

The Rapture. Coming, ready or not!

What is the gospel message?

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have **eternal life**.”

Ok, so 2000 years ago, Mary had a little Lamb, a cute little baby boy named Jesus, the Lamb of God. Shepherds came to worship Him; angels sang about Him, wise men brought Him presents. And every year, He's back in the manger at Christmas time with the animals and we sing 'Away in a manger.' As long as He stays in his crib, everyone is happy.

But, that's not the whole gospel. The baby grew up, preached against false religion; performed many miracles including raising a dead man; was crucified for telling people 'I and the Father are one'; He died.

And yet, even this is not the complete gospel message. He arose from the dead; ascended back to His throne in heaven leaving behind the message "And if I go, I will come back for those who put their faith in Me and take them to My Father's home in heaven."

THAT is the true gospel message! The gospel that saves us from the guilt and eternal punishment for our sin is not finished until we have been released from this body of sin on earth.

'Eternal Life' – that is, in heaven with God for Eternity.

When I was 7 I accepted Jesus Christ's offer of forgiveness for my sin and a place prepared just for me in His Father's house. It was through the preaching of a Church Elder on two alternate eternal destinations that convinced me. I chose heaven. I was later accused of being 'so heavenly minded I'm of no earthly use!' By church elders! I didn't know that was possible. What I understood from the Bible was that looking forward to heaven made you more useful on earth! And you received greater reward when you got there. Hello!

The attitude today of so many self confessing Christians is the rapture is 'Pie in the sky by and by. Amen. Ok, let's eat cake now!' Why shouldn't you enjoy your cake now coz the feast in heaven is a long ways off and I want stuff now, so we can't get too hung up on this caught up in the clouds thing, playing harps and all that!

But when I read the bible, I read that Christ the Saviour died to save sinners from the eternal punishment in Hell that we deserve for our sin and disobedience. The Lord Jesus Christ is so eager that I get to live eternally with Him that He has prepared a place in Heaven for me! So I shouldn't look forward to it? Is the life to come is no better than the life I live here, now?? If this is as good as it gets, then we may as well get all that we can now on earth. Party up. Get all the toys you can. I read this message on the fridge magnet in a wealthy man's home: 'He who has the most toys wins!' And he had a lot of them! And he was very proud of it.

Sadly, this too is the attitude of many self confessed Christians. They think Heaven's such a bore and they want all that the world has to offer. Why should WE miss out! I mean, look at all the stuff!!

This mind set, I think, stems from things:

- Ignorance of what Heaven really offers, and so their focus is off target, or
- Not having a real faith that transforms from the inside out, the mind and heart.

The unbelieving world says Jesus will never come and rule the earth. Life just continues on as always. Nothing changes, and it never will.

2Pe 3:1-10 ‘...*I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, (2) that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles, (3) knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. (4) They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."* (5) For they **deliberately overlook** this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, (6) and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. (7) But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the Day of Judgment and destruction of the ungodly. (8) But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (9) The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Note: The Bible teaches the rapture WILL take place.

So what exactly is it and when can I expect it?

The word rapture is not found in the Bible. It is a word used to depict the event that Paul described in 1Th 4 & 5 where ‘Born Again’ Christians are ‘caught up’ to Heaven.

This idea of Believers being taken by Christ to heaven before death was first announced by Jesus himself. O.T. believers believed in a physical resurrection, but they had no concept of being caught up from the earth in the blink of an eye to appear in the next instant in heaven. Except for two guys by the names of Enoch and Elijah, who were the exceptions.

Job, that great stalwart of the faith believed in a physical resurrection: **Turn to Job 19:25-27**. These became my favourite verses when I first believed in Jesus Christ at the age of 7yrs.

*25I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
26And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;
27I myself will see him with my own eyes-I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*

Job believed that after his death, he would be resurrected, physically transformed to see God with the eyes of his physical body. And how he longed for that event to happen! These are precious and encouraging thoughts to all who trust in the one true God. And more on that soon!

What Jesus taught his disciples.

Turn to John 14:1-3. It was the time of the ‘Passover’ celebration. The disciples were with Jesus in the upper room and he’d just been giving them some very disturbing news:

- One of their own number would do the unthinkable and betray their Lord;
- Peter would deny even knowing Christ and He was about to leave them!
- And this just a short time after announcing to the large crowd of Jews who came to see Him after He raised Lazarus from the dead, that He was about to die on a cross.
- That He was going to leave them and they would think themselves sadly deserted and exposed to the world.

