

Prophecy III

INTRODUCTION TO PROPHECY

Some students of prophecy have been studying prophecy for a long time and are familiar with the program as outlined in the Word of God. Others have not studied the subject before, so terms such as eschatology, rapture, the tribulation, the man of sin, the judgment of nations, Armageddon, and the millennium are unfamiliar. A panorama of prophecy will give a Bird's-eye view of the prophetic program as it is unfolded in the Word of God in order to give a perspective of coming events and show them in their relationship to one another.

If you want to make any subject complex and difficult-no matter how simple it really may be-so that you appear to be brilliant, the easiest thing to do is to change common terms to complex terms so that nobody really knows what you are talking about. Some of the prophecy terminology may sound quite complex, but an explanation of it will show how simple the prophetic picture actually is.

When Christ took the disciples apart into the upper room just before His death, He spoke to them not only of his approaching death and of the new relationship which they would sustain to him when He was in heaven and they were on earth, but He also talked to them about His coming to earth again: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also". (John 14:2-3)

Then shortly after Christ's death and resurrection when the disciples were gathered with him on the Mount of Olives, they watched as He was taken bodily away from them into heaven, and God dispatched messengers to speak to them these words: "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

The angels who attended the ascension announced to the disciples that Jesus was coming bodily back to earth, and that every eye should see Him, and the one who ascended would be present on earth again. From the time of the Lord's ascension, those who have had

the truth of the Word of God have held to Christ's promise that He would return. Generation after generation from the time of the ascension of Christ has lived confidently expecting the fulfillment of what Jesus promised: "I will come again, and receive you unto myself" (John 14:3).

The next event in the prophetic program is called the rapture of the church. Today the word rapture means joy; it is an emotion that sets the heart aflame and excites the mind and quickens the pulse. But the word rapture as used in connection with the prophetic scriptures means "a change, a translation." It literally means "to snatch away," for the Latin word *rapto*, from which the English word rapture is derived, means "to snatch away" or "to pluck out." The promise that He would come and take Christians to Himself is explained in greater detail by the apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. He said the time would come when the Lord would descend from heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and He would appear in the clouds (v. 16).

At this point Christ will not descend to the earth. He will appear in the clouds and, from the clouds, will give an authoritative command, the same kind of command that a general would give to the troops serving under Him. When the Lord issues this command from His vantage point in the clouds, first of all, the dead in Christ shall rise out of their graves and begin an ascent into the clouds to meet the Lord. Then, immediately after this resurrection of believers, the Lord will catch up or snatch up those who are alive, and the living and the resurrected dead ones shall meet each other in their ascent, and they shall be joined into one group. These who were the living and the dead will become the resurrected and the translated, or the glorified ones. Some arrive in glory by resurrection and some by a translation, but the apostle says, "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up (snatched up, raptured) together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (v. 17).

That is the hope that is given to believers. It is the assurance that we shall meet the Lord in the air, and it matters little whether we go to meet Him by way of resurrection or by way of translation. The process by

Prophecy III

which we shall come to be with the Lord is insignificant. The important part is that together we shall meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. This "catching up" or rapture is the next prophetic event for which believers are looking and waiting.

Two events in the prophetic program await the church after its translation. The first event that takes place in heaven following the rapture is the judgment seat of Christ. This is explained in 2 Cor. 5:9-12. Every believer who has been translated into the Lord's presence will be examined so that the Lord may give a reward to those who have faithfully discharged their service for Him.

The second event prophesied concerning the church is the marriage of the Lamb. This is the event following the judgment seat of Christ in which the church, so frequently called the Bride in the New Testament, is presented to the Lord Jesus Christ, the bridegroom. This is referred to in Jude 24: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy".

The word translated "to present" is the technical word that was used by the Greeks for the presentation of the bride to the bridegroom. The ceremony was quite simple. The bride and the bridegroom would come into the presence of the father of the groom who had contracted for the marriage, and the bride's father would take his daughter's hand and put it in the hand of the groom's father. Then the father of the groom would put the bride's hand into the hand of the groom. That was the official presentation and at that moment she became his wife. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul says we have been betrothed to Jesus Christ as a chaste virgin to become His bride and, after the church is translated into glory and has been examined to receive rewards for faithful service, the Father will take the bride and present the bride to Jesus Christ and He will possess that bride as His very own. Christians are looking forward to a wedding, and we will not be spectators. We will be participants, for we who have looked forward for so long to that blessed union with Jesus Christ will be presented to Him and will be His possession for the unending ages of eternity. Those

two events then transpire in heaven following the church's rapture or translation.

