



# A REVELATION OF THE END TIMES

WHY THE PRE-TRIBULATION  
RAPTURE IS BIBLICAL



TIMO GROOT

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A Revelation of the End Times

Why the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is Biblical

By Timo Groot

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## FOREWORD

The Rapture of the Church is a beautiful yet complex topic. Yet, Christians are divided on the timing and occurrence of the Rapture. We will study the Word of God, the Bible, and examine through its guidance—whether the Rapture of the Church is a biblical principle. If so, how and when will it take place? Throughout this book, I assume that the Bible is 100% inspired by the Holy Spirit, making it a source for teaching, refuting error, and guiding a righteous life (2 Timothy 3:16). My prayer is that this book will encourage and edify you, igniting a desire for the moment we'll see Jesus.

My interest in the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ has been long-standing, and these subjects bring me immense joy. However, it saddens me that due to the many arguments—both for and against the Rapture—many have become indifferent to these topics. Yet, a substantial portion of the Bible speaks about these events. In my view, it's a pivotal moment for God's children and all of His creation awaiting Jesus to return to earth. As Paul puts it, "*For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God*" (Romans 8:19, KJV). Creation eagerly awaits Jesus' return to reign over the earth alongside His followers. Are you also eagerly anticipating this moment?

In addition to studying the Rapture and the Second Coming in the Bible, I had a revelation via a dream about the Rapture. In this dream, I was walking alone in a meadow, heading towards the woods. I lifted my head and saw a clear sky. Instead of a starry sky, I beheld a massive lion that appeared human-like. His head spanned the entire expanse of the sky, from east to west, and his face was turned towards the Earth. As I walked the path toward the woods, I heard a human voice say, "Before the Rapture occurs, two blue beams of light will pass along the lion, traversing the entire Earth." I gazed upwards and witnessed these beams of light flash past the lion at a speed faster than lightning. About one or two seconds later, another blue flash of light descended upon me, enveloping me in a blue-white-golden radiance. The forest and meadow vanished, and I noticed myself being lifted



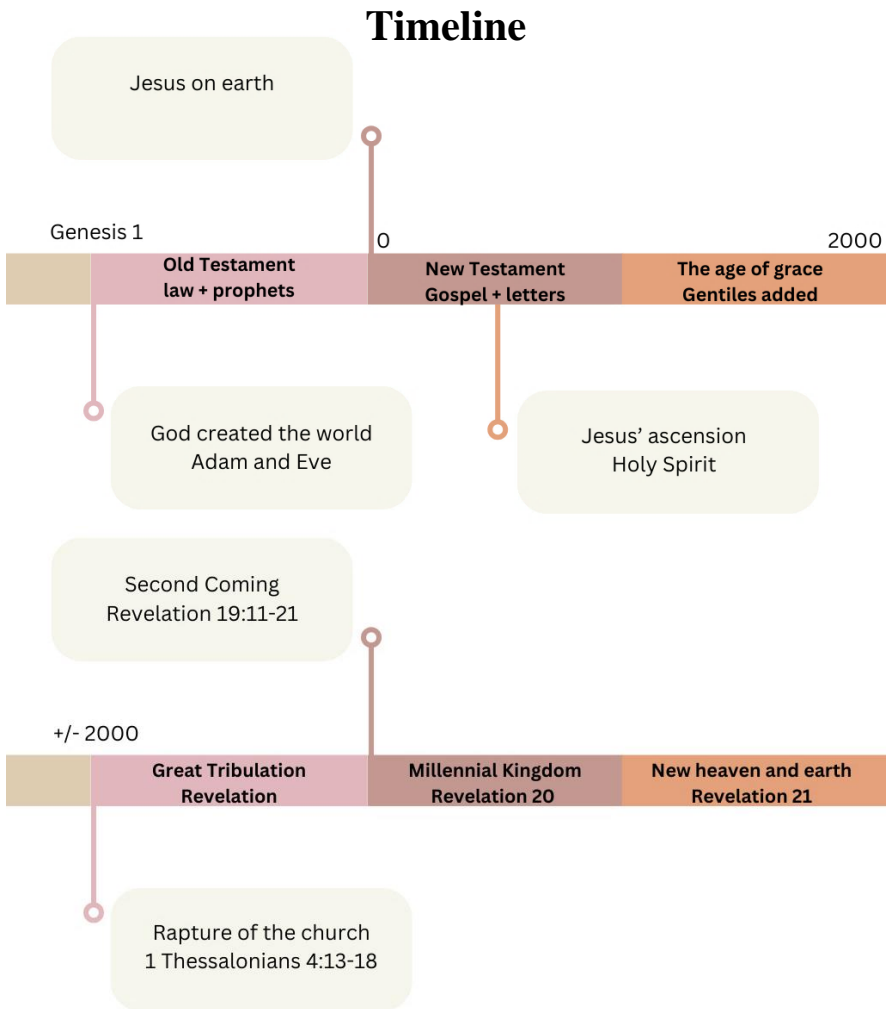
upward. I thought, "Oh no! Is it happening now? Is it real?!" And I realized that this must be the Rapture of the Church. For a very brief moment, I closed my eyes to contemplate and thought, "If I open my eyes now, I should see Jesus as it is written in His Word!" I opened my eyes and saw the ceiling of my bedroom. I'm not exactly sure of the meaning of this dream or why I dreamt it, but what remains most vivid to me is the moment after the dream. I encountered three things:

1. I experienced the Spirit of God within me, convincing me that this was from Him.
2. I realized that I have nothing to offer the Lord Jesus when I meet Him in the air. Jesus is so good and loving, while I am a sinful person, unable to name anything in my life as a fragrant offering to Jesus. I recognized that I can only enter heaven through His grace and love.
3. I developed a desire to make my wedding garments whiter in the blood of Jesus. I sensed that in His presence, I was unclean and a wrongdoer. This was not a feeling of condemnation but rather a sense of Jesus' love for me.

After this dream, a stronger yearning burn within me to meet the Lord Jesus in the air, and I pray that a similar desire to meet Jesus also burns within you!

# 1 DIVINE TIMELINE

Before delving into the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ, this chapter addresses the various events on God's timeline. It's crucial to keep this timeline in mind, as it aids in discovering God's ways and plans. After discussing the timeline, we will explore the events that have occurred and those that are yet to occur. Since I do not know when the Rapture will happen, I've set the year to approximately 2,000 years.



The Rapture could take place today, or it might be years away. God decides when this will occur, and this moment has not been disclosed to anyone (Mark 13:32). Therefore, attempting to calculate a Rapture date is futile.

## **God's Creation and the Fall**

The Bible teaches that God created humans, whereas science tells a different story. Science presents a narrative where God is absent, and humans are a product of chance. Through a "big bang" that occurred 13.8 billion years ago, the universe emerged, filled with countless stars, planets, comets, and other celestial bodies. This is already difficult to fathom, but science adds another layer: this explosion emerged from nothing and happened in an area smaller than a bottle cap. I find it remarkable that an explosion yields beautiful stars and planets. If I were to set off a firecracker in my house, it's more likely that my house would suffer rather than benefit. I believe science tells this story because it refuses to believe in God. If God exists, it means that every individual must answer to this God, which is a thought that can be daunting to science.

The Bible recounts in the first verse of Genesis how the heavens and the earth were indeed created: *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* And Psalm 90:2 states, *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."* Firstly, we have God, who exists eternally. He was present before the earth was formed and will remain forever. Secondly, God created the heavens, the earth, and all that resides within them. It began on Day 1 with the appearance of light, and by Day 6, God had completed the creation of humankind.

*"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7)*

I scarcely realize the significance of Genesis 2:7. God began His creation week with His voice: "God said, Let there be." However, as the days progressed, He increasingly employed His creative hands. In Genesis 1:21 and 1:25, we read that God made the animals, and in Genesis 2:7, we learn that God formed man from the dust and breathed His breath of life into his nostrils. God was working towards His crowning creation, humanity. God desired to make people in His own image, people who resemble Him (Genesis 1:26), people with whom He wishes to have a personal relationship (Revelation 3:20), people who walk with Him (Genesis 5:22), people who obey Him (Ephesians 5:1), people who desire to be joined with Him in marriage (2 Corinthians 11:2), and people who acknowledge Him as their Father (Romans 8:15). God did not long for servants or slaves; God yearned for a relationship with humanity, and those who obey Him He calls "My friends" (John 15:13-15).

God created man. He began with Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden. However, it didn't stop there; God's desire extended to more people, and He continued creating. These new people weren't formed from the dust of the earth but were fashioned within the wombs of pregnant women. King David wrote the following Psalm about this:

*"For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." (Psalm 139:13-16, KJV)*

David wrote this Psalm about himself, and I believe it also holds relevance for our lives. God is the One who formed you within your mother's womb. God is the One who fashioned all your organs and breathed life and soul into you. It was God's desire that you exist and

live. God was so pleased with you that even your unformed beginnings are recorded in His book. You may not actively remember your time in the womb, but God documented each day in His book. God knows you better than you know yourself. His desire is for you to know Him and share your life with Him, creating a love relationship where obedience, belief, and loyalty go hand in hand.

For this reason, God created humankind, and in Genesis 3, we read about the time Adam and Eve spent with God. Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden of Eden and conversed with Him (Genesis 3:8). They had a relationship with God and were able to be in His presence. How is it that today, we live separated from God and cannot come into His presence?

A few years ago, I had the following experience. I was sleeping in my bedroom and suddenly woke up. I sensed the presence of God's Spirit, and I felt being filled with His Spirit. It started with a wave of His love, then came another wave, and another, and another. I increasingly felt God's Spirit within me, and I realized that my body couldn't contain any more of God's love. I had to tell God, "Please stop, or I might collapse and die!" My body couldn't bear God's love and holiness because my body is tainted by sin. Due to my sinfulness, God cannot fully reveal Himself in my earthly body. To make this possible, I need a new body, an imperishable body like that of the Lord Jesus.

*"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Philippians 3:20-21, KJV)*

But how is it that Adam and Eve were able to walk with God? God is love, and because He is a loving God, He wanted humanity, Adam and Eve, to have the choice to walk with Him or to lead their own lives.

*"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17, KJV)*

It was truly a paradise on Earth, and Adam and Eve were allowed to do almost anything and eat from every tree except one. God desired to give humankind free will. That's why humans had the choice to disobey God and engage in actions that would lead to their death. With this choice, God granted humanity the freedom to decide whether to walk with Him, to be faithful to Him, and to obey Him. God didn't create robots compelled to serve Him; He created individuals with the capacity to choose whether or not to obey Him. I also long for people who love me out of their own choice, not out of obligation. Moreover, setting my phone to say "I love you" every hour wouldn't bring me joy. I want those words to be spoken only when someone means them. I believe this applies to God as well, and that's why He gave Adam the command, giving him the choice to obey or disobey.

Next, Eve walked through the garden and suddenly saw a serpent speaking to her. The serpent is a manifestation of Satan (Revelation 12:9), and Satan aims to seduce humans into rebelling against God. He primarily accomplishes this through lies, deception, and twisting the truth (John 8:44). We see this happening for the first time in the early chapters of Genesis in Eve's conversation with the serpent. The serpent said, *"Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"* (Genesis 3:1, KJV) Here, we see the serpent's lie, for this is not what God had said. Eve also clarified this, saying, *"But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."* (Genesis 3:2, KJV) *"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."* (Genesis 3:4-5, KJV) In reality, this wasn't entirely a lie from the serpent. Their eyes would indeed be opened, and they would gain

knowledge of good and evil by eating the fruit. However, the serpent 'forgot' to mention one crucial thing: *"It will be terrible when your eyes are opened and you gain the knowledge of good and evil."* After Adam and Eve ate the fruit, their eyes were opened, and they realized they were naked. This isn't just about physical nakedness or the awakening of sexual feelings. It's about the loss of protection and the experience of shame and emptiness. Adam and Eve realized something was taken from them, making them imperfect, and they began to feel ashamed before each other and before God. But it didn't stop there. This shame led to fear, and they were afraid to face God (Genesis 3:10). Their goodness and protection were lost, making it impossible to continue walking with God. This doesn't apply solely to Adam and Eve but to every human being (Romans 5:19). Due to Adam and Eve's disobedience, it's no longer possible to walk with God, as demonstrated by their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

*"So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (Genesis 3:24, KJV)*

Before we move on to the next event on the timeline, I want to address one question about the Fall: Why did Adam and Eve have to leave God's presence? The 'simple' answer is that God is holy, and humanity is unclean. But what does this mean practically? Let's make it practical with an example.

In a small village in the south of the United States, there are two people: David and Karen. They love each other deeply. Karen always helps in the soup kitchen, ensuring everyone gets a good meal. She also takes care of the village, and everyone loves her. Karen always wears a wristwatch. She inherited it from her grandfather, and everyone in the village knows that Karen can't live without her watch; it's her most prized possession. Karen asks David to look after the watch while she cooks for the homeless. David agrees and takes the watch. However, David decides to sell the watch in Austin, Texas. He travels there and sells it to a jeweler for 2,500 dollars. The next

day, David and Karen meet in the village, and Karen asks David, "Do you still have my precious watch?" How do you think David would feel? Wouldn't his heart be torn by the injustice he's done to her? I believe David would want to avoid Karen and regret his actions.

I think a similar feeling was present in Adam and Eve, but even stronger. God, who is exceptionally good and loving, experienced injustice when Adam and Eve sinned against Him.

## **The Old Testament**

Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden and live on the Earth. They had sons and daughters (Genesis 5:4), and Genesis 4 tells the story of two sons: Cain and Abel. In this story, we read about the first murder committed on Earth. Cain became furious when God did not accept his offering but accepted Abel's (Genesis 4:5). Cain decided to murder Abel and took him out into the field and killed him (Genesis 4:8). Humanity, created in the image of God, became a murderer, even though nothing dark is ever conceived in God's thoughts (1 John 1:5). As we journey through the entire Old Testament, we encounter stories of many people. Some were better than others, but everyone did something wrong in their lives. This is stated in Romans 3:12: *"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* This creates a significant problem because everyone has done wrong, and this must be judged by God. Besides being a loving God, God is also holy and righteous. He cannot overlook our sins. Consider Adolf Hitler, for instance. Hitler was one of the worst individuals who ever lived, leading Germany during World War II. This war led to the death of 50 to 80 million people, with around 6 million Jews exterminated in concentration camps. It remains one of the darkest chapters in human history, and the pain is still visible today. When Hitler realized he was losing World War II, he chose to commit suicide. He ingested poison, shot himself in the head, and instructed his closest aides to burn his body. Thus, Hitler escaped earthly judgment. Humans, like God, possess a sense of justice. People want the evildoers to be punished and judged by the court. But many, like Hitler, escape human courts by



dying or taking their own lives. This lack of justice leaves many people grieving and perplexed. These people fail to realize that God exists and possesses a sense of justice. He will judge all the dead in a heavenly court. Everyone whose name is not in the Book of Life (the followers of Jesus) will stand before this court and receive their sentence. The Lord Jesus is the judge (John 5:22) who will judge people's sins. However, every person has gone astray and done wrong, which means everyone deserves punishment. This punishment is uniform for everyone, as we read in Revelation 20.

*"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:12-15, KJV)*

## **The New Testament: Jesus on Earth**

People will be judged, and those who have acted righteously will be able to walk with God, while those who have done wrong will be cast into the lake of fire. No one is justified by keeping the law (Galatians 2:16). This means that everyone deserves to be thrown into the lake of fire. But fortunately, God has devised a plan that allows for acquittal.

*"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:21-24)*

Paul says that faith in Jesus Christ brings about our justification. This is only possible through God's grace and the work Jesus Christ did on Earth. The New Testament tells us about Jesus. It begins with the four Gospels, containing stories and teachings of Jesus, and ends with various letters from the apostles who witnessed Jesus. In this paragraph, we'll explore who Jesus was, why He lived on Earth, and what humans must believe to claim God's righteousness. Before delving into the book's content about Jesus' Second Coming, it's important to know who Jesus is and how His first coming on Earth unfolded.

Before Jesus came to Earth, He was God. Jesus was the one who formed us from the dust of the Earth and breathed life into us (1 John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-16). Jesus was not alone as God; there are two other personalities: God the Father and the Holy Spirit. These three personalities form one God: the Trinity. God saw that people were unable to live righteously (Genesis 6:5), which saddened Him greatly because He loved people (John 3:16). If God didn't intervene, these people would be lost. God decided to intervene, and this cost Him a high price. One of the Trinity, Jesus, decided to come to Earth to live as a human.

*"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men." (Philippians 2:5-7)*

The Lord Jesus came to Earth, and how this happened is described in the Book of Luke, where a woman named Mary received a message from an angel:

*"Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house*

*of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:30-33)*

During His first coming, Jesus was born from a woman's womb. The Holy Spirit brought about Mary's conception (accomplished through God's creative work), and then Jesus experienced the same life as a human. He grew in the womb, was born (Luke 2:6-7), grew as a baby, toddler, child, teenager, and young adult until He became a grown man with a job (Mark 6:3). Jesus experienced every aspect of human life and the temptations and concerns that humans face. However, unlike all other humans, Jesus did not sin. While walking the Earth, He committed no wrong (Hebrews 4:15). He was tempted on Earth but did not give in. Jesus chose not to sin in His life and was obedient to God the Father throughout His life. Around His thirtieth year, Jesus began preaching the Gospel of God, calling people to repentance and declaring that the kingdom of heaven was near (Matthew 4:17). During these three years, miracles followed one after another: people were healed and delivered, and extraordinary events occurred.

But that wasn't all. Jesus is also the Son of God, and He came to Earth to proclaim that only through Him can people be reconciled with God the Father. In one of His sermons, He said: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* (John 14:6). Since all of humanity is sinful (Romans 3:12), no one can reach God in heaven on their own strength. Therefore, Jesus is our only way to God. The path to God is opened only by adhering to His commandments and statutes. The Bible contains Jesus' teachings, detailing what we must do to be reconciled with God: believe in Jesus, trust Him, and obey Him (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus has paved the way to God, and there is only one way—Jesus Christ.

The price for paving this path was exceedingly high for God the Father and Jesus Christ. This could only be achieved if Jesus led a sinless life on earth and was then nailed to a cross. The cross was one of the most brutal instruments of torture used by the Roman Empire for the worst criminals.

Jesus knew well in advance what awaited Him. After celebrating Passover with His disciples, He went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray to God. During His prayer, it's clear He was anxious and would have preferred that the "cup passes from Him." Luke notes that He sweat blood due to anxiety and was in agony (Luke 22:44). He prayed to God: "*Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.*" (Luke 22:42). He was subsequently arrested, and His followers fled from Him. He was utterly alone during His most difficult time and was taken to Pilate, where He was falsely accused. Despite having done nothing wrong, He was condemned to flogging and death by crucifixion. The flogging was carried out by Roman soldiers and is considered very brutal. The Romans designed their whips to inflict maximum damage, tearing away much of the victim's skin. Jesus had whip marks all over His body, bleeding profusely. He no longer looked like a human being (Isaiah 52:14). Without medical intervention, these whippings could be fatal within days. After being flogged, He had to carry His cross to a hill outside Jerusalem. The horizontal beam of the cross was placed on His back, full of whip marks and blood, and He walked to the hill called Golgotha. He was so weakened that He couldn't carry the cross, so Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry it for Him while Jesus followed to Golgotha (Luke 23:26). In a shattered state and with a torn body, Jesus was nailed to the cross, which was then raised. Jesus, the Son of God, hung outside Jerusalem on a cross. Cicero, a Roman statesman, described crucifixion as "the most cruel and disgusting penalty." With His arms outstretched and no good support for His feet, He hung forward on the cross, struggling to breathe. To take a breath, He had to lift His body, which was excruciatingly painful due to His strained muscles and joints. Eventually, Jesus was so exhausted that He likely suffocated. It's worth noting that at any moment, Jesus could have summoned twelve legions of angels to save Him from the cross (Matthew 26:53), but out of love for us, He chose not to.

It was not cheap for God to free us from sin and hell. He sent His only Son into the world to break the power of sin and bear our

sins in our place. As a result, no one needs to be lost, and everyone can return to God by believing in the Lord Jesus.

After the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He was placed in a tomb, and a large stone was rolled in front of the entrance (Matthew 27:60). The tomb was sealed, and guards kept watch to prevent anyone from stealing the body. Jesus lived His life on earth from the cradle to the grave, experiencing everything that a human can experience, but without sinning.

Because the Lord Jesus never sinned, death has no hold on Him. Death is the consequence of sin (Romans 6:23), and since Jesus never sinned, death cannot hold Him.

This allowed the Lord Jesus to rise from the dead through the power of God's Spirit! He then appeared to various people, including Mary, the disciples, and the Emmaus travelers, and they saw that He was alive. After this, the Lord Jesus ascended into the clouds and took His place at the right hand of God the Father. Through the work of the Lord Jesus, the way to God the Father has been restored. Anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus and trusts in Him can benefit from His work. Everyone who believes will live with God forever.

## **Holy Spirit**

Before the Lord Jesus left the earth, He made a promise to His disciples.

*"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." (Acts 1:4-5, KJV)*

After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples were baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not just a force or an entity but is a part of the Trinity of God and is, therefore, God. This means that the disciples were baptized with God, and God would forever remain

within them. After Jesus was taken up to heaven, the disciples returned to Jerusalem to an upper room, where they fervently and unitedly devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 1). On the day of Pentecost, they were gathered together and were filled with the Holy Spirit.

*"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4, KJV)*

The people in the house were filled with the Holy Spirit, causing them to speak in various languages. On this day of Pentecost, many Jews from different parts of the world were in Jerusalem, and they could hear the Spirit-filled individuals speaking in their own native languages. What a great miracle of God! From this day onward, God dwells within people! But was the Holy Spirit meant only for this select group of people, or can the Holy Spirit fill everyone?

After the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, one of them, Peter, spoke up (Acts 2:14-40). Peter addressed the Jews and residents of Jerusalem, explaining the gospel of God and proclaiming that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. Then Peter told them what they needed to do to be saved.

*"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:38-39, KJV)*

The promise of the Spirit is for everyone whom God calls. This includes me, you, and every other person on this Earth. Does this mean

that everyone has received the Holy Spirit? No. God sets a condition: *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ."* If you have done this, then you will receive the Holy Spirit. What a great grace from God! The Holy Spirit is received when you come to faith and decide to follow Jesus. From then on, the Holy Spirit acts as a seal on your life (Ephesians 1:13-14), and the Holy Spirit remains in you for eternity (John 14:16). It's important not to quench the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) by ignoring Him in your life and not allowing Him space to move. It is our 'task' to be continually filled (and baptized) with the Holy Spirit. Our desire should be to experience more of God, as stated in Ephesians 5:18: *"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."* "Be filled with the Spirit" in the original text implies a continuous process of allowing ourselves to be filled with God's Spirit. Every day, anew. The Holy Spirit remains in us forever, but this doesn't mean "once saved, always saved." If we come to faith and then turn away from it, it doesn't mean we are saved simply because we believed at one point in our lives. We see this, for example, in the Book of Hebrews.

*"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (Hebrews 3:12-14, KJV)*

It is our task, with the help and strength of God, to persevere to the end and hold onto our faith until the end. But why do we need the Holy Spirit? In the Bible, there are several roles that the Holy Spirit performs in a believer's life. First and foremost, the Holy Spirit has been given to us to reveal who Jesus was and is. The Holy Spirit always points to Jesus. Additionally, the Holy Spirit carries out the following roles:

- "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Romans 8:16, KJV)
- He intercedes and guides us in our prayers (Romans 8:26).
- He leads us on the path, resulting in the increase of our fruits (Galatians 5:18).
- He comforts and aids us (John 14:16).
- He grants us spiritual gifts to help others and strengthen their faith (1 Corinthians 12).
- He instructs us and reminds us of the Lord Jesus (John 14:26).
- He helps us become more like Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We all need the Holy Spirit to walk in the ways of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is a gentleman, which means He never intrudes into our inner being without permission. The Holy Spirit is a personal God and only operates within us when we allow Him. Thus, Paul urges us: "*Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*" (Galatians 5:16, KJV). It's our own choice to walk in the Spirit or the flesh, yet the outcome of walking in the Spirit is far more beautiful than walking in the flesh.

Learning to drive a car can be quite challenging. In the Netherlands, you need to pass a driving test and a theory exam before you can hit the road. To pass the theory exam, you need to study a lot. You must read through the books, take practice exams, and learn the meanings of traffic signs. During driving lessons, you receive guidance from the instructor, who intervenes if things start to go wrong. Gradually, you gain more independence from the instructor to handle the car independently. Living a life without the Holy Spirit is like attempting to drive after only studying the theory. You might think you know, but when you try to start the engine, it stalls. It's quite challenging to avoid accidents on the road without the instructor's help. Christians who study the Bible but don't let the Holy Spirit lead their lives are akin to those who only read the theory books. You make things unnecessarily difficult for yourself. There are also people who solely rely on the instructor and don't read the theory book. They learn how to operate the car but don't know the meanings of the traffic signs. The instructor keeps saying, "You can't go in here, you can't



park here, the speed limit is 80 kilometers per hour." This is also not optimal. Similarly, there are Christians who never read the Bible and solely rely on the Holy Spirit. Even then, you make things unnecessarily difficult for yourself. The right way is to both study the theory books (the Bible) and listen to the instructor (the Holy Spirit). The beauty is that the Holy Spirit and the Bible always complement each other!

## **The Age of Grace**

After everyone present on Pentecost received the Holy Spirit, they spread the word to the people in Jerusalem. More and more people were reached with the gospel of God, causing more and more people to follow the Lord Jesus. From Jerusalem, the gospel spread to most parts of the world, and with the technological advancements of the 21st century, it won't be long before the good news reaches everyone on Earth. In the time between Pentecost and the Rapture of the Church, God has inserted a kind of pause, during which we live in anticipation of the next item on God's calendar, the Rapture of the Church.

Sometimes, I enjoy watching a TV series. A series has different seasons, and each season contains multiple episodes. The producer creates one season and airs it on television and streaming services. If it's a good series, it gains fans who eagerly await more seasons, prompting the producer to start working on the second season. Fans have to wait until the second season is made and aired. Essentially, the world today is in a period between two seasons. We read the Bible and see the incredible things God has done. Moreover, we know that God will soon complete His work and move on to the next steps on His timeline. We await the moment when God proceeds with His timeline and begins the next part of the 'series.'

Today, we are living in the Age of Grace. This means that everyone who believes in Jesus is saved. The grace of God and Jesus is free, and salvation comes solely through faith. During this Age of Grace, the church plays a significant role. As brothers and sisters, we gather in the church to glorify God together. In the Book of

Revelation, which speaks about the last days on Earth, the church holds a special position at the beginning of the book. John had to write letters to seven churches (congregations) in which he recorded what the Lord Jesus thought about those churches. Jesus highlighted what He appreciated about each church and what they needed to change. Firstly, these churches were actual congregations that existed in John's time, and secondly, these churches symbolized different time periods of the church in the future. These churches are described in Chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Revelation. For the purpose of this study, we won't delve into the examination of these churches. However, we'll only reflect on the fact that Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 show that during the Age of Grace, the church is a significant entity. The remarkable thing is that there has always been a church since Pentecost! And there will come a time when no (faithful) church will remain, as every son or daughter of God will be taken up during the Rapture of the Church. However, a remnant church will remain, consisting of lukewarm Christians who missed the Rapture. After the Rapture of the Church, new followers will arise, dedicating their lives to Jesus. Yet, these followers will face tremendous challenges due to a global persecution of Christians, resulting in their arrests and deaths. The church we know today will hardly, if at all, exist during the Great Tribulation.

The age of grace is indeed the time when God primarily focuses on His Church. After the Age of Grace, God's attention will shift towards His people of the Old Testament, Israel. Today, we can observe God restoring Israel's honor by the day, beginning from the year 1948 when Israel returned to their promised land in the Middle East after almost two thousand years in exile. While God's focus is currently on the Church, during the Great Tribulation, His focus will be on Israel, and all of Israel will be saved. Paul shared this event with us in the Book of Romans:

*"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has*

*come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.'" (Romans 11:25-26)*

In Romans 11, Paul explains that God has not rejected Israel, and he uses his own life as an argument. Wasn't Paul himself a Jew? And wasn't Paul called by God? Today, we still see Jews who believe in Jesus as the Messiah. These are people who are born Jewish and follow the Lord Jesus, although they constitute a minority within the Jewish population. During the Age of Grace, this minority will remain, but after the fullness of the Gentiles (non-Jews) has come in (the Rapture), God will continue His work with the Jewish people, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 7.

## **The Rapture of the Church**

An in-depth study of the Rapture of the Church can be found in Chapter 2. In this section, we will briefly explore what the Rapture of the Church entails, giving us a better understanding of God's timeline. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 clearly describes the Rapture and how it will take place. The Rapture hasn't occurred yet and is a future event that could happen at any moment.

*"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)*

*"Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)*

In the Book of Thessalonians, we read that the Lord Jesus will call the dead who are in Christ, and they will rise. Afterward, the living Christians will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord Jesus in the air. The Book of Corinthians adds that the dead and the living will receive an incorruptible (immortal) body, and their current bodies will be transformed instantly into an incorruptible body.

The Rapture of the Church will be the moment when the Lord Jesus calls us (Christians), transforms our bodies into immortal ones, catches us up into the air in the blink of an eye, and we will forever be with the Lord. We will delve deeper into this topic in the next chapter.

The exact timing of the Rapture of the Church is unknown. There are millions of Christians on Earth, and one day they will disappear. One might be driving a car, another might be asleep, and yet another might be grocery shopping. I wonder, "What would be a fun moment to be raptured?" And I conclude that it should be when I'm playing hide and seek with friends. I know who would win in that case....

## **The Great Tribulation**

After the Lord Jesus has taken His followers in the Rapture, a terrible period will occur on Earth. God will judge the Earth during this time, and His wrath will be poured out on its inhabitants. Additionally, God will protect His people, Israel, and all of Israel will be saved. The Lord Jesus described this period as follows:

*"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matthew 24:21)*

It will be a tribulation like no other. History lessons teach us about terrible periods. Think of world wars, the civil wars in the Soviet Union and China, and the European crusades. Think of famines, natural disasters, corruption, and the deception of certain governments, as

well as the persecution Christians face in North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, and Pakistan. Today, the world is "broken" in many places, and then the Lord Jesus says, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." The Great Tribulation will overshadow everything else and will be a period filled with wars, natural disasters, and distress. In Chapter 4, we will explore the Great Tribulation in more detail.

## **The Second Coming of Christ**

Since the second part of this book is about the Second Coming of Christ, we'll briefly touch on this topic in this section. For a comprehensive discussion, I refer you to Chapter 10.

After the seven years of the Great Tribulation, the Lord Jesus will intervene. He will come with the saints to Earth. After His first coming (born of a woman) and His "intervention" to gather His followers, it is now time for Jesus to come to Earth as King and reign over all nations during the Millennial Kingdom. During His first coming, He came to serve and suffer, whereas during His Second Coming, He comes to rule. He will set foot on the Mount of Olives, located near Jerusalem.

*"And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south." (Zechariah 14:4)*

The Lord Jesus will come to Earth to defeat the devil, his demons, and all those who serve the devil, establishing a Thousand-Year Reign where He will be King. Everyone on Earth will see the Lord Jesus coming from the clouds, unlike the Rapture of the Church. If it hadn't been clear before, everyone would now know that the Lord Jesus is alive and holds all power.

*"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen." (Revelation 1:7)*

In the second part of this book, we'll delve deeper into the Second Coming, and in Chapter 14, we'll examine the differences between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ. It's important to know that the Lord Jesus will return to Earth and have all authority over it.

## **The Millennial Kingdom of Peace**

During the Millennial Kingdom, the Lord Jesus will reign on Earth alongside His followers. The devil will be bound for a thousand years, and the inhabitants of the Earth must obey the Lord Jesus. A time of rest and peace will ensue, and people will not wage war against each other. Jesus will administer justice from Jerusalem, and all nations will be required to honor Him. In addition to humanity, the Earth itself will find peace. Deserts will bloom like roses, and the climate crisis will be resolved by the Lord Jesus. However, this period will come to an end because, after a thousand years, the devil will be released and will deceive people into waging war against the saints of Israel. The Lord Jesus will ultimately destroy those who engage in this war, and the age of the Earth will come to an end. For a detailed account, I refer you to Chapter 13.

*"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus*

and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." (Revelation 20:1-4)

## **A New Heaven and a New Earth**

If the Rapture occurs in this age, the period of human existence on Earth will be 7,000 years. Six thousand years have passed, and the Millennial Kingdom will last for 1,000 years. Throughout these 7,000 years, much has happened, and we are not even familiar with 99% of the historical narratives! Yet, these 7,000 years pale in comparison to the duration of the New Heaven and New Earth. This time will last forever, meaning that nothing will follow after it. We will remain on the new Earth eternally. The Bible doesn't provide many details about this time, and neither John nor I, who wrote about it, can adequately describe how it will be. One thing I do know: it will be better than we can imagine! Let's read the key verses about this time.

*"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful. ... He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.'" (Revelation 21:1-8)*

John received this revelation and saw a new heaven and a new earth. God will make everything new. Today, we live in a world that is perishable (mortal). Grass dies, trees die, flowers die, and its inhabitants pass away. This applies to the Earth, the sky, and the universe—the blue sky and the cosmos. Even the stars are slowly dying and are perishable. God will remove everything and start with a new heaven and a new earth.

*"But the heavens and the earth which now exist are kept in store by the same word, reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. ... But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. ... Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." (2 Peter 3:7-13)*

*"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." (Matthew 24:35)*

Now, let's explore what will or will not be present in the New Heaven and New Earth.

### **The Sea Disappears**

The sea will no longer exist. The sea is tumultuous, and waves constantly crash onto the shore. I find the sea and the beach beautiful to behold, especially during sunsets as the sun disappears into the sea. On one hand, I feel a sense of loss that I won't get to see the sea after the Millennial Kingdom. On the other hand, I know that God has something even more beautiful in store. The reason why the sea no longer exists is explained in the Book of Isaiah.

*"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." (Isaiah 57:20)*



The sea symbolizes the wicked and unrest. In the new Earth, there will only be the righteous, and there will be eternal peace. In this image, there is no place for the sea. Furthermore, the sea is a remnant of judgment and the flood (Genesis 6-9). While Noah and his family entered the ark, it began to rain. The water from the sky poured down onto the Earth, and water from beneath the Earth surged upward. This caused all the mountains and land to be submerged. Eventually, the water receded, allowing Noah to leave the ark, but much water remained and formed our seas and oceans.

