

## Lesson 21-24

### The Doctrine of Eschatology

*“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”* Luke 21:25-28

#### I. What does the word “eschatology” mean?

- A. The word “eschatology” comes from two Greek words, *eschatos* meaning “last in time or place” and *logos* meaning “word or discourse.”
- B. Literally the word “eschatology” means “words about the last things.”
- C. From a theological point of view, “eschatology” refers to that branch of theology that deals with the last or final things. It usually refers to some of the following:
  - 1. The last days leading up to the return of Christ and the associated events.
  - 2. The second coming of Christ itself.
  - 3. The final judgment of the living and the dead.
  - 4. The millennial kingdom and the eternal states.
- D. Note the following verses about the last days: Matthew 24: 3-44; Mark 13:3-37; Luke 21:3-36; John 6:39-44, 54; 11:24; 12:48; Acts 2:17-18; II Timothy 3:1-5; James 5:3; I Peter 1:5, 20; II Peter 3:3; I John 2:18; Jude 18.

#### II. What are some of the prophetic signs of the last days?

There are many signs of Christ’s return and of that period known as the last days (Mt. 24:3).

*Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”*

Jesus gives his answer to these questions in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21.

- A. There will be signs in creation itself (Luke 21:25-28; Rom. 8:20-21).

*“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”*

1. Earthquakes (Mt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11).

*And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.*

Luke 21:11

2. Famines and pestilence (Mt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11).
3. Wonders in the heavens (Mt. 24:29; Mark 13:24-25; Luke 21:11, 25-26; Acts 2:19-20).

*But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.*

Mark 13:24-27

*I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.*

Acts 2:19-21

- B. There will be signs in the world system and nations of the world.

*And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. Matthew 24:6-7*

1. Wars and rumors of wars (Mt. 24:6-7; Mark 13:7-8; Luke 21:9-10).
2. Nations rising up against nations (Mt. 24:7).
3. Perplexity and distress of nations (Luke 21:25-26).
4. Multiplication of knowledge and travel (Dan. 12:4)

*But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.*

C. There will be signs in the spiritual world and the church.

1. Deception by false ministries (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 23-26; Mark 13:5-6, 21-23).

*And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many."*

Matthew 24:4-5

*Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.* Matthew 24:11

*Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or "There!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, "Look, He is in the desert!" do not go out; or "Look, He is in the inner rooms!" do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

Matthew 24:23-27

*For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.* Mark 13:22-23

2. Persecution of Christians (Mt. 24:9-10; Mark 13:9, 13, 11; Luke 21:12-15).

*But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.* Luke 21:12-15

3. Betrayal of Christians (Mt. 24:10; Mark 13:12-13; Luke 21:16-19).

*And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.* Matthew 24:10

*You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake.*

Luke 21:16-17

*Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated*

*by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.*

Mark 13:12-13

4. Tribulation and pressure (Mark 13:9, 19-20, 24).

*But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. Mark 13:9*

*For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. Mark 13:19-20*

5. The Gospel preached in the entire world (Mt. 24:14; Mark 13:10).

*And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. Mark 13:10*

*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:14*

6. All nations flowing into the house of the Lord (Is. 2:2-3).

*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

### **III. What will be the spiritual climate of the last days?**

The end times will be characterized by two significant opposing forces.

- A. On the negative side, the seed of the serpent will come to full manifestation (II Tim. 3:1-5).

*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*

1. The love of many will grow cold (Mt. 24:12).

*And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.*

2. There will be a great falling away (II Th. 2:3).

*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition...*

3. Many will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (I Tim. 4:1-2).

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

4. Many false christs (anointed ones) will arise deceiving many (Mt. 24:24; II Tim. 3:13).

*For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Matthew 24:24*

*But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. II Timothy 3:13*

5. Deception will be prevalent (Mt. 24:4-5, 24).

*And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.*

*Matthew 24:4-5*

6. Wickedness will come to full fruit (Rom. 1:18-32; Rev. 22:11).

Read Romans 1:18-32 which portrays the increasing vileness of wickedness when it is unchecked.

*He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.*

*Revelation 22:11*

*And when that time comes, all doing wrong will do it more and more; the vile will become more vile; good men will be better; those who are holy will continue on in greater holiness. –Living Bible*

- B. On the positive side, the Seed of the Woman will come to full manifestation (Is. 60:1-5).

*Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. "Lift up your eyes all around, and see: they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.*

1. The church will be glorious and victorious (Eph. 5:27; Is. 60:13).

*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.*

Ephesians 5:25-27

2. There will be days of great harvest (Mt. 13:39; Rev. 14:14-16).

*Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" Matthew 13:36-42*

*Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. Revelation 14:14-16*

3. There will be a great outpouring of the Spirit of God (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-18).

*And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in*

*the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls. Joel 2:28-32*

4. The spirit and power of Elijah will be on the families of the church (Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6).

*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse. Malachi 4:5-6*

5. The Gospel will be going forth into the entire world (Mt. 24:14).
6. The kingdom of God will come to full fruit (Jam. 5:7-8; Rev. 22:11).

*Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. James 5:7-8*

*“And when that time comes, all doing wrong will do it more and more; the vile will become more vile; good men will be better; those who are holy will continue on in greater holiness.” Revelation 22:11, LB*

- C. The days of Noah are a prophetic type of the last days (Mt. 24:36-42; Luke 17:24-27).

*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

Matthew 24:36-39

*For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. 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. Luke 17:24-27*

1. There are many negative similarities between the last days and Noah's day (Gen.

6:1-22). Wickedness came to full fruit.

Read portions of Genesis 6:1-22

- There was a population explosion (Gen. 6:1).
  - Marriage vows were taken lightly (Mt. 24:38, Lit. “they were married and they were married”)
  - The earth was filled with violence (Gen. 6:11).
  - Pleasure seeking was the order of the day (Mt. 24:38; Gen. 6:2).
  - People in general were morally bankrupt (Gen. 6:5, 11-12).
  - There was persistent unbelief in the face of abundant witness (e.g. The Cherubim and Flaming Sword, the mark of Cain, the testimony of the patriarchs, the preaching of Enoch, the translation of Enoch, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the preaching of Noah).
2. There are many positive similarities between the last days and the days of Noah. Righteousness came to full fruit in Noah and his family.
- Noah found grace (Gen. 6:8).
  - Noah lived a separated life (Gen. 6:9).
  - Noah was a just man (Gen. 6:9).
  - Noah walked with God (Gen. 6:9).
  - Noah feared God and walked in the obedience of faith (Heb. 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.*
- Noah had his household in order (Heb. 11:7).
3. God provided a place of refuge for His people in the days of Noah. The ark is a beautiful type of the church.
- It was prepared by God’s initiative and commandment.
  - It was prepared beforehand for the faithful.

- It was available for clean and unclean animals (Jews and Gentiles).
- It had provision for all.
- It was a place of the presence of the Lord (Gen. 7:1; 8:16).

*Then the LORD said to Noah, "Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation." Genesis 7:1*

*"Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you." Genesis 8:16*

- It was a place of salvation for all who entered before the coming judgment.

#### **IV. What are the four major eschatological viewpoints?**

While there are many opinions about how the end time events will unfold, there are three main views that can be summarized as follows:

##### **A. The Amillennial View.**

In this view the Second Coming of Christ concludes God's plan for man on earth. The 1000 year reign referred to in the Book of Revelation is a symbolic number and refers to an indefinite period of time including the entire Church Age. In this view the rapture or the catching away of the saints occurs in conjunction with the Second (and only) Coming of Christ.

##### **B. The Post-Millennial View.**

In this view Christ will not return until the kingdom of God has been fully established by the church. In this view the power of the Gospel will gradually overcome all opposing forces until all earthly kingdoms are reformed to reflect godly principles and justice. This also takes an indefinite amount of time. It could be many thousands of years.

##### **C. The Pre-Millennial View.**

The pre-millennial view holds that Christ will come again before any millennial (1000 year) kingdom is established. The Pre-millennial view takes on three main forms:

###### **1. Pre-Tribulation**

In this view the church is “raptured” out before the tribulation at Christ’s secret appearing. During the period of the tribulation, in the absence of the Church, God works through the Jewish nation to evangelize the world. In this view, Christ returns at the end of the tribulation and ushers in the millennium.

This view is the dominant view among evangelicals. It is commonly viewed as dispensationalism. In this view Christ could come at any time and take the church out. At this time many Jewish people will see their Savior and come to salvation. God will return and work with the Jewish people who will complete the purpose of God.

A strong premise of this view is that the church and Israel are distinct from each other in God’s plan each having their own unique destinies. It holds that God suspended His program with Israel when they rejected their Messiah and turned to the church. The church will not succeed as an instrument of God’s purpose, it will be raptured out and God will again turn His attention to the Jew.

