***Prophecy  
  
The Rapture  
  
The Great Migration - PR07-01***

I thought it would be well if we paused as we look at these highlights of prophecy to take a look at the great migration. Mankind will experience a great and a sudden migration of millions of people into heaven in a moment of time. This is the next event in the order of God's prophetic program. Jesus Christ is coming to take every Christian, dead and alive, back to heaven with him. There are three main passage of Scripture that set this forth. We're going to look at this here--this mass movement of people into heaven and into the presence of God. Not all of humanity will be included in this great migration, of course--only those who are believers.

**The Doctrine of the Imminency of the Return of Christ**

Since the Lord's ascension, every generation of believers has been looking forward to this event--Christ's return at any moment. This is called the Doctrine of the Imminency of the Return of Christ. Imminent means at any moment or at any time. This is the dominant hope of the New Testament. The New Testament itself ends with the words, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Yet today we have a lot of belittling of the idea that God is going to return to this earth in the person of His Son. Over the centuries, 2 Peter 3:4 has told us that scoffers will arise that ask the question, "Where is this coming? Everything is going on just like it always did. What makes you think that things are going to be changed?"

The liberal churchmen today declare that the apostle Paul was mistaken. He was rather naive on the matter that Jesus Christ would come back to this earth. Conservative Christianity often will interpose other events and say, "Yes, the rapture is coming, the catching away of the church is coming, but first this, this, and this must take place. The Bible gives us several signs of things which must take place before the tribulation begins. However, it does not give us any signs of what must take place before the rapture occurs. That is an any-moment event which can happen before you have finished reading this document.

Most religious leaders today simply ignore the revelation concerning the mass migration into heaven. The Bible warns us that there will be a period preceding the catching away of the church to be with the Lord which will be one of agonizing crises and of collapse of all moral standards here on earth. A showdown with evil is upon us today. The stability and the rewards of every believer are at stake.

**2 Timothy 3**

In 2 Timothy 3:1, the apostle Paul is writing to his young associate Timothy, and giving him some guidance concerning the last days of Christianity on the earth. Paul says, "This know also that in the last days, perilous time shall come." The expression "this know" stresses that something important, never to be forgotten, is to be said. This is the word for "know" in the Greek language which means to know this thing as a result of your experience--not something you just have as mental knowledge, but something that you use in experience, and thereby you come to know it in such a way that you act upon it. "The last days" have reference here by this context particularly to those days immediately preceding the return of Jesus Christ to take the church out of this world.

1 John 2:18 calls this whole dispensation "the last time." "The last days" is a particular reference to the final days of this dispensation. Timothy was to be on guard even in his day for these things. The occurrence of perilous times is to be upon, in a particular way, some generation of believers.

Now the word for "times" means a season occurring periodically. You may think of it like a wave that comes up on the beach. It hits, recedes, and hits again, and increasingly mounts. Every time the wave comes in, it's a little bigger than it was before. "Perilous" means these will be times which will be hard to bear and very dangerous. This is the very word which is used concerning the two demoniacs at Gadarenes in Matthew 8:28. It says that they were "exceedingly fierce." This is this same Greek word "perilous," that means very hazardous. It shall come within the last days of the church. It will build up gradually as a thunderstorm builds up, and finally it is fully present when it explodes upon this world. So each season will be a greater menace. Each time period will be a greater menace than the last.

Now we have almost 2,000 years of the wave building up and of the storm clouds gathering, and we are in the days immediately preceding the explosion of this which has built up. So these are dangerous times for the Christians because the world that surrounds us is about to be dealt with in judgment by the living God. Evil will have escalated tremendously as it has today. Sin will be more open and accepted. As you read through this passage, you see that a fantastic list of sins will become just commonplace and accepted. Christians will be in danger of getting used to these evil ways, and of accommodating themselves to it. Certainly this is the condition that we face today.

