***A Survey of the Revelation and the End Times

RV71-02***

The apostle John, as you remember, was the last of the apostles to die. In contrast to the others, John died a natural death rather than as a martyr for his faith in Jesus Christ. John lived almost to the year 100 A.D. Near the end of his life, he was sent into exile on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, off what is the coast of Turkey today, by the Roman emperor Domitian. Domitian was the first Roman emperor to wage a systematic persecution against the Christians. John was caught up in that first persecution. Domitian was doing this because he was seeking to restore the former glory, which had characterized the Roman Empire, by enforcing the old pagan religious systems which were based upon the religious expression created by Nimrod, way back in Babylon.

So, the core of the religion of the Roman Empire was the Babylonian mystery religious system of Nimrod. Domitian was trying to get people to begin practicing the worship of the ancient gods in order to try to restore the glory of Rome. Domitian, in the process, actually declared himself to be a descendant of deity, and thus to be a God. He required, as the representative of the state, sacrifices to be performed before his image. This was required at least once a year. It was an expression of loyalty to the emperor, and it was also an act of patriotism. Well, you can see immediately that the Christians would come into conflict with such a practice; would refuse to make sacrifices to the image of the emperor; and, would certainly refuse to call the emperor "Lord," which connoted deity.

**The Book of Revelation**

While John suffered in prison on Patmos, the Lord Jesus Christ, one Sunday morning, appeared to him and dictated what we have now as the contents of the book of the Revelation. Please remember that it is called the book of the Revelation (singular – not Revelations), though it does contain several visions. The Lord Jesus identifies Himself as the one who died on Calvary's cross as the sinless God-man to pay for the sins of mankind, and as the one who now is again alive.

**The Three Segments of the Book of Revelation**

Jesus Christ told John that the revelation he was about to receive would be delivered to him in three segments. We have this recorded in Revelation 1:19. The three segments were:

1. **The Things which you have Seen**

First of all: "The things which you have seen." John was told, "Write the things which you have seen." This is the vision that John had of Jesus Christ, and which he has recorded in Revelation 1:9-18.

1. **The Things that are**

Then, he is told that the second segment would be: "The things which are." "The things which are" referred to the current dispensation of the church age – the current condition of the church on earth. This we have covered in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 which, dealt with the seven letters to the seven churches.

1. **The Things which shall be hereafter**

John was told that the third segment of the revelation would be delivered to him under the title of: "The things which shall be hereafter." "The things which shall be hereafter" are recorded in the events from the rapture of the church through Revelation chapters 4 through 19. Then we pick up a period that has to deal with the millennium; then we pick up a period that has to deal with the matter of eternity; and, then some closing remarks. But basically this third section, "The things which shall be hereafter" is Revelation chapters 4 through 22. That's where we are now. We're going to begin this final segment of the revelation delivered to John.

**The Seven Letters to the Seven Churches**

"The things which are" were presented in the form of the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor. These churches faced a variety of problems which have characterized local churches since Pentecost. So, these letters are an invaluable guide for a local church ministry. That, as you well realize, is always a debate. What is the local church all about? What should a local church do? What kind of an organizational structure should it have? What kind of activities should it participate in? What is its main objective? What are the things that threaten that main objective of informing people concerning the issues of the Word of God? The warnings and the advice, therefore, of the Lord Jesus to each church, are a grand guidebook for the conduct of local church ministries today. We relate these basic procedures to modern times.

