***The Tribulation Period, No. 4

RV47-02***

Please open your Bibles once more to the letter to the Philadelphia church. This is segment number 16 in Revelation 3:7-13. The history of Satan has been one of seeking to build a kingdom on earth which is subject to his authority. Ever since the Garden of Eden, Satan has ruled the nations of the earth. As you know, on one occasion, he actually offered to make Jesus Christ the world's supreme ruler without having to go to the cross. He offered Him the nations of the world as His possession, and he could have delivered them. Satan's kingdom seeks to place mankind in opposition to God and to the divine viewpoint principles of Scripture. That is the whole name of the game. The kingdom of Satan is designed to indulge the evil desires of the old sin nature with its human good and its sins.

God has permitted Satan to have his day, and to demonstrate the total failure of the kingdom of man which Satan is creating. Neither Satan nor man is independent of God's sovereign authority, but both Satan and man like to act as if they were. The time of worldwide judgments upon this kingdom of Satan is rapidly approaching in our day. It is not far down the road. The tribulation era will be the time when God exposes the helplessness and the false claims of Satan's kingdom, when God exposes it for the deficient thing that it really is.

We have seen that the church, as the special royal family of God, will escape the divine judgments of the tribulation. Revelation 3:10 has said, "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." The Jews will suffer the worst persecution ever, but the Christians will escape it. Anyone who trusts in Jesus Christ during this seven-year tribulation period will suffer martyrdom.

**Liberalism**

Satan's goals, as expressed in what we call liberalism today, will be realized in all their bitter fruit for human beings. Never forget that all that liberalism stands for politically; economically; socially; and, religiously, always eventuates in bitter fruit for human beings. That's an oddity because the liberals claim to want to help people. And, sincerely, I'm sure they do. They think that their principles are going to expand the quality of human life to improve it. But history has demonstrated again and again that the concepts of liberalism are the concepts of secular humanism, and those principles always destroy human freedom, and when you destroy human freedom, you destroy everything that is of value to a human being.

We have seen what God is going to do when He exposes Satan's kingdom. Really, the tribulation period is kind of an era when God is just holding up this kingdom to public ridicule, because the devil thinks he has finally created something, and then the Lord begins tearing it apart right before the eyes of all humanity.

**The Seven Seals**

This is described for us in the Bible, first of all, under the series of judgments which are symbolized by a series of seals that Jesus Christ breaks upon a document. These judgments that come from each of these seals are what Revelation 3:10 says we are going to escape as believers.

1. **The First Seal**

Very briefly, the first seal declared that the antichrist would establish a Cold War peace upon this earth. He will be the ruler of the Western Confederacy of nations made up of nations that once were part of the Roman Empire around the Mediterranean Sea.

1. **The Second Seal**

The second seal indicates that wars still plague various parts of the world. This is taking place in the first three-and-a-half years of the tribulation era.

1. **The Third Seal**

The third seal indicated that the principles of socialism will have been incorporated worldwide, and, as always, they bring with them famine and poverty.

1. **The Fourth Seal**

The fourth seal indicates that death will become rampant in the world from various causes to the extent that one-fourth of the world's population will die. That is a horrendous number of people. When you think about the possibility that by this time, there'll be 4 billion human beings on the face of the earth. That means one billion people will die. That's 1,000 million human beings. We have never experienced anything like that in the worst of wars, let alone to find that many dead human beings at one time (in a short space of time), and having to dispose of the bodies, and everything that's involved in that kind of destruction.

1. **The Fifth Seal**

The fifth seal gave us a look into heaven where people, who have been martyred during this period of the tribulation, are promised vindication by divine justice against their oppressors.

1. **The Sixth Seal**

Seal number six indicates that God will turn loose a tremendous series of disruptive events in nature – natural forces which will be turned loose on unbelievers that will put them in such fear that they will actually try to hide themselves from God in caves of the earth.

