

The Rapture Revealed

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The MESSIAH and The Doctrine of Imminency

There are several unrelated Theological words in the English language that sound remarkably similar to one another.

There is the word “Immanent”, with an “a”, which means that GOD is working within His creation, and He is not far from each one of us, even though He transcends His creation.

There is the word “Eminent”, with 2 “E’s”, which means that something is high and lifted up, or greatly respected.

And there is the word “Imminent”, with 2 “I’s”, which means that something is just about to happen at any time.

So today, as we discuss the doctrine of Imminence, we will be specifically speaking about a particular teaching of dispensational theology, that emphatically states that something is ready to happen at any time, without a moment’s notice. And that something is “the rapture”!

According to many popular pre-tribulational, dispensationalist leaders, the foundational proof of a pre-tribulational rapture is the doctrine of Imminency. And history records that it was this concept of a rapture that could happen at any moment that led John Nelson Darby, of the Plymouth Brethren, to first teach the pre-tribulational rapture in the 1800’s.

So today, we will be answering a very specific question from Scripture, and that question is: Did the MESSIAH or His Apostles teach that the Rapture is Imminent, or did they teach that certain things must take place before the Rapture will occur? This fundamental question must be asked and answered very carefully, since it is the very foundation of the pre-tribulational rapture teaching of dispensationalism.

Now before we can discuss this important subject, we should begin by briefly reviewing what the Rapture actually is! And for that, we will turn to the quintessential Rapture passage. You see, there is only one passage that the word “Rapture” can be traced back to; and word “Rapture” descended from the fourth century Latin Vulgate translation of that passage.

In 1st Thessalonians, Paul wrote: **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.**¹

Our Brother Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica because they had lost loved ones in their afflictions and tribulations, and Paul did not want them to hopelessly mourn over those who had fallen asleep (or physically died) in JESUS. So, to provide comfort to those who were mourning, Paul explained that those who physically die in CHRIST will physically rise from the dead at the return of JESUS. And then, those who were still alive and awaiting His return would be caught up together with the resurrected saints to meet the LORD in the air!

So, Paul’s purpose here was comfort; it was not a detailed explanation of the sequence of the LORD’s return. And Chapter 5 verse 1 of this same letter confirms this conclusion. But we must remember that the chapter and verse numbers in our Bibles are not inspired; they were added much later by men to help people find passages more quickly. So, Paul did not intend for us to see a division between chapter 4 and chapter 5 of this letter.

But before we see how those two chapters were never meant to be read separately, I must explain: it is from this passage of comfort and reassurance, that we get the word “Rapture”, from the Latin translation of the words “caught up”. Therefore, the Rapture is undisputedly the “catching up” of those who belong to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, when He returns in the clouds at the sound of the trumpet of GOD!

And very clearly, this “catching up” involves a resurrection of those who sleep in CHRIST, at His return. So, the return of the MESSIAH, the sounding of the trumpet of

¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

GOD, the resurrection, and the catching up together of the remaining saints at all happen simultaneously, according to this passage where the term “Rapture” originated.

Now, over the last three hundred years some teachers have begun to claim that these four events are Imminent; and they could take place before we even finish meeting together here today. Meanwhile, for the last 2000 years, many other teachers have explained that there are some specific prophecies of the Bible that must be fulfilled before these events take place. And this controversy is why we must determine what the Bible actually teaches!

But before we hear more from GOD’s holy word on this important subject, let’s listen to some popular dispensational teachers, as they explain their teaching of an imminent rapture in their own words...

<https://youtu.be/qs1yBKJhkfs> 7:27-17:00

We can all plainly see that each of those teachers believes that the rapture is the very next event on the prophetic timeline. But, like the Bereans who Scripture called “noble-minded” for checking everything Paul told them against the Word of GOD, we should check to see what the Bible actually says about the sequence of future events such as the Rapture!

But before we do that, let me quickly address two of the points you just heard; beginning with Hal Lindsay’s addition of the words “sudden” and “secret” to Matthew chapter 24, verses 41 and 42.

Prior to speaking about one being taken and the other left behind, JESUS listed over a dozen very specific signs to look for prior to His return. And then, He explained: “when you see all these things, know that [His return] is near—at the doors!”.

But after saying that we can know when His return is near, then JESUS added: “no man knows the day or the hour”. Or in other words, JESUS gave us the ability to see when His return was very near, but not the ability to know the specific day or hour of His second coming!

And, since JESUS mentioned Noah and the flood before He mentioned “one will be taken and the other left”, we should note: the flood was not “secret” or “sudden” for Noah and his family! No, it was only “secret” and “sudden” for those wicked sinners who rejected GOD’s Word! Thus, in the same way, the LORD’s return will not be secret or sudden for those who have received a love of the truth to be saved!

Therefore, when JESUS said: “one will be taken, and one will be left” He was not saying that His return would surprise His true disciples! No, He was referring back to how only Noah and his family were saved in the flood, as well as how He had said earlier: “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”.

You see, the point of “one will be taken, and the other will be left” is this: the angels will know “the elect” who belong to JESUS; and they will gather them and only them! But they will leave those who are not faithful followers of JESUS behind, to face the then-inescapable wrath of the MESSIAH.

Just as Peter once explained: “the LORD knows how to deliver the godly out of trials and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.” So, like Noah, we have been warned of what is coming; and we need to be obediently prepared “in CHRIST” when He returns, just like Noah was prepared “in the Ark”.

Now, in regards to the claim: “we are to be waiting for the return of JESUS, therefore ‘no signs should precede His second coming’”; I ask you: can you be earnestly waiting for the Feast of Tabernacles even while you still know the Day of Trumpets will be our next celebration? Obviously, we don’t earnestly wait for the revelation of the antichrist, or the abomination of desolation, but that does not mean that those things can’t precede the LORD’s return! So, passages that tell us to “look for” or “wait for” our LORD’s return from Heaven cannot eliminate passages that explain what we should expect to see while we wait for His appearing!

And having said that, the fact is that Paul (who actually wrote the Rapture passage in 1st Thessalonians) later wrote to the exact same believers in the exact same church: **Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 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, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?**²

Please notice, this passage plainly indicates that Paul expected certain things to happen before “the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST and our gathering together to Him”. Also, in this passage, Paul makes it clear that he believed the coming of the LORD and our gathering together to Him would occur on the same day.

You see, the first thing we must notice about Paul’s letters to the Thessalonian Church is that in both of these passages Paul uses a Greek definite article that is the equivalent of our English word: “The”, before he describes “the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST”. And this means that Paul only expected one coming, or “par-oo-see’-ah” in the Greek.

