***The Rapture and the Second Coming

RV02-01***

Please open your Bibles to the first chapter of the book of the Revelation. We have learned that the Bible is to be interpreted in terms of the meaning of the words which it uses. The Holy Spirit actually guided the human authors in selecting the specific words so that the mind of God could be accurately and completely conveyed to us through a written record. The goal of all Bible study, and the goal of all expository preaching, is to understand, first of all, the actual words of Scripture. That is the text. That's the first thing we want to understand. After we understand the Scripture (after we understand the text), then we want to be able to apply it to our lives in terms of our contemporary situations.

The exposition of the Revelation follows the same basic principle of literal interpretation as do all the other books of the Bible. There is no justifiable ground for switching in this book. While the book is full of symbols (and we have observed that fact), we have indicated that these symbols all have real actual meanings. They are concrete terms.

Revelation 1:1-3 may be called the prologue to the book of Revelation, and Revelation 1:1 begins this prologue. This book is presented as an unveiling of the future. It comes from Jesus Christ. He's the source of this information. The Lord Jesus Christ received this revelation from God the Father. It is a preview of history, which He says is to be shown to all Christians of the church age. That is the purpose of book of the Revelation. The disclosure was communicated to John the apostle via an elected angel. So the chain of communication of the Revelation goes from God the Father to Jesus Christ the Son; to an elect angel; to John the apostle; and, to we Christians today.

Once the events that are described in this book begin to take place, verse 1 tells us that they're going to be fulfilled very quickly and very rapidly. As a matter of fact, because we have a timetable of world history given to us in the book of Daniel, we know that that word "shortly" there means, specifically, seven years.

**The Events that Lay Ahead**

So here's how we apply that information. Let's think of the study of Revelation in three main segments. We are currently living in the first segment which is the church age. Following the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, there was a short period of 40 days that He was on this earth, and He then ascended to heaven. We have moved through the church age. We are now someplace near the end of this age. In the near future, the rapture of the church will take place (or the catching away, as Scripture describes it), where all the Christians who are alive will be caught up to meet Jesus Christ, who comes down to meet the believers in the air. All Christians who are alive will be caught up, and those who are in the graves will be raised in their physical bodies, and they will meet the Lord in the air and go right up to heaven.

Then there will begin a seven-year period here upon the earth, which is described in the Scripture as the period of tribulation. The first three-and-a-half years are called tribulation. The last three-and-a-half years are called the great tribulation because of the intensity of the wrath of God that is poured out at that time.

At the end of this seven-year period, the Second Coming of Christ takes place. This time Jesus Christ returns not simply to the air, but actually right down to the earth. The Bible tells us that the specific place will be the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives will split in two, and a great valley will be formed when He touches upon it. This will dramatically announce His arrival. Following that return to this earth, with the believers who have been in heaven for this seven-year period, there will take place the 1000-year period of Christ's kingdom rule upon this earth. That 1000-year period is described by the word "millennium," which comes from the Latin "mille," which means a thousand. It is an era of great happiness and of great joy. It is the earth's golden age, because the ruler of the whole world will be the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, ruling from the city of Jerusalem. It will be the finest time that humanity has ever had. All of its major problems will be solved in this era because Christ will be there. After that period is over, following a short rebellion at the end of the millennium (Satan is bound for most of this period), He is released, and a short rebellion takes place. That is destroyed by Christ, then eternity begins.

**The Revelation**

Let's tie the book of the Revelation to this a little more exactly. Revelation chapters 1 through 3 cover the period of the church age. After chapter 3, there is no more reference to the church. Any allusion to the church after the third chapter of Revelation is the church in heaven. There is some allusion that the church is in heaven, which, of course, is where it is. At this point during the church age, therefore, the church is on the earth; Christ is in heaven; and, all the people on earth have mortal bodies. By "mortal bodies," we mean bodies in which a person can sin, and a body which can die. During the seven-year period of the tribulation, the church has been removed, and Revelation chapters 4 to 19 apply to that period. The center primary portion of the Revelation applies to this tribulation era. The church is now in heaven; Christ is in heaven; and, there are mortal bodies only on the earth. That's going to be important in a moment to understand what kind of physical beings are on the face of the earth at this time. There are mortal bodies on the earth during the entire church age. There are mortal bodies only on the earth during the entire tribulation period.