"This know also that in the last days, these perilous times shall come." Now let's look at the nature of this peril. "They shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy," and he goes on through a long list of characteristics that will be the result of the apostasy that has descended upon our age. This is a climactic season, and the Word of God tells us that in this time, certain major doctrines will be challenged, and will be undermined by ministers themselves. The moral trend in the moral attitude of our day, which is summed up in the phrase "situation ethics," did not begin with Hugh Hefner and Playboy magazine. It began with a religious leader who set forth a new concept of morality. This is a whole new source of Satan's imposing of his point of view upon humanity. From the source of the pulpits themselves will come challenges, the Word of God tells us, to certain doctrines:

**Doctrinal Challenges**

1. There will be a denial of God (Luke 17:26, 2 Timothy 3:4-5).
2. There will be a denial of Jesus Christ (1 John 4:1-3, 2 Peter 2:1).
3. There will be a denial of the return of Christ (2 Peter 3:3-4).
4. There will be a denial of the faith. (1 Timothy 4:1-2).
5. There will be a denial of sound doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:3-4).
6. There will be a denial of the separated life (2 Timothy 3:1-7).
7. There will be a denial of Christian liberty. (1 Timothy 4:3-4).
8. There will be a denial of morality. (2 Timothy 3:13, Jude 18).
9. There will be a denial of authority (2 Timothy 3:3-4).

The apostates are going to depart on all these accounts from biblical Christianity and still they're going to profess to be Christians. Religion is going to be substituted by Satan for faith in Jesus Christ. True Christians are going to be in danger of accepting the counterfeit. So Jude 3 calls upon us to earnestly contend for the faith that we have in the Bible, a faith which is often rejected by seminaries themselves today. Religion is based today on the opinion of the majority. That's human viewpoint. It is intellectual searching for a new faith to satisfy the so-called modern mind. That modern mind is just the old sin nature all over again.

So the Bible no longer judges life, but our customs and the opinions of our society judges the Bible. Today we have spiritual anarchy. That's what the Holy Spirit is cautioning us against--we who are living immediately before the Lord's return. Here in 2 Timothy 3:3-5, we have these characteristics. People will have these qualities about them in a unique way:

**People in the Last Days**

1. They will be lovers of themselves. I'll let you make the application in your own experience and in the world that you move in.
2. People will have a love of money.
3. There will be a spirit of pride.
4. Blasphemy will characterize the speech of men.
5. There will be disobedience to parents. Increasingly it will be difficult for fathers and mothers to stand up against their teenage kids and spell the thing out to them the way it is. Increasingly it will become difficult to find parents, unfortunately, who will do that, and who will have the discernment to know how to apply good basic Christian judgment to their particular case--when to give a little, and when to tighten up. But the problem will be largely with the fact that parents will have so failed that they will have trained their children in disobedience. That is everywhere around us today.
6. There will be the lack of thankfulness. When you are reared in the welfare state, like most people are in the United States today, they don't feel they need to be thankful for anything because they've got it coming.
7. There will be a lack of holiness.
8. There will be a lack of natural affection. That means that people simply won't be able to respond in love. It won't mean that parents won't love their children, but people just will not be able to respond to each other with genuine love.
9. There will be unceasing enmity so that there will be no peace.
10. People will slander one another.
11. There will be lack of self-control.
12. There will be savagery. This means untamed wild fierceness.
13. There'll be outright opposition to goodness. If you're in the ministry, and you're true to your experience and your knowledge of the Word of God, all you have to do is declare a couple of things that are good sense relative to rearing kids, and you discover how much opposition there is to goodness. The screams of pain will erupt over a declaration of what is really God's good sense imposed upon a young life. And he screams with pain. He's opposed to goodness.
14. People will be traitors. This is a common trait among believers. It's very easy for Christians to be traitors, instead of having loyalty to the Word and loyalty to their ministry.
15. People will have pettiness. That means that they're rash, reckless, and headstrong.
16. People will have high-mindedness. This word literally means "to raise a smoke."
17. People will have love of pleasure.
18. People will have a pretense of worship without any godliness in life. They keep going on as if this was all just like it always was.