1. **The Seventh Seal**

When the seventh seal is broken, it eventuates in seven trumpets. The seals go to trumpet's. These are, of course, just symbols. Out of these trumpets come again a series of judgments that are identified by each trumpet. This is in the middle of the tribulation period. The rapture has taken place earlier. Christians were removed. We come to the midpoint of three-and-a-half years. At this point, the great battle has taken place in outer space between Lucifer and Michael: the demon angels being with Satan; and, the angels of God being with Michael. The angels of God overwhelm the angels of Satan. Satan then is cast out of God's presence completely. This enrages him as he has never been enraged before. He is enraged in being defeated in the battle, and losing his access even to heaven. He can't even parade up there anymore. He can't even sound off. Up to this time (which is true now), he has been able to enjoy being able to go to heaven and call attention before God; the Lord Jesus; and, all the angelic hosts, to every evil thing we do, and every evil human good thing we do. He just loves to throw it up into the face of God. This is what is going to be stopped. This will enrage him.

**The Midpoint of the Tribulation Period**

He therefore turns with a fury against the Jewish people, whom he considers the source of all of his problems, and against believers, in particular. The antichrist at this time, which is here in the middle of the tribulation, rules the whole world because Russia and her military forces have been destroyed by God. Therefore, he moves in and becomes part of Satan's trinity of Satan; the antichrist; and, the false prophet. Satan proceeds from this point on (from the middle of the tribulation) to try to stabilize world conditions, and he does this with world government. This, of course, is the ambition of liberalism today – the concept is internationalism. The goal of liberalism today is world government. All individual volition will be overridden as Satan seeks to maintain control over mankind through economic domination. He will control what people can do in business matters, and what they can do in terms of even securing the necessities of life.

**The Last Half of the Tribulation Period**

Satan's kingdom enters the last half of the tribulation literally reeling from the judgments of God that have hit it under the seven seals. Satan is up there, and you can just see him. He's lost the battle in outer space with the angels of God. Like any normal military commander, the first thing he tries to do now is to regroup, and he tries to stabilize the situation militarily. He tries to stabilize the situation on earth. He himself knows that his time is running out because he knows this same timetable of Daniel, and he knows that there are only three-and-a-half years left. So he's got that much time to come up with some kind of a plan to outwit God.

**The Seven Trumpets**

So the second part of the tribulation begins with Satan trying to get the dust settled. The result is that immediately they are hit by the seven trumpet judgments.

1. **The First Trumpet**

The first we have seen was hail and fire, which destroyed one-third of the earth's trees and all of the green grass. The result of that destruction cause human and animal life to be destroyed as well, so, blood is flowing.

1. **The Second Trumpet**

The second trumpet blows, and a volcanic-like eruption takes place in the saltwater areas so that one third of the seas are turned into literal blood. Marine life dies, and a third of the world's shipping is destroyed. That is very serious. You can see what would happen if one-third, for example, of the oil-carrying vessels were destroyed overnight in our world today. You can see what an effect that would have immediately. These vessels carry the food; these vessels carry the oil; and, these are the vessels that carry all the things of civilization. Suddenly, one-third of them are put out of commission when a third of the seas are turned into blood. So, immediately, there is a great economic problem that has been interjected. Remember that Satan is trying to solve all this; trying to straighten it out; and, trying to keep control over a world that he has created – his kingdom on this earth, which is now rapidly deteriorating.

1. **The Third Trumpet**

Then, with the blowing of the third trumpet, a meteorite falls upon the freshwater areas and poisons one-third of them, so the people are in fear of drinking the waters because they are instantly fatal to them.

1. **The Fourth Trumpet**

Fourth trumpet is blown and the sun; the moon; and, the stars are diminished in their illumination. They are diminished by one-third of their capacity. That radically alters life cycles. That disrupts all kinds of things in nature: the cycles of animals; the cycles of one thing and another; the heat; the cold times upon the earth's surface; and, the effects of not having that heat that it normally would be expending. So, that has a devastating effect.

1. **The Fifth Trumpet**

Then the fifth trumpet is blown, and a real terror insect is turned loose upon the earth so that mankind is stung, and mankind is fed upon. These insects do not affect vegetation. They feed upon people. And the people that they bite are in great pain. They suffer, but they cannot die. Believer's, however, are immune.

1. **The Sixth Trumpet**

Then trumpet number six is sounded by the angels in Revelation 9:13. This trumpet reveals that an army of 200,000,000 destroys one-third of the world's population. You've already had one-fourth destroyed. Then if you destroy a third of what is left, that means that, at this point, one-half of the world's population has been killed. That is perhaps two billion people who now have been wiped out: Verse 13: "And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Loose the four angels who are bound in the great river Euphrates.' And the four angels were loosed who were prepared for an hour; a day; a month; and, a year to slay the third part of men." One third of humanity is destroyed: "And the number of the army of the horsemen were 200,000,000. And I heard the number of them." The army of 200,000,000 destroys one-third more of the world population.