*"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights." (Genesis 7:11-12)*

### **God Dwells Among People**

In this time, God will continue to dwell among people. We will never again be separated from God! We are called the sons and daughters of God. This signifies that we can call God our Father and that we have an intimate relationship with Him. This applies not only to the future but also to today (1 John 3:1-2). Unfortunately, earthly fathers may not always be good. A father, whether good or bad, makes a significant difference in a child's upbringing. We can rest assured that God is the best Father who exists. When the Bible says that God will wipe away all our tears, it demonstrates that God is a loving Father who cares for us. We can establish a relationship with our loving Father and all righteous brothers and sisters around us. This applies to both the future and today, even though brothers and sisters today still make mistakes. It will be a good and just family.

### **No Discomfort**

Can you imagine a world with no death, sorrow, crying, or pain? Yet, this time will come! This is a significant difference between the new

Earth and the Millennial Kingdom. In the Kingdom, there is mortality, but in the new Earth, there is immortality. Everything will be made right! The sorrow of the current Earth will pass away, and everything will be made new.

### **God's Righteousness**

Everything in the new Earth reflects God's righteousness. No war, no pain, no oppression, no wickedness, and no liars. All injustice is gone, and anyone who has practiced injustice will not enter the new Earth. Only the righteous (those made righteous by the Lord Jesus) will enter the new Earth.

### **The City of Jerusalem**

There will be a city in the new Heaven and on the new Earth. Not just an ordinary city as we know it today, but a holy city that comes from God. This is the New Jerusalem and bears characteristics of the Church of Christ and the people of Israel. John attempted to describe this city in Revelation 21 and 22, but it was very challenging for him because how do you compare this city to anything? The city shows that God dwells within it, and God is its light. God's righteousness shines over the city, and there is no place for anything vile or anyone engaged in abominations and lies.

I'd like to conclude this section with a comparison made by Paul. I can never describe how the New Heaven and Earth will look, and in this section, we've only covered the main points from Revelation 21:1-8. Paul compares the heavenly like this:

*"But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?' Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another*

*flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." (1 Corinthians 15:35-43)*

In this life, we may appear as a "mere grain," but we will be raised in glory and power when we are resurrected. Just as you can't compare a grain to the wheat it produces, you can't compare our current life and world to what's to come. One thing I do know: It will be more beautiful than we can ever imagine.

## **Summary**

God has established a timeline for events on Earth. Today, we live in the age of grace, and soon, we anticipate the Rapture of the Church. After the Rapture, the Great Tribulation will occur, culminating in the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus will rule as King during the Millennial Kingdom, and afterward, the New Heaven and New Earth will come into existence.

# PART 1



A REVELATION OF THE

# RAPTURE

WHY THE RAPTURE IS BEFORE  
THE GREAT TRIBULATION

## 2 WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

*But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)*

The most well-known verse about the Rapture of the Church is 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Firstly, this verse is intended to bring comfort to believers. Paul reassures the Thessalonian church that they should not grieve for those who have passed away, for the departed will rise again in the future and live. Subsequently, the living and the deceased are united, and together, we are caught up in the clouds to meet Jesus in the air. An argument against the Rapture is that this text is meant for comfort and does not explicitly mention a catching away. However, this reasoning is overly simplistic, as Paul essentially conveys: "Take comfort, for we will be caught up in the air and forever be with Jesus and the departed believers. If I say to someone, "Take comfort, for next week we are going on vacation," my words are intended to provide comfort. Likewise, it would be odd if I said a week later, "No, we are not going on vacation; that wasn't the point of my words. They were meant for your comfort, nothing more." Paul's words are meant to console and provide essential information about the Rapture. In this chapter, we address the question, "What is the Rapture?" We examine key Bible verses and how the Rapture will occur. We won't delve into the question of when the Rapture will take place or whether

it happens before or after the Great Tribulation; these topics are covered in Chapters 5 and 8.

## The Concept

The New Testament was written in Greek. Paul wrote his letter to the Thessalonians in Greek, which means we must employ the Greek context to understand Paul's intention. We focus on 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

*'Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.'* (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

## Being Caught Up

While the phrase 'the Rapture of the Church' is not found verbatim in the Bible, the principle of the Rapture is present. This is also the case for the Last Supper or the Trinity of God. Instead of 'being caught up,' we can use another term found in the Greek original text.

Returning to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the Greek phrase '*harpagēsometha*' is used, which is derived from '*harpazō*.' This Greek verb can carry various meanings: to snatch quickly, to seize hurriedly, to carry away forcefully, to kidnap (obtained by robbery), and to be caught up (as in snatching away). The term '*harpagēsometha*' stems from '*harpazō*' and is in the future tense, indicating that the subject (we) will experience this action. It literally translates to: 'We shall be raptured,' 'We shall be quickly taken away,' or 'We shall be snatched away.' We are snatched away from the Earth to meet Jesus in the air. It's crucial to read the word '*harpazō*' in its context, as it holds various meanings and is used differently throughout the Bible.

## Meeting

The term "a meeting" is essential to understand in the Greek context. What exactly does a meeting entail? Paul used the word '*apantēsin*,' derived from '*apantēsis*,' which means to meet, to go out to meet, and

to welcome warmly. It's important to examine the Bible verses where this word appears.

*"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom." (Matthew 25:1)*

*"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'" (Matthew 25:6)*

*"From there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns." (Acts 28:15)*

Two verses speak of a wedding feast with a bridegroom, and one verse speaks of brethren meeting Paul to encourage him. Opponents of the Rapture argue that 1 Thessalonians 4:17 implies that we are caught up in midair and then immediately return to Earth with Jesus. It's as if we are yo-yos, going up to meet Jesus and then coming back to Earth. Supporters of the Rapture argue that we meet Jesus in the air and ascend to heaven with Him. The parable of the ten virgins speaks about the coming of Jesus, and in this parable, Jesus uses the term '*apantēsin*' twice. Jesus likened His coming to the arrival of a bridegroom, and thus, we need to understand the context of the wedding feast in contemplation. This starkly contrasts modern Western weddings with vows, cake, reception, and a church ceremony. The pivotal question is: 'Do the virgins go with the bridegroom to his house, or does the bridegroom go with the virgins to their house?' In other words, do we go with Jesus to heaven, or does Jesus come with us to Earth? Let's first read the entire parable of Jesus and then explore where the wedding feast took place in ancient Israel.

*"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps but took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with*

*their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." (Matthew 25:1-13)*

The virgins went with the bridegroom to the wedding. Where and when did the wedding feast take place when Jesus spoke this parable? It was not at the virgins' homes but at the father of the bridegroom's house. In this context, the wise virgins, symbolizing followers of Jesus, went to meet the bridegroom, representing Jesus, at the house of the father, in other words, God the Father's house in heaven. Jesus' disciples understood this immediately. "It can be challenging for us (modern-day believers) to grasp what it means to go to the Father's house because we live in a different time and culture.

*"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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:2-3)*

We are going to the Father's house, which the Jewish wedding in Israel reflects. In this house, the bride and groom celebrated for seven days, and we will celebrate in the Father's house for seven years. In Chapter 6, we will study the wedding feast.

Meeting means a place where we encounter the Lord Jesus. The virgins met the bridegroom on their way, and then they followed



the bridegroom after reaching the father's house. Similarly, during the Rapture, we will meet the Lord Jesus in the air and ascend with Him to the heavenly Father's house.

## **How Long Does the Rapture Take?**

When the Lord Jesus was taken up into the air, the disciples could see it happen. The Lord Jesus ascended and gradually disappeared into the clouds. Does this also apply to Christians during the Rapture? Will those left behind see the Christians ascending slowly?

*"Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)*

In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, it states that we, the living, will be changed in an indivisible moment. This transformation occurs when the trumpet sounds and the dead are raised as incorruptible (immortal) beings. This passage refers to the Rapture of the Church. Our transition from perishable to imperishable bodies takes an indivisible moment and lasts no longer than the blink of an eye. Within one second, our bodies change from perishable to imperishable. This clearly shows that humans do not participate in this change; it is solely and entirely a miracle of God. People will not have time to think; suddenly, we will see the Lord in the air with our imperishable bodies, and no one on Earth will witness us ascending.

## **The Body Becomes Imperishable**

In the previous section, we briefly touched on this topic. During the Rapture, our bodies are transformed from perishable and mortal bodies into imperishable and immortal bodies. Our renewed bodies do not wear out, are free from illness, and do not die. This phase consists of two parts. First, the departed believers receive new bodies, and

immediately after, the living believers receive theirs. Let's take a closer look at both phases.

### **Unperishable Bodies for the Deceased**

*"And the dead will be raised incorruptible." (1 Corinthians 15:52)*

One of the most dreadful things on Earth is human death. Through the fall of man, death entered the world, and so far, all people have died, regardless of how holy they may have lived (with a few exceptions, as discussed in Chapter 3). Many believed that death was the end and that humans would not be resurrected. This is not true; every person will rise again! However, there will be a difference when a person rises. Jesus Christ was the first to rise in an imperishable body. During the Rapture of the Church, the first to receive new bodies will be the deceased believers who have gone before us.

*"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming." (1 Corinthians 15:22-23)*

Everyone who belongs to Christ will be resurrected at His coming. During the Great Tribulation, which follows the Rapture, many people will come to faith. Will they also receive new bodies?

*"And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." (Revelation 20:4-5)*

These individuals will live after Jesus' return and will reign with Him. The order of receiving new bodies is as follows:

- Jesus Christ as the first fruits.
- Deceased believers at the Rapture.
- Living believers at the Rapture (see the next point).
- Believers who come to faith during the Great Tribulation after Jesus' return.

There is one group left: those who do not belong to Christ. Will this group remain dead, or will these people come to life? It is essential to understand that this group remains spiritually dead. They have not chosen God, and this means they will not participate in the Millennial Kingdom and the New Heaven and Earth. They will rise from the dead and be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

*"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt."  
(Daniel 12:2)*

*"that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." (Acts 24:15)*

### **Unperishable Bodies for the Living**

During the Rapture of the Church, the living believers will also receive new bodies.

*"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," (1 Corinthians 15:51)*

Someday, a group of people will not experience death. Their bodies will transform within a single second into bodies that cannot die. In the Netherlands, there is a saying: "There are two certainties: death and paying taxes." It turns out that one certainty is eliminated because it is no longer certain whether someone will die. Our bodies will change during the Rapture of the Church and become like the body of Jesus Christ.

*"But our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." (Philippians 3:20-21)*

The Lord Jesus has power over death (Revelation 1:18), and He determines when someone will pass away. God decides when the Lord Jesus may call us to be with Him forever.

## **Who Will Be Raptured?**

Who actually experiences the Rapture of the Church? A question many ask is, "Would all children (minors) go to heaven?" At the same time, the Bible does not provide a clear answer to these questions. Let's begin by studying the clearest Rapture passage.

*"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)*

Paul speaks of "We." Initially, he is referring to himself and the church in Thessalonica. Paul speaks of born-again Christians, which means born-again Christians will be caught up, both the deceased and the living.

As for children who cannot make their own decisions, the Bible does not directly mention whether they will be raptured. An answer to this question is speculative, meaning no one knows it for certain. Nevertheless, let's look at various Bible passages concerning children.

First, let's bear in mind that the purpose of the Rapture of the Church is to escape God's judgment and wrath. During the wilderness

period of the Israelites, God became angry with His people. God wanted to bring His people to the Promised Land, and twelve spies thoroughly examined the land. Ten of them returned, claiming that they would never be victorious because powerful and large people lived there. Only Joshua and Caleb trusted in God and said that God would give them the land. The people sided with the ten spies and wanted to leave. That's when God said the following.

*"Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me. Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above, except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. Your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised." (Numbers 14:26-31)*

The unbelieving Israelites did not enter the Promised Land because they did not trust in God. None of the adults, except for Caleb and Joshua, would leave the wilderness alive, and everyone would die in the next forty years. God's wrath was poured out on all the Israelites, and only the children under twenty (and Caleb and Joshua) were spared. Here, we read that in the time of the Exodus, God spared the children, and they entered the Promised Land forty years later.

In the New Testament, we see that Jesus had a special bond with children, particularly in Matthew 19.

*"Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He laid His hands on them and departed from there." (Matthew 19:13-15)*

I grew up in a religious family, and it certainly had its benefits. When I was a child who couldn't make decisions, I was already holy to God and belonged to Him. This is stated in 1 Corinthians 7:14. Even if one parent in a family believes, the children are considered holy, and this applies until a child can make their own decision to follow Jesus.

*"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy." (1 Corinthians 7:14)*

Please note that in Greek, a different word for "holy" is used for the unbelieving husband and wife. Children of a believing parent (or one believing parent) belong to God and are saved. The unbelieving husband or wife is transferred from a non-Christian family to a Christian family and holds a special position, even though they are not saved.

Children have a unique position in God the Father's grace. I believe that children of believing parents (or one believing parent) will be raptured in the Rapture of the Church.

And what about the children of unbelieving parents? In 2014, the movie *Left Behind*, starring Nicolas Cage, was released. Everything was normal until, in an instant, all believers were caught up. Not only the believers but also all children were caught up. Is this biblical or purely speculative? Will God take the children of non-believing parents, or will they be left behind? The answer is not directly in the Bible, so let's explore whether children always escape God's wrath and judgment. We'll start with the prophet Jonah. Jonah called upon the people of Nineveh, proclaiming that God would destroy the city. Nineveh repented altogether, and God decided to relent from His wrath. Jonah was angry about this, and God responded as follows:

*"Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?" (Jonah 4:11)*

Some argue that this is evidence that God spares unbelieving children, particularly those who cannot discern between their right and left hands. I have two questions regarding this text:

**Question 1:** Were these one hundred and twenty thousand people spared because they were children or because the entire city repented? What would have happened to the children if the city had not repented?

**Question 2:** How many inhabitants did Nineveh have? According to GeoGraphixs, Nineveh had over a hundred thousand inhabitants around 700 BC. According to Wikipedia, Jonah lived from 786 to 746 BC. Does this text mean that God was referring to the adults (as children) who spiritually couldn't discern between their right and left hands?

This text only states that God spared the city and had compassion for the one hundred and twenty thousand people and the livestock. Let's see if God had previously poured out His judgment and wrath on the Earth. The Great Tribulation is not the only moment of judgment and wrath. In the past, God had already pronounced judgment, and then a great flood covered the Earth, causing a worldwide deluge. Every living creature on Earth perished. Only Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark survived the flood, and the children of unbelievers were not spared during the flood.

*"So all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died. So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive." (Genesis 7:21-23)*

A few chapters later, we read about God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot and his daughters were rescued from the city because Lot was the only righteous man there. Here, we can see that Lot's

daughters were spared because of their righteous father, Lot. Then, the following happened to the city:

*"Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground." (Genesis 19:24-25)*

The children in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were not spared. Does God always take away all the children when He passes judgment? No, this is not the case. For example, this didn't happen with the Great Flood and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, it did happen with the children of the Israelites in the Book of Numbers (please note that God had made a promise to Abraham, which prevented Him from destroying the entire people). Will God take the children of unbelievers during the Great Tribulation? This question cannot be answered definitively. God makes a just decision Himself. In the past, He has both taken children and not taken them.

Lastly, there's one more group to consider: the Old Testament believers. These are the people who believed in God before Jesus had come to Earth and died on the cross. Think of individuals like Abel, Abraham, David, Daniel, and John the Baptist. Will their bodies be resurrected during the Rapture of the Church? One thing is certain: they will be resurrected, as stated in Daniel 12:2, and this promise also applies to Daniel, an Old Testament believer.

*"But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days." (Daniel 12:13)*

However, there's a debate about when this will occur. Is it during the Rapture or after the Millennial Reign? When we read the Bible, we see that Old Testament believers longed for the Millennial Reign. Why would they long for it if they wouldn't experience it? Consider Abraham, who longed for the city with foundations.



*"For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:10)*

Additionally, the Bible doesn't specify a separate moment when Old Testament believers are resurrected. During the Rapture of the Church, it's believed that those in Christ are caught up, followed by those who died during the Great Tribulation, and after the Millennial Reign, the dead are thrown into the lake of fire. It seems logical that Old Testament believers would be caught up during the Rapture of the Church.

## **The Sound of the Rapture**

*"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God." (1 Thessalonians 4:16)*

*"At the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound," (1 Corinthians 15:52)*

During the Rapture, three sounds are mentioned. It's possible that these sounds occur simultaneously or successively. First, the Lord Jesus comes to call His followers. Every follower on Earth, whether alive or deceased, is called by the Lord Jesus Himself. This is the wonder of the Lord Jesus. He doesn't send angels to call us or a video message; He comes Himself. In fact, the word 'call' isn't quite the right translation. The Lord Jesus doesn't call us; He commands us to come to Him. Our time on Earth is over; we have fought the good fight, and now it's time to depart to the Lord Jesus.

Next is the voice of an archangel. An archangel is a chief angel who leads other angels. In the Bible, only one archangel is mentioned by name, and that is the archangel Michael, who is a prince over the people of Israel. If the Thessalonians passage refers to Michael, it could mean that this is a special event for the people of Israel. God has promised that archangel Michael will assist the Israelites

during the Great Tribulation. The voice of an archangel will sound during the Rapture, and perhaps Michael will play a significant role in the catching away of Old Testament believers, or he will (spiritually speaking) come to Earth during the Rapture of the Church to help protect the people of Israel.

*"At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:1-2)*

*"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (Revelation 12:7-9)*

Michael has an important role during the Great Tribulation. The angel fights against the devil and protects the people of Israel.

Finally, a trumpet of God is mentioned. This trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised, and the living will be changed. The voices of God and Jesus are described by John as a loud voice, like a trumpet (Revelation 1:10 and 4:1). The Israelites, during their time in the wilderness, heard this voice and pleaded that they would never have to hear it again.

*"For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it*

*begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore." (Hebrews 12:19)*

When God speaks, remarkable things happen. God's trumpet sounds and all the dead who are in Christ are raised. When God's trumpet sounds, He will wage war against the enemies of His children (Zechariah 9:14). As the trumpets sound, God will conquer the enemy's land and give victory to the children of Israel (Joshua 6:1-5). Moreover, trumpets are used on holidays (Numbers 10:10) and to call the people of Israel together.

*"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps. When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.'" (Numbers 10:1-3)*

God's trumpet will sound during the Rapture of the Church, and all His followers will break "camps" and gather to the Lord Jesus.

## **Where Are the Believers After the Rapture?**

Finally, let's consider where the believers are after the Rapture. In Chapter 6, we'll delve deeper into this, and in this section, we'll examine two Bible verses that tell us more about our future destination.

*"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:17)*

Before the Rapture of the Church, we will be in various current locations. For some, it might be in bed, for others at school, and for others on an airplane. Suddenly, we are called by the Lord Jesus and transported from Earth, through the clouds, into the air. Here, we see the

Lord Jesus, and we will be with Him forever. But we don't stay in the air; this is just the place where we meet the Lord Jesus. Together, we go to another place.

*"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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:2-3)*

We are going to the Father's house, which is in heaven. We will explore this further in chapter 6.

## **Summary**

Someday, the followers of Jesus will be caught up in the air. The Lord Jesus will give us the command to come to Him: the voice of an archangel (likely Michael) and a trumpet of God will sound. In response to these sounds, the dead are first raised, receiving renewed bodies. Immediately after that, the bodies of the living are transformed, and the dead and the living are caught up in the blink of an eye in midair to meet the Lord Jesus. Together with the Lord Jesus, we go to the Father's house in heaven, and we will be with the Lord Jesus forever.

## 3 RAPTURES IN THE BIBLE

The rapture of believers is mentioned nine times in the Bible. In addition to the Rapture of the Church, there are various biblical accounts where one or two individuals were taken up. This occurred in both the Old and New Testaments, demonstrating that God can indeed take individuals up to Himself. Moreover, when we study these other instances of rapture in the Bible, we gain valuable insights into the Rapture of the Church. Many events in the Old Testament foreshadow the life of the Lord Jesus and what will happen in the future (Colossians 2:17). Initially, these Old Testament stories happened literally, but secondarily, they point to future events. Many of these future events were fulfilled by the Lord Jesus during His first coming, while others are yet to occur. The Bible records the following individuals who were taken up:

1. Enoch
2. Elijah
3. Jesus
4. Philip
5. Paul
6. The Church of Christ
7. The Two Witnesses
8. The Male Child (symbolic)

Enoch and Elijah's raptures occurred in the Old Testament, while Jesus, Philip, Paul, John, the Church, the Two Witnesses, and the Male Child are found in the New Testament.

### 1 Enoch: Walking with God

The Bible doesn't provide extensive details about Enoch. Aside from genealogical records, the Bible mentions Enoch's life three times: once in the Book of Genesis, once by Paul, and once by Jude. Let's examine these passages.

*"Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. And Enoch walked with God after he begot Methuselah three hundred years; (...) So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." (Genesis 5:21-24)*

*"By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:5-6)*

*"Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Jude 1:14-15)*

These Bible verses reveal that Enoch was a remarkable individual. It was recorded that he walked with God, signifying that he was a righteous man who had a living relationship with God. In Genesis, it was recorded that Enoch was suddenly no more because God took him. This was not a euphemism for death because, in Genesis 5, everyone else was said to have died, but this was not the case for Enoch. Furthermore, Paul wrote in Hebrews 11: "By faith, Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death." Enoch did not die; he was taken alive by God, serving as a foreshadowing of believers who will experience the Rapture of the Church, for they, too, will not experience death. Because Enoch walked with God, he received revelations about God's judgment. Jude wrote that Enoch prophesied about God's judgment upon the ungodly.

In Genesis and Hebrews, the term used is 'taken away.' Genesis was written in Hebrew, and the Hebrew word for 'taken away' is

'*kî-lāqah*,' meaning to take, receive, carry away, fetch, and receive. Hebrews was written in Greek, and the word 'taken away' is derived from the Greek word '*meta-tithēmi*,' signifying transfer, transport, and change. Enoch did not experience death and was transferred from Earth to another place. Why was Enoch taken away? The answer is clear: because he pleased God. Who will be taken during the Rapture of the Church? Those who please God, those who believe in Him, and those who believe that He rewards those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Furthermore, some Bible scholars suggest that Enoch was taken away before the Flood, escaping God's judgment. However, this was not the reason why Enoch was taken away. He was taken because he pleased God, and nowhere does it say that he was taken to escape earthly judgment. Enoch was not taken just before the Flood. In Genesis 5, it states that Enoch was taken at the age of three hundred and sixty-five, and the Flood occurred six hundred and sixty-nine years later. God did not take Enoch to escape the Flood's judgment; he could have peacefully passed away as the oldest person in the Bible, reaching nine hundred and sixty-nine years.

In Summary:

- Enoch was taken by God.
- Enoch pleased God and walked with Him.
- Enoch prophesied about the judgment of the ungodly.
- Enoch is a type of foreshadowing of the Rapture of the Church.

## **2 Elijah: Whirlwind**

The next instance of being taken up in the Bible is the account of the prophet Elijah. We find his story in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2. Elijah was a prophet of the people of Israel (the ten northern tribes) and prophesied during the reigns of Kings Ahab and Ahaziah. Elijah proclaimed the Word of God and brought about a drought in Israel for three and a half years. He is also known for his showdown with the prophets of Baal. Elijah said:

*"I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God." (1 Kings 18:22-24)*

The prophets of Baal couldn't make their god, Baal, answer with fire. However, the God of Elijah answered with fire, leading the people of Israel to honor God. The prophet Elijah was an extraordinary person who did what God asked of him. Nevertheless, we read in James:

*"Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit." (James 5:17-18)*

Elijah was an ordinary human, and God used him to accomplish great things. The things Elijah did may seem miraculous to us, but to God, they are not. Later, Elijah had a disciple who would succeed him when he was no longer on Earth. This disciple was Elisha, who spent a long time with Elijah. Let's examine the last day of Elijah on Earth.

*"Then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent!" (2 Kings 2:3)*

*"Then the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" So he answered, "Yes, I know; keep silent!" (2 Kings 2:5)*



*"And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." (2 Kings 2:9)*

The sons of the prophets, Elijah and Elisha, knew that Elijah would be taken away that day. When God decides something, He always reveals it to His prophets. He discloses His mysteries to them.

*"Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7)*

This was the case with the sons of the prophets. The apostle Paul also received wisdom about the mystery of God. Paul was given insight into the Rapture of the Church and the transformation of the living.

*"Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)*

The significant difference between Elijah's taking and the Rapture of the Church is that the prophets knew that Elijah was going to leave Earth that day, while no one knows when the Church will leave Earth.

The prophets prophesied to Elisha, and afterward, Elijah and Elisha continued walking together. They were talking, and suddenly, the ascension happened.

*"And so it was, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more." (2 Kings 2:11-12)*

Elisha and Elijah knew that Elijah would be taken away, yet Elisha was startled when a chariot of fire with horses of fire appeared and separated them. Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. Subsequently, Elisha returned to Jericho, and it is evident that Elijah was taken to heaven and not relocated to another area on Earth.

*"And they said to him, "Look now, there are fifty strong men with your servants. Please let them go and search for your master, lest perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley." And he said, "You shall not send anyone." But when they urged him until he was ashamed, he said, "Send them!" Therefore they sent fifty men, and they searched for three days but did not find him. And when they came back to him, for he had stayed in Jericho, he said to them, "Did I not say to you, 'Do not go'?" (2 Kings 2:16-18)*

Elijah was not found on Earth until the Lord Jesus appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration. Here, we see Elijah conversing with Moses in the presence of the Lord Jesus. Elijah returned to Earth for a brief period.

*"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus." (Mark 9:2-4)*

Lastly, let's examine the term 'taken up.' In Hebrew, this word is 'ālā,' meaning to go up, ascend, climb, or be taken away. This indicates that Elijah ascended to heaven. Additionally, the prophets used the word 'kî-lāqah.' This word was also used in the account of Enoch's being taken in the Book of Genesis.

### In Summary:

- Elijah was a human being like us.
- The prophets knew that Elijah would be taken.
- Elisha witnessed Elijah being taken up to heaven.
- People could not find Elijah on Earth.
- Elijah returned to Earth for a brief period.

## 3 The Lord Jesus: Ascension

After Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to various people for forty days, it was time for Him to return to God the Father. The ascension of Jesus is significant for the topic of "The Second Coming of Christ," as angels proclaimed about His ascension, "*Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven*" (Acts 1:11). This indicates that we can learn much about Jesus' Second Coming by studying His ascension. The main difference is that Jesus will not be traveling from Earth to heaven but from heaven to Earth. In modern times, air travel is not exceptional, given that we have airplanes, spaceships, and jetpacks. However, in the era of the disciples, only birds could travel through the air. Suddenly, they saw Jesus ascend into the sky and not return to Earth. They stared up at the sky in complete astonishment, not understanding how this was possible until two angels stood beside them and asked, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven?" Can you imagine someone ascending into the sky? Let's examine the Scriptures that speak about the ascension.

*"So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen." (Mark 16:19-20)*

*"Then He (Jesus) led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they*

*worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen." (Luke 24:50-53)*

*"Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:9-11)*

In these passages, we read that the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven without the need for any external aid. He could do this because He is the Son of God and possesses a glorified body that is not bound by the laws of nature. After His resurrection, Jesus had a glorified body that retained the scars of His crucifixion. He invited Thomas to touch His wounds to prove that He had truly risen from the dead (John 20:27). Additionally, in Revelation 5:6, John describes Jesus as a Lamb that had been slain, which signifies the ongoing impact of Jesus' sacrificial death. Simultaneously, Jesus has a glorified body, which believers will receive in the future:

*"Who (Jesus) will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." (Philippians 3:21)*

According to 1 Corinthians 15:20, Jesus is the first to possess a glorified body, which He obtained during His resurrection. Believers will receive this same type of body at the time of Jesus' Second Coming. Based on the appearances of Jesus on Earth between His resurrection and ascension, we can see what He was able to do differently from a normal earthly body. Here are some examples:

- The Lord Jesus could change His appearance (Mark 16:12).

- The Lord Jesus could disappear from sight (Luke 23:31).
- The Lord Jesus could appear suddenly (Luke 23:36, John 20:19, John 20:26).
- The Lord Jesus could ascend into the sky (His ascension).
- The Lord Jesus lives and will live forever (Revelation 22:13 and Hebrews 13:8)

When our bodies are transformed to be like Jesus' glorious body, it will not be difficult for us to be caught up to heaven or to disappear from sight. We will be able to do new things that are currently impossible without God's intervention.

The location of the ascension is also interesting. The Book of Luke mentions that the ascension took place near Bethany. The Book of Acts specifies the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12). Since the angels declared, *"This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11), does this mean that Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives during His Second Coming? Yes! This is foretold by the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 14:4). Jesus will return to the same place to complete His work and receive the kingship of the world (Revelation 20). This will be further explored in Part 2.

Lastly, let's consider the reason for the ascension. Why did Jesus need to leave Earth? The first reason is that Jesus was exalted (and still is) by God the Father. Jesus now sits at the right hand of God. All angels, powers, and authorities are subject to Him (Philippians 2:9, 1 Timothy 3:16, and 1 Peter 3:22). The second reason is that the Holy Spirit could only come to Earth after Jesus returned to God the Father.

In Summary:

- Jesus had and has a glorified body.
- We will receive the same type of body as Jesus.
- Jesus was taken up into heaven to be glorified.
- Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives during His Second Coming.

## 4 Philip: Earthly Relocation

Philip was an evangelist who preached the Word of God in Samaria, where many miracles and signs occurred (Acts 8). Many people were delivered from unclean spirits, and the paralyzed were healed. One day, an angel said to him, "*Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.*" (Acts 8:26). Philip followed this road and saw a chariot approaching. In the chariot was an important Ethiopian court official serving the queen of Ethiopia. The court official was reading the scroll of Isaiah but didn't understand its meaning. The Holy Spirit instructed Philip to approach the court official, who then asked for an explanation. Philip explained the text's meaning, and based on the passage from Isaiah, he preached the gospel of God. The court official came to faith, and then we read:

*"Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities until he came to Caesarea."* (Acts 8:36-40)

After Philip baptized the court official, his mission was completed. The Holy Spirit needed him in another place to continue preaching the gospel. The distance between the water and Azotus is about 20 miles (ca. 32 kilometers). This was not a spiritual—but a physical relocation of Philip because the court official could not see him, yet the people in Azotus could. Philip was a man who lived closely with God and listened to the voice of the Holy Spirit. He preached the gospel in many places because he was attuned to the Holy Spirit. The reason he was taken away had to do with proclaiming the gospel.

Apparently, the Holy Spirit wanted to expedite reaching Azotus and found it would take too long if Philip were to walk. Philip is proof that human relocation in space and time is possible.

How might the court official have reacted after Philip was taken away? First, they were in conversation, and suddenly he was alone. How will people left behind during the Rapture of the Church react when suddenly millions of people have disappeared? I fear there will be chaos and panic. However, some Christians may have mentioned the Rapture with unbelievers, and the concept may click for some. They missed the Rapture, but by God's grace, they can still be saved by believing in Jesus Christ.

In the Book of Acts, the phrase 'caught away' is used. In Greek, the author Luke used the word '*hērpasen*,' which is a conjugation of the verb '*harpazō*.' We encountered this word in Chapter 2, and it means to seize, snatch, or quickly take away. Just as Philip was taken away by the Holy Spirit, we will be taken away from the Earth during the Rapture.

In Summary:

- Philip was led by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel.
- Philip was taken away by the Holy Spirit and placed approximately 20 miles away.
- Philip did not have a glorified body at that time, whereas the Church will during the Rapture.
- The court official was left alone.

## **5 Paul: To Paradise and Back**

The next individual who experienced being caught up is the Apostle Paul. Paul was a prominent evangelist to the Gentile nations and authored many of the New Testament books. He himself was unsure whether he had a physical or spiritual experience of being caught up. Just as Paul was caught up to heaven, the Church of Christ will also be caught up to heaven. He recorded his experience in a letter to the Corinthian church.

*"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. ... Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, ..." (2 Corinthians 12:2-7)*

Initially, it may seem that Paul was writing about someone else. However, we can assume that this experience happened to Paul because he spoke about his own revelations in the final sentence. Paul wanted to prevent people from praising him for his extraordinary revelations and experiences, as others did in his time. Paul had received many revelations, and likely, many of his revelations were not recorded in the Bible.

This revelation in the Corinthian letter demonstrates that people (spiritually or physically) can come into the presence of God in heaven. Paul was caught up to the third heaven, with the first heaven being the atmosphere with birds, the second heaven being the cosmos with stars and planets, and the third heaven being the dwelling place of God. Enoch, Elijah, and the Lord Jesus were also caught up in heaven. In heaven, there is a distinct place called Paradise, where the departed who are in Christ reside. Paul states that he was in Paradise and heard inexpressible words. Paradise is a peaceful place where the departed await the Rapture of the Church. It is not a vague dream-like state but a place where experiences are consciously known. According to Paul's revelation, he heard words that were so extraordinary that they couldn't be expressed in either the Greek or Hebrew languages. He couldn't convey them because they wouldn't be comprehensible on Earth. In heaven, a unique language is spoken, and what Paul experienced might somewhat resemble the tongues spoken by believers on Earth. When the Lord Jesus was on the cross, two criminals were crucified alongside Him. One criminal repented and asked Jesus to remember him when He entered His kingdom. Jesus replied:



*"And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."" (Luke 23:43)*

This implies that the Lord Jesus is present in Paradise. We do not know exactly what Paradise looks like or what activities take place there. What is certain is that it is a beautiful and peaceful place. Paul was temporarily caught up to this place. The Greek word for 'caught up' is *'harpazō,'* which is used twice in Paul's revelation. Paul was snatched away to the third heaven and into Paradise, just as the Church will be caught up to the third heaven in the Father's house of God (John 14:1-3). The teaching of the Rapture is not meant to instill fear but to let us know that a day will come when we will forever be with the Lord Jesus. It is intended to comfort and give us courage when we experience pain and sorrow on Earth. After receiving this revelation, Paul returned to Earth and reached many people with the gospel of God.

In Summary:

- Paul was caught up into the third heaven (Paradise).
- Paul saw and heard inexpressible things.
- Paul did not know whether it was a physical or spiritual experience.
- Paul returned to Earth after this experience.

## **6 The Two Witnesses: Ascending Above**

The next event to take place is the Rapture of the Church. After the Church is raptured, God will send two witnesses to the Earth, and they will live during the Great Tribulation.