Also, we have indicated that these local churches reflect the historical development of Christianity on the earth from Pentecost to the present. We'll have a brief review of those, just to refresh your mind as to where we're coming from. This comes under this section of "The things that are:"

1. **Ephesus**

The first letter was to this church in the city of Ephesus. This represented historically the apostolic era from Pentecost to 100 A.D. We find, from the letter that the Lord sent to this church, that this was a period when the mental attitude of "agape" type love had begun to cool off among the believers, and the ill will and bitterness, that can so easily creep in among Christians, began to come in. The Lord condemned them for the fact that they were slipping away from their relaxed mental attitude that had so beautifully characterized this particular congregation. Their mental attitude love toward one another was slipping away, and was being compromised by a lot of little pettinesses, and a lot of little bitternesses that ought never to have been permitted to have been indulged in any way. That is the great tragedy of Christians walking around with their feelings on their sleeves, and walking around with a desire for a place in the sun; a place of exaltation; and, a place of commendation. This is what happens when Christians lose their base of spiritual orientation; that is, that everything about us is to be geared for the Lord's glory. When that is held, relating to ourselves and to others, then we treat people within the congregation with the same grace that God has treated us. These people in Ephesus were slipping away from the grace orientation basis that had once characterized them in such a magnificent way.

1. **Smyrna**

The second letter was to Smyrna, which historically represents the condition of the church from the year 100 to the year 314 A.D. This was the persecution period. During this period, the church is under attack by the civil authorities of the Roman Empire. Believers are living daily with the fear of personal suffering of various kinds and of physical death.

1. **Pergamum**

The third era is represented by the letter written to the church in Pergamum, which was the period from 314 to 600 A.D. This was the compromised period. This is the period when Christianity was declared the state religion of the Roman Empire, and the time when New Testament Christianity gradually became mixed with the Babylonian paganism of ancient Rome, and resulted in the conglomerate known today as the Roman Catholic Church. It was during the Pergamum period that the Roman Catholic Church gradually evolved – an amalgamation of genuine biblical Christianity, and then perverted by the incorporation of Babylonian mystery religious concepts.

1. **Thyatira**

The letter to Thyatira was the corruption period. It represents the period from the year 600 to 1520 A.D. During this period, the Roman Catholic Church dominates civil and religious matters, and is described in Scripture as a spiritual harlot. The authority of the Bible was replaced by the authority of the papacy, and there descended upon civilization the period that we refer to in history as the Dark Ages. Learning was abetted, and mankind descended into the grossest kinds of superstitions, and millions of human beings poured through the gates of hell into the lake of fire for all eternity, because the Roman Catholic Church was in charge for this period of practically 1,000 years.

1. **Sardis**

The letter to Sardis was next, representing the orthodox period: the years 1520 through 1750 A.D. This was the period of the Protestant Reformation that restored an inerrant Bible as the source of spiritual authority and information concerning God. This period, unfortunately, degenerated into formalized religion without the filling of the Holy Spirit. While they restored the authority of the Bible, they missed the great doctrine of the filling of the Holy Spirit, which was the key of New Testament Christianity. So, without the internal filling and the control of God the Holy Spirit, it was inevitable that this restored Christianity should very quickly degenerate into rituals and cold formalism that was detached from the lives and the minds and the convictions of the people who participated.

1. **Philadelphia**

The sixth letter was to Philadelphia. This was the Bible doctrine period: the year 1750 to the rapture. This period is still fully in operation, as indeed are all the others to some degree. This was the period that saw a revival of Bible study leading to the recovery of prophetic truths which had not been restored during the Reformation era. By and large, the reformers, who hacked out the doctrines of salvation and the doctrines associated with that, missed the boat, practically completely, when it came to what the Bible said concerning future events. Prophecy was not restored from the darkness of the Roman Catholic era of the Middle Ages. Along with this revival of the study of the Word of God also came the revival of missionary enterprise.

So, during this period, great missionary organizations arose, and the body of believers everywhere once more became concerned for the outreach of the gospel to the lost around the globe. They had also, at this period, the return of the dependence upon God the Holy Spirit in living and in service. That's what made the Philadelphia period such an enormous success, because they corrected what had been missed in the Sardis area (the doctrine of the filling of the Holy Spirit) and with the inerrant Bible in their hands (the guidance of God the Holy Spirit), the results were the magnificent blessings of the modern knowledge of the Word of God, and of the sudden moving forward of Christians to spiritual maturity in super grace levels such as had not been seen for centuries.