In Revelation 3:14-22, we have the church called the church of the Laodiceans. It's described as being lukewarm, which is a description of the church in our day. As we approach the rapture, more and more, churches will be lukewarm. That means that they will be middle-of-the-road. They will not be against the things that they oppose, and they will not be in favor of the things they stand for. They will be middle-of-the-road. They will be lukewarm. This condition is to grow worse.

Laodicea was a city in Asia Minor. It was a city which had banks, it had industry, and it had a famed Phrygian eye powder. It was not opposed to religion as a city. It just didn't take it too seriously. The church was wealthy. The members were well-off. They had a high standard of living. So they imagined that they were really well-off, and the Word of God comes in, and verse 17 says that they're spiritual beggars. Verse 18 says that they need God's gold and clothing and eye salve. Verse 19 says that it's a time for carnal Christians who are carried away with this season pf peril to repent. Jesus is pictured in Revelation 3:20 as knocking on the door of the Laodicean church trying to get in. They have it closed against Him. They have no room for His kind. That's the church in our day. The book of Jude gives us ample warning to contend for the faith and to take a stand. We are in a period of threat to the production of your divine good.

**Jesus Will Return**

Now this is the world before the great migration takes place. Let's look at three Scriptures that tell us about this great migration. We have three things declared to us. The first thing is that Jesus is coming back. In John 14:1-3, we have described the imminent departure of the Lord Jesus. The scene is on the night before the crucifixion in the upper room. The Lord is preparing his disciples for the church age which is comparatively unknown to them. Jesus announces that He will soon be separated from them. He is to die, and to depart back to heaven physically. Peter is very confused, and he is very reluctant to accept this separation. He totally rejects it in John 13:36-37, and the Lord has to rebuke him. Now the disciples are very troubled in heart. They love the Lord Jesus. Yet, here He is telling them, "I'm about to leave you. I'm about to return to heaven." So the disciples on this occasion had to be comforted.

In John 14:1, Jesus therefore says, "Let not your heart be troubled," speaking here now in the upper room, "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." What the Lord said to them was that in His Father's house, which is heaven, there are many dwelling places, or apartments. These heavenly homes are being prepared for us by the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a work of grace.

Perhaps you have heard the illustration that preachers sometimes like to use that some of you folks are going to get to heaven and find that you don't have a mansion. You just have a hovel to live in. When you complain to the authorities how come you have such a poor place to live, they're going to shrug their shoulders and say, "Well, we did the best we could with the materials you sent up." However, you are not building your apartment, or furnishing it, or preparing it. This is something that the Lord Himself, fortunately, is doing for us. This heavenly home is being prepared as a place that we are going to dwell in. The Lord is going to return for us when the apartment is equipped. We are His bride. He is getting the place ready for bringing His bride home. The purpose of the return of Jesus Christ at the Rapture, preceding the tribulation, is for us to meet Him in the air so that He can take us home to these dwelling places that He has prepared for us.

So this return is a clear contrast, of course, to what the Old Testament looked for. The Old Testament saints were promised an earthly kingdom by the Old Testament prophets. They looked for the Lord to come as King of Kings to rule on David's throne, which he is going to. And this revelation that Jesus spoke of in the upper room was only a temporary separation. He was to come again, but for the time being, He was preparing them for the fact that He was going to return to Heaven. Positionally, since we are in Him, we too are in heaven. This is where you are in God's sight. Positionally, you're in heaven. That's why you're superior, positionally, to angels. Positional truth is very vital to understanding your security and your blessings and your resources in the Lord as a Christian.

He wanted to comfort these upper room Christians. So the Lord reminded them that He would come and He was going to take them to be with them. Verse 3 says, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and I will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also." 1 Thessalonians tells us that this meeting is to be in the air. Then John tells us that after we meet Him in the air, we go to heaven.