² 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5

If Paul had used an indefinite article, like our English word “a”, then we could consider the possibility that there might be more than one coming, or “par-oo-see'-ah”. But the definite article Paul used in both of these passages means that we can only expect one return of our LORD. And the fact is: two returns of JESUS seven years apart cannot be two stages of a singular second coming!

Now, a second fact we must recognize about Paul’s choice of words in His second letter to the Thessalonian church is that he said “our gathering together to Him”. And this reveals that Paul most certainly expected to be gathered to JESUS with the rest of the saints on what he called “the day of CHRIST”, or “that day”.

Thus, by mentioning these two events, namely the coming of the LORD and our gathering together to Him, and then explaining that they both occur on the same day, called the Day of CHRIST, Paul permanently connected the Day of CHRIST and the Rapture in this passage! And then Paul explained what must come before that day, chronologically.

You see, Paul proved the antichrist must be on the world stage before JESUS returns, when he went on to write: **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. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.**³

And that word translated here as “coming”, is the same Greek word Paul used earlier in both of his letters to the Thessalonians; and it is pronounced: par-oo-see'-ah! So, if JESUS destroys the antichrist with the brightness of His coming, the antichrist must be revealed before the coming of JESUS!

Yes, with all of these details, Paul makes it very, very clear that the coming of JESUS and our gathering together to Him will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed; when He sits as GOD in the temple of GOD, showing himself that he is GOD!

Therefore, Paul did not think that the return of JESUS and the gathering together of the saints could occur until after at least two very specific prophecies were fulfilled; namely the apostasy and the abomination of desolation. Yet Paul still looked forward to the LORD’s return!

However, to try to get around the obvious problem that this passage presents to their shaky theory, the pre-tribulational rapture teacher will say that this portion of the letter is referring to a second gathering of the saints and a second-“second coming” of JESUS, after the Tribulation.

³ 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8

But it is obvious here (as even Chuck Missler even mentioned), that Paul expected to be gathered together with the saints to the LORD after the great falling away and the abomination of desolation. And we know this because Paul used the word “our” when referring to being gathered together!

So, Paul taught that there was only one gathering together to the LORD, at His singular coming! And Paul believed that all of those who belong to JESUS would be gathered together to the LORD at one time, after two very specific prophetic events!

But Paul is not the only one to describe this clear sequence of events, because JESUS very clearly described this same pattern to His disciples in Matthew 24! And many of the prophecy teachers we just heard from quoted from this very important passage, in an attempt to prove their teachings about imminence.

Matthew records: **“Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” 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?”**⁴

We now know that the temple was destroyed, and the LORD’s first prophecy in verse 2 was fulfilled, in 70 AD. But JESUS has obviously not yet returned to earth. So, this means that most of what JESUS will say next here in Matthew, is answering the question: “what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age.”

And, while warning of great deception surrounding the details of His return, JESUS answered them by saying: “Take heed that no one deceives you.” Our LORD and Savior, and His Apostle Paul, included serious warnings about deception, in regards to the timing, circumstances, and sequence of the LORD’s return. And we would be wise to note these warnings and heed them!

Plus, JESUS makes it clear that part of this deception would be false messiahs, when He said: **“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.”**⁵

Then, after the warning about many false messiah’s, JESUS warned: **“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,**

⁴ Matthew 24:1-3

⁵ Matthew 24:5

and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. “All these are the beginning of sorrows.”⁶

And after these clear signs, JESUS added: **“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. “And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. “But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”⁷**

Then JESUS finished his list of signs by saying: **“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.”⁸** So, in general: false messiahs, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, tribulation, persecution, deception, and lawlessness lead up to the LORD’s return. But JESUS is about to get very specific now about what sign we must look for; and He even explains exactly what some of His disciples must do, when this next sign appears.

He said: **“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. “Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. “And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! “And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. “And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”⁹**

That “abomination of Desolation standing in the holy place” is exactly what Paul told the Thessalonians must precede the LORD’s return and our being gathered together to Him! Yes, Paul described the Abomination of Desolation when he wrote about “the man of sin” being “in the temple of GOD”, declaring that he is GOD!

And, just as JESUS mentioned, “the holy place” is in Judea, because it is a sacred room in GOD’s temple, that is always located in the City of Jerusalem, that is found in the province of Judea!

Also, we must note, JESUS said to His closest disciples: “when you see the abomination of desolation”! JESUS did not say, “when the left behind Jews see the abomination of desolation”, as the pre-tribulational dispensationalist would teach!

⁶ Matthew 24:6-8

⁷ Matthew 24:9-13

⁸ Matthew 24:14

⁹ Matthew 24:15-22

Clearly JESUS gave this warning to His disciples, and He warned those in Judea who see the Abomination of Desolation to flee to the mountains, and pray that their flight may not be in the winter or on the Sabbath!

Meanwhile, some dispensationalist teachers will try to claim that this passage is only for those that JESUS called “the elect”. And then they will say that “‘the elect’ are the Jews”. Therefore, they wrongly teach: “Matthew chapter 24 should not be considered authoritative in regards to the timing of the rapture of the disciples of the LORD!”

But when they tell you that the term “the elect” means “Jew”, please ask them why Paul wrote to the Colossians to say: “**[You] have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.**”¹⁰ Clearly Paul did not think the phrase “the Elect” was only referring to Jews!

Yes, if the term “elect” is only referring to “Jews” as those confused teachers claim, why does Peter write to those “**who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.**”¹¹, saying: **She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you”?**¹²

Friends, no respectable theologian reads: “**He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against GOD’s elect?**”¹³ and claims that this passage is only about Jews! So please don’t let anyone deceive you with deceptive words! If someone tries to tell you that “the elect” in Matthew 24 must be understood to be “Jews” instead of “Christian saints”, they are deceived! That is not a biblical idea by any stretch of the imagination!

In Matthew 24, the signs JESUS spoke of were proclaimed to all of His disciples; and He makes that clear when He uses phrases like: “when you see” and “pray that your flight”! But these are not the only phrases that prove the disciples were to consider themselves part of this passage until the very end, because next JESUS also said...

“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.”

¹⁰ Colossians 3:10-12

¹¹ 1 Peter 2:10

¹² 1 Peter 5:13

¹³ Romans 8:32-33

“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.”¹⁴

All through Matthew chapter 24 JESUS keeps speaking directly to His Apostles, using the pronoun “you”, and giving them direct imperative commands. Clearly, the words He was speaking were meant for those who heard them! And, if the events He described did not happen in their lifetime, then His words were to directly apply to every successive generation of the Church!

Then, the first time JESUS mentions His coming (or “par-oo-see'-ah”) in this passage, He says: **“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. “For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.”¹⁵**

Please notice, like Paul, JESUS used the definite article when describing His coming, so we should only expect one return of our LORD.

