

# Understanding the Rapture from a Strictly Biblical Perspective

by Jeremy James



## Introduction

This study has been compiled to help Christians acquire a scripturally-based understanding of the event known as the Rapture. While it does not advocate a specific position – Pre, Mid or Post – the paper focuses mainly on the Pre-Tribulation position since most of the arguments in support of the other two positions are determined largely by the interpretation that one places on those passages of scripture which are otherwise used to support the Pre-Tribulation position.

## Definition of the Rapture

The ‘Rapture’ is an interpretation based on a number of passages of scripture which prophesy that all saved believers (as distinct from unsaved members of the professing church), who are alive at the time of this event, will be caught up in the air to meet Christ, will receive immortalised or glorified bodies, and will dwell thereafter with Christ in his heavenly kingdom. The Rapture is preceded, seemingly on the same day, by the resurrection of all believers who had died in Christ.

## **Principal references to the Rapture in Scripture**

The two principal passages in scripture regarding the Rapture are as follows:

### **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

- [13] *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.*
- [14] *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*
- [15] *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.*
- [16] *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:*
- [17] *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.*
- [18] *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

### **1 Corinthians 15:51-58**

- [51] *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*
- [52] *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.*
- [53] *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*
- [54] *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*
- [55] *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*
- [56] *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.*
- [57] *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- [58] *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

## **The word ‘Rapture’**

The Greek word translated as *rapture* in English is ‘harpazo’, which is Greek for ‘snatch’ or ‘pluck’ (Strong’s G726). In other parts of the King James Bible this word is translated as follows

<i>catch up</i>	4
<i>take by force</i>	3
<i>catch away</i>	2
<i>pluck</i>	2
<i>catch</i>	1
<i>pull</i>	1

## **Precedents or Types of the Rapture**

There are several precedents for the rapture – the translation of Enoch, the translation of Elijah, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the resurrection and ascension of the Two Witnesses in the Book of Revelation, and the translation of Philip (but only to another place on earth). Regarding the latter Acts 8:39 states: “*And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.*” The same word, *harpazo*, is used in relation to Philip. According to Acts 8:40, “*Philip was found at Azotus*” (which is also known as Ashdod and is located about thirty miles from Gaza).

Two episodes in the Old Testament also prefigure the Rapture by depicting the removal of the righteous by divine intervention – Noah and his family and Lot and his family. It is noteworthy that these events involved families, just like the brethren (one body) who comprise the Church.

## **The Rapture as part of Christian doctrine**

The Rapture was identified as a distinct tenet of Christian doctrine in the New Testament. Verse 51 of 1 Corinthians 15 says, “*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.*” This means that believers who are alive at the time of the Rapture will not experience death but will receive immortalised bodies.

The Rapture is an event which believers are meant to eagerly anticipate. The Bible ends with the words: “*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come...Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*” (Revelation 22:17 and 20).

## **References by Christ to the Rapture**

It is believed that Christ was referring to the Rapture when he said: “*And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*” (Matthew 24:39-41)

When referring to the calamitous events of the End Time the Messiah confirmed that some believers would escape the wrath to come and would “*stand before the Son of man*”, namely Christ himself in his glorified state – “*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) Since Christ will not be on earth during the main part of the tribulation the believers concerned must be taken alive (and miraculously) from the earth in order to stand before him.

## **The Rapture and the Second Coming are Two Separate Events**

Much confusion arises when Bible scholars fail to distinguish between the Rapture and the Second Coming. Scripture makes it very plain that these are two distinct events, separated by an unspecified period of time:

### **~ The Rapture as a distinct event**

At the Rapture Christ does not return to the surface of the earth but catches up believers to meet Him above the earth, taking them directly to heaven: “*I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*” (John 14:3). Also, “*Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them [i.e. the resurrected dead] in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*” (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

At the Rapture there will be a resurrection of all church-age believers who had died up to that time: “*the dead shall be raised incorruptible*” (1 Corinthians 15:52-53) and “*the dead in Christ shall rise first...*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