When I was a boy, I was taught that the kingdom was to follow immediately after the rapture. I was told that one day there was going to be a great big judgment day, and everything was going to be settled on one great big so-called judgment day. And all of a sudden, God was going to come back, and it was all going to be over. Well, the kingdom does not begin immediately. There is a seven-year period before the millennial kingdom begins. It is necessary that there be a period before the kingdom begins. Otherwise, there wouldn't be any point in preparing the apartments. Who's going to live in them? When will we spend any time in them? It's during the tribulation. This is going to be your home during the tribulation period. This is the place that God is preparing for you and me to spend our time in while we are awaiting our return to celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb back here on earth.

So the apartments in heaven are going to be used. They are our refuge during the tribulation period. The nature of this passage indicates that there is nothing standing between us and this event. This is a crucial passage to establish the fact that there is nothing coming before the rapture. It is an imminent affair.

This imminent coming is significant because it has certain implications. 1 John tells us what this should mean to the Christians. 1 John 3:2: "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself even as He is pure." We will become perfect as Jesus Christ is perfect. This is our blessed hope in the dark world. So until He returns, you and I have opportunity to produce divine good. Every bit of divine good that we produce is treasures in heaven for which we shall be rewarded.

So the exhortation is to holiness because the Lord's coming is at any moment. Since it's at any moment, we are cautioned not to be caught unawares; not to be wasting our time; and, not to be living our lives as if someday we could finally get around to the production of divine good in the plan that He has for us. The atmosphere of our lives is to be the same way you act when you know that guests are coming to your house. You don't know quite when they're going to arrive, but you make sure well ahead of time that the house is clean; everything is prepared; and, that you are ready for the arrival of the guests. That's how we should be towards the Lord Jesus Christ--constant readiness for His immediate, any-moment, return.

**Some of Us Will Not Die**

A second major Scripture declares to us that some of us will not die. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, some of us will never die. The fact of a general resurrection is declared in the Bible. 1 Corinthians 15 is the resurrection chapter of the Bible. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is here declared as a reality essential to our salvation. It ensures that we too will conquer death as He did. Some will be raised to eternal life, and some to eternal judgment. There is no eternal oblivion for anybody in the grave. The cults sometimes teach that even if you don't make it to heaven, you'll simply be wiped out of existence. This is not true. You will exist forever in your body either in heaven or in hell. Jesus taught a universal resurrection in John 5:28-29. Everybody comes back to life. This revelation is described as a mystery.

1 Corinthians 15:51: "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." If you are acquainted with scriptural terminology, you know that the word mystery indicates a truth which was hidden in Old Testament times but which is now revealed in New Testament times. What is the mystery that is revealed as you read this Scripture? If somebody were to say to you, "Now what is the mystery? What is the secret that has been hidden that is now made known?" "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

You will notice that the mystery is not the fact of physical resurrection. That was well-known in the Old Testament--that people would be physically raised. Job 19:25-25, Isaiah 26:19, and Daniel 12:2 all declare that there will be a physical resurrection. So that wasn't the mystery. What was the secret that nobody in the Old Testament ever knew? The secret was that some people would go to heaven without dying. "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep (which is the term for Christian death), but we shall all be changed." Some of us will be changed, we will be given a resurrection body, without ever having gone through the experience and the expense of dying. God never told this to the Old Testament writers. The rapture was a mystery. The whole church was a mystery in the Old Testament.

There is going to be a generation of Christians who go to heaven without having to die first. The Lord could return indeed within a generation from the time that Israel became a nation. The Scriptures say in Matthew 24 that all these things will be fulfilled within the time of that generation. All of the things will be fulfilled that are described of the tribulation. The terms which are used and the warnings which are given indicate that Israel is once more a nation within her land. On that basis, we may perhaps use 1948 as the anchor point from which to figure a generation, maybe of 35 or 40 years. Then we don't have very long. We're dealing with just a few years before we might expect the rapture and the great migration to take place. So you can add that up to your own age and see what your chances are of making it alive. This generation of believers probably is it.