Revelation 20 applies to the millennium. Revelation 20 applies to the thousand years of Christ's rule on this earth. During this period, Christ is on the earth, and the church is on the earth. But now you have a different condition relative to humanity, because you have two kinds of human beings on the earth. You have those who have glorified bodies, namely ourselves, who return with Christ, who has been resurrected, or who have been translated. That is, we have been changed from earth to heaven without dying. We have had our bodies changed into glorified bodies. A glorified body means that you cannot sin, and it means that you cannot die. But there will also be people on the earth, we find as we study the descriptions of the millennium, who are in mortal bodies. They will have the normal human relationships and functions. There will be marriage; there will be sex; there will be children; there will be eating; there will be working; and, all of the things that normally exist in people who are in their mortal bodies. They'll be able to do evil, and they'll be able to decide to do what is right. It'll be a wonderful time for both types because Jesus Christ will be the center of attention of the human race.

Following the period of the millennium, Revelation chapters 21 through 22:5 apply to eternity. Then there are some final verses that conclude the book. Revelation 22:6-21 give us the conclusion of the book.

During the period of eternity, there are only glorified bodies. At that point, the body of every believer (Jew, gentile, or Christian) has been transformed into the body of Jesus Christ. So if you kind of keep this in mind, this will help you follow what we are talking about.

**The Return of Jesus Christ**

You will notice that we have made a very specific declaration concerning the return of Christ. That's what I'm leading up to here. We have said that Jesus Christ returns in a twofold manner. He returns, first of all, in the rapture, which is a meeting in the air, and then a return to heaven. And He returns in the Second Coming, which is a return actually to the surface of the earth, and then remaining to rule in the millennium. If you interpret the book of the Revelation, literally (as we are going to do), you will be led to what is called the premillennial, pre-tribulation rapture view of the end times before eternity begins.

"Premillennial" means that Jesus Christ returns to this earth before the millennium. "Premillennial" means that there is actually going to be 1,000 years when Jesus Christ is going to rule on this earth. "Amillennial" means there is no millennium at all, at least not on this earth. "Pre-tribulation rapture" means that the Christians are going to be removed from this earth before the tribulation begins. So you and I, as members of the body of Christ, do not experience the horrible, nightmarish holocaust that is going to take place here during the tribulation on the human race. That's called "pre-tribulation rapture." If the rapture and the Second Coming are not separated by this seven-year period, but rather are simply one event (that is, it all takes place just before the millennium), then the literal interpretation of the book of Revelation cannot be the correct method of interpreting the book. If you interpret the book literally, and other Scriptures as well, it simply will not fit the picture of the rapture and the Second Coming taking place at the same time.

It is important that you get this straight because his majesty the devil has mounted a great campaign, in the matter of the last year or so, in order to bring great confusion on this subject to believers. It will rob you of your comfort; it will rob you of your hope; and, it will rob you of a great deal of peace of mind, relative to your destiny, if you are not certain that you do not go through the tribulation. There is a mounting campaign to present the covenant theology position as being the true scriptural position – that the Christians are taken up indeed in the rapture; that Christ does come down to meet them; and, that they immediately come right back down, and they stop on the Mount of Olives where Jesus Christ is predicted to return. That is the position that you must come to if you say there is no seven-year period break.

There are post-tribulation amillennialists. The fact is that all amillennialists are post-tribulationists. All amillennialists say that Christians are going to be caught up to meet the Lord right at the end of the tribulation. They say that the rapture and the Second Coming are the same event, and they say that there is no millennium, and you go immediately to eternity. The church is caught up, and immediately Christ returns in His Second Coming, and immediately eternity begins. There is no millennium. That's what "amillennial" means. So they are post-tribulationists. They do believe, as amillennialists, that the Christians are going to go through the hell-on-earth period of the tribulation.

