

Raptured Away?

Many people are confused about just when the resurrection takes place, many believing in a rapture seven years before Christ's second coming, so that they believe they will not experience *any* of the Tribulation, some believing in a resurrection at the second coming, at the end of the Tribulation, and just a few believing in a mid-tribulation resurrection when Christ returns for His saints.

We can see from Matthew 24 however, that the resurrection of the Saints is preceded by the "tribulation of those days," and the heavenly signs, verse 29. *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:"*

It is then that we see the coming of the Son of man, verse 27, *"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."*

This event causes all the earth to mourn in trepidation, verse 30. *"And then shall appear the sign of 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."* Why should that be?

Well, the answer lies in Rev 14:6-7. *"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."*

This message is miraculously announced to all men and women on the earth in dreams and visions, as the very first event of the last 7 years before Christ's Kingdom, three and a half years prior to Christ's arrival for the Saints (see our article *Dreams and Visions*). Most people, at least "Christians", rejoice to hear about His return, but take little notice of verse 7, which warns of the need to honour God's commandments, by repenting in true worship before God's coming judgment.

Please understand that these two verses are merely a brief summary of the very graphic events of the Tribulation in much amplified detail, which the angel provides in dreams and visions to everyone on earth, a staggering world-wide phenomenon. In the next three years or so come great troubles, and the world sees the arrival of the Beast Power in Europe, led by the Beast or Anti-Christ, which you can read of in Revelation 13. Latterly, this man actually begins to claim that He is the returned Christ, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. *"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."*

Most people will be deceived, and even true Christians fall away from the truth after seeing the miraculous powers of the false prophet, inspired by Satan the Devil, and begin to worship the Beast - Revelation 19:20, *"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image."*

Rev 13:13, *"And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men."*

As we saw from the Matthew 24 account, the saints do experience the “tribulation of those days”, which is described in verses 5-8. *“For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”*

These terrible, earth shaking events are followed by the persecution of the saints by the Beast, verses 9-11. *“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.”*

The identical events are also described in Revelation 6:2-11, where they are called “seals”. *“And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another and there was given unto him a great sword. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”*

After the 5th seal, we read once again of the heavenly signs, Revelation 6:12-14, *“And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.”*

These awesome signs in the heavens, as we saw in Matthew 24, precede the arrival of Jesus Christ upon the sea of glass at the 6th seal - Revelation 6:15-16, *“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:”*

When Jesus Christ has arrived for His *faithful* Saints, in the clouds, visible to all on the earth, the realisation dawns that the world has failed to repent and will now actually face the horrors of judgment for their sins, about which they were warned, in their dreams, three and a half years previously. This realisation, that everyone now faces the wrath of the True God, causes all humanity to tremble in fear. Most Christians have been deceived into believing that they will be spared ALL the Tribulation by being raptured away into heaven, at the very start of the last 7 years.

Obviously this is not so, for, as we read, some true Christians are persecuted and killed at the 5th seal, having already lived through the previous four seals. God however, promises protection for the

righteous, - (2Peter 2:9, *“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished”*) but some recognise right from the start of the last 7 years that the end time has arrived, with the prophesied dreams and visions. So they are not then afraid to witness to the world about the dangers of worshipping the Beast, and so some of them *will* pay with their lives, in the full realisation that their resurrection is only a few months away, at the very next and sixth seal!

How can we know for sure that the resurrection does occur then, at the 6th seal, as there are those who claim that the resurrection will not occur until the last trumpet at the conclusion of the 7th seal, when Jesus Christ arrives *with His Bride* (Revelation 19:7) to set up His Kingdom here on the earth?

At this point it is important to remove the main stumbling block to a correct understanding about the resurrection – 1Corinthians 15:52. *“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.”* Many of us have read this verse and concluded that the resurrection can only take place at the 7th trumpet of Revelation 11, at the very end of the last 7 years!

As you will see as we progress, from the whole counsel of God, this is mistaken, but what about this verse? Firstly, there is evidence from history that the phrase ‘last trump’ was a colloquial Greek phrase commonly used at the time, alluding to ranks in the military (see Vines Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words and Bullinger’s Companion Bible.) More important though, is the evidence which you can see from the Bible itself!

We will see that the elect do not go through **the Great Tribulation** – the last 3 1/2 years. The trumpet of the 7th angel cannot be the same trumpet as 1 Corinthians 15:52, because it is blown **after** the resurrection, after Christ’s return and the establishment of His rule. Revelation 11:15 *“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”*

The trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52 that summons the church to rise is blown **before** the resurrection! The Corinthian trumpet is singular – not part of a series at all. The trumpet in Corinthians calls the believers into Christ’s presence, but those in Revelation all introduce God’s fearful judgments upon the earth.