This view has very recent origins in the history of the church, first being put forward in the late 1800’s. It has a low view of the church and divides the plan of God in a way that minimizes the power of the cross. It also does not acknowledge the mysterious link between the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church and the coming together of the Jew and Gentile into one spiritual temple.

## 2. Mid-Tribulation

This view is the same as the above view except that the church is raptured out half way through the tribulation.

## 3. Post-Tribulation

In this view the church remains right up to the end through the tribulation when Christ returns to set up a millennial kingdom. In this view the rapture or the catching away of the saints occurs in conjunction with the Second Coming.

In this view Christ cannot return “at any time” as the dispensationalist would suggest. In this view, the Church is the instrument of God in the earth and, therefore, will remain in place until all of the purpose of God is fulfilled (Acts 3:19). This view has a strong view of a triumphant church (Mt. 16:18-19).

# V. What does the Bible teach about the Rapture?

A. The term “rapture” is not found in the Bible as such.

1. The word “rapture” is a term that is used to describe the “catching away” of the

believers at the appearing of Christ (I Th. 4:15-17).

2. There is no debate that this is a biblical experience for the believer. The debate has to do with when this event occurs in the experience of the believer.
- B. There are several verses that are used to teach the concept of the pre-tribulation rapture of the saints. Let us take a brief look at them (Much of this section taken from *Understanding End Times*, by David Sell, pg. 31-37).

Before we look at these verses, it is critical that we refresh ourselves with some basic principles of interpretation. We need to remind ourselves that we interpret a passage based on the context of the passage itself. We interpret unclear passages from the clear passages. We interpret the passage with an understanding of the historical context within which it was written.

#### 1. Revelation 3:10-11

*Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.*

Many consider this verse to be the strongest link to a pre-tribulation rapture. God promises to keep the church from the “hour of trial” which shall come upon the whole world. The logic suggests that to keep the church from this hour, she must therefore be raptured away before the trial begins.

There are two problems with this thinking. The first is that this verse was specifically written to the church in Philadelphia, which did in fact undergo the hour of trial during ten historical waves of Roman persecution. To suggest the removal of the entire Body of Christ from a future antichristal persecution, when the very church to whom the promise written endured severe persecution, seems inconsistent.

The second problem surrounds the choice of the Greek word “*tereo*” which is rendered “keep.” If the author intended to communicate a removal from the situation, John would have used the Greek word “*paraphero*” translated “to take out or remove.” Both Greek possibilities present themselves next to each other in John 17:15, where John again writes, “*I do not pray that You should **take them out** of this world, but that You should **keep them** from the evil one.*”

Since John wrote both Revelation and the Gospel of John, he was familiar with both Greek words and their proper usage. Had John promised the church at Philadelphia some type of literal “removal” he would have used the appropriate word. Rather than “remove” the church, Jesus promised to keep or “preserve” the church during the difficult days ahead.

This theme runs consistent throughout the rest of Scripture. Rather than remove Noah from the earth during the flood, God kept Noah by providing a means whereby his family could be preserved on the earth in spite of the flood (Heb. 11:7). Rather than remove the three Hebrew children from the fiery furnace, the Lord shielded them from the effects of the flames and not even the smell of smoke was on them (Dan. 3:5). God could have removed Daniel from the lion's den, but instead He chose to close the mouth of the lions and preserve Daniel in the den itself (Dan. 6:23). Just like Israel was preserved in the wilderness and Elijah was preserved for three and a half years by the brook, God can preserve His people within the trial of faith.

2. I Thessalonians 5:9-10

*For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.*

This passage says, *“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Those who espouse the pre-tribulation rapture theology equate the tribulation period with the wrath of God. It should be noted that the New Testament defines wrath four different ways:

- a. Eternal Wrath. This wrath results in eternal damnation (John 3:36; Rom. 5:9; I Th. 1:10; Rev. 14:10).

*He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. John 3:36*

*Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. Romans 5:9*

*For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. I Thessalonians 1:9-10*

*...he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. Revelation 14:10*

- b. Natural Wrath. This wrath is a pouring out of tribulation upon the world during the great tribulation (Rev. 15:7; 16:1).

*Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden*

*bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. Revelation 15:7*

*Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." Revelation 16:1*

- c. Satanic Wrath. This is a wrath exercised by the devil against the purposes of God when he realizes that his days are numbered (Rev. 12:12).

*Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.*

- d. Human Wrath. This is when man exercises a lack of control and manifests an unproductive anger (Jam. 1:19-20).

