in Christ" when Jesus returns. Jesus is coming for his people, not a building, denomination, or religious institution. The word church is not in the original scriptures; the Greek word translated as church is ekklesia, which means a called-out assembly or congregation of people. This congregation of people who get raptured are born of the Spirit and are members of the body of Christ. So, denominations, institutions, mega or small church buildings, and big-name or no-name preachers do not represent the church. The true church consists of individuals who worship God in Spirit and

truth and fellowship with others of like mind to form the mystical body of Christ.

Romans 12:4-5 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.

The Bride

The church, the Bride of Christ, is distinct from the Old Testament saints because the two groups are subject to two different covenants, the Old and New Testaments. Jesus said John the Baptist was the greatest of the Old Testament saints, but the person who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. That's not to say that the lowest person in the kingdom is a better person than John, but that they participate in a better covenant than John.

Matthew 11:11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Hebrews 8:6 But now He (Jesus) has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better

promises.

All the Old Testament prophets prophesied about the grace that would come with Christ in the New Testament. Most people who have been the beneficiaries of the new covenant ratified with Christ's blood underappreciate the magnitude of what Jesus did for us. The good news of Christ was not revealed to the Old Testament prophets or even the angels but has been revealed to us by Spirit-filled preachers of the gospel.

*1 Peter 1:9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. 10 **Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:** 11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 12 **Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.***

The gospel of Christ has given us exceedingly great and precious promises to transform our character and change us from the inside out. We have everything in Christ that we need to overcome sin and live a godly life.

*2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as **His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises,** that through*

these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The New Testament is a better covenant because of Jesus' sacrifice, not because the people are better. Also, that does not mean that God has replaced Israel with the church; that is a false teaching that gives a distorted and warped view of the Bible. God did not reject the Jews; the Jews rejected Christ, so he offered salvation to the Gentiles (non-Jews) to make the Jews jealous and bring them to salvation. When the "times of the Gentiles" are over, Christ will return, then Israel will see him and accept him as their Messiah, and all of Israel will be saved.

*Romans 11:11 I say then, have they (Israel) stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! **But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.** ... 25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this **mystery**, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that **blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.** 26 **And so all Israel will be saved,** as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;*

Some people include the Old Testament saints and John the Baptist, with the bride of Christ. People will contend that John was Spirit-filled from his mother's womb. That's true, but that's not the same as the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

*Luke 1:13-15 Lu 1:15 For he (John the Baptist) shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; **and he shall be filled with the***

Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

The unique filling of the Holy Spirit came upon John as an individual because, in the Old Testament, the Spirit of God would only come upon selected individuals, elders, judges, prophets, priests, and kings, and for specific times and purposes, but never came upon the entire congregation of Israel. Notice how the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and came upon David; the Spirit only came upon one anointed king at a time.

*1 Samuel 16:13-14 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and **the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.** So Samuel arose and went to Ramah. **But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul,** and a distressing [evil] spirit from the LORD troubled him.*

John, speaking of Jesus, said that he, Jesus, would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. Later, John told Jesus that he needed to be baptized by him, implying that John wanted to be baptized with the Holy Ghost but was not. John never saw anyone receive the baptism of the Spirit because he died before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

*Matthew 3:11 (John speaking about Jesus) "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ... 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. 14 And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"**"*

When they asked John who he was, he said he was the friend of the Bridegroom (Jesus), and John was like the best man at the wedding. John and all the Old Testament saints would be the guests at the wedding feast, aka the marriage supper of Christ the Lamb.

John 3:27-29 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, **I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.**

Revelation 19:9 Then he said to me, "Write: **'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'**" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

The baptism of the Holy Spirit would not happen until after Jesus was crucified, resurrected, and glorified. Jesus told his disciples he needed to leave them to send them a helper, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was **WITH** the disciples, but he would later be **IN** them.

John 7:38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." 39 **But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.**

John 14:16 "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you **another Helper**, that He may abide with you forever 17 **'the Spirit of truth,** whom the world cannot receive,

*because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, **for He dwells WITH you and will be IN you.** Acts 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that **they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father,** which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but **ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. ... 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:** and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

After his resurrection, Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem to become clothed with power from on high. One key difference in the new covenant was that God promised to pour his Spirit on ALL flesh. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit only came upon a select few people for specific reasons. In the New Testament, the entire body of believers is Spirit-filled, and each member receives different gifts and abilities to contribute to the congregation. On Pentecost, 120 disciples prayed in an upper room when they got baptized with the Holy Spirit with fire and power.

*Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came **a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.***

On the day of Pentecost, Peter, who just a few weeks before had been a coward before a young girl and had denied Christ three times, was transformed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and boldly stood up and preached with great power. Three thousand people dedicated their lives to Christ and got baptized on the same day. That was a display of the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to change Peter.

*Acts 2:16 (Peter preaching) But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, **I will pour out of my Spirit upon ALL flesh:** and your **sons** and your **daughters** shall prophesy, and your **young men** shall see visions, and your **old men** shall dream dreams: 18 And on my **servants** and on my **handmaidens** **I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:***

*Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, **Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to ALL that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. ... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.***

The Holy Spirit brings life, freedom, power, boldness, order, guidance, discernment, spiritual gifts and abilities, and much more to the church. Jesus saves us from sin, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to live above sin. Anyone who wants to be part of the bride of Christ and go up in the rapture should make the

primary focus in their life to have an intimate relationship with Jesus and be Spirit-filled at all times.

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

All followers of Jesus in the New Testament have access to the better covenant, better sacrifice, better promises, everything that pertains to life and godliness, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, which was not available to the Old Testament saints. The most significant event after being born again is the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

A Separate Experience

To show a distinction between initial salvation by faith and a subsequent experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, we will follow the path of the original Apostles and their experiences before and after Pentecost. Jesus sent out 70 disciples to preach the Kingdom, and they returned rejoicing over the power

they had over demons. Jesus told them to rejoice, not at power over demons, but because their names are written in heaven. That sounds like a confirmation of their salvation by faith, implying that their names were already in the Book of Life.

Luke 10:20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but **rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.**

We have another example of someone receiving salvation by faith before Jesus went to the cross. Zacchaeus demonstrated repentance and faith, and Jesus said, "Today," salvation has come to his house.

Luke 19:8-10 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." And Jesus said to him, **"Today salvation has come to this house,** because he also is a son of Abraham; **"for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."**

Jesus sent the twelve apostles out to preach the kingdom, and they experienced the power of God before Pentecost, but that was not the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 10:7-8 And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. **Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils:** freely ye have received, freely give.