*"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to*

*shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire." (Revelation 11:3-6)*

The witnesses would prophesy for three and a half years in Jerusalem and are granted extraordinary power and authority from God. Their enemies are consumed by fire from their mouths, and they have the power to bring various plagues upon the Earth. For three and a half years, they are protected by God, and no one can overcome them. During the Great Tribulation, God continues to extend His mercy and calls for repentance. The witnesses are described as the two olive trees and the two lampstands. Olive trees produce oil, which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Lamp stands give light, symbolizing Jesus, who brings light to the world. The two witnesses are filled with the Holy Spirit and bring light to the world. They bear witness and prophesy about the Lord Jesus (Zechariah 4). However, many will not listen to them, persist in their sins, and fail to recognize the Lord Jesus. Even today, followers of Jesus are called to bring His light into the world by bearing witness about Him.

*"And when they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth." (Revelation 11:7-10)*

After they complete their testimony, the ruler of the Earth, known as the beast, engages in a war against them, overpowers them, and kills them. Their dead bodies are left lying in the street of a great city, symbolically called Sodom and Egypt, where the Lord was crucified.

As trophies, their bodies are not allowed to be buried, and people on Earth celebrate, make merry, and exchange gifts because the two witnesses have been killed. Firstly, it is a torment for the wicked to hear about the Lord Jesus. They may be open to discussing anyone or anything except Jesus; His name is uncomfortable for them. Secondly, the witnesses have brought about three and half years of drought and various plagues on Earth. Finally, the torment is over.

*"Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake, seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven." (Revelation 11:11-13)*

For three days, the two witnesses lie dead on the ground while people on Earth rejoice. Suddenly, life returns to them, and they stand on their feet. Instead of being buried, they remain as trophies, demonstrating their loss of power to the world. Then, the witnesses are called by God and are taken up into heaven, just as the Church is called by Jesus to meet Him in the air. Like Jesus ascending into the sky, the two witnesses rise, and people on Earth witness this event. It serves as a powerful testimony to those living on Earth. After the Church of Christ is raptured, people do not know where the Church has gone. It is likely that the media will spread lies and concoct a story. Now, everyone sees that God is calling the witnesses, and they ascend into the sky. Following this event, a judgment comes upon the city of Jerusalem, resulting in a massive earthquake.

In Summary:

- The two witnesses prophesy for three and half years in Jerusalem and are endowed with extraordinary power from God.
- The witnesses are killed by the ruler of the Earth.

- After three days, the witnesses are raised from the dead.
- The witnesses ascend into the sky.

## 7 The Male Child: Escape

The next rapture in the Bible is the rapture of the male child in the Book of Revelation. Revelation is a challenging book to read. John saw things happening that he had never seen before, and many of these events were far in the future from his time. How, for instance, would someone from 50-100 AD describe helicopters, airplanes, or tanks? In Revelation 12, John wrote about a heavenly sign with three key characters: the woman, the child, and the dragon.

*"1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. 2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days." (Revelation 12)*

Let's begin with verse 1, which speaks of a great sign in heaven. John saw a woman with attributes reminiscent of the people of Israel. Joseph, the son of Jacob, had a dream in which the sun (Israel), the moon, and eleven stars (the twelve tribes of Israel, excluding himself) bowed down to him. Joseph was the twelfth star. The woman represents Israel. Verse 2 tells us that Israel is pregnant and crying out in pain. This imagery has been used before to describe Israel (also referred to as the daughter of Zion).

*"Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in your midst? Has your counselor perished? For pangs have seized you like a woman in labor. Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in birth pangs. For now you shall go forth from the city, you shall dwell in the field, and to Babylon you shall go. There you shall be delivered; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies." (Micah 4:9-10)*

The above text describes the Babylonian exile, which is in the past. God compared Israel to a woman in labor, signifying impending trouble. One chapter later, Micah speaks of Israel's future.

*"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:1)*

Micah 5:1 speaks of the birth of the Lord Jesus in Bethlehem. Herod wanted to know where the Messiah would be born so he could kill Him. The scribes told him that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, citing this verse (Matthew 2:6). This prophecy has been fulfilled.

*"Therefore, He shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labor has given birth." (Micah 5:2a)*

Afterward, the One who has ruled from ancient times, the Lord Jesus, will give them up. The Israelites did not believe that Jesus was their Messiah, so they were removed from the land and scattered among the nations. This will continue until the woman gives birth. I believe this is referring to the woman in Revelation 12. Until she gives birth, the eyes of most Israelites will remain closed, and they will live among the nations. Today, we see Jews slowly returning to Israel, although many are still scattered among the nations and do not

recognize Jesus as their Messiah. When the woman gives birth, there will be a turning point, as prophesied by Micah.

*"Then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel." (Micah 5:2b)*

When the woman in Revelation 12 gives birth, the brethren of the Lord Jesus, the people of Israel, will return and become part of the true sons of Israel—those Jews who believe in the Lord Jesus. Israel will come to faith in Him, as spoken of by Micah and in the Book of Romans.

*"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Romans 11:25-26)*

Today, there is a partial blindness over Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in (the Rapture of the Church). When the Gentiles come in, all of Israel would be saved, as prophesied by Micah and the Book of Romans. I believe the child being born is the Church of Christ.

In verse 3, a new character emerges, the dragon with seven heads. According to verse 9, this dragon is the devil. Verses 4 and 5 tell us that Israel gave birth to the child, and the devil attempts to devour this child. The child is the Church of Christ. Just before the devil is released to deceive and devour people, the Church of Christ is caught up into the sky, to God and His throne. The Church does not have to go through the Great Tribulation, as it is protected by God, and the devil cannot harm the Church. The word 'caught up' in Greek is *'harpazō,'* which we encountered in the study of the Rapture of the Church. We are not devoured on Earth by the devil; we are caught up

to Heaven just before this event. Verse 5 can raise four questions. Let's look at these questions.

**Question 1:** Is the Church of Christ born out of Israel?

When we read the Book of Acts, we see that the first Christians were Jews. The Church originated from the Jewish people, and through Paul, the Gentiles became acquainted with Christian doctrine. The Church was "born" out of the people of Israel. Secondly, Paul tells us that everyone who believes (the Christians) is spiritually born out of Abraham. Abraham is the patriarch of the Jewish people, and through him, many descendants were promised.

*"Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Therefore, know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham." (Galatians 3:6-7)*

*"That he (Abraham) might be the father of all those who believe." (Romans 4:11)*

Believers are the spiritual children of Abraham, and Abraham is the spiritual father of believers. Furthermore, Sara, the wife of Abraham, is compared to the heavenly Jerusalem. Sara and the heavenly Jerusalem are likened to the mother of those who believe. We have become children of the promise, just as Isaac was a child of the promise (Sara). We have become children of the free woman Sara through our faith.

*"For it is written that Abraham had two sons: one by a bondwoman, and one by a freewoman. (...) These things are symbolic, (...) the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. (...) Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. (...) So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free." (Galatians 4:21-31)*

**Question 2:** Who will shepherd the Gentile nations with an iron rod?

To identify the child, verse 5, speaks of shepherding the Gentile nations with an iron rod. The Book of Revelation mentions this event three times. Let's read the other two texts from Revelation.

*"And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (Revelation 19:14-15)*

Firstly, the Lord Jesus Himself will shepherd the Gentile nations with an iron rod, and the armies in heaven (the angels and possibly the believers) will follow Him. Additionally, believers will also shepherd the Gentiles with this rod, as stated in the following text in Revelation:

*"And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'— as I also have received from My Father;" (Revelation 2:26-27)*

The overcomers, all followers of Jesus who persevere until the end and keep the works of Christ to the end, will shepherd the Gentile nations with an iron rod. They are those who receive authority from Christ to do so.

**Question 3:** Why is the woman ready to give birth just before the Great Tribulation?

Question 1 was answered by stating that the church is spiritually born from Israel. So, why is it said that the woman is ready to give birth just before the Great Tribulation? Let's examine what happens just before the Rapture.



*"Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)*

A millisecond before the Rapture of the Church, the dead are raised, and all followers of Jesus receive new bodies. We are 'born again' into new bodies. During conversion, the spirit is born again. During the Rapture of the Church, this spirit receives a new body. Furthermore, the body of Christ is only completed when everyone who 'must' be converted is converted. The body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) includes all believers and is ready when all believers are added to this body. Afterward, this body is 'born' and united with the head of the body, the Lord Jesus. This happens during the Rapture of the Church.

**Question 4:** Does the Church of Christ go to the throne of God?

The Church of Christ is taken to the throne of God. Not only that, but they will sit with the Lord Jesus on the throne.

*"He who overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." (Revelation 3:21)*

Finally, let's address verse 6. Verse 6 talks about Israel fleeing from the devil to the wilderness (or a solitary place). In the wilderness, God will provide for and protect the Israelites from the devil for 1,260 days. One thousand two hundred sixty days correspond to three and half years and coincide with the most challenging period of the Great Tribulation. The wilderness is not an unfamiliar place for the people of Israel, as they spent forty years there after the exodus, and God supernaturally provided for them. There was food from heaven and

water from a rock. During the Great Tribulation, God will care for them again. God calls the Israelites to flee so that He can protect them.

*"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (...) For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matthew 24:15-21)*

When does this 'abomination of desolation' stand in the holy place? It occurs three years and seven months before the return of Christ (Daniel 12:11). At that time, the Israelites are called to flee to the mountains, where God will care for them.

In Summary:

- The woman represents Israel.
- The male child represents the Church of Christ.
- The dragon symbolizes the devil.
- The Church of Christ is raptured to the throne of God before the tribulation.
- Israel is protected and cared for by God in the wilderness.

## **Summary**

The Bible indeed speaks of the rapture of believers. Enoch, Elijah, Jesus, Philip, and Paul experienced a form of rapture, and the two witnesses and the Church are yet to be raptured. The rapture of believers is not a human invention but is found in both the Old and New Testaments.

## 4 THE GREAT TRIBULATION

This chapter serves as an introduction to the following chapter. I believe that the Rapture of the Church takes place before the Great Tribulation, so it's crucial to gain insight into what the Great Tribulation entails. Why are we taken away before this period? There is much to talk about this period, and we will limit ourselves to the main points. In Chapter 5, we will delve into the Rapture of the Church before the Great Tribulation. The Lord Jesus said the following about this period:

*"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matthew 24:21)*

It will be a tribulation unlike anything in history. In history classes, we learn about dreadful periods, and today, the world is broken in many places. Yet, the Lord Jesus says, *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."* The Great Tribulation will surpass all previous horrors and will be a terrible period filled with wars, natural disasters, and hardship. The following texts also speak of this time:

*"(...) It shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation. (...)" (Daniel 12:1)*

*"For thus says the LORD: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." (Jeremiah 30:5-7)*

*"For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be." (Mark 13:19)*

After reading that the Great Tribulation is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments, we will now focus on the primary reasons for the Great Tribulation, which include:

- The pouring out of God's wrath and the wrath of the Lamb
- The judgment of the nations
- The discipline of the people of Israel
- The salvation of many.

## **The Wrath of God and the Wrath of the Lamb**

During the period of the Great Tribulation, the wrath of God will be poured out upon the earth and its inhabitants. Wrath can also be translated as anger, indignation, offense, irritation, or righteous anger. During the Great Tribulation, God will do something with His wrath.

*"Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." (Revelation 16:1)*

*"So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God." (Revelation 14:19)*

*"Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. (...) Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger." (Isaiah 13:9-13)*

*"And they said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the*

*Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"" (Revelation 6:16-17)*

*"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God;" (Isaiah 61:1-2)*

Now, let's answer the following questions:

1. Why does God pour out His wrath upon people and the earth?
2. How long does the period of God's wrath last?

### **Why Does God Pour Out His Wrath?**

On one hand, we are instructed not to be wrathful and angry but to be kind and forgiving. God calls us to forgive one another and to set aside our anger. This also means that we shouldn't engage in sinful actions driven by anger, such as shouting at each other or using foul language.

*"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:31-32)*

*"But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth." (Colossians 3:8)*

On the other hand, we read about God's wrath and how it is poured out upon the inhabitants of the earth during the Great Tribulation. How is this possible?

First and foremost, God's wrath differs from human wrath. God's wrath is always holy and justified, which is not the case with

human wrath. Additionally, God calls us not to be wrathful because vengeance belongs to Him, and He will repay (Romans 12:19). Finally, God's wrath is necessary to render a just judgment upon the earth and its inhabitants.

*"Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thesalonians 1:6-8)*

God is right to repay those who oppress us, and we are not to take matters into our own hands because God will take vengeance for us. It's important to note that God's wrath is poured out only on those who have been disobedient to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness and salvation are available to everyone on Earth, but those who reject forgiveness and refuse to believe in Jesus Christ will remain under the wrath of God.

*"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life, and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36)*

God's wrath, which includes the Great Tribulation and the Day of God's judgment, remains upon those who are disobedient. But why is God angry with them? What have they done wrong?

*"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them." (Romans 1:18-19)*

*"But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek." (Romans 2:8-9)*

*"But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." (Ephesians 5:3-6)*

God's wrath applies to those who are disobedient to the truth, such as those who disobey Jesus Christ. If we do not obey Jesus, we see this in the fruit we produce, such as fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, as well as outbursts of wrath and angry shouting. No one can escape the wrath of God, but fortunately, Jesus went to the cross to bring reconciliation for all who choose to obey Him. There is only one escape route, and that is through Jesus.

### **How long does the period of God's wrath last?**

First, let's answer a different question: "How long does the Great Tribulation last?" Two different views provide an answer to this question: the seven-year view and the three-and-a-half-year view. I want to let the Bible speak first and then provide my personal conclusion. Therefore, let's begin with the Bible verses containing time indicators. These verses are challenging to read because they describe events that take place during the Great Tribulation. For the purpose of this book, we won't focus on these events but rather on the time indicators.

*"(...) And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." (Revelation 11:2-3)*

*"Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days." (Revelation 12:6)*

*"But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent." (Revelation 12:14)*

*"And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months." (Revelation 13:5)*

*"He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time." (Daniel 7:25)*

*"(...) After the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. (...) From the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days." (Daniel 12:7-12)*

In the Book of Daniel, a different unit of time is mentioned. While Daniel was praying to God, he received a message from the angel Gabriel. Gabriel explained that seventy weeks were determined upon Daniel's people and the holy city of Jerusalem. Today, sixty-nine



weeks have been fulfilled, and only the last week remains. It is highly likely that one week represents seven years, making these seventy weeks a total of 490 years. This is connected to the sabbatical years in Israel (Leviticus 25:8-10), where one sabbatical year (according to the Hebrew term) lasts seven years. Sixty-nine weeks have been completed, and a pause has been pressed between the sixty-nine weeks and the final week. We are waiting for God to press play again, resuming the last week. Concerning this final week, the following is said:

*"Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate." (Daniel 9:27)*

Based on the above texts, we arrive at two distinct periods. The first period is three and half years (or 42 months, 1260 days, 1290 days, and a time, times, and half a time), and the second period is a prophetic week of seven years. The first period begins when Israel (the woman) flees into the wilderness, the Antichrist is allowed to blaspheme, and the devil is cast down to the earth (Revelation 12:9). Thirty days prior, a desolating sacrilege will be set up, and the future temple sacrifices in Jerusalem will be interrupted. The second period begins when the Antichrist strengthens a covenant with many, seven years before the return of Christ (and after the Rapture of the Church).

The Great Tribulation commences with the Antichrist, strengthening a covenant with many. The Antichrist is the opposite and imitator of Jesus Christ. While Jesus came to Earth to do God's will, the Antichrist comes to do Satan's will. The Antichrist will perform miracles and signs on Earth to deceive the world and will rule over a large part of the Earth during the Great Tribulation (Revelation 13:7 and 13:13-14).

According to this timeline, there is a "moderate" period of tribulation with a deceptive peace lasting three and half years,

followed by a severe period of three and half years when the Anti-christ seeks to destroy the people of Israel. So, when does God's wrath begin? It begins when God (the Lord Jesus) starts passing judgment on the Earth and its inhabitants. In the Book of Revelation, a scroll is presented, and the question is asked, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" (Revelation 5:2) Only the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, is found worthy. The scroll contains seven seals, and with each broken seal, something significant happens on Earth. Moreover, the events on Earth are directed from heaven (Revelation 6). Let's look at the first seal being broken.

*"Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer." (Revelation 6:1-2)*

At first glance, this is the only seal that doesn't appear to depict calamity. It speaks of someone going out "conquering and to conquer." However, appearances can be deceiving. The HNV translation incorrectly uses capital letters to refer to this person. This text is not about the Lord Jesus or God; it's about the Antichrist. Daniel 9:27 speaks about the Antichrist and says that he will strengthen a covenant with many. In other words, the Antichrist is "conquering and to conquer" at that moment. Daniel 9:27 begins at the start of the seven years, so Revelation 6:1-2 also begins at the start of the seven years. In other words, the Lord Jesus' first judgment (His first wrath) is the sending of the Antichrist to Earth, which means God's wrath lasts for seven years and not less.

## **The Judging of the Nations**

When calamities occur and people experience great suffering, they may wonder, "Why doesn't God intervene?" This is because God is still merciful and patient. He desires that no one be lost and, therefore,

delays His intervention and judgment. If God were to intervene today and judge everyone righteously, no one on Earth would survive. Fortunately, we can trust in the Lord Jesus.

*"But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:7-9)*

During the Great Tribulation, God judges the Earth. I'm not referring to the final judgment of God that comes after the Millennial Reign, but rather the period of the Great Tribulation. In the Book of Revelation, we read that the city of Babylon receives God's judgment during this time. Additionally, the Earth and its inhabitants do not escape God's judgments.

*"And they stood at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come." (Revelation 18:10)*

*"Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth. (...) And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments." (Revelation 16:1-7)*

The angels proclaim that God's judgments are righteous and true. At a certain point, God's patience reaches its limit, and He passes a righteous judgment on the Earth and the sins of humanity.

## **The Discipline of the People of Israel**

During the Great Tribulation, the Church of Christ is in heaven with God. On Earth, you find a remnant church with Christians who came to faith during the Great Tribulation. Additionally, there is another people of God, namely, the people of Israel. Israel will face a terrible time before they recognize their Messiah (Jesus Christ). This period involves much tribulation, and everyone expects the complete destruction of the Jewish people. Let's read Bible verses about Israel (or Jacob) and the Great Tribulation:

*"At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book." (Daniel 12:1)*

*"These are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah. For thus says the LORD: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." (Jeremiah 30:4-7)*

*"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Romans 11:25-26)'*

*"So they shall fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him. The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," says the LORD." (Isaiah 59:19-20)*

Israel will be brought into distress one more time. The kings of the earth seek to annihilate God and His holy people (Israel) and wage war on the land. Ultimately, these kings will battle against Jesus and His army in the region of Armageddon, which is located near Megiddo in northern Israel (Revelation 16:16). The conclusion is found in the Book of Revelation, where Jesus appears on a horse.

*"Then I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet. (...) These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh." (Revelation 19:19-21)*

Even though the Great Tribulation will be a time of distress for the people of Israel, God will grant them victory. This victory won't come because Israel possesses a powerful arsenal but because God will fight for them. During the Great Tribulation, God will chastise (discipline) and purify the people of Israel, meaning that ungodliness will be removed, and all of Israel will be saved and redeemed. A remnant will remain, standing pure before God, and from Israel, the Lord Jesus will judge the world during the Millennial Reign. The purification of Israel from ungodliness is foretold by the prophet Zechariah:

*"And it shall come to pass in all the land," says the LORD, 'that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is*

*refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, "This is My people"; and each one will say, "The LORD is my God.""* (Zechariah 13:8-9)

## **The Salvation of Many People**

I would like to conclude this chapter on the Great Tribulation with a note of encouragement. Even in His wrath, God is a merciful God. Firstly, as we have seen, Israel will be saved. Secondly, many will come to faith. Often, tribulation and pain lead to a reevaluation of life, and people come to the realization that there must be a God. This is also the case during the Great Tribulation.

*"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands. (...) Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So, he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*" (Revelation 7:9-14)

During the Great Tribulation, a vast multitude acknowledges the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. Through God's judgments and wrath, many will realize that they must surrender their lives to the Lord Jesus, after which they stand before His throne with white robes and palm branches. In the final years before the Second Coming, many will be saved.

## **Summary**

The Great Tribulation is a dreadful period that has never occurred before. During this time, God pours out His wrath upon the Earth. God's wrath is always just and holy, and His wrath lasts for seven years. After these seven years, the Millennial Kingdom occurs.

During the Great Tribulation, Israel would face distress one last time, and many would not survive this period. God saves a remnant, and these Jews will recognize the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. In addition to the Jews, many Gentiles come to faith and will praise and worship God in heaven with palm branches in their hands.

## 5 RAPTURE BEFORE TRIBULATION

In Chapter 4, we studied the Great Tribulation. If the church were to go through this time, I fear that few would survive, and Jesus would return for only a handful of Christians after the Great Tribulation. The Antichrist, the ruler on Earth, would have killed many people. Will God send us into the Great Tribulation? Is that the blessed hope we have, and does it bring comfort? In this chapter, we will explore indications as to why Jesus returns before the Great Tribulation.

### Today's Tribulation

Before we delve into the indications of the Rapture before the Great Tribulation, let's examine whether Christians experience suffering and tribulation.

In the Book of Acts, we find an account of the early followers of Jesus. After Pentecost, thousands came to faith and were led by the apostles. The Jewish leaders in Israel were unhappy with the apostles and their teachings about Jesus. Some apostles were brought before the leaders, who, after questioning them, "commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18). The apostles continued to proclaim Jesus, and the leaders grew increasingly jealous. Consequently, "they laid their hands on the apostles and put them in common prison" (Acts 5:18). They also "beat the apostles" (Acts 5:40). These beatings involved scourging, which are whips with multiple tails used for severe corporal punishment. The apostles endured suffering and tribulation, and it wasn't a one-time occurrence. We read about Stephen being stoned to death (Acts 7:59), John being banished to Patmos (Revelation 1:9), and Paul experiencing much suffering and tribulation. In the following passage, Paul compared himself to false apostles:

*"Are they ministers of Christ? – I speak as a fool – I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty*



*stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." (2 Corinthians 11:23-27)*

The early church endured much suffering, and there are numerous stories of Christians experiencing suffering and tribulation. There was suffering in the past that still subsists to this day, and it will continue until Jesus sets foot on Earth. Unfortunately, suffering and persecution are part of life with Jesus.

*"In the world, you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I (Jesus) have overcome the world." (John 16:33)*

Is there any hope for Christians?

*"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18)*

On Earth, Christians may experience suffering and tribulation. If you go through this, you can find comfort in Romans 8:18. Whatever happens, it doesn't compare to the glory of eternal life with God. Life on Earth is temporary. After a few years, we will either pass away or experience the Rapture of the Church. The glory with God is eternal, and there will be no suffering, pain, or sorrow. The Bible contains more verses about suffering and tribulation, showing that it is part of life. However, there is a significant difference between the "normal" tribulation of today and the Great Tribulation in the future. The Great Tribulation is a time that has never occurred on Earth and will never

happen again (Matthew 24:21). It eclipses everything else, and the Bible has prophesied about it extensively. Now, we will explore the indications as to why I believe that Jesus will come to take us before the seven-year tribulation.

## **Indication 1: Not Appointed to Wrath**

In Chapter 4, we read that the Great Tribulation is a period of God's wrath upon the Earth. People will suffer terribly from wars, poverty, famine, deadly diseases, wild animals, and natural disasters (Revelation 6 and onwards). This is not only the work of humans and the devil but also God's wrath upon the wicked. Does the Bible state that Jesus' followers experience God's wrath?

*"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:9)*

In the Book of 1 Thessalonians, Paul talks about the Rapture of the Church and encourages believers to be watchful for it. Then he says that we are not appointed to wrath but to obtain salvation. We are not destined for God's anger and fury but are saved from it because we belong to the Lord Jesus. This applies to all of God's wrath: firstly, eternal wrath in hell, and secondly, the wrath poured out on Earth. God has not destined us for this, and we can rest assured that if we believe in Jesus, God has forgiven all our debts and sins. He did this by placing all our sins on His Son. Through Jesus' sacrifice, we do not have to bear God's wrath, be it eternal wrath in hell or the wrath on Earth.

*"Verily, He has borne our sicknesses, and carried our pains. Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes, we are healed." (Isaiah 53:3-4)*

We are not destined for wrath. This is also written by Paul in the first chapter of the Thessalonians letter.

*"And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." (1 Thessalonians 1:10)*

Paul first wrote about the faith of this congregation. He had received positive reports about their faith and their conversion from idols to Jesus. Paul knew the congregation expected Jesus to come from heaven to save them from the impending wrath. The coming wrath includes the wrath that God pours out on the earth, resulting in plagues, wars, and diseases.

Additionally, nowhere in the Bible does it state that believers are part of God's wrath. There is no warning or explanation about God's wrath upon believers.

## **Indication 2: Foreshadowing**

We have discovered that Christians are not destined for wrath. In this section, we examine two foreshadowing from the Old Testament: Noah and Lot. Were they destined for wrath?

### **Noah**

The story of Noah is essential to study. The Lord Jesus spoke with His disciples about His coming to the earth and used a reference to the time of Noah.

*"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matthew 24:37-39)*

In the early pages of the Bible, God looked upon the earth and saw all the works and thoughts of humanity. Everyone was wicked and constantly engaged in wrongdoing, and it was a godless generation.

*"Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." (Genesis 6:5-6)*

It pained God greatly to witness all the wickedness of humanity. Because of people's sins, God wanted to wipe them all out. God's wrath and judgment came upon the earth. Only Noah lived a righteous and good life, and only he found favor in the eyes of God.

*"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." (Genesis 6:11-13)*

God decided to destroy the earth. God looked at the earth, and it was full of violence, with no one living righteously. How does humanity live today? Is it righteous and doing good deeds? Humanity believes that things are getting better and better. According to humans, everyone can behave as they please without considering what God wants. At some point, God's patience wears thin, and judgment comes. Humanity doesn't understand this; they are preoccupied with life on earth. They eat, drink, marry, and celebrate life. People fail to realize that the earth is filled with violence and corruption. Suddenly, the righteous are taken away by God, and humanity experiences God's wrath, just as it happened in Noah's time.

Noah was the only one leading a righteous life. God didn't want to destroy the righteous Noah, so He devised a plan. Noah had

to build an ark to escape God's wrath. In the ark, he could take his wife, children, and his children's wives. Additionally, God would send animals to go with him. After constructing the ark, 'the Lord said to Noah, *"Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation. (...) For after seven more days, I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made."* (Genesis 7:1-4). Noah and his family entered the ark, and after seven days, it began to rain. Every living creature perished, both animals and humans. Only the righteous Noah and his family survived God's wrath. From this story, we learn the following:

1. God's wrath came upon the earth.
2. The unrighteous remained on earth and perished.
3. Noah and his family entered the ark and were not affected by God's wrath.

## **Lot**

Jesus also referred to the story of Lot. When speaking with his disciples about His coming, Jesus spoke of Lot.

*"As it was in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built. But on the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."* (Luke 17:29-30)

The following story is about Lot, the nephew of Abraham. God had called Abraham to leave his homeland, family, and loved ones to go to a land that God would show him. Abraham departed with his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot. God blessed both Abraham and Lot, and they had accumulated much livestock, making it difficult for them to stay together. Abraham and Lot discussed their future and concluded that it was best for them to separate.

*"And Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left." And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom." (Genesis 13:8-12)*

Lot decided to pitch his tent near Sodom. It seemed like a beautiful place with splendid scenery and plenty of food for him, his servants, and his livestock. However, Lot overlooked one crucial aspect.

*"But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD." (Genesis 13:13)*

Lot had settled in a city filled with exceedingly wicked and sinful people. Later, God told Abraham that the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah was great, and their sin was grave (Genesis 18:20). In the Book of Ezekiel, the sins of the city of Sodom are detailed.

*"Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore, I took them away as I saw fit." (Ezekiel 16:49-50)*

While Sodom was rich and had an abundance of food, the wealthy did not help the poor and the needy, which was considered evil in the

eyes of God. Additionally, the residents of Sodom lived wickedly and sought to engage in a severe form of immorality.

*"As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (Jude 1:7)*

Who did Sodom engage in immorality with? We can find this in the Book of Genesis. The city was visited by two angels because it was deeply steeped in sin. God wanted to assess the extent of the wickedness of the people of Sodom through these two angels. The angels appeared in the guise of two men and met Lot. Lot offered them shelter for the night so they could rest from their journey.

*"The two angels arrived in Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth. (...) But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter. And they called unto Lot and said unto him, 'Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them.'" (Genesis 19:1-5, KJV)*

The entire city, from young to old, surrounded Lot's house and demanded that he send the two men (angels, although they didn't know this) out to them. They desired to engage in what would have been a terrible act of collective immorality, resembling a gang rape. Furthermore, according to Jude 1:7, such behavior, man with man, is considered an abomination, as it is described as 'strange flesh.' It is highly likely that Sodom was plagued by even more wickedness and sin. Peter noted that righteous Lot was '*vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked*' (2 Peter 2:7).

The men of Sodom wanted to engage in immorality with the two men (angels), but after every effort of Lot to dissuade the men of the city, the angels struck them with blindness. Furthermore, the angels then instructed Lot and his family to leave the city so that God could destroy it. Lot, his wife, and daughters heeded this call, but his sons-in-law did not take it seriously. Similarly, even today, Christians are sometimes not taken seriously and may face mockery. Nevertheless, judgment will come, whether they believe in the judgment or not. I believe Lot did everything he could to reach his sons-in-law. He remained in the city until daybreak, perhaps attempting to persuade them.

*"And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, 'Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.' And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, 'Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.'" (Genesis 19:15-17, KJV)*

The angels took hold of their hands and led them out of the city. Righteous Lot was not subject to God's wrath; God intended to spare him and his family. On the way, Lot's wife turned and looked back against God's command and was turned into a pillar of salt. Lot and his daughters escaped. God could not bring judgment upon Sodom until Lot and his family had covered a safe distance away from the city. God's wrath is not directed at the righteous; it was borne by Jesus, and we are forgiven by God.

*"Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou become thither." (Genesis 19:22, KJV)*



After Lot and his daughters were safely taken away, God destroyed Sodom, and everyone perished.

*"Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." (Genesis 19:24-25, KJV)*

From this story, we learn several key lessons:

1. Sodom was destroyed due to the extreme wickedness of its inhabitants, and God's wrath was poured out upon the city.
2. Only Lot was considered righteous. He and his daughters were spared.
3. God could not execute His judgment on Sodom until Lot and his daughters were safely removed.

In these biblical accounts, we see a foreshadowing of the fact that the righteous, like Noah and Lot, do not experience God's wrath. They are rescued from it, while the unrighteous face it without realizing its impending arrival.

### **Indication 3: Guarded Against Temptation**

In the following Bible verse, the Lord Jesus communicated to the church in Philadelphia. Apart from the ancient church in Philadelphia during John's time, this church represents a particular phase in the history of the Church. It is the second-to-last phase, with the final phase being the Laodicean church, characterized by lukewarmness. God spits out lukewarmness. Today, we see both these churches, with the Laodicean church on the rise.

The Philadelphia church, as described by Jesus, may have little influence and power, but they hold fast to God's Word and do not deny the Lord Jesus. They have been and continue to be a faithful church that endures. Because of this, Jesus made the following promise:

*"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." (Revelation 3:10)*

The Lord Jesus guards the Philadelphia church, which includes all believers who persevere in Him. They will be kept from the hour of trial, which is the Great Tribulation that will surely come upon the world. In this verse, one of the characteristics of the Tribulation is mentioned. An Antichrist will arise, performing great signs and deceiving many. During this time, many will be tempted and led astray.

*"He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast." (Revelation 13:13-14)*

We are kept from this temptation by the Lord Jesus. This does not mean that a Christian will never face temptation on Earth, but it means that a Christian will not have to endure the worst temptation in human history. Just before the Great Tribulation, the followers of Jesus will disappear and will be preserved in the Father's house.

The following Bible passage is from the Book of 2 Peter. Peter compares the false teachers who were and will be among the church with the angels who rebelled against God, the generation of Noah, and the inhabitants of Lot's city. They were all kept from judgment, which befell the ungodly. Noah and Lot were saved by God. Similarly, it will be with the righteous during the time of the Great Tribulation. God will keep them from the temptation while the ungodly face His wrath.

*"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive*

*ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)—then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.' (2 Peter 2:1-9)*

I believe this passage speaks of the temptations we experience today, but, in particular, the temptation that is to come, the Great Tribulation. God will deliver the righteous from temptations, while the unrighteous will face punishment during the day of judgment. The Lord Jesus will judge the living and the dead according to their deeds (Revelation 20:11-15) and during the period of the Great Tribulation on Earth.

A quick note on today's temptations: God is not the one tempting us; it is our own desires that lead to temptation. The devil, and in the future, the Antichrist, exploit these desires and tempt us in areas where we are weak. For one person, it might be alcohol; for another, money; and for yet another, power. God helps and saves us from our weaknesses. How gracious our God is!

*"Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed." (James 1:13-14)*

*"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)*

## **Indication 4: The Day of Christ**

Another clue as to why the Rapture occurred before the Great Tribulation can be attributed to Paul's statement about the coming of the Lord Jesus and our gathering to Him when the Day of Christ arrives.

*"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come." (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2)*

2 Thessalonians reassures the members of the church. They thought that Jesus had returned and they had missed the Rapture. Paul tells them not to be easily shaken because they are not living in the Day of Christ. They hadn't missed the Rapture; it was yet to happen. But what is the Day of Christ that the Thessalonians thought they were part of? Let's read some Bible verses to understand.

*"I trust in Him who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6)*

*"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:9)*

The Christians partially experience the Day of the Lord, and it is a joyful time for them. The Rapture of the Church is the first part of this day, followed by God's judgments and wrath upon the inhabitants of the earth. After the Great Tribulation, there will be a Thousand-Year Reign of Peace, and after that, the wrath will resume with the

final judgment of those who did not believe in Jesus. Just as we can distinguish between the birth, ministry, and crucifixion of Jesus at His first coming, we can differentiate various events within the Day of the Lord. The Thessalonians feared that they had missed the beginning of the Day of Christ, the Rapture. They were experiencing persecution and had heard from Paul that during the Great Tribulation, the persecution of Christians would intensify. Hence, they thought they were already in the Great Tribulation, and Paul reassured them that it had not yet begun.

The Old Testament uses different terms for the Day of Christ, such as the Day of the Lord or the Great Day. Zephaniah, an Old Testament prophet, clearly speaks about this day and shows that it involves the Great Tribulation and the Rapture of the Church.