*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*

So to which of the four definitions of wrath does I Thessalonians 5:9 refer. When you read the context, it places the wrath of God in opposite position to salvation through Jesus Christ. The opposite of salvation is eternal damnation.

Salvation is never defined as safety from natural wrath such as the physical death encountered in this life. Otherwise, do we say any time that a Christian dies as a martyr or from an earthquake or from any other natural catastrophe that he or she dies as a result of God's wrath? Of course not! Verse 10 says, "*whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.*" Neither death nor life can separate us from Christ.

The tribulation period will bring extreme demonstrations of natural wrath, but the wrath of God that is referred to in I Thessalonians 5:9 is what follows natural death. Christian will have no part of this as promised in this verse. Romans 5:9 also adds to the promise, "*having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath through Him.*"

### 3. Jeremiah 30:7

*"Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it."*

Pre-tribulationists assign the identity of Jacob to the church; post-tribulationists could agree to that possibility. Both might also agree that this could refer to the coming end-time tribulation. Where each side disagrees centers upon the interpretation of the phrase, "*but he shall be saved out of it.*"

Does this mean “removal” or the “ability to endure whatever the trouble?” The Hebrew wording does not in any way indicate “removal.” Had Jeremiah meant to illustrate “removal,” he would have used the Hebrew word “*suwr*,” which appears throughout his writings for that exact purpose. For example, “*suwr*” appears in Jeremiah 32:31, which says, “*For this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and My fury from the day that they built it, even to this day; so I will remove [Heb. “suwr”] it from before My face.*” Historically, the city was removed from the map. The word used in Jeremiah 30:7 is “*yasha*,” meaning to be “safe or free; to get the victory.”

Jacob (the church) will indeed go through a time of great trouble. Martyrdom is never easy; however, even in death there can be victory. Revelation 15:2 mentions the martyrs standing on the sea of glass mingled with fire who “*have the victory over the beast.*” They never let go of their testimony and now enter heaven “saved” as they anticipate a victorious eternity.

#### 4. I Thessalonians 4:13-18

*But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 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. Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

Those holding to pre-tribulation viewpoint believe these verses prove a rapture before the tribulation since Paul addresses the need for hope. They assume the hope Paul offers is an exemption from the tribulation.

Nothing within these verses suggests that interpretation; instead, the intent of his words addresses verse 13, *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.*” The Thessalonians believed that if people died before Jesus returned, they would miss going to heaven. Through verses 14-17 Paul methodically describes how Jesus will first come for those asleep (dead in Christ), and then call for those who are alive. These verses do not address the tribulation period in any way.

In verses 16-17, Paul continues to elaborate on the detail of the rapture. Jesus’ return will not be a quiet, secret event, but will in fact be quite noisy: “*He will descend with a shout, the voice of the archangel will be heard, and the trump of God will be sounded.*”

As a closing thought, why would Paul promise the Thessalonians the comfort of a rapture removing them from tribulation and persecution, when in fact, II Thessalonians 1:4-5 specifically mentions the persecution and tribulation that this very church endured? *“So that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.”*

5. Luke 21:34-36

*But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 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.*

Luke 21:36 reads, *“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.”* Those who hold a pre-tribulation view use this verse to say that if we will pray always, we are promised to escape tribulation. The post-tribulation view rejects this logic, claiming that it is possible for some to escape the disasters of the end, while still having not left this earth as the result of a rapture. Revelation 12:6 speaks of a woman fleeing into the wilderness, where she will be protected and nourished from the dragon during a time of tribulation.

*Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*

Revelation 12:6

6. I Corinthians 15:51-54

*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”*

The pre-tribulationists say these verses suggest a rapture before the coming of Christ since there is no mention of a tribulation before or after the resurrection. Post-tribulationists see I Corinthians 15 as a chapter devoted exclusively to the subject of the resurrection of the dead (See vs. 4-57). To address the tribulation or any other topic would detract from the single purpose of this chapter. To apply these verses as a proof text to the placement of a rapture in respect to the

tribulation diverts from the integrity of Paul's sole purpose for this chapter.

7. Revelation 4:1

*After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."*

Some pre-tribulationists believe that the call for John to ascend into heaven symbolizes the rapture of the church. This assumption stems from the word "church" not appearing from chapter four on through the rest of the book of Revelation. Due to the absence of this word, it is assumed the church must be in heaven during the time of the tribulation.