At one point, Jesus asked his disciples who he was, and Peter answered that he was "the Christ," the Son of the living God. That sounds like a statement of faith many

Pastors would include in their sinner's prayer. Do you believe Jesus was the Son of God?

Matthew 16:15-17 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."** Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, **for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**

Jesus brought his inner three disciples to a mountaintop and gave them a glimpse of his glory, endorsed by God the Father speaking from heaven.

Matthew 16:28 "Assuredly, I say to you, **there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."**

Matthew 17:1-5 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and **He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.** ... While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and **suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"**

Let's summarize the Apostles' experiences before the cross: They were witnesses and participants in raising the dead, miracles of healing, casting out demons, miraculous multiplication of food, walking on water, revelations from the Father that Jesus was the Messiah, a vision of Jesus glorified with Moses and Elijah, with names already written in heaven, and salvation declared

to repentant sinners. We know that redemption and salvation were purchased on the cross by the shed blood of Christ, but when did they have saving faith? The Old Testament saints received salvation by faith by looking forward to the cross; after the resurrection, we receive salvation by faith by looking back to the finished work of the cross.

The disciples had salvation after the resurrection of Jesus, and they tarried in Jerusalem until they received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Salvation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are not simultaneous and synonymous experiences, as some claim, but two distinct experiences, as seen in the Bible with Jesus's disciples.

Let's look at the events leading up to Pentecost, particularly in Peter's life. When they took Jesus and crucified him, Peter cut off somebody's ear, denied that he knew Jesus three times, cursed, hid from persecution, and went back to his former job, fishing. Peter was not exactly a picture of spiritual fortitude at that time. Then, three days later, Jesus was raised from the dead, and he appeared to His disciples with these final words before His ascension:

*Luke 24:49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been **clothed with power from on high.**"*

*Acts 1:8 But **you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;** and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

The word translated as "witness" in that verse comes from the Greek word "martus" and means a martyr. So, Jesus appears to his disciples, who had been hiding in fear, and tells them that they will receive power, enabling them to be his martyrs. Jesus had already personally prophesied about Peter's martyrdom [John 21:18, 10].

If no outward sign happened on Pentecost, how would the disciples know when they had received the Holy Spirit and power? When the 120 disciples in the upper room received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, there was a sound from heaven and a mighty rushing wind, and the disciples spoke loudly in foreign (unlearned) languages that attracted attention from people in all the surrounding areas. It was anything but silent and unnoticeable. Let's read the actual account of the disciples receiving the infilling and power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:1-4 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came **a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind,** and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ... Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. **and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

We read of a number of outwards signs that took place that day:

- Sound of a rushing wind
- Appearance of tongues of fire on each of them

- They spoke in 16 different foreign languages, they had not previously known

There was another sign that day, it was a change in Peter. The same Peter who denied the Lord three times, who cursed, went back to fishing, and was hiding for fear. Now, he is standing up boldly and openly preaching about Christ, whom he had denied. After being Spirit-filled, boldness became a trademark of Peter [Acts 5:28-32].

Acts 2:14 **But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice,**

Acts 4:5-13 Now when they saw **the boldness of Peter and John** ...

Acts 4:14-31 ... they were **all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.**

Acts 5:28 (High Priest speaking) saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" 29 **But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 "And we are His witnesses (martyrs) to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."** 33 When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.

Acts 5:40-42 And to him they agreed: and when **they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus,** and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that **they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.**

Another sign that we see took place on the day of Pentecost was the tremendous increase in the number of disciples added to the church:

Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day **there were added unto them about three thousand souls.**

Are you having problems taking a stand and being bold for Jesus? Take note of Peter's life and be encouraged at what the Holy Spirit can do! He can change a cowardly backslider into a fiery preacher! Let's read from Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, **Repent, and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, **and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**

This verse is what some people call the gospel in a nutshell. In this one verse Peter gives four aspects of the gospel [*Romans 6:3-7, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4*].

- 1. Repent** (turn from sin)
- 2. Be Born Again.** (crucified with Christ)
- 3. Be Baptized in Water.** (buried with Christ)

4. Receive the Baptism of the Spirit. (resurrected with Christ, to walk in the newness of life)

Peter lays out the gospel of salvation by faith in Christ with four steps of obedience. If there is no repentance, the process stops on step one. If they repent and believe, they proceed to water baptism immediately. And any time after being born again, they should pray to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter promoted having two additional experiences **after** being born again, namely water baptism and receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Let's look at a few more examples. The disciples scattered to various cities after persecution broke out against the church. In every city where they were scattered, they preached the gospel. A deacon named Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ with tremendous results. Multitudes of Samaritans got healed, delivered from demons, saved, and baptized in water [Acts 8:4-13]. Take note also that Philip would not baptize someone unless that person believed in Jesus with all their heart [Acts 8:36-37].

Although Philip did evangelism with signs and wonders, salvation, and water baptisms, for some reason, no one received the baptism of the Holy Spirit under his ministry. A person does not automatically receive the Holy Spirit at the new birth. Therefore, the church in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria to pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit. These believers had been born again and water-baptized, but they only received the baptism of the Holy after Peter and John laid hands on them. Again, that shows that being born again and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are separate events. It also demonstrates that the Holy Spirit baptism can be

imparted by laying hands on people and praying. Taking that into consideration, read the following verses:

Acts 8:14-17 Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that **Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.**

Here's another example. In Ephesus an eloquent man named Apollos who was mighty in the scriptures, he taught accurately the things of Lord but he only knew about the baptism of John. Two disciples, Aquila and Priscilla, took Apollos to the side and taught and more accurately the things of God, and then took him to Achia.

Acts 18:24 Now a certain Jew named **Apollos**, born at Alexandria, an **eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.** 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, **he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.**

After Apollos left Ephesus, the apostle Paul came to Ephesus and found some disciples in Ephesus, most likely the disciples of Apollos. Upon discovering that these disciples were already believers in Christ, what was the first question that Paul asked them? Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? That implies that salvation and receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit are separate experiences. The Ephesian's answer was no; they did not know about the Holy Spirit, probably because they were disciples of Apollos, and Apollos didn't

know about the Holy Spirit.

*Acts 19:1-2 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, **"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So, they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."***

Paul acknowledged that they were already born-again believers. So, if receiving the Holy Spirit is automatic at salvation, why would Paul ask if they received the Spirit? Paul held that salvation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are two separate experiences. When Paul found out they got baptized into John's baptism, he re-baptized them in Jesus' name, laid hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came upon them; they spoke in tongues and prophesied (like the day of Pentecost).

