

The Rapture: part 2

'Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

To be comforted and to comfort others; this is the reason that a clear understanding of the truth of His soon coming for us is so important. We don't teach and learn about the Pre-Tribulation Rapture in order to argue or even to convince; convincing and convicting is the Holy Spirit's work. However, when it comes to comforting... even though He is 'The Comforter,' He has called us to be part of His work of comforting. Comfort in times of grief, pain, anxiety, loneliness... our first line of comfort should be: 'The Lord Jesus Christ loves us; He gave His life on the Cross to save us and He has promised to come for us one day soon... maybe even today!'

What could be more comforting than to be told, 'You'll see your loved one again; maybe even today. Your pain will end; maybe even today. You're not alone; He's always here with you and in you, drawing you to Himself and He will come for you, one day soon, to gather you into His arms.'

If someone wants to argue against the Pre-Tribulation Rapture... we don't need to argue; we don't need to be right in their eyes; we simply are to be comforted, and to comfort, with these precious words.

On the other hand, how comforting would it be if we had to tell someone, whose loved one had already died and gone before us, 'Well, you will see them again but first, the Antichrist will come... over half the World will be killed leaving rotting corpses everywhere... the Mark of the Beast will be required of everyone and if you take it you will be condemned to eternity in the Lake of Fire but if you refuse to take the Mark, then you will be hunted down and killed, probably by being beheaded... and demonic forces will fill the World with terror; that'll all go on for 7 long years, but... don't worry, be comforted... because finally, after all that and so much more, after the longest 7 years ever... Jesus will finally come back... and, if you're still alive, you won't receive a glorified, eternal body for another 1000 years because you will still be a mere mortal, tasked with repopulating the World. But don't worry... be happy... be comforted... everything will be just fine. *Not very comforting at all!*

But Jesus told Paul, and us: 'Wherefore comfort one another with these words...' because these words are, in fact, truly comforting... Jesus will come for us soon in the Rapture: 'For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: ²¹Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Phps 3:20

One of our most certain teachings from Paul is the 'mystery' of our Rapture. The Greek word is: Harpazo, meaning: 'to grab and snatch away by force to some other place, then, Greek was translated into Latin with the word, Rapio, and finally to the English word: Rapture.

The truth of the Rapture and the Millennium, our Eternal Salvation by God's Grace alone through our faith alone through our faith alone based on God's Word alone... these were all lost to the true Church with the growth of the false Christianity of Catholicism from the fourth through the sixteenth Centuries until they were re-revealed, by God, to men like Martin Luther, John Calvin and later, John Nelson Darby.

The reason these truths were 'lost' was because the Catholic Church kept God's Word hidden from the laity, from the common people. In fact, Catholicism put to death anyone found with a Bible so it's no wonder these important Doctrines were lost for so many hundreds of years. It was only when common men and women could hold God's Word in their hands, to read in their own languages, that they began to see the deadly deception of Catholicism and were willing to die in the cruelest ways imaginable rather than deny the Truth of God's Word. Only then, after so many Centuries did truth begin to come back into the light. This is why it is but lies when those who deny the Rapture say that it was only 'invented' in the 1800's. The Truth of much of God's Word was suppressed and denied by Catholicism and only regained when true Christians came out and away from the strangling, suffocating darkness of Catholicism.

To Daniel, God revealed that End Time prophecy would be 'sealed up and not understood until the End Times when God would begin re-revealing the Truth and understanding of His prophetic Word: Daniel wrote: 'Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, "My lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things?*"⁹ And he said, "Go *your way*, Daniel, ***for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.***¹⁰ Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and ***none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand...***¹³ "But you, go *your way* till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days." Dan 12:8

We are in the last days, the end of days and all of God's Word is being revealed to many who do, now, understand... ***'but the wise shall understand...'*** We are wise and understanding because we ask God for wisdom; He promised, through James, that He will always give us more wisdom when we ask for it.

Of His return at the 'End of the Age,' Jesus spoke of it as being in two stages; the first stage will be like a 'thief in the night:' it will be a complete surprise coming at a time least expected. The second stage of His return will be at a time of maximum destruction and greatest tribulation when all the armies of the World will be gathered at Jerusalem, hoping to prevent His return.

Of His return for us in the Rapture, when He will come down only as far as the clouds, He said, 'And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.²⁷ They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.²⁸ Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;²⁹ But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.³⁰ Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.'
Luke 17:26

Life will be going along as always with nothing unusual happening, at the Rapture, which is so different from the worldwide cataclysmic evil and Judgment when He returns at Armageddon, at the end of the Tribulation.

Now, notice the other important Truth Jesus was conveying with His allusion to Noah and Lot who were, themselves types of the Rapture. Noah was taken up and away from the destruction of the World in the Flood. Noah and his family were sealed into their Ark of Safety before God brought any destructive tribulation upon the World. God would not bring His judgment until the Righteous were removed. We have been sealed, by the Holy Spirit, into our Ark of Safety, the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as God removed Noah and his family, up and away from, before the destruction and judgment to come, so too, we will be removed up, and away from, before the destructive judgment of the Tribulation comes upon the World. By the same token, Lot and his wife with their two daughters were forcefully removed before God rained down destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Look what the angel said to Lot: 'Haste thee, escape thither; ***for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither (until you are removed).***' Gen 19:22 Do you see... the angel told Lot that he could not do anything, that the destruction ***could not come*** until the Righteous were removed: taken away by force.

This is one of the reasons I believe that three important End Times events will all happen either simultaneously or within very quick succession; they are: the Ezekiel 38 war, the Rapture and the appearance of Antichrist. All three of these could actually happen together, even during the same day. Notice how, in both examples, Jesus gave, that He emphasizes the fact that it is with immediacy that the destruction follows the removal and protection of the Righteous. And make no mistake... that includes us: 'For He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' 2 Cor 5:21 We are the Righteous and we will be forcefully removed before destruction and judgment come.