Like the Jewish crowd in ch 12, the disciples thought that their Messiah was going to kick some serious Roman butt all the way out of their promised land and then set himself up as the rightful ruler on the throne of David. So the Disciples were freaking out hearing the Messiah say these things.

So Peter asked the question on all of their minds: (*with great concern*) “Lord where are you going?” (13:36)

Thankfully, Jesus was not a harsh uncaring shepherd, or a Kiwi, for He would have said to them: “Suck it up Bro. Get a grip!”

Oh contraire, knowing that they were a disturbed bunch, He gave them the most comforting words ever written to disturbed people!

Read: John 14:1-3 ESV “Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. (2) In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

A word study to help us understand:

V1

‘Heart’ –literally your thoughts and feelings

‘Troubled’ – agitated, uncertainty

‘Believe in God’ – have entrusted yourselves to God, committed your spiritual welfare, the safety of your soul – to God. You trust God with the eternal care of your soul because of who He is. Because of His perfect/flawless character He is dependable.

‘Believe also in Me’ - John 14:9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? I and the Father are one.'

V2

‘House’ – place of *residence*, an *abode*; by implication a *family* home, or household).

‘Are’ – most definitely, presently has many rooms.

‘Mansions’ – lit. ‘A staying dwelling place’. A place for one to stay. To make this their permanent home.

‘If it were not so’ – Kiwi lingo: ‘If there was no place for you in heaven, I would have told you so you wouldn’t get your hopes up’.

‘Go and prepare - His errand is to go on ahead and make the necessary preparations, get everything ready.

Is the same concept used of sending people on ahead of a King to make sure the roads and lands are safe and able to be used/passable. Also John the Baptist.

‘Place’ – a portion, a piece of the mansion for your own possession .

‘I will come again’- to arrive, make an appearance, show himself once more; to oscillate.

‘Take you to myself’ - to join to one’s self, to associate us with himself, as a companion, it’s the opposite of rejection.

‘We shall see him as he is’.

John 14:1-3

In these verses, Jesus took notice of His disciple’s troubled hearts and so He cautions them against anxiety, to keep them from ‘Heart trouble!’ He is saying in effect, don’t doubt. And this is the remedy for your anxiety: “Trust me as you trust in God”. He said in verse 9 **"Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me... Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."** 11 **Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.**

Being troubled of heart leads us into temptation, to anxiety and doubt. Anxiety is a lack of trust in God and in taking Him at His word and is sin! Doubting God is an affront (insult) to His character. This is The LORD who created the worlds with a word we are talking about!

Put it all together and here’s what you get, well, a Kiwified version anyway:

- **In Kiwi lingo, Jesus said:**

“Guys, listen up. To stop you all getting uptight and agitated and having heart trouble, I have something to tell you. Look, you have entrusted yourselves to God, so do the same with me eh. The Father and I are one after all. My Father’s household is huge – you better believe it mate - and shortly I’m going back home there. It’s best for you that I do go, ok. So when I get there, I’ll get a whole bunch of rooms ready for you guys. And when I’m all done with that, I’ll come and get you and take you back and you guys can all move in and live with us. How’s that sound Bro?!”

So, Jesus is going to come and get all the saints who love and obey Him. That includes the living and the dead! Paul later elaborated further on this and talked about being raptured from the earth.

What is the Rapture?

Read:

1Th 4:13-18 / 5:1-11

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. (14) For since we believe that Jesus died

and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. (15) For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore encourage one another with these words.

The rapture is not to be confused with the 2nd coming of Christ in 2 Thess. 1

where Jesus comes in blazing glory and power with the angels and He brings punishment and everlasting destruction on all who refuse to obey the truth. This is at the **end** of the Tribulation when He arrives to set up His 1000 year reign on earth. For the rapture, He does not set foot on the earth.

‘Caught up’

- 1) to seize, carry off by force
- 2) to seize on, claim for one’s self eagerly
- 3) to snatch out or away

‘Shout’ - an order, command, spec. a stimulating cry, either that by which animals are roused and urged on by man, as horses by charioteers, hounds by hunters, etc., or that by which a signal is given to men, e.g. to rowers by the master of a ship, to soldiers by a commander (with a loud summons, a trumpet call).