*"Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation, before the decree is issued, "or the day passes like chaff", before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of the Lord's wrath comes upon you. Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's wrath." (Zephaniah 2:1-3)*

Zephaniah speaks of the dreadful Day of the Lord. Many people will be swept away, and the people of Israel will face great hardship. However, the Lord says that it's possible to be hidden on the Day of His anger. All the meek of the earth who seek the Lord's justice, righteousness, and humility may be hidden. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 that followers of Jesus are not appointed to wrath. At the beginning of the Day of the Lord, Rapture would take place, followed by God's wrath, which includes the Great Tribulation. This is also stated in Isaiah 26:19-20, which we will discuss in Indication 5.

## **Indication 5: Alive Before Tribulation**

In the study of the Rapture of the Church, we saw that the dead will receive imperishable bodies just before the Rapture. Then the bodies of the living who are in Christ will be exchanged for the imperishable bodies, and both the living and the dead will be caught up to meet the Lord Jesus. This process takes less than one second.

*"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)*

*"Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)*

Isaiah describes the moment when the dead will rise, and it's noteworthy that the following verse talks about the wrath of God. This wrath will be poured out on Earth during the Great Tribulation.

*"Your dead shall live; together with my dead body, they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain." (Isaiah 26:19-21)*

Pay attention to the words 'Your dead will live.' This applies only to the dead who belong to God. In the New Testament, this would be

translated as the dead who are in Christ. They will come back to life and receive new bodies. This happens before God's wrath comes upon the earth. Then, God calls His people to enter their rooms and close the doors behind them. They must hide until God's wrath has passed. Is this talking about the people of Israel? Should they lock themselves in their houses? I don't believe so because Jesus said:

*"When you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes." (Matthew 24:15-18)*

Here, the Lord Jesus instructed the people of Israel not to return to their homes but to flee to the mountains immediately after they witnessed the abomination of desolation. It's important to note that Jesus was referring to Judea (and not to the Christians, who have spread throughout the world). Those in Judea are urged to escape and not to lock themselves in their rooms. God refers to another people (nation) in Isaiah, who are the living followers of Jesus. We take refuge in our rooms, not our earthly homes but our heavenly chambers in God's house.

*"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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:2-3)*

When the Great Tribulation occurs, the followers of Jesus are caught up in their heavenly chambers. They will be hidden there until God's wrath has passed, for afterward, we return to Earth with the Lord Jesus to reign over the Earth. This text in Isaiah speaks of a resurrection of the dead before the Great Tribulation.

## **Indication 6: Hell Will Not Overwhelm the Church**

The Lord Jesus taught the disciples and engaged in many discussions with them. On one occasion, He asked the disciples, *'Who do you say that I am?'* (Matthew 16:15). After Peter declared that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Lord Jesus said:

*"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:17-18)*

The Lord Jesus promised Peter that he would be the rock on which He built His church. The Church of Christ is not a building with stones; it comprises all the followers of the Lord Jesus. The Master Builder, the Lord Jesus, constructs this church, and through Him and God the Father, we are added to this assembly. We have also received a revelation that the Lord Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus pledged that the gates of Hades (or the realm of the dead) would not overpower the church. Firstly, Hades is the place where the wicked await God's judgment; it's a place of death. Secondly, it is an indication of a realm of the wicked, evil spirits, and demons. They will not succeed in overwhelming the Church of Christ, for it belongs to Jesus, who has conquered Hades (Revelation 1:18).

Now, let's read the texts about the Great Tribulation and what would happen during that time. We will see if Hades prevails over the world and its inhabitants in this brief period.

*"So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth." (Revelation 6:8)*



Hades is granted power to kill a fourth of the earth's population using various 'weapons.' Hades is partially prevailing on Earth. Daniel spoke of the Antichrist as the greatest human adversary on Earth. During the Great Tribulation, he is given authority to overcome the saints. In Daniel's vision, the Antichrist was depicted as a horn of a dreadful beast. We won't delve any further to explain this beast and the implication of his horns.

*"Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them." (Daniel 7:19-21)*

The horn, the Antichrist, waged war against the saints and overcame them. Who are these saints? Often, followers of Christ are addressed as saints (Romans 1:7 and 15:26); however, the Book of Daniel does not refer to saints as the followers of Christ who are part of the Church. Jesus said that the gates of Hades would not overpower the church—meaning this would not happen to the saints in the Book of Daniel. The same imagery is found in the Book of Revelation, where it speaks of a beast overcoming the saints during the Great Tribulation.

*"It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation." (Revelation 13:7)*

Chapter 7 delves deeper into those living on Earth. The saints are the people of Israel and the Christians who came to faith after the Rapture

of the Church. This means the church does not experience the Great Tribulation and is therefore caught up to heaven.

## **Indication 7: Praying to Escape**

The Lord Jesus provided instructions to the disciples about the coming times. He discussed the birth pangs of the end, the Rapture of the Church, the Great Tribulation, His Second Coming, and the end of the current heaven and earth. The Lord Jesus said the following:

*"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. (...) And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." (Luke 21:20-24)*

This clearly speaks of the Great Tribulation that will come upon the entire Earth. Then, the Lord Jesus tells us what to do in these dreadful times.

*"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:34-36)*

First and foremost, we must be watchful about our everyday concerns and ensure that they do not dominate our lives. We must continue to expect the Lord Jesus, and if we do, the Day of the Lord will not come upon us suddenly with all its wrath and judgments. This day will come as a snare to everyone on the Earth, without exception. Therefore, the Lord Jesus says that we must always watch and pray to be considered worthy, for then we will escape all the things that will happen. The Lord Jesus spoke of all the things that will happen, not just the final judgment after the Thousand-Year Reign. The Lord Jesus spoke of the Great Tribulation and said it could be escaped. The word 'escape' stems from the Greek word '*ek-phugein*,' meaning to flee or escape (from). Since the Great Tribulation is a snare for the entire Earth, the followers of Christ must be kept in a different place to escape the Great Tribulation. The same word is used in 1 Thessalonians, where Paul calls for vigilance before the Rapture of the Church.

*"For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief." (1 Thessalonians 5:3-6)*

Firstly, Paul speaks of 'they,' referring to those who do not believe in Jesus. They will not escape the destruction, the Great Tribulation. The Lord Jesus said that we can escape this tribulation, and Paul says that the rest of the people will not escape it.

Then the Lord Jesus says, "to stand before the Son of Man." Instead of 'stand,' we can translate this as 'endure' or 'remain standing.' We must pray to endure before the Lord Jesus. This primarily pertains to the final judgment of the Lord Jesus after the Thousand-Year Reign. Who will endure? Who are those that will not be found guilty? They are the followers of Christ and will be exempted not because they were upright and righteous but through the righteousness of Jesus. During the Great Tribulation, the wicked cry out:

*"(...) Hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:16-17)*

Secondly, the followers of the Lord Jesus stand during the great day of the wrath of the Lord, and they do not need to hide from His presence. The wicked would cry out during the Great Tribulation, and this tribulation would continue for a few more years.

### **Indication 8: We Do Not Belong to the Night**

The Great Tribulation is likened to darkness and night in various places. This tribulation represents the night on Earth, followed by the Thousand-Year Reign.

*"The great day of the LORD is near; It is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness," (Zephaniah 1:14-15)*

*"They will roar against them like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and sorrow; And the light is darkened by the clouds." (Isaiah 5:30)*

*"Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! For what good is the day of the LORD to you? It will be darkness, and not light." (Amos 5:18)*

The Great Tribulation is characterized by darkness. Paul wrote about the Great Tribulation (the Day of the Lord) and said that this day would not overtake the believers in Thessalonica because they are not children of the darkness but children of the light.

*"For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. (...) For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." (1 Thessalonians 5:2-10)*

Paul makes a division. On one hand, Paul speaks of 'they,' and on the other hand, he speaks of 'we' or 'you.' By 'they,' Paul means the wicked who are not part of the Church of Christ, and by 'we' or 'you,' he means the church of Christ. They think there is peace and safety, but sudden destruction will come upon them, starting with God's wrath during the Great Tribulation. They will not escape it; it's not possible. God's wrath will come upon all the inhabitants of the Earth. They are children of darkness and the devil (1 John 3:10) and belong to the night. They will experience the darkness of the Great Tribulation and will not be caught up by the Lord Jesus. In contrast, we, the followers of Jesus, do not belong to the darkness but to the light. We are children of the light, and the Day of the Lord will not overtake us because we will be caught up to heaven during the Day of the Lord. We belong to the light and the day, with God in heaven.

### **Indication 9: The Antichrist is Restrained**

Currently, the Antichrist is being restrained from reigning on Earth. He has a designated time to lead the world, and there is something and someone holding him back. Let's read the text.

*"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from*

*us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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 2:1-8)*

The Thessalonians believed that the day of Christ had already arrived and that they had missed the Rapture of the Church. They were facing persecution and hardship, and because Paul had spoken to them about the Rapture of the Church and the Great Tribulation, they thought that their current persecution must be the Great Tribulation. Paul reassured them, saying that it was not yet the day of Christ and that the Rapture of the Church and the reunion with the Lord Jesus had not taken place. Paul explained that two things must happen first: the apostasy of the church and the revelation of the Antichrist. These events will come to pass before the Great Tribulation takes place and the world enters the day of Christ. Paul then continued his teaching and wrote that the Antichrist has not been revealed because a restraining force is holding it back. Until this restraining force is removed, the Antichrist cannot be revealed, and when the restraint is removed, the day of Christ begins. The restraining force is first referred to as a power or restraining principle and then as a person who represents this restraining principle. This implies that we should look for a power or institution and a person closely associated with this power or institution. Unfortunately, Paul does not specify what this power is or who this person is, making it uncertain who or what Paul was referring to. The most common answers to the question of who and what the restrainer is are:

<b>Resisting power</b>	<b>Resisting person</b>
The (Roman) law	The emperor or a ruler
The gospel is proclaimed everywhere.	The angel that is responsible for the gospel.
The church of Christ	The Holy Spirit.

Many Bible scholars believe that Paul is speaking of Roman law and the emperor. The emperor has enacted various laws that every citizen must obey, and this prevents the man of sin, the Antichrist, from being revealed. I believe that the government can ensure that citizens behave well. In the Netherlands, we have laws that prohibit murder, rape, theft, or fraud. However, a government may enact godless laws, such as legalizing abortion or prohibiting church gatherings. According to this theory, the emperor is the one who is taken out of the way, and then the Antichrist comes into play. The Roman Empire split in two, with a western and an eastern part. The last Western Roman emperor abdicated around 476 AD, and the Eastern Roman part was conquered in 1453 AD. Roman law and the Roman emperor were not the restrainers since the Antichrist was not revealed in 476 or 1453. Additionally, some Roman emperors were precursors of the Antichrist. Think, for example, of Emperor Nero, known for his terrible persecution of Christians, immoral behavior, and murderous acts. Could such a person restrain the Antichrist?

Then there are Bible scholars who proclaim that the restraining force is the gospel, and the person is an angel responsible for the gospel. This does not seem possible to me. The Antichrist is the leader of the world in the Great Tribulation, which lasts for seven years. The angel of the gospel (if such exists) is taken away, and then the Antichrist will arise. The gospel is 'gone,' which means that no one can come to faith anymore. It is precisely about the Great Tribulation that it is said:

*"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes,*

*with palm branches in their hands. And they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (...) Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9-14)*

The gospel will be proclaimed during the Great Tribulation, and many will come to faith. Even the angels proclaim the gospel during that time.

*"And I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." (Revelation 14:6-7)*

In my view, the restraining force has nothing to do with the gospel of God or an angel of the gospel.

### **The Church of Christ and the Holy Spirit**

I believe that the restraining force is the Church of Christ, and the restraining person is the Holy Spirit. Let's revisit Paul's text once more.

*"And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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 2:6-8)*



Firstly, Paul spoke about the present; at that moment, the Antichrist was being restrained. The Church of Christ was in the world during Paul's time and could be referred to here. Today, too, the Church of Christ is present on Earth, meaning that the Church has been restraining the Antichrist for 2,000 years. Secondly, it talks about 'until he is taken out of the way.' This implies that the Holy Spirit will leave the Earth. The Holy Spirit dwells in believers, and a follower of Jesus is likened to a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). This means that the body is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. When the Rapture of the Church takes place, all followers of Jesus go to the Father's house. The Holy Spirit accompanies them to the Father's house and leaves the Earth. When this happens, the Antichrist gets the opportunity from God to carry out terrible things on Earth for seven years. That the Holy Spirit is in heaven during the Great Tribulation is indicated in the Book of Revelation.

*"And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." (Revelation 4:5)*

After the Church age, John sees the throne room of God. Before the throne of God, he saw seven burning lamps or torches, which are the seven Spirits of God. The number seven is associated with 'completeness,' indicating that the fullness of the Holy Spirit is present in heaven before the throne of God.

The Holy Spirit and the followers of Jesus are taken up to heaven. The light of the world is removed, and darkness comes with the emergence of the Antichrist. Followers of Jesus are likened to the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

*"For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'" (Acts 13:47)*

*"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:13-16)*

When the salt and the light on Earth are removed, what remains? Only darkness. Additionally, John tells us in his letter that followers of Jesus have something in them that is more powerful than what is at work in the world.

*"And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:3-4)*

The Book of 1 John indeed provides valuable insights into the children of God and the children of the devil. In chapter 4, John starts with the call that we should not believe every spirit but test whether they are from God. Every spirit that denies that Jesus came in the flesh is the spirit of the Antichrist. The spirit of the Antichrist has been active from John's time until today and will not disappear. After the Rapture of the Church, this spirit will take on a visible form, and the Antichrist will be revealed. John says that we have already overcome the spirit of the Antichrist today. We are above this spirit. Why? Because the One who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. The Holy Spirit within us is greater than the devil and the Antichrist in the world. The devil and the Antichrist cannot deceive the Earth because Christians, empowered by the Holy Spirit, have overcome them. When the conquerors of the Earth are taken away, the Antichrist has free rein and can reveal himself. We read that the salt and light are

taken away, and all the righteous leave the Earth with the Holy Spirit. This is the ideal moment for the Antichrist to be revealed. Fortunately, during these seven years, many will come to realize that they need to repent and follow God. To what extent will the Holy Spirit play a role during the Great Tribulation? We leave it open for discussion.

Finally, I want to emphasize that the identity of the restrainer of the Antichrist remains speculative. I believe the most likely personalities are the Holy Spirit and the Church of Christ, but I cannot say this with certainty. Time will tell.

### **Indication 10: The Day Comes Unexpectedly**

The observant reader has discovered that it is not difficult to predict the date of Christ's Second Coming. At the moment the Antichrist confirms the covenant with many, as described in Daniel 9:27, seven years (one week) will pass until the return of the Lord. At the moment, the sacrificial service in the temple in Jerusalem has been stopped, and an abomination of desolation has been set up there, 1,290 days will pass (Daniel 12:11). It is a simple calculation to determine that the Second Coming occurs approximately three and half years after the abomination of desolation. The day of the Second Coming is not unexpected but can be easily calculated using the Word of God. Today, we do not know this yet, as the Antichrist has not been revealed, he has not strengthened the covenant, and an abomination of desolation has not been placed in the restored temple in Jerusalem. What does the Bible say about the Rapture of the Church? Can it be calculated, or is it unknown to everyone?

The Lord Jesus Christ instructed us to be prepared because we do not know when He will come. He spoke these words to His disciples and the people gathered around them.

*"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Luke 12:40)*

In the Gospel according to Mark, we read the same message. Jesus warns us to be watchful.

*"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (Mark 13:32-37)*

The Rapture of the Church is unexpected for everyone, while the Second Coming of Jesus can be calculated. The Rapture of the Church, therefore, does not occur simultaneously with the Second Coming. We will delve further into this in Chapter 14.

## **Other Indications**

In addition to these significant indicators, there are also smaller hints as to why the Lord Jesus returns to take us before the Great Tribulation.

Firstly, the Antichrist will wage war against the saints of God. If the Rapture of the Church occurs after the Great Tribulation, how many people will Jesus return for? Haven't Christians been largely massacred? I fear that a vast majority of Christians would have been wiped out and would not experience the Rapture of the Church.

Secondly, the Great Tribulation is intended to discipline the people of Israel. At this time, the era of the Church will be over, and God will resume His plans for Israel. At a certain point, the number of Gentiles is fulfilled, and God the Father decides that the Lord Jesus may gather His followers. Only after this does God continue with the people of Israel, which is discussed in Chapters 4 and 7 of this book.

*"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.'" (Romans 11:25-26)*

Thirdly, the Church of Christ is not warned about the Great Tribulation. If we were to go through the Tribulation, then Paul, John, or the Lord Jesus would have warned us. They have not done so; in the Bible, only the people of Israel and the inhabitants of the earth are warned.

## **Summary**

I believe that the Rapture of the Church occurs before the Great Tribulation. Before this dreadful time begins, the Lord Jesus comes to gather us, and we can be with Him in heaven. I base this belief on the following indications for a pre-Tribulation Rapture:

1. We are not destined for wrath.
2. Noah and Lot did not experience God's wrath.
3. We are kept from the hour of trial.
4. The Day of Christ starts with the Rapture of the Church.
5. The dead rise before the Great Tribulation.
6. Hell does not overpower the Church.
7. We must pray to the Lord Jesus to escape.
8. We do not belong to the night.
9. The Antichrist is restrained by the Church and the Holy Spirit.
10. The Rapture of the Church happens unexpectedly.

## 6 TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN

The followers of the Lord Jesus are taken up into the sky on their way to the Father's house of God. In this chapter, we will explore the Bible verses that speak of Jesus' followers being taken up to heaven and what they do in heaven during the Great Tribulation. In Chapter 7, we will examine which groups remain on Earth.

### **Taken or Left Behind**

Before we study the people who are in heaven during the Great Tribulation, let's first look at Bible verses that talk about a distinction between those who live on Earth and those who live in heaven, or those who are taken and those who are left behind. Let's examine Matthew 24, where the Lord Jesus spoke about the Rapture of the Church.

*"Just as the days of Noah were, so the coming of the Son of Man will be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matthew 24:37-39)*

In this text, it is mentioned that the Lord Jesus is coming, and His coming is likened to the days of Noah. Who was taken away during that time? They were Noah's contemporaries who perished in the flood. The word "took them all away" comes from the Greek word "*ēren*," which means to lift, take up, receive, accept, or take away. It paints a clear picture: the flood came, and everyone was taken away from their place by the water, heading for destruction. In the Book of Luke, we find a similar story, and Luke used the word "*ap-ōlesen*," which means to lose, destroy, or kill (Luke 17:27). We see a division: on one side, there's Noah and his family, and on the other side, there are Noah's contemporaries.

*"Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming." (Matthew 24:40-42)*

In the following text, we see the same division. One is taken, and the other is left. Who is taken, and who is left behind?

Let's start with the Greek translations. "Taken" comes from the Greek word "*para-lambanetai*," which means to take near, carry along, receive, accept, or welcome. It's a different word than the word "took them all away" from verse 39, and in this text, it's not the ungodly who are taken away but the believers. The same Greek word is used in John 14:3: "*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*" This is used for the Lord's disciples. They are taken, while the unbelievers are left behind to face the Great Tribulation. The word "left" comes from the Greek word "*ap-hietai*," which means to send away or let go. In the context of a story, it can also be translated as forgive, forsake, abandon, or permit. Jesus will take His followers to heaven, and the unbelievers will be left on Earth to experience the Great Tribulation. Matthew 24:40-42 corresponds to Luke 17:26-37.

In the Book of Revelation, we see the same division. John wrote about two different groups: those who dwell in heaven and those who dwell on Earth. We will study this text later in this chapter.

*"And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:6-8)*

This division arises because of the Rapture of the Church. Will you be taken to heaven during the Rapture, or will you be left behind on Earth?

## Heavenly Mansions

We have learned that the Lord Jesus is preparing a place for His followers in the Father's house of God. After He has prepared a place, He will return and take us to Himself.

*"Let not your heart be troubled; you 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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:1-3)*

After the Rapture of the Church, we have a place in the house of God the Father. Where is this house located? I believe that 2 Corinthians 5 provides an answer to this question, as Paul talks about the current tent we dwell in (our bodies) and the future house or building of God in heaven.

*"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, (...) Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:1-9)*

When we come to faith, we become citizens of heaven. We are no longer earthly residents but are sojourners from heaven.



*"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body (...)" (Philippians 3:20-21)*

This is a beautiful image presented by Paul. Today, we groan in our current bodies and eagerly await the house that God and the Lord Jesus have prepared for us. We want to be clothed with it, and today, we are still sojourners. This means that we live in the world but realize that we belong in heaven. In this life, we can proclaim God to the world and lead a life of obedience. At some point, earthly life ends, either through death or through the Rapture. The dead are kept in Paradise, waiting for the Rapture of the Church (1 Corinthians 15:52) so that we all receive new bodies. Then, we are no longer sojourners but residents. Our current tent is transformed and made like the glorified body of the Lord Jesus. What a great wonder of God! When the Lord Jesus said He is preparing a place in His Father's house, it has a much deeper and more beautiful meaning than an ordinary earthly house. It cannot be compared to a house made by human hands, and we will not find this house on earth. This house is likened to a tent in the Book of Revelation, which we will return too shortly. Are you looking forward to eternity with God in your new home?

During the Rapture, we will go to this new home and be residents. During the Great Tribulation, we will reside in heaven, where the Lord Jesus is. We will witness extraordinary events from heaven and see God's intervention on earth.

## **The Book of Revelation**

In the Book of Revelation, we are shown future events, both on earth and in heaven. In this chapter, we will study the passages that show people in heaven and discover what we will be doing in heaven during the Great Tribulation. Revelation 1:1 shows that the things written in this book are future-oriented.

*"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John (...)" (Revelation 1:1)*

The Book of Revelation is not just any book; it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus wants us to know about the Great Tribulation and what is to come, so He revealed this to the apostle John. Verse 1 speaks of things that will shortly take place. It pertains to the Day of the LORD, the Great Tribulation, and the moment when God intervenes on earth.

*"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day (...)" (John 1:10)*

John received a command from the Lord Jesus. He was to write down what he had seen, what is happening now, and what must happen after these things. This is what John did. He first wrote about his encounter with the Lord Jesus (Revelation 1), then about what is happening now, the Church of Christ (Revelation 2 and 3), and finally about the time after the Church of Christ. It's noteworthy that the Church of Christ is not mentioned after Revelation 3. This is because the Church will not experience the Great Tribulation on Earth.

*"Rewrite what you have seen, both the things that are and the things that will happen after these things." (Revelation 1:19)*

In chapters 2 and 3, John wrote seven letters to the churches, and this is the part that addresses what is happening now. This part of the prophecy continues until the day of the Rapture.

## **The Elders**

After John had written the letters, he was taken into a state of spiritual ecstasy and shown things that would happen after the church age.

*"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald." (Revelation 4:1-3)*

It's remarkable that right after the church age, John was called to go up to heaven. In the spirit, he passed through the open door and saw the throne of God. John saw heaven after the church age, which means the Church of Christ must be in heaven. Can we, through the eyes of John, see heavenly residents?

*"Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones, I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. (...) Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will, they exist and were created."" (Revelation 4:4-11)*

Around the throne of God, John saw twenty-four thrones with elders sitting on them. They were wearing white robes and had golden crowns (or wreaths) on their heads. In the New Testament, the term "elders" always refers to people. These could be older individuals, elders in a church, or elders of the people of Israel. In any case, they are not angels or other beings. Even the characteristics of the elders show that they are human conquerors. They are wearing white robes

and golden crowns. The Bible tells us who can wear white robes and golden crowns.

*"You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (Revelation 3:4-5)*

*"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." (2 Timothy 4:8)*

*"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10)*

The elders are believers and will be in heaven during the Great Tribulation. It's noteworthy that John saw twenty-four elders. Where else do we find the number twenty-four in the Bible?

We find it in the time of David, as mentioned in 1 Chronicles 24. Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, had four sons, two of whom had no sons. Only the sons of Eleazar and Ithamar had descendants. The descendants of Eleazar consisted of sixteen family heads, and the descendants of Ithamar had eight family heads. Together, they formed twenty-four family heads. The casting of lots determined when each family head would serve in the temple. Their duties included:

*"And the sons of Amram were Aaron and Moses. And Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons*

*forever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister to Him, and to bless in His name forever." (1 Chronicles 23:13)*

Not only were the priests divided into twenty-four groups, but the singers were also divided into twenty-four groups to make music in the earthly temple (1 Chronicles 25).

Back to the Book of Revelation. What exactly do the elders do? We read that they sit on thrones, wear white robes, and have crowns on their heads. They prostrate themselves before God and worship Him. They can enter the Holy of Holies, the throne room of God, just as the descendants of Aaron could. The significant difference is that the elders are permanently allowed to come before God in heaven. On the other hand, the high priest Aaron (or one of his descendants serving as high priest) could only enter the earthly temple once a year. Could it be that the twenty-four elders are priests and singers of God? And that they consist of twenty-four groups of believers rather than twenty-four individual persons, similar to what we read in the Book of Chronicles. Let's examine other passages that mention the elders.

*"And when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth." (...) Then the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever." (Revelation 5:8-14)*

In this Bible passage, several notable features stand out. Firstly, the elders have stringed instruments to make music for God. Secondly, they have golden bowls filled with incense, which represent the prayers of the saints. They function as priests before God. Thirdly, they sing a new song to the Lord Jesus, the One who is worthy to take the

scroll and open its seals. In this song, they praise the Lord Jesus for what He has done for humanity. They were redeemed by His blood from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. God's people consist of individuals from every corner of the world, reflecting the diversity of nations and languages. In 2020, there were 196 internationally recognized states and around 6,000 languages in the world. I believe that these elders symbolize or represent all followers of the Lord Jesus from every corner of the world who, at the time of Revelation 5, have been taken up to heaven. Fourthly, the elders declare that people have been made kings and priests, and they will reign over the earth. This assertion aligns with what is said about the Lord's followers.

*"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people;" (1 Peter 2:9)*

In 1 Peter, we read about a royal priesthood. The elders are priests, just like the descendants of Aaron. In Revelation 11, we see the twenty-four elders worshipping God.

*"Then the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth."" (Revelation 11:16-18)*

They call for the time when the dead (the unbelievers) will be judged, and reward will be given to God's servants, the prophets, and the saints, as well as those who fear His name, both small and great. It is time to put an end to the horrors on Earth. Lastly, in Revelation 19,

we read that the elders worship God again because His judgments upon the Earth are just.

*"And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying: "Amen! Alleluia!""*  
(Revelation 19:4)

The twenty-four elders, representing or symbolizing believers, worship God during the Great Tribulation and are kings and priests of God.

## **New Inflows**

During the Great Tribulation, we read about new groups of people who come to heaven. These are the people who are martyred for their testimony about God.

*"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed." (Revelation 6:9-11)*

During the opening of the first four seals, John witnessed dreadful plagues. In the fifth seal, he saw souls under the altar in heaven. A human being consists of a soul, spirit, and body. These souls are not from members of the Church of Christ, as they received bodies during the Rapture of the Church. These souls are those who, during the Great Tribulation, made a choice for the Lord Jesus and were martyred because of their faith and testimony for Him. During the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist will rule, and he will persecute the saints,

resulting in many deaths. The souls cry out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" While today we are instructed to pray for our enemies, the Great Tribulation will be a time of judgment, and God will avenge His enemies. Only during the Great Tribulation is such a prayer from the souls appropriate. God tells them to wait a little while longer until all their brethren and fellow servants, who will be killed like them, have also been martyred, and their number is complete. This passage does not mention the living who, without dying, are taken up to heaven, as this has already occurred. Instead, it focuses on waiting until the remaining brethren are killed. Do you see the significant difference between the Great Tribulation and our grace period today? Today, following Jesus costs us nothing; everyone who believes is saved. However, during the Great Tribulation, it will likely cost believers their lives, as they may be killed by the Antichrist. This group is called souls because they did not receive bodies during the Rapture of the Church. After the Great Tribulation, they will receive bodies, as described in Revelation 20. In these verses, an additional distinction is made for these souls, namely that they did not worship the beast and his image. Revelation 6 and 20 do not refer to the souls of believers who passed away before the Great Tribulation, but specifically to the souls martyred during the Great Tribulation who persevered in their faith in the Lord Jesus.

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."* (Revelation 20:4)

In Revelation 7, we read more about these martyrs and others who come out of the Great Tribulation.



*"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."'" (Revelation 7:9-17)*

During all the plagues and judgments, John is shown glimpses of encouragement. Despite all the suffering, people from every nation and language choose to give their lives to Jesus. Their number is so vast that it cannot be counted. In Chapter 6, they were offered white garments; in Chapter 7, they put on these garments and held palm branches, a symbol of victory, in their hands. They are forgiven through the blood of Christ and, as a result, can wear white garments. They worship Him before God's throne. One of the elders asks John if he knows who these multitudes are. John does not know, and the elder tells him that these are the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation and believe in the Lord Jesus. After their earthly sufferings, they are in the presence of God. Sometimes, the trials and temptations of today can discourage us. Let this passage be an encouragement to

us even today! One day, we will be with the Lord forever. I believe God showed this to John to encourage those living during the Great Tribulation who have come to believe in the Lord Jesus. The tribulations will last for at most seven years, but eternity lasts forever and is glorious.

Finally, John sees one more group of individuals. These individuals sing to the Lord, having overcome the temptations of the Antichrist on Earth. During the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist introduces a mark, allowing people to buy and sell. It seems attractive but is a deception. Anyone who takes this mark is eternally lost, with no way back. John sees people who have not taken this mark and believe in the Lord Jesus. They sing the song of Moses and thank God.

*"And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.""* (Revelation 15:2-4)

First, those who experienced the Rapture of the Church have been taken to heaven. This is the first event just before the Great Tribulation. During the Great Tribulation, many more souls of people who have overcome the Antichrist and have died or been martyred will enter heaven. They will receive new bodies after the Great Tribulation.

## **The Silence**

Now, we return to God's judgments, and the seventh seal is opened by the Lord Jesus. As He does this, there is silence in heaven.

*"When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour." (Revelation 8:1)*

God is continually worshiped in heaven by His angels and servants. In this chapter, we read that there is silence for about half an hour. Worship ceases, and the heavenly beings say nothing; there is half an hour of silence. The exact meaning of half an hour and whether it lasts for thirty minutes is uncertain. Moreover, John did not give an account of the reason for the silence. There are several possible reasons for this silence:

1. Silence before the storm, as a realization of what the inhabitants of Earth will endure and how terrible it will be.
2. An expression of reverence for God.
3. A silence inherent in heavenly worship.
4. God is still merciful for a brief period and delays the judgment trumpets in hopes that someone may still repent.

Other Bible verses do not mention this silence, so we do not know which reason is correct. This text reveals that there is an awareness of what God is about to accomplish. The heavenly inhabitants know what time it is on God's agenda, and we may also know what God is planning to do. God desires to reveal things to people, whether they are Earth-dwellers or heavenly residents (Genesis 18:17).

## **Dwelling in Tents**

On Earth, the Antichrist is wreaking havoc. He aims to destroy all the saints. The Antichrist cannot reach or snatch us, the heavenly residents during the Great Tribulation, out of God's hand. During a battle between the archangel Michael's army and the devil's army, Michael prevails, and the devil is cast out of heaven. The devil is no longer present in the heavenly realms and is thrown down to Earth. Then the following is declared:

*"Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." (Revelation 12:12)*

This text speaks about the inhabitants of heaven. These are the ones who have experienced the Rapture of the Church and those who believe in Jesus during the Great Tribulation and have passed away. It's interesting to study the phrase 'who dwell in them' in Greek. In Greek, it reads '*skēnountas*,' which literally means to pitch one's tent or (to live) in a tent. This word is found in Revelation 13, where the Antichrist blasphemes God, His tent, and the heavenly inhabitants.

*"And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven." (Revelation 13:6)*

These verses do not refer to angels or other beings because '*skēnountas*' is used exclusively for people and for God. This word also appears in Revelation 7:15 and refers to those who have come out of the Great Tribulation.

*"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them." (Revelation 7:14-15)*

Believers in the Lord Jesus dwell with God and the Lord Jesus in heaven, in God's tent. In addition to these three texts, the Greek word '*skēnountas*' is used two more times. One instance is in the past, where the Lord Jesus dwelled 'in bodily form' among people (John 1:14). Now, the roles have been reversed, and Jesus is no longer dwelling with the believers, but the believers dwell with Jesus. The second

instance is after the Great Tribulation and relates to the New Heaven and Earth, where God dwells among people.

*"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth (...) And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God." (Revelation 21:1-3)*

We dwell with God in the tent. I don't think you should see this as a literal tent with pegs and canvas. It's symbolism and signifies that God will protect us and maintain an intimate relationship with His followers. In the past, a tent consisted of an open living area and a closed sleeping area. With all due respect, God has granted us access to His bedroom, the place where strangers do not enter, only confidants and family members. David longed for this place, for he said, 'For in the time of trouble, He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle, He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock' (Psalm 27:5). Was this prophesied by David? When the Great Tribulation occurs, will He hide us in His tabernacle? And what does David eagerly desire to do in heaven?

*"One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble, He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle, He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; therefore, I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD." (Psalm 27:4-6)*

Moreover, a tent is portable. Heaven is not our final destination; it is a dwelling place. After the Great Tribulation, we will lead Earth's inhabitants during the Millennial Reign, and then there will be a New Heaven and New Earth. Just as the Tabernacle in Moses' time moved

from place to place, we, with our heavenly tents, can also change locations.

## **The Victory Achieved**

*"The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful." (Revelation 17:12-14)*

The ten future great kings of the Earth surrender all their power to the beast, the Antichrist. In this chapter, we read that the Antichrist blasphemes the Lord Jesus and His followers. Now, the Antichrist wants to take it a step further and seeks to overcome them. It's noteworthy that this text states the Antichrist and the kings will make war against the Lord Jesus and those who are with Him. Who are they? They are the called, chosen, and faithful. This is one group—encompassing the followers of the Lord Jesus. They are no longer on Earth but are in heaven with the Lord Jesus and will overcome the ten kings.

*"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness, He judges and makes war. (...) His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. (...) Then I saw the beast, the kings of the Earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire*

*burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh." (Revelation 19:11-21)*

The war is won by the Lord Jesus. He has achieved victory, and the Great Tribulation comes to an end. Following the Lord Jesus is His army, symbolizing the angelic hosts in heaven who, along with the Lord Jesus, engage in a battle against the beast. It's possible that believers may be included alongside the angels, or they might arrive a moment later when the battle is concluded. In any case, the army doesn't need to take action, for the Lord Jesus Himself conquers the kings.