*Acts 19:3 And he said to them, **"Into what then were you baptized?" So, they said, "Into John's baptism."** 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." 5 **When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.***

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Some corrupt preachers try to give the impression that they control the Holy Spirit and can use the power of God and gifts of the Spirit at will by snapping their fingers, like flipping a light switch. Run from those frauds. Quite to the contrary, the Holy Spirit is God and deserves to be

feared, revered, and obeyed as God. The Holy Spirit controls the distribution and power of the gifts according to His will and not any man.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 But the **manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all**; for to one is given the word of wisdom **through the Spirit**, to another the word of **knowledge through the same Spirit**, to another faith **by the same Spirit**, to another gifts of healings **by the same Spirit**, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and **the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.**

Fruits of the Spirit

If someone is walking in the Spirit, they will reflect Christ's character and avoid bringing shame to the name of Christ. Jesus said you will know them by their fruits, good or bad.

Galatians 5:22-25 But **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.** Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.**

Matthew 7:17-20 "Even so, **every good tree bears good fruit**, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit", nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. "Therefore, **by their fruits you will know them.**

Empowerment

The following is a list of some of the operations and blessings that the Holy Spirit bestows in and through us.

Sanctifies & makes holy,	<i>1 Cor 6:11, 2 Thess 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2</i>
Power & gifts of healing,	<i>1 Cor 12:9, Acts 10:38</i>
Casting out demons,	<i>Matthew 12:28</i>
Boldness to preach,	<i>Acts 4:31</i>
Breaks oppression,	<i>Isaiah 10:27, Luke 4:18</i>
Clothes with power,	<i>Luke 24:49</i>
Reveals truth,	<i>John 16:13, 1 Pet 1:22, Eph 3:3-5</i>
Righteousness, peace, joy,	<i>Rom 14:17, 1 Thess 1:5-6</i>
Gives faith, hope, love,	<i>Gal 5:5, Rom 5:5, Rom 15:13</i>
Gives guidance,	<i>John 16:13, Luke 4:1, Rom 8:14</i>
Helps in prayer,	<i>Rom 8:26, Zech 12:10</i>
Grace & gifts,	<i>1 Cor 12:4-11, 1 Cor 12:28, Heb 2:4</i>
Spiritual life,	<i>John 6:63, Rom 8:4-12, 2 Cor 3:6, Gal 6:8</i>
Puts to death fleshly lusts & sins of the body	<i>Rom 8:4-12</i>
Strengthens us in the inner Man,	<i>Ephesians 3:16</i>
Strengthens our physical body,	<i>Romans 8:11</i>
Comfort, Encouragement,	<i>John 14:16-26; 16:7, Acts 9:31</i>
Assurance of salvation,	<i>2 Cor 1:22, 2 Cor 5:5</i>
Writes on our hearts,	<i>2 Corinthians 3:2-3</i>
Makes us his temple,	<i>Eph 2:22, 1 Cor 3:16</i>
Takes us from glory to glory,	<i>2 Cor 3:18, 1 Peter 4:14</i>
Brings us into glorious liberty,	<i>2 Corinthians 3:17</i>

The Engagement, Sealed

Those who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit are sealed for the day of redemption, meaning the resurrection and rapture of the church. The Holy Spirit's infilling of Jesus's followers is like a wedding dowry, engagement ring, or wedding engagement to become the bride of Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, **who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.**

Ephesians 1:13-14 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, **you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession,** to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve **the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

In ancient Israel, the parents arranged marriages, and the process began with an engagement, a legal contract that included a dowry, meaning money and gifts, given to the bride's parents to seal the agreement. Once sealed, the engagement was a legally binding contract, and breaking off the wedding engagement would require a letter of divorce (*Matthew 1:18-19*).

The Holy Spirit seals the bride of Christ until the day of redemption, the rapture. And the Holy Spirit working in our lives prepares us for the rapture. On God's part, he will never fail; he will never break his promise. But the apostle Paul's greatest fear is that Satan could get us to stray from simple, pure devotion to Christ and lead us into sin or false religion.

2 Corinthians 11:2-4 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for **I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent (Satan) beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should**

be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth **another Jesus**, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive **another spirit**, which ye have not received, or **another gospel**, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

Galatians 3:1-3 **O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?**

God will never forsake us, but we can stray and forsake him, especially when we walk by our fleshly desires and not by the direction of the Holy Spirit. Whenever we stray from Christ and give our love and devotion to others, like sinful pleasures, money, possessions, and things we idolize, we are committing spiritual adultery.

James 4:4-7 **Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?** But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. **Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**

Romans 8:5-9 *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have*

*their minds set on what the Spirit desires. **The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.***

Dependence on the Holy Spirit is a central theme for the church and obedience to the Holy Spirit is essential to prepare the Bride of Christ for the rapture, so much so that the Holy Spirit and the Bride speak with one voice in the last verses of the Bible.

***Revelation 22:17** **The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"** And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

The Rapture

In essence, the rapture is the wedding day for the Spirit-filled followers of Jesus and the blessed hope of every believer since the time of the Apostles. The rapture and the second coming teachings are so crucial that Paul gave them the highest priority. Paul probably stayed less than three months with new converts in Thessalonica, and sometime after leaving, he wrote back to them and said that they knew perfectly well about the end times seasons and the coming of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:1** **But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day

of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

Of all the things Paul could have taught new believers, he ensured that they understood the teaching of the rapture and the difference between believers and the ungodly. Paul said sudden destruction would come upon "them," the ungodly, but added, "that Day," the Day of the Lord, a time of judgment and wrath, would not come upon the followers of Jesus.

*1 Thessalonians 5:3-6. For when **THEY** say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon **THEM**, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And **THEY** shall not escape. But **YOU**, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake **YOU** as a thief. **YOU** are all sons of light and sons of the day. **WE** are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore, let **US** not sleep, as others do, but let **US** watch and be sober.*

Let's read portions from Paul's letters to the believers in Philippi, Corinth, and Thessalonica to see the rapture and resurrection of the church.

*1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep [have died] **in Jesus**. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. **For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [harpazo] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, comfort one*

another with these words.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Behold, **I tell you a mystery**: We shall not all sleep [die], 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed.**

Philippians 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which **we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,** according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

We just read 1 Thessalonians 4:17, which said those who died and those who are alive **"in Christ"** would be **"caught up,"** which is the Greek word **"harpazo,"** which means to seize, catch (away, up), pluck, pull, take (by force). In the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible, the Greek word harpazo got translated as **rapturo**; that is where we got the English word **"rapture."** So, when Jesus returns in the rapture, he will snatch away his people, the bride.