At the Rapture the bodies of living believers (like those who are resurrected) will instantly become immortal: “*We shall not all sleep [i.e. die], but we shall all be changed...the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [who are living] shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*” (1 Corinthians 15:51-53) and “*we which are alive...shall be caught up together with them [the resurrected church-age believers]...to meet the Lord in the air [in immortalised bodies]*” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

At the Rapture the earth is in a state of relative calm and none are expecting judgment from God: “*And as it was in the days of Noah [when the world was not expecting judgment of any kind]...they did eat, they drank...married wives...were given in marriage... Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded... Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.*” (Luke 17:26-30). This was the case right up to the day that Noah entered the Ark and Lot departed from the city. Scripture also states “*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*” (Matthew 24:36 and 44). The Rapture could occur at any time.

At the Rapture the professing church is sleeping and there is little general expectation of the Lord's return: "*While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept*" (Matthew 25:5) and "*Watch ye therefore...lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping*" (Mark 13:35-36).

### ~ **The Second Coming as a distinct event**

At the Second Coming Christ returns to the earth to rule both Israel and the entire world from the throne of David in Jerusalem: "*And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east...*" (Zechariah 14:4) and "*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*" (Luke 1:32-33)

At the Second Coming the resurrection of the dead which is referred to in the Book of Revelation does not occur until after the Antichrist is defeated. The dead here referred to are those who came to Christ during the Tribulation and were martyred for their faith:

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 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 20:4-6).

This passage of scripture is describing the two groups which form "*the first resurrection,*" namely (i) the saints caught up in the Rapture (both living believers and dead church-age believers) and (ii) believers who were martyred for their faith during the Tribulation. (Some Bible scholars believe that the resurrection of the dead, which takes place just prior to the Rapture, will also include Old Testament believers.)

At the Second Coming all of the church-age saints will return to earth with Christ at His Second Coming:

*"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee."* (Zechariah 14:4-5)

*“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.” (Revelation 19:11-14)*

The armies referred to cannot be the angels alone since reference is made to the clothing of the saints (*“fine linen, white and clean”*). Therefore the Rapture must have taken place before the Second Coming and must constitute a completely separate event.

At the Second Coming the world is nearing the end of the greatest war in history, where countless millions have died through famine, war and disease and the entire earth has been subjected to appalling devastation: *“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”* (Matthew 24). Every one of the Seals described in the Book of Revelation will have been opened before the Lord comes to defeat the Antichrist.

## **Pre-tribulation argument**

We will now consider the various pieces of evidence, from both the Old and the New Testaments, which are often cited in support of the Pre-Tribulation position:

### **Comfort**

1. *“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 1:9-10) To be delivered from the wrath to come means to avoid the trials of the Tribulation.

*“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night...For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:1 and 9). This is a promise that believers will not have to face the wrath of *“the day of the Lord”*.

*“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:18). The rapture can only be a comfort if it occurs before the Tribulation.

*“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord...”* (Luke 12:35-36). This enjoins believers to be ready for the return of Christ, which could occur at any time.

### **Escape from Wrath**

2. *“For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. 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 21:35-36). The Tribulation is the ultimate expression of God’s wrath. To be accounted *“worthy to escape all these things”* one must be removed from among *“all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth”*. If this promise is to be properly fulfilled it must occur before the period of wrath commences.

### **The Holy Spirit as the Restrainer**

3. *“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.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8) [NKJV] This states that the Holy Spirit, who has dwelt in the church since the day of Pentecost and who restrains the power of lawlessness and iniquity, will be *“taken out of the way.”* The departure of the restraining power of the Holy Spirit – which will occur with the rapture of the church – will be necessary if the Antichrist is to pursue his course unhindered.

### **The Church**

4. The church is not seen or mentioned in the Book of Revelation between the end of chapter 3 and the start of chapter 19. This would imply that the church is absent from the Tribulation described in chapters 4-18.