1. **Laodicea**

The final letter was written to the church in the city of Laodicea. This is the apostasy period: 1900 to the rapture. It is fully in operation with us today. This was the period of the rise of religious liberalism and the period when, again, the Bible came under attack, and its inerrancy (that is, that it is a book without mistake) was again brought under attack. Christians, consequently, fell into spiritual reversionism of the type that the letter to Laodicea says nauseates the Lord Jesus Christ. Today, the Bible is under attack. That is the key theological issue – that the Bible is a book which was produced by God in such a way that it is without error. Therefore, when we read something in the Bible, it carries absolute authority. If you listen to discussions of the Bible through various media, particularly on talk shows on television, you will become very much aware of the fact that we live in the Laodicean period where the Bible is rejected as the book that we must obey, because it is no longer viewed as the book which has come by supernatural provision from an omnipotent God who could fully provide us with a book that was accurate in every respect.

When we come now to Revelation chapter 4, we shift gears – from the earthly scene to a heavenly scene. In chapter 4, the Lord Jesus Christ begins His revelation to John which deals with the third section of the Revelation – of "The things which shall be hereafter" (future events). This is, therefore, the period after the rapture of the church, when the church is removed from earth to heaven. John, himself, is taken in a vision into the future, and he sees the consummation of world history. We now begin one of the most important sections of the Word of God, because this is the section that gives perspective to what is happening in world events today. This is where history is moving. If you have the background of Revelation chapters 4 through 19, you will understand what is taking place today in a way that will thrill your soul. You'll see how God is on the move, and how we live in the intensified stage of the angelic conflict.

The devil is moving things into high gear. The demonic host is extremely active, because they see that, immediately on the horizon in the near future, all hell is going to break loose upon this earth, as chapter 4 of Revelation begins to be put into operation. We are talking about future events. The things which now follow deal with the reign of human viewpoint, and the reign of terror of that seven-year period on the earth that the Bible refers to as the tribulation era. Revelation chapters 4 through 19 deal thus with the climactic events in world history during the seven-year period which immediately precedes the Second Coming of Christ to this earth. This period of the tribulation is future for mankind as of today.

**The Rapture of the Church**

From Revelation 4 on, the church is no longer on the earth. We're dealing with the tribulation, and the church does not go into the tribulation. The church is in heaven. The rapture event has already taken place. There are a variety of indications that this is the case – that beginning with chapter 4, the church is no longer on earth. The Christians have been taken off the earth. The things that are going to be described now that are happening to the earth will in no way affect those of you believers who sit here today. Believers of the church age are removed. This is indicated in a variety of ways.

One indication, for example, that you may have noticed is in Revelation 3:22. We have an expression which has been repeated at the ends of these letters: "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches." This is an admonition for positive volition response to the information which has just been given. And in the seven letters, it is information which is given directly to the churches, and they are called upon to respond as members of the body of Christ.

If you turn to Revelation 13:9, you see the same call for positive volition response to the information which is given at this point, but with a very significant omission: "If any man has an ear, let him hear." But it does not say, "What the Spirit says to the churches," because, in Revelation 13, you're deep into the tribulation, and the church is not on earth, and God is not speaking to the church. The Lord is dealing with the unbelieving world. He is not dealing with the church. So, that omission is significant at that point: "To the churches" could no longer be added.

I do want to stress something up front as we get into this period: You are going to, sooner or later, come up against believers who are going to agree with you concerning what the Bible teaches of future events, but who are going to be very insistent that you, as a Christian, are going to be in these terrible events, and that the things we are going to study henceforth are not things that you will escape, but will be things that you, as a believer, will suffer. There is a debate among these people. Some of them think you're only going to suffer the first three-and-a-half years of the tribulation. Some think that you'll suffer the whole seven years.