Biblical Precedence

The idea of God snatching his people to heaven is not new; it has happened in the past with a few individuals. What is unique and different about the rapture is the number of people taken up from Earth to Heaven. The rapture is not just one person but the removal of all Spirit-filled believers in a moment, the twinkling of the eye. Let's look at the previous raptures that have happened to individuals.

Enoch

The first incident was before Noah's flood; just seven generations from Adam was Enoch, the first person raptured to heaven, and he was also the first to prophesy about the second coming of Christ to judge the world.

Genesis 5:21-24 After he begot Methuselah, **Enoch walked with God** three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So, all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. **And, Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.**

Hebrews 11:5 **By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him";** for before **he was taken** he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Jude 1:14-15 Now **Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, "to execute judgment on all,** to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

Elijah

Another personal rapture example is Elijah. Somehow, all the sons of the prophets knew that God would snatch him away suddenly. So, having a prior warning of a rapture event is not new. Like Elijah's situation with the sons of the prophets, all those who read Bible prophecies know



to watch for the rapture while the world is oblivious and unconcerned.

2 Kings 2:3 Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, **"Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?"** And he said, **"Yes, I know; keep silent!"**

2 Kings 2:5 Now the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, **"Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?"** So, he answered, **"Yes, I know; keep silent!"**

Elijah was walking with his disciple Elisha, who asked to receive a double portion of Elijah's prophetic anointing when he left. As Elijah and Elisha were walking together, suddenly a chariot of fire with horses of fire separated them and snatched Elijah away to heaven.

2 Kings 2:10-11 So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, **if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.**" Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, **that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.**

Philip

Next, the evangelist Philip was water baptizing a new convert in a river when the Holy Spirit "harpazo" snatched him away to another place.



Acts 8:38-40 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now **when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus.** And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

Paul

Another example is the apostle Paul, who recounted an experience where he was "harpazo" snatched up to the heavenly Paradise and heard inexpressible words.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago **whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows such a one was caught up to the third heaven.** And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows how **he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.**

Christ was the first fruit, meaning the first to rise from the dead. Then at the rapture, the dead and the living in Christ will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and be transformed with a new resurrected eternal body.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 But now **Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so **in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.**

Philippians 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which **we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,** according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep [dead]. **For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [harpazo] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus, we shall always be with the Lord.

Rapture vs Second Coming

Part of the confusion regarding the Rapture is because Jesus makes multiple appearances when he returns. He will come like a thief in the clouds for his church; this is his first appearance. Seven years later, Jesus will come with an army of saints behind him, and every eye will see him [*Jude 1:14, 15*]. He will destroy the Antichrist's armies and send the Antichrist to the Lake of Fire [*Revelation 19:11-21*]. Then Jesus will stand on the Mount of Olives, which will split apart, creating a valley [*Zechariah 14:2-4*]. Then Jesus will enter the eastern gate to Jerusalem [*Ezekiel 43:1-4, 44:1-2; Psalms 24:7-10*] and set up his glorious throne [*Matthew 25:31-46*] in the valley of Jehosaphat [*Joel 3:2*] to judge the sheep and goat nations [*Matthew 25:31-45*], and this is his second appearance when he returns. Many teachers divide these appearances into the Rapture and the Second Coming; the Rapture is for the church and the

Second Coming in to save Israel, make war, and judge the world.

The Rapture / Church	Second Coming / Israel
Believers disappear	Christ appears
Unseen – like a thief	Every eye sees Him
Rapture, over in a moment,	Christ wars & judges nations
Meet the Lord in air	Rules on earth 1,000 years
Christ comes for his Bride	Christ returns with His Bride
Ushers in the tribulation	Ushers in the Millennium
Imminent – no warnings	Preceded by many signs
Message of comfort	Message of judgment
Program for the church	Program for Israel & nations
New Testament only	From Genesis to Revelation
Believers are judged	Nations & Israel are judged
Leaves creation unchanged	Creation is changed
Nations are unaffected	The nations are judged
Israel's covenants unfulfilled	All Israel's covenants fulfilled
No effect on sin in the world	Sin is judged, destroyed
Before the day of wrath	Christ executes God's wrath
Is for believers only	Affects everyone on earth

When will it happen?

There are different opinions about when the rapture happens and who gets raptured. What a person believes about who gets raptured and when it happens will determine their attitudes and lifestyles. Jesus said he didn't know when it will happen, the angels don't know, and no man knows the specific day or hour of the rapture; only the Heavenly Father knows. However, we can see the signs of the times to discern the seasons and recognize how things are lining up to fulfill the prophecies.

Mark 13:28-32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, **you know that summer is near. "So, you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near at the doors! "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.** "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. **"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**

Matthew 16:2-3 [Jesus' speaking] He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; "and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' **Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.**

1 Thessalonians 5:1 But **concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.**

The fact that Jesus said nobody knows the day or hour is called the doctrine of imminence. There are no warning signs for the rapture. Jesus will come like a thief in the night, unannounced, by surprise. It will happen so fast that if you blink, you could miss it, like a flash of lightning; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and the bride of Christ is gone.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 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 ...

Matthew 24:27 "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

At any moment

The viewpoint that believes Jesus can come at any time is called the pre-tribulation rapture. This viewpoint is in alignment with Jesus' words that no man knows the day or hour. But, once the tribulation period begins, we know there will be a seven-year fixed time frame, and we would know the approximate time that Jesus returns at the second coming.

The tribulation begins with the confirmation of a seven-year covenant between the antichrist and the nation of Israel [Daniel 9:27]. Once that covenant is in force, we know the time frames and order of the main events. The scriptures tell us that once the tribulation begins, 3 1/2 years later, the antichrist enters the temple and declares himself to be a god, and 3 1/2 years after that, Jesus returns to make war and judge the nations. There are no big surprises; even the ungodly will know to hide in caves, rocks, and mountains on the great day of the wrath of the

Lamb when Jesus returns in the second coming.