### **Signs**

5. The Second Coming of Christ (where he defeats the Antichrist) is preceded by very specific signs, as set out in Matthew 24 and elsewhere. However the rapture of the church-age saints can occur at any time, with no warning or sign of any kind. This implies that the Rapture takes place before the Second Coming and before the signs which inaugurate the Tribulation period.

### **The Old Testament**

6. The Old Testament did not make any prophetic statements about the church age. *“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...”* (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). It is described as a “mystery” because it had not previously been revealed. If the church was still involved in the events of the Tribulation one would expect this important fact to feature somewhere in Old Testament prophecy, but it does not appear to do so.

Reference is made to “*the last trump*”. Silver trumpets and rams’ horns (*shofar*) were used on high holy days, the Feasts of the Lord. (“*Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.*” – Psalm 81:3-4). On such occasions they sounded many times, not just once. The “*last trump*” may imply the repeated sounding of the *shofar* or ram’s horn on the resurrection of the church. The repeated sounding of the ram’s horn trumpet at the fall of Jericho is a possible prefiguration of this event. One of the earlier trumpet calls may summon all who died in Christ (“*the dead in Christ shall rise first*”), while the “*last trump*” may summon all living believers.

### **The Gentiles**

7. “*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 fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*” (Romans 11:25) The “*blindness*” of Israel will persist until “*the fulness of the Gentiles*” (i.e. the age or full number of the gentiles) has come to completion. The prophetic clock, as it relates to Old Testament prophecies of the End Time, is on hold (like the sun in the sky in Joshua 10:13) and will not restart until the age of the Gentiles has reached its “*fulness*” with the Rapture. The Great Tribulation is concerned with Israel and her enemies (the church is not her enemy).

### **Endure to the End**

8. Born-again believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit. Their salvation is not determined by works of any kind. Therefore, when the Lord says “*But he who endures to the end shall be saved*” (Matthew 24:13) – a key verse in the Tribulation chapter – he is referring to those who turn to Christ during the Tribulation, not to those who were saved during the church age. This implies that the Holy Spirit has left the earth and is no longer ‘sealing’ the new believers. Seemingly to be saved during the Tribulation one must endure to the end. (The 144,000 are sealed by an angel “*And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God*” – Revelation 7:2. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned.)

### **Israel as Witness to the World**

9. The witness for God during the Tribulation is Israel, not the church. It would be extraordinary if the church were on earth during the Tribulation and yet not receive any mention in chapters 4-18 of the Book of Revelation. The 144,000 are witnesses to the world from the 12 tribes of Israel (except Dan). They are not church-age believers.

### **Revenge**

10. *“And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”* (Revelation 6:10) This is the prayer of the saints in heaven, namely *“the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.”* This means they are saints of Israel who came to the Lord during the Tribulation and are calling for revenge. Church-age saints would not make a prayer of this kind since they would be familiar with, and obedient to, the command of Jesus to love one’s enemies.

### **The Twenty-four Elders**

11. The 24 elders in the Book of Revelation are of special significance. Before the events of the Tribulation commence, they are seated on 24 thrones (not just seats) and wear victors’ crowns on their heads. The crown is given by the Lord as a reward to the righteous on the day of judgment: *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”* – 2 Timothy 4:8. The expression *“at that day”* refers to the day of Christ, when He comes for his own. *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”* – James 1:12.

The 24 elders are believed to be the representatives of both the Raptured church and all who were resurrected in Christ. If they are wearing crowns, then they must already have gone through the Rapture/Resurrection and been judged by the Lord. They cannot be angels since there is no suggestion anywhere in scripture that an angel may wear a crown or receive a reward. The representative nature of the 24 elders is prefigured by the appointment by David of 24 elders to represent the entire Levitical priesthood (*“...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.”* – 1 Chronicles 24:18-19)

### **The Two Witnesses**

12. The two witnesses in Jerusalem are the two olive trees mentioned by Zechariah (*“Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.”* – Zechariah 4:3) and are referred to again in a similar manner in the Book of Revelation – *“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.”* – Revelation 11:4. They are clothed in sackcloth (which is found only in the Old Testament and never in the New) and call down flaming judgment upon the enemies of Israel (This too is appropriate for Old Testament believers but not for church-age believers). The two witnesses mark a resumption of Old Testament judgment, which is not associated with the church-age. This would strongly suggest that the church has left the earth by the time they arrive.