‘Archangel’ - chief of the angels – Michael; Gabriel the announcer.

‘Trumpet’ – used to announce an arrival of someone important, or to gain the attention of people to an announcement that will follow.

There are many instances of God using trumpets to announce his arrival, or of impending judgement in Rev. 8. One that caught my imagination is in Ex. 19 when the LORD descended upon Mt. Sinai with *‘thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled... And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.’*

‘In the air’ – literally, the earth’s upper atmosphere; in the clouds. Jesus at this point in time will not set foot on the earth. We meet him in the air and He takes us back to His Father’s home.

An awesome and fear inducing day!

The thunder and lightning were designed to strike awe in the people, and to grip and engage their attention.

- Were they asleep? The thunder would wake them up.
- Were they looking another way? The lightning would grab their attention to turn their faces towards him that spoke to them.
- And then the trumpet of God sounded and the people trembled.

The trumpet of God on the day we are caught up to meet The Christ in the air will not be some puny sound: 'brrrrp'. This is going to be loud, and long. It's going to arrest your concentration from whatever it is you are doing, no matter how important it is to you at the time. Your mind is going to be startled; your heart will skip a beat at the shear noise made by that angel, and you will catch your breath. Your eyes are going to jerk heavenward and in that same instant, you will vanish from the face of the earth and appear in the earth's upper atmosphere to be FACE TO FACE WITH THE LORD GOD, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH!

Now that is something worth looking forward too!

Paul's desire here in this passage is for the comfort of the

Thessalonians who mourned for the death of their relatives and friends that died believing in the Lord. His design is to **deter them from excessive grief**. Grief for the death of friends is not forbidden; if we do not weep for them, we may at least weep for ourselves, weep for our own loss, but we must not be excessive in our sorrows, because,

I. This looks as if we have no hope, 1Th 4:13. It is to act too much like the Gentiles, who have no hope of a better life after this; Christians, who have a most sure hope, the hope of eternal life, *which God who cannot lie has promised us*, this hope is more than enough to bring balance our grief.

II. This is an effect of ignorance concerning those who are dead, 1Th 4:13. **There are some things concerning those who die in the Lord that we need not, and should not, be ignorant of;** and, if we really understood them, they will be sufficient to calm our distress.

- **They are asleep, :13.** They have '*fallen asleep in Christ*', 1Cor. 15:18. Death does not annihilate them. No one ceases to exist when they die.
- For the believer in Jesus Christ, it is sleep, their rest. They have retired from this difficult and tiring world, to rest from all their hard work and sorrow, and they sleep in Jesus.
- Their souls are in his presence, they are not lost, and they are not the losers in the game of life, but great gainers by their death.
- To be removed out of this world is into a better place, the ultimate place!

Isa. 57:1-2 *The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. 2Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.*

Php 1:21-23 *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (22) If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. (23) I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.*

2. They shall be raised up from the dead, that is, awakened out of their sleep, :14. The doctrine of the resurrection and the second coming of Christ is a great antidote against the fear of death and excessive sorrow for the death of our Christian friends; we have the utmost assurance in this doctrine, because we *believe that Jesus died and rose again*.

1Co 15:3-8 *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, (4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (5) and that he appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. (6) Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. (7) Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. (8) Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*

1Co 15:20 ‘But in **fact** Christ **has** been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.’

Therefore, those who have fallen asleep in him have not perished, nor are they lost. His own resurrection is full proof/confirmation of all that is said in the gospel.

3. The state and condition of those who sleep in Christ shall be glorious/wonderful and happy at the coming of Christ. The apostle informed the Thessalonians of this ‘*by the word of the Lord*’ in verse 15, by a divine revelation from the Lord Jesus; though the resurrection of the dead, and a future home in heaven, were part of the belief of the Old Testament saints, **they didn’t have the full picture** as revealed in the N.T.

The full picture:

(1.) That the Lord Jesus will come down from heaven with all the ceremony and power of the supernatural world (1Th 4:16): *The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.* He will descend from heaven into our atmosphere, **17**. His appearance will be with pomp and power, *with a shout* - the shout of a king, and the power and authority of a mighty king and conqueror, with the voice of the archangel. *For the trumpet shall sound*, and this will awaken those that sleep in the dust of the earth.

