

# *The Rapture*

## *What is it and when will it occur?*

by Rodrigo Silva

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In John chapter 14, Jesus gave His disciples a promise that became the greatest hope of every believer in every age. Let us read it: *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know"*. (John 14:1- 4)

This is a reference to the rapture given by Jesus himself. Notice that He promised that He would prepare a place for His disciples promising also that they would be with Him wherever He was. Jesus was going to heaven ,so this means that He will be back to take His followers to heaven to be with Him.

### *But what is the rapture?*

In order for the Rapture to be understood, one must first understand the background of the Jewish marriage system which was present in the days of Jesus.

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, a Jewish scholar explains: "First, the father of the groom made the arrangements for the marriage and paid the bride price. The timing of the arrangement varied. Sometimes it occurred when both children were small, and at other times it was a year before the marriage itself. Often the bride and groom did not even meet until their wedding day.

The second step, which occurred a year or more after the first step, was the fetching of the bride. The bridegroom would go to the home of the bride in order to bring her to his home. In connection with this step, two other things should be noted. FIRST, it was the father of the groom who determined the timing. SECOND, prior to the groom's leaving to fetch the bride, he must already have a place prepared for her as their abode. This was followed by the third step, the wedding ceremony, to which a few would be invited. Prior to the wedding ceremony, the bride underwent a ritual immersion for ritual cleansing.

The fourth step, the marriage feast, would follow and could last for as many as seven days. Many more people would be invited to the feast than were to the marriage ceremony. In the Marriage of the Lamb all four of these steps of the Jewish wedding ceremony are evident. First, God the father made the arrangements for His Son and paid the bride price, which in this case was the blood of the Messiah .Just a long period of time (always at least one year) often transpired between the first and second steps of the Jewish marriage arrangement, this has been the case here. Almost two thousand years have now passed since the first step occurred. But in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, discussed earlier in this chapter, the second step will occur. The Rapture is the fetching of the Bride. Jesus will come in the air in order to fetch His bride to His home, which is in Heaven. Only God the Father knows the timing of this event (Mat.26:36). Furthermore, it will only happen once the place of residence has been prepared." (John 14:1-3)[1]

The Rapture event requires a translation of believers in Christ from earth to heaven. Paul the Apostle expands on this subject in his epistles to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians saying that it is the event in which the Lord will come back for His church. Let us read what he says to the Corinthians:

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

In this passage, Paul exhorts the Corinthians who had lost their hope in the resurrection of the body saying that there was no resurrection. But Paul writes to them saying that if Christ rose from the dead as the first fruits, we also shall raise in His coming. (Verses 22-23.)

In 1 Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul writes to the believers in Thessalonica who were concerned thinking that they were already going through the Great Tribulation because of the persecution they were facing and sad because of their relatives that had died before the coming of the Lord. In response, Paul comforts them with these words: *"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."* (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

In this passage Paul explains that the believers that had died before the coming of the Lord would not be left aside, for they would be risen by the Lord Himself, and we who remained alive would be caught up (RAPTURED) with them in the air, in other words, Christians will suddenly vanish from planet earth to be with Jesus in heaven.

Some deny the Rapture by saying that the word Rapture does not appear in the Bible. That is because they never read the Latin Bible which translates the Greek word Harpazzo as Rapturo, Raptus and Rapiemur as is the case in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The Italian Bible translates the word as Rapito.

The doctrine of the rapture has caused more confusion in the body of Christ than any other. The students of eschatology are not in agreement about when this event is going to take place, whether before the tribulation, in the middle of the tribulation or at the end of the tribulation. The problem is with the distinction between Israel and the Church in the plan of God for the events of the future.

The distinction between Israel and the church is essential to understand the future events that God has prepared to deal with the world. If that distinction is not made as is the case of many Bible commentators, a great confusion arises in the prophetic stage in regards to the Great Tribulation.

In our [Great Tribulation](#) study we see that the church was not present in the first 69 weeks of Daniel 9; therefore the church will not be present in the 70th week, for this period concerns only the Jewish people, not the Church on true believers in Jesus. But what about those who prove from the Bible that the church will go through this horrible period of persecution caused by the Antichrist? They are called Post-Tribulationists. They say that the church is the new Israel of God, therefore the Church will go through the Great Tribulation. We find in the Bible itself people who were Pre-tribulationists.