Daniel 9:26-27 And the people of the prince who is to come [antichrist] shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. **Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week [7 years]; But in the middle of the week [3 ½ years], He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."**

Matthew 24:15, 21 [Jesus' speaking] "Therefore **when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place'' (whoever reads, let him understand), ...** "For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Revelation 6:15-17 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, **hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"**

Deliverance from Wrath

The tribulation period, all seven years, is full of the wrath and judgments of God. The second half, in particular, will be the worst time of suffering in human history, culminating with the return of Christ to tread the

winepress of God's wrath. Jesus said it would be like the days of Noah and Lot, which demonstrated a pattern of God protecting or removing the righteous when his judgment destroys the wicked.

Luke 17:26-29 "And **as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:** "They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, **until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.** "Likewise, **as it was also in the days of Lot:** They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; **"but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.**

God did not spare the angels who sinned, and he did not spare the ancient pre-flood world of Noah. But God saved righteous Noah and his family inside the Ark while bringing a flood of judgment on the ungodly.

2 Peter 2:4-5 For if **God did not spare the angels who sinned,** but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; **and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;**

Hebrews 11:7 **By faith Noah,** being divinely warned of things not yet seen, **moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.**

The premise that God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked was the basis of Abraham's intercession for

Lot before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Also, take note that God will not spare the wicked with the righteous.

Genesis 18:23-25 And Abraham came near and said, **"Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"** "Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? **"Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"**

2 Peter 2:6-9 ... **and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot,** who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) **then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,**

Those who have been born again and put their trust in Christ for salvation will not be subject to God's wrath at the second coming of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 For **God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,**

God has promised all those who will live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution. Since the first disciples, the true

church has always had martyrs for the faith, and there is more persecution today than ever, especially under Islamic, Hindu, and Communist regimes.

However, American and Western "Christians" have been the exception to the rule of persecution; we have not suffered severe persecution, but that may end soon. Our version of American Christianity will come to a time of testing by fire, and it's not a question of "if" but "when." We know that all the world's inhabitants will worship the antichrist or be killed, and we are heading rapidly in that direction; the antichrist beast system is steadily forming before our eyes.

2 Timothy 3:12 *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

Matthew 24:9-10 *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake." And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.*

Revelation 13:15 *He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.*

Revelation 20:4 *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

The difference between wrath and persecution is that persecution is from man and done with cruelty and hatred, but it only has temporary effects on the earth. God's wrath can be corrective and redeeming if it produces repentance, and the consequences are eternal [2 *Chronicles 12:12*].

Hebrews 12:4-8 ***You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.*** *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." ***If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.****

But when the unrepentant and hard-hearted people reject repeated attempts by God to offer them repentance and salvation, they will face the judgment of abandonment, and the full wrath of God will smash them with an immeasurable impact both now and in eternity. Persecution may include physical death, but God's wrath does not end with physical death but sends the body and soul to Hell and the Lake of Fire in the eternal second death.

Matthew 10:28 ***"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.***

Luke 20:17-18 [*Jesus' speaking*] *Then He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'The*

stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone'? "Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

*Revelation 20:13-14 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. **Then Death and Hades [Hell] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.***

As we said, God has not destined us for wrath. The bride of Christ will not be beaten and bloodied by God's wrath in preparation for the wedding day but will most likely suffer persecution at the hands of cruel men before that day arrives. At the end of the great tribulation, the nation of Israel will repent and turn to Christ, so the seven years of wrath will bring redemption and reconciliation with God for Israel.

Different Views

In this study, we present the pre-tribulation view of the rapture. We can agree to disagree with those who don't see our point of view as long as we agree with them on the essential doctrines of salvation. You can believe any view of the rapture you want, and as Jesus said, "Be it unto you according to your faith" [Matthew 9:29]. We will avoid a long, detailed study with every angle and view of every rapture theory. But we will briefly summarize some rapture theories of the most popular teachings.

Pre - Tribulation - prepare to fly

Those looking for the pre-tribulation rapture expect Christ to come like a thief at night without warning; it can happen anytime. In a moment, a complete

transformation happens. The dead and the living in Christ will be harpazo, raptured, and their physical bodies will be transformed into their eternal resurrected bodies while ascending through clouds to meet Jesus in the air. **The pre-trib people are watching, praying, and preparing to fly.**

Mid - Trib, prepare to die or fly

Some believe Jesus will come in the middle of the seven-year tribulation to rapture them away. What happens in the middle of the tribulation? The antichrist commits the abomination of desolation, and he will have authority for 3 1/2 years to kill the saints. [*Revelation 13:4-7, 15*]. So, they believe they would go through the first 3 1/2 years of wrath. And, if they can survive the first judgments, starvation, plagues, and millions of people dying, they believe they will get raptured before the antichrist gets unleashed on a murder rampage against the saints. **The mid-trib people must prepare to survive or die, then fly.**

Pre- wrath - prepare to die or fly

Some teach a pre-wrath rapture, which is a variation of the mid-tribulation view, and the only difference is that they believe they will get removed before the worst judgments and wrath strike the earth. They say pre-wrath, but in reality, all seven years of the tribulation are the wrath of God, with increasing intensity of pain, suffering, and death, escalating with each added judgment, reaching a pinnacle of suffering, destruction, and death when Jesus appears to make war and judge the world. Like the mid-trib people, they may be preppers and think they will survive the plagues, famines, natural disasters, and billions dying to get raptured when Jesus

comes. **The pre-wrath people must prepare to survive or die, then fly.**

Post Tribulation – prepare to die or survive

Finally, some hold to a post-tribulation rapture that believes Jesus comes for his people after the tribulation period. They are preppers, possibly off the grid. Their strategy is to survive a massive percentage of the world's population dying or getting killed by starvation, plagues, wars, earthquakes, and possible radioactive and biological pollution, and should they survive, they will get raptured. Besides having terrible survival odds, one of the biggest problems with that theory is that at the second coming, Jesus returns to make war and judge the world [Revelation 19:14, Jude 14], his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, then he enters the Eastern Gate of Jerusalem [Zechariah 14:3-5, Ezekiel 43:1-5]. Jesus brings the saints with him at the second coming, and they come from heaven to Earth, whereas at the rapture, the saints go from Earth to meet Jesus in the heavens. Maybe they expect to go up and make an immediate U-turn to come back to the Earth.

Also, there will be those who survive until Jesus returns who will stand before Christ and the judgment of the sheep and the goats. The sheep enter the millennial kingdom, and the goats get sent to hell. **The post-trib people must prepare to survive or die, either make a round trip to heaven and back, or get judged with the sheep and the goats.**

The no rapture people

We will say upfront that the following belief systems are erroneous and full of deceptions. Some people don't believe there will be a rapture or a millennium, and those

people fall into a few categories. There are the **amillennialism** people who don't believe in the 1,000-year reign of Christ on the earth or the rapture. The **preterists** think that when the Romans destroyed the Jewish temple in 70 A.D., that was supposedly the fulfillment of all the Biblical prophecies.