There are two problems with this assumption. First, why didn't God call the "church" to come up to heaven, instead of John? John ascends into the heavenlies, most likely through a trance, to receive the vision of the Revelation. To identify "John" as "the church" is forced and unsubstantiated.

The second problem point toward the various terms found within Revelation chapters 4-21 that refer to the Body of Christ still being present during these chapters. John speaks of the souls under the altar, saints, servants of God, God's people and a mysterious woman (Rev. 6:9, 11; 7:3, 14; 12:6, 17; 13:7, 10; 14:12, 13; 17:6; 18:4, 20).

These thirteen verses describe members of the Body of Christ--the Church--some of which will live through the tribulation and stand as those alive and remaining unto the coming of the Lord (I Th. 4:15).

8. Matthew 24:40-42

*Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.*

These familiar verses address the two standing in the field grinding at the mill; one will be taken and the other left. Some holding a pre-tribulation view see the one taken in the rapture, while the other is left behind.

The post-tribulation view does not equate these verses with the rapture, but with the separation of believers and unbelievers at the time of the judgment. Before interpreting verses 40-41, we must respect the context of the surrounding verses (vs. 26-39). Verse 39 says, "And did not know until the flood came and took them all away." Who was taken away--Noah or his ungodly generation? Verses 38-39 refer to Noah's generation being taken away, those who ate and drank, who married and were given in marriage. The flood came and took "them" all

away. Noah and his family, on the other hand, were those who were alive and remained.

Matthew 24:40 says, *“Then two men shall be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.”* To remain consistent with the previous analogy, those taken are the unbelievers; those who are left, analogous to Noah, are the righteous. When taken in context, verses 40-41 have nothing to do with the rapture, but rather address the taking of wicked in judgment and the leaving of the righteous to enjoy the eternal kingdom or the 1000 year millennium.

#### 9. II Thessalonians 2:7

*“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.”*

Pre-tribulationists believe the Holy Spirit will remove Himself from the earth when the antichrist arrives. If the Holy Spirit is removed, it must mean that the church is also removed, knowing that the Spirit lives within believers.

Post-tribulationists state the impossibility of that interpretation, noting that during the tribulation there will still be saints present (See previous list of verses). Are saints no longer filled with the Holy Spirit? Of course they are (Rom. 8:9). The alternative interpretation realizes the time is coming when the Holy Spirit will no longer restrain evil as He has done so throughout the ages.

#### 10. Matthew 24:29-31

These verses actually state that the rapture of the church happens after the tribulation. Verses 29-30 read, *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”*

After the tribulation Jesus visibly returns to the earth, an event every eye shall see. Verse 31 next indicates that it is at this time that the rapture of the church takes place: *“And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”*

The elect are believers according to the following: Luke 18:7; Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; Titus 1:1; I Peter 1:1-2.

## **VI. What does the Bible teach about the Second Coming of Christ?**

- A. It is a fact that Christ will return a second time (See: The Doctrine of Christ, XI).
- B. Christ will return personally, visibly, gloriously and triumphantly (See: The Doctrine of Christ, XI).
- C. Christ has a multi-faceted purpose for His return.

- 1. To receive His own (John 14:3; 17:24; I Th. 4:16-17).

*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. John 14:3*

*Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. John 17:24*

*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.*

I Thessalonians 4:16-17

- 2. To reckon with His servants (Mt. 25:19).

*After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.*

- 3. To judge all (Mt. 25:31-46; II Tim. 4:1, 8; Jude 14-15).

*I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom... I Timothy 4:1*

- 4. To reward every man according to his works (Mt. 16:27; I Cor. 3:12-15; II Tim. 4:8; I Pet. 5:4).

*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. II Timothy 4:8*

*...when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. I Peter 5:4*

- 5. To complete the salvation of the saints (Rom. 8:23; Heb. 9:28; I Th. 3:13).

*Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our*

body. Romans 8:23

*And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. Hebrews 9:27-28*

*And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. I Thessalonians 3:12-13*

6. To be glorified in His saints (Col. 3:4; II Th. 1:10).

*When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Colossians 3:4*

*...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. II Thessalonians 1:10*

7. To receive His bride, His reward for redemption (Mt. 25:10; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-9).

*“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.” 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. 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.” Revelation 19:7-9*

## **VII. What effect does the Second Coming have on the Church?**

- A. The dead in Christ will rise (I Th. 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.*

- B. Believers will meet Jesus in the air to be with Him forever (I Th. 4:17).