And the prophets are clear that the “carcasses” JESUS was speaking of in Matthew 24 will be in the valley of Armageddon. So the eagles will be there to feast on the flesh of kings and rulers!

Plus, no one will miss the brightness of the LORD’s coming; just as no one misses a flash of lightning across the sky!

But after this description of how His coming will appear, JESUS describes very specifically when His coming will occur in time. And He explained the unmistakable sign of His arrival by saying: **“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.”¹⁶**

According to His own words: JESUS is coming “after the tribulation”, and “after” the Biblical signs of the Day of the LORD appear; when the sun, moon and stars go dark!

And this means that unless we see these very specific signs that are only ever mentioned in passages that describe “the Day of the LORD”, we must not believe it when someone tells us that the Messiah is in the desert or the upper rooms!

Also, according to our MESSIAH, “all the tribes of the earth” will know when the King of kings and the LORD of lords returns. In fact, they will all see Him coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory! So, even though we all look forward to our

¹⁴ Matthew 24:23-26

¹⁵ Matthew 24:27-28

¹⁶ Matthew 24:29-30

LORD's return, His coming is singular, it is not secret, and it is not currently imminent! Because JESUS Himself said that He would return immediately after the tribulation!

But JESUS did not end there, because He went on to describe in great detail the rapture of His saints, by saying: **“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.”**¹⁷

The Bible plainly teaches: after the tribulation, JESUS will destroy the antichrist with the brightness of His coming. And while He is still in the clouds over the Mount of Olives, we will be gathered to him, whether we are alive or asleep in Him. And thus we will always be with the LORD!

This is the first resurrection, and there are no secret resurrections before it! And we know this because, just after JESUS arrives in glory in Revelation 19, Scripture says: **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.**¹⁸

And this means that during the darkest days of the tribulation, when satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet are calling together the kings of the earth for the great battle of the day of the LORD (which Revelation calls Armageddon), Scripture teaches that we can look up and know that our redemption is at hand!

Yes, the Bible makes this point indisputably clear, because JESUS said in Revelation 16 (just as the final events that will lead up to Armageddon were unfolding): **“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”**¹⁹

And this passage actually leads us to the main reason why our beloved brothers and sisters in the dispensationalist movement believe and teach the doctrine of imminence. And that reason is the Biblical concept of “a thief in the night”.

You see, in the same Olivet discourse where JESUS plainly listed the signs that would precede his coming (such as the ‘great tribulation’), our LORD also said: **“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. “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.**

¹⁷ Matthew 24:31

¹⁸ Revelation 20:6

¹⁹ Revelation 16:15

“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.”²⁰

So, when John Nelson Darby studied Scripture, and especially these verses; instead of seeing them as a warning against living in sin so that JESUS did not come upon us like a thief when He returned, He essentially thought: “if JESUS plainly listed the signs of His coming, but later compared His coming to a thief breaking in at night when the homeowner least expected it, there must be a secret coming of the LORD that is imminent, that could happen at any moment!” And in this way the doctrine of Imminence was born from these passages.

Then, from the 1830’s onward, Darby and the Dispensationalist movement he founded taught that the LORD’s pretribulational return and the Rapture could occur at any time, like a thief in the night. Thus, the concept of “the Rapture” and “the Thief in the Night” were firmly tied together through the dispensational doctrine of imminence.

But the problem with Darby’s interpretation was that it relied on separating the Day of the LORD, that He readily admitted would occur after the Tribulation, from his concept of a secret, imminent, pre-tribulational rapture that would come “like a Thief in the Night”.

And I say that the separation of the Biblical metaphor of JESUS coming like “a thief in the night” from the day the Bible calls “The Day of the LORD” was a problem, because JESUS, Paul, Peter, and John all directly connect the Day of the LORD and the Thief in the Night together in Scripture!

For example, in the passage Paul wrote that became the quintessential rapture passage, Paul went on to say: **But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.**²¹

The chapter divisions you see in your Bible were invented by a Roman Catholic Bishop in the 1300’s, and Paul never intended for us to see a pause or separation between his description of the rapture and these words! So, without that division, we can see that Paul taught that we would be caught up to be with JESUS on the Day of the LORD! But we can also see that Paul plainly taught that it was the Day of the LORD that would come as a thief in the night; not a separate, secret, pretribulational rapture!

But in Scripture, the Day of the LORD is always preceded by the gathering of the nations in the valley of decision, otherwise known as the valley of Megiddo, or

²⁰ Matthew 24:36-44

²¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

Armageddon. Plus, the Biblical Day of the LORD is always preceded by the sun and moon and stars going dark, and the powers of the heavens being shaken.

This is why Peter writes: **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?**²²

Yet, about this same “Day of the LORD”, just after describing the rapture to the Thessalonian church, Paul then explained: **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. 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.**²³

If 1st Thessalonians chapter 4 was telling the church in Thessalonica they would be raptured out of the world before the Day of the LORD, why would Paul later tell that same church (in that same letter) that they were not in darkness so the Day of the LORD would not come upon them like a thief! Paul expected them to be present on the Day of the LORD! But because they lived sober lives of righteousness in faith, hope, and love; he knew that they would be caught up to meet the LORD in the air just before the LORD consumed all the workers of lawlessness with the brightness of His coming!

Truly, JESUS will come like a thief in the night only on those who walk in the spiritual darkness of sin! But for all of us who (like Noah) have received a love of the truth to be saved, the Day of the LORD will not come upon us as a thief! And this is what the Scriptures plainly teach, when we allow them all to speak together in harmony, from the very first Hebrew word of Genesis to the very last Greek word of Revelation

The MESSIAH and The Pre-Trib Rapture

The firm, unchangeable, unshakable foundation of MESSIAH Theology is: that **“JESUS our MESSIAH is the key to properly understanding the Word of GOD”**.

And that obvious and unchallengeable principle also led us to conclude that our second rule of interpretation must state: **“the writings of the Apostles and Disciples**

²² 2 Peter 3:10-12

²³ 1 Thessalonians 5:4-10

of JESUS also reveal the MESSIAH's infallible understanding of the Word of GOD".

Now, I began today by calling your attention to these two foundational rules of MESSIAH Theology to point out **this** seemingly obvious fact - the Apostles and Disciples of our LORD **would not, could not, and did not** abandon, contradict, or challenge the teachings of JESUS CHRIST, or they would not have been His Apostles or Disciples.

On the contrary, John wrote: **Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.**²⁴

And Paul warned: **If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.**²⁵

Clearly, John commanded us to avoid even ***greeting*** those who don't firmly hold onto the teachings of JESUS. And Paul plainly told us to ***withdraw*** from anyone who taught anything contrary to the teachings of our LORD, or refused to consent to His words. So, we can be sure that the Apostles and Disciples of JESUS were fully submitted to every word that proceeded from the mouth of the MESSIAH!