"And thus I saw the horses in a vision, and them that sat on them having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions, and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three were the third part of men killed: by the fire; by the smoke; and, by the brimstone which issued out of their mouths, for their power is in their mouth, and in their tails, for their tails were like serpents, and they had heads, and with them they do hurt. And the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues, yet did not repent of the works of their hands – that they should not worship demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk."

If that wasn't in the Bible, that would be very hard to believe. It would be very hard to believe that people, who are experiencing the agonies and the worldwide terrors that people will be experiencing in the tribulation, and knowing that God is doing these things, would not repent. They would not change their minds. But that's always the fallacy that people have. People think that if you could just let people know what hell is going to be like, and if they could experience it, and if they could see it, they would change their minds. That is not true about the old sin nature. The old sin nature hates God; it is rebellious about God; and, it always seeks a way to evade the consequences of sin and of sinfulness. It always wants to outmaneuver God – not to obey God.

So, here you have an army of 200,000,000 destroying one-third of the world's population. These people, seeing what is happening, continue to worship demons and their idols representing those demons. Verse 21 says, "Neither repented they of their murders, nor their sorceries (their drug usage), nor their fornication, nor their thefts."

That seems to be a pretty good list. If you want to know what God really looks upon with horror and that He condemns, you've got a list right there. Murder is a thing that God condemns. Yet, we have a society which is finding out how to avoid people suffering the consequences of murder. The current trial that you are reading about and hearing about now in the news is opening up a whole new defense for criminal defense lawyers. That is the defense that if a woman has a husband who has been beating her, and who has been treating her in a way that she considers abusive, that there is question whether she is now justified in blowing his brains out in order to resolve the problem. It'll be interesting to see what happens in the current case, because that's the whole line of defense. This is a battered wife, and that is why she killed her husband. And if this case wins, you will see that this becomes a major approach to defending murder. But God says, "No, murder one is murder one, and it deserves the retribution of death."

The "sorceries" is the word referring to drug usage. Obviously, there is no letup of that. Fornication is self-evident; promoted; and, dignified. Then it's interesting that is says, "thefts," or "stealing." You might say, "Well, that doesn't seem too bad – stealing compared to these other things that are really terrible sins." Stealing seems kind of out of place there. But that's not the case with God. Taking that which doesn't belong to you is easy to do. This is characteristic of our society. Of course, where do we learn this from? Well, we learn it from government. This is what government does best in our country – it steals. The government is the expert in stealing from those who produce in order to give to those that it chooses to favor with its blessings.

So, here you have the sixth seal with a fourth of the world's population killed. That now totals one-half of that which was alive at the beginning of the tribulation. Death is becoming a fantastically common horror with all that's required in handling that many bodies.

1. **The Seventh Trumpet**

Then you come to trumpet number seven, and with the blowing of the seventh trumpet, another seven appears. This time it is under the symbol of bowls.

Each angel comes and he pours out a bowl which contains a series of the final judgments of God. Apparently, where this fits into the picture is right down near the very end of the tribulation period. By this time, humanity is reeling under the judgments of God. They are staggered by what is happening. It seems that the bowl judgments come very near the end. The reason for that is because the things that are poured out of these bowls are so terminal. They are just terminal to human life. Every judgment has in it something that just finishes people off, so that you couldn't go very long, or there wouldn't be anything left. So, it's right down at the end, where it's like somebody striking with a hammer on an anvil, and it's bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, one after another. You can just see the poor devil running around trying to straighten things out here. About the time he thinks he's got something straightened out here, something else blows up over here, and he rushes over there. He's running around here willy-nilly, trying to straighten things out. He's humiliated and he's embarrassed. His whole kingdom that is based upon the supposed sovereignty and independence of man is all coming apart within a matter of a short space of time.

So, let's look at the bowl judgments. The announcement out of the seventh trumpet is that the end of the tribulation is near. Revelation 11:15: "The seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven saying, 'The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.' And the 24 elders who sat before God on their thrones fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, 'We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who are, and was, and are to come, because You have taken to Yourself Your great power, and have reigned. And the nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that You should give reward unto Your servants; the prophets; the saints; and, them that fear Your name, small and great – and should destroy them who destroy the earth.' And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple, the Ark of the Covenant. And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail."