(2.) The dead in Christ shall rise first (1Th 4:16), before those who are found alive at Christ's coming are changed; The first act of the Redeemer (liberator, rescuer) in that day will be for his dead saints, including all of the O.T. saints; he will raise them before the great change passes on those that are alive. This is so that those who did not sleep in death will have no greater privilege or joy on that day than those who fell asleep in Jesus, in many cases 1000’s of years before.

(3.) Then those that are alive will be changed. They shall be ‘*caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*’, **1Th 4:17**. At the very moment of rapture, those believers - and I stress, only those who have believed that Jesus *Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures*’ **1Co 15:3-4** - it is these who will be raptured, who will receive the spiritual, immortal, imperishable body of 1 Cor. 15.

Note: there will be many thousands, millions of ‘christians’ who will be shocked to discover their religion was not enough to save them and remove the guilt of their sins. They have been left behind and the bible believing fundamentalists have been snatched away. There will be chaos in the minds of those people and they will be ripe to accept the Antichrist in the place of the real Christ.

We will be changed: These bodies of ours are not able to enter Heaven because they are corrupt bodies ruined by sin and as Paul calls it, ‘*a body of death*.’ They have to be made fit to inherit the kingdom of God. So we who are alive will undergo a miraculous change, a mysterious transformation that we can’t comprehend: So, **1Co 15:51-52** ‘*we shall all be changed, (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.*’

In the very instant, once changed, we shall meet together in the clouds, and there meet with our Lord, to praise him on his coming, and to receive the crown of glory he will then grant to us.

I say “we” because isn’t this the hope of all Christians, the desire to avoid suffering, pain and death and suddenly disappear from this world, and appear in the next where we are able to look into the face of our King?!

(4.) Here is the delight of the saints at that day: we shall *be forever with the Lord*, [:17](#). Part of the enjoyment we have in heaven will be meeting with all the Saints - the O.T. Saints, our friends and family who were asleep in the Lord and all of the living Saints at that very instant.

But the principal happiness of heaven is this: *'to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord'*. To see him, live with him, and enjoy him, forever. This should comfort us upon the death of our friends that although death has caused a separation, yet their souls and bodies will meet again.

And the apostle's desire is to have us *comfort one another with these words*, [:18](#). We should make every effort to **support** one another in times of sorrow, **not stifle** one another's emotional state, **nor cause someone to stumble in their faith**, but we should comfort one another; and this may be done by serious consideration and discussion on the many good lessons to be learned from the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, the second coming of Christ, and the glory of the saints in that day.

(18) *'Therefore encourage one another with these words.'*

When Will the Rapture take place?

Part 2 of 1 Thess.

Read: 1 Thess ([5:1-11](#)) *Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. (2) For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (3) While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. (4) But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. (5) For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. (6) So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. (7) For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. (8) But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. (9) For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, (10) who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. (11) Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*

In these words of Paul we observe several things:

I. The apostle tells the Thessalonians it was needless or useless to enquire about the particular time of Christ's coming: the thing is certain: Christ will come, and there is a certain time appointed for his coming. Paul had no revelation given to him when it would occur. Christ himself did not reveal this while upon earth 2000 years ago. There are times and seasons for us to do our work in, to make disciples of all nations. But the time and season when we must give an account of ourselves we do not know, we don't need to know, nor would our knowledge of them do us good.

II. He tells them that the coming of Christ would be sudden, and a great surprise to most, [1Th 5:2](#). Jesus himself taught us in [Mat 24:36](#) **"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."**

The exact time of His coming is not for us to know. The Father has not chosen to reveal it to us. [Mark 13:32-37](#) **"But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (33) Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. (34) It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to**

stay awake. (35) Therefore stay awake--for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning-- (36) lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. (37) And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."

Paul had already taught them that Jesus will come like a thief in the night, when not expected. So they should have known better than to ask! **The knowledge of this will be more useful than to know the exact time, because this should inspire us to watch, that we may be ready whenever he comes.** Noah spent 120 years preaching, warning everyone that destruction is coming, yet Jesus said that [Mat 24:37-39](#) For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (38) For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, (39) and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Note: if you do not have his sudden appearing on the forefront of your mind, will you be embarrassed, ashamed when He comes for you? I constantly wonder what I will be doing...?

