

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH PRECEDES THE SEVEN YEARS OF TRIBULATION

Man-caused tribulation of the saints has always been an ongoing event and will be the main feature of the first 3.5 years of the tribulation saints. 2 Thess. 1:4-6 Revelation 6:9-11; 7:13-14

God's wrath in the great tribulation (the last 3.5 years) will be poured out on those who troubled the saints and those who refuse to obey God. 2 Thess. 1:6-9 Revelation 16:9,11 Matt. 24:14-22

During the 7 year tribulation, a great multitude will turn to God in faith and become tribulation saints.

Revelation 7:9-17

The fifth seal describes a scene in heaven of many martyred tribulation saints as they have participated in resurrection, being given white robes, and are told to wait a little while until more tribulation saints are killed as they had been killed. Revelation 6:9-11

Even the 7 year tribulation starts off with a redemptive nature. However, beginning at Rev. 15:5, the 7 vials of the wrath of God are poured out upon the earth yet no one from this point forward in time seems to repent of their deeds. Rev. 16:9,11

While the redemptive nature of the tribulation (Jacob's trouble) is due partly to the restored purpose for Israel, the church has been removed from earth to allow the unleashing of antichrist and the wrath to come upon the unbelieving and wicked world system and its followers. 2 Thess. 2:7-12

Preceding the breaking of the seals in Rev. 5, in Rev. chapters 1-3, we see Christ walking among the churches and calling the churches to repent. Rev. 1:12,20; 2:1-3:22

In chapters 4-18, we no longer see the church on earth, but is caught up into Heaven in the presence of Jesus and the throne of God. In Revelation 4:4 we see the church seated round about the throne of God represented by 12 of the 24 elders having white raiment and crowns of gold on their heads. The number 24 is a number representing completeness. The only completed entities of the saints at the beginning of chapter 4 are the church represented by 12 elders and the Old Testament saints represented by the other 12 elders, both Jew and Gentile. At the beginning of chapter 4, Israel is not

yet complete in their number of regenerated believers. And the tribulation saints are not complete in their full number.

So, the 24 elders may represent just the church and Old Testament saints. Whereas the redeemed of all time consists of the church and the Old Testament saints, both Jew and Gentile, the tribulation saints, both Jew and Gentile, and the millennial saints.

Saints of all the ages consist of those who have cooperated with the Spirit of God and have been brought to saving faith in God's provision for salvation.

The true church consists of only those "professors" who have cooperated with the conviction of the Spirit and have been born again of the Spirit. At the rapture of the church, the dead in Christ will rise first and we who are still alive will be given resurrection bodies along with Old Testament saints and we ascend into heaven to the throne of God.

The rapture of the church serves many purposes in God's plan. The Holy Spirit operates within the church saints to hold back lawlessness until He is taken away from this ministry by the rapture of the church. Also the true church is promised to be spared from the wrath of God to come upon earth (Revelation 3:10; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9-11). The rapture also allows for Israel to be grafted back into the vine and complete its intended purpose on earth, and that is evangelism (Romans 11:23-27).

So the rapture spares the church from the 7 year tribulation. 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:14-18

2 Thess. 1:4-2:17 Revelation 3:10 John 14:1-3 Psalm 27:4-5 Zephaniah 2:2-3 Isaiah 26:19-21

During the 7 year tribulation, the church and the Old Testament saints are worshiping the Lamb in heaven represented by the 24 elders. Rev. 5:8-14

The church, the bride of Christ, will eventually go back to earth and be made a kingdom and priests to our God. Rev. 5:10; 19:7-14

All who are part of the first resurrection to life eternal with God will be priests of God and of Christ (Rev. 20:4-6) and will reign with Him for a thousand years on renovated earth. After the thousand year reign, the Great White Throne Judgment of the unbelieving will be carried out, and then the New Heaven and New Earth and the New Jerusalem will be our home with God for all eternity.

Revelation chapters 20-22

The first resurrection refers to all saints of all ages. The second resurrection refers to all those who will experience the second death and separation from God for all eternity. Rev. 20:4-6

Back on earth during the 7 year tribulation, Israel has begun its role in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and evangelizing the world. Rev. 7:1-8 Matthew 24:14-21 Romans 11:23-27

After the witness of the 144,000 Jews, the 2 witnesses, and the angel preaching the everlasting gospel on earth during the 7 years of tribulation, Christ proclaims "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on (to the end)." Rev. 14:1-13

The redemptive nature of the 7 years of tribulation reminds us that the Cross of Jesus is the basis for a redemption leading to total sin removal from all of creation. The Cross of Jesus condemned sin to the utmost sentencing sin to total removal (Romans 8:3). Sin and death and all the wicked will be assigned to the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14) and all heaven and earth will be cleansed by fire (2 Peter 3:10, 12-13).

The creation itself will be liberated from bondage into the glorious freedom of the children of God.
Romans 8: 18-23

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. Revelation 22:17

Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive (with everlasting indwelling). John 7:37-39a

Receptive hearts (with readiness of mind) receive the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit leading to righteous acts of faith. Old Testament saints were regenerated and sealed unto eternal life by the Holy Spirit and power for doing righteous acts came upon them. New Testament saints are regenerated, sealed, permanently indwelt with power for doing righteous acts, and given eternal life unto fellowship with God and other saints.

THE LAST TRUMP

Paul's last trump is not referring to John's seventh and last trump. Paul wrote as a Jewish historian decades before John wrote down the Revelation. So Paul knew nothing of John's seventh trumpet. Paul wrote 1 Cor. at about the year 53. John wrote down the revelation about the year 95. The Seventh Trumpet of Revelation 11:15-19 is a judgment upon the earth. The wrath of God is revealed and judgment comes upon earth. John received this revelation from Jesus.

The Last Trump of 1 Cor. 15: 52 is likened to the last trump of the Jewish feast of Trumpets and is a trumpet of hope and redemption. The Old Testament feast of Trumpets was celebrated every year. This last trump was blown every year and so was not referring to a final trumpet sound (of all time).

Paul reveals the blessed hope is that the church is not appointed to wrath. 1 Thess. 4:17-5:9

1 Thess. 5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

5:11a Wherefore comfort yourselves together.

Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Paul says that we are not looking for the tribulation to overtake us, rather we are looking for the glorious appearing of Jesus and (the rapture).