### ***Enoch, the first Pre-Tribulationist.***

In Genesis 5, we find a list of people who were born and died before the Flood. But Enoch did not die, in fact he was Raptured before the Great Tribulation of a worldwide flood.(Genesis 5:24). Enoch is a type of the church which will be Raptured before the Great Tribulation of a worldwide judgment from God just like the flood was.

### ***Abraham, the second Pre-Tribulationist.***

In Genesis 18, we find that God decides to bring judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness. Before God pours out His wrath against these two cities, Abraham asks the Lord if He would destroy the righteous with the wicked and the Lord says that He would not destroy the righteous with the wicked just as He will not judge His church with the wicked during the Great Tribulation.(Genesis 18:20-33).The intercession of Abraham for the righteous of Sodom and Gomorrah in this passage shows us that God does not destroy His followers with the wicked when He pours out His wrath.

### ***Lot, the third Pre-Tribulationist.***

In Genesis 19, we read of God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Just before He utterly destroys the cities with fire and brimstone, He sends angels to warn Lot and his family and tells them to leave the city so that God can bring His judgment against the wicked people of these cities.(Genesis 19:1-29)

In this passage of scripture, Lot and his family are a type of the church being Raptured before God pours out His wrath on a sinful world. Peter even makes a comment on this passage. He says:

"And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds; The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:" (2 Peter 2:6-9)

But what about Noah and his family who lived through the worldwide flood? Aren't they a type of the church going through the Great Tribulation that is yet future? No. They are a type of the 144,000 Jews of Revelation chapter 7 who will be protected by God through the worldwide destruction of the Great Tribulation. Post-Tribulationists point to the fact Jesus told His disciples that they would have tribulation in this world. They overlook the fact Jesus is referring to Satanic attacks against Christians, but The Great Tribulation is something totally different. It is God's wrath being poured out upon a Christ rejecting world even though Satan is used as one of God's tools to pour out His wrath.

Post-Tribulationists spiritualize the prophecies that refer to Israel as if they applied to the church. This doctrine is called Reconstructionism or Replacement Theology. Reconstructionists say that after Israel rejected the Messiah, the Messiah in turn rejected Israel making all the promises made to Israel fall on the church. The problem with this teaching is that it makes God a liar, for when God promised the land of Palestine to Abraham and his descendents, the promise was unconditional. In Ezekiel, we read that God would bring His people back to their land, not because of them, but because of the oath that He had taken saying that Israel would be His people forever and because of His holy name. Let us read what he says:

*"Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land. But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall*

*be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh,*

*and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded.*

*And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD."(Ezekiel 36:16-38)*

After a statement like this, I think it is impossible to think that God has forsaken His people.

There are those who say that Israel is no longer the chosen people of God. Let us read what God Himself has to say about this: *"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

*Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD."(Jeremiah 31:31-37)*

Here God says that if the sun, the moon and the stars stop shining, Israel will no longer be a nation before Him. Have you ever seen the sun, the moon and the stars stop shining? I believe that the answer is NO. Do not confuse the departing of these ordinances with the cosmic events of Matthew 24:29 that will be a divine judgment from God as we shall see below.

The Post-Tribulationists use the text of Matthew 24 to prove the church will go through the tribulation. It

states in Matthew 24: *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."* (Matthew 24:29-31)

In Mark 13 we read the same: *"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."* (Mark 13:24-27)

They say that the "ELECT" of Matthew and Mark are the believers who will go through the Great Tribulation and will then be gathered together (raptured) from the four corners of the earth. What they fail to realize is that Jesus is quoting several passages of the Old Testament which refer to the re-gathering of the Jews from the whole world to the land of Israel at the end of the Great Tribulation. Let us examine these passages: *"And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee."* (Deuteronomy 30:1- 4)

In this passage, God promises to bring back his people to their land from the uttermost parts of heaven as we see Jesus quoting this verse in Matthew 24:31.

*"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."* (Isaiah 11:11-12)

Again we see that the elect of Matthew 24 are the Jews who are scattered to the four corners of the earth. *"And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all. Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."* (Eze. 37:21-28)

Notice that God said He will gather the Jews from every side as Jesus said in Matthew 24 and He even goes on to say that it is He who sanctifies Israel in verse 28.

*"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness. . . Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you."* (Zechariah 8; 7-8, 22-23)

Notice that in the last verse all the nations will ask a JEW to take them with him for they will know that God is in the midst of the JEWS again.