Meanwhile, Dispensationalism teaches that we should look to the letters of Paul to learn about a secret, imminent coming of our LORD - instead of our MESSIAH's own answer to the question "**what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age**"!

And Dispensationalism claims that Paul's words about the rapture of the saints in 1st Thessalonians chapter 4 should not be connected with the words of JESUS in Mathew Chapter 24, about the gathering together of the elect!

But Paul himself wrote in the quintessential rapture passage that what he was writing was based on "**the word of the LORD**"! And we know from how that phrase is used in other places in the Bible that Paul simply meant that his teaching on the rapture was based on things that JESUS was well known to have said.

And after mentioning that fact, Paul went on to write about birth pains, the day of the

²⁴ 2 John 1:9-11

²⁵ 1 Timothy 6:3-5

LORD, the second coming, clouds, angels, the saints being caught up, the trumpet sounding, the resurrection, the metaphor of a thief in the night, watching, and being sober.

So, where can we find a place where JESUS taught about all of these things that Paul mentioned in one place, that just so happened to be His answer to the question “**what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age**”? ... Why- Matthew 24 of course!

Yes - JESUS was the first to speak about all of these things, and Paul was simply agreeing with and reiterating all that His MESSIAH had taught in the Olivet Discourse.

So, the fact is - that anyone who tells you these passages are not speaking about the same events is gravely mistaken! Paul was not going beyond the teachings of JESUS, He was reinforcing them, and reminding the Thessalonian Christians of how those teachings applied to their grief, and how they should conduct themselves in light of the LORD's return!

And the truth is, when we look at a few verses here or there in the Bible, and remove those passages from their overall context, we can easily go astray in our thinking, and create division and false doctrine that can spread like a cancer in the church.

For example, the doctrine of a secret, imminent, pretribulational rapture was based on the following Biblical doctrines taken out of their overall context: the metaphor of “**the thief in the night**”, the phrase “**one will be taken and the other will be left**”, the statement “**no man knows the day or the hour**”, the exhortation to “**wait for the LORD's return from heaven**”, the concept “**GOD did not appoint us to wrath**”, and the LORD's often repeated promise “**I am coming quickly**”.

But - in context - the metaphor “**the thief in the night**” is connected to the day of the LORD, not a secret, imminent, pretribulational rapture.

The concept of JESUS coming like a thief in the night is mentioned even as Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet are gathering the kings of the earth for the great battle of the Day of the LORD, that Revelation calls Armageddon.

And we are told that the Day of the LORD will **not** come upon the saints like a thief in the night because we are not of the night, but we are of the day – a metaphor describing those who live in obedient righteousness in the strength of the HOLY SPIRIT.

So - we can dismiss the idea that the thief in the night doctrine supports a pretribulational rapture theory.

And - in context - the phrase “**one will be taken and the other will be left**” was spoken by JESUS after He explained that His angels would be the ones “taking” some and “leaving” others when they “**gathered together His elect**” to Him “**in the clouds**” at “**the sound of a great trumpet**”, “**after the great tribulation**”.

Also - in context – the phrase “**one will be taken and the other will be left**” was spoken by JESUS just after He metaphorically compared His coming to the days of Noah. But the flood was not a surprise to Noah! And Noah was delivered through the flood, he was not taken out of the world before the flood.

So - the phrase “**one will be taken and the other will be left**”, simply means that the holy angels will precisely gather those who are living in faithful obedience to JESUS like wheat at the harvest, but the fruitless tares will be left behind to be burned up.

Similarly, the statement “**no man knows the day or the hour**” was presented shortly after JESUS said: “**So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!**”²⁶ So, the statement “no man knows the day or the hour” does not mean “we can’t know when the coming of the LORD and the end of the age is near, it means we can’t know “**the day or the hour**”!

Imagine I told you that you can know geographically when you are near some hidden object, but I refused to tell you the exact longitude and latitude of the object. This is similar to what JESUS was saying!

Or - If your friend told you that they would be flying into DFW sometime next week, but you did not know the day or the hour, you would know when their arrival was near, but you would not know the day or the hour, and this would be very similar to what our MESSIAH said! He told us the signs of His coming and told us that when we saw all of those things, we could know His return was near, but no exact day or hour of His return can be known.

But - people either “go beyond what is written”, or they ignore the words of JESUS when they claim that this passage means: “No signs can precede the LORD’s coming”, or “we cannot know when His arrival is near”!

Likewise, people go beyond what is written and they ignore the words of JESUS when they claim that the exhortations to “**wait for the LORD’s return from heaven**” imply that no signs will precede His coming! We can all earnestly wait for the seventh day of the week, even while we know days one through six must come first!

And it is equally ridiculous to claim that passages that say: “**GOD did not appoint us to wrath**” must mean “we will not face the tribulation”! ... Parents, can you punish one of your children without accidentally punishing the rest of them? Do angry bosses tend to fire every employee when they get mad - or do they just punish those who provoked them to anger? Or most tellingly: Did GOD accidentally pour out His wrath on the Israelites when He judged the gods of Egypt?

I hope you can see that all of the classic dispensational arguments for a secret, imminent, pretribulational rapture are built on a series of false premises, faulty

²⁶ Matthew 24:33

conclusions, and passages taken out of their native context. And nowhere is this more evident than with the LORD's exclamation "**Behold, I am coming quickly**"!

In every popular translation, if you search out the phrase "**I am coming quickly**", you will exclusively find it occurring four times in one specific book. That book was written to seven churches in Asia Minor, it was written down by John, and it begins with the words: **The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place.**²⁷

So, you see - **the entire book of Revelation lies under the heading that it was to take place in the near future!** Each and every generation of the church was to read **the entire book** as a warning that could easily take place in their time. So - the only book of the Bible that records JESUS repeatedly saying: "**I am coming quickly**" is also the book that very clearly describes what we should see **before** He arrives!

Truly, the book of Revelation is named after a Greek word we transliterate into English as the word "**Apocalypse**". And that Greek word that means: "**The Unveiling**" or "**The Revelation**" is pronounced: "**ap-ok-al'-oop-sis**". Therefore, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven thunders, and the seven bowls are all like countdowns to "**The Revelation**", or "**Apocalypse**" of JESUS CHRIST our LORD!

And - because JESUS plainly listed the signs of His coming in Matthew chapter 24 **and** in the book of Revelation - there are many things these two portions of Scripture have in common!