The **New Apostolic Reformation** (NAR) is another group that doesn't believe in the rapture. They think that they must conquer seven mountains of the culture and society and establish a global Christian empire before Christ comes back to reign on his earthly throne. Ironically, that sounds similar to the Muslim teaching about their 12th Imam, the Mahdi, who is our Antichrist. The NAR also has a seven-mountain mandate, and Revelation 17:10 says, "Here is the mind which has wisdom: **The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.**" So, the woman, the mother of Harlots, sits on seven mountains; maybe they're unintentionally helping to build the Antichrist kingdom. **They will either do nothing or try to conquer the world,**

There are too many groups and teachings to cover; we will finish by saying most, if not all, of these types of erroneous teachings, are the result of **replacement theology** that says that God has replaced Israel with the church. We non-Jewish people, Gentiles, have been adopted into God's family by his grace and we partake of the covenants and promises through the Jewish Messiah, Jesus the Christ. God has an eternal covenant with Israel; God will never break his covenant with Israel and will never replace Israel. Also, Israel is the key to understanding the Bible, especially end-time prophecy.

Let's pick up where we left off from a pre-trib view. Returning to the harpazo, the rapture, the only future group we know for sure who will be harpazo, raptured is the Spirit-filled church. Jesus gave himself to sanctify the church to present her to himself as a holy, spotless bride. Jesus will not marry Jezebel, the harlot church [Revelation 2:20-23]. The Bride of Christ will keep themselves from being defiled by the perverse culture and immorality so they can maintain unbroken communion with Christ.

Can you imagine Jesus' spending eternity with a harlot? We used to be sexually immoral [1 Corinthians 6:9-11], but now we are new creations in Christ, and the old life has passed away, and everything has become new [2 Corinthians 5:17]. The bride is dressed in holy and spotless linen garments and waits, watching, hoping, and looking for the day Christ returns to meet them in the air. If anyone lacks that love for Christ, they're lukewarm, apathetic, and backslidden, then maybe they're not the bride of Christ [Revelation 3:15-16].

***Ephesians 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ... 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

***Revelation 19:7** "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

Accounted worthy

Jesus encouraged us to watch and pray always that he finds us worthy to escape what is coming and to stand before him. We could never be worthy to earn salvation for ourselves, which is only by God's grace. But we should watch and pray that he finds us worthy to be raptured and escape the coming wrath and judgment in the tribulation. To watch at all times and pray every moment requires a diligent and consistent effort by those who want to be deemed worthy. To do that, we must know what we are watching for by understanding the scriptures, following the signs of the times, and then faithfully praying about them.

Luke 21:36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Only God knows the precise standard for those counted worthy to be raptured. Any vagueness about the standard is likely intentional to keep us on our toes, living right, watching, and praying. So, if the Spirit-filled church gets raptured before the tribulation, who are the Christian martyrs who get killed in the tribulation? One group mentioned explicitly in scripture is called the remnant of her seed. Apparently, they missed the rapture. They are in the tribulation period, but they have an established testimony of Jesus without any mention of their conversion in the tribulation.

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

We could put all professing Christians in two camps, and people can switch camps at various times of their lives. There are those who have the fruit of the Spirit and those who manifest the works of the flesh. Jesus said, by their fruits, you will know them [Matthew 7:16-20]. Only by the grace of God can we live by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which lifts us above the law of sin and death [Romans 8:1-3] But those who intentionally gratify the lusts of their flesh, who live in open sin and rebellion against God, walking in hypocrisy while playing church, take the risk of being left behind and facing the great tribulation.

Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? 2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Notice what the works of the flesh are: adultery, fornication, sorcery, murder, drunkenness, etc., and those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God, heaven, or the rapture.

Galatians 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish

ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

We used to practice the works of the flesh, but when we are born again, we are forgiven, washed, sanctified, justified, and become new creations in Christ [2 Corinthians 5:17]. Those evil things are in our past, at least they should be.

1 Corinthians 6:9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Instead of the old life of living to gratify the fleshly lusts and impulses, those who are the Spirit-filled believers in Jesus allow the Holy Spirit to guide and control their actions, which produces the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Those counted worthy to escape the tribulation [Luke 21:36] are also called overcomers in Jesus' messages to the churches in Revelations 2 and 3. They don't overcome to obtain salvation; they overcome themselves, the works of the flesh, self-will, and disobedience to walk in the Spirit and live a life of obedience to God. We could never be overcomers by the strength of our flesh; we are dependent on the Holy Spirit for the power and grace to live a life that is pleasing to God.

1 Corinthians 9:27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Proverbs 16:32 He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, 4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. 5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind

of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. 9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.

And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. 12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Escape wrath, not persecution

Something to note for those who want to escape the wrath and judgment of God in the rapture: we are not exempt from suffering and should expect and be willing to suffer persecution and even martyrdom before the rapture happens. There are more Christian martyrs now than at any time in history, but martyrdom in Muslim, Hindu, and Communist countries does not get reported to the Western world. The tide of persecution is rapidly rising and spreading across the globe against Jews and Christians, especially after the October 7 massacre in Israel.

For those who try to live a godly life, there is a type of cultural persecution that grinds against the soul, a kind of

social stigma, isolation, government retribution, and moral rot that creates an abrasive environment for the followers of Jesus in the secular society. Daily while living in Sodom, Lot's righteous soul felt vexed and grieved by the ungodly behavior and aggressive threats of the Sodomites. The Sodomites tried to attack Lot, but two Angels forcibly snatched, seized, and removed him from the rapists of Sodom. The angels blinded the perverts and removed Lot from Sodom before God sent fire and brimstone to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Similarly, Christ will snatch away the church before his judgment against the whole world, but we may suffer first.