So, let's put it right up front that the rapture, when Christians are caught up to meet the Lord in the air (caught out of the world to meet the Lord in the air), and the Second Coming of Christ, when He comes down to this earth, are two different events. During the millennial rule of Jesus Christ on this earth, the Bible reveals to us that the world will be populated by born again Jews and gentiles who are still in their mortal bodies. When the millennium begins, it will begin with a world full of people who are in the same condition that you are now, relative to your physical body; to your soul; and, to your human spirit. They will be the same kind of mortals as you and I are today. Let's notice that that is the kind of people who go into the millennial kingdom.

For example, in Matthew 24:29, we read, "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 Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." This passage deals with the end of the tribulation period. It ends in one great, horrifying, dramatic evidence of the wrath of God out in space (out in the heavenly areas). The stars will respond to giving the signal that something dramatic is about to happen.

At that point, Jesus Christ bursts forth from heaven coming back to this earth. Then all the smart-alecs and all the sophisticated intellectuals with all their PhDs and doctorate degrees and sophisticated religious intellectualism will fall in grief to their knees. They will scream out in horror. The Scripture says, "They will mourn." And, boy, it means they will mourn. They will be torn to the innermost parts of their being, as they will realize how wrong they have been. Remember this the next time that you hear one of these sophisticates talking on some television talk program, dismissing the Bible.

Recently, when I was in Chicago, I was listening to a program, and hearing a professor from a Catholic university sneeringly speaking to one of the speakers (who happened to be Tim LaHaye) about this notion that these fundamentalists have that there is a great power in the north (Russia) who is going to come down and cause great world turmoil, and going to create the great events that are going to bring back the return of Christ. As I sat and listened to this man, who carries great prestige (and that's why he was on that program), I thought how he is going to be torn within him someday, when those things that he sat there sneering at, will indeed come to pass right before his very eyes.

The Bible tells us here that the Lord is going to send out angelic beings to gather, from all over the earth, human beings who are born again, not in the body of Christ, but who are born again as on Old Testament ground, and who have survived the tribulation. And they will be gathered in to enter the millennial kingdom. That's what this passage in Matthew is referring to.

In Ezekiel 20:34, we have this information repeated relative to the Jews. The Matthew passage concentrates particularly upon born-again gentiles who survived the tribulation. Ezekiel prophesies, quoting the Lord God: "And I will bring you out from the peoples, and will get you out of the countries, in which you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured forth. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face-to-face." What he is saying here is that God, at the end of the tribulation, will gather up the Jews who survive and who are on the face of the earth – some who are born again, and some who are lost. He will come to them face-to-face, and He will bring them under the judgment relative to their condition of salvation.

Verse 36: "'As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,' says the Lord God. 'And I will cause you to pass under the rod.'" That is a technical expression for: "And I will put you to death:" "I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against Me, and I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord" (that I am Jehovah). This passage is telling us that God will judge the Jews, and those who are saved will be taken into the millennium – in their mortal bodies, the way that they are constituted right now. The Jews who have rejected the testimony given by the 144,000 evangelists during the tribulation era – those Jews will be put to death.

In Matthew 25:31-46, we have this again laid out for us. I'll let you read that at your leisure. This is where the Lord is pointing out that these gentiles, who are born again and who evidenced their new birth by the way they treated the Jew who is under the attack of the antichrist, and who assisted him when he was hungry; when he was thirsty; when he was in need of clothing; and, when he was in prison – hazarded their own well-being, because they were believers as gentiles. Again, they were not part of the church, but believing gentiles who reached out, and in mercy, helped the Jew in his night of terror. They will be told that the Lord is receiving them on the basis of their testimony of faith in Christ, and that while they were not aware of what they were doing, the Lord was well aware of what they were doing.

So, Matthew 25:45 says, "Then He shall answer them, 'Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to Me." These are those who rejected. On the other hand, for those who did it, it says, "As you did it to the Jew, you were doing it to Me. You wouldn't help him: you wouldn't help Me."