For example, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse described in the first four seals of Revelation perfectly correspond to the items JESUS labeled "*birth pangs*" in Matthew chapter 24.

The false christs of Matthew 24 correspond to the white horse of Revelation 6. The wars and rumors of wars correspond to the red horse of the second seal. The famines of the Olivet Discourse correspond to the black horse of the third seal. And the pestilence that the LORD mentioned corresponds to the horse of the fourth seal, that is literally a green horse.

This fourth and final symbolic horse is described with the Greek word for green, which is: **khlo-ros'** – where we get the word: **chlorophyll**, a green pigment found in plants.

Then, after JESUS described "pestilence" He spoke of the great tribulation - described in verses 9, 21, and 29 of Matthew 24. And this tribulation is also pictured - in the exact same sequential order - in the fifth seal of Revelation chapter 5.

Plus, the very next seal, the sixth seal, describes a great earthquake; just as JESUS mentioned earthquakes in Matthew chapter 24!

But the sixth seal also describes something else that connects back to Matthew

²⁷ Revelation 1:1a

chapter 24, as John recorded: **I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.**²⁸

And about this sixth seal, John also wrote: **Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! “For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”**²⁹

So, the sun and the moon go dark, and the stars of heaven fall to the earth just before the people of earth hide themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and cry out: **“Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come”.**

Friends this is the **“*mourning*”** that JESUS described when He said: **“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.”**³⁰

The signs in the sun and the moon described in the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls of the book of Revelation correspond to the words of JESUS in Matthew chapter 24! And they are the key sign of what all the tribes of the earth will call **“the great day of His wrath”!**

About this day, Paul wrote: **But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath.**³¹

You see, the Bible speaks about a **day of wrath** - not a 7-year long tribulation period

²⁸ Revelation 6:12-13

²⁹ Revelation 6:14-17

³⁰ Matthew 24:29-31

³¹ Romans 2:5-11

of wrath! And this is *yet another* reason it is completely unbiblical to claim that passages that say we are not appointed to wrath mean we must be raptured before the tribulation!

Also - please notice that Paul made it clear on “**the day of wrath**” – GOD will do two very different things. He will render **eternal life** to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality – and He will also render indignation and wrath on the wicked! But at this point I should now explain that the Bible calls this very important day: The day of wrath, the day of CHRIST, the day of GOD, and the Day of the LORD!

For example, in 2nd Peter, our dear Brother explains: “**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?**”³²

Clearly Peter calls the same day here - **the day of the LORD** and **the Day of GOD**. And he tells us to look for and hasten that day, as we live in holy conduct and godliness.

And our brother Paul called the day of the LORD, “the day of CHRIST”, when he wrote: **Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 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, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**³³

Now, some of our beloved dispensationalist brothers and sisters might try to claim that “*the day of CHRIST is their beloved pretribulational rapture, while the day of the LORD is the second coming of JESUS after the tribulation*”, but Paul here very clearly states that **the day of CHRIST** will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed during the abomination of desolation! So, our dispensationalist friends cannot legitimately suggest that **the day of CHRIST** will come before those two events that JESUS plainly mentioned in Matthew 24.

And now that we have addressed many of the fallacious arguments and de-contextualized verses that are so frequently used to prop up the dispensational pre-

³² 2 Peter 3:10-12

³³ 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

tribulational rapture theory - we should address one more key argument our beloved dispensational brethren often turn to in an effort to support their “blessed hope”.

And that argument is the claim that the Bible describes two very different returns of JESUS CHRIST – one that is imminent, secret, and pretribulational – and one that occurs after certain Biblically-described signs, in a very public way- and most notably - ***after the tribulation.***

But to explain why this argument is their most successful argument, ***and*** to explain how we must properly evaluate it - we must first learn what we mean by the word “argument”, and how a formal logical argument is composed.

When someone makes a truth claim based on other pre-established truth claims we say that they have made an argument for or against something.

For example: If I were to say to you, the sky is blue and my car is blue, therefore the sky and my car are completely alike. I used two premises – or truth claims – to argue a conclusion. So, to evaluate my argument, you must first evaluate both of my premises, and determine if the sky is blue and if my car is blue, and then you can evaluate my conclusion.

And when you have evaluated my conclusion, you would immediately know that my conclusion that “***the sky and my car are completely alike***” was wrong, because blue is simply a color - and things can be colored alike, but very different from one another. So, an argument can be wrong even if the premises are true, when the conclusion assumes things not supported by the premises.

But what if I said the sky is blue and my car is blue, therefore the sky and my car are ***colored*** alike! Then you would have to evaluate both of my premises and the conclusion, and if both of the premises were true, and I clarified I was only making a conclusion about ***the color of my car***, then my statement would be true.

But the fact is that ***my car is silver, not blue***, so my false premise that my car was blue was incorrect, and that made my conclusion untrue as well. And this simple example reveals that ***we must carefully evaluate both the premises of an argument as well as the conclusion to determine if the truth claim the argument makes is valid.*** Because – if we blindly accept a false premise and only evaluate the conclusion, we will be deceived.

And this very brief lesson in logic should help us all understand why the most powerful, confusing, and alluring argument a dispensationalist can present is a comparison of their concept of an imminent, secret, pretribulational rapture to the Biblical Day of the LORD.

For example, the dispensational website GotQuestions.org lists as their first supposed example of differences between the rapture and the day of the LORD: “***At the rapture, believers meet the Lord in the air. At the second coming, believers return with***

the Lord to the earth.”

Now to evaluate this claim, let's write it in the format of a formal logical argument. Premise one would be: **“At the rapture, believers meet the Lord in the air”**. Premise two would be: **“At the second coming, believers return with the Lord to the earth.”** And the implied conclusion would be: **“there are important differences between the Biblical descriptions of the rapture and the second coming therefore they cannot occur at the same time.”**

I think that we can accept premise one, and we can agree that Scripture supports the premise that at the Rapture those who are obediently following JESUS will be gathered to meet the LORD in the air.

But when it comes to premise number two, I ask you: “what would it do to this argument if we could prove that “believers return with the LORD to earth at the rapture”. It would mean that the rapture and the second coming are not as different as this website would have you believe, correct? Well, let's take a look at the quintessential rapture passage that GotQuestions.org has listed as the proof text of their first premise.

In 1st Thessalonians chapter 4, where Paul describes the rapture, he writes: **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.**³⁴

Friends, in the classic rapture passage we are told very plainly: **“GOD will bring with Him those who sleep in JESUS”**, but the dispensationalist falsely claims that this does not happen at the rapture, only on the day of the LORD!

Therefore, Scripture most certainly teaches that those believers who were asleep in JESUS will return with Him at His second coming and at the rapture – and this is because the rapture occurs at the second coming!