Now here's the process for this migration. We're told that it's going to happen very quickly. 1 Corinthians 15:52 says, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpets shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. The time of the last trump is going to be when the last person is saved. When the last person is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the church, at that moment, the bride is complete.

Perhaps as we have suggested in our studies concerning Satan and demons, the number of believers may be equal to the number of demons who rebelled against God. When Satan is removed, Christians who share with Christ in His rule, may also share in the removal of the demons, one-to-one. In any case, when the last believer is saved and the church body is complete, then Operation Project Footstool will come into being. Of course, this is the thing that Satan is fighting. Satan is doing everything in his power to delay Project Footstool which means his imprisonment, the removal of demons from the earth, and the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

In a moment, when you least expect it, there will be a trumpet sounding calling us to heaven. We will look up. There is the Lord Jesus, just as He went. We will look at our bodies and suddenly discover that we have been transformed. We are free of time and space. We can walk through walls. We can move through the air. We can move anywhere in the universe. We will have been completely transformed, and we will be in His presence. Now this is our hope. For some Christians, this hope is without death first. This was the revelation to these Corinthian Christians, that some would be in the Lord's presence without having to go through death.

There is a time interval between the time of the rapture and the time that the millennium begins. When we look at the millennium, we find that it's a time of farming and of marriage and of birth and of death (Amos 9:13-15). Therefore you have to have people on the millennial earth in order to do this. So there is a group in their natural bodies which must be on earth when the Lord comes to set up His kingdom. However, we know from the Word of God that when the rapture takes place, everybody who is a believer goes to heaven. So what's left on the earth? Only unbelievers. We also know, as we've already studied, that when Jesus Christ does come back a second time that He takes all of the Jews who are unbelievers. This is at the end of the seven-year tribulation. All the Jews who are unbelievers are put to death. All the gentiles who are unbelievers are put to death. It is only the believers, Jew and gentile, that enter the millennial kingdom: to farm; to marry; to bear children; and, so on. Where do these people come from?

Well, between the time that the church goes to heaven and everybody on earth is unsaved, and seven years rolls along, people are going to be born again. They're going to be born again in one way or another by information that God brings to them: through the Word of God; or, through all these tapes that various groups are passing around that have the Word of God on them. People will be born again in that seven-year period, and those are the people who go into the tribulation, in physical non-resurrected bodies. So the Christians are out of the way. We don't go into the millennium in non-resurrected bodies. We go in bodies like unto the Lord's. Here's a group of people who enter the millennial kingdom in their human bodies.

So it's a time interval. The Bible indicates that these saints are here on earth when the Lord returns, and they remain here throughout that period. So the Lord has to come with the rapture first, before the tribulation begins. So we, the church, are removed, and then a group of believers has to be raised up during that tribulation period to be here to enter the millennial kingdom.

There is a third point concerning the great migration. One: Jesus Christ is coming back. He is now preparing a place to which we are going to go to spend the tribulation period with Him. While turmoil is here on earth, we will be dwelling in heaven. Secondly, some of us will go into that place of heavenly apartments without dying first. We will go immediately from this earth meeting the Lord in the air and up into heaven to live in these apartments. If the kingdom were to begin immediately, we would have this condition: Here are the believers on earth. The Lord would come down. The believers would be caught up to meet the Lord. Then they would have to turn round and come right down to begin that kingdom period. But the kingdom does not begin here. The kingdom has a seven-year period, and then it begins. We return with Jesus Christ at His second coming. The term "second coming," by the way, actually applies to this point where the millennium is about to begin. The term "rapture," or "catching away" is what it means, applies to this point immediately before the tribulation when the saints are removed. The church is removed--those who are members of the body of Christ.