Paul places them closely together in 2 Thes 2. Paul had taught the Thessalonians the truth of the coming Rapture but false teachers had slithered in, like in today's churches, teaching that the Rapture either had happened already or that it was not a true Doctrine: 'Now we beseech you, brethren, by ***the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,*** (clearly the Rapture)² That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ (the Rapture) is at hand.³ 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; ⁴Who 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.

Paul is telling us that the Rapture will not come until the 'falling away' comes first; we have watched the falling away swallow up the Church all around the World. He means that many will fall away from the true Faith: that is, faith in Jesus Christ and faith in His Life, Death and Resurrection; they will fall into a false faith: the Social Gospel, a Gospel of works, the New Apostolic Reformation, the Gospel of Greed: Word of Faith, the rush to Ecumenicalism and so many others... Paul is saying that the *Great Falling Away*, the Apostasy, will happen before the Rapture; the fallen away Church is represented by the Church of Laodicea in Revelation 3; that is today's falling away and fallen away church.

Then, right next to the 'falling away,' Paul refers to the Antichrist: *that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition*. The only thing separating these two End Time events is that little conjunction: **and**. Here, in this portion of 2 Thes 2, it seems that the appearance of Antichrist actually happens before the Rapture: the order seems to be: first, the Apostasy, the 'falling away;' then, just the 'revealing' of Antichrist, not his full coming to power during the Tribulation, and then, the Rapture but, all three are very close together. But then, in verse 5, it seems that the Antichrist will 'appear' after the Rapture: 'Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? ⁶ And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time ⁷ For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He who now letteth (Who holds back) will let, until he be taken out of the way. (The Holy Spirit is now 'withholding or letting,' the Antichrist's appearance)⁸ And then shall that Wicked be revealed...'

The Greek verb used here means: to hold back, detain, retain, to restrain, hinder, that which hinders, to hold back the Antichrist from making his appearance.

The Holy Spirit is now holding back the Antichrist and all the evil which he will be allowed to do during the Tribulation. Remember, Jesus said, of us, 'Ye are the salt of the earth... Ye are the light of the world...' He meant that we, the True Church, as salt, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, He in us holds back the rot of Satanic evil and we, as light, He in us, holds back the darkness. When we are removed in the Rapture, the Holy Spirit's work of withholding evil will be taken out of the way; He will stop withholding evil and then the World will get what they've always sought but they will all discover, too late, that what they sought is not what they thought.

Whether the Antichrist is revealed just before or just after the Rapture, those three, the Ezekiel 38 war, the Rapture and the appearance of Antichrist may happen very close together or even simultaneously on the same day... and that day could be today.

Here is how we, with the Holy Spirit in us, act as Salt and Light in this increasingly dark and rotting World: first, we must always remember that God is in complete and absolute control over every aspect of every life in all Creation; nothing will ever happen apart from His Will and direction. He, alone restrains or unleashes; He alone holds back or brings forth but part of how He restrains evil during this, the time of the Church, is through our lives, as we are examples of His saving work, as He continually works within us to sanctify, to mold and form, to cause us to more and more, day by day, reflect the image and likeness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ... as we love our neighbors and our enemies... as we seek true justice and goodness where He has planted us... as we pray for our government leaders as well as for our leaders within the Church and as we pray for so many others... as we are faithful to tell the Gospel to all we know and to pray diligently for the Salvation of our friends and family... in these ways, we show forth the truth that we are, in fact, as Jesus said, the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World.

Here is an important point: in Rev 6, when the 6th Seal is opened, which happens around the midpoint of the Tribulation, we read: '*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;*' ¹⁶ *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: ¹⁷ For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Because of this verse, some teach that the Rapture won't happen until the middle of the Tribulation, what they call, 'the pre-wrath or mid-Trib Rapture.' But notice who is speaking here, in Rev 6; it's not Jesus, nor an angel, not John but all those who are part of the Tribulation World System... the lost, those who know nothing of the Word of God. Those who say we must believe these 'anti-christians,' in Rev. 6, would, in the same breath, tell us that we must be careful which words we believe in the Book of Job because Job's three friends often say what is contrary to Scripture... or that we shouldn't believe what Goliath says, or Ahab and Jezebel.

We will study Jesus Christ's Revelation to John at a later time but remember: in the Revelation: in Chapter 1, John sees the Glorified Jesus. In chapters 2 and 3, Jesus dictates letters to seven churches which also form a type for the entire 2000 years of Church history. Then, before the Tribulation begins, John sees an open door in Heaven and hears the words: 'Come up here!' That is another type for the Rapture and from that moment onward there is no more mention whatsoever of the Church, on Earth, during the entire 7 years of the Tribulation. We don't see the Church again until we see her as the Bride of Christ, at the end of the Tribulation as she/we accompany Jesus Back to Armageddon. The Tribulation, the last 7 years before Jesus returns to Earth, is the final, 70th week of Daniel's prophecy in Dan.9. That final 7 years has two purposes: to complete God's dealings with Israel before they are honored throughout Jesus Christ's 1000 year reign on Earth and, also, when God finally pours out His Wrath and Judgment upon the World which always rejected Him and His love. But... the Tribulation, on Earth, has no purpose, whatsoever, for the Church; we will be in Heaven.

God's Word is filled with so much that directs our attention to the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church. It is not something we need to argue about or debate but He tells us of it so often because His intent is that we be comforted knowing that no matter how dark or evil the World increasingly becomes, He will call us up to Himself, in the Rapture, before He unleashes evil and pours out judgment and wrath such as the World has never known.

God removes the Righteous before His Judgment falls, as soon as they've been removed!