When we examine the context of Matthew 24, we see that Jesus is referring to the Jews and not the church. In verse 15 He mentions the Abomination of Desolation which will occur in the Jewish temple that will be built in Jerusalem. In verse 16 He mentions those who are in Judea will flee to the mountains, which is a reference to the Jews who will be living in Israel at that time. Verse 20 mentions the Sabbath, a reference to the sabbatical law of the Old Testament that will be observed by the Jews when they return to Palestine. I watched a video entitled *25 Messianic Signs in Israel Today*, and the narrator said he had to turn off the camera because the Sabbath was about to begin. The Israeli authorities would not allow the camera to keep recording.

On the other hand, Jesus tells His disciples the following words: *"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."* (Luke 21:36)

The prophetic sermon of Luke 21 is basically the same as Matthew 24, but here in Luke, Jesus is speaking to His disciples who had put their faith in Him before the period of the Great Tribulation after having spoken about the destruction of the Jerusalem and the Diaspora of the Jews in 70 A.D.

In verses 20-24, He speaks about the cosmic events and natural disasters of the seven years of the tribulation period. In verse 25-26, He speaks about His second coming. In verse 27-28 He speaks about the parable of the fig tree and in verses 29-33 He exhorts His followers to be watching so they will stand before Him before the events of the tribulation which is a reference to the rapture.

The problem of not knowing the prophetic passages of the Old Testament or to spiritualize them as if they were for the church causes too much confusion in interpreting the prophetic passages of the New Testament. Paul the Apostle gives us some information about this in the book of Romans: *"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew . . . For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:"* (Romans 11;1-2; 25-26)

And in this same chapter, Paul warns the gentiles not to boast against the Jews for having obtained salvation: *"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be,*

*but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." (Romans 11:13-21)*

These branches are the Jews and the wild olive tree is the gentiles. Here Paul warns the gentiles not to boast against the branches (the Jews), for it is not the gentiles that bear the root, but the root (God) bears the branches. At the end of verse 16 he says the branches are holy. It is amazing the number of Christian denominations that reject the branches (the Jews) saying they were cast out forever. But Paul says that the branches (the Jews) will be grafted again: *"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" (Romans 11:22-24)*

### ***The Church Will be in Heaven at the Time of the Tribulation***

Before we start, I want to make it very clear that the term CHURCH here implied, does not refer to a building or a denomination as we think when we speak about the church. The word church here refers to those people who are followers of Jesus and who trust only in His redemptive work on Calvary's cross regardless of any denomination, be it Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Catholic etc.. With the exception of the Roman Catholic Church which teaches its members that Mary and the Saints are alternate ways to salvation, something which contradicts the Bible. I Timothy 2:5 says that Jesus is the ONLY mediator between God and men, all the other denominations agree that Jesus is the only way to God as Jesus Himself told his followers in John 14:6. Nevertheless, there are many people in denominations that never come to a full knowledge of the truth, and are not born again. Jesus said in John 3 you must be born again and Peter confirmed a new birth which takes place in someone's life through the Word of God acting in the hearts of the listeners.( 1 Peter 1:23).

There are many people in all these denominations that have an appearance of religiosity but never become born again and experience a relationship with Christ. These people usually trust in their good works, rituals, sacraments and legalism, things which do not count for salvation, for the Bible says that no one will be justified by works, no one will boast before God for having obtained salvation, but only by faith in the redemptive work of Jesus which is the only thing accepted by God for justification for sins. Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 3:11 and the entire book of Romans.

### ***The Church in Heaven***

The book of Revelation has a divine outline given by the author (God) which divides the book in three chronological sessions. *"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;" (Revelation 1:19)*

#### **This division would be:**

- 1- The things which thou hast seen: The vision of the glorified Christ in chapter 1
- 2- The things which are: The things of the church in chapters 3 & 4
- 3- The things which shall be hereafter: The visions of chapter 4 through 22

The phrase "hereafter" in verse 19 in the Greek is META TAUTA. In chapter 4, the first phrase contains "After this" which is the same phrase META TAUTA in the Greek.