*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.*

- C. Believers will receive their new bodies (I Cor. 15:35-49; Phil. 3:20-21).

*There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.*

I Corinthians 15:41-43

*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.* Philippians 3:20-21

- D. Believers will be transformed into Christ's image (I John 3:2).

*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.*

- E. Believers will be united with Christ in marriage (Rev. 19:7-9).

- E. Believers will receive a crown of righteousness (II Tim. 4:8).

- G. Believers will live and reign with Christ forever (Mt. 19:28; II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4-6; 22:5).

*This is a faithful saying: for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.* II Timothy 2:11-13

*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. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.* Revelation 20:4-6

## **VIII. What is to be our attitude as we anticipate Christ's return?**

- A. Our attitude in general.

1. We should be ready for His coming (Mt. 24:44; Luke 21:34-36; I John 2:28).

*But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 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. Luke 21:34-36*

*And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. I John 2:28*

2. We should be preaching about His coming (I Th. 4:17-18).

*Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

3. We should desire the second coming (II Pet. 3:10-13; I Th. 2:19).

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. II Peter 3:10-13*

*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? I Thessalonians 2:19*

4. We should be looking and watching for His coming (Luke 12:36-37; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28).

*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... Titus 2:11-13*

5. We should pray for the second coming (Rev. 22:20).

*He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

6. We should be patient in the event He delays His coming (II Th. 3:5; Jam. 5:7-11).

*Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. James 5:7-8*

B. Our personal readiness.

1. We should watch out for deception (Mt. 24:4).
  - a. Do not go after those who say “Christ is in the desert” (Mt. 24:23-26).
  - b. Do not be misled by signs and wonders (Mt. 24:11, 24 Compare: Mt. 7:15).
  - c. Be sober and alert and avoid spiritual drowsiness (I Th. 5:3-8).

*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. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.*

2. Do not allow fear to come in when natural signs begin to unfold (Mt. 24:6; Luke 21:26-28).

*And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. Matthew 24:6*

3. Keep your behavior excellent among the heathen as a testimony (I Pet. 2:11-12).

*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

C. Our attitude toward the lost.

1. We should make it a priority to preach the Gospel (Mt. 24:14).
2. We should compel them to come into the kingdom with a sense of urgency (Luke 14:22-23).

*And the servant said, “Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.” Then the master said to the servant, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”*

The word compel here is *anangkazoo* and it means “to necessitate, compel, drive to, constrain, whether by force, threats, etc., or by persuasion, entreaties, etc., or by other means” (Compare: II Cor. 12:11).

## **IX. What is the date of the Second Coming?**

A. The Bible teaches that no one knows the day or hour of the Second Coming.

1. The angels of heaven do not know (Mt. 24:36).

*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.*

2. Even Jesus in His earthly walk did not know (Mark 13:32).

*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*

3. Even the servants of the Lord do not know the specific time (Mt. 24:42-44).

*Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*

4. Some of this information comes from books of the Bible that are sealed until the time of the end and unless the seals are opened our understanding is veiled (Dan. 12:4; Rev. 5).

*But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase. Daniel 12:4*

5. To unbelievers and those believers who are asleep, He will come as a thief in the night (I Th. 5:2).

B. The Bible seems to indicate that those among His people who are watchful can know the times and seasons (Luke 19:44).

1. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees who should have had insight into the times and seasons of the Lord (Mt. 16:1-4; Luke 12:54-56).

2. God seems to be committed to His people, the children of the light, in letting them in on His plans (Gen. 18:17-19; I Th. 5:4).

*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.*  
I Thessalonians 5:4-6

C. Certain things must take place prior to the Second Coming of Christ.

1. On the negative side

- a. The man of sin is revealed (II Th. 2:3).

*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition...*

- b. A falling away or apostasy of many (II Th. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1-4).

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...*

- c. A general world-wide tribulation or persecution of the church (Mt. 24:29-35).

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

2. On the positive side.

- a. The Gospel is preached in the entire world (Mt. 24:14).

- b. The end-time world-wide harvest of souls comes in (Mt. 13:39).

- c. There is a restoration of all that was prophesied (Acts 3:19-21).

*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*

- d. The bride of Christ, the Church will have made herself ready (Eph. 5:27; Rev. 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.* Revelation 19:7

- D. God will let us know what we need to know when we need to know it. In the meantime we need to occupy this world, press into the kingdom, reach forth to the mark of the high calling and extend His kingdom until the whole earth is filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.