However, there are premillennialists who are post-tribulationists. There are premillennialists who believe that the church is taken up to meet the Lord after the tribulation, which means that the church suffers through the tribulation. They say that the rapture and the Second Coming are one in the same event, and they both go after the tribulation period. Then these post-tribulationist premillennialists do say that there is a 1000-year period of the reign of Christ on earth. They do believe in a millennium before eternity begins. If this is the case, then all of the section from Revelation 4 through 19 applies to the church, and it cannot be as we have presented here. It all applies to the church. The church is actually going to go through this era as well.

**Christians have Glorified Bodies in the Millennium**

During the church age and the tribulation, the earth is going to be populated by people who are only in mortal bodies. I pointed that out to you already. During the church age and the tribulation, I remind you again, there are only mortal bodies on the earth. During the millennium, there will be both Christians in glorified bodies, and Jews and gentiles in mortal bodies. This is very clearly taught to us in Scripture in many passages. I have to establish the fact that Christians are actually going to be walking around on the earth during the millennium in glorified bodies.

For example, 1 Corinthians 15:51 says, "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep. (That is, we Christians shall not all die.) But we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." That Scripture is telling us that Christians are going to be raised in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and their corruptible bodies (that is, bodies which can decay) will be transformed into incorruptible bodies (bodies which cannot die and cannot decay).

1 John 3:2 points that out to us. Our bodies are going to be changed into glorified bodies. John says, "Beloved, now we are the children of God. And it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when He shall appear (that is, Jesus Christ), we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." John says, "We're going to be like Him because when He appears, we will see Him, and we will be changed into His image."

Then there is the famous passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:13. It tells us, "But I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning them (Christians who are asleep – who have died), that you sorrow not as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also 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." We, who are alive when Christ returns, will not go ahead of the Christians who are in the grave. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and 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." There is the "caught up." That's the word "rapture." "Shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. So shall we ever be with the Lord."

That is a clear declaration in Scripture that we Christians are going to meet Jesus Christ in the air. We're not going to meet Him on the earth. We are going to meet Him in the air. No post-tribulationist denies that. He cannot deny this Scripture. He says, "Yes, that's what it says. Christians are going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." When they're caught up to meet Him there, it also says that their bodies are going to be changed.

Philippians 3:21 puts it even more specifically. Concerning the return of the Lord, it says, "Who shall change our lowly body that it may be fashioned like His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." So these Scriptures make it very clear that when we are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, something very wonderful happens to our physical bodies. They are made physically perfect. That's true. But they are also transformed into the kind of a body that Jesus Christ had after He rose from the dead. It is a resurrection body, whether you have gone through the grave, or gone directly to meet the Lord in the air. It is a resurrection body (a glorified body), and in the marvelous capacities that attach themselves to glorified sinless bodies.

When you return with the Lord (wherever you do it), you as believers are going to return in glorified bodies. So in this period of the millennium, you're going to be here in a glorified body. But there are going to be Jews and gentiles on this earth who do not have glorified bodies. Matthew 24:29 describes that for us: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn."

Why are they distressed? Because they're unbelievers. Here, suddenly, wherever you are, there is a flash in outer space, and there's Jesus Christ. There's the vast host of believers who have been taken up to heaven ourselves, returning with Him. These people then mourn. They grieve for themselves because most of them have upon them the mark of the beast. They can never be saved.

"And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He shall send His angels with the great sound of a trumpet, and He shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

**Others have Mortal Bodies in the Millennium**

Now, here is something else. While some will mourn, some will rejoice: "Here He is coming." These are the people here during the tribulation. That's what this is describing. It specifically says that after this tribulation period, near the end, Christ is going to return. Many will look upon Him because they are unbelievers. They will grieve. They will mourn over His return. But others are His elect. It says He will send angels out to gather His elect. What does that mean? It means born again. It means saved people who are on the earth during the tribulation period. At the end of the tribulation, there are going to be born again people on this earth. These are people who've been saved during the tribulation. These are people who have refused to take upon themselves the mark of the beast. These are people who gave a hearing to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who preached the gospel of salvation. These people will be both Jews and gentiles scattered everywhere on the earth.