## **The Wedding Feast**

Finally, we celebrate the wedding feast of the Lamb. Let's read the text concerning this.

*"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."'" (Revelation 19:6-9)*

Before John wrote about the war of the Lord Jesus against the Anti-christ, he wrote about the wedding feast of the Lamb. Let's study this text.

## The Wedding

Firstly, it speaks of the wedding. This is an image of a man and a woman, where the man leaves his parents to be united with a woman, and they become one body.

*"And the LORD God built the rib, which He had taken from Adam, into a woman, and He brought her to Adam. And Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man." Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:22-24)*

This is a beautiful text that applies to every man and woman. It is pleasing in God's eyes for a man to be joined to a woman, and they become one flesh. Marriage was not invented by humans but by God. This is one of the first covenants that God had written in the Bible. Today, marriage is not taken seriously by many. Some decide to live together first to see if it works out and only marry after a few years. God states that marriage isn't about 'trying it out'; God says that a man shall leave his parents and cleave to his wife, and through this, they become one flesh. Physically, they become one through their union, and spiritually, they become one through their covenant. Marriage should be a place without physical or spiritual shame. It should be a safe place where there are no secrets, no fear of abandonment, and everything can be shared. It's a place of intimacy and security. Alongside earthly marriage, this text speaks of a great mystery between the church of Christ and Jesus.

*"For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:30-32)*



The mystery between the marriage of Christ and the Church is profound. God instituted marriage on Earth because it is a foreshadowing of a heavenly reality—the wedding feast of the Lamb. On Earth, we see, in marriage, a limited glimpse of our heavenly reality with Jesus. The mystery is profound; we cannot fully grasp how it will be. One thing is certain: it will be a glorious union where we have an intimate covenant relationship with our Lord Jesus (Ephesians 5:25).

### **The Lamb**

Secondly, it speaks of the Lamb. That is the Lord Jesus, as mentioned in Revelation 5 and John 1.

*"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:35-36)*

It is the wedding feast of the Lamb. It is primarily about the Lord Jesus; it's His celebration, and only afterward does the bride come into the picture. Jesus paid a high price to marry His bride. He purchased her with His blood and clothed her in clean, bright, fine linen. The Lord Jesus is the Bridegroom, and He has chosen someone to marry. The King of kings and the Lord of lords has chosen someone who has the privilege of marrying the Creator of heaven and earth. This must be the greatest feast ever, incomparable to anything on Earth. So, who is the fortunate bride?

### **The Bride**

Thirdly, it speaks of the bride. The bride is not an individual but consists of a group of people. In the Bible, two groups are referred to as the bride of God (or the Lamb), and the first group is the Jewish people. The following text refers to the people of Israel.

*"And it shall be, in that day," Says the Lord, "That you will call Me 'My Husband,' (...) I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth*

*you to Me in righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the LORD."* (Hosea 2:15-19)

This happens at the end of the Great Tribulation when the people of Israel flee to the wilderness, which is spoken of in Chapter 3 as the paragraph concerning the male child. 'That day' refers to the following:

*"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her. I will give her her vineyards from there, And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, As in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt."* (Hosea 2:13-14)

In the wilderness, the people of Israel come to know the Lord Jesus, and from there, they address the Lord Jesus as their Husband. What a marvelous wonder of God! Then, the Israelites will no longer rely on their strength but on the strength of Jesus. This beautiful imagery is reflected in the Song of Solomon, which speaks of the love between a bridegroom and his bride.

*"Who is this coming up from the wilderness, Leaning upon her beloved?"* (Song of Solomon 8:5)

Besides the Book of Hosea, there are more passages in the Bible that depict Israel as a woman or bride of God. For example, read Isaiah 54:5-8, 62:5, Jeremiah 2:2, and Ezekiel 16:8.

In addition to the people of Israel, another group is called the bride of God. It pertains to the Church of Christ. Paul wrote the following to the Corinthian church:

*"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:2)*

Or, as Paul explains in the letter to the Ephesians:

*"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:25-27)*

The Book of Ephesians explains that the Lord Jesus cleanses us with the washing of water (baptism) so that we can be presented before Him without spot or wrinkle. We become holy and spotless. Does this sound familiar from Revelation 19?

*"And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." (Revelation 19:8)*

Through the Lord Jesus, we are clothed in fine linen so that we can be presented before Him without spot or wrinkle. The fact that the followers of the Lord Jesus are spotless before Him is also emphasized in Ephesians 1:4, Philippians 2:15, Colossians 1:22, and Jude 1:24. These Bible verses make it clear that we should strive, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to live blamelessly before the Lord Jesus, not only during the wedding feast of the Lamb but also in our present lives. As pure virgins, we await the Lord Jesus to take us as His bride. The second group consists of the followers of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus marries one woman, symbolizing the Church of Christ and the people of Israel.

In the Book of Revelation, an angel shows John the bride of the Lamb. John saw a city coming down from heaven, and this city had characteristics of both Israel and the Church of Christ.

*"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also, she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (Revelation 21:9-14)*

Both the names of the twelve tribes of Israel and the names of the twelve apostles of the Lord Jesus are inscribed on the holy Jerusalem, the city of God. The bride possesses characteristics of Israel and characteristics of the Church, and together, they form one bride. We read that the marriage of Christ is a great mystery. With our earthly realities, we cannot fully comprehend the future expectations. Let's return to Ephesians 5:

*"For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."* (Ephesians 5:30-32)

Adam was the first man created by God. God saw that Adam was alone and deemed it not good for him to be by himself. God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep and took a rib from him. From this rib,

He created a woman, Eve. Thus, the first woman was formed from the first man, and they were bound together through marriage. This is analogous to the relationship between the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12) and being the Bride of Christ. During the marriage feast of the Lamb, we become one with the Lord Jesus. Just as Paul wrote, "This mystery is profound," yet so beautiful.

### **The Invited Guests**

During the marriage feast of the Lamb, the invited guests to the supper were mentioned.

*"Then he said to me, "Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." (Revelation 19:9)*

It's evident that this is not referring to unbelievers. They do not partake in the marriage feast of the Lamb and are not among the invited guests. They are either on Earth to wage war with the Lord Jesus or have been defeated by Him and are dead, awaiting judgment (I believe the marriage feast of the Lamb occurs before the final war, with unbelievers still on Earth).

Let's study the Bible and see where it speaks of a wedding and invited guests. This book highlights a few texts, but for a comprehensive view, you should read these Bible verses in context within the Bible.

*"And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. (...) Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding." So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad*

*and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:1-14)*

In this parable, a king is arranging a wedding for his son. Symbolically, the king represents God the Father, and the son represents Jesus Christ. The King sent His servants to invite the guests. These servants could represent the prophets of the Old Testament or the disciples of the Lord Jesus, who called the Jews to come to the wedding feast of the Lord Jesus. The Jews, however, chose not to attend, which was a tremendous insult to God the Father. God declared that the invited guests were no longer worthy to enjoy His Son's wedding feast. So, He decided to invite others. The disciples were instructed to go to the crossroads of country roads. This wasn't like the intersections we know today, but a place where a street from the city reached its end and transitioned into open land (similar to an unpaved road). At this place, they would find many people, mostly beggars, impure individuals, and even robbers. These were not the people typically invited by a king to celebrate the wedding of his son. Jesus prophetically spoke of the Gentiles, the non-Jews. It was unthinkable for the Jews that Gentiles would be considered God's people and His children. The servants (disciples) invited everyone they could find, whether they were good or bad. In God's eyes, every person is sinful, and no one does good, yet this imagery helps us better understand the concept. The disciples invited beggars, impure individuals, and robbers, and all of them were allowed to celebrate the marriage feast of the Lamb. Subsequently, God the Father "evaluated" those who had responded to His call. These are the ones who heeded the gospel of God. However, within the wedding hall, we find two groups. In this parable, all but one person had wedding garments. During that time, these

garments were typically white (similar to Revelation 19:8?). Everyone was wearing clean, white clothes and had prepared for the wedding feast. One person, though, did not do this; he was a name-only Christian. Perhaps he always attended church or claimed to believe, but it was not in his heart. The consequence was that he was cast out from the wedding hall into darkness, an image of hell. I would like to add that after death, you cannot make a different choice. If you believe in Jesus, you will go to the marriage feast; if you do not believe in Jesus, you will go to darkness, a place of eternal lament and sorrow. After death, you cannot be moved from one place to another, not from heaven to hell, nor from hell to heaven. This wedding feast is a parable and does not need to happen literally. Nonetheless, the Lord Jesus used many truths and realities in His parables.

In this parable, the invited guests are the followers of the Lord Jesus, and they consisted of the Gentile nations because the Jews did not believe. The Jews, by the grace of God, are later reinstated as the bride. Let's continue with the next text about the wedding guests.

*"Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast." (Matthew 9:14-15)*

In this Bible verse, the twelve disciples are referred to as the friends of the bridegroom. They are the invited guests of the Bridegroom. Lastly, we are compared to virgins waiting for the wedding feast. These virgins are synonymous with bridesmaids and were likely between twelve and eighteen years old, symbolizing wise believers who have enough oil (the Holy Spirit) and foolish believers who have too little.

*"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five were foolish." (Matthew 25:1-2)*

I believe that the guests invited to the wedding feast are the same people as the bride of the Lamb. While the bride of the Lamb is seen as all believers (Old Testament and New Testament) together, the invited guests of the wedding feast represent each individual member of the bride.

Are you looking forward to entering into an intimate relationship filled with love and security with the Lord Jesus? The wedding feast takes place during the Great Tribulation, and the marriage with the Lord Jesus lasts forever. A 90th-anniversary celebration (known as a granite anniversary) pales in comparison to this eternity.

## **Summary**

During the Rapture of the Church, a division occurs. On the one hand, there are the heavenly residents who have been taken by Jesus to the Father's house, and on the other hand, there are earthly residents who have been left behind on Earth. Immediately after the Rapture of the Church, we dwell with God in heaven. These are not ordinary dwellings but special ones that are not made by human hands. We live in God's tabernacle and can enjoy His shelter and love. During the Great Tribulation, the souls of those who came to believe in the Lord Jesus after the Rapture of the Church and who have overcome the Antichrist and the mark of the beast join the souls already in heaven. They await the souls of their brothers and sisters, and after the Great Tribulation, they receive imperishable bodies. At the end of the Great Tribulation, the heavenly residents overcome the ten kings and the Antichrist, and the Millennial Reign on Earth begins. Shortly before or after this, the wedding feast of the Lamb takes place. The Church and the people of Israel marry the Lord Jesus, and they are Husband and wife forever.



## 7 LEFT BEHIND ON EARTH

While the followers of the Lord Jesus are caught up, several groups are left behind on Earth. In this chapter, we will examine these groups and what befell them. This topic was discussed in numerous Bible verses, and for the purposes of this book, we will focus on a few selections of these verses.

### **Group 1: The People of Israel**

In Chapter 4, we read that the people of Israel will be disciplined during the Great Tribulation and will experience a difficult time. Many will be killed, but few individuals will obtain favor before God and be saved. In this section, we will briefly discuss the key moments in the history of the Israelites. It's important to thoroughly examine the Old Testament because, without this foundation, we won't fully understand the New Testament and the Great Tribulation.

#### **Israel in the Old Testament**

The Old Testament speaks of the Israelites and God's covenant with His people. In the Book of Genesis, we read that God made a covenant with Abraham, the patriarch of Israel, and blessed him. God chose one man who lived in righteousness before Him, and God intended to bless all other nations through him.

*"Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3)*

This is how the people of God were birthed. It began with a man who lived in separation. He had to leave his land, family, and house and

go to a strange land. God's people were descendants of one man, but not just any man— a man with absolute faith in God.

*"Now Abram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. (...) Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants, I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him." (Genesis 12:5-7)*

Abraham left his home and went to the land of Canaan, which is modern-day Israel. While he lived in this strange land, he received the promise that the entire land would be given to his descendants.

*"And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you." (Genesis 13:14-17)*

In Genesis 15:5, God promised that the descendants of Abraham would inherit the land forever and that they would be innumerable. Beyond these promises, God also made a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:7-21).

*"On the same day, the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants, I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates." (Genesis 15:18)*

This land is vast, stretching from the Nile River in Egypt to the Euphrates River in Syria and Iraq. The Promised Land included some

parts of Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and modern-day Israel. This has never happened in history and will occur during the Millennial Reign. Afterward, Abraham received a great promise.

After Abraham realized that God (the Lord Jesus) would come to Earth as the Lamb to provide reconciliation for humanity (Genesis 22), he was told that this would come through his descendants and that they would be a blessing to all nations.

*"And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." (Genesis 22:8)*

*"So the two of them went together. In your seed, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed because you have obeyed My voice." (Genesis 22:18)*

The blessing of Abraham was passed down to Isaac, while his other sons received beautiful and unique blessings from God but were not counted as his descendants. They even had to leave Isaac's territory.

*"But God said to Abraham: (...) Only the son of the bondwoman will I establish as your heir." (Genesis 21:12)*

*"Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son." (Genesis 25:5-6)*

After Abraham had passed, Isaac received his inheritance, and God blessed him.

*"And it came to pass after the death of Abraham that God blessed Isaac his son." (Genesis 25:11)*

God established with Isaac the same covenant He had with Abraham. He promised that his descendants would be numerous and dwell in the promised land (Genesis 26:3-4). The blessing of Isaac was passed on (through a trick) to Jacob, who later became known as Israel.

*"Then he said: "Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed. Therefore, may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!" (Genesis 27:27-29)*

After many years, the Kingdom of Israel was established. And David became the second king of Israel, and God made a significant promise to him.

*"Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:16)*

The throne of David would be established forever. Initially, God spoke about Solomon and his descendants. However, this is also a prophetic reference to the Millennial Reign (and beyond) and pertains to the Lord Jesus, as the angel told Mary. The Lord Jesus is a descendant of King David, and He will soon take His place on the throne of David forever.

*"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom, there will be no end." (Luke 1:32-33)*

The blessings proclaimed on Israel include:

- Whosoever blesses Israel will be blessed.

- Whosoever curses Israel will be cursed.
- Israel will become a great nation with innumerable descendants.
- Israel will inherit the land between the Euphrates and the Nile.
- The Lamb of God will descend from the lineage of Israel.
- Nations will serve Israel, and Israel will rule over their brethren.
- The kingdom of David will stand forever.
- The Lord Jesus will be the eternal king over Israel.

### **Israel in the New Testament and Present day**

In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus was born. It is noteworthy that Jesus was originally sent only for the Israelites and not for the Gentile nations. We do not see Bible stories where the Lord Jesus went to Europe, America, Africa, or East Asia. The Lord Jesus was a Jew and was sent to redeem the Jews. He spoke to them and performed miracles and signs in Israel. The Lord Jesus said, *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Matthew 15:24). Israel is not just an ordinary land or people on Earth; they are God's chosen people. God Himself (Jesus) lived among them for 33 years, and He preached about the kingdom of God for three years. The people rejected His teachings and decided to crucify Him. Jesus Christ, the King of Israel, came to His people, and they refused to acknowledge Him. The Gentiles had the opportunity to serve Him as God and accept His good news because the Jews rejected Him. Through this rejection, salvation was made available to the Gentiles.

*"For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world (...)"* (Romans 11:15)

The Jews rejected the Messiah, and as a result, the Gentiles gained access to God. God knew this from the beginning, yet He sent His Son to Israel. What grace from God. In modern-day Israel, we see that some Jews believe in Jesus, and thus they've become part of the body of Christ. They will be caught up with the other believers during the Rapture. However, a significant part of Israel has experienced a hardening of heart, and God has closed their eyes.

*"God has given them a spirit of deep sleep, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day." (Romans 11:8)*

God made great promises to the Israelites: He covenanted that Israel would become the mightiest nation on earth and all nations would be blessed through them. The King came to them, but they rejected Him. Now, God has closed their eyes and put them into a deep sleep. Is this their destined fate? No! Because the Jews will awaken, and their ears will hear. God has put Israel on hold so that He could work with the Gentiles and the Church of Christ for two thousand years. At the end of these two thousand years, we will witness the restoration of Israel. Presently, Israel is a nation in the Middle East, but spiritually, Israel is still asleep. The body is there, but it is waiting for the Spirit of God to breathe life into it (Ezekiel 37). This restoration will happen at the end of the Great Tribulation.

### **Israel and the Antichrist**

Let's examine Israel during the time of the Great Tribulation. The Antichrist strengthens his covenant with the land, ushering in a period of peace and safety. The Jews will believe that the Antichrist is their long-awaited Messiah, not realizing that they are making a pact with evil. The following text refers to the Antichrist.

*"Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week, he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate." (Daniel 9:27)*

At mid-week, during the last three and half years of the tribulation, the 'friendly' Antichrist, whom Israel accepted as their Messiah, becomes dreadful. He stops the sacrificial system in Israel and places a

horrifying abomination in the temple of God. He sits in the temple and demands that the Jews worship him as their God.

*"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:4-5)*

During these three and half years, he seeks to destroy the Jews and wage war against God.

*"He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time." (Daniel 7:25)*

The 'Saints of the Most High' refers to Israel.

### **Israel Under Fire**

Modern-day Israel is a small country in the Middle East with an area of 22,145 square kilometers. For comparison, the Netherlands is nearly twice as large at 41,543 square kilometers, and Suriname is over seven times larger at 163,820 square kilometers. Yet, Israel is frequently in the news, constantly criticized, and has experienced several wars since its rebirth in 1948. According to the Bible, during the Great Tribulation, there will be two or more fierce wars. We read about the Gog and Magog War, the ten kings (Are they at war, or do they seize power through an alliance?), and the Battle of Armageddon.

In the Gog and Magog War, the Antichrist is not mentioned. This war might occur before the Antichrist comes to power, or it may happen before the Great Tribulation. The Bible speaks twice of Gog and Magog attacking Israel. The first war is described in the Book of

Ezekiel, which occurs before or during the Great Tribulation, and the second war is narrated in the Book of Revelation, which occurs after the Thousand-Year Reign. A detailed account of this war is found in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Many nations will wage war against Israel, and according to some Bible scholars, these nations include Russia, Turkey, Iran, and North African countries. It's a massive military force against which Israel should typically lose. However, God has destined Israel to achieve victory through supernatural intervention.

*"For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: Surely in that day, there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains,' says the Lord GOD. 'Every man's sword will be against his brother. And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.'" (Ezekiel 38:19-23)*

What a world event that will be! A terrible war in which a small nation wins against mighty nations through divine intervention. Israel will burn the enemy's weapons, which they will use as fuel for seven years.

*"Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years." (Ezekiel 39:9)*



After the Gog and Magog War, a new domination under the leadership of the Antichrist follows. In the scripture, Daniel spoke of ten kings who would destroy the whole earth. The Antichrist is their leader. The fourth kingdom is the kingdom during the Great Tribulation, and Daniel saw this kingdom in a vision as a beast with ten horns on its head.

*"Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it, and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; he shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings. He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever.'" (Daniel 7:23-26)*

The Antichrist and the kings will overcome the people of Israel and become the leader of the world. The Antichrist is the different horn that will subdue three horns (kings). They will devour and trample the earth, and the Antichrist will have power over the land of Israel for three and half years. In Daniel 12, we read that there will be continuous wars, also directed against other nations. It wouldn't be a pleasant time to live in.

Finally, we look at the last war, in which the Antichrist intends to fight against the Lord Jesus. Israel and Jerusalem will (largely) be in the hands of the Antichrist, and every other nation will be summoned by the Antichrist to battle against the Lord Jesus and His followers. The Lord Jesus comes to the earth and destroys the Antichrist and his followers. He liberates Israel and crowns Himself as the King of the world. He will judge the nations from Jerusalem for a thousand years.

*"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (...) And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon." (Revelation 16:13-16)*

*"Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh." (Revelation 19:20-21)*

### **Israel is Protected**

Israel will experience terrible wars. The people will win the first war but lose the second war or the domination of the Antichrist. The Antichrist will appear as a false Messiah to the Israelites (and perhaps to the Muslims). After revealing his true character, he will stop the recurring sacrifices in Israel and introduce an abomination in the temple. This will be the signal for the Jews to flee to the mountains, as the Antichrist will do everything in his power to destroy the Jews.

*"Therefore when you see the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." (Matthew 24:15-16)*

The Jews who have fled into the mountains located in the desert will be pursued by the devil, but God will protect them (Revelation 12). God will speak to their hearts, and they will recognize Him as their

God and Husband. This was discussed in Chapter 6 (The Wedding Feast).

### **Hardening Leads to Salvation**

After the Church of Christ is raptured, God's plan with the people of Israel continues despite all the wars and deceptions in the world.

*"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Romans 11:25-26)*

The hardening of the Israelites remains effectual until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. Then, all of Israel will be saved. And their restoration will take seven years: The Great Tribulation. During the Tribulation, the Antichrist will do everything to destroy the saints of God, the people of Israel. His intent is to prevent the return of the Lord Jesus and His rule over the world from Israel during the Thousand-Year Reign. God holds the entire world in His hand, even during the Great Tribulation. God allows the Antichrist and the devil to mislead and wreak havoc on the world for seven years, but He sets clear boundaries. This includes His protection over a portion of the Israelites, and the devil cannot exterminate this portion. Unfortunately, many Jews will perish in the Great Tribulation, but the surviving Jews will know the LORD and confess Him as their God.

*"It shall come to pass in all the land," says the LORD, "that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.'" (Zechariah 13:8-9)*

## The 144,000 Sealed

During the Great Tribulation, we read about 144,000 sealed Israelites. Before all of Israel is restored, God begins with 144,000 individual Jews from various tribes.

*"Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: one hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed." (Revelation 7:4)*

These sealed individuals will be the first to be redeemed by God and are the first fruits of the salvation of Israel. They will praise and worship the Lamb and will be protected from the mark of the beast. In Revelation 14, the scripture reveals this story after the Great Tribulation on Mount Zion.

*"Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God." (Revelation 14:1-5)*

They are redeemed from among men and are the first fruits of God from Israel. God begins with 144,000 Israelites during the Great Tribulation. The term 'Firstfruits' means that they are the first crop of the harvest. However, the harvest becomes greater. They do not tell lies and are not defiled by women because they are pure and dedicated to

God (2 Corinthians 11:2). Conversely, women can also be part of the sealed. In any case, it is clear that these sealed individuals are completely devoted to God, and they live a holy life. Presently, and especially during the Tribulation, we can see that God's plan with Israel is in motion.

### **The Two Witnesses**

During the Great Tribulation, something special happens in Jerusalem. God sends two witnesses to testify about the Lord Jesus. They will preach to the people about the Lord Jesus and perform various miracles on Earth. He intends to reach the people on Earth, showing that even in His wrath, He is still merciful. This story is revealed in Revelation 11. The beast that ascends from the bottomless pit will wage war against them and kill them, but they will rise from the dead. Also, make reference to Chapter 3: The Two Witnesses.

### **The Saints**

Saints may refer to the people of Israel or the believers in Jesus. The following Bible verses may refer to the Israelites or those who have come to faith after the Rapture of the Church. This does not primarily refer to the Church of Christ, which has been raptured into the air.

*"I was watching; and the same horn (the Antichrist) was making war against the saints (Israel and believers after the Rapture), and prevailing against them until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints (Israel and believers after the Rapture) of the Most High, and the time came for the saints (Israel and believers after the Rapture) to possess the kingdom. (...) the saints (Israel and believers after the Rapture) of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever." (Daniel 7:21-25)*

*"It was granted to him to make war with the saints (Israel and believers after the Rapture) and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation." (Revelation 13:7)*

*"Here is the patience of the saints (Israel and believers after the Rapture); here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." (Revelation 14:12)*

### **In Conclusion**

Israel will experience a time of distress. During the Great Tribulation, as the Israelites experience perilous and difficult times, God will speak to their hearts. The Jews had no knowledge about the Lord Jesus before the Great Tribulation, but by the end of the Great Tribulation, they will come to the knowledge of Him. God disciplines Israel, and after the Tribulation, He will shepherd them as King and Shepherd. When the Book of Revelation or other books of the scripture makes reference to saints during the Great Tribulation, it mainly refers to the Israelites. It does not refer to the Church of Christ, for they have been raptured into heaven. After the Great Tribulation, all the blessings of Israel will be fulfilled during the Thousand-Year Reign.

Some blessings of Israel include:

- God's covenant to bless those who bless Israel.
- Curse those who curse Israel.
- Israel becoming a great nation with innumerable descendants.
- Israel will inherit the land between the Euphrates and the Nile.
- Nations serving Israel, and Israel ruling over its brothers.
- The kingdom of David enduring forever.
- The Lord Jesus will be the eternal King over Israel.

The devil wants to prevent these blessings at all costs, which is why we witness so much anti-Semitism in the world. Unfortunately, this will increase and reach its peak during the Great Tribulation.

## **Group 2: Believing Gentiles After the Rapture**

In addition to the Israelites, many Gentiles come to faith during the Great Tribulation, which is the second group we can identify. Their decision to follow Jesus is not without consequences, as the Antichrist is very vengeful and does not want followers of Jesus to live on Earth. During the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist will decide to wage war against them, and God will allow him to overcome them. These believers will be mass-murdered and must make a radical choice. They have to choose between their mortal life on Earth or their eternal life with God. There is no middle ground. The Antichrist will seduce them to take the mark of the beast. They can only buy and sell if they accept the mark of the beast, and their life on Earth continues. The mark ensures that such a person is permanently separated from God; there is no turning back. However, if the believer refuses to accept the mark, they can do nothing but await death. Most believers choose the latter and are killed by the Antichrist. Immediately after their death, they come to heaven.

*"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held." (Revelation 6:9)*

This is the first group of martyrs that we encounter. It is said to them that they will not be the only ones. Many more believers on Earth will be killed by the Antichrist.

*"And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed." (Revelation 6:10-11)*

During the Great Tribulation, God commands the believers to flee from the kingdom of the Antichrist, which is referred to as the great city of Babylon, in the next verse. God does not want them to be affected by the judgments He intends to bring upon this area. This Bible verse refers to believers after the Rapture who live in this kingdom and occurs shortly before Babylon is destroyed and the Lord Jesus returns to Earth.

*"And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.'" (Revelation 18:4-5)*

Ultimately, this group of believers forms an immense multitude that are innumerable. The Spirit of God will reach many people during the Great Tribulation.

*"After these things, I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands. (...) And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" (Revelation 7:9-14)*

God looking after the Gentiles was prophesied by the prophet Isaiah. This prophecy has already been fulfilled but remains effective even during the Great Tribulation by God's grace. The Lord Jesus remains a light to the Gentiles. God says to His Son, the Lord Jesus, that it is too small a thing for Him to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back those of Israel who are preserved. He has also given Him as a light to the Gentiles, to be His salvation to the ends of the earth.



*"He says: 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'" (Isaiah 49:6)*

### **Group 3: The Ungodly**

Lastly, let's examine another group: the ungodly. God intervenes in world events. One disaster follows another, and everyone knows that God exists. From the Book of Revelation, we can follow this group, and we see that most of them are not inclined to repent. Even though God intervenes and makes it clear to everyone that He is Lord, many are stubborn and want to live without God.

The first text we address from the scripture is in Revelation 3. In this text, God preserves His followers from the hour of trial. In Revelation, John reveals the reason for the trial, which is to test the inhabitants of the earth. These are the events that will occur during the Great Tribulation.

*"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." (Revelation 3:10)*

During the Great Tribulation, the inhabitants of the earth are the unbelievers and not the believers. This term appears only in the Book of Revelation, and from the context, we can deduce that it refers to unbelievers. Therefore, we can assume that Revelation 3:10 also refers to unbelievers. God raptures the Church of Christ in heaven and tests the unbelievers on earth.

The next Bible verse is found in the chapter where the seals of the scroll are opened. After a series of disasters has occurred, the believers who come to faith after the Rapture are murdered. Their souls cry out:

*"They cried out with a loud voice: How long, O holy and true Sovereign, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who live on the earth? And a long white robe was given to each of them. And it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed." (Revelation 6:10-11)*

Those who dwell on the earth are referred to as unbelievers. This scripture cannot refer to the believers because why would the souls cry out for their brothers and sisters to be killed? During the Great Tribulation on Earth, unbelievers are actively trying to locate and kill other followers of Jesus.

In the same chapter, we discover the lamentation of the unbelievers on Earth.

*"Then the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave, and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'" (Revelation 16:15-17)*

The inhabitants of Earth flee and hide themselves in caves and among the rocks in the mountains. They know that Jesus is pouring out His wrath on Earth, and they certainly know that no one will survive it. There is total panic, but yet they do not consider repenting. If they repent, God is merciful to forgive them, but if they do not, they will remain under His wrath. These cannot be believers either, as believers are required to eagerly await the coming of Jesus (Revelation 22). Even an angel pronounces woes upon the inhabitants of the Earth.

*"And I saw and heard one angel flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, 'Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of*

*the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" (Revelation 8:13)*

After this pronouncement, the first angel who gets to blow his trumpet blows it. A star (likely a fallen angel or the devil) falls on Earth, and this star opens the bottomless pit. This is where several demons reside. They appear as locusts and are given power by God to harm unbelievers. Only those who have the seal of God on their foreheads (The 144,000 sealed) are exempt from this plague.

*"And they were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them." (Revelation 9:4-6)*

When it was time for the sixth angel to blow his trumpet. He is instructed to release other angels, who will go throughout the world and kill one-third of humanity, likely through wars on the Earth. However, those who survive these disasters refuse to turn to God and continue with their sinful lifestyles.

*"So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. (...) And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. (...) But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see*

*nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts." (Revelation 9:15-21)*

Following this revelation, John sees the two witnesses in Jerusalem. After these witnesses give their testimony, we read the following.

*"When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth." (Revelation 11:7-10)*

The inhabitants of the Earth are happy that the two witnesses have been killed. They send gifts to each other and celebrate. The two witnesses tormented the inhabitants of the Earth with the testimony and plagues they brought. This scripture refers to unbelievers. To unbelievers, those who testify about God and the Lord Jesus are tormentors, while for believers, witnessing is an encouragement. After lying dead on the ground for three days, a spirit of life from God is breathed into them, and they ascend to heaven. Following this event, an earthquake occurs, and seven thousand people are killed. This causes the other inhabitants of the Earth to honor the God of heaven. This is a unique event during the Great Tribulation.

*"Now after the three-and-a-half days, the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and*

*their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake, seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven." (Revelation 11:11-13)*

In Revelation 12, we read a woe to the inhabitants of the Earth because the devil has been cast down to the Earth. The heavenly inhabitants rejoice, but the Earth's inhabitants face a great problem.

*"Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." (Revelation 12:12)*

Besides the inhabitants of the Earth, this is also a significant challenge for the Jews who haven't fled to the wilderness and for the believers who will come to faith after the Rapture.

*"And the dragon (the devil) was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 12:17)*

The devil gives power and authority to the beast (the Antichrist). The Antichrist becomes the ruler over all nations and tongues. He performs great wonders and signs, and his deadly wound gets healed (perhaps he rises from the dead or survives an assassination attempt?). The inhabitants of the Earth marvel at the Antichrist, and everyone who does not have their names written in the Book of Life worships him. The Earth's inhabitants reject the Lord Jesus and worship the devil and the Antichrist. It's indeed a strange world!

*"And they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast,*

*and who can fight against it?" (...) And all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain." (Revelation 13:4-8)*

Alongside the Antichrist stands the false prophet. The false prophet points the people to the Antichrist and ensures that everyone worships him. He deceives the inhabitants of the earth and devises a dreadful plan. He creates an image of the beast and compels everyone to worship it. Those who refuse to worship the Antichrist are to be killed. Additionally, people receive the mark of the beast, which enables them to buy and sell.

*"Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast, it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. Also, it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666." (Revelation 13:11-18)*

People are terribly deceived, and the false prophet ensures that everyone receives a mark. I can't ascertain the exact mark of the beast. It could be a tattoo, a stamp, an imprint, or a chip implanted in or on the body. It can also be something entirely different that resembles a

mark. However, God strictly forbids taking this mark. There is no turning back for any individual who accepts the mark of the beast, and eternal torment awaits.

*"And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name." Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus." (Revelation 14:9-12)*

If you are reading this book after the Rapture of the Church, I strongly urge you to reject the mark of the beast. Remain steadfast in your faith in God and Jesus, and do not accept the mark. It is better to be killed and persecuted by the Antichrist and be with God in heaven than to obey the Antichrist and be lost for eternity.

The people on earth largely refuse to repent, but God still urges them to do so. God's mercy still prevails, even in these dire times.

*"Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people." (Revelation 14:6)*

Instead of repenting, they blaspheme God because of the plagues they experience.

*"The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues*

*in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds." (Revelation 16:10-11)*

*"And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe." (Revelation 16:21)*

When the kingdom of the Antichrist, the city of Babylon, collapses, the merchants of the earth will mourn. Babylon is a city filled with impurity, immorality, and demons. Sin accumulates in the heavens. However, the people don't care; they can trade with the city, and in their eyes, it's a city of great importance. They only focus on earthly matters, and all morality and ethics vanish. This is the current trend in today's world. At some point, God's patience will be exhausted. God has been patient for a long time, but eventually, He will intervene and pour out His wrath on the city.

*"And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. (...) And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore. (...) And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls. "The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again!" The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, "Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste." And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on*



*the sea, stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?" And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste." (Revelation 18:9-19)*

After this judgment, the Lord Jesus will engage in the final battle with the Antichrist. The Antichrist has deceived many kings to join him in fighting against the Lord Jesus. In addition to the kings, many inhabitants of the earth also engaged in this battle. The Lord Jesus prevails, and the wicked who battle against the Lord are destroyed.

*"And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." (...) And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh." (Revelation 19:17-21)*

Many will perish in battle and not survive. And God will triumph against the inhabitants of the Earth. The inhabitants of the Earth will await the Judgment of the Great White Throne for a thousand years, where they will be judged. This will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 11. In this chapter, we briefly examine the judgment that will take place after this battlefield. Not everyone engages in battle against the Lord Jesus; some stay at home. The Lord Jesus divides this group into two: the sheep and the goats. They will be judged based on their deeds. This is not the final judgment that occurs after the Millennial Reign, as that would mean someone can enter heaven by their works alone. This is a different judgment.