*Luke 17:28-29 "Likewise as it was also **in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 'but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.**"*

2 Peter 2:6-9 ... and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,

As the overcoming church watches for the return of Jesus, we should feel like Lot, grieved and vexed in our spirit as we see the deluge of perversion and wickedness flooding the earth. Also, our godly testimony will result in greater and greater persecution by the secular and religious

world until the church is forced out and snatched up by Jesus to take us out of this wicked world. Until then, the fires of persecution and the fear of God will purify those who hope in Christ.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and **all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

1 Peter 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, **you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,** 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

1 John 3:2-3 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.**

2 Corinthians 7:1 **Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

The coming of Jesus is the blessed hope of his bride; all those who love Jesus and his appearing will eagerly watch for Christ to rapture his church.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 **teaching us that, denying**

ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

2 Timothy 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Who is Raptured?

One thing we notice about Paul's letter to the Ephesians is that Jesus will sanctify, cleanse, wash, and remove every spot, wrinkle, and blemish to present to himself a glorious church. Does that mean that Jesus does everything and we do nothing? Can we live like the Devil and still be raptured? Some say the rapture is purely by grace alone and that you can't do anything of yourself to be rapture worthy, or else you are trying to earn salvation by works.

Indeed, only by God's sovereign grace and mercy through Christ alone does anyone hope to stand blameless before God regarding salvation. However, regarding rewards, God judges according to works, and faith without works is dead [*James 2:17-18*]. Otherwise, why are there so many warnings from Jesus and the apostles if we are not held accountable? What if people set the rapture bar too low by abolishing all standards and accountability? Wouldn't that deaden the conviction of the Holy Spirit, sear our conscience, and make us prone to demonic deception?

1 Timothy 4:1 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. 2 Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

Why gamble with your soul by living a lukewarm, compromised life? What on earth is worth missing the rapture? There are eternal consequences at stake. The cure for lukewarmness and apathy can come in the form of persecution, or a proactive person can choose to surrender their life completely and stay filled, yielded, and guided by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will purify, sanctify, and prepare us for the rapture by removing every spot of fleshly lust, every wrinkle of old dead religion, and every blemish in our character so that we can walk worthy of Christ to the best of our ability and beyond our natural ability.

Revelation 3:15-18 [Jesus to the Laodicean church]"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the

washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

In short, shouldn't the bride love her bridegroom above all others? Will Jesus marry a harlot??? Those who want to be the bride of Christ should try to love Jesus with all their heart.

Isaiah 62:5 For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So, shall your God rejoice over you.

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

Will all professing Christians be raptured?

For some people that's like asking, how deep can I go into sin and still be saved? Or, what are the bare minimum requirements to go up in the rapture? It is far better to look at it from the opposite direction of considering this world's pleasures as dung compared to the eternal riches, we gain by knowing Christ. We should be motivated to run after Christ with everything within us so we win the race and prize of being Christ's bride.

Hebrews 11:24-26 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

Philippians 3:7-12 *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ... that I may know Him* and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, *if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.* And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore, *I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus, I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

In Paul's analogy of running the race, he speaks of the discipline of an athlete to run a race. The athlete dedicates their entire life to winning their race, their diet, exercise, routines, and schedules for months and years focused on the big race to win the gold medal. The race is a sprint to the finish line, but if the athlete steps out of their lane, they disqualify themselves!



What a gut-wrenching disappointment! The trauma of being disqualified and missing the rapture would be magnitudes worse than anything we can imagine! That might sound frightening, and it should, because the fear or reverence for God keeps us from sinning, purifies our life, and keeps us in our lane.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

Philippians 2:12-16 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.** Do all things without complaining and disputing, **that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,** among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, **so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.**

"In Christ"

One aspect of Paul's first letter to those in Thessalonica that often gets no consideration is the phrase "in Christ." The bride of Christ will be found "in Christ" when he returns, both those currently alive and those who have died in Christ.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep **in Jesus.** For this we say to you by the

word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. **For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus, we shall always be with the Lord.

There is symbolism throughout the Bible that demonstrates that our salvation comes by being "in Christ." Noah's family got saved by physically getting into the ark, symbolic to us of being in Christ. Israel got saved in Egypt by putting the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorpost and staying inside their homes when the death angel passed over them, which points to Christ our Passover. Israel had cities of refuge for an innocent man to flee from the avenger of blood, and as long as he stayed in the city of refuge, he was safe; abiding in Christ is our city of refuge. Over and over, every page of the Bible has symbolism of Jesus, our stronghold, fortress, tabernacle, and dwelling place. Jesus said that he is the vine and we are the branches; everyone who abides in him will have his life flowing through them, and everyone that gets cut off from abiding in him will be gathered together and thrown into Hell's fire.

John 15:1-9 [Jesus' speaking] "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the

branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

We will list a few verses that speak of the blessings of abiding in Christ, which include redemption, no condemnation, life, the love of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and good fruit.

Romans 3:24 ... being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:38-39 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

*Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Eternal Security & the Rapture

Some teachings may undermine the Holy Spirit's work to prepare people for the rapture. There is a teaching that says once a person is saved they can never lose their salvation, they say salvation is irrevocable and if a person backslides and denies the Lord they were never saved.

One YouTube preacher who promotes the once saved, always saved theory said that someone could be watching porn and smoking crack when Jesus comes, and they will go up in the rapture. What an outrageous statement! Maybe that preacher was under the influence of crack to say something that absurd. But it proves a point and shows how destructive cheap grace can be. How many viewers were encouraged by that preacher to continue in their demonic addictions, thinking crack, pornography, and who knows what other evils are acceptable behaviors with God?

That type of permissiveness is an ancient lie reminiscent of the corrupt Roman Catholic indulgences, pay to play. Are there no standards??? Is there no reverence for God??? Preachers who give sugarcoated, watered-down gospels do so to their peril [*Galatians 1:6-8*]. If their messages compromise and allow sin, resulting in their listeners having a defiled or seared conscience, they will answer to God. We must constantly battle to maintain a pure conscience with God and man.

Acts 24:15 "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. 16 "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

1 Timothy 1:5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, 6 from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk,

1 Timothy 1:19 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,

1 Timothy 3:9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

People who play a game with sin are rolling dice and gambling with their souls. God cannot be mocked or fooled; God knows the thoughts of our hearts, and everything is naked to him.

Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Walk worthy

When Jesus warned about the end times, he said to watch and pray to be "counted worthy" to escape the tribulation and to stand before the Son of Man. Here's a question, did you have to be counted worthy to receive salvation? No! We can't save ourselves; we can only receive salvation by faith in Jesus' death and resurrection on our behalf. But Jesus said we must pray, watch, and be worthy to escape the tribulation and stand in his presence. We should watch for the end time signs and be watchful over our spiritual lives. In all his epistles, Paul urged the churches to walk worthy of the Lord, which should come naturally to anyone in first love with Jesus.