**All Go to Heaven Together**

The third thing that's going to happen is that all go to heaven together. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, when Paul visited the Thessalonian church, he discovered they had a problem. He was with them for a period of perhaps only six weeks. It was a short stay. During this time, he found that the members of the Thessalonian congregation were distressed over certain things relative to the return of Jesus Christ, which they knew about and which they believed. They wondered what was going to happen to some of their loved ones who had died. Because the return of Jesus Christ was imminent, they looked forward to it happening within their lifetime, right there in New Testament times.

However, a few years went by, and they discovered that some of the people in the church died. So they began wondering, "What's going to happen to those people? We are going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and they're in the graves. Isn't that sad?" So Paul sat down to explain to them that living and dead Christians would be raised together. If you have a loved one who has gone to heaven, the next time you're going to meet that person is not in heaven. The next time you're going to meet that wife, that husband, that son, or daughter is right in the air. The next time you see that loved one, you're both going to be airborne. That's where the return will take place, and you'll go to heaven together.

The procedure is this, and there is no need to be ignorant about it. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul says, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep (which is a term for Christian death), that you sorry not even as others who have no hope." This is a great passage. You are not to sorrow as if your dead loved ones have been left out of this great experience. You are not to sorrow as if your dead loved ones are forever gone, instead of recognizing that they simply have transferred on detached duty into another sphere into the Lord's presence.

It falls to my lot sometimes to conduct funeral services. When I do, I usually can tell very clearly whether the people who have been left behind, the survivors, are of the no-hope category, or those who have all the hope in the world. Those who are believers and understand this hope will have tears and they'll have sorrow to express. However, they will know what it's all about. I've had funeral services where I've had no-hope people. There is a point at which they already went through the gruesome procedure of an open casket, where they had the dead remains out there for everybody to come by and gawk at, rather than rising to a little more Christian procedure of slamming the lid shut and saying, "See you in the air," and remembering a living vital person as you once knew that individual. The mortician earns his money by playing these things. This is a dramatic moment when he walks by and brings everybody by to slam the lid. Well, that's the point at which the no-hope crowd reveals itself. They start screaming. They fall on the floor. If anything could raise the dead, that can do it.

However, God says that those who have gone before us, who are believers, are not left out. We're all going to go to heaven together. They're going to be raised from the dead, and then we will be joined with them, and we will go together to meet the Lord in the air. The living Christians do not go ahead of the dead Christians. The shout here is a military command, "Move out." The archangel is the executor of God's command, which is Michael. Trump is the summoning of the people of God together to meet the Lord in the air. So the dead Christians are raised, and the living Christians are transformed into resurrected beings, and they join, and they form one group to meet the Lord in the air. All change into glorified bodies. There are no distinctions and no privileged classes. And this truth is given to us for our comfort.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 says, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them who are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall 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 so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Now this was a great comfort to the Thessalonian church and to the believers there--that nobody would be left out, and that they could look forward to a time of meeting with those who had preceded them.

**Three Views of the Rapture**

When does this event take place? There's a little bit of debate about this. We have the seven-year tribulation period (and we have three views of the rapture). There is one point at the beginning of the tribulation, really before it begins. There is another point in the middle, and there's another point at the end of the tribulation. The first one is called the pre-tribulation rapture. The second one in the middle of the seven years is called the mid-tribulation rapture. The third one is called the post tribulation rapture. There are people who believe all three of these positions. The Word of God confirms only this first one--the pre-tribulation rapture--that Christians go out of this world before the time of judgment upon the earth.

**The Day of the Lord**

In 1 Thessalonians 5:2, we read, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night." Here you have a technical term: the day of the Lord. What does the Bible mean when it says the day of the Lord? Well it means this: After the tribulation, there comes this period of 1,000 years which we call the millennium. The day of the Lord begins where the tribulation begins and it ends at the end of the millennium. The day of the Lord has this time of trial or judgment, and then it has a time of blessing. It is this vast segment of 1,007 years.