Then verse 46 "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." What's he talking about? He's talking again to the gentile world at the end of the tribulation period. Some gentiles in mortal bodies will go into the Millennial Kingdom, and some will be put to death. So, right at the beginning, the Bible is very clear. I take the time to call these passages to your attention, because this is a key factor. When the millennium begins, there have to be people who are in mortal bodies, just as we are today, who can bear children; who can go through all the processes of living; who have all the physical and emotional needs that we have today; and, who have all the social relationships and social arrangements that are necessary today. Life moves on into the millennium with people who are in bodies capable of continuing life as it is now.

**The Millennium**

The Bible is very clear that that is the condition when the millennium begins. They are all born again, and that's refreshing. There is not a single unsaved person on the face of the earth when the millennium begins, but they are in the same mortal condition as we are now. These regenerated mortals, making up the nations of the world, move on into the marriage relationships and all the other relationships of life, and the result is that children are born. It is these children, who are born to these godly, born-again people during the millennial age, who form the core of rebellion against Jesus Christ at the end of the millennium, which is described in Revelation 20:7. 1,000 years have gone by. Jesus Christ has reigned over the whole earth. It began with an earth of mortal human beings who were all born-again. Children have been born. And some of these kids, while being held in line by the authority of the King who is ruling the world, Jesus Christ, never pledged Him their allegiance and faith. They are lost people.

Revelation 20:7: "And when the 1,000 years are ended, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison." During this 1,000-year period, people are tempted by their sin natures. They are, in a very limited way, tempted by the effect of the world, because the world is going to be considerably revised. This is when the concepts of the Moral Majority will be fully implemented by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So, what people are exposed to will not be the high level of temptations that they are exposed to today. Satan himself and his demons will be completely of the picture from being in any way a source of influence for evil upon people.

However, at the end of the millennium, Satan is loosed from his prison so that he can once more go out to make one last move, and play one last ace-in-the-hole, which are these children born during the millennial era to try to yet bring off his rebellion against God, and to push God off the throne.

Verse 8: "And shall go out to deceive the nations, which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for battle, and the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." That's amazing, isn't it – that there are going to be that many unbelievers in the various nations of the world that it could be described as the sands of the sea? That's one of the things that the dispensation of the kingdom will demonstrate. Even when you have Jesus Christ right before you, and seeing His power, and seeing the kind of a wonderful world (the golden age of mankind) that He has brought about, yet they will rebel against Him, and they will not subject themselves to Him as their Savior and Lord.

You can see why it was a stupid statement on the part of the religious leaders of Israel that screamed at Jesus Christ, when He hung in agony on the cross, "Come down off the cross, and we'll believe you." Or when they said on another occasion, "Bring somebody from the dead." The rich man wanted to have somebody rise from the dead so that his five brothers would not come to the agony of Hades that he was in, and that they would believe. No, they won't. They won't believe. If Jesus Christ had come off the cross, they wouldn't have believed. They wouldn't believe if someone had come back from the dead and told them," I've been there, and it is terrible." They will not believe unless they are ready to exercise their positive volition. That's why your eternal destiny is hinged on your own decision. You have the capacity to say, "Yes" to Christ, and you have the capacity to say, "No." You will bear the consequences either way. Make no mistake about that.

Verse 9: "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and encompassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." That finishes off that group of mortals. But all of this is a picture of people who are in their physical, mortal bodies, who begin the millennium; who continue through the millennium; and, who produce a new generation that multiplies to such an amazingly great degree, and rebels against Jesus Christ.

When the Lord returns from heaven to set up His earthly kingdom, we are told that He is going to descend to the Mount of Olives outside of Jerusalem. This was no secret in the Old Testament. Zachariah 14:1-4 points out that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is going to return someday to the earth. And when He comes for the purpose of setting up His earthly kingdom, He will arrive in the land of Palestine on the Mount of Olives: "Behold, the day of the Lord comes, and your spoils shall be divided in your midst. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravaged (raped). And half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city."