*"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (...)" Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels (...)" (Matthew 25:31-41)*

The sheep represent those who have cared for the brethren of the Lord Jesus, while the goats represent those who have not. The sheep will be granted access to the kingdom and the Thousand-Year Reign, while the goats have no right to reign with Christ. The goats will be condemned and await the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, which is hell. The sheep will be granted access to the kingdom, and from them, new generations will emerge. And the Earth will be repopulated. In the Old Testament, we can find a similar event.

*"For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land. They have cast lots for My people, have given a boy as payment for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink." (Joel 3:1-3)*

The nations will be summoned, and how they treated the brethren (Israelites) will be examined. If they acted kindly, they would be granted entrance into the Millennial Kingdom. However, they will be condemned to hell if they act unjustly.

## Summary

After the Rapture of the Church, three groups will be distinguished. The first group is the people of Israel. Several nations will seek to destroy Israel through war and domination. Antisemitism during the Great Tribulation will be greatly executed, and the Antichrist will attempt to deceive and kill the Israelites. Many will perish, but God will extend His grace to the remnant. He will lead them into the wilderness and protect them from the devil and the Antichrist. The second group consists of those who come to the knowledge of Jesus after the Rapture. The Antichrist will despise them and seek to exterminate them. However, God will permit him to overcome the believers on Earth. The most significant deception is the mark of the beast. Eternal condemnation will be the fate of anyone who accepts the mark of the beast, and believers must resist and refuse it. The third group comprises the ungodly. God will judge them as they endure great suffering. Despite this experience, they still choose to continue in sin and ungodly deeds. Ultimately, the Lord Jesus will prevail and destroy them. A smaller group will face a trial before the Lord Jesus. The sheep will be granted entrance into the Millennial Kingdom, while the goats are ultimately cast into hell.

## 8 WHEN IS THE RAPTURE?

Many have tried to calculate the day of the Rapture or predict the end of the world. Wikipedia lists forty incorrect calculations by well-known Christians and scientists, ranging from 156 AD to 2060 AD. Perhaps you've also come across videos or teachings where people make calculations. Some YouTube channels continually update their predictions every month, using prophets, vague biblical calculations, and world events to support their claims. So far, they have been consistently wrong, but they remained undeterred. Here are some dates from history: European Christians thought Jesus would return on January 1, 1000 AD; Martin Luther suggested 1558 or 2040, and Isaac Newton proposed 1715, 1766, or 2060. I have chosen not to engage in these vague biblical calculations to predict the Rapture of the Church. I do not use prophets, celestial alignments, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, wars, or world leaders to predict the return of Christ. However, I'm certain of these two things: I cannot know when Jesus will return, and He didn't ask me to predict His coming. In this chapter, we will examine what Jesus and the Bible have revealed about the timing of the Rapture and whether it is possible for anyone to give accurate predictions.

### **No One Knows the Day or Hour**

We begin this paragraph by studying the wisest man who ever lived. No man before or after him is wiser. He answered the question, "When will the Messiah return? We will study the words of the Lord Jesus.

*"But of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Matthew 24:36)*

The Lord Jesus explicitly states that He doesn't know, nor do the angels know, the day of His return. No one knows except God the Father. If Jesus doesn't have the answer to when He will return, then we

certainly don't. The Rapture of the Church is scheduled and will happen one day, but nobody knows when that day will be. The same sentiment is echoed in the Book of Mark.

*"But of that day and hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is." (Mark 13:32-33)*

Using an example, the Lord Jesus explains in Matthew that we do not know when He is coming back. Jesus only admonishes us to be vigilant, which we are going to discuss in Chapter 9.

*"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Matthew 24:42-44)*

In the Book of Luke, we also see the same statement. We do not know at what hour the Lord Jesus will return.

*"Therefore, be ready also, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Luke 12:40)*

After Jesus had died and risen, He appeared to His disciples for forty days. The disciples were eager to know when He would return to establish His kingdom; in other words, "When is the Second Coming, and when does the Millennial Reign begin?" Jesus responded that it was not their place to know.

*"Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.'" (Acts 1:6-7)*

God the Father determines the moment when the Lord Jesus returns to Earth. It is not for humans to know this specific time. We are called to be watchful but not to calculate the day and hour of the Rapture. Thus, it is not possible for anyone to calculate the date of the Rapture or receive a revelation about the day of His return.

## **Like a Thief in the Night**

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that he didn't need to write to them about the timing of the Rapture of the Church and the day of the Lord.

*"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober." (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2)*

Firstly, Paul speaks about the wicked. He reveals that they do not know when the day of the Lord will come, and it will surprise them like a thief in the night. However, the day of the Lord will not take the church by surprise because the church is watchful and sober. Even Paul didn't know the timing of the Rapture either. If he did, he could have said, "You don't need to worry about missing the Rapture; it won't happen for thousands of years." Instead, Paul emphasized that this Church should remain watchful and sober. John presents a similar advice in his Revelation.

*"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and*

*you will not know what hour I will come upon you.*" (Revelation 3:2-3)

Like Paul, John does not mention any specific date. He simply calls for vigilance but doesn't specify when the church should expect His return. If the church is not watchful, the Lord Jesus will come as a thief. This applies both to the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ. In Revelation 3, John wrote about the Rapture, and in Revelation 16, he revealed details about the Second Coming.

*"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."* (Revelation 16:15)

Also, for the Second Coming, God admonishes believers to be watchful. However, for most individuals, Jesus will come as a thief; they will not expect Him. For those who are watchful and have lived in purity, the Lord Jesus will not come as a thief. The significant difference between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming is that the Rapture cannot be predicted. No one knows when it will occur. Is it possible to calculate the date of the Second Coming? We cannot ascertain the date in this current era, but those who will live during the Great Tribulation will be able to calculate the date. They can observe when the abomination of desolation is set up in the temple. After this, about three and half years will pass until the Second Coming (Daniel 12:11).

## **Time Indicators**

While it is impossible to predict the date of the Rapture, the Bible does mention events that will occur before and during it. Particularly, Matthew 24 revealed this truth.

*"Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to*

*them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3)*

The disciples asked for three things: When will the temple be destroyed? What will be the sign of your coming? And when is the end of the age? The first event happened in 70 AD when the Roman Empire destroyed the temple. The other two events are still pending. Nevertheless, the destruction of the temple is likened to the coming of Christ. Jesus compares these events to the birth pangs of a pregnant woman. The birth pangs increase in intensity.

*"And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." (Matthew 24:4-5)*

The first thing Jesus mentioned is that many will try to deceive the believers. Many will come and say, 'I am the Christ.' The greatest deceiver is yet to come: The Antichrist. But before the Antichrist, many will desire to be worshiped as God or Christ. For example, the pope is worshiped, and he is said to be 'The Vicar of Jesus Christ on Earth and the successor of Saint Peter.' According to the Catholic Church, the pope has the power to forgive sins and declare people 'Saints.' During the coronation of Pope Innocent X, it was said of him: 'Most Holy and Blessed Father, Head of the Church, Ruler of the World, to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, whom the angels in heaven revere, and the gates of hell fear; and whom the whole world venerates, especially devoutly venerate and adore you.' Even today, the pope is addressed as 'Holy Father' or 'Your Holiness.' Additionally, the pope can change church rules, while according to the Bible, no one is allowed to make such alterations. Jesus said, *'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will*



*by no means pass away.'* (Luke 21:33). The pope holds a different view, and great deception has infiltrated the Catholic Church. This underscores the prophecy of false Christ arising and misleading believers.

*"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." (Matthew 24:6-8)*

Before the Rapture, there will be many wars and rumors of wars. The world is filled with terror and war crimes. Nations will rise against one another, and new challenges will continually arise. Since the beginning, millions of people have lost their lives in wars due to fear and assassination attempts. These issues will persist on Earth until Jesus establishes the Thousand-Year Reign of Peace. In addition to wars, Jesus mentions famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. Alongside human conflicts, nature will also be in turmoil, causing great problems. For instance, consider the locust plagues, hunger in Africa, and earthquakes that sometimes displace thousands of people and result in multiple casualties. Think of contagious diseases like the plague, smallpox, Ebola, or Corona. During the plague in the Middle Ages, fifty million people died. Also, consider climate change and global warming. Yet, we are still in the beginning of sorrows.

*"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another." (Matthew 24:9-10)*

There will be a terrible hatred of Christians. We see this in the lives of the disciples. Except for one, the disciples of Christ were all killed. This hatred has endured, and "Open Doors" releases a yearly ranking

of Christian persecution. This persecution is usually fierce in North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. In these regions, Christians are betrayed by their family members. With all these occurrences, the end has not yet come.

*"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many." (Matthew 24:11)*

In addition to false Messiahs, false prophets will also arise. These are individuals who will twist the words of the Bible to make it suit their selfish narrative. During the time of the apostles, they were already active.

*"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness, they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time, their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber." (2 Peter 2:1-3)*

We currently live in a world where everything is justified. People say, "God is love!" and claim that because of His loving nature, anything goes. They determine for themselves what is right and wrong, and they want the Bible to be reinterpreted in the light of a new era and culture. This is a great deception, and unfortunately, more churches are calling for us to listen to the world's call and for the church to become "woke." These are false prophets, and many will follow them. They fail to understand that their judgment has already been pronounced. These false prophets will increase in number, with the crowning figures being the false prophet and the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation.

*"And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." (Matthew 24:12)*

According to the scripture, lawlessness will increase. People no longer want to be bound by the laws of the government or the laws of God. When believers are obedient to God in all things, they naturally love people. Many will not take God's laws seriously and will live outside His authority. The result is that the love of many will grow cold, and this is what we encounter in today's world. For example, think of all the negative reactions on social media. Consider famous individuals and how they are criticized for small mistakes. Consider the cases of assassinations and stabbings that occur because people disagree. The love of many has grown cold, and hatred increases.

*"But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:13-14)*

In the midst of all the terrible events listed in the scripture, you might wonder, "Is there still hope?" Jesus says that there is hope. Those who endure to the end will be saved, which means they will receive eternal life. Furthermore, the gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world as a testimony to all nations. Many argue that this hasn't happened yet, and therefore, the Rapture of the Church cannot occur. However, I don't see Matthew 24:14 as an obstacle to the imminent return of Jesus. For example, Paul believed he would experience the Rapture during his lifetime. He spoke of "We who are alive" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Was Paul not aware of this verse? I believe he was. Paul knew that Matthew 24:14 was not a hindrance. Paul even stated:

*"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by*

*the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith." (Romans 16:25-26)*

According to Paul, the gospel has been made known to all nations. This doesn't mean it's unnecessary to continue proclaiming the gospel to everyone.

*"Learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place." (Matthew 24:32-34)*

Then Jesus speaks of a parable with a fig tree. When the events mentioned in this chapter begin to occur, we must realize that the end is near. Just as people see that summer is approaching when the fig tree's branch becomes tender and puts forth leaves, we must realize that the end is approaching when we witness these signs. The generation witnessing the beginning of the Great Tribulation will not pass away until all these things have happened.

## **The Day of the Rapture**

Now that we understand what happens during the Rapture let's examine the day of the Rapture. Are there any specific events that occur before the Rapture takes place? In Chapter 2, we saw what happens during the Rapture, and in this section, we'll explore whether there are any signs that occur on the actual day.

*"And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:26-27)*

According to the Lord Jesus, the days of Rapture will resemble the days of Noah. Before the flood came, the wicked lived ordinary lives. They ate, drank, and married. None of them suspected the impending judgment, but the flood arrived and destroyed them all. Similarly, this will be the case at the Rapture of the Church. The inhabitants of the Earth will continue with their daily routines, and it will feel like an ordinary day. Suddenly, the followers of Jesus will be caught up, and a terrible judgment will befall those left behind, starting with the Great Tribulation.

*"For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape." (1 Thessalonians 5:3)*

At that time, there will be peace and safety. Everyone will feel secure, and no one will expect the impending calamity.

*"Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." (Luke 17:28-30)*

The Lord Jesus also used the example of the days of Lot. During that time, the wicked ate, drank, engaged in commerce, and built. They thought there was nothing to fear and believed they needed to secure their future. Suddenly, judgment came, and they all perished. The Rapture occurs at an unexpected moment, and no one can anticipate it in advance.

*"I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left." (Luke 17:34-36)*

People will go about their daily work, both those who are taken and those who remain on Earth. As they work together, suddenly, the followers of Jesus will be taken. There is no need for specific signs or events preceding the Rapture. Rapture can happen anytime, even today.

## **I Am Coming Soon**

The Lord Jesus declares, *"I am coming soon."* He said these words over 2,000 years ago, and today, we are closer to that moment than ever. Let's study the Bible verses where Jesus said He is coming soon.

The first verse is addressed to the church in Philadelphia, which has existed on Earth since 1700. To them, Jesus said:

*"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming soon! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." (Revelation 3:10-11)*

Jesus tells us that He is coming quickly and will protect us from the hour of trial, the Great Tribulation. What does "Quickly" mean? "Quickly" comes from the Greek word "*Tachu*," which means fast, soon, or immediately. Jesus is telling us that He is coming fast and soon.

The next times Jesus reminds us of His Second Coming are found in the last chapter of the Bible:

*"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (Revelation 22:7)*

*"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work." (Revelation 22:12)*

*"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20)*

Jesus is coming soon, and this is a great encouragement for us. Besides the word "*Tachu*," Greek also has a verb indicating that something will happen with haste or speed. This word is "*Tachos*," and it is used, among other places, in Revelation 1:1 and 22:6. In these verses, Jesus states that the things written in the Book of Revelation will happen speedily. This includes the Great Tribulation with its catastrophes, the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, the Millennial reign, and the new Heaven and Earth.

*"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place (...)" (Revelation 1:1)*

*"Then he said to me, 'These words are faithful and true.' And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place." (Revelation 22:6)*

## **God's Patience**

We've read that Jesus is coming soon. It's been 2,000 years since He said this. This might lead us to wonder, "Why hasn't Jesus returned yet?" There is an important reason for this, as explained by Peter in his letter.

*"Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation (...). But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the*

*heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." (2 Peter 3:3-10)*

From the time of Peter till this day, there have been scoffers—people who mockingly ask, 'Where is this Jesus who was supposed to return?' Peter provides an answer to why the Lord Jesus has not yet returned. Firstly, one day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord Jesus stands outside of time, and what seems long to us is a short time to Him. Time in heaven either doesn't exist or operates very differently. The exact nature of this is beyond our understanding, but it is scientifically credible. According to science, time on Earth passes faster than it does for an object in a black hole in space. If I were to enter a black hole, one year for me might be equivalent to ten years passing on Earth (these are fictitious numbers). God has embedded this principle in space, and He is not bound by the limitations of time. Secondly, the Lord Jesus is patient with us. He knows how dreadful the Great Tribulation and hell will be. He delays His judgments because He does not want anyone to perish. The Lord Jesus desires to save as many people as possible from judgment and wrath. This is the primary reason why He has not yet returned. But the Great Tribulation will come, without a doubt. In this Bible verse, Peter also looks far into the future and speaks of the moment when the entire earth and heaven will be destroyed. After this event, God will create a new heaven and a new earth.

## **Summary**

No one knows when the Lord Jesus will return. It is not possible to determine the date through revelation or by calculating with the Bible. However, we must realize that the Rapture is imminent. This understanding comes from the signs in Matthew 24 and the Lord Jesus, who assured us that He is coming soon. The primary reason why Jesus has not returned yet is that God is patient and does not want anyone to be lost.



## 9 LIVING TOWARD THE RAPTURE

In the previous chapters, we studied Bible verses that reveal details about the Rapture. The Rapture happens suddenly, and according to the Lord Jesus, He is coming soon. That is a beautiful prospect. But how should we live today? Using the Bible as our guide, we will explore what we should do in preparation for the Rapture. This chapter provides an overview, as each topic requires a separate chapter.

### **Live in Expectation**

God calls us to expect the Lord Jesus. According to the dictionary, to "expect" means to anticipate the arrival of something or consider it likely to happen. Living in expectation is not unfamiliar to expectant parents. Before a child is born, parents live in expectation. When a test reveals that a woman is pregnant, she shares this good news with her husband. At that moment, both parents are expecting a child. They know and realize that in a few months, a child will be born. Consequently, they decide to prepare a nursery and buy the necessary items to care for the child. As the months pass, the parents can see more evidence of the child. Ultrasound images become clearer, and (if the parents decide) the gender can be determined. The awareness of the impending birth of a child grows, leading the parents to choose a name and imagine what life with the child will be like. The child also becomes more tangible and larger. The woman feels the child move in her womb, and her belly grows. The doctor provides an estimated due date for the baby's birth, though the actual birth could occur a few weeks before or after the speculated date. When the baby is born, the expectation ends, and the parents enter the reality of caring for their baby. This is similar to our expectation of the Lord Jesus. He has told us about the time when He will come to take us. Today, we live in a time when the Rapture of the Church could happen, but no one knows the exact day. Nevertheless, we may live in expectation every day, just as in the birth of a baby. It would be odd if expectant parents said, "It could be days before the baby arrives; we'll see when it happens."

We won't prepare yet; we'll set up the nursery when the baby comes." Family and friends would likely say, "It's just a few days away. The baby is coming soon, and you haven't prepared. You'll be too late, and you won't be able to care for the baby properly." Similarly, it's strange for someone to say, "The Lord Jesus might come in decades. I'll see when He comes, and then I'll prepare." It is crucial to live your days in expectation and anticipate His coming.

*"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." (Philippians 3:20-21)*

Instead of expecting a baby, we expect our Savior. The term "Savior" means a redeemer, a deliverer, or a source of salvation. We live in expectation of our Savior, who rescues us from the Great Tribulation and the wrath of God. We anticipate our Savior's coming from heaven, where we hold our citizenship. When He comes, He will transform our bodies to be like His glorious body.

*"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." (Hebrews 9:27-28)*

It is usually a remarkable moment when a parent sees their baby for the first time. It is the most beautiful sight they have ever seen. Similarly, with the coming of the Lord Jesus, we eagerly await Him and witness His glory and love. We see that He is pure and without sin, and it will be the most beautiful sight we will ever see.

*"So that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that*

*you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:7-8)*

Until this revelation occurs and we see the Lord Jesus face to face, we lack no spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit. Until the meeting takes place, we are called to serve the world and our brethren in love, bearing witness to the Lord Jesus. Additionally, we need not fear the impending wrath of the Great Tribulation. We anticipate the Lord Jesus, who will deliver us from this dreadful period.

*"And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." (1 Thessalonians 1:10)*

In the same vein, we must not be deceived. Many will claim to be the Messiah, but they are not.

*"And Jesus answered and said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.'" (Matthew 24:4-5)*

## **Stay Watchful**

*"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Matthew 24:42-44)*

The Lord Jesus calls us to be watchful. In the Dutch movie *"De brief voor de koning"* (*The Letter for the King*) there are citizens who aspire to become knights and serve in the army. Before this can happen, they must practice and learn how to fight. Eventually, it was time for the examination, and they were required to complete various tasks. The final task involves "Being watchful." Some of the knights were kept

in a small room in the middle of the night, where they had to stay awake the whole night. They are not allowed to play games, talk to each other, open the door, or sleep. The only thing they can do is watch a candle, and they must remain vigilant. Similarly, we should be watchful in our spirits. When the Lord Jesus said we should be vigilant, it doesn't mean we should never sleep. The body may sleep, but our spirit must not sleep or become sluggish. We must always be watchful and ensure that the devil finds no entrance into our lives. It's said, "The devil never takes a vacation, so your spirit can't either." We must always remain vigilant, just as the knights watched the "candlelight." By candlelight, I refer to the light of the Lord Jesus. Let our eyes remain fixed on Him, and let us wear our armor so that we are not caught off guard by the attacks and temptations of the devil.

*"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)*

Peter urges us always to be sober and vigilant. If we stay watchful and do not slacken, the devil will never devour us, and we will always have victory in Christ. This is how we must remain watchful until the Rapture of the Church.

*"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." (Matthew 25:13)*

Additionally, we must be watchful for the Lord Jesus and ensure that our spirits do not fall asleep. The Lord Jesus is coming back, and He is coming for watchful servants.

*"Take heed, watch, and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the*

*crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he finds you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (Mark 13:33-37)*

The Lord Jesus says to everyone, "Watch!" He says this not only to the prophets but also to the shepherds, Bible teachers, and every believer. It is essential for everyone to watch, for He is coming suddenly. Some individuals may say, "I'll see when He comes. I'm not concerned about it, and I'll see whether He comes before or after the Great Tribulation." That is not being watchful. Besides, if Jesus comes after the Great Tribulation, we don't need to be watchful today. The temple in Israel has not been built yet, temple services are not happening, the Antichrist has not arisen, and the judgments in Revelation are not taking place.

The Lord Jesus may not come today. You can only be watchful if you expect Jesus to return today. How should you be watchful, then? I believe the following points can help us:

- Read the Bible and take it seriously (Revelation 22:6-21).
- Study the times we live in and compare them to the Biblical events.
- Do not be deceived by false prophets with false Rapture dates. This can cause us to lose our vigilance during the interim.
- Let yourself be led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit points us to Jesus and reveals God's plans to us. No one knows the Rapture date, but the Spirit says that Jesus must come (Revelation 22:17).
- Do not grow slack, and do not be distracted by worldly pleasures.
- Do this by putting on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:11).
- Pray continually and build a living relationship with God.
- Warn others and attend gatherings of believers.

*"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning. And you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird*

*himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Luke 12:35-40)*

*"Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober (...) whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." (1 Thessalonians 5:6-10)*

## **Do Not Be Anxious**

The time we live in has inflicted a lot of fear. Infectious diseases, wars, threats of war, famines, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, terrorism, and persecution are familiar to us. Fear flows into our living rooms from the television, and many wonder, "Will things ever get better?" What does the Lord Jesus say about this time?

*"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." (Matthew 24:6)*

The Lord Jesus doesn't deny the occurrence of terrible events in our time. He says that these things must happen; however, He assures us that we do not need to be afraid. "*Do not be terrified! Do not be afraid!*"

*"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:34-36)*

Jesus admonishes us not to let our hearts be weighed down by the cares of everyday life. We don't need to be afraid of anything; the Lord Jesus takes care of us. We don't even need to fear death because Jesus is with us. When a believer dies, he spends eternity with the Lord Jesus. If we worry about the cares of life, we may miss the day of the Lord and the Rapture of the Church.

*"And we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, KJV)*

Finally, we do not need to waver or be afraid due to a manifestation of the spirit, a word, or a letter claiming that the Rapture of the Church has already occurred or that Jesus has already returned. If someone makes such a claim, do not be afraid, but hold fast to the Word of God. If Jesus had returned, we would see Him and witness the restoration of creation. If the Rapture had taken place, we would know that millions of people have suddenly disappeared. Fear not!

## **Remain Watchful**

We are to live in expectation and be watchful for the coming of the Lord Jesus. However, this does not mean we should be idle on Earth. It's essential to be active until the moment of the Rapture. Firstly, it's good to work in the world and earn a living. Secondly, it's important to work for God's Kingdom and fulfill your God-given purpose. Working for God's Kingdom doesn't mean that everyone has a public ministry. Not everyone is called by God to speak before thousands or millions of people. God has given each person a unique ministry, and every one is essential for the proper functioning of the Church. We cannot say that one ministry is more important than another. Paul compares it to a body, and we need every part to function well (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).

*"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods." (Matthew 24:45-47)*

Blessed are those who do what the Lord has assigned to His servants. What could be more beautiful than being caught up in the air while actively engaged in His kingdom? At the moment when we are faithfully fulfilling His commands, the Lord Jesus says that He will reward those who are active and will make them rulers over His possessions. We read this in Matthew 25.

*"His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." (Matthew 25:21)*

This verse speaks of a servant who received five talents (a weight measurement) from his master. While the master was away, the servant ensured that these five talents increased to ten talents. The servant worked diligently and now receives honor from the master. The servant was also rewarded. The master says, *'You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.'* The servant receives a high position from the master. The same applies to believers. Let us get active in God's purpose for our lives, and let the Lord Jesus say to us, *'Well done, good and faithful servant.'* In this story, we also read about a wicked servant who was not active. He received one talent and buried it. When the master returned, he retrieved his talent and handed it back to the master. The master became furious with him because he was lazy, and he was cast into darkness.

## **Remain Pure**

We are the bride of Christ. This means we are given to one man, and the wedding day is approaching. God designed earthly marriage as a



covenant between one man and one woman. The man and the woman wait until they are married to come together physically. Until then, they have no physical intimacy with each other or with other men or women. This is God's intention and desire for the husband and wife to remain pure and not engage in fornication. The same applies to our relationship with the Lord Jesus.

*"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:2)*

It is our responsibility to remain pure and be presented as chaste virgins. This means we are pure and innocent. We do not engage in sin but live a holy life before God.

*"(...) Do not share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure." (1 Timothy 5:22)*

We cannot achieve this purity on our own. We need the help of the Holy Spirit. He desires to transform us so that we become conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus. Through this, we become pure virgins. If we fall into sin, we have the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, and by His blood, we are (again) made pure (1 John 1).

*"I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:4-8)*

God will confirm us until the end so that we may be blameless on the day of Christ. This verse is not a call to sanctification but a promise

of sanctification. Blameless means without accusation. On the day of the Lord, we will stand without accusation due to the grace and righteousness we receive from God. In the Book of Corinthians, we are called to live a holy and pure life before God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 9:24-27, or 11:1).

*"So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." (1 Thessalonians 3:13)*

The word 'Blameless' in 1 Thessalonians means that no fault can be found in or against us. It's a collaboration between God on one side and believers on the other. We must strive to be blameless and holy, and God gives us the strength to walk into purity.

*"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:23)*

*"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience." (Colossians 3:1-6)*

In the Book of Colossians, Paul urges us to seek the things that are above only. Moreover, we are to put to death the earthly desires within us. In other words, we are to sanctify and purify ourselves for the Lord Jesus, as failure to do so may lead to experiencing God's wrath, which is reserved for the disobedient.

In 2 Peter, he spoke about the destruction of the current heaven and earth and the promise of a New Heaven and Earth. Many believers long for this promise, but Peter emphasizes the following:

*"Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless." (2 Peter 3:11-14)*

According to Peter, we are to be diligent in order to be found without spot or blameless. Being diligent implies making an effort. We must strive to be blameless and avoid sin.

## **Persevere**

*"But he who endures to the end shall be saved." (Matthew 24:13)*

*"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." (Revelation 3:10)*

The Lord Jesus calls us to persevere, and if we endure, we will be saved and we will be preserved from the hour of trial. It is crucial to persevere. Perseverance means steadfastly continuing in what we have started. When we come to faith, we begin a new life in Christ. Jesus says we must maintain this new way of life regardless of our challenges. Oftentimes, it's akin to a five-kilometer route through the mountains. The first kilometer is easy, as it's a paved, flat road. The second kilometer becomes more challenging, as it's a steep, paved road uphill. The third kilometer is even more challenging as the paved

road ends, and we walk on rough terrain. The fourth and fifth kilometers become easier as we reach the peak and descend slowly on a paved road. Perseverance means determination to complete what we've started, just like the mountain hike. The Lord Jesus says this applies to our spiritual life, and we must always persevere, especially when life becomes tough.

*"Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." (James 5:11)*

Job knows how difficult life can be. Yet, despite all his hardships and the disasters that befell him, he persevered, and God rewarded him. God also rewards us when we persevere. Firstly, we are saved, and secondly, we escape the Great Tribulation.

*"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2)*

## **Comfort Each Other**

*"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18)*

Life can be challenging sometimes, and the passing of a loved one is a difficult period in our lives. Paul urges us to find comfort in the Rapture of the Church and our reunion with the Lord Jesus and our

loved ones. Farewell to a believer is temporary. In due time, we will be reunited with those who have gone before us.

*"Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." (1 Thessalonians 5:11)*

Paul calls for mutual encouragement. The reason for this encouragement can be found in the scripture above.

*"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10)*

Comfort one another because we are not appointed to wrath, and we will live together with Him. By God's grace, we will not experience the wrath poured out on the wicked during the Great Tribulation and in eternity in hell.

## **Other Ways of Living**

### **Attend the Gatherings**

*"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25)*

We must not neglect the gathering of believers. Paul is referring to gatherings of believers, such as church services, Bible studies, or prayer meetings. Let us encourage one another to attend church to worship God and receive instruction, especially as we see the approach of the great day, the Rapture of the Church, and the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

## **Be Patient**

*"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." (James 5:7-8)*

Patience is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), and it is important to cultivate this fruit. We must be patient and wait for Him until the coming of the Lord. Just as a farmer waits patiently for his harvest, we wait patiently for the Lord Jesus.

## **Warn Others**

*"When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand." (Ezekiel 3:18)*

It's crucial to warn those who do not know God and His plans. We do this not out of fear but out of love. We love the people around us, and therefore, it is important to tell them about God and His grace. God desires that people choose Him. God takes no pleasure in the lost perishing; He wants the wicked to repent. We have the privilege of being part of God's plan and reaching out to people to tell them they can become children of God.

## **Summary**

When the Lord Jesus returns, He wants to see servants who do what He commands. Until the Rapture of the Church takes place, the Lord Jesus instructs us to:

- Live in expectation
- Remain watchful
- Do not be anxious
- Stay active

- Remain pure
- Persevere
- Comfort one another
- Attend gatherings
- Be patient
- Warn others

This study on the Rapture of the Church should not make us passive, merely waiting for the Lord's Second Coming. It should motivate us to recognize the need to testify about the Lord Jesus to the people around us so they may experience the Rapture and not fall under the judgment and wrath of the Great Tribulation.

# PART 2



## A REVELATION OF THE **SECOND COMING**

WHAT JESUS WILL DO WHEN HE  
RETURNS TO EARTH



## 10 THE SECOND COMING

The Lord Jesus came to serve on Earth. He lived a human life, being born, grew up, and eventually died on the cross. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead, receiving a new, glorified body. Between His first and second coming, the Holy Spirit came to Earth to empower and guide believers. Then, the Lord Jesus will gather His followers during Rapture, and the Great Tribulation will begin. At the end of the Great Tribulation, the Lord Jesus will return to Earth, and His feet will touch the ground. The Second Coming signifies His return. The Lord Jesus returns to Earth, and this will not be a brief visit. After the Second Coming, the most beautiful millennium on Earth will commence: the Thousand-Year Reign of Peace with Jesus as King. In this chapter, we study the day of the Second Coming. What happens on that day?

### Who is Coming Back?

It shouldn't be a surprise that the Lord Jesus is returning to Earth, and the Second Coming is about His presence on Earth. Shortly after Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples saw two angels who declared that He would return.

*"And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:10-11)*

The Lord Jesus is coming back in the same manner he ascended to heaven. Just as He ascended into heaven two thousand years ago, He will soon return to Earth. Jesus is not sending a messenger, ambassador, or angel; He is coming in His glory. Moreover, the Lord Jesus is hundred percent God and hundred percent human. He is the Son of God and the Son of David (Romans 1:3-4). He is a Man with a

glorified body, having conquered death and sin, and reigning above every power, authority, and dominion (Ephesians 1:21).

*"I was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven!" (Daniel 7:13)*

Daniel received a vision and was granted a glimpse into the future by God. After all the tribulations of the Antichrist, Daniel saw a man appear with the clouds; it was the Lord Jesus. Daniel tried to describe Him, and he saw that He resembled a Son of Man. The Lord Jesus returns as a glorified man to Earth. The following Bible passage records Jesus speaking to the high priest of Israel.

*"(...) you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." (Mark 14:62)*

The Lord Jesus described Himself as the Son of Man. This applies not only to His first coming but also to His Second Coming. The Son of Man will come with the clouds of heaven.

*"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works." (Matthew 16:27)*

In this verse, we discover that the Lord Jesus will not come alone. He will appear with His angels and intervene in world events.

*"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30)*

While the Rapture of the Church is hidden, during the Second Coming, all the tribes of the earth will see the Lord Jesus appear in the sky. Everyone will see Him in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. The Lord Jesus will not come as He did the first time to serve and proclaim grace; during His Second Coming, He will come into power as a King.

*"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory." (Matthew 25:31)*

*"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." (Luke 21:27)*

*"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen." (Revelation 1:7)*

The Lord Jesus returns to Earth with His angels and His bride. The bride consists of the Church of the Lord Jesus and Israel. When the Lord Jesus is revealed to the world, we will be revealed with Him.

*"When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:4)*

This will happen during the war that the Lord Jesus wages against the Antichrist and the ten kings (Revelation 19).

*"These (the kings) will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful." (Revelation 17:14)*

In Revelation, we are referred to as "The called, chosen, and faithful." This is not about the angels but about the followers of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is physically returning to Earth. We cannot spiritualize this or claim that it already happened in the past through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or during the temple's destruction in 70 AD. When He comes, everyone will see and feel His presence.

## **Where is He Coming Back?**

The Lord Jesus is returning to Earth in a physical form. This means He can return to a specific location and is not spiritually present everywhere on Earth. There has been speculation about the specific place of His return. A false prophet claimed that He would return to Mont Blanc and even specified a date for this. The said date has passed, and the Lord Jesus did not return to that mountain, disappointing those who believed the false prophet. They had traveled to that mountain in vain. So, where will He return? Who will receive the King of kings? Will it be a political capital in the world, like Washington, Brussels, Beijing, or Moscow? Or will it be a religious location like Rome, Constantinople (Istanbul), or Canterbury? None of the above. The Lord Jesus will return to a city marked by great controversy and terrible wars.

*"And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south." (Zechariah 14:4)*

Two thousand years ago, Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives, and soon He will return to this mountain. The Mount of Olives is located east of Jerusalem and has an elevation of 827 meters. It's a fifteen-minute walk from Jerusalem, and from the mountain, one can see Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives is not a strange place for the

Lord Jesus. At its base, you'll find Gethsemane, where He was arrested. What the Lord Jesus said at that time is remarkable.

*"Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53)*

At that moment, the Lord Jesus chose not to pray for more than twelve legions (a legion consisting of 5,000 men) of angels because He wanted the Scriptures to be fulfilled. Soon, He will return to this place, surrounded by many angels and followers, and engage in battle with His enemies. The Mount of Olives is also where the Lord Jesus and His disciples discussed future events, such as the destruction of the temple, the Rapture of the Church, and His Second Coming.

*"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"" (Matthew 24:3)*

It is a remarkable place, and when the Lord Jesus sets His feet on the Mount of Olives, it will split in two. The King of kings, the one who possesses all power, will return to Earth, and He will reign over the entire world from Jerusalem.