So here is the end – the shouting of the "Hallelujah Chorus" by the saints in heaven, because the tribulation period is about to end, and God is about to vindicate His integrity completely.

**The Seven Bowls of Wrath**

The seven bowl judgments then begin in Revelation 16. There's some intervening material. We'll be looking at that in more detail, and at all of these judgments in greater detail, when we get to them. We're just passing over them in a general way.

1. **The First Bowl**

Bowl number one is poured out in Revelation 16:2: "And the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and there fell a foul and painful sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast and upon them who worshiped his image." Remember that Satan's man, the antichrist, has now turned against the Jewish people that he once protected. He has set his own image up as the object of worship in the temple, and those who pledge allegiance to the antichrist, and thus to Satan, are worshiping this image. God pours out upon them running, festering sores which are painful and are highly contagious. God imposes, in other words, diseases which man cannot cure. That is really ironic, because this whole kingdom of Satan is based upon the fact that man has the intelligence and the capacity to be able to control his world, and to meet all of his needs apart from God. And here comes a disease that is widespread, for which there is no cure, and life becomes a little bit more unbearable.

1. **The Second Bowl**

Then comes bowl number two in Revelation 16:3: "And the second angel poured out his bowl upon the sea, and it became like the blood of a dead man, and every living soul died in the sea." Here, the sea is turned to blood, bringing death to all marine life. Now, it's everything. There is no saltwater area left on the face of the earth that is not just plain turned to blood. You can imagine the stench of the dead marine life, and you can imagine what this does again to the food source of a vast part of the earth's population when this food source is suddenly removed – parts of the earth that depend heavily upon marine life for their food.

1. **The Third Bowl**

Bowl number three is in Revelation 16:4: "And the third angel poured out his bowl upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood." Now, the freshwater areas are all turned to blood. "And I heard the angel of the water say, 'You are righteous, O Lord, who are, and was, and shall be, because You have judged thus, for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink, for they are worthy. And I heard another one of the elders say, 'Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

It's interesting that God the Holy Spirit, took time to record that verse 7 in the Bible – to say that God Almighty is true and righteous in His judgments. The integrity of God is untarnished. The liberal mentality reads these things and says, "If this is really literal, this is the most brutal kind of God the human mind could have ever invented, who would do such things to human beings." But the Scriptures make it clear that God is acting in integrity, not in brutality, and that this is judgment which people have brought upon themselves in spite of the patience of God to try to turn them around. They have literally shed the blood of God's saints, even as the terrorists have recently shed the blood of one of God's saints in Columbia. Except this is going to be on a widespread scale. Now the irony of the judgments of God says, "You have taken the blood of My saints. Now I'll give you blood to drink," because no matter where you go for water in its natural sources, it's just blood.

What do you think they're going to do? Well, blood is largely made up of water. I suggest that in their desperation, they're going to drink it. Have you ever tried drinking blood? That was one of the things forbidden to the Jews – to eat food with the blood in it, because of the characteristic of the blood carrying the life. It is forbidden to eat blood. But I dare say these people are going to drink it, and they're going to be glad to have it. And somebody may even come up and sell it as bottled blood, so there'll be some entrepreneur who thinks he can make a few dollars out of their desperation, and tell them that they have high quality blood to drink. It would be funny if it wasn't so sad.

1. **The Fourth Bowl**

Bowl number four comes along in Revelation 16:8-9: "The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God who had power over these plagues, and they did not repent to give Him glory." Now the sun is used to scorch mankind with intense heat, and they know where this is coming from. They know who's responsible for this – that God is doing this to them, and they blaspheme God. To "blaspheme God" means you "curse God." The foulest language you've ever heard in your life – that is what is going to be on the lips of mankind in general as they address God; as they talk to Him; and, as they scream up at Him in the agony of their heat. You can see what has happened here in Satan's world. He has lost his saltwater areas. He's lost vast quantities of food. He's lost the freshwater areas. Those have been turned to blood. Now, as if that isn't bad enough, humanity is placed under an intense heat lamp, so to speak, so that their thirst mounts precipitously. Now, they're desperate for something to drink, and there isn't any water to drink.

Does God know how to bring justice? Does God know how to bring man up short in all of his arrogance; all of his confidence; and, all of his cockiness? Indeed he does.