After this (META TAUTA) I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter (META TAUTA). (Revelation 4:1)

Therefore we see that the phrase "hereafter" and "after this" which is the same in the Greek, refers to the things of the church in chapters 2 and 3, re-appears in chapter 4 indicating that the things of the church have come to an end, thus bringing church history to a close here on earth and now the vision points to heaven in chapters 4 and 5 and comes back to the earth in chapter 6.

In recent decades, some scholars have discovered that the seven churches found in Revelation 2 and 3, represent prophetically seven eras of the church here on earth. What is interesting is that there were hundreds of churches at that time including the churches of Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, Rome and Thessalonica, but Jesus for some special reason chose these seven. If the order of these churches was inverted, the prophetic aspect would not fit as we will see.

#### **Church of Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7)**

Represents the Apostolic period from 30 A.D. to 100 A.D.

#### **Church of Smyrna (Revelation 2:8 -11)**

Represents the period of Roman persecution from 100 A.D to 313 A.D.

#### **Church of Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17)**

Represents the period in which the church married the state under the reign of Constantine from 313 A.D. to 590 A.D.

#### **Church of Thyatira (Revelation 2:19-29)**

Represents the period when Babylonian practices represented by the idolatry caused by the false prophetess named Jezebel (verse 20) were introduced in the church under the power of the Popes from 590 A.D. to 1517 A.D.

#### **Church of Sardis (Revelation 3:1- 6)**

Represents the period of the Protestant Reformation when the church had a name (denomination) of being alive, but was dead from 1517 A.D. to 1790 A.D. notice that Jesus had nothing good to say about this church.

#### **Church of Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13)**

Represents the period of the missionary church that had an open door (verse 8) when the gospel was preached to many nations by the great missionaries who did not miss the chance of having that open door from 1790 A.D. to 1900 A.D.. It also represents the faithful believers who did not deny Jesus' name and kept the word of His patience (verse 10). Notice that in verse 10 Jesus promises to these faithful believers that He would keep them from the Tribulation.

#### **Church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22)**

Represents the period of the apostate and materialistic church from 1900 A.D to the present time thus being the last period of the church here on earth before the next event in the chronological order of Revelation which will be the rapture indicating that we are very close to that blessed hope. (Titus 2:13)

Our day is really characterized by the Laodicean church with its false Theology of prosperity, pastors who only worry about tithes and offerings without being concerned for the salvation of souls and lack of Biblical truth. Jesus said that he was outside of this church, for we read: *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."* (Rev 3:19-20)

In this passage, Jesus was speaking to "Christians" and not to non-Christians. He claims to be out of this materialistic church, for the Laodicean church claimed to be rich. May the Lord have mercy and lead this generation to study His word especially the book of Revelation.

By the way, there are those who call themselves "Pastors" and "Theologians" and say the book of Revelation should not be studied. They say the book is too symbolic and should not be taught in the church. Their obligation is to know that 404 verses found in Revelation contain almost 800 allusions to the Old Testament explain the meaning of these symbols. Do not believe this idea, for Revelation is the only book in the Bible that promises a blessing for those who read and those who hear the words of this book. Let us read it: *"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."* (Revelation 1:3)

Therefore, I strongly believe Revelation should be taught verse by verse once a year in churches from a futuristic perspective and not historical (past) or symbolical one (without literal meanings) as do many teachers today, for the book claims to be a prophecy (future events) in verse 3 of chapter 1.

In studying the book of Revelation, we find the word CHURCH many times between chapters 1 and 3. But when we get to chapter 4, something very subtle happens; the word church disappears and reappears in chapter 22. The seven years of the Great Tribulation are described in detail beginning in chapter 6 with the opening of the seals, the first seal showing a man riding a white horse with a bow without arrows going forth conquering and to conquer. This man riding the white horse is the coming Antichrist who will appear in the world scene with a peace plan represented by the white horse and conquering the world with diplomacy represented by the bow without arrows.

The seven years will culminate with the return of Jesus in chapter 19. But before the seven years begin in chapter 6, the church mysteriously disappears from the earth in chapter 4 and is seen in heaven in chapter 5, and the titles of Jesus which refer to the church are dramatically changed to Jewish titles as "The Lion of the tribe of Judah" and "The Lamb that was slain" in the next chapters. What happened to the church in chapter 4 so that it is no longer on earth? When we study the visions of the throne of God in Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10 and in Isaiah chapter 6, we basically find the same elements in both prophets. But when we study the vision of the throne of God in Revelation 4, we find 24 mysterious beings that were not in the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah. Who are these beings?