## **How Will He Be Received?**

In the previous chapter, we examined three distinct groups left on Earth: The Israelites, the followers of Jesus who come to faith after the Rapture, and the ungodly. For the Israelites and the surviving followers of Jesus, His Second Coming is a day of salvation and eager anticipation. For the ungodly, it's a dreadful day, and many will face judgment. Let's briefly study what each group will do during Jesus' Second Coming and their fate.

### **Group 1: The Israelites**

This group can be divided into two subgroups: The Israelites who have fled to the wilderness and those who remain in the city of Jerusalem. Those in Jerusalem would experience terrible things before the Second Coming.

*"Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city." (Zechariah 14:1-2)*

The city of Jerusalem will be captured by the nations under the leadership of the Antichrist. The houses in the city will be plundered, and women will be subjected to violence. Many will be taken into captivity and transported to other lands. However, God makes a promise. Some of the people in Jerusalem will not be annihilated.

*"And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You." (Zechariah 14:4-5)*

After this harrowing period, God will intervene, and Jesus will arrive on Earth. The Mount of Olives will split in two, and the remaining Israelites will flee to find refuge in Him. Jesus is not alone; He brings all His saints with Him. These saints will likely include angels and possibly believers who were part of the Rapture and return with Him. The Israelites in Jerusalem will discover they can take shelter with

Jesus, finding protection under His wings. Perhaps they will sing the following Psalm in the presence of Jesus.

*"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.' Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler." (Psalm 91:1-4)*

The other part of this group comprises the Israelites who have fled to the wilderness. As we've seen earlier, Israel goes through terrible wars, and when the Antichrist stops the sacrificial offerings and sets up the abomination of desolation in the temple, Jesus instructs them to flee to the mountains. This will occur three and half years before Jesus' Second Coming.

*"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." (Matthew 24:15-16)*

These are mountains in the wilderness. The Jews who have fled will be pursued by the devil, but God will protect them. We find this in the parable of the woman in labor and the male child, where the woman represents the people of Israel.

*"Then the woman (Israel) fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days." (Revelation 12:6)*

*"So the woman (Israel) fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. And war broke out in heaven: Michael and*

*his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.' (Revelation 12:6-11)*

God beckons a portion of Israel into the wilderness, where He speaks to their hearts. There, He provides them with protection, and the devil cannot reach them. The devil knows this and decides to neglect them, focusing on the rest of Israel. I believe this remaining group consists of the Israelites who are still in the world, especially Jerusalem and the Gentiles who come to faith after the Rapture. In the wilderness, God will speak to the hearts of the Israelites, and they will discover that Jesus is their Messiah and Bridegroom.

*"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of A'chor as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. And it shall be, in that day,' says the LORD, 'that you will call Me 'My Husband,' (...) I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD."* (Hosea 2:14-19)

In the wilderness, the people of Israel will come to know the Lord Jesus, and from that point on, they will address Him as their Husband. The Israelites will receive a revelation and recognize that Jesus Christ



is their Messiah and Bridegroom, eagerly anticipating Him as the Bride.

## **Group 2: The Living Followers of Jesus**

Apart from the Israelites, there are followers of Jesus who will remain alive. During the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist aims to exterminate everyone, but some followers will survive. They have endured the most challenging period on Earth, and now the Lord Jesus will rescue them. What happens to them when Jesus returns?

*"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven." (Mark 13:24-27)*

When the Lord Jesus returns, He sends His angels to gather all the elect. Everyone who has survived the Great Tribulation will be called and gathered. I believe Jesus is referring to both Jews and believing Gentiles. This gathering was mentioned in various passages in the Bible.

*"And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:31)*

*"Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles, to give thanks to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise." (Psalm 106:47)*

In the following Bible passage, Jesus spoke these words during His first coming to Jerusalem. He desired to gather all the children of

Abraham and care for them as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. He wanted to protect Israel under His wings, but the Jews rejected Him. However, the Lord Jesus will return, and He will gather all the elect.

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" (Matthew 23:37-39)*

This is not a meeting in the Father's house, like the Rapture of the Church. This is a meeting on Earth in Jerusalem. This group eagerly anticipates Jesus' return. Finally, they don't have to fear the Antichrist and his allies because the Lord Jesus offers them protection.

### **Group 3: The Ungodly**

The third group can be divided into two categories: those who engage in battle with the Lord Jesus and those who remain at home. In this section, we'll examine those who engage in battle with the Lord Jesus, while we'll study those who stay behind in Chapter 11.

A vast multitude marches to Armageddon to engage in battle with the Lord Jesus. It is God's work, and He leads them to Jerusalem.

*"For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle.' God Protects a Portion of Israel." (Zechariah 14:2-3)*

The City of Jerusalem will be taken, and the Israelites will be plundered. By this occurrence, the gentiles will assume victory. But then, the Lord Jesus will go forth to battle against the gentiles.

*"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. (...) Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet (...) These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh." (Revelation 19:11-21)*

The Lord Jesus will emerge victorious, signaling the end of the era of the wicked and the Antichrist. Jesus will prevail! More Bible passages speak of this war, but for this study, we'll examine this one. Interested readers can also explore Joel 2 and Isaiah 13.

The second part of this group will remain alive. They will appear before the Lord Jesus, and He will judge them. This will be discussed in Chapter 11.

## **Immediately After His Second Coming**

Following the destruction of the wicked who engage in the battle, an angel descends from heaven and casts the devil into an abyss for a thousand years. We delve deeper into this in Chapter 13.

*"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished." (Revelation 20:1-3)*

During the Rapture of the Church, believers will receive glorified bodies. Those who come to faith during the Great Tribulation and are martyred will immediately go to heaven but will not receive glorified bodies. They receive them shortly after Jesus' Second Coming and after the devil is cast into the abyss. Following this event, the first resurrection is complete, and the Millennial reign begins on Earth, with Jesus as the King.

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4)*

## **Summary**

After the Great Tribulation, Jesus will return to Earth. He will come with a host of angels and His bride. Jesus physically returns to the Mount of Olives, and everyone will see Him. The Israelites will acknowledge Him as the Messiah, and the believing Gentiles who are in the world are gathered by angels. They will be protected by Jesus. The wicked engage in battle against Jesus, and He will triumph over them. Those who stay behind are judged by Him, as described in Chapter 11. Immediately after the Second Coming of Jesus, the devil is imprisoned in the abyss, and the believers who pass away during the Great Tribulation receive new bodies and come to life.

## 11 THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

The Bible speaks of various judgments which will occur at different times and places. Furthermore, the individuals who will be judged form different groups. In this chapter, we will examine three different judgments and their time of occurrence. The judgment of the nations is particularly crucial for part two, as it occurs shortly after His Second Coming.

### The Judgment of the Church

The Church is shielded from God's wrath and judgments on Earth. However, Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and be evaluated. One significant difference between the judgment of the Church and other judgments is that the believers appearing before this judgment cannot be lost. Rather than judgment, I prefer to call it evaluation. The Lord Jesus examines our works on Earth, distinguishing between our good and bad deeds. This does not pertain to the sins for which we have sought forgiveness; God has forgiven those sins, and He no longer holds them against us.

*"He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:9-12)*

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)*

When the Bible speaks of forgiveness, it uses the Greek word 'Aphēmi,' which literally means to send away or let go. When God forgives us, He has washed away our sins. He will not use them against us again. Nevertheless, we will stand before His judgment seat.

*"Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:9-10)*

Paul wrote this text to the believers in Corinth. He stated that believers would appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and thus, he desired to be well pleasing to the Lord Jesus during his life. If Paul was well pleasing to Jesus, it means He looked at Paul and said, 'I am pleased with Paul.' Let's explore a few examples of how our lives can be well pleasing to Jesus.

*"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret." (Ephesians 5:6-13)*

Paul urges us to walk in the light and not in darkness. Darkness is filled with hatred, unfruitful works, and terrible deeds. We must determine what is acceptable to the Lord. This involves continually seeking God's will in every situation and putting it into practice. The greatest commandment is to love God and your brethren. Walk in the light, in love, and in accordance with God's will; only then will you be pleasing to Jesus. In the following scriptures, Paul provides more exhortations, primarily concerning relationships among men. He talks about women, men, children, fathers, and servants (Who can be regarded as modern-day employees). Paul admonishes that every act done to a brethren should be done for the Lord Jesus.

*"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality." (Colossians 3:18-25)*

Being well pleasing to the Lord Jesus does not require competition among the believers. God doesn't keep a scorecard, tallying how many people we've led to faith or how much money we've given to the poor, and then judges our favor with Him based on these criteria.

*"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (Hebrews 13:20-21)*

We should live according to God's will. We can find His will in the Bible; however, God can also reveal His will to us. This book does not delve into the communication of God's will. Let's examine 2 Corinthians 5.

*"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:9-10)*

Every believer will receive a reward from God, and what we receive depends on what we have done on Earth. It is not possible to lose eternity in this evaluation. Every believer will enter heaven and be in the presence of God. However, there are different levels of rewards in heaven. Some receive greater wealth and treasure than others. I don't have a clear picture of this reward system, but it is a biblical concept.

*"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly." (Matthew 6:1-4)*

When we give our tithes or offerings, we should do so in secret. We should not broadcast how much we have given or whether we contribute to charitable causes. Oftentimes, when an individual wins a large sum of money and he's asked, "What will you do with it?" most people will reply by saying, "A portion will go to charity." Jesus says, "Do not do this; do not let anyone know, and do not trumpet it to others." We must abstain from broadcasting our good deeds because we receive our reward from others when we do so. By keeping it secret, we receive our reward from God. This reward can be received (partially) on Earth but will be most evident during the evaluation at the judgment seat of Christ. In the Bible, Matthew 6 discusses various instances where God rewards the believer.

*"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed*



*by fire, and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)*

Paul explains that Jesus is our foundation, and it is our responsibility to build upon this foundation. Some were built with wood, hay, or straw, as in the example from Matthew, where an individual gave money to a charitable cause and took pride in it. Or consider a person who performs an act without love. Others are built with gold, silver, or precious stones. Such individuals may secretly give to charity and perform actions with love for the Lord Jesus. Every believer is saved, but some may suffer loss during this evaluation, while others will receive a reward.

*"However, what do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way." (Romans 14:10-13)*

Paul advises us not to judge other brothers and sisters. Everyone will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We should examine our own lives and live in purity because everyone will be accountable to the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the judge of all, and we should not meddle in the affairs of our brethren. However, it is good to lovingly admonish and warn fellow believers about sin.

The judgment seat of Christ will likely take place when He comes to gather the believers, which is the Rapture of the Church. In Revelation, Jesus said:

*"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work." (Revelation 22:12)*

## **The Judgment of the Nations**

In Chapter 4, we read about God judging the earth and its inhabitants with plagues during the Great Tribulation. After the Great Tribulation, Jesus will return and judge the survivals. Most inhabitants of the Earth will engage in war against the Lord Jesus and perish during this war. This is part of God's judgment on the nations. Those who do not engage in war will be judged later on Earth, and the Lord Jesus will decide whether they will enter into the Millennial Kingdom or be cast into hell. The judgment of the nations is one of the most challenging topics in this book, and there are diverse controversies about it. This paragraph is written for your consideration because it is an important part of God's Word. Let's study the first text.

*"For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land." (Joel 3:1-2)*

In this scripture, Joel is speaking about the end of the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem. During the Great Tribulation, Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles. God decides that the season of captivity for Jerusalem is over and intervenes on behalf of His people against the Gentiles, resulting in a great war. The Kingdom of God triumphed in this war. During that time, God will gather all the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat means "The Lord Judges" or "The Lord Decides." This valley is still unknown, but God will gather all the nations there. The judgment will be based on how the nations treated the Israelites. Did they participate in the scattering of the Jews, or did they assist the Jews during their difficult times?

God calls the nations together, summoning them with weapons to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. This is likely referring to the same war as described in Revelation 19.

*"Proclaim this among the nations: 'Prepare for war! Stir up the mighty men! Let all the men of war draw near; let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I am strong.'" Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD!" (Joel 4:9-11)*

After this proclamation, we expect a great war, which is revealed in Revelation 19. However, we will discover a change of tone in this chapter. Instead of speaking about war, it shifts back to the imagery of a trial.

*"Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations." (Joel 4:12)*

God gathers the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat to judge them. He stands in defense of the Israelites, and the nations receive God's wrath and judgment. This judgment begins with the Lord Jesus overcoming the armies of the enemy. Subsequently, the surviving nations will be judged. In the scripture, Revelation 19 revealed the war led by the Lord Jesus against the nations. In Revelation 20, the judgment that occurred immediately after this war and His return were revealed.

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. (...)" (Revelation 20:4)*

Could this refer to the judgment of the nations? It's possible. The descriptions in Revelation 20:4 are similar to the text in Daniel.

*"I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened." (Daniel 7:9-10)*

The Lord Jesus begins His trial, and the books are opened. The court pronounces judgment upon the Antichrist and his earthly kingdom, as described in the following verse:

*"But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his (the Antichrist's) dominion, to consume and destroy it forever." (Daniel 7:26)*

The dominion of the Antichrist will be taken away through the war led by the Lord Jesus in Revelation 19. Subsequently, Jesus will return, and a new trial will be held on Earth, with the same purpose as the trials in Joel and Daniel. In Daniel, we see that the trial comes first, followed by the judgment of the kingdom of the Antichrist. It's possible that the judgment of the nation spans multiple trials or extends beyond a single day, starting before the war and concluding afterward. Let's read the prophecy in Zephaniah to see the nations that will be judged.

*"I have cut off nations, their fortresses are devastated; I have made their streets desolate, with none passing by. Their cities are destroyed; there is no one, no inhabitant. I said, 'Surely you will fear Me, you will receive instruction'—so that her dwelling would not be cut off, despite everything for which I punished her. But they rose early and corrupted all their deeds. Therefore wait for Me,' says the LORD, 'Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My*

*indignation, all My fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy." (Zephaniah 3:6-8)*

In the Book of Zephaniah, it appears that the judgment of the nations will be served on every nation on Earth. No one from a nation will be spared; everyone will be judged based on their actions toward the Israelites, both good and evil. Let's examine the parable of Jesus in the New Testament regarding the judgment of the nations.

*"When the son of man comes in his Glory, and all the Holy Angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of Glory." (Matthew 25:31)*

The Lord Jesus states that He is the one who will judge the nations. God the Father has given the authority to the Son to judge all people. This occurs when He returns, accompanied by His angels, to sit on the throne of David on Earth.

*"All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." (Matthew 25:32-33)*

All the nations on Earth are gathered together. Jesus will divide them into two groups, just as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. There is no middle ground; the sheep are the righteous nations, and the goats are the unrighteous nations. I believe that Jesus judges entire nations in this context. Here, Jesus is not judging believers; they have been raptured into heaven, martyred during the Great Tribulation, or gathered by angels at His return.

*"And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:31)*

This judgment is pronounced upon non-believers who are alive at the time of the Second Coming. The Lord Jesus does not examine each person's individual life; rather, He assesses the actions of nations or lands. The righteous nations are placed at His right hand, while the unrighteous nations are placed at His left hand.

*"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." (Matthew 25:34-36)*

The righteous nations are invited to enter the Millennial Kingdom, as described in Chapter 13. They will enjoy an earthly existence with the Lord Jesus as their king because of their kind treatment of Him.

*"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?"" (Matthew 25:37-39)*

The righteous nations express surprise. They recognize the great King seated on His throne in all His glory. If they had done a favor for Him, it surely would have been noticed. It's not about just any person, beggar, prisoner, sick person, or stranger; it's about the great King!

*"And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." (Matthew 25:40)*

The Lord Jesus explains to the righteous nations that whatever they did for the least of His brethren, they did it for Him. I believe this

refers to the people of Israel because Joel prophesied this. How the nations treated Israel is the standard for this judgment. It's possible that Jesus, in addition to Israel, is speaking about believers, and nations that treated Christians well may also be spared. Which countries would be considered righteous nations today?

*"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me." Then they also will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?" Then He will answer them, saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me." (Matthew 25:41-45)*

After Jesus promised that the righteous nations would gain entrance into the Millennial Kingdom, He turned to the unrighteous nations. The nations that lived in unrighteousness will not be allowed to enter this kingdom; rather, they will be thrown into eternal fire. This means they will be killed and will await the Great White Throne Judgment, where their final punishment will be decided. According to the scripture, they will be thrown into the lake of fire. What a dreadful state! This judgment will be placed on them because they failed to care for the least of Jesus' brethren, which refers to the Israelites and perhaps the Christians.

*"And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:46)*

In verse 46, the Lord Jesus summarized the judgment of the nations. The righteous nations will enter the Millennial Kingdom and have eternal life, while the unrighteous will face eternal punishment. I find

this text challenging. Does He mean that the righteous nations already possess eternal life? Is it not possible for them to lose this eternal life during the Millennial Kingdom? After all, the judgment of the nations involves the people who are still alive and have not received glorified bodies. Perhaps the Lord Jesus is pleased with the nations that cared for His followers and the Israelites during the Great Tribulation, which is equivalent to choosing Him. It remains remarkable that entire nations will either be saved or condemned. In any case, no one in these nations will have taken the mark of the beast. They are under God's judgment and wrath, with no way back to God. Perhaps they have all died during the Great Tribulation or are among the 'goats' (Revelation 14:9-11 and 16:2). The judgment of the nations is a complex subject, but I hope you gained a clear understanding of this subject in this paragraph.

## **The Great White Throne**

The final judgment of God is the judgment pronounced at the Great White Throne. This is revealed in Revelation 20.

*"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them." (Revelation 20:11)*

Most believers fear this White Throne Judgment. They believe it's the moment when their salvation will be determined. They hope that the sacrifice of Jesus and their faith is sufficient to secure their salvation. Fortunately, the believer will not appear before this White Throne Judgment. They have already ruled with Christ for a thousand years during the Millennium and have been taken to heaven before the Great Tribulation. It would be odd for believers who have experienced these events to be condemned at the White Throne Judgment. Jesus assured us that we would not come under this judgment and that we would not be condemned.



*"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:1)*

*"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." (John 5:24)*

When an individual comes to faith, they have passed from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive. This doesn't refer to a physically dead or living body but to a dead or living spirit. A man who is spiritually alive has a relationship with God, while an individual who is spiritually dead does not.

The Great White Throne is meant for the judgment of unbelievers. When this throne appears, heaven and earth will disappear, and the old will pass away. Suddenly, God will create a new heaven and a new earth.

*"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:12-15)*

John saw the dead standing before God. This does not refer to the believers because they are alive in Christ. Unbelievers have no relationship with God, and thus, they remain spiritually dead during their journey on Earth. Believers will participate in the first resurrection, which will happen before the Millennial Kingdom. During that time,

the dead must wait for a thousand years for the Great White Throne's judgment.

*"(...) and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4-6)*

Believers will partake in the first resurrection, making them immune to the second death. The first death is physical death, which every man will experience. The second death is spiritual death, which entails eternal separation from God. This fate awaits the spiritually dead, including the great and small, kings and servants, the rich and the poor, and also employers and employees.

John saw the dead standing before God. This is remarkable because how can a dead man stand? This is because God will allow every man to rise from the dead. John speaks of the dead, but in reality, they are alive. Their spirit and relationship with God are dead, but they have received new bodies.

*"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." (John 5:28-29)*

Believers rise to the resurrection of life, which is the first resurrection. Unbelievers rise to the resurrection of condemnation, which is the second death. This applies to all the dead; no one is exempt. Whether such person died at sea or on land, whether they were buried or cremated, everyone will stand before the Great White Throne. Suddenly, the Book of Life will be opened, and it contains the names of living individuals like Moses, Abraham, David, Daniel, and hopefully many

more who lived for Christ. I hope this is the thickest book we will ever see. The Book of Life lists those who belong to Jesus and are allowed to enter heaven, escaping condemnation.

*"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (Revelation 3:5)*

During this judgment, the dead will realize that their names are not written in this book. This will be the most dreadful moment in human history, and it is the duty of every believer to reach out to people with God's gospel to make the book thicker and reduce the number of souls standing before the Great White Throne. Then, their works are examined, and new books are opened. It will become apparent that no one is good enough to enter heaven by their own merit. The evidence is complete; everyone has received a fair trial, and all have been justly judged. Jesus gives His judgment, casting death and the realm of death into the lake of fire. Every soul waiting in the realm of the dead for the Great White Throne Judgment will be found guilty and transferred from the realm of the dead to hell. The realm of the dead will no longer serve any purpose and will cease to exist. The realm of the dead is essentially a waiting room where the dead await their final judgment. Only those whose names are in the Book of Life will escape the lake of fire. The dead will be thrown into the lake, proving that their work isn't good or righteous before God.

## **Summary**

The Bible speaks of various judgments. The Church of Christ will not be condemned but evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ. God will assess the believers who are well-pleasing in His eyes. Those who do good works are saved and rewarded, while those who perform wrong deeds are saved but suffer loss. This judgment likely occurs at the Rapture of the Church. During and after the Second Coming of Christ, the judgment of the nations will happen. The nations that

treated Israel and Jesus' followers well are allowed to participate in the Millennial Kingdom, while those who lived in unrighteousness will be condemned. This judgment will occur on Earth in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Finally, the last judgment will be held at the Great White Throne. All the dead will be judged according to their works and cast into the lake of fire, except for Christians. This judgment will not take place on Earth, as it will have passed away with the heavens, and afterward, God will create a new heaven and a new Earth.

## 12 SIGNS OF HIS COMING

The Rapture of the Church can occur at any moment. It could happen today, tomorrow, in a year, or even decades from now. However, the Second Coming of Christ cannot happen today because certain prophecies must be fulfilled before Jesus returns. In this chapter, we will examine the signs of His return.

### The Rapture of the Church

The Second Coming cannot happen today because the Rapture of the Church has not yet occurred. The Lord Jesus will return twice. His first return is to gather His followers before the Great Tribulation, and the second return is to set His feet on the Mount of Olives. The Rapture of the Church can happen at any moment. This is the most crucial event before the events revealed in the Book of Revelation will unfold. The Second Coming of Christ will happen at least seven years after the Rapture of the Church. The primary reason the followers of Jesus are taken up is that Jesus has not destined them for wrath. God cannot proclaim His judgment today because He does not want the righteous to suffer the same wrath as the unrighteous.

### The Great Tribulation

It is beyond the scope of this book to extensively study all the events of the Great Tribulation. Nevertheless, it is essential to realize that the Second Coming of Christ cannot occur until all the disasters, plagues, and signs written in the Book of Revelation have taken place. Below is a brief list of some examples from the Book of Revelation that will happen before the Second Coming of Christ:

Revelation	What Happens?
6:2	The Antichrist goes out to conquer.
6:4	A great warfare that will make individuals kill one another.

<b>Revelation</b>	<b>What Happens?</b>
<i>6:5-6</i>	Great famine ensues.
<i>6:8</i>	A fourth of the Earth's population dies from hunger, war, death, and wild animals.
<i>6:9</i>	Persecution and martyrdom of Christians.
<i>6:12</i>	Severe earthquakes, the sun turns black, the moon becomes like blood, and stars fall to Earth.
<i>6:14</i>	Mountains and islands are moved from their places.
<i>7:3</i>	144,000 from Israel are sealed.
<i>8:7</i>	A third of all trees and greenery are burned.
<i>8:8-9</i>	A third of the sea becomes like blood, and a third of sea creatures die.
<i>8:10-11</i>	A third of rivers' waters become bitter.
<i>8:12</i>	A third of the day and night lose their light.
<i>9:3</i>	Demonic locust-like creatures torment people.
<i>9:6</i>	People will seek death but not find it.
<i>9:13-19</i>	A massive war from the east that will result in many casualties.
<i>11:1</i>	A temple in Jerusalem.
<i>11:3</i>	Two witnesses in Jerusalem with power over water and the ability to bring plagues.
<i>11:7</i>	The Antichrist kills the two witnesses.
<i>11:10</i>	People celebrate the death of the two witnesses.
<i>11:11-12</i>	The two witnesses resurrect and ascend to heaven.
<i>11:13</i>	A massive earthquake in Jerusalem led to the death of seven thousand people.
<i>12:14</i>	Israel flees to the wilderness and is protected by God.
<i>13:3</i>	The Antichrist's deadly wound is healed.
<i>13:7</i>	The Antichrist becomes a ruler over the Earth.
<i>13:13</i>	The false prophet performs miracles, including calling fire from heaven.

<b>Revelation</b>	<b>What Happens?</b>
<i>13:14</i>	The mark of the beast is introduced and required for buying and selling.
<i>16:2</i>	Those with the mark of the beast develop painful sores.
<i>16:3-4</i>	All the seas and rivers turn to blood, and sea creatures die.
<i>16:8</i>	Intense heat from the sun.
<i>16:10</i>	The kingdom of the Antichrist is darkened.
<i>16:12</i>	The Euphrates River dries up.
<i>16:14</i>	Deception of nations for a great war.
<i>16:18-21</i>	Another great earthquake - Babylon divided into three parts, and islands and mountains disappeared.
<i>16:21</i>	Great hailstones of a talent pound heavy fall on the people.
<i>18:8</i>	Judgment upon Babylon - death, mourning, hunger, and fire.
<i>19:11-21</i>	A massive war with the arrival of Jesus. The preparations for this war occur before His return.

After all these wonders, signs, plagues, and devastations, the Lord Jesus will return. These events have never occurred before, and many of these judgments happen worldwide. The Second Coming of Jesus takes place after all these prophecies are fulfilled.

## **Time Indicators**

The Second Coming of Jesus can be calculated. When the Antichrist appears and strengthens the covenant with the world, the Lord Jesus will return seven years after this event. Three years and seven months before His return, a great abomination will be introduced in the temple of Jerusalem, and the regular sacrifices in the temple will cease. Every believer can then count down to the return of Christ. The following Bible verses speak of a week lasting seven years.

*"Then he (the Antichrist) shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate." (Daniel 9:27)*

*"And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days." (Daniel 12:11)*

The following Bible verse speaks about the people of Israel. In the second half of the seven years, Israel will flee to the wilderness, and the Antichrist will do everything in his power to destroy them. He will have three and a half years to do so. After his destruction, the end will come, and Jesus will return.

*"And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?" Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished." (Daniel 12:6-7)*

The Second Coming of Christ can be calculated, allowing anyone with biblical knowledge to know the time of His return. The only events we need to wait for to begin the countdown to His return are the Rapture of the Church and the establishment of a strong covenant by the Antichrist. Additionally, significant disasters and adversities will occur before the Second Coming, serving as reminders to future believers of the Book of Revelation and the imminent return of Jesus to Earth.



## Other Signs of the Second Coming

For the purposes of this book, it's beyond our scope to cover all the signs and prophecies that must occur before the Second Coming of Christ. The Bible is filled with prophecies about the day of the Lord, which begins with the Rapture of the Church. However, we will discuss a few important signs.

### The Coming of Elijah

*"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes." (Malachi 4:5, ESV)*

Before the Second Coming of Christ, He will send the prophet Elijah. Perhaps prophet Elijah will be one of the two witnesses. The Second Coming cannot take place until Elijah has paved the way for Christ. This pattern was used during Jesus' first coming. John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus, and the same pattern will reoccur in the future. Instead of John, Elijah will be the forerunner of Jesus. John and Elijah share similarities, but John was not the complete fulfillment of this verse from Malachi. John operated in the spirit of Elijah but was not the person of Elijah. John explicitly stated that he was not Elijah, as they expected.

*"And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." (John 1:19-23, ESV)*

In this text, John stated that he was not Elijah. However, in the following text, the Lord Jesus revealed that John operated in the spirit and power of Elijah.

*"And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."*  
(Luke 1:17, ESV)

Prophet Elijah will appear before the Second Coming of Christ and before the great and awesome day of the Lord. While John was a type of Elijah, they were not the same person.

### **The Man of Lawlessness Arises**

*"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)*

Before Jesus returns, the man of lawlessness must arise, and there must be a falling away within the church. If the Antichrist has not yet risen, Jesus cannot return to Earth to overcome them. Before Jesus returns, the Antichrist will be revealed. He is not a hidden ruler but a known figure who demands worship from the people. Those who refuse to worship him are even put to death. The Antichrist seeks to claim all power on Earth.

*"And he (the false prophet) deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast (the Antichrist), telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived." (Revelation 13:14)*

Additionally, the Antichrist will present himself as God in the temple of Jerusalem, demanding worship from the people. Everyone will see him and everyone must worship him. The Antichrist is not afraid to seek publicity, and he is a physical person who will appear during the Great Tribulation.

### **The Sign in Matthew**

*"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:29-30)*

Immediately after the Great Tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will lose its light. This is when the sign of the Lord Jesus will be revealed, and He will appear with great power and glory. It is unknown what the sign of the Lord Jesus will be. In the early church, it was said to be a sign of the cross. Others suggest it could be a bright light or a throne. Regardless of the sign, it will be visible to all nations and tribes on Earth, and people will be aware of His return to judge the Earth. The Second Coming of Christ will not be hidden but visible to everyone, not only to the people of Israel and believers but also to unbelievers.

*"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matthew 24:27)*

### **The Temple**

The Book of Revelation speaks of an earthly temple in Jerusalem. This temple has not yet been built to this day, but it is still to come. At least three and half years before the Second Coming, the temple will be built in Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles for forty-two months before Jesus returns.

*"Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months." (Revelation 11:1-2)*

The temple will be built before the Second Coming. The temple doesn't need to exist before the Rapture of the Church, but it could happen.

## **Summary**

The Rapture of the Church can happen at any moment, but the Second Coming cannot. Before the Second Coming, various prophecies must be fulfilled. This includes the Rapture, the Great Tribulation, the appearance of Elijah, and the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. Many prophecies must be fulfilled before Jesus appears on the Mount of Olives. In this chapter, we examined the prophecies found in the Book of Revelation.

## 13 THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

In previous chapters, we explored the return of Christ. In this chapter, we will study what will happen after His return and what believers will be doing during that time.

In the world, there are different countries, and some are more conducive to live in than others. In one country, the government is seen as a servant of the people; in another, the people are considered servants of the government. I am grateful to God that I live in the Netherlands, where I can freely practice my Christian faith. However, every government has flaws and enacts ungodly laws, which seems to deteriorate with each passing year. This leads us to wonder, 'Will there ever be a government that is absolutely godly, good, righteous, and just?' During the Great Tribulation, many believed that the world government would be perfectly ruled by the Antichrist. However, appearances can be deceiving: the Antichrist will be worse than any world leader we have seen to date. After the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation, a righteous and perfect kingdom will be established. Even the animals will no longer harm each other. The King of this kingdom has been on Earth before, demonstrating His great love for humanity. He loved humanity so much that He died for them on the cross. This King did not remain dead but rose from the dead. Ultimately, He will return and establish a kingdom known as the Thousand-Year Reign. That King is the Lord Jesus.

In this chapter, we will examine the key aspects of the Thousand-Year Reign. Many Bible verses from the old and new testaments speak of this time, and we will examine these verses to understand Jesus' reign and its impact on the Earth and its inhabitants. The Thousand-Year Reign will occur after the Great Tribulation and is a literal kingdom on Earth. From the multitude of verses, we can ascertain that the Thousand-Year Reign is not a symbolic or spiritual representation that has already happened or is presently happening.

## Jesus Reigns on Earth

As revealed in the scripture, the Lord Jesus will rule on Earth. Finally, a righteous King will reign. Today, the Lord Jesus is exalted above all powers and authorities (Colossians 2:10). During the Thousand-Year Reign, Jesus will physically rule on Earth and dwell amongst His people. The Lord Jesus is associated with King David in the following passages because God made a promise to King David that his kingdom would endure forever, and a descendant of David would always sit on his throne (2 Samuel 7:16). The Lord Jesus is a descendant of David, which allows Him to sit on the throne of David forever and rule over Israel and all nations.

*"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:31-33)*

*"And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse (Jesus Christ), Who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious." (Isaiah 11:10)*

*"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,' says the LORD. 'Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you." (Zechariah 2:10-11)*

*"For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet." (1 Corinthians 15:25)*

*"Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will raise to David a BRANCH of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper,*

*and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth." (Jeremiah 23:5)*

*"But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them." (Jeremiah 30:9)*

*"Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days." (Hosea 3:5)*

## **His Followers Reign with Jesus on Earth**

The Lord Jesus will not reign alone during the Thousand-Year Reign. The believers will also reign with Him. It's almost unimaginable that we get to reign with the Lord during the Thousand-Year Reign, but the Bible is filled with verses that affirm this privilege. We serve a gracious and loving God! Believers will be resurrected, enabling them to reign alongside Him. Paul wrote about the resurrection of believers in 1 Corinthians:

*"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming." (1 Corinthians 15:22-23)*

When will the followers of Christ be resurrected from the dead? At the coming of Christ, also known as the Rapture of the Church! Those who come to faith during the Great Tribulation will be raised to life after the tribulation. Together, we will reign with Christ. The following verses establish the truth about our reign with Christ.

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their*

*foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4)*

*"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" (1 Corinthians 6:2)*

*"You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed, I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!" (1 Corinthians 4:8)*

In the previous text, Paul criticized the church in Corinth. He stated that the church acted as if everything had already been accomplished and they had reached the pinnacle. Paul sarcastically said, "*You are already kings! And would to God you did reign so that we might also reign with you.*" Paul did not say, "*You cannot become kings at all,*" but rather, "*Would that you were kings, for then we would also be kings with you.*" This event will take place during the Millennial Reign.

*"If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us." (2 Timothy 2:12)*

*"But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever." (Daniel 7:18)*

*"Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." (Daniel 7:27)*

The twelve apostles of Jesus will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel. This will be their reward for following Jesus and proclaiming His Word to the people. Almost all the apostles were martyred, meaning



they were brutally killed for their faith in Jesus. Nevertheless, they will live during the Millennial Reign and lead the people of Israel.

*"Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore, what shall we have?" So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matthew 19:27-28)*

## **The Devil is Locked Away for a Thousand Years**

People are continuously deceived and misled by the devil. The devil even attempted to deceive Jesus in the wilderness but failed (Matthew 4:1-11). The devil seeks to ensnare and destroy as many believers as possible.

*"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)*

During the Millennial Reign, for the first time, humanity will no longer be subject to the deception and lies of the devil because he will be locked away for a thousand years.

*"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while." (Revelation 20:1-3)*

Finally, humanity will find rest and be free from the deception of the devil. Does this mean that people will no longer commit wrongdoings during the Millennial Reign?