1. **The Fifth Bowl**

Bowl number 5 is then poured out in Revelation 16:10-11: "And the fifth angel poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast (that is, the antichrist). And his kingdom was full of darkness. They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds." They have these festering, running sores on them from the disease they can't cure. They've got the seawater turned to blood with all the stench of the dead life. Their fresh water supply has been denied them because it has turned to blood. They're under the intense heat of the sun, and now God removes the light, and they're in darkness.

The effect of this is something you've almost got to experience. If you've ever been in a cave, like if you've ever traveled, for example, through Carlsbad Caverns, one of the things they'll do on the tour when you get down deep into one of those caves is that they'll ask everybody to be perfectly quiet, and they turn out all the lights. That is intense darkness. It's a fantastic dark room. There is nothing to see. You can't see. No matter how you strain, it is nothing. It is fun there, because there's somebody giggling, so you know that there's somebody there. Those who get nervous – the more nervous they are, the gigglier they get because it's so scary. Then finally, the lights are going to come on. But here, you can't do it. You can't change it. They're in darkness. The darkness is everywhere. Whatever relief they can come up with, it has to be artificially produced, and there's never any daylight. It's just the gloom of darkness. It causes a physical reaction there. Their agony is so great that they chew their tongues. They begin gnawing on their tongues. The very pain that they're suffering causes them to grit down with their teeth, and to grit down on their tongues.

1. **The Sixth Bowl**

Bowl number six is in Revelation 16:12: "And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared." One of the power blocs in the world at that time will be the oriental armies. With the drying up of the Euphrates River, they will have open clear access to come sweeping down upon Israel in preparation for their part in the final phase of the Armageddon showdown. The campaign of Armageddon is a series of battles, and this is the final climactic campaign. The oriental armies come sweeping down. What are they doing? What they're doing is challenging the authority of the antichrist. Remember that he is the world ruler. What they are doing, in effect, is rebelling. With the removal of this natural barrier, they have clear access to the area of the world that has become his headquarters where his image is being worshipped, and where honor is being brought to him. He knows, therefore, that he has to turn around and hustle there, and get his forces together to meet the onslaught of the oriental armies that are sweeping down upon him. So, the scene, with this bowl, is being set for the final confrontation of all the armies of the world upon that great field, the field of Armageddon.

Last summer, I stood there, and looked across that vast area. It's really exciting to stand there. In your mind, you know that this is where it's going to take place. Right here is where it's going to take place. You stand there in the city of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives, and you say, "Right here is where it's all going to end up when the Lord Jesus Christ returns." He confronts these armies; He destroys them with the Word of His mouth; and, His feet touch down on the Mount of Olives. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords is finally here to begin His reign upon this earth. And it is going to be a devastated earth that he returns to. So, these armies are triggered into action by this bowl because the oriental armies are now sweeping down on the citadel of the antichrist's power.

1. **The Seventh Bowl**

Then bowl number seven is in Revelation 16:17: "And the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven from the throne saying, 'It is done.' And there were voices and thunders and lightning, and there was a great earthquake, such as was not, since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts (that is, Jerusalem), and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon came in remembrance before God to give onto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath (Babylon, which was the center of Nimrod's false religious system, epitomized today in the Roman Catholic Church). And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven – every stone about the weight of a talent."

Do you know how heavy that is? That is hailstones 100 pounds in weight. If you've ever been hit by a hailstone that's small, those are rocks that fall from heaven. Have you ever been hit by a 100-pound hailstone? Obviously not, because you're here. This is going to be a TV weather reporter's nightmare. He's going to get on the tube that night and say, "Folks, this afternoon, in several parts of the country, we had 100-pound hailstones falling." Who is going to believer that kind of nonsense? If they can keep the cameras rolling, they'll believe it.

And what's the reaction of men? Oh, they know who's doing this. They know it's that God up there that they've all turned against. They bear in their foreheads and on their hands the mark of their allegiance to the antichrist. They hate that God up there, and they know that He's doing this to them. The last part of verse 21 says, "And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for the plague was exceedingly great." This is not just one of your passing-through little hailstorms. It's going to be a huge event, and it's going to be extended for some time.