Luke 21:35-36 "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Ephesians 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,

Colossians 1:9-10 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all

wisdom and spiritual understanding; **that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him,** being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, **and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.**

2 Thessalonians 1:9-11 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, **when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power,**

Move with fear

Noah moved with fear to prepare the ark to save his family from the flood. As far as we know, it took 120 years to build the ark, and Noah preached righteousness at that time. Jesus said the end times would be like the days of Noah; we want to move like Noah, preparing, preaching, and praying.

Hebrews 11:7 **By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household,** by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**

2 Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

We are facing a worse time than Noah did, and Jesus said it would be the worst time in human history. We know billions of people will die horrible deaths from starvation, plagues, war, and being tormented by demons. We must be watchmen to warn others of what's coming so they can escape. One of the best tools of evangelism is teaching about the end times and the second coming of Christ. Many people see how the world is going crazy, and they want to know what is going on. We have the answers in the Bible; we know what is happening and what will happen. Like a modern-day Noah, we should urgently warn others and lead them to the ark of salvation, Christ, before the flood comes and it's too late.

Ezekiel 33:7 **"So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman** for the house of Israel; therefore, you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. 8 **"When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!'** and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 **"Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.**

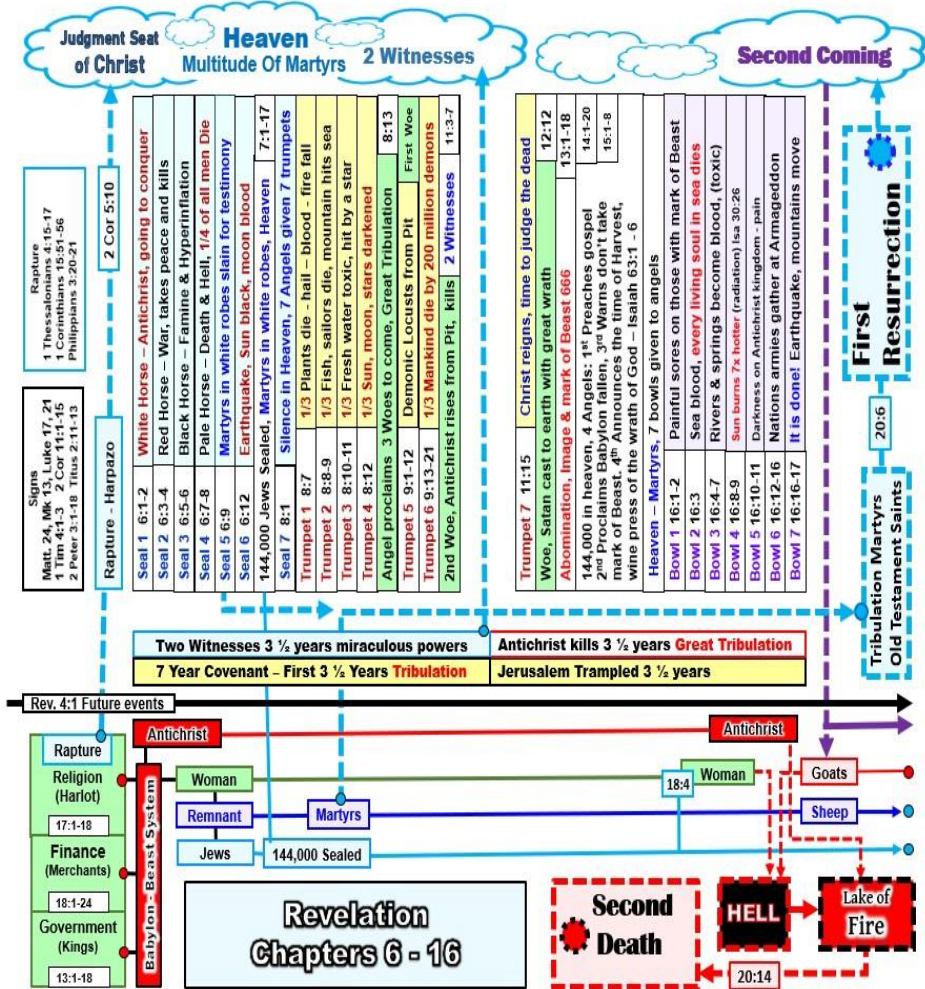
Call to Action

We are in the end times; our world is changing quickly to line up with Bible prophecy. Jesus said the signs of his return would be like birth pangs, growing globally in intensity and frequency. We are seeing those signs happening weekly in real-time with wars, food shortages, pandemics, shutdowns, and natural disasters, all leading to global tyranny.

There will be global persecution of Christians and Jews, and it's not a question of if, but when. There will also be a great falling away from Christ, and we can see it happening already. So-called churches are already becoming sexually immoral, politically woke, and in bed with the government. As more churches go apostate or get shut down, true believers may have to find or create small groups for fellowship. While we have time and freedom, we should study the scriptures, share the gospel, and watch for Jesus to return. For free resources and study materials, visit our website at Ears2Hear.online.



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The Revelation of Christ – Message to the Churches

CHURCH	VISION of Christ	GOOD Points	FAULTS	ADVICE	REWARD
EPHESUS Loveless Ch.2:1-7	Holds 7 stars, walks in midst of 7 Candlesticks	Discernment, perseverance, hate the Nicolaitans	Left first love	Repent, do first works, (or lamp will be removed)	Eat from the Tree of Life
SMYRNA Persecuted Ch.2:8-11	First & Last was dead, and is alive	Endures persecution		Don't fear, be faithful until death	Crown of Life
PERGAMOS Compromising Ch.2:12-17	He who has the sharp two edged sword	Holds fast to my name, didn't deny the faith	Hold doctrine of Balaam & Nicolaitans, immorality	Repent, (or I'll fight against you with the sword of my mouth)	Hidden Manna, white stone with new name
THYATIRA Corrupt Ch.2:18-29	Eyes of fire, brass feet, searches heart	Love, service, faith, patience	Allow Jezebel to teach, immorality	Hold fast to what you have	Power over nations, morning star
SARDIS Dead Ch.3:1-6	Has the 7 Spirits of God, and 7 stars		Dead	Be watchful, strengthen what remains, repent	Walk with me in white garments, name in book of life
PHILADELPHIA Faithful Ch.3:7-13	He who is true, He who has the key, opens & shuts doors	Kept my word, have not denied my name, persevered		Hold fast what you have that no one may take your crown	Make a pillar, write name of God, city of God & new name
LAODICEA Lukewarm Ch.3:14-22	The Amen, Faithful & True Witness, the beginning of creation		Lukewarm, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked	Buy gold from fire and white garments, anoint your eyes, repent, open the door	Sit on throne of God