III. He tells them how terrible Christ's coming would be to the ungodly, 1Th 5:3. The disappearance of true believers will usher in the 7 year Tribulation. The righteous God will bring ruin upon his and his enemies; and it will be total and final.

1. It will be sudden. It will overtake them, and fall upon them, in the midst of their carnal appetites, security and fun, when they say in their hearts, '*Peace and safety*', while they think nothing of God and eternity and nothing of sinning to their hearts content, sudden, unexpected judgement will hit them.

2. It will be unavoidable destruction too: '*They shall not escape*'. There will be no means possible for them to avoid neither the terror nor the punishment of that day. There will be no place to hide from the wrath of a righteous God. Not even caves nor a mountain falling on them will keep them safe from his judgement.

IV. He tells them how secure this day will be to the righteous, 1Th 5:4-5. We '*are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you*'. This was the happy condition of the Thessalonians as it is of all true Christians. They were not in a state of sin and ignorance as are those who do not know Christ. We used to be in darkness and blind to the truth. It is only by God's grace and gift of faith to each of us that we will avoid the time of destruction.

When can I expect the Rapture to occur?

Most modern mainstream churches in Christianity believe in Christ's catching up the saints to heaven, a 7 year tribulation period and his formal 2nd coming to reign on earth. But there are several differing views on the order in which these events happen.

1. Post tribulationism: this is the view that the church will be raptured as Christ is descending from heaven at His physical 2nd coming at the start of the millennium. So, they believe the church goes through the tribulation and the rapture will occur at the end of the tribulation.

2. Mid tribulationism: this view is less popular. Those who adhere to this believe the rapture will occur mid way through the tribulation. The trib. Is 7 years but in two parts: the trib/Great trib. They believe it is significant that the rapture occurs before the start of the 2nd 3.5 years as God steps up His judgements and they grow markedly worse.

3. Partial Rapture: not many hold to this but this holds that only those who qualify will be raptured at the beginning of the trib and others will be raptured as they become qualified.

4. Pre tribulationism: this is the most popular view. Believers in Jesus Christ will be snatched from the earth more than 7 years before He starts His 1000 year reign.

The Church is taken up from the earth before the judgement of Revelations begins, and along with it, an evangelistic effort takes place. Millions of people will be converted, believing in the Messiah, after the church has disappeared. Lead by God's two witnesses and the 144,000 sealed Jews who are chosen for this purpose.

It is these newly saved people during the 7 year Tribulation period that constitutes the 'this generation' Jesus spoke of in Matthew's gospel. If they survive the trib. They will see Christ return in power and glory at its end to set up his throne on earth.

I believe in Pre tribulationism.

We don't have the time to look at this passage, but I want to observe some important observations from 'The book of Revelation'.

What is the evidence for the rapture before the Trib begins?

1. Where the Church is and isn't in the book of Revelation:

- Rev. Ch 1-3 its theme is centred on Jesus' dealing with the church. The church is mentioned 19 times in these chapters.
- Ch 1 is a vision of Christ ministering to the church.
- Ch's 2-3 contains the letters of Christ written to the churches.
- Then in Ch 4 on, all that is said – the warnings, descriptions and visions are devoid of any reference to the church. It would appear that the church is not present in all the later scenes on earth as judgement is poured out on the wicked.
- Ch 4 and 5 portrays scenes in heaven before the trib begins in ch 6.
- Ch 4:4 describes the 24 Elders seated on thrones around the throne of God. Most respected Bible commentators (ie MacArthur, Walvord, Henry) all conclude that they represent the glorified church in heaven.
 - They have crowns which are promised as rewards for the church.
 - Ch 4-22 describes the process in which Christ the King receives His inheritance from God the Father –the Title Deed to the earth and the throne in Jerusalem from which to rule the nations.

As Christ unseals the scroll in ch 6 onwards, we see judgement after judgement poured out on unbelieving Israel, the wicked unrepentant gentile nations and the defeat of Satan and his minions.

So, you have:

- The church on earth in Ch's 1-3.
- The church in Heaven in Ch's 4-5
- The Tribulation begins in Ch 6 on earth.