So, here you have a voice from heaven announcing the end of the tribulation judgments. You have giant worldwide earthquakes, greater than any in history before. Now, you have an earthquake here, you have an earthquake there. And we've had some really big ones recently. But this is the whole mantle of the earth just in a convulsion everywhere, so that there is sheer terror all over the face of the earth, as the earth rumbles in a violent agony, as God's judgment is coming to its final climactic blows. The city of Jerusalem is split into three major areas. Cities of the world collapse everywhere. There are great atmospheric disturbances. Political and ecclesiastical Babylon is destroyed. The islands sink in the sea. Mountains appear and disappear. With these huge hailstones, civilization under Satan comes to a screeching halt. It is total shambles, and their reaction is to curse God.

That, folks, is the era of the tribulation. That is what this letter to the Philadelphia church is referring to. That's why it is indeed a happy event to realize that you, who are Philadelphia type believers, because you are members of the body of Christ, are going to be spectators of all this. This is going to be a seven-year horror show that you will not be a participant in. We've had some big series on television, and some of them run for seven hours, and that's big stuff. But this is going to be a show that's going to run for seven years. You're going to have a front seat to watch the whole thing. You'll be its spectators. You will not be its participants. That is a great and tremendous blessing.

So, it's no small thing when we're told that this is something that we will not be part of. There are some believers who have not been able to grasp what Revelation 3:10 is promising. They don't fully see what the tribulation is in terms of its horror. They don't see that it is God's judgment upon those who dwell upon the earth (that is, unbelievers). They don't recognize that it is God's final judgment upon Israel (upon the Jewish nation) for having crucified Jesus Christ, and for having called down the blood of Christ upon their heads and upon the heads of their children. It is these people that God is bringing under judgment, and it is not those of us who have been born again. We have been preserved from that kind of judgment. We have not been called to that. We've been called to be preserved from that.

**A Blessed Hope**

So, we have a blessed hope. That blessed hope is that we will escape the tribulation period – a period that is going to be nothing but a nightmare.

**A Pre-Tribulation Rapture**

There is one very important verse that helps establish the fact that the rapture is pre-tribulation. What we're talking about is that some people are saying that the church is taken up in the rapture at the middle point of the tribulation period. That's called mid-tribulation rapture. Some say that the Christians are going to go all the way through the tribulation. That's called post-tribulation rapture. But the Scriptures really teach pre-tribulation rapture – that the believers go up before the period of seven years actually ever begins.

One very significant verse to indicate that is in John 14:3. In this verse, Jesus says, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." This is a promise from Jesus Christ that He's going to return from heaven. This is referring to a literal departure. He has just told them that He is going to go into the Father's presence. He's going to prepare a variety of living dwelling places of apartments for them. And He is going to prepare these places for the believers, His bride. And, of course, we know that He literally did depart. Verse 3 says that He is literally going to come back again. He promises to return. The purpose of His return is what? His purpose is to take Christians to heaven in their physical bodies from the earth to the place which God the Son has prepared for them in heaven. Now, there is only one event that could fit that picture. Here it is. We have God the Son. We have the Father's throne in heaven, and God the Son is sharing this throne. He is seated upon the throne when the Father tells Him to come down at the right time to receive the church. He does come down. He says, "I've gone into heaven. I've prepared a dwelling place for you. I'm going to come back for you, literally, to receive you unto Myself, so that you may be where I am." And where He is is in heaven – in the father's presence. That's where He says He is coming back to receive them to.

That is very clear language. The people who believe in the mid-tribulation and post-tribulation rapture take this verse, and you won't believe what they do to it as they try to wiggle and squiggle and spiritualized it, and get away from this literal meaning. I'm embarrassed for them to read their stuff. A lot of what they write is good and straightforward, and then they get to this foolishness of trying to put Christians in that nightmare horror that we've been describing. And this verse sticks in their throat like a broken chicken bone. It's like a piece of meat that you hung on a meat hook, and they sit there and they wiggle and they squiggle, and they try to get off of John 14:3. It's a hook into the mid-tribulation and post-tribulation raptures that they can't get off of.

The situation that is described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is the Son leaving His Father's presence; coming and meeting the believers in the air; and, then, when you add John 14:3, it tells us what happens when He meets them in the air – exactly what 1 Thessalonians 4 says: we go back to be with the Lord in heaven. Now, that is the rapture. But indeed, at the end of the tribulation, Jesus Christ once more leaves heaven. And the Bible is very clear that He ends up on the Mount of Olives. That's where he His feet touched down. The fault line that is now in the Mount of Olives causes it to split in half. But His dramatic arrival is right back there from whence He departed. So, the Second Coming is different from the rapture. At the second Coming, all that is described there is that He comes from heaven to earth. That's the opposite of the rapture. John 14:3 does not say that He comes from heaven to the earth. It says that He comes for the believers to take them back to where He is. The passages that deal with the Second Coming tell us that he actually comes to the earth.