What kind of bodies do they have? Obviously, they have mortal bodies. We won't read this in detail here. I'll just give you the Scripture. Ezekiel 20:34-38 describe how God is going to take the Jews, and He's going to separate them into saved and unsaved. And for those who have been the rebels, it says, He is going to bring them under the rod, which means He's going to put them to death, and they will go to Hades. Their bodies will be buried, and their souls will go into Hades. Those Jews who are believers are going to be told to enter the millennium. So here you've got Jews in the millennium with mortal bodies. Remember, they haven't been transformed. They haven't gone to heaven. They haven't been caught up in the rapture. They were saved during the tribulation. They have mortal bodies.

Matthew 26:31-46 give you the same picture relative to gentiles. This is the separating into the sheep and the goat categories. The sheep are the saved gentiles. The goats are the unsaved gentiles, the ones with the mark of the beast upon them. Jesus Christ takes the goats and puts them to death. Their bodies are buried. Their souls go to Hades. But the elect gentiles, in their mortal bodies, are brought into the millennium. They are part of the elect that He has gathered together.

So now the millennium begins with everybody born again, with two kinds of people. Some of us have glorified bodies, and other believers (Jews and gentiles) have mortal bodies, but they're born again. So the whole millennium starts off in the best possible way. Why do we have to have people in mortal bodies in the millennium? For the simple reason that at the end of the millennium, Satan is released, and a large number of humanity rally to him. He forms an army to fight against God once more. He's been in the abyss for 1,000 years. The minute he gets out, he rallies a group of people to him once more to try to do what God stopped him from doing at Armageddon, 1,000 years previously. He again seeks to carry out a rebellion to attack and destroy God.

Where are the people going to come from who make up that vast army of rebellion? Obviously not from those who have survived the tribulation (Jew and gentile) and who are born again. They will not rally to him. Therefore, we must have new human beings in the millennium. These are human beings who were born during the millennium. These are human beings who, while they were held under control by the rod of iron rule of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ, ruling from Jerusalem, nevertheless, in their hearts were rebels. They did not receive Christ as Savior. They acted in rebellion against Him. They could not do it openly. Any open evil is immediately dealt with. But they were secretly disloyal rebels toward the king.

The moment that Satan arrives on the scene, they openly express their true allegiance, and they rally to Satan and to his human leaders. Remember, they will be human leaders. The devil always has to work through people. He cannot work without human beings in places of leadership. That's why all over the world today, there are critical strategic men who are in places of leadership, placed there by Satan, and they are moving the world into Satan's plan for the world. Satan will rally these people, who have been born during the millennium, to his cause. The only way these people could have been born is with people who have mortal bodies. People in glorified bodies do not marry and do not bear children. Mark 12:25 indicates that to us. Those glorified bodies will not be married to each other, and they will not bear children. The only people who can bear children in the millennium are those who are in mortal bodies, and it is necessary that children should be born during that period. The Bible indicates that it will be a prolific time of childbearing.

Life in the millennium, for this reason, is geared to people who are in mortal bodies, with the normal needs of mortal bodies. Again, I won't go through reading the Scriptures, but I'll just give them to you. If you will look these Scriptures up, you will see that these are promises for all the kinds of things that people need who live under the conditions that we live under today: the food; the climate; the clothing; the warmth; the peace; the security; the happiness; and, everything else that people in mortal bodies on this earth need are now going to be provided during the millennium in a magnificent abundance, as never before. Why?

