
It's easy to make our faith about the here and now only, but the real glory, our real glory, will appear only at His appearing! The Coming of the Lord was and is known throughout the ages as the Blessed Hope (*Titus 2:13*). The appearing of the Lord was the event. I don't know too many people who speak of the appearing of Jesus as their hope. Not really. And to be sure, 2,000 years is quite a delay. But there is a day, fixed by the Father, when Jesus will split the sky and come again. He will most certainly come again!

1 Thessalonians 4

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

I. WE DO NOT GRIEVE AS OTHERS DO

1 Thessalonians 4

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

A. This is not it. This life really is fading...into something more real!

1 Corinthians 15

54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

*“Death is swallowed up in victory.”
55 “O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?”*

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Yesterday we went to Brad Braland's funeral to celebrate his life. This very scripture was the one that Reinhard preached to remind us that Brad's death has been swallowed in victory. He talked about how a bumble bee only has one sting...only one. The sting was all used up on the cross of Calvary. Jesus took the sting. We have no fear. Death does not reign over us. Christ has swallowed up the death by the power of the cross. We do not grieve as others do who have no hope! We have a hope! This life is fading into something even more real.

II. WHEN JESUS COMES, HE'S NOT COMING ALONE

1 Thessalonians 4

14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

- A. When we talk about the coming of the Lord, we have a tendency to leave out a big part of the story... namely, the glorious return of the saints! We were made from the earth, and for the earth. When Jesus comes again, those who have fallen asleep will return with Him!
- B. Death does not separate us from the unfolding drama, the reconciling of heaven and earth. Death can not separate us. Just like during times of sleep we cannot tend to even the pressing matters of the earth, we are indeed alive! Death is comparative. All death means for us is a momentary inability to tend to the matters of the earth...but that's all it is. We are very much alive to the reality of heaven. And when heaven finally begins to descend, to collide into the earth, we shall find ourselves awakened again.
- C. Death cannot separate us from the unfolding mystery of Christ in all and for all. Paul will come. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will return. David will come. Your loved ones, those who have fallen asleep in Christ, will come again. Death cannot separate us from our role and reign!

III. THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPET

- A. In America the rapture has been taught as a way and means for us to avoid persecution and tribulation. This is a great disservice to our nation, and a slap in the face to our brothers and sisters in the faith who are right now enduring great trials for their faith. The rapture has nothing whatsoever to do with rescuing us out of tribulation.

1 Thessalonians 4

16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

- B. Jesus is descending... He's returning to the earth. Depending on where we are, we will either be descending with Him, or ascending to Him. His mission is clear. He is coming to reign as King of all Kings.
- C. If we are in heaven already (if we are asleep), this is what we will see and be part of...

Revelation 11

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." 16 And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying,

*"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
who is and who was,
for you have taken your great power
and begun to reign.*

*18 The nations raged,
but your wrath came,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
and those who fear your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”*

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

D. If we are on the earth, this is what we will see and be part of...

Matthew 24

29 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, 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. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

1 Corinthians 15

51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

E. If you were driven out in exile (from Israel), then this is what you will see and be part of...

Isaiah 27

13 And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

F. This is the coming of the Lord. It is at His coming that we shall put on immortality!

1 Corinthians 15

53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

IV. CLEARING UP CONFUSION

A. One of the greatest points of confusion for the church involves a scripture that is not difficult at all, but which has been twisted to accommodate a new doctrine. The scripture itself is plain, and you will be able to understand it.

Matthew 24

37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39 and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the

Son of Man. 40 Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.

- B. What story is Jesus pointing us to see? In the story of Noah, who was swept away? And who was saved? This story is not about the rapture, rather it is plainly about the righteous being saved through great tribulation. The story of Noah is not about being saved from judgment, but being preserved in the midst of judgment.
- C. Why does this matter? Well, it matters a great deal if you find yourself in need of preservation! And we will! Our brothers and sisters in Christ, stationed and assigned all over the world, are this very moment being saved and preserved in the tribulation and persecution... not from the tribulation. How should we stand with them? How can we be faithful in our prayers for them, our family in the faith? As for me, I will not believe a doctrine that seems to be only for our western hemisphere only... by no means! I will throw in my lot with the rest of the body of Christ. I will not present a doctrine that nullifies their lives and deaths.

V. HISTORY OF PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE THEORY

- A. There is no known writing existing, or referred to by other writers, of the pre-tribulation rapture teaching prior to 1830. None of the early Church fathers or anyone else throughout Church history wrote about the saints being raptured before the end-time Great Tribulation. This does not conclusively mean that the theory is false, only that it is a historical fact that this teaching did not exist among the early Christians or the Church fathers or any Christians throughout history until 1830.
- B. Reportedly the origin of the pre-tribulation rapture teaching was with a fifteen-year-old girl named Margaret MacDonald in the town of Port Glasgow, Scotland. Supposedly in 1830 she had a dream or vision that Christians were raptured just prior to the Great Tribulation. In 1831 or 1832 a Presbyterian pastor in London, England named Edward Irving heard about this dream or vision that Miss MacDonald had and started teaching it to his congregation. These are well-known reports among scholars of eschatology. These reports concerning the origin of the pre-trib rapture theory may or may not be true. What is well-documented is the fact that John Nelson Darby, the founder of a group known as the Plymouth Brethren, after visiting Miss MacDonald began teaching this new theory.
- C. Later, by 1917, C. I. Scofield had published his improved edition of the Scofield Reference Bible which contained the dispensational pre-tribulation teachings of Darby and others. Soon many Bible Colleges such as Moody Bible Institute and seminaries such as Dallas Theological Seminary became staunch promoters of dispensational theology that included the doctrine of a pre-tribulation rapture.
(<http://www.bethelministries.com/pretrib.htm>)

*** The rise in belief in the pre-tribulation rapture is often wrongly attributed to a 15-year old Scottish-Irish girl named Margaret McDonald who was of the first to receive a spiritual baptism under a Pentecostal awakening in Scotland, who in 1830 had a vision of the end times which describes a post-tribulation view of the rapture that was first published in 1840. It was published again in 1861, but two important passages demonstrating a post-tribulation view were removed to encourage confusion concerning the timing of the rapture. The two removed segments were, "This is the fiery trial which is to try us. - It will be for the purging and purifying of the real members of the body of Jesus" and "The trial of the Church is from Antichrist. It is by being filled with the Spirit that we shall be kept". (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture>)*