According to John's vision these are 24 elders who represent a group. They were dressed in white raiment and had upon their heads crowns of gold. In Revelation 3, Jesus makes a promise to the church of Sardis: *"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."* (Revelation 3:5-6)

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

Notice that the promises made by Jesus to both churches refer to white raiment and crowns of gold. There are two Greek words for crowns in Revelation. The first is Stephanos and the second is Diadema. The

word stephanos is used in both passages about the church and the 24 elders. The word diadem is used in Revelation 12 for the dragon and in Revelation 13 for the beast that comes out of the sea. These 24 elders cannot be angels, for in chapter 7 we read the following words: *"And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God."* (Revelation 7:11)

Notice that the text says "all the angels" and not most angels. Therefore these 24 elders cannot be angelic beings. Another clue to the identity of these 24 elders is in the Old Testament. When King David organized the divisions of the priests to represent the people before God, he chose 24 divisions.

*"Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children: therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office. And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service. And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar, and thus were they divided. Among the sons of Eleazar there were sixteen chief men of the house of their fathers, and eight (16+8 = 24) among the sons of Ithamar according to the house of their fathers. Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another; for the governors of the sanctuary, and governors of the house of God, were of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar. And Shemaiah the son of Nethaneel the scribe, one of the Levites, wrote them before the king, and the princes, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and before the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites: one principal household being taken for Eleazar, and one taken for Ithamar. Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiiah, The third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, The fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, The ninth to Jeshuah, the tenth to Shecaniah, The eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, The thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, The fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, The seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Aphses, The nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, The one and twentieth to Jachin, the two and twentieth to Gamul, The three and twentieth to Delaiah, the FOUR and TWENTIETH to Maaziah. These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him."*(I Chronicles 24:1-19)

In this passage we find a similar setting to the book of Revelation. This group of 24 priests represented all the people of Israel before the tabernacle which was a model of the throne of God.( see Hebrews 8:1-5)

We can also identify these 24 elders by the song that they sing in chapter 5: *"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed US to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made US unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."* (Revelation 5:8-10)

Notice that they sing in the song that they were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and were made kings and priests unto God. These can only be human beings, for angels cannot be redeemed. It seems that God has given us all the information to identify the 24 elders as representatives of the entire church before the throne of God.

### ***Passages which Prove that the Church will not go through the Tribulation***

When Paul the Apostle wrote his first epistle to the Thessalonians, he said: *"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. So that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had*

*unto you, and how ye 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, which delivered us from the wrath to come."*(1 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

Notice that in the last verse he says we will wait for Jesus to come from heaven to deliver us from the wrath to come. This wrath is the judgment of God against the inhabitants of the earth in tribulation period. In chapter 5, he says this: *"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."* (1 Thessalonians 5:1-10)

Here again Paul says in verse 9 that God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation. The previous verses apply to those who are asleep, namely, the inhabitants of the earth.

In Revelation 3, Jesus gave this promise to the church of Philadelphia: *"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."* (Revelation 3:10)

In this passage we see a promise given by Jesus Himself that He would keep the faithful believers from *"the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."*

We believers are not earth dwellers, but only pilgrims who are passing through this world, for the Lord said that we are not of the world: *"And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."* (John 17:3-14)

An Old Testament mention of the rapture which many commentators miss is found in Isaiah. *"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."* (Isa 26:9-21).

Notice that Isaiah mentions the resurrection of those who sleep in the dust of the earth in verse 19 even as Paul mentions the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. In verse 20, God says to His people to enter into their chambers and shut the doors to hide from the indignation even as Jesus said that in his father's house are many mansions and was going to prepare a place for us in John 14:1-3, for in verse 21, the Lord will come out of His place to punish ALL the inhabitants of the EARTH for their iniquity.