"The day of the Lord" is a technical expression in the Bible. Verse 1 says, "Behold, the day of the Lord comes." The day of the Lord includes the period of the Tribulation and the period of the millennium. The day of the Lord is made up of the tribulation and the millennium. He is describing the first part here, the day of the tribulation. Then in verse 3, he picks up the latter part of the day of the Lord, the millennium: "Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the East. And the Mount of Olives shall cleave in its midst toward the East and toward the West, and there shall be a very great valley, and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south."

Two summers ago, it was a very great thrill to me to stand on the Mount of Olives, east of the city of Jerusalem, looking down at that magnificent display in the layout of the city of Jerusalem, glittering there in the morning sunshine, and to realize that we were standing on the very spot where Jesus Christ (Zachariah told us) is going to touch down when He returns a second time from heaven. That was the very spot. And when His feet hit that top of that Mount of Olives, it's going to split in two, and a great valley will appear between those two halves. It will be a great demonstration that the God Creator has arrived on the scene.

In Acts 1:9, the New Testament confirms this prophecy of Zachariah concerning the return of Christ and the location of that return: "And when He had spoken these things (that is, Jesus), while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." They've all gathered. Jesus and His disciples have gathered up on the Mount of Olives. And suddenly, He begins floating up in the air in front of them. He begins going up to heaven: "While they look steadfastly toward heaven, as He went up, behold, two men (that is, angelic beings) stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.' Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is, from Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey." He ascended from the Mount of Olives, and the angel said, "He's going to come back just the way you saw Him go. As you saw Him leave, you're going to see a return trip the same way right back to this same place. But in the meantime, the question is: why are you standing, gazing up into heaven?"

That's a good question for a lot of Christians who are standing around, gazing up into heaven, waiting for a better day, waiting for something wonderful to happen, when the point of the angelic being was, "Gentlemen, the time has come to get to work. You are the witnesses. You have the gifts. You have the capacity. And I'll guarantee you that you've only got a few years to do it. You've got a short lifetime: 70 years at best. Most of you won't make that. You've got a short time. Stop standing around looking into heaven. Stop dreaming. Stop riding on the top of the mountain, and get into the battle of the angelic conflict that has now begun in its intensified period."

**The Rapture**

So, we have this picture thus far. When the millennium begins, it will have mortals on this earth, just as people are now. Jesus Christ, when He returns to this earth to inaugurate that Millennial Kingdom, we will touch down on the Mount of Olives. But the Bible also describes another coming of Jesus Christ that simply does not fit that picture at all. You're all acquainted with the passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:16: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, 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 in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. So, shall we ever be with the Lord."

Here you have two distinct pictures in Scripture. You have the Mount of Olives. You have the Bible telling us that when Jesus Christ comes back to the earth the second time, He will descend and His feet will touch down upon the Mount of Olives. But you have another picture here such that when Jesus Christ comes specifically for we who are Christians, whether we be dead or alive, the Christians who are here on the earth are going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then He will return with them. Those are the two pictures that are in the Scripture that are very distinct. The Mount of Olives arrival means that He now descends and proceeds to institute the Millennial Kingdom. He does not return to heaven. You have these two pictures.

Now, the Bible does not contradict itself, and it is necessary for us to relate these in some way. The explanation is not all that complicated. This first future return is the rapture event. The word "rapture" means "to be caught up" ("to be taken") to meet the Lord in the air. This second future return is the Second Coming event. The point is that these two events are distinctively separate events. There are, however, believers who hold the same faith in the Bible (the same inerrancy of Scripture view) who have come to the conclusion that the rapture of the church is not before the seven-year tribulation. They believe that the Christians are not taken up at the point before the tribulation, but rather that the Christians are taken up after the tribulation is over. This means that everything described in Revelation 4 through 19, you potentially will experience, if that position were true, which it isn't. Post-tribulationists, however, are also faced with this problem. They know that these two returns are described in this way. So, the question is: how do we relate them?