### **Noah and his Family**

13. The eight righteous people then living on earth were preserved in the Ark during the Flood. They too were 'lifted above' the judgment which befell the entire earth. The Ark was covered within and without with pitch. The Hebrew word for pitch, *kaphar*, occurs 102 times in the Old Testament and in virtually all other cases is translated 'atonement' [Strong's H3722]. It was through the atonement of Christ (which lay in the future) that the family of the righteous was preserved from God's wrath.

### **Lot and his Family**

14. The small number of righteous people living in the region of Sodom and Gomorrah (namely Lot and his family) were also removed from the scene by divine intervention immediately before Judgment was delivered.

### **Jacob's Trouble**

15. The Tribulation is the time of "Jacob's trouble," when the children of Israel finally find deliverance from bondage after a period of great trial. We know it as the period of the Tribulation, "*for that day is great, so that none is like it*":

*"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them."* (Jeremiah 30:7-9)

This description marks the Tribulation as an event specific to Israel, not the church.

### **Prayer**

16. If the church were still on earth during the Tribulation, it would alert the world to the identity of the Antichrist and to the massive deception that he was orchestrating. The church would also pray fervently against the works of the Antichrist and hinder him greatly in his deadly programme of deception and destruction. Since the Book of Revelation tells us that the Antichrist enjoys virtually uninterrupted success in his work until the Second Coming of Christ, it is reasonable to conclude that the church is not on the earth during the Tribulation.

### **The 144,000**

17. “*For the Jews require a sign...*” (1 Corinthians 1:22). What sign therefore will the 144,000 receive? These men must go through an extraordinary spiritual transformation to convert from Judaism to Christ, all at virtually the same time, and become ardent missionaries and witnesses throughout the earth. It has been suggested that the Rapture of the church is such a sign. The sudden and inexplicable disappearance of millions of born-again Christians, as well as thousands of Jews who had converted to Christianity (known as Messianic Jews), will trigger this momentous event. This must occur at the commencement of the Tribulation period if the 144,000 are to have enough time to evangelize the world and lead many to Christ.

The details surrounding the rapture or translation of Elijah are of particular significance since they prefigure the wider context within which the End Time rapture occurs:

*And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. (2 Kings 2:8-15)*



Elisha asked Elijah for *“a double portion of thy spirit.”* Elijah said that this exceptional request would be granted **provided** Elisha actually saw him as he was “taken”. This points to the stunned recognition by the 144,000 of the spiritual significance of the Rapture, when millions of born-again Christians, as well as thousands of Messianic Jews, disappear from the earth. When they **see** the sign, they awaken to the truth of the Gospel and are saved, whereupon a great outpouring of the Spirit is given unto them. Just as Elisha picked up the mantle of Elijah and continued on from where his mentor had left off, so the saved remnant of Israel will pick up the mantle of the Church and continue the work of the LORD.

Two other passages in scripture confirm the special blessing that the saved remnant of Israel will receive during their great awakening in the End Time. Both appear in prophetic chapters relating to the Second Coming and its implications for Israel:

*“Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee” – Zechariah 9:12*

*“But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.” – Isaiah 61:6-7*

### **The Marriage of the Lamb**

18. The Book of Revelation clearly states that the marriage of Christ to His bride, the Church, takes place in heaven before Christ returns to earth at the Second Coming to defeat the Antichrist:

- [7] *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*
- [8] *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.*
- [9] *And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*
- [10] *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*
- [11] *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.*
- [12] *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.*
- [13] *And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. (Revelation 19:7-13)*

This shows that the Rapture and the Second Coming are two separate events. It also implies that the Rapture must have taken place well before the Second Coming. We know this because the Bible draws a clear parallel between the Jewish tradition of engagement, betrothal and marriage and the preparations made by Christ in anticipation of His marriage to the church.