This is undoubtedly a reference to the Rapture before the wrath of God is poured out over the entire planet earth. Some would not consider this passage in Isaiah as talking about the Pre-Tribulational Rapture because Paul refers to the Rapture as a "mystery" in 1 Corinthians 15. The word "mystery" refers to something that was not revealed in the Old Testament, but made known in the New Testament. Maybe what Paul was saying is that this doctrine was not explicitly revealed because the time had not yet come

for this doctrine to be understood by God's people as was the case of Daniel not understanding the prophecies in his day.(Daniel 12:8-9)

Furthermore, this section of Isaiah is talking about the Great Tribulation beginning with chapter 24 which talks about God's wrath being poured out upon the earth for braking the everlasting covenant (Isaiah 27:5) which is the covenant of the death of Jesus on the cross and ending with chapter 27 which talks about the deliverance of Israel from the persecution caused by leviathan the piecing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent, the dragon that is in the sea.(Isaiah 27:1-13).Leviathan the serpent, the dragon that is in the sea is the same red dragon-serpent known as Satan and the Devil of Revelation 12:9 and the beast that comes out of the sea in Revelation 13:1.

After the seven years of tribulation, the church will reign on the earth with Jesus as we see in Revelation: *"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."* (Rev. 19:11-14)

Notice that the armies that follow Him are clothed in fine linen white and clean which is the righteousness of the saints, for in verse 8, we read: *"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."* (Rev. 19:7-8)

These saints are the believers of all ages who were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and that washed their garments in His blood. After the church comes back with Jesus, she will reign for a thousand years with Him as we see in Revelation 20: *"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."* (Revelation 20:6)

This coming will occur at the campaign of Armageddon when all the nations of the earth will come against Israel to exterminate the Jews and to destroy Jesus: Let us examine all the passages which refer to this event: *"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed (Christ) , saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."* (Psalm 2:1-12)

*"For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink. Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head; Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things: The children also of Judah and the*

*children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompence upon your own head: And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the LORD hath spoken it. Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion."* (Joel 3:1-21)

Notice that in the beginning of the above passage, God says that He will plead with all the nations of the world for having parted (divided) His land. Never in the history of the world was the land of Israel parted by nations trying to bring a two state solution between Israelis and Palestinians until the formations of the United Nation. We see in the passage below that Jerusalem would be a burdensome stone ( a heavy problem) to all the peoples (nations) of the world. Again, that never happened before until the formation of the United Nations. For Israel to be a problem to all the nations, first ,there would have to be an organization that would unite all the nations into one body. That is what we see today with the existence of the United Nations and their concerns with the land of Israel.

*"The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it."* (Zechariah 12:1-3)

*"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that*

*day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one. All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth." (Zechariah 14:1-12)*

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

Notice that the last sentence says that the kings of the earth will be gathered together in a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. Contrary to many theories that describe Armageddon as an event, the Bible says it is a geographical place. The word Armageddon is a compound word that means "Mountain of Megiddo". This place is located in northern Israel southeast of Haifa and is a valley described by Dr. John F. Walvoord, a great prophecy scholar as being fourteen miles wide and twenty miles long.[\[2\]](#)

This place will be the center of the final World War where Satan will gather the armies of the world to fight the armies of heaven in the second coming of Jesus Christ to the earth to rescue the nation of Israel from total annihilation. But as the Scriptures describe, there will be no real battle, for Jesus will destroy all the armies gathered against Him with the words of His mouth.(Revelation 19:15). In this event, millions on millions of soldiers and ungodly people will die for having turned against their own Creator.

If I am not a believer, what must I do to receive the promise of being Raptured? God has great news for you. He provided a way by which all who desire might be saved, for we read: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son (Jesus), that whosoever believeth in him should not perish ( in hell) , but have everlasting life (in heaven). For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."*(John 3:16)

In Romans Paul says: *"For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him (Jesus) shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (Rom 10:11-13)

And John says: *"But as many as received him (Jesus), to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* (John 1:12-13)

And the Lord himself says: *"And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* (John 14:4-6)



Picture of the Valley of Armageddon

Make a decision for Jesus today and: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."* (Acts 16:31)

Notes

[1] ( Arnold Fruchtenbaum, The Footsteps of the Messiah A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events, Revised Edition, Ariel Ministries,Tustin,California,2003.pg. 160-161)

[2] ( John F. Walvoord, Every Prophecy of the Bible, Chariot Victor Publishing, Colorado Springs, Colorado,1990,1999,pg.600)

### **Apologies from the ministry**

We want to apologize for any spelling and grammatical errors in our writings. As you might have noticed, we are from Brazil and English is not our first language. We do everything by ourselves including the creation and editing of the web site from our computer at home since we do not have a hired web master. We do not have anybody available at the moment to help us correct the English for us since this ministry is run by one person alone. Thank you for your support and for taking the time to read our material.

Rodrigo Silva.

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