Then, in Ch 19 Christ comes back to reign and with Him are all the saints clothed in white. That's us. We've been in heaven for the 'Marriage supper of the Lamb'

and faced the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. [2Co 5:10](#)

2. There is no instruction or warnings given to the church about how to endure the future Trib. Period.

Nothing on how to survive as the world plunges into chaos:

- How to survive 45kg hail stones;
- meteorites the size of mountains slamming into the sea;
- water so bitter it makes you sick or sea turned into thick putrid blood;
- millions of demonic creatures that cause so much pain you want to die but cannot;
- Or the murderous Antichrist who beheads those who will not worship him!!!

All of the instruction to the church throughout the N.T. is of how to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we look forward to the glorious living hope of Jesus' return to take us to His Father's Home. We are to wait eagerly for the appearing of our Blessed Lord and Saviour, with our eyes fixed on the author and perfecter of our faith who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ([Col. 3](#))

3. The N.T. places huge emphasis on our hope.

In [John 14](#), [1 Cor. 15](#), [1 Thess. 4](#), the church, made up of those who have placed their hope in Christ alone as the way to enter heaven, is taken from earth to heaven to be with Christ.

In each passage there is no judgement, but Christ comes to take believers from the earth. He does not come down and set foot on earth. We are rescued from this world of trouble.

Note: If this describes the **end** of the Trib, what's the point of His calling us up to heaven, then immediately bring us straight back? – I get motion sickness so bad, I'll fall from the sky with all the up and down stuff and land on my face! Splat!

No, Jesus has called us up to a place He has prepared for us, where we – the bride- will meet our bridegroom and celebrate the 'marriage supper of the lamb'. We will receive our reward for faithful service here on earth. Then we will come back with Him to assist with His reign on earth. This is the only way to make sense of all that the Bible says on it.

4. If we are raptured at the end of the Trib, then who populates the earth during the Millennium?

First, Christ comes and destroys all the wicked at His glorious appearing. So, no one survives the 'Day of the Lord'.

Second, then Christ raptures the church. All the saints are taken away. We are given new glorified bodies, just like his.

So, you have no unbelievers on earth and no living believers on earth either.

a. Who, then, has the babies to populate the earth?

b. Over whom is Christ ruling with a rod of iron? The wicked are dead. Perfected believers who came back with Him don't need it.

c. Where do the sinners come from who will rebel against Christ at the end of His 1000 year reign?

d. Therefore, there has to be God fearing people who survive the Trib who make up the nations of the earth. It is their off-spring who are then ruled.

5. What do we do with Rev 3:10: *‘because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth’.*

This is a promise to those true believers, who out of love for their Saviour, been faithful to His Word. Those who have a persevering salvation, the proof of genuine faith: faith that never gives up. Just like the saints of [Heb. 11](#).

Jesus here said he will **keep them from** the hour of trial (adversity, affliction, trouble, tribulation) that is coming upon the whole world.

“I will keep you from that hour”,

‘keep’ - to *guard* (from *loss* or *injury*); by implication to *detain*.

‘trial’ - adversity, affliction, trouble: sent by God and serving to test or prove one’s character, faith, holiness

So, we are kept out of a specific set time of trouble, ‘hour’ meaning a brief period of time.

Note: as some misuse this verse, He is not promising to keep you from all the trials of life. You’ll have health, wealth and prosperity. But James 1:2 says we **will have trials** of many kinds. Keep it in context: it is from this set time only ‘out of which’ we will be kept.

John MacArthur sums this up like this:

At the rapture:

The church meets Christ in the air.

The Mt of olives is untouched. Christ does not stand on it.

Living saints are transformed and taken to heaven.

The world is not judged, and sin on earth rapidly gets worse.

The body (transformed) goes to heaven.

The rapture is imminent – expected at any time.

The rapture concerns only the saved.

At the Second Coming of Christ:

The church returns with Christ to the earth.

The mt of Olives is split in two.

No one is transformed and taken to heaven.

Sin is judged and the world is ruled by righteousness.

The body (new glorified) comes to earth.

The second coming has distinct signs.

The second coming concerns the saved and the lost.

Whether we like it or not, whether we are ready or not,

Jesus is going to rapture His church. It will be sudden. It will happen when it’s not expected: many Christians will be surprised; many religious people will be stunned, and the unbelieving world just don’t have a clue and don’t want one either. They are blinded by the ruler of this world, blinded by their sin and many that do attend a ‘Christian’ church are taught by spiritually blind guides.