The ‘engagement’ of Christ to his bride took place before the foundation of the world – “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:” (Ephesians 1:4) He claimed his bride legally through betrothal at his first coming and then went to prepare a place for her. A dowry is paid at the betrothal: “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” – 1 Corinthians 6:20.

He promised to come again and take her to the home which he had prepared for her. According to Jewish custom in Biblical times, the groom came unannounced at her home after an interval of a year or so and called forth his bride – the date was never specified in advance. He would arrive during the night to the sounding of trumpets. The parable of the Ten Virgins would appear to describe the five who were ready and thus prepared for the Rapture, while the other five, who were not ready but sleeping, would miss the Rapture. By the time they awoke the groom had come and gone. The five wise virgins were the true church, while the five foolish virgins (who were not filled with the Holy Spirit) were the professing but unsaved (non-born again) church.

At the formal betrothal ceremony, which had legal standing, the bride and groom would seal their betrothal by drinking wine from the same cup. They would not drink together again until they were married.

During the year or so of betrothal the bride would work on her wedding garment. Meanwhile the groom, who lived at his father's house, would construct what was traditionally known as the *little mansion*. This comprised one or more rooms built on to his father's house in which the married couple would live together thereafter:

*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)*

While the groom was working on the little mansion, his father kept track of progress. Only the father of the groom had the authority to determine when the little mansion was ready and that the time had finally come for his son to go forth and bring home his bride.

When the groom returned with his bride, the nuptials and marriage feast commenced. This traditionally lasted seven days and was a time of great joy and celebration. The third phase of the wedding process, after the betrothal and the nuptials, was consummation. This represents Christ and his bride living together in blessed oneness in eternity.

## **Post-Tribulation Argument**

Most of the arguments for a Post-Tribulation Rapture are based on an alternative interpretation of scriptural passages already cited in the previous sections. In particular advocates of a Post-Tribulation Rapture do not appear to accept the arguments set out in the section entitled *The Rapture and the Second Coming are Two Separate Events*. They also draw attention to certain passages of scripture, as follows.

1. According to this school of thought, the Second Coming is a single, definitive event. Christ cannot come to take His bride and then come again to deal with the Antichrist. If the saints who return with Him to earth are exclusively those (living and dead) who have been taken up in the Rapture, then one must account for the differences between the following passages of scripture:

*“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)*

*“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)*

The second description includes the words, “*the uttermost part of the earth*”, while the first does not.

2. Scripture refers specifically to the last trumpet call, at which point the Rapture will occur:

*“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.” (1 Corinthians 15:52)*

The last trumpet call implies earlier trumpet calls and could be taken as a reference to the seven Trumpet judgments in the Book of Revelation. If so, then the Rapture takes place at an advanced stage of the Great Tribulation.

3. The reference to “the first resurrection” is made in Revelation 20, after the Second Coming. There is no reason to believe it provides for a Rapture-type event before the Tribulation:

*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*  
(Revelation 20:4-5)

### **The Mid-Tribulation Argument**

The Mid-Tribulation position is sometimes called the Pre-Wrath Rapture since it sees the church going through the first half of the Tribulation but avoiding the second half, known as the Great Tribulation, when the full force of the Antichrist is unleashed.

Much of their argument appears to be based on the belief that the “birth pangs” to which Jesus referred, and which the church will experience, run into the first half of the 7-year Tribulation period. To that extent they believe the church *does* escape the Tribulation via the Rapture, but they interpret the Tribulation in the real sense as a period shorter than seven years. Referring to the Antichrist, Daniel 7:25 says:

*“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.”*

The term “*a time and times and the dividing of time*” is almost universally accepted among Bible scholars to mean three and a half years (a year plus two years plus half a year). If the “saints” to whom Daniel is referring mean the church, then, it is argued, the Rapture takes place half way through the seven year period of the Tribulation.

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**Jeremy James**  
**Ireland**  
**18 August 2011**

**For more information about the End Time, Israel, and the ongoing  
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