You and I aren't going to need them. You and I don't have to eat. We will not have to drink water. We might drink a coke just for the fun of it, for old time's sake. We can if we want to. Jesus could eat. He didn't have to eat. When He met His disciples, with that campfire they had built, and with that fish-fry that they were having, He ate. He didn't need to. He just ate so they could see that He was for real; it wasn't a ghost; and, it was the Jesus they knew.

You'll walk on water. Don't try it now, but then you can. You and I are just going to be different. We don't need this lifestyle. You won't need a car. We'll go from place to place zip-a-dee-doo-dah, just like that. You'll be playing Samantha all over the place. But there is great need for these who are in mortal bodies – the same needs we have today.

So these Scriptures make that very clear that God intends to provide that during the millennium for this purpose, because there are people with mortal bodies: Micah 4:3-4, Isaiah 2:4, Isaiah 66:21-22, Amos 9:14-15, Psalm 72:4-16, Ezekiel 34:25-26, Ezekiel 36:29-30, Isaiah 33:24, Isaiah 35:5-6, Isaiah 65:20, and Isaiah 11:6-9. Those verses very clearly establish a human type of lifestyle.

**Are the Rapture and the Second Coming the Same Event?**

With this understanding of this picture, with this revelation from Scripture as to how things are going to be, we come back to the question of: are the rapture and the Second Coming the same thing in the Bible? Most preachers will say, "Yes." Most church members who know anything about the Bible will say, "Yes." Most of the vast denominations will overwhelmingly say, "Yes. The rapture and the second coming are one in the same thing." Most of them will say, "There is no such thing as a millennium." So let's take a look and see what happens if you put the rapture and Second Coming together. The reason I'm doing this is so that you will understand that we are following a true biblical time schedule here, and that we are applying the Scriptures to the proper place here in this period of the tribulation that the book of Revelation deals with.

When Jesus Christ descends from heaven to set up His earthly kingdom, He is going to touch down at a very specific place on the face of the earth. That place, we are told, is the Mount of Olives. Zachariah 14:1 and Acts 1:9-12 spell that out. When Jesus Christ comes back to planet earth, His feet are going to touch down on the Mount of Olives. When Jesus Christ comes for the church, we have already seen in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, that He meets them in the air. There are two points that the Bible says that Christ is going to have a rendezvous. He has a rendezvous in the air in the future. He has a rendezvous in the future on the Mount of Olives.

The post-tribulationists say that Christians meet the Lord in the air, and then descend directly with Him on the Mount of Olives. You have an elevator effect. You go up, and you never get off the thing, and you come right back down. That is the idea. If this is true, notice what happens. There are many people on the earth. This is the church age. People all over the world are caught up to meet Christ in the air. A vast number of these people are gone. But there are many people left on the earth. Who are they? Unbelievers. The ones who have gone up have glorified bodies. The ones who have been left behind have mortal bodies. Then they turn around and come right back down (according to the post-tribulation theory), because this is supposedly at the end of the tribulation that this is happening.

Then Jesus Christ comes immediately back down with these believers that He has just taken, and He lands on the Mount of Olives. Here, all over the earth, are people indeed in mortal bodies. Here on the Mount of Olives, and out in space, are people in glorified bodies. All of the believers are saved, and all of the unbelievers who are on the earth are lost. Do you see the problem? How are you going to get people in mortal bodies to go into the millennium; to have children; to repopulate the earth; to form the nucleus; and, to be the group that joins Satan in the rebellion at the end of the millennium? These who are people who are saved in glorified bodies cannot bear children. Only these mortal people can, and these are all lost. We have already seen that the Jew, who is lost, is going to be put to death, and that the gentile who is lost is going to be put to death, so there's nobody left on the earth.

There's nothing Satan would like better than for this to happen. That would immediately frustrate the plan of God, and disaster would set in for all humanity, and for all eternity. So the post-tribulationist says that some people who are here are going to be saved when Jesus Christ returns. When they see Him return, that's when they're going to be saved. But the only people who are here are those who have the mark of the beast upon them. They cannot be saved.