*"The LORD within her is righteous; He does no injustice; every morning He shows forth His justice; each dawn He does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame." (Zephaniah 3:5, ESV)*

*"Every morning I will destroy all the wicked of the land, so as to cut off from the city of the LORD all those who do iniquity." (Psalm 101:8, ESV)*

*"No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed." (Isaiah 65:20, ESV)*

Unfortunately, people will continue to sin during the Millennial Reign. Many will reject the supremacy of God. In this current dispensation, they might say, "We don't know God, so it's not fair," but during the Millennial Reign, it will become clear that many people intentionally refuse to serve God, even when He reveals Himself to the world. God gives every person a choice, and everyone can choose whether they want to spend eternity with God or live in separation in *Gehenna* (Hell). Is this disobedience only related to individuals or entire nations? Unfortunately, it involves both individuals and nations. We'll briefly examine this in the subsequent pages of this book. Below is a Bible verse that reveals the punishment of the nation:

*"And it shall come to pass that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles." (Zechariah 14:17-19)*

## People live on Earth

In the kingdom of peace, people live on Earth. For now, I'm not referring to the born-again Christians who have been revived; I'm talking about ordinary people, like those we see today. I mean those who are born of women and have not yet received glorified bodies. These ordinary people will enjoy greater blessings than the people of today, and no one will doubt the existence of Jesus Christ, as He will dwell on Earth. Here is an overview of the circumstances surrounding people on Earth.

1. They will live for a thousand years. The aging process will be slowed down, making a hundred-year-old person considered young.

*"No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, (...) For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, (...)" (Isaiah 65:20-22)*

2. People will obey the Lord Jesus. The following texts demonstrate that this obedience is not always with joy; some will approach Him in fear and trembling. Nevertheless, they will listen to Him and live in obedience.

*"They shall lick the dust like a serpent; they shall crawl from their holes like snakes of the earth. They shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of You." (Micah 7:17)*

*"You have delivered me from the contentions of the people; You have made me the head of the nations; a people I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me; the foreigners shall submit to me." (Psalm 18:44-45)*

The previous Psalm primarily spoke about David's kingship. This Psalm has a historical context, but simultaneously, the Bible often

operates prophetically. This means that some Old Testament texts contain historical occurrences and future fulfillment (Hebrews 8:5). Many stories and prophecies were fulfilled by the first coming of the Lord Jesus, and this Psalm points to His Second Coming during the Millennial reign. The nations will obey the Lord Jesus, even though they may pretend to submit. In other words, they will act as if they are obedient.

*"Say to God, "How awesome are Your works! Through the greatness of Your power, Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.""* (Psalm 66:3)

3. The People will come to Jerusalem to be instructed by the Word of God and to celebrate. Thankfully, there will be people in the Millennial reign who genuinely desire to obey the Lord Jesus, learn about Him, and see His glory.

*"Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."* (Isaiah 2:3)

*"It shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles."* (Zechariah 14:16)

*"Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." (Isaiah 60:1-3)*

*"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9)*

4. People will no longer engage in warfare and conflict. In the Millennial reign, there will be a thousand years of peace. Today, we see many weapons, wars, and terrorism around us, causing severe pain and suffering. How hopeful are the words that there will be no more war and nations will not know weapons?

*"He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4)*

*"(...) I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her New Moons, her Sabbaths—all her appointed feasts." (Hosea 2:11)*

5. The idolatry in the land disappears. People no longer call upon their idols (Including Baal) but upon the true God.

*"Therefore by this the iniquity of Jacob will be covered; and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin: when he makes all the stones of the altars like chalkstones that are beaten to dust—wooden images and incense altars shall not stand." (Isaiah 27:9)*

*""It shall be, in that day," says the LORD, "That you will call Me "My Husband," and no longer call Me "My Master," for I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered by their name no more."" (Hosea 2:15-16)*

The inhabitants of the Earth will call upon the true God, the God of Israel, and He will answer their call.

*"It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear." (Isaiah 65:24)*

6. People who ascend to Jerusalem will be reminded of God's judgments during the Great Tribulation. God will use feasts and remembrance points so that humanity doesn't forget what He has done. This will also occur in the Millennial Reign.

*"And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." (Isaiah 66:24)*

7. There will still be sorrow in the Millennium reign. Even though people will live for a thousand years and everything on Earth will be restored, sad events will still occur. For example, the memories of the Great Tribulation and the terrible times people endured. God promises that He will wipe away every tear from all faces. Certainly, no one is better at comforting than God.

*"He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken." (Isaiah 25:8)*

8. But the wicked and those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus will remain dead and gone during the Millennial reign. They await the Great White Throne, which comes after the Millennium.

*"But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." (Revelation 20:5)*

After the Millennium, they will rise to be judged according to their deeds (Revelation 20:12). It will be a terrible punishment, and no one

will escape it. Only those whose names are written in the Book of Life, the followers of Jesus, will escape the punishment.

*"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." (John 5:28-29)*

## **Israel and Jerusalem Will Be Restored**

Israel was chosen by God to be His people, and in the blessing of Israel, all other nations will be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). This blessing has already been poured out upon the nations that bless Israel, but it will be more evident during the Millennial Reign. It is crucial to bless the nation of Israel and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. During Jesus' first coming, He mourned over Jerusalem. He found it distressing that Jerusalem would be destroyed (Which happened in the past) (Luke 19:41-44). However, Jerusalem will be restored to its glory and become the capital of the world. The following events will happen to Israel and Jerusalem:

1. Jerusalem will be rebuilt. In today's world, Jerusalem exists and is a beautiful city with tourist attractions. During the Millennial Reign, Jerusalem will shine even more, and it is compared to Eden and the Garden of the LORD by the prophet Isaiah. Jerusalem has been partially restored today, but the best is yet to come.

*"For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." (Isaiah 51:3)*

*"For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell there and possess it." (Psalm 69:36)*

*"The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel." (Psalm 147:2)*

2. The pain and shame will be removed from Israel. For example, the shame they will feel when they realize they rejected the Messiah. God will take away that shame and dwell with them in the land of Israel. Israel will be a place of joy and eternal glory.

*"He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken." (Isaiah 25:8)*

*"A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." (Luke 2:32)*

*"Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs." (Isaiah 61:7)*

3. Israel and Jerusalem will become the center of the Earth, and Jerusalem will serve as the world's capital.

*"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; (...) For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; (...) And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—" (Micah 4:1-7)*



*"Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in My wrath I struck you, but in My favor I have had mercy on you. Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night, that men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, and their kings in procession. For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined." (Isaiah 60:10-12)*

4. The Temple will be rebuilt. The Lord Jesus will return to Earth and dwell amongst His people. In other words, from a human perspective, the Lord Jesus will need a place to dwell. In the Old Testament, God dwelt in the tabernacle and later in the temple. From the day of Pentecost onward, God, in the form of the Holy Spirit, dwelt in humans, making our bodies the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). During the Millennial Reign, the temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt. There will likely be another temple in Jerusalem during the Great Tribulation.

*"Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place, He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the LORD; yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne." (Zechariah 6:12-13)*

*"I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore." (Ezekiel 37:26-28)*

The Ark of the Covenant, upon which the glory of God rested in the Old Testament, will no longer be there. People won't even think about

the Ark because the Lord Jesus will physically dwell among them, rendering the Ark unnecessary.

*"Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days,' says the LORD, 'that they will say no more, "The ark of the covenant of the LORD." It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore. At that time Jerusalem shall be called the Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts." (Jeremiah 3:16-17)*

Furthermore, temple services and sacrifices will be reinstated, as revealed by the prophet Ezekiel. To get an idea of what the temple will look like and what will happen in the temple, you can read the Book of Ezekiel 40- 48. On the one hand, it seems strange that sacrifices are resumed since the Lord Jesus has once and for all made atonement with His blood between humans and God. On the other hand, God prefers to work through memorials and feasts so that the temple, with its sacrificial activities, will be moments for people to remember what the Lord Jesus has done. Just as the Israelites did this in the past to know that the Messiah will come to bring reconciliation in the future, they will do this in the Millennial Reign to remember that the Messiah has come to bring reconciliation.

Finally, the heavenly temple was mentioned. This temple is currently in heaven, where an altar and a throne are also located. When Moses built the tabernacle, he did so based on a vision of the heavenly temple/tabernacle. This heavenly temple/tabernacle symbolizes the Lord Jesus and serves as a representation of Him. Perhaps the temple during the Millennial Reign will also depict the Lord Jesus and serve as a representation of Him.

5. Israel will forever dwell in its own land. Israel will not be attacked due to world peace, and the Jews will live safely in their land.

*"Also your people shall all be righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified." (Isaiah 60:21)*

## **The Earth Is Restored**

Currently, we live in a fallen world; this is evident from the terrible things individuals engage in, such as wars, shootings, violence, corruption, and deceit. The entire creation has also fallen due to the sin of Adam and Eve. Animals attack other animals and humans, and some animals are venomous, causing harm or death with a single bite. During the Millennial Reign, the creation will be restored, and the animal world will no longer harm each other.

*"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den." (Isaiah 11:6-8)*

*"The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," says the LORD." (Isaiah 65:25)*

Besides the animal kingdom, God will resolve our climate crisis. Recently, there has been growing awareness among humans about the need to preserve the climate. This has led to the sustainability of energy sources, and we see more solar panels and wind turbines. While environmental consciousness and responsible stewardship of nature are commendable, humans will not succeed in solving the climate crisis by their own ability. Amazingly, God will resolve these challenges during the Millennial Reign, allowing the Earth to be restored.

*"The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." (Isaiah 35:1)*

*"I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia tree, the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine and the box tree together, that they may see and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it." (Isaiah 41:18-20)*

*"For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD. (...)" (Isaiah 51:3)*

## **The End of the Millennial Reign**

The above passages are indeed beautiful, and you might think that it can't get any better. However, the Millennial Reign will come to an end, a decision made by God. Don't worry! Something even better is coming! But first, a few significant events will occur before the new era begins.

1. The devil will be imprisoned for a thousand years before the Millennial Reign. God has decided that after the Millennial Reign, he will be released from his captivity for a short time. After his release, the devil immediately does what he does best: he deceives people.

*"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea." (Revelation 20:7-8)*

The devil manages to deceive many people. *'Whose number is as the sand of the sea'* indicates that this is an innumerable multitude of people. It's sad to see that humans allow themselves to be deceived so easily. For a thousand years, they lived together with God, and yet they let themselves be deceived by the devil into waging war. Most people weren't even exposed to war and weapons, since there have been a thousand years of peace. You may ask, why does God release the devil when He knows that he will wage war against Him? During the Millennial Reign, people outwardly obey God and the Lord Jesus, but their obedience is often superficial. In reality, they don't want to obey God. God wants to give everyone a choice: Will you choose me or not? Even the people living in the Millennial Reign will face this choice. Will they listen to God or the devil? Adam and Eve chose the devil at the beginning of creation. You would think that humanity has learned some lessons from history and life with God, but that is far from the truth. Many choose the devil and go to war, which is addressed in the next point.

2. There will be a final war waged against God, the Lord Jesus, and His saints. As stated earlier, the inhabitants of the Earth let themselves be deceived and believed they could defeat God. Let's read what will happen. Will it be a neck-and-neck race?

*"They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." (Revelation 20:9)*

Indeed, fire comes down from God to Earth and devours them. God is infinitely more powerful than humans and the devil. He has triumphed, and every inhabitant of Earth has decided to live with God or without Him.

3. The devil will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone as an eternal punishment. I cannot imagine what hell looks like. The Bible

speaks of the devil and the false prophet being tormented day and night in a fire that never goes out (Mark 9:43-44). It will not be a pleasant place to be, let alone an eternal destination for the devil and his followers.

*"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (Revelation 20:10)*

4. Before the New Heaven and New Earth are created, there will be a final judgment. Believers will not be subject to this judgment. This judgment will solely involve the dead, those who have remained spiritually dead or refused to believe in God and His Son. They will receive a fair judgment from the Lord Jesus, but there is no one who earns acquittal through their own deeds. Everyone who appears before this judgment will be lost, and there is no turning back. Before the judgment is pronounced, the earth and the heavens will pass away and disappear.

*"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:11-15)*

Every dead person will be judged and cast into the lake of fire. This is the same place where the devil and his cohorts are cast, and it is an eternal abode of pain and regret. The only ones who escape this fate

are those whose names are written in the Book of Life. These are the followers of Jesus. Thankfully, by the sacrifice of Jesus, they are not cast into the lake of fire but will partake in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

## **Summary**

The Millennial Reign is a physical kingdom on Earth. During this reign, the Lord Jesus rules alongside His followers on Earth, and the devil is imprisoned and unable to deceive people. The people in this kingdom are more blessed than us, living for a thousand years without war. Additionally, the natural world and the animal kingdom will be restored. While Israel and Jerusalem will become the center of the Earth. This reign will end when God releases the devil, who then deceives the inhabitants of the Earth. They wage war against God, and He destroys them with fire. While the unbelievers are cast into hell, the believers enter eternity with God.

## 14 RAPTURE VS SECOND COMING

This book reveals that the Rapture of the Church will occur before the Second Coming of Christ. The period between these two events is known as the Great Tribulation. If the Rapture and the Second Coming are two distinct events, we should be able to discern differences between them in the Bible. This chapter explores these differences. Despite the differences, there are also similarities between these events. In both events, Jesus plays a central role, and references to clouds are made in the texts concerning both the Rapture and the Second Coming.

### **Difference 1: (Un)expected**

In Chapter 8, we read that the Rapture of the Church can happen at any moment. Jesus says that He is coming quickly, and no one knows the day or the hour. The Rapture could even happen today.

*"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. (Mark 13:32-33)*

Even the apostle Paul believed he would belong to the generation that would experience the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 4:17). This means that the Rapture can occur at any moment, and no prophecy needs to be fulfilled before the Rapture takes place.

No one knows when Jesus will come to take us. No man on Earth knows, Jesus doesn't know, and the angels don't know. Mark 13 speaks about the Rapture. The Second Coming is not an unexpected event. Anyone with knowledge of the Bible can precisely calculate when Jesus will return, as discussed in Chapter 12. This can't be done currently because the Rapture of the Church and the revelation of the Antichrist must first come to pass. Once the Antichrist strengthens the covenant, it will be seven years until Jesus returns.



Based on the signs in Revelation, everyone will know that Jesus is coming soon, even unbelievers.

*"And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'" (Revelation 6:15-17)*

## **Difference 2: Hidden and Manifest**

The Rapture of the Church is a mystery. It's a secret coming of Jesus, and only His followers will see Him. Jesus will rapture His followers to protect them from the Great Tribulation and to take His bride.

*"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)*

The Rapture will take place in the blink of an eye. No one on Earth can see Jesus, and no one will know that Jesus is in the air. No man will see believers being caught up to the Father's house of God.

*"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:52)*

The emphasis of the Rapture of the Church is the meeting of Jesus with His followers. It is a joyous event where there is no mention of

wrath or anger. This verse doesn't mention unbelievers; they are left behind and don't realize that Jesus has returned to take the believers.

During the Second Coming, Jesus will return to Earth, and all people will see Him appear. Jesus doesn't come for the believers; He comes to put an end to the reign of the wicked on Earth. Rather than the Bridegroom coming for His bride, it is the King and Warrior who will establish His kingdom on Earth. Everyone will see Him appear; it won't be an event that lasts less than a second.

*"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen." (Revelation 1:7)*

*"And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him (Jesus) who sat on the horse and against His army." (Revelation 19:19)*

### **Difference 3: Destination**

During the Rapture of the Church, Jesus comes to take us to the Father's house in heaven. Our destination is in heaven.

*"Let not your heart be troubled; you 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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:1-3)*

The Lord Jesus spoke very clearly about the Rapture of the Church. He states that in heaven, He is preparing a place for the believers in the Father's house of God. When He is finished, He will return to take the believers with Him so that they will abide with Him. The Lord Jesus does not return to Earth; instead, He meets us in the air (1 Thesalonians 1:10). During the Rapture, believers ascend into the air and are taken up into heaven.

During the Second Coming, the Lord Jesus does not take people to heaven, or return to the Father's house. The Lord Jesus sets His feet on Earth, and believers follow Him. For seven years, believers will be in heaven, and afterward, we all return to Earth to reign with the Lord Jesus.

*"And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south." (Zechariah 14:4)*

During the Second Coming, the Lord Jesus returns to Earth and stands on the Mount of Olives. He then reigns for a thousand years from Jerusalem.

#### **Difference 4: Taken or Left Behind**

This difference can be divided into two aspects: who gathers or takes people from the Earth, and who is taken and who is left behind.

During the Rapture of the Church, the Lord Jesus will command all His followers to rise into the air to meet Him. This is not done by an angel or a messenger but by the Lord Jesus Himself.

*"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)*

During the Second Coming, the Lord Jesus will not instruct the believers to be caught up in the air. Instead, He sends His angels to gather the chosen ones. It is not mentioned in the scripture that these

followers are gathered in the air. They likely remain on Earth because the Lord Jesus is on Earth.

*"And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:31)*

*"Then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of the earth to the farthest part of heaven." (Mark 13:27)*

Moreover, there is a distinction between those who will be raptured and those who remain on Earth. During the Rapture, followers of Jesus will leave the Earth (John 14:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), while the ungodly remain. During the Second Coming, the ungodly nations and people will leave the Earth, and the righteous nations and people will remain. We discussed this in Chapter 11. The kingdom spoken about in the following Bible text is the Millennial Reign that takes place on Earth.

*"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (...) Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."" (Matthew 25:31-41)*

## **Difference 5: The Timing**

The Rapture and the Second Coming consist of different components that occur sequentially. There are differences in the order of events

that take place. During the Rapture of the Church, believers will receive glorified bodies during His call, and then the Rapture occurs.

*"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)*

During the Rapture, the dead in Christ will rise first, followed by the living believers who are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. In contrast, during the Second Coming, the sequence is reversed. First, the Lord Jesus returns to Earth, and then the resurrection of the dead occurs. It is possible that the resurrection of the dead takes place hours or even days later; it does not happen instantly upon His return.

*"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He (Jesus) who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war." (Revelation 19:11)*

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4)*

Revelation 20:4 can only refer to the dead in Christ who died during the Great Tribulation. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that it is stated in the text and also because the order of events differs from the Rapture.

Another difference in timing is that the Rapture occurs before the Great Tribulation, while the Second Coming takes place after the

Great Tribulation. The following verses show that the Rapture takes place before the Great Tribulation.

*"And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." (1 Thessalonians 1:10)*

*"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." (Revelation 3:10)*

The Rapture occurs before the Great Tribulation, the outpour of God's wrath, and the hour of trial, while the Second Coming takes place after the Great Tribulation.

*"Immediately after the tribulation of those days (...) the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:29-30)*

## **Other Differences**

### **Blessing or Judgment**

The Rapture is a moment of great joy and celebration. It is a moment when Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, welcomes His bride. It's understandable that the texts about the Rapture do not speak of judgment. Some Rapture texts even speak of believers escaping the judgment and wrath of God. In contrast, the texts about the Second Coming do mention various judgments. For example, Matthew 25 revealed the judgment of the nations, and in Revelation 19, the Lord Jesus revealed the judgment of the Antichrist and his followers.

## Changes on Earth

During the Rapture of the Church, no notable changes will occur on Earth. There is no mention of earthquakes, falling stars, or other topographical changes. However, during the Second Coming, significant events occur on Earth, as indicated in the following Bible passage:

*"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." (Matthew 24:29)*

In addition to signs in the heavens, remarkable events also take place on Earth. The Mount of Olives splits in two, creating a great valley.

*"And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south." (Zechariah 14:4)*

The Second Coming has consequences for nature and topography, which the Rapture does not.

## Other Arguments

The Rapture and the Second Coming have many differences. If they were the same event, important details would not be mentioned during the Second Coming as they are in God's Word. This implies that the Rapture and the Second Coming must occur at different times.

## The Rapture in the Air

The Rapture in the air is not mentioned in the key verses about the Second Coming. When we examine Revelation 19, which describes the Lord Jesus returning to Earth, there is no mention of the Rapture

taking place. This is noteworthy because this is one of the most significant prophecies yet to be fulfilled.

### **No Resurrection**

The scriptures that speak of the Second Coming do not mention the resurrection of the dead in Christ, which is a major event occurring during the Lord Jesus' return (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This implies that the resurrection of the dead in Christ must take place at a different time. This point was earlier discussed in 'Difference 5'.

### **The Rapture Mentioned in Revelation**

Initially, the Book of Revelation speaks about the Great Tribulation and the return of Christ. However, there are two instances in this book where the Rapture could be implied. In Revelation 2 and 3, John wrote letters to the seven churches on Earth. After this, an event will take place after the Church Age but before the Great Tribulation with all its judgments and wrath.

*"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." (Revelation 4:1)*

I believe this text is not a direct proof of Rapture before the Great Tribulation. However, it may contain an indirect reference to the Rapture, and this might be a hidden image of the Rapture.

The representation of the Rapture of the Church can be found in Revelation 12, which describes the woman in labor, the male child, and the dragon. I envision the Rapture of the Church in this image, as discussed in Chapter 3. Two examples in the Book of Revelation could speak of the Rapture, even though it is not clearly mentioned in the chapter that discusses Christ's return. This suggests that the Rapture occurs at a different time.



### **The Church was not mentioned after Revelation 3**

In the Book of Revelation, John initially wrote to the churches on Earth. After Revelation 3, the church was no longer mentioned, and John refers to "Those who dwell on the Earth." This happened after John saw an open door in heaven and experienced a spiritual transition. It is remarkable that during the most dreadful period on Earth, Jesus did not provide any encouragement or guidance to the church. This can only happen if the Rapture of the Church occurs before the tribulation and is not the same as the Second Coming after the tribulation.

Furthermore, in Revelation 19, when Jesus returns to Earth, there is no mention of believers waiting for Him on Earth and anticipating Him as the Bridegroom. The tone in Revelation 19 is one of war, with Jesus coming as King and Warrior, whereas we should be expecting Him as our Savior.

*"while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13, NIV)*

If the Rapture and the Second Coming were to occur simultaneously, shouldn't John in the Book of Revelation be more focused on the church? He would explain how the church should endure this difficult time and how the Second Coming is the moment when the church will be rescued from the ungodly. After Chapter 3, John no longer mentions the church on Earth. This is because the Rapture has already taken place before the Great Tribulation.

### **Summary**

The Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Jesus are different events. In this chapter, we've examined the differences, indicating that the Rapture and the Second Coming are not the same events. These are two distinct events that cannot be reconciled with each other. In this chapter, we've discussed the following differences:

1. The Rapture comes unexpectedly, while the Second Coming can be calculated.
2. The Rapture is a hidden encounter, and at the Second Coming, everyone will see Jesus.
3. The Rapture will happen in the air, and from there, believers ascend to the Father's house. The Second Coming occurs on Earth, with Jesus setting His feet on the Mount of Olives.
4. During the Rapture, Jesus takes believers to heaven, while during the Second Coming, angels gather the chosen ones who remain on Earth. The ungodly will be removed from the Earth.
5. The Rapture occurs before the Great Tribulation, and the Second Coming occurs after the Great Tribulation.
6. During the Rapture, the dead in Christ will rise first, followed by their ascension. During the Second Coming, Jesus will return first, followed by the resurrection of the dead in Christ.
7. The Rapture is a time of blessing and escaping judgment, while the Second Coming is a time of judgment.
8. During the Rapture, there will be no signs in the sky or on Earth, whereas during the Second Coming, there will be significant signs in the heavens, and the Mount of Olives splits.

Finally, we also discussed reasons why the Rapture and the Second Coming cannot occur simultaneously.

## 15 HOW CAN I BE INCLUDED?

Now that we know that the Lord Jesus is coming back, the most critical question we should ask ourselves is, 'How can we be included?' We can ask this question twice. The first time is concerning the Rapture of the Church. How can we be part of the Rapture? The second time is during the Great Tribulation. How can we still become children of God during the Great Tribulation? The answer is simple: have faith and trust in the Lord Jesus and believe in the gospel of God.

### **The Gospel of God**

The Bible speaks of the gospel of God. The word 'Gospel' means good news, but why is it good news, and does it follow bad news?

#### **Bad News**

The Bible states that everyone has sinned. This means that everyone has done ungodly and wrong things. This can range from a mass murderer committing an act of terror to someone stealing a piece of candy from grandma's pantry or telling a lie to their spouse. Everyone has sinned, and as a result, no one can come to God of their own accord (Romans 3:23).

The Bible teaches us that Adam and Eve walked with God. It was perfect, and they had a beautiful relationship with God. However, Adam and Eve chose to act wrongly. They did not obey God, and as a result, their relationship with God was broken. God is so good and holy that anything that is not good and holy in His presence instantly perishes. In other words, it became impossible for Adam and Eve to walk with God, and invariably, it also became impossible for us to walk with God.

Finally, sin has significant consequences. Sin must be condemned, or there is no justice. We see this happening in today's legal system. Murderers, thieves, rapists, and swindlers stand before a judge, and the judge decides the punishment for their offense. Likewise, everyone will stand before the Divine Judge after their death.

Jesus condemns sin, and because both He and God the Father are good and holy, every sin will result in everlasting punishment, filled with pain and sorrow (Romans 6:23 and Revelation 20:11-15).

### **Good News**

Fortunately, the story doesn't end with the previous sentence because God Himself (the Lord Jesus) has provided a solution to atone for the punishment of sin and offer a hopeful future for mankind. In other words, Jesus is both a just and merciful Judge.

The Lord Jesus did the following: He set aside His divinity and came to the world as a human (Philippians 2:6-7). On Earth, the Lord Jesus did everything correctly; He committed no sin (Hebrews 4:15). This means that the Lord Jesus does not deserve punishment and can 'simply' walk with God the Father, as Adam and Eve did in the past. However, the Lord Jesus thought of mankind and decided to bear the punishment for our sins so people would not have to do it themselves. The Lord Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified and died on the cross. At that moment, He bore the punishment for sin (Ephesians 1:7-8). Then, the Lord Jesus rose from the dead and received the authority to decide who would be condemned and who could walk with God. In other words, people no longer have to endure eternal punishment but can walk with God.

### **Your Choice**

However, God gives people the choice to make use of Jesus' sacrifice. Anyone who believes that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God and trusts in the work of the Lord Jesus does not have to bear the punishment for sin (Romans 3:23-27). However, anyone who does not believe in the Lord Jesus is already condemned (John 3:18). God wants no one to be condemned but wants everyone to walk with Him. God says, 'Come!' What will you do? (2 Peter 3:9 and Revelation 22:17)

## **I Want to Follow Jesus!**

The Bible says: *"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved"* (Romans 10:9, NIV). It helps to speak a prayer of faith to God, and I can assist with a sample prayer that you can say aloud:

Heavenly Father,

I have made mistakes, and I have sinned against you. I cannot, by my own strength, be good and come to you. I believe and trust in the work of the Lord Jesus, and I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Will you forgive me for all my mistakes and sins? And will you come to live in me and help me lead a good life? Lord Jesus, teach me to follow and obey you, and thank you for making me a child of the Most High God!

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

If you prayed this with a believing heart, you are now a child of God! It is important to get to know God better and to continue believing in the Lord Jesus. You can do this primarily by reading the Word of God, as it contains stories and texts that describe God and show His acts. Additionally, we worship a living God, which means God wants to speak to you. You can do this in your quiet time. Also, find a nearby church and connect with fellow Christians. They can help you with any questions you have about God and the Bible. You must realize that every follower of Jesus is always on a journey. If you have said the sample prayer, you have begun your beautiful (And sometimes challenging) walk with God here on Earth. It is also important to be baptized.

## **Joining the Rapture of the Church**

I believe that anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus and trusts in Him will be taken up to heaven. I believe that Jesus is coming back for all those who have died in Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16) and all those who are alive in Christ. I do not believe that it is a requirement to

believe in a pre-tribulation Rapture to be taken up. I believe that anyone who is saved according to the Lord Jesus (And thus goes to heaven) also qualifies for the Rapture of the Church. However, I want to emphasize that it is essential to expect the Lord Jesus and remain watchful, as we discussed in Chapter 9 of this book.

I encourage everyone to work as if Jesus will not return during our lifetime, but to expect Him as if He could return today. Do not live a life where you stop your earthly activities and cease your work in God's Kingdom because you believe Jesus is returning within a year. Spend your lifetime treating your colleagues, supervisors, friends, family, brothers, sisters, acquaintances, and the people you encounter with kindness so that we all can be living witnesses of God. Do not be deceived by false Rapture dates or people who have prophecies that are not in line with the Bible. Trust in Jesus, confess your sins, and let us lift up our heads.

*"Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." (Luke 21:28)*

The Rapture of the Church is one of the most beautiful moments in human history. Our Bridegroom is returning to pick up His bride (Believers). Jesus is coming back. And what does His bride say?

*"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!'" (Revelation 22:17)*

My prayer is that, after reading this book, you will say, "Come, Lord Jesus!" The best times are yet to come!

## **Believing During the Great Tribulation**

You might be reading this book after the Rapture has occurred. Know that this period is described in the Bible as the Great Tribulation, and a world ruler will arise who wants to be worshiped by mankind. Do not worship him, and do not participate in his agenda. No matter what

deceptions are proclaimed during that time, I know that the Lord Jesus is still merciful and has all power. The section "The Gospel of God" applies today, and anyone who believes in Him and trusts in Him will be saved. However, I want to share the following points with you.

### **Do Not Take the Mark!**

The Antichrist and the False Prophet will invent a mark that everyone must take. In the Bible, this mark is called the mark of the beast. Perhaps this mark may be named differently by the Antichrist.

*"And it deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which it was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. And he was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666." (Revelation 13:14-18)*

Do not take this mark, no matter how difficult it may be. You would be better off starving to death, facing a sword, an electric chair, or whatever torture might be introduced, than taking the mark. Know that the mark and the reign of the Antichrist will only last for a short time. After seven years, this rule will come to an end. If you take the mark, there will be no reconciliation with God. Nothing will help anymore.

*"Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his*

*forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.* 'Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."  
(Revelation 14:9-13)

Do not worship the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and do not take the mark. The Lord Jesus says, "*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.*" If the Antichrist or his followers kill you because you refuse to take the mark, you will immediately be with God in heaven. Remember this well!

### **Buy a Physical Bible**

Perhaps it is still possible to buy a Bible. Go to a bookstore as soon as possible and buy a Bible. Bibles are likely to be banned. Therefore, having a physical Bible and not relying solely on a Bible app on your phone is crucial. Let these last seven years (Or however short they may be) be a time when you read the Bible extensively. The Book of Revelation precisely describes these events. Let this knowledge encourage and prepare you. Know that Jesus is coming back soon.

### **Reach Out to People**

Try to reach as many people as possible and tell them about the Gospel of God and the warnings mentioned here. Perhaps you can save some from taking the mark and guide them to serve the living God.



**Endure!**

Sincerely, the time you are in is the most challenging time on Earth in the history of humanity. Know that this time will end. Endure and persevere! This terrible time will last for a few years, but the time you will spend with God afterward is eternal. Endure and persevere, for in eternity, you will enjoy the presence of the Lord Jesus and God the Father.

*"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." (Revelation 22:20-21)*

# LIVING GOSPEL

In this chapter, I want to tell you about myself and Living Gospel.

## Who am I?

I am Timo Groot, and I grew up in a Christian family in the Netherlands. From my childhood, I have been attending various evangelical churches, where I have experienced beautiful sermons, powerful testimonies, and the fellowship of dear brothers and sisters. However, the most beautiful thing is that God is at work in the churches through sermons, testimonies, and interactions! In my life, I have encountered and discovered God in various ways.

Presently, I work alone on this ministry and the books. Since the age of eight, I have felt the Holy Spirit drawing me to study the Bible. In that year, I read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation for the first time, and over time, I did so repeatedly. I have a love for God and His Word, and I want to share God's Word with anyone interested. Many who read the book assume I am an older man who has lived a long life. This is not the case. You might find me old, but I was born in 1999. Currently, I do everything voluntarily and have a part-time job alongside my activities for Living Gospel. I have a desire to work full-time for God's Kingdom, and that time will surely come! I want to see the world transformed and flooded with the knowledge and power of God. People need Jesus; many just don't know it yet. With God's power, I want to reach people so that they make a radical choice for Jesus. Additionally, I want to train people to evangelize and walk in God's Kingdom.

At the moment, I create videos on biblical topics and write books on biblical subjects. In these ministries, I see that God's Word is more relevant today than ever, and we have a God of miracles, and God's love extends to all people. I desire to reach people with the Word of God and show them that God is a living God who is active in the lives of believers today, as Mark 16 tells us:

*"And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name, they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mark 16:17-18)*

## **Formation**

Living Gospel was founded in April 2020. Since then, hundreds of thousands of people have been reached by teaching the gospel of God through Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Dutch and English websites. We look forward to the future and what God has in store for you!

You can access Living Gospel through the following channels.

## **Website**

On the website [www.TheLivingGospel.org](http://www.TheLivingGospel.org), you can explore God's Word and see that God's Word is relevant today. On this website, you can watch videos and read Bible studies. When creating the videos and Bible studies, I assume that God's Word is hundred percent inspired by the Holy Spirit, and every Bible verse can be used for learning and to guide us in living a good life. I hope that this website helps you grow in faith and get to know God as He reveals Himself in the Bible. You can also find my books on the website.

## **YouTube**

Living Gospel's videos are available on YouTube. On this channel, I post additional video material that complements the content of the books. You can find my channel at @LivingGospelEN.

## **E-mail**

For questions, comments, or words of encouragement, you can use the email address [info@TheLivingGospel.org](mailto:info@TheLivingGospel.org)

## **Vision, Goals, and Building Together**

Our vision: Living Gospel intends to ensure that you live in God's perfect grace, extend God's grace to those around you, and live in God's perfect will and calling.

Grace: By grace, I mean all of God's graces, including:

- Forgiveness
- Redemption and justified
- Being in Christ
- Intimacy with God
- The baptism and fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Deliverance (Freedom from demonic powers)
- Healing
- Provision and prosperity
- Tongues
- A life in authority.

Perfect Will and Calling: This is God's specific calling and plan for your life. Living Gospel wants to teach and train you to know and carry out God's plan for your life.

If you have been blessed by this (e)book and want to help me reach even more people and equip them with the gospel of God, consider becoming a partner of Living Gospel or making a one-time donation. By becoming a partner, you are making contributions to building God's Kingdom and helping in reaching people with the gospel of God. You can give your (periodic) gift through the following link:

**[www.TheLivingGospel.org/Giving](http://www.TheLivingGospel.org/Giving)**

It is also possible to make a one-time donation. You can do this through the same link. Finally, I want to thank you for reading this book.