Truly - why would JESUS bring those who sleep in Him back at the time of the rapture if He was not coming back to stay and set up His kingdom on earth at that time?

But, since dispensationalists are trained to ignore the fact that Revelation 19 and 1st Thessalonians 4 **both** describe JESUS bringing with Him “those who sleep in Him” at His second coming, the dispensationalist claims the descriptions are of two different

³⁴ 12.1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

days.

Consequently, the second premise and the conclusion presented by GotQuestions.org are both false, and their point is Biblically invalid. But we must admit, if we blindly accept their faulty premises, and subsequent unbiblical conclusions it deceptively **appears** to be a powerful argument.

And the same can be said of their second argument, that states: “**The second coming occurs after the great and terrible tribulation. The rapture occurs before the tribulation**”. And their implied conclusion is: because these events supposedly occur at different times, they must be separate events.

This argument clearly relies on the reader assuming that both of the premises are true - but the fact is the second premise is the debated point they are actually trying to prove!

So this is the equivalent of arguing: everyone agrees that the second coming occurs after the great tribulation, but **we** think the rapture occurs before the great tribulation, so - ***if you accept that the rapture occurs before the great tribulation (even though the Bible never says it does)*** - then you will agree that the second coming and the rapture are separate events.

And they as much as admitted the certifiable fact that the Bible never describes the rapture coming **before** the tribulation by listing the extraordinarily inapplicable verses they choose on their webpage.

The first verse they listed in 1st Thessalonians 5 was plucked from Paul’s words about the day of the LORD coming like a thief in the night, where Paul explained that the day of the LORD would not come upon us like a thief because we are children of the day, and we walk in the light of JESUS our Savior. So - in context – it is clear that this passage had to do with still being on earth when the Day of the LORD came - not with a pretribulational rapture.

And the second passage from Revelation 3:10 that they cited was written to the church in Philadelphia – ***the only church to ever receive this promise!*** And it is worth noting that the church that existed in Philadelphia in Asia Minor has already been spared from the hour of trial - because every believer that would have received this letter later went on to sleep in CHRIST. So, reading this passage and applying it to all believers to support a secret pre-tribulational rapture theory would be like reading about the LORD’s promises to Abraham or David and applying **them** to every believer!

Surely, the church of Philadelphia is to be an example to us all - but the LORD’s promises cited on GotQuestions.org were made directly to Philadelphia - not to all the churches! And it is a gross mishandling of Scripture to take specific promises made to a precise person or group and claim them as universal, when no other passage of Scripture exists to support such a leap!

And with their first two highly fallacious arguments out of the way, we come to the third, where they argue: **“The rapture is the removal of believers from the earth as an act of deliverance. The second coming includes the removal of unbelievers as an act of judgment”**.

Based on their faulty presuppositions, the implied argument here is: The Rapture is all about delivering believers from the tribulation, and the second coming is all about removing unbelievers in judgment, therefore, they must be separate events.

But we have already seen that Paul wrote that on the same **“day of wrath”** GOD will render eternal life to those who persisted in doing good, while rendering judgment and wrath on those who persisted in doing evil.

And our MESSIAH also frequently spoke of a simultaneous separation of the harvest at the end of the age. For example, He taught: **“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, “which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. “So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, “and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”³⁵**

And this is why Malachi wrote: **“For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” Says the LORD of hosts, “That will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,” Says the LORD of hosts.”³⁶**

You see, the day of the LORD is a two-sided coin! On one side – for those who are living in sin - that day will be a terrible day of wrath and judgment, but on the other – for those who are living in faithful righteousness - it will be a day of rejoicing and deliverance!

But the dispensationalist always tries to paint the day of the LORD as a one-sided coin, while they attempt to transfer the other side of the coin to their unsupportable pre-tribulational rapture. And this is the biblically unsound basis of the *second* premise of their *third* argument.

But next we come to their fourth argument, that states: **“The rapture will be secret and instant. The second coming will be visible to all.”**

Obviously the first premise of this argument is contradicted by the very rapture

³⁵ Matthew 13:47-50

³⁶ Malachi 4:1-4

passages that the dispensationalist relies upon as foundations for their rapture doctrines. In 1st Corinthians 15, the rapture occurs at the last Trumpet, and in 1st Thessalonians the rapture is preceded by shouting and the sounding of the Trumpet of GOD.

So, if anyone believes that those passages describe a secret event, I honestly don't know what language GOD would have had to use, to reveal to them that the rapture is not going to be a secret!

Now, with their first premise refuted, the fourth argument falls, and we can move on to their final argument that states: **“The second coming of Christ will not occur until after certain other end-times events take place. The rapture is imminent; it could take place at any moment.”** While the Bible agrees with the first premise, the second premise is demonstrably unbiblical.

Paul specifically wrote: **Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 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.**³⁷

Despite the claims of the dispensationalists, the way Paul structured this passage permanently connects the coming of the LORD and our gathering together to Him to the day of CHRIST.

And to help us all see that fact, imagine I said: **“Brethren, concerning the coming of the final annual Feast of the LORD and our camping out together, let no one deceive you by any means, for the Feast of Tabernacles cannot come unless the Day of Trumpets comes first, and then the Day of Atonement.”**

When a sentence lists multiple events before mentioning a single day or timeframe, you can know that the previously listed events will all occur on that day, or in that timeframe. So, “the coming of the final annual Feast of the LORD and our camping out together” will occur during the Feast of tabernacles, and - in the same way – “the coming of our LORD and our gathering together to Him” will occur on the day of CHRIST.

Also, since Paul included himself in this “gathering together” by using the word **“our”** - and he would have obviously been gathered together to JESUS at the rapture if it would have happened in his lifetime - the rapture clearly occurs at the same time as the coming of the LORD.

Therefore, Paul did not consider the rapture to be imminent, because he specifically listed two things that had to occur before “our gathering together” to the LORD on the

³⁷ 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

day of CHRIST! And this is what the Scriptures really say, when we let them all speak clearly in context - from the very first Hebrew word of Genesis to the very last Greek word of Revelation.