The latest idea of the post-tribulationists is that the 144,000 are unbelievers; that they're not believers at all; and, that they are unbelievers who are standing around waiting for this moment when Christ steps upon the Mount of Olives, and the moment He steps on the Mount of Olives, they believe in Him. That way you have saved people in mortal bodies. But even that would only be Jews. The millennium clearly indicates that all nations will look to Jerusalem; that all nations shall recognize Jesus as king; and, that Israel will be but the leading nation of many other nations. So where are the gentiles going to come from out of those 144,000? Now that is poppycock exposition interpretation. There is no ground whatsoever for that notion in Scripture.

However, I'll tell you what the Bible does say. What I'm getting at is that the post- tribulation position, which has become widely accepted among people who should know better, is a position that is going to rob great security and great joy, and it is the first step in leading a person into spiritualizing Scripture. You cannot hold the post-tribulationist position without spiritualizing Scripture. And one of the Scriptures that they spiritualize most of all is John 14:1-3. This Scripture is like a meat hook. If you've ever been to a packing house, it's like a meat hook in a packing house where they take a slab of meat, and they put this thing on it, and they just stab it there through there, and it hangs there. And that chunk of meat just hangs there, dangling helplessly. The post-tribulationists are like a chunk of meat hung on the hook of John 14:1-3. They simply cannot do anything with it. I'm going to show you here what the smartest and latest writer of the post-tribulationists does with trying to get off that meat hook. And this is all you need. I don't care whatever else they talk about (the rapture and the Second Coming being separated by seven years or being one event), this Scripture itself will settle the matter for you. There are many other evidences that the two are separate events, but let's just work from this one alone.

Let's go to John 14:1-3. It is the night before the crucifixion, and they're in the upper room. Jesus tells these discouraged disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions (or apartments). If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 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 now." Now, exactly what is this Scripture saying about what Jesus is about to do? He's telling them that He is about to depart. "Oh, He means He's going to die the next day. Isn't that what He means?" How can that be going to His Father's house? He's talking about the fact that He is going to take up a permanent residence someplace as the God-man in His physical body. He is referring to that place as His Father's house, in which there are many dwelling places that He is specifically going to prepare for us. Jesus made it clear to them that He was their passageway (He was the way) to this place that He was going.

Now, where has Jesus gone? Where did he go from the Mount of Olives, when the disciples saw Him taken up out of their sight in the clouds? Where did He go? Well, obviously, He went to heaven. He is at the right hand (the Bible says) of God the Father. He has been there all during the church age. He did not go and sit here on the Mount of Olives. That is not where He is. He is in heaven, and that is what the Father's house is. That is where He is preparing a place. Then he says, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am, there you may be also." Now, where is He? He is up in heaven. That's where He is. He is not down here on the Mount of Olives. He says, "I'm going to come to receive you." He's talking about the rapture, the same thing we read in 1 Thessalonians 4. "And I'm going to take you to where I have been all during the church age, preparing a place for you, My bride, to come to. That's where I'm going to take you, because that's where I have been.

The post-tribulationists do a horrendous things to this passage. It is a meat hook right through their back, and they sit there and squirm. That's how they handle it. They fall into the thing I said: that if you are a post-tribulationist, you have opened the door to the worst possible danger in your dealing with Scripture, because you open the door to spiritualizing. They actually take this Scripture, and they spiritualize it. The foremost written by a post-tribulationist on the post-tribulation position was written by a man named Robert H. Gundry, in a book entitled The Church and the Tribulation. Gundry, in order to try to solve this problem of this passage (of this meat hook), has come up with an interpretation of spiritualizing what this means that is unique. He has the honor of having come up with something that nobody since the time of Christ ever thought of saying about it. Here's what he says. I'm quoting from page 153. First of all, he quotes Dr. Walvoord of Dallas Seminary from an article that he wrote in which Dr. Walvoord said, concerning John 14:1-3 that we just read. He said:

"Christ is promising to take His disciples to the Father's house when he comes again. The passage clearly teaches that the disciples will go from earth to heaven."