**The Second Coming**

At the Second Coming (when He does come here), there are, of course, living believers on the earth. They have been born again in the tribulation time, because when the tribulation began, everybody who was a believer went to heaven with the Lord. Now, there are living believers. They are in their natural bodies. They do not have glorified bodies the way we of the church will have. They are just normal human beings who are born again with everything back to just where you are now. These believers now are taken out of the tribulation, and they begin the 1,000-year period of the millennium with Jesus Christ now reigning from His throne here on the earth – the throne of King David.

**The Millennium**

So, the Second Coming takes people who are believers on the earth, who are in physical non-glorified bodies, and they go into the millennium to populate the millennial earth. When the millennium begins, there are only believers. Whatever unbelieving Jews that are still living on the earth at the end of the tribulation, they're put to death. Whatever gentiles are still alive, they're put to death. That's what Matthew 25 describes – the sheep and the goats operation.

So, the millennium begins with believers. Some of us, however, the bride of Christ, have glorified bodies (resurrected bodies like Jesus Christ). But these people who lived through the tribulation, who were born again in the tribulation, go into the millennium with those human bodies – non-glorified bodies.

Let me pose a question: If the rapture (the catching up of the saints) is at the end of the tribulation, where are these believers going to come from to populate the millennial kingdom? The only place you can get believers in their natural bodies: to have children; to have families; and, for life to go on under the reign of the King of Kings, Jesus Christ – the only place you can get living born-again believers is those who are born again out of the tribulation. If those saints are all taken up after the tribulation, then you can't have anybody in normal human bodies (un-glorified bodies) to populate the millennial earth.

**A Comforting Hope**

So, that one verse makes it very clear that the return of Jesus Christ to preserve the church from suffering is before the tribulation, and the people who were born again during the tribulation then go into the millennium to populate that earth. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 says that the believers are going to be delivered from the wrath to come. That's talking about this same concept of pre-tribulation rapture: "And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come." Do you know what "the wrath to come" is now? It is the seals; the trumpets; and, the bowls. That is the wrath to come. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul made it clear that we Christians are preserved from that. For that reason, we can call this a comforting hope. In 1 Thessalonians 4:18, after describing the catching up to meet the Lord in the air, says, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words;" that is, comfort one another with the fact of the rapture. Well, it isn't a whole lot of comfort if you know that there's a lot of misery to come first. You'd rather die than be looking forward to the rapture. Who would want to look forward to be alive when the Lord comes if you know that, to do that, you have to go through this kind of terror on this earth? You'd say, "Lord, I'd rather die and go directly to heaven. Forget the terror, and I'll go that way. I don't want to be alive at the rapture."

The whole concept of being a blessed hope is removed. But it is nice. It is nice to think about going to heaven right directly alive the way Elijah did and the way Enoch did, without having to go through the intermediate stage of death.

The return of Jesus Christ is, therefore, imminent. If we had to have the tribulation first, we couldn't say that He's coming at any moment. But since we've been told we're preserved from this, there's nothing in prophecy that has to be fulfilled before the church can be removed. The next thing in prophecy is for us to be removed.

So, any mid-tribulation or post-tribulation rapture view is completely out of keeping with John 14:3. You can't fit that verse anywhere into any concept except a pre-tribulation rapture. That makes everything fall together of all the other things that have been described in Scripture concerning our preservation from this time of wrath upon the earth.

So, thank the Lord that this is your destiny. We hope that your heart will go out to the people that you know who are going to be in this tribulation period. Unless they turn from evil and turn to the living Savior and receive Christ, this is going to be their future.

I see that the new antichrist movie is out now. I don't know what's in it, but the advertisements in the movie page are that he's no longer a boy, but he's a man. How true! Those words may be more prophetic than they realize. In all likelihood, he isn't a boy anymore. He's roaming this earth as a grown man, just standing by to come into his political prominence, and to take his place in this tribulation world. Who knows? You might even know him yourself. ... He's around someplace, folks. In any case, you're secure and safe from him, even if he is right next to you.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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