The MESSIAH, The Rapture and The Trumpet

Billy Sunday – who has been called: ***“the most celebrated and influential American evangelist during the first two decades of the 20th century”*** - once said about the Rapture: **“The Lord does not come to the world at the time of the Rapture, but only reveals himself to the members of His Body. At the time of his resurrection He was only seen by those who believed on Him. Pilate and the High Priest, and those who crucified Him, did not know that He was risen. So it will be at the time of the Rapture. The world will not know that He has been here.”**³⁸

And he also said: **“After [the rapture] has occurred there will be an army of Church members and Preachers who will not know that it has come, because they are not members of the Lord's Body; for the Lord will not at that time be seen by any except those who have been caught up to meet Him in the air.”**³⁹

Based on this premise, he went on to say: **“The remainder of the world will not know that He has been here, and they will not know what has become of the missing ones. They will seem to have disappeared in all kinds of unaccountable ways.”**⁴⁰

And Billy Sunday concluded: **“After Jesus comes and takes the believers out of the world, then takes place the great Tribulation. At the close of the Tribulation the Lord will return, bringing with Him His saintly members of His Body, to begin His Millennium reign.”**⁴¹

In these quotes from Billy Sunday’s message entitled **“The Second Coming of CHRIST”** we hear of a **secret** second coming of JESUS that he calls **“the Rapture”** and a **third** universally visible coming. And Billy makes it clear that he expected the secret coming known as the Rapture to occur **before** the great Tribulation, while he expected a third visible and final coming of JESUS **after** the great Tribulation.

And Brother Sunday’s ideas about the Rapture can also be seen in many popular books and movies. Dozens of popular films vividly portray drivers suddenly disappearing from behind the steering wheel, pilots suddenly disappearing from the cockpits of their planes, and mass hysteria - as people try to identify where all of the

³⁸ <http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=425>

³⁹ <http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=425>

⁴⁰ <http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=425>

⁴¹ <http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=425>

missing people went.

But before we discuss this popular idea of a secret rapture – we should ask: where did this term “**Rapture**” come from? Have you ever found the word “**rapture**” in the inspired words of your Bible? Well - you won't find it in the King James Translation or the New King James Translation. Nor will you find it in the New American Standard Translation or the New International Version Translation. But there is one *very ancient* translation that is technically responsible for the word “**Rapture**” and that is the translation known as the Latin Vulgate.

From 382 AD until 405 AD, a man considered to be a leading Biblical Scholar of that time - named Jerome - translated the Scriptures into a Roman Catholic approved Bible, commissioned by Pope Damasus. And that ancient Roman Catholic Latin Bible was known as the Latin Vulgate.

So, the term “**rapture**” comes from a specific word found in the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible, and that is the word “**rapi-e'-mur**”. And that Latin word that means “**shall be carried off**”, comes from the Greek word “**har-pagé-sóm-etha**” – the second future passive indicative form of “**har-pad'-zo**” – which means “**to carry off by force**”. Thus, the Greek word that means “**shall be carried off**” was translated into a Latin word that means “**shall be carried off**”, and that Latin word was later transliterated into the English word “**rapture**”.

Now - in the King James and New King James translations, for example - the words “**shall be caught up**” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 are the English translation of the Greek word that has become associated with the term “**rapture**”. However, the only time this Greek word is ever used in scripture within the context of the return of the Lord or the resurrection of the saints is this passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:17! Therefore, we must pay very special attention to this passage - since the entire concept Billy Sunday and many others are teaching about the rapture is built on the foundation of these words!

So - in the quintessential Rapture passage - where the word “rapture” originated - Paul wrote: **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.**⁴²

To provide real, lasting comfort for those who were grieving over deceased loved ones,

⁴² 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

the Apostle explained that those who physically died as faithful disciples of the Messiah would also physically rise at the return of Jesus. And then, those who were alive and remaining would be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

So, it is out of this passage of reassurance that we get the word “**rapture**” - from the words here translated “**shall be caught up**” - but somehow many believe that the rapture Paul described in this passage will somehow be secret - and they claim that Christians will simply disappear leaving the non-believers behind scratching their heads to figure out where they went!

But please consider - even if we only look at the rapture passage in 1st Thessalonians chapter 4 – we can still disprove this concept, because Paul describes the catching up, by saying: **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.** ⁴³

Honestly, how could *shouting* and *the sounding of the trumpet of God* be a secret? How could millions of saints meeting up with Jesus in the sky be secret? And, how could anyone actually read this passage and dream up a secret rapture theory?

People typically don't shout and blow trumpets for secret events, they shout and blow trumpets to call attention to an event! So, when we simply look at Paul's words in context, we can see that the rapture is the exact opposite of a secret - and every single person on earth will know what is happening like never before!

Therefore, based on Paul's words in the quintessential rapture passage, there is no way that millions of Christians will simply disappear as Billy Sunday (and hundreds like him) have taught for the last two hundred years. The world will not be left behind to figure out where the saints have gone - and once JESUS comes there will not be seven years left to repent and get right with GOD!

Now if Billy Sunday were here, He might reply: “***But the pretribulational rapture teaching causes sinners to repent and get right with GOD for fear of being left behind when JESUS secretly comes like a thief in the night at the rapture.***” And I would have to answer him by saying: “***Friend, Peter did not say that a secret pretribulational rapture – and a fear of being “left behind” to face great tribulation - should cause people to live holy, righteous lives! Instead He said the Day of the LORD should have that effect on people!***”

Peter wrote: **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.**

⁴³ 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

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. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.⁴⁴

You see, Peter pointed to **“the Day of the LORD”** and **“the elements being burned up”**, not a secret pretribulational rapture to motivate people to repent and live lives of holy conduct and godliness! And Peter did not tell people to look forward to a secret rapture, He told them to look forward to **“a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells”!**

And the truth is, when a dispensationalist tries to use the pragmatic argument that their secret pre-tribulational rapture doctrine alone promotes repentance and holy living – we must have two answers ready. First, that was not how Peter approached the subject. And second – Peter clearly taught that once the LORD returns on the Day of the LORD like a thief in the night there is no more time to repent! Therefore, if we believe that living in sin will only cause us to be **“left behind”** for seven years to face the great tribulation, then we will wrongly think that there is a chance to repent after the rapture of the saints.

However, the truth is: **“God now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”⁴⁵**

Paul did not say **“GOD has appointed a seven-year period when He will judge the world”** – Paul said a **“day”!** And the day the Bible calls **“The Day of the LORD”** is that day! And if someone is counting on seven years after the rapture to get right with GOD, they will receive a very tragic rapture surprise.

But a belief in the pre-tribulational rapture also endangers a Christian because they will not heed the warnings of Revelation issued to the churches about such things as the Mark of the Beast, a saint’s future inability to buy or sell, or even the warnings we have received about the plagues that GOD will be pouring out on the earth to call sinners to repentance before the great and terrible day of the LORD!

But the truth is - within the second most popular passage that both we - *and our dispensationalist brethren* - would agree is discussing the rapture, Paul wrote: **Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all**

⁴⁴ 2 Peter 3:10-14

⁴⁵ Acts 17:30-31

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.”⁴⁶

Because Paul here speaks of the resurrection of those who sleep in CHRIST and the “changing” of those who remain from mortal to immortal in the twinkling of an eye - ***those who follow dispensational theology*** - as well as those who follow MESSIAH Theology agree that this passage and 1st Thessalonians chapter 4 are speaking about the same future event! And while both passages mention trumpets - this passage adds a very important detail about ***which*** trumpet will be blown at the rapture.