So, they come up with this concept that the Lord Jesus Christ does this: The Lord Jesus Christ, descends from heaven. The Christians are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then He comes down and touches upon the Mount of Olives with them. The explanation is that the rapture and the Second Coming are one event, which they are not. This is a very serious mistakes. They try to relate it in this way, so that they can bring these two distinct types of comings together, which are clearly described in the Bible. What they say is that the Lord simply immediately returns from the air to the earth. They never go back to heaven.

Remember that when this rapture takes place: who is it that goes up? It is born-again people. It is members of the body of Christ. Those are the only born-again people there are. Anybody who is a Jew, as such, who is not trusting in Christ as Savior is going to hell. Any gentile who is not trusting in Christ as Savior is going to hell. These people, as a matter of fact, within the era of the tribulation, will be clearly marked as going to hell, because they're going to have the mark of the antichrist upon them. The mark of the beast will be there identifying them as doomed creatures whose allegiance is to the antichrist, and who are headed for the lake of fire. Once you get the mark of the antichrist, there is no return. Once that mark is stamped upon you, you cannot be born again.

During the period before the tribulation here on this earth, the only people who were saved are those of us who are members of the body of Christ. That's the only program that God is dealing with now. So, suddenly the rapture takes place. What happens here on the earth? The earth is wiped clean of every born-again person. The only people you have left on this earth are people who are in their mortal bodies, who are unbelievers.

Notice the problem: Suppose this idea were true – that the rapture takes place at the end of the tribulation, and we meet the Lord in the air. The earth is wiped clear of all born-again people. Then the Lord turns around, and comes right back down to the earth immediately to touch down on the Mount of Olives with all the body of the born-again believers. How is Jesus Christ going to come down to begin the millennium of born-again people who do not have glorified bodies? Those of us caught up in the rapture will have glorified bodies. That means your body will no longer be mortal. It will no longer be subject to death. It will be cleansed of the genetic defect of the sin nature. You will no longer not only not want to sin, but you will not be capable of sinning. You will be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. In your experience, you will have the perfection (the holiness) that characterizes the Son of God. That is the kind of a person you are. You come down here, but while you are going to be on this earth, you are in a glorified body. But there are no born-again people here in mortal bodies, because all of those are to be put to death. As we read, when Jesus Christ comes, those who are unbelievers who are in mortal bodies will all be put to death.

So, when you have this idea, where you do not separate the rapture and the Second Coming, you end up with an earth that has no people who are born-again; who are still in mortal bodies; and, who can bear those children who can create that basis of rebellion that is described in Scripture at the end of the millennium.

This position is called the post-tribulation rapture ("post" means after the tribulation). When the post-tribulation people are faced with this, some of them come up and say, "Well, that indicates that the people who are on this earth, when Jesus comes with the Christians, are going to be given a second chance to be saved, and many of them will believe at that point, and then they will populate the earth as born-again mortals." But the problem with that argument is that the only people who are on the earth at this point have the mark of the beast on their forehead or in their right hand. Therefore, with that mark, they cannot be saved. They are already under the condemnation of God.

Some pre-tribulation rapture people say that the 144,000, that we read of in Scripture as testifying for God, are actually unbelievers, and that they are saved when Jesus comes and touches down on the Mount of Olives, and that those 144,000, at the point of his Second Coming, then become the born-again mortals to populate the millennial earth. Well, the problem with that, as we have already shown you earlier in this session, is that the born-again mortals that populate the millennium come from two categories: gentiles; and, Jews. This would only give you Jews. How would you like a millennium with nothing but born-again Jews, with no gentiles in there? ... No, there's a difference. You have problems there, obviously, with trying to fit that kind of a picture together.