Following the translation of the church, a seven-year tribulation period will unfold on the earth, known as the tribulation or the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7). It is the time of wrath or the time of indignation or, to use the Lord's words, there shall be "great tribulation" such as never was and shall never be again. A great portion of the prophetic Scriptures is devoted to describing the events that will unfold on the earth during this seven-year period, and many of these events will be studied in detail in Prophecy IV. To summarize briefly: after the rapture of the church, the nations of Europe will form a federation and elect one man as their head. This man is referred to in Daniel's prophecy as "the little horn." He is called "the abomination of desolation" by Christ (Matt. 24:15). Paul calls him "the man of sin" or "the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3), and John calls him "the beast" (Rev. 13). This individual will emerge on the world scene as an answer to the world's problems, and the European nations which originally emerged from the Roman Empire will federate together under this one head. The first act of this man will be to attempt to settle the Arab-Israeli dispute. He will make a covenant with the nation of Israel and guarantee to preserve and protect her from her Arab neighbors who will be federated with Russia on the North. Realizing that a Russian-Arab alliance threatens Israel and that any war generated in Israel would threaten the world, this head of the federated states of Europe will guarantee to protect Israel and hope to avert a third world war by putting his power behind Israel. For three and one-half years the world will exist in that cold-war state where the Russian-Arab alliance will wonder if they dare to attack Israel, and the western alliance will build up its strength and rattle its rockets to seek to prevent an invasion of Israel by the Russian-Arab alliance.

In the middle of that seven-year period, or three and one-half years after this covenant is broken, there will be an invasion of Palestine. The center of interest will move to Palestine and Jerusalem, and for three and one-half years - the last three and one-half years of this tribulation period - there will be no less than four

Prophecy III

invasions of Palestine. It will begin, according to Daniel 11, when the Arab nations move into Israel, and those Arab nations will be joined immediately by the second invader, Russia, who will come down from the north. These two coalitions will meet in Jerusalem, destroy the city, and challenge the world to do anything about it (Eze. 38). At that moment God will destroy the Russian-Arab alliance the same way He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Eze. 38:22). That will leave the land vacant, and the head of the federated states of Europe will move from Europe over into Palestine (Dan. 11:45) and announce that he is the world ruler (Rev. 13:7). He will be called a god (2 Th. 2:4) and become the only god that can be worshipped; for three and one-half years he will seek to dominate the world, ruling as king and god on his throne. At the end of the tribulation period, an alliance of nations from the Orient will move across the Euphrates River to contest this European ruler's right to rule the world. A vast army will march from the East to join battle with the European confederation. At that moment the Son of God will invade the earth, destroying the nations gathered in Palestine. During the seven-year tribulation period, God will pour out judgment upon the earth that will make the Egyptian plagues seem insignificant. The book of Revelation describes in detail the awful judgments that shall destroy the vast majority of the earth's population. War, famine, pestilence and death are divine judgments poured out upon the earth because of man's sin of rejecting Christ and submitting to a man as their god.

At the end of that seven-year period, the Son of God shall descend from heaven, and His feet shall stand again on the mount of Olives (Zec. 14:4). He ascended from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1), and He will come back to that mountain. When He comes, those who had been translated into glory and joined to Him will come with Him. Revelation 20 says that all of the saved ones who were in the graves shall be resurrected to live and reign with Him a thousand years. This is the resurrection of all Old Testament and tribulation saints.

Following Christ's second advent there will be a judgment to separate sheep from goats (Matt. 25:31-46). All living individuals at the moment

of Christ's return will be brought before Him and judged, and He will divide them into two groups - the sheep and the goats. To the goats on His left hand He will say, "Depart from me you wicked into everlasting fire," and to the sheep He will say, "Come ye blessed of my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the earth." The Lord is coming back to earth in order that He might ascend David's throne and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. He is to be King in Jerusalem. But he cannot reign over unsaved people; He can only reign over saved ones. And so when He returns to earth the second time, He will not only subdue nations and bring them under His authority (Rev. 11:15), but He will judge both Israel and the Gentiles and will separate the saved from the unsaved, excluding the unsaved and receiving the saved ones into His kingdom.

Revelation 20 says He shall rule on this earth for a thousand years. Millennium is a Latin word meaning "thousand." That is why it is used for the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. It will be His reign over those who have received Him as Saviour and those who in their natural bodies go into this period of time. He will reign as a universal King, ruling from sea to sea and shore to shore. He will remove all lawlessness, sickness and disease, and control any outbreaks of sin. This earth will become a veritable paradise, an Eden, because the Son of God will rule with a rod of iron. During that period, God will show the world through His Son's reign that He is sovereign, that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords and that only He has the right to reign. When Satan rebelled against God, he said in effect, "God does not have a right to reign. I have as much right to reign as He." Satan has been insisting that he has a right to reign ever since the time of his fall, and he will continue to do so until Christ's second coming. At the second advent he will be bound and then chained in a bottomless pit. He will be removed as a tempter from this earth. God will rule through Christ, and He will be acknowledged as King of kings and Lord of lords, and every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue confess that He is Lord so that the Father might be glorified.