In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul explained that ***the trumpet of GOD*** would sound - but in his letter to the Corinthians Paul revealed that it would specifically be the ***last*** trumpet.

Now, the Greek word Paul used here to describe this trumpet is “***es'-khat-os***” – and it means: “***last in place or time***”, “***last in a series***”, or “***last in a temporal succession***”. And it is from this word “***es'-khat-os***” that we get the theological word: “***Eschatology***” which means “***the study of last things***”. But ***which*** trumpet could be the ***last*** trumpet in time, the ***last*** trumpet in a series, or the ***last*** trumpet in a temporal succession?

Well, the answer to all three questions, is very obviously - ***the seventh trumpet of the book of Revelation!*** But before we see what happens at the seventh, and last trumpet - let’s look at the rest of the trumpets that lead up to the sounding of the ***last*** trumpet.

John recorded: **So, the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. (and) The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.**⁴⁷

Now, when we read about the first trumpet, and see the words “***hail***” and “***fire***” - we should remember the words of Exodus - where it is written: **Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail.**⁴⁸

⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:50-54

⁴⁷ Revelation 8:6-7

⁴⁸ Exodus 9:23-26

Truly, GOD did not deliver His people out of Egypt **before** He sent this plague, instead He warned them ahead of time, and provided them with a “**land of Goshen**” where they would be protected from His wrath.

And with that understood, John wrote about the second trumpet: **Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.**⁴⁹

Obviously, when we read about water turning to blood, we should be reminded of Exodus, where it is written: **Then the LORD spoke to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water, that they may become blood. And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in buckets of wood and pitchers of stone.’ ” And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the LORD commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.**⁵⁰

But let me ask you, do you think that GOD allowed Moses to thirst and suffer during this plague? Certainly not! Because GOD told Moses exactly what would happen before it happened - just as He warned Noah about the flood! So, we can be sure that Moses, and the children of Israel, put up water before this plague - just as we can be sure that Noah built the Ark. And we can also be confident that GOD did not strike the stored water of the Israelites, because this plague was sent as a judgment on Egypt - not as a judgment on His people! And this same principle should be applied to the next trumpet judgment John will describe.

John wrote: **Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.**⁵¹

Unlike the sea water that will be turned to blood at the sounding of the second trumpet, this plague will turn a third of the fresh water sources of earth bitter and deadly. But JESUS has warned His people ahead of time, so they can prepare when the time comes.

And shortly after those plagues, we can expect more to come, because John also wrote: **Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.**⁵²

⁴⁹ Revelation 8:8-9

⁵⁰ Exodus 7:19-20

⁵¹ Revelation 8:10-11

⁵² 12.Revelation 8:12

Now, when we read about this plague of darkness, we should also remember how GOD's word recorded: **Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may even be felt." So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.**⁵³

Imagine, every Egyptian home was so dark that the Egyptians just stayed in their dark houses for three days like blind men! But at the exact same time, inside the homes of GOD's people, there was light! You see - our GOD is so great that He can deliver us from His wrath even while He pours it out on all those around us!

And the truth is - just as His wrath was poured out on the Egyptians to secure the freedom of His people in Exodus, His wrath will be poured out on Babylon in the last days to secure the freedom of His people in the book of Revelation!

But just as the book of Exodus had a plague of locusts - the book of Revelation speaks of a plague of locusts too.

And about this, John writes: **Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.**⁵⁴

Did you notice that these terrible demonic locusts will not be allowed to harm those who have the seal of GOD on their foreheads? You see - when we look at the plagues of the book of Revelation and remember how GOD delivered Noah through His judgment in the book of Genesis, and how He delivered the children of Israel in the book of Exodus - we realize that these plagues will not harm those who are hidden in the cleft of the Rock – our glorious MESSIAH!

And this applies to the judgement of the sixth trumpet also, about which, John wrote: **Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." So the**

⁵³ Exodus 10:21-23

⁵⁴ Revelation 9:1-6

four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.

Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.⁵⁵

Did you notice that the sixth trumpet mentions the great river Euphrates? Well, John conspicuously mentions that exact same river when describing the sixth bowl, saying: **Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to 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 am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.**⁵⁶

So, even as the world prepares for Armageddon, JESUS is still warning that He is coming like a thief! And - in the context of “the second-to-last trumpet judgment and the second-to-last bowl judgment - He pronounces a blessing on all those who watch and keep their garments of righteousness, so that the shame of their nakedness will not be exposed at His coming.

And with that in mind – next we read about the last trumpet that will sound when the rapture takes place, as John writes: **Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth.” Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple.**

⁵⁵ Revelation 9:13-19

⁵⁶ 12.Revelation 16:12-16

And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.⁵⁷

Brothers and Sisters, behold the last trumpet - when we shall be gathered to our victorious King! At the seventh trumpet JESUS will reward His servants the prophets and saints, and then He will destroy those who destroy the earth. And on this great day, that Scripture calls the Day of the LORD, there will be thunder and lightning, an earthquake, and great hail!

And just in case someone ever tries to tell you that the seventh trumpet can't signal the end of the age and the Day of the LORD because the bowls come after the trumpets, please consider what John writes about the seventh bowl.

He recorded: **Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.⁵⁸**

Hmm, it seems that the seventh trumpet and the seventh bowl describe the same events! When a voice from the throne proclaims "**It is done**" - then the loud voices in heaven rejoice by saying: "**The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever**". Meanwhile – noises, thunder, lightning and a great earthquake are described in both passages.

Plus, a few sentences later John writes about the events of the seventh bowl: **Great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.⁵⁹**

Clearly the seventh bowl and the seventh trumpet reveal two different perspectives of the same events, but they are both the last in time, the last in their series, and the last in a future temporal succession. And in the second most agreed upon rapture passage Paul makes it very plain that the rapture occurs at the sounding of this "**last trumpet**"!

And this is why Luke records our MESSIAH saying: "**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.**"⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Revelation 11:15-19

⁵⁸ Revelation 16:17-18

⁵⁹ Revelation 16:21

⁶⁰ Luke 21:25-28

On the day of the LORD - the whole earth will see JESUS coming in the clouds with power and great glory, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him! But His saints will have a very different response to the glorious appearing of our beloved Savior! When the sun and the moon go dark, and the stars cease to shine, we will look up, and rejoice because we will know our redemption is drawing near! And this is an accurate summary of the message contained in Scripture – when we search all of the Bible and the Bible alone!