This is why I entitled this message, **‘Coming, ready or not!’**

In light of this then, what should be our response? And yes, there has to be a response. Do something or do nothing?

1Th 5:6-10

The Apostle now builds on what he said by adding a warning: be watchful and busy.

I. To watchfulness and self-control, :6. These duties are distinct, yet they mutually befriend one another. For, while we are surrounded with so many temptations to over indulge in, we can't keep sober unless we are watchful, on our guard, and, unless we are self-controlled, we won't be able to stand watch for very long.

1. Then let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch; we must not be self-secure and careless, nor be spiritually idle. The answer? Eph 6:10-13 'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (11) Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (13) Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.'

They say, 'Peace and safety', when they are in the greatest danger, dozing away their precious moments on which eternity depends, indulging in idle dreams, and have no thoughts nor cares about the next world. Either they do not consider the things of the next life at all, because they are asleep; or they do not consider them with correct information. But we, you and I, must be watchful, be diligent and that stand at attention like a guard at his post.

2. Let us also be sober, or self-controlled and sensible. Let us keep our natural desires and appetites after the things of this world under control. Soberness as opposed to gluttony and drunkenness; but it also extends to all other worldly and temporary things. That's why our Saviour warned his disciples not to be overtaken with the cares of this life, and so that day comes as a surprise.

3. God has given us all the tools we need to remain self controlled and sober: 2Pe 1:3-8 His divine power has granted to us **all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,** (4) by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (5) For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, (6) and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, (7) and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. (8) **For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

4. Always remember this: our hope is grounded in God's power and appointment.

- God has not appointed us to suffer His wrath but to receive salvation.
- That whether we are awake or sleep, we should live together with Christ, live in companionship with Him and in glory with him forever.

Also, 2Pe 3:11-14 'Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, (12) waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! (13) But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (14) Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.'

'Waiting for' - dokeuō (to watch in anticipation with hope).

‘Hastening’ - *speudō* - *spyoo'-do* to “speed” (“study”), that is, *urge* on (diligently or earnestly); by implication to *await* eagerly: - (make, with) *haste* unto.

Watching, waiting, anticipating, longing for the day the Son Of God appears in the clouds to remove us from the face of the earth is a sign of a true believer.

Are you ready to face the judge? *‘And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment...’* [Heb 9:27](#)

We will give an account to God:

‘So whether we are at home (in the body) or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (11) Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.’ [2Co 5:9-11](#)

What better motive is there to stimulate diligence, than reflection of the judgment to come!?! Henry said: *‘There are many things relating to this great matter that should awe the best of men into the utmost care and diligence in religion; for example, the certainty of this judgment, for we must appear; the great Judge before whose judgment-seat we must appear, the Lord Jesus Christ, who himself will appear in flaming fire; the reward to be then received, for things done in the body, which will be very particular (unto every one), and very just, according to what we have done, whether good or bad. The apostle calls this awful judgment the fear of the Lord.’* [2Co 5:11](#)

[Heb 10:25-29](#) has a similar theme.

Longing for Heaven!

[2Co 4:16-5:4](#) *‘So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. (17) For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, (18) as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (5:1) For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, (3) if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. (4) For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened--not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.’*

A guarantee of things to come:

In speaking of the eternal life to come for those who put their faith in Jesus Christ, Paul wrote of something God has done and which can't be undone:

[2Co 5:5](#) *‘He who has prepared us for this very thing, is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.’* (ESV)

‘Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.’ (NIV)

So don't fall away:

[Heb 10:19-25](#) *‘Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus... (22) let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of*

faith... (23) Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. (24) And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.'

Heb 10:26-31 'For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (27) but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. (28) Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. (29) How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (30) For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

A healthy dose of Encouragement and exhortation: God is faithful.

Heb 11:1-12:29 'Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (2) For by it the people of old received their commendation. (3) By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible... (6) And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him... (8) By faith Abraham obeyed ... For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God... (13) These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth... (16) But as it is, **they desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, **for he has prepared for them a city...** (23) Moses... (25) Choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin... **for he was looking to the reward...** And all these (the saints listed here), though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, (40) since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (12:1) Therefore, **since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted...** (12) Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, (13) and make straight paths for your feet... (22) ... you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, (23) and **to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven,** and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, (24) and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant..'**

Amen!!

Let me finish on this note:

1Th 5:23-24 'Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (24) He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.'