The equivalent Thessalonians trumpet is called “the trump of God” (see the following same events, Zechariah 9:14, *“And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the LORD God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south,”* and Psalm 18:14, *“Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.”*) but the 7th trumpet is **blown by an angel!**

The Corinthian trumpet sounds briefly, “in the twinkling of an eye,” but the 7th trumpet of Revelation 10:7 indicates a long sounding over the whole period of the judgment of the 7th trumpet.

After the Corinthian trumpet, the Saints are rewarded in heaven by their marriage to Christ. After the trumpet of Revelation 11 the Saints are rewarded on earth by their rule with Christ, *after* He has started to reign.

The trumpet in Corinthians cannot literally mean the “last trump,” because Isaiah 27:13 mentions yet

another trumpet blown to bring the scattered remnant of Israel home to Jerusalem, after Armageddon.

In the instructions given about the assembly of the Israelites at God's command in the Exodus, the last trumpet was for those with the rank of princes, the heads of thousands – Numbers 10:4, *“And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee.”* The trumpet sounded in 1 Corinthians 15:52 is similarly the final command of the Lord to gather His saints *before* their transformation.

Much more important than just this one verse however, is the whole counsel of God, revealed by all relevant scripture. We must understand that the first six seals take three and a half years, and the 7th and last seal also takes three and a half years (see our article *The Tribulation – How Long?*) The “tribulation of those days”, the first 3 and a half years, is bad enough, but the Great Tribulation, (Revelation 7:14, *“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of ‘the’ – Greek] great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,”*) will be an unprecedented outpouring of the wrath of God, which very few will survive!

The scriptures reveal that the Saints, those true Christians who are fully prepared, (Matthew 25:1-10) are taken out of the way, and do not experience the Great Tribulation, or Wrath of God. 1 Thessalonians 1:10, *“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come,”* and 5:9, *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ”*, and also Revelation 3:10, *“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”*

The resurrection takes place ‘in the twinkling of an eye’ – 1 Corinthians 15:52, *“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.”*

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”*

The angels gather the saints from wherever they are found, Matthew 24:31, *“And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”*.

We have seen that this occurs immediately after the “Tribulation of those days” and the heavenly signs, Matthew 24:29-30, but *before* the Great Tribulation of the 7th Seal, Revelation 6:16-17, *“And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”* This is confirmed by a quite separate account in Revelation 14.

First, understand that the book of Revelation is not always consecutive, but consists of a series of quite separate visions. Bullinger's ‘Companion Bible’ so explains that the series of visions alternate; a vision of Heaven, then of Earth, Heaven and Earth etc.

This important chapter of Revelation 14 starts with a vision of Heaven, verses 1-5, **and then** there is a quite separate vision of events on earth which cover the period of the last 7 years. This in no way relates to the previous vision, despite its inclusion in the same chapter by those who divided the Greek text of

the New Testament into chapters and verses.

To repeat, the events described here, on earth, **start** with the *first* angel delivering the dreams and visions at the very start of the last 7 years, verses 6-7, *“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters”....*

The *fourth* angel describes the firstfruit harvest of God’s saints, the resurrection – verses 15-16 *“And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped”....*

The *sixth* angel activates the events of the 7th seal, the Great Tribulation, which lasts 3 and a half years, verses 19-29, *“And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.”*

Very few people understand the significance and importance of this vision, for it confirms and adds to the same theme as Matthew 24 and Revelation 6, but also adds the extra information that the **harvest of the saints at verse 15 definitely precedes the harvest of the wicked** who are cast into *“the great winepress of the wrath of God”*, or Great Tribulation!

God’s word will be understood only by those who diligently struggle to put these widely scattered verses together, from *“here a little, there a little”*, and then keep the instructions which they read in connection with these prophecies

This precious information was only understood because the North West Church of God, as it was then called, began keeping the True Biblical Calendar based upon God’s instructions about the Wave Sheaf and the Firstfruit harvest, some years ago. This Wavesheaf day pictures the harvest or resurrection of Christ and also the Firstfruit Saints, which, as we have seen, takes place 3 and a half years from the message of the 1st angel with the dreams and visions, and also 3 and a half years (Revelation 12:14) from Christ’s return from Heaven *with* those saints at the Final Trump (see our brief article on Revelation 12:14).

Revelation 19 :11-15 *“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him (including the saints – see Zechariah 14:5) upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”*

God is continually allowing us to grow in grace and knowledge, though some are held back by the worship of men, putting the beliefs of their church before the words of God. Make sure that *you* ‘prove all things’ by

checking, and diligently studying the scriptures in your own bible!

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