The Scriptures say, as you know perfectly well, that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night--this time when the tribulation begins. "For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief." It comes unexpectedly; it says it is a thief in the night; it involves sudden destruction for some people, verse three says; and, it is not to overtake Christians. This trouble will not overtake Christians. Verse 4: "But you, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief." It is not something that we worry about.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 five says, on the contrary, that "You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness." Therefore, we are not part of this tribulation period. "Therefore let us not sleep as do others. But let us watch and be sober minded." Verse 9 sums it up. "For God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the period of wrath. This is the period when God's wrath is poured out upon the earth, the tribulation period. We are not part of that wrath. We compare that with Revelation 6:17 which says, "For the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" This is not a day in which we have any problem because we will be able to stand. Being in Christ there is no problem for us to stand, but there will be people who will face that day who will not be able to stand.

Compare also Revelation 3:10, a strategic verse: "Because you have kept the word of my patience," and this is directed to what the Scriptures called here in Revelation the Philadelphia church. This is the biblical church, the true church. "Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation which will come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth." From the hour of trial is what he is saying. The hour of temptation is the hour of trial. This verse declares to believers in the church age that they will be kept from this hour of trial. So we see that Christians are not destined to experience God's wrath in the tribulation period. A great contrast is between those who are raptured and caught away to meet the Lord and those who are left behind for wrath. The day of the Lord begins with the tribulation and goes all the way through the 1000-year millennium. The church is not in the day of the Lord. We're told that we are members of light, and that we are not to be in this period of darkness and be overtaken by it.

We have already looked at what the tribulation is going to be like, the fantastic horrible things that are going to take place on this earth. What good would it be for us to go around saying to each other, "Here's our blessed hope. We're going to go through the tribulation, which will include an atomic war?" What kind of a blessed hope is that? What kind of a wonderful thing is that to look forward to? Not at all. But it is a blessed hope to know that we are going to miss this, and that we are going to instead experience this catching up to meet the Lord in the air.

The Bible indicates that the Lord's return is imminent in view of the fact that there is deterioration morally on every account. The age is going to be an age of apostasy. And please get it straight. The Bible gives you no basis whatsoever to hope that this will be reversed. Now if you're a do-gooder type, and you think if you just get out there and work in the community; if you just get out and promote these good social programs; or, if you get out there and work in politics or something else, that you're going to reverse this trend, you're mistaken. You have not one single Scripture to support that idea.

Instead the Bible indicates that once these things are set in motion, they're like a runaway train. The apostasy that descends upon the church in the age in which we live will become darker. So what we have said here is that we are in for a period of moral deterioration of Christianity upon this earth. This will be a period in which people will increasingly move away from anything comparable to biblical Christianity in the expression of their lives. Then the Lord will return and He will take us to meet Him in the air to take us back to heaven.

So there are three major scriptures that tell us three major points: He will come back. That's definite. Some of us will not die. We'll be alive when He does come back. But whether we are alive or in the grave, we will all be raised and caught up to meet the Lord together in resurrection bodies. This will happen before the day of the Lord begins. So we shall escape all that the tribulation has, and we shall return with the Lord at this point to begin this millennial period where we will reign with Him. We who are now His body, and who are now being prepared as His bride, will then be His wife. And we will return. I hope you're in that group. I hope that you can count yourself among those who are believers.

This is going to happen. You may count on it just as you may count upon sin and taxes. This is going to happen. The Word of God has made his declaration. The Word of God is never wrong. It has spelled out the details for us, and it will take place. If you are not in the family of God, you will not leave this earth in the rapture. Instead, you will be left here. You will be left to be amazed; to be appalled; somehow to become acclimated; and, to move into this time of God's wrath upon the earth. You will, in that period, if you do not come to salvation then, find yourself clawing the inside of caves and screaming in the pain of the plagues that will descend upon this earth. You'll be looking up at God and blaspheming and cursing Him to His face, because then will be the time of judgment, and the worst will yet be before you.

The Lord Jesus Christ has removed the barrier, the wall, between you and God. All you have to do is walk across the line.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971

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