Mr. Gundry says, concerning that quotation:

"That, however, is exactly what the passage does not state. Indeed, the absence of such a statement makes one of the most remarkable features of the passage, and holds the clue to a deeper and truer understanding."

Now, those words flew up like red flags when I read them: "A deeper and truer understanding." That went back to our old boyfriends in the school of Alexandria who were looking for deeper and truer understanding of Scripture beyond the simple, literal meaning of the words. That was back to Origen's notion. Continuing (Here's the explanation of what these words mean – the deeper and truer meaning.):

"In order to console the disciples concerning His going away, Jesus tells them that His leaving will work to their advantage. He is going to prepare for them spiritual bodies within His own person. Dwelling in these abiding places, they will belong to God's household. This He will accomplish by going to the cross and then ascending to the Father. But He will return to receive the disciples into his immediate presence forever. Thus the rapture will not have the purpose of taking them to heaven. It rather follows from their being in Christ, in whom each believer already has an abode." So what does it mean that Jesus is preparing? He's preparing a dwelling place in his own person, is what he is saying. Quoting again from Gundry:

"We can now easily understand why Jesus said, 'I will receive you to Myself, that where I am there you may be also,' instead of, 'I will receive you to Myself, that I may take you to the heavenly mansions.' Believers already dwell in Christ – their abiding place." That is true. We are in Christ. But that is not the abiding place of John 14:1-3 unless you spiritualize what Jesus is saying about, "I'm going to My Father's house," which clearly is a symbol for heaven. Continuing:

"Hence, all that is needed at their meeting with Him is to be kept in His immediate presence forever more. We are not to deny a literal heaven, of course, but only to regard the context of John 14:1-3 as indicative of a spiritual relationship to the Father through union with Christ."

You might be interested in what Dr. Walvoord had to say about that. I found it interesting. He wrote a book called The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation (John Walvoord, president of Dallas Seminary). Here is his remark concerning that passage in Gundry's book:

"One is at a loss to know how to comment on such fanciful exegesis. If the passage says anything, it says that Christ is going to leave the disciples to go to heaven – not simply leave them by dying. The Father's house is not on earth, and Christ is not going to remain in the earthly sphere in His bodily presence. The expression, 'I will come' must be spiritualized and deprived of its real meaning to allow Gundry's explanation. To spiritualize the Father's house, and make it spiritual abodes within his own person is spiritualization to an extreme. The believer is unquestionably in Christ, but this is not the same as being in the Father's house. It is most significant that Gundry, who claims to be a literalist when he deals with the first passage that clearly reveals the rapture, is forced to spiritualization in order to avoid the pre-tribulation rapture. The extreme form of exegesis to which Gundry is driven in the passage is to escape the implication that the rapture is different from the Second Coming of Christ to set up His kingdom."

I read you those because I just want to give both authorities. These are considered the two highest authorities: Gundry for the post-tribulation rapture position; and, Walvoord for the pre-tribulation rapture position. I hope that we have outlined for you specifically what the problem is; that you see now where the book of Revelation will fit in the tribulation period; and, that you see now that it is impossible to join together the rapture and the Second Coming and still have people on this earth in mortal bodies to fulfill the millennial picture. All that you can do is to spiritualize away the passage in John. It means Jesus is going to meet us in the air, and He's going to take us into heaven.

Therefore, we are happy to leave with you the promise of Revelation 3:10 that confirms that rapture-in-the-air to heaven position: "Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation (the period of tribulation) which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth."

I leave you with 1 Thessalonians 5:8-9: "But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to attain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." We have not been appointed to the terrible period of wrath coming upon this earth, but we have been appointed, rather, to the completion of our salvation, which is the resurrection and the transformation of our bodies into a glorified state.

Hebrews 9:28 describes that ultimate return of the Lord a second time for that specific purpose: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation," unto the fulfilling of all that is involved in our salvation, which includes the transformation of our physical bodies. That event is described as our blessed hope. It is a thing we look forward to, and it's going to happen just that way.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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