So, the post-tribulation rapture person has no believable solution for the problem of having saved mortals on earth when Jesus Christ returns and touches down upon the Mount of Olives.

The conclusive passage, perhaps, as we tie this session up, is in John 14:1-3. Jesus says this to His disciples: "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me." This is the night before the crucifixion. "In My Father's house are many mansions (or apartments). If it were not so, I would have told you. And I go to prepare a place for you." So, Jesus says, "Right now, I am here in heaven, and I am preparing dwelling places for you in heaven."

Verse 3: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again." He is talking to Christians. Where does He come again for us? At the rapture event: "I will come again, and I will receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." And where is He? He is up in heaven. That's where He is, and that's where He's going to return to. So, the event that we have described in 1 Thessalonians perfectly coordinates with these verses in John 14. He is going to take us to where He is.

**The Judgment Seat of Christ**

Of course, that's exactly how the Scriptures fall together. During the seven-year tribulation period here on earth, we are in heaven, and we're marching up one-by-one before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and we're having our report card issued to us relative to our good works, and thus to the rewards which we have earned by our Christian service. That seven-year period is where we're going to get all the information about ourselves without any conning; without any kidding; and, without any deception, as we are prone to do it now.

Also, during that time, we will be married to our Lord Jesus Christ. We, His bride, will now be married to the Savior in heaven. We have the Judgment Seat of Christ; the marriage ceremony; and, then, at the end of the tribulation period, when Jesus Christ comes at the Second Coming, we indeed come with Him. We join Him in this coming to the earth. We're part of that group. We are in these born-again glorified bodies, and we come down to the earth, and we begin the celebration of our marriage. The millennium is the marriage supper of the Lamb period when the whole millennium is one great big celebration of our union with Jesus Christ in the intimacy of a husband to a wife. This was never permitted to a Jew of the Old Testament. You are the unique; the exclusive; and, the select of God, as no other group of human beings on the face of the earth have ever been. John says that Jesus is going to take us back to heaven, and that we will then return with Him to the Mount of Olives.

Some post-tribulation rapture people say that the passage doesn't say that Jesus is going to take the church to heaven. They say that it's to the Mount of Olives, but that, obviously, doesn't fit when He says that He's going to take us to where He is. The fact is that the Lord has been sharing the Father's throne in heaven (not on Olivet), and that's where He's going to take us. So, the Christian is going to meet the Lord in the air, not on Mount Olivet.

Well, the post-tribulation rapture person actually finds this passage in John like a meat hook that someone has hung him on. No matter how much he squirms and wiggles, he can't get off of it. What he finally does is that he spiritualizes the passage. I will not burden you in this session, but I'm telling you, I could read you some explanations from their writings that will cause you to go bug-eyed and say, "I can't believe that anybody, with a doctoral degree and some knowledge of the Scriptures and everything else they have, can come up with such an absolute nonsensical, perverted, spiritualizing of John 14:1-4 to try to escape the statement there that so clearly distinguishes between the event of the rapture and the event of the Second Coming."

All of this is preparatory for us to join John now at the beginning of Revelation 4, which we shall do next week. The first thing we're going to do is to walk into heaven itself. I don't know when the last time was that you walked into heaven, but we're going to walk right into heaven with John, and we're going to see some things that are breathtaking and astounding right off the bat. But we want you to understand that when we walk into heaven, you will be seeing a preview of the scene that you will experience someday when you are in that heaven. John is going to see a condition after the rapture. He's going to see the condition where we are there, and you're going to walk in like a dream. You look at yourself and you see yourself, and you say, "Well, look there. There are my friends. Look at this." You're going to see them all. It's all going to be like a dream that you're just living through, and that you're experiencing. But it's important that you understand that, beginning at Revelation 4, the rapture is past, and the Second Coming in the future. Stay with us. We'll go on next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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