Prophecy III

At the end of the thousand-year reign, Satan will be loosed from his prison for a brief season because those who go into the millennium in their natural bodies will beget children and those children will be born on this earth, as you and I were born, with a fallen sin nature and will need to be redeemed, to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Many born during the millennium will give only lip service to Christ, will never really receive Him, but because of the stringent rule of the King, they will be afraid to rebel against Him. So, at the end of the millennium. Satan will be loosed so all those who had given only lip service to Christ might have an opportunity to rebel against Him to show that they have never been born again. When Satan is loosed, he will draw away from Christ and he will be followed by those persons who only professed to serve the King under whose reign they had lived. After that final rebellion, God will judge the earth by fire (2 Peter 3:10). He will set up the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15). At this judgment, all unsaved men of all ages will be brought to hear the sentence of second death pronounced upon them. They will be banished to eternal torment from Christ's presence and, because they rejected the offer of salvation, will be separated from God forever. Then God will create a new heaven and a new earth. This present earth must be judged because it was the stage upon which the drama of sin was unfolded, and Peter says it shall be renovated by fire, and a new heaven and earth will be created. All the redeemed will be brought into this new sphere in order that they might enjoy God's presence forever (1 Peter 3). This is a brief panorama of the prophetic program. Christ has promised that at any moment He may appear to take us into His presence, and the resurrected and translated ones will be caught up to meet Him in the air. The event is the rapture. Afterward believers will be examined for rewards at the judgment seat of Christ and then presented to Christ as His bride. But while we are undergoing examination and our marriage in glory, the tribulation period will unfold on the earth in which the European nations will federate together. A cold war will continue for three and one-half years, deteriorating into the greatest holocaust the world has ever seen, as multiplied millions of men march and converge upon

Jerusalem to be destroyed at Christ's second advent. When His feet touch the Mount of Olives as He promised, Christ will subdue all nations. Then He will remove unbelievers, and set up His kingdom on earth with those living believers who have received Him as personal Saviour. The redeemed will share in the glory of His reign, and this earth shall finally realize its great desire for peace. At the end of this reign, Satan will be given an opportunity to draw off those who rebel against Christ. They will meet Christ as Judge at the great white throne judgment. This will be followed by the creation of the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, where Christians shall enjoy His presence forever. This is the sweeping panorama of prophecy.

PROPHECY - SECTION III

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

The present age, in respect to the true church, terminates with the translation of the church into the Lord's presence. The doctrine of the translation of the church is one of the major considerations of the Eschatology of the New Testament (John 14:1-3; 2 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 1:8; 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20-21; 2 Cor. 5:1-9). It is one of the questions on which Bible students are most in disagreement at the present time. Interpreters of the premillennial school are divided into such camps as the partial rapturist, who raises the issue of the subjects of the rapture, and the pre-tribulationist, mid-tribulationist and post-tribulationist, who raise the issue of the time of the rapture in relation to the tribulation period.

Prophecy III

I. DEFINITION OF TERMS

It would be well, at this point, to set forth the various words used in the New Testament in relation to the second advent of Christ: parousia, apokalupsis, and epiphaneia.

1. PAROUSIA

The word most frequently used in the Scriptures to describe the return of Christ is (parousia)...it occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament in a variety of connections. As its etymology indicates the word means to be near or alongside... It involves all that the English word presence connotes...It has to come to mean not simply presence but the act by which the presence is brought about, i.e., by the coming of the individual.

A brief survey of its usage in the New Testament includes... 1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 7:6-7; Phil. 1:26; 2 Thess. 2:9; 2 Peter 3:12. All must concede that these instances are general and not technical.

That it is used frequently of the rapture of the church is clear in the following references (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19; 4:15; 5:23; James 5:7-8; 1 John 2:29)

The word is also used, however, of the return of Christ to the earth with the church in a number of passages (Matt. 24:3,27,37,39; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 2:8; 2 Peter 1:16)

The conclusion is inevitable that the same word is used in all these passages in a general and not specific sense. Its contribution to the doctrine is to emphasize the bodily presence of Christ...

2. APOKALUPSIS

The second important word for the coming of Christ...[apokalupsis] occurs...eighteen times in noun form, twenty-six times in the verb form. It is obviously derived from... [apo] and... [kalupto], the latter meaning to cover, or to veil, and with the prefix, to uncover or to unveil, and hence to reveal...

A survey of those passages in which the word is used in relation to Christ demonstrates that in a

number of instances it is used of the second coming of Christ (1 Peter 4:13; 2 Thess. 1:7; Luke 17:30)

In other passages, however, it is clearly used in reference to the coming of Christ in the air for His church (1 Cor. 1:7; Col. 3:4; 1 Peter 1:7, 13)

The doctrine that is involved in the use of the word in relation to Christ is an emphasis on the future manifestation of the glory of Christ.

3. EPIPHANEIA

The third word used in the return of Christ is, [Epiphaneia]... [Epi] and, [phanes]. The root meaning of to bring forth into the light, cause to shine, to show is found from Homer down (Thayer). The addition of the preposition gives it an intensive meaning...it is used of the first coming of Christ to the earth in His incarnation (Luke 1:79; 2 Tim. 1:10)

As used of the return of the Lord, two instances are found where it refers to the rapture of the church and two instances seem to refer to the second coming of Christ...it would seem sound exegesis to classify 1 Timothy 6:14 and 2 Timothy 4:8 as referring to the rapture...

In 2 Timothy 4:1 and Titus 2:13, however, there seems to be a reference to His second coming...

The emphasis given to the truth in the use of...[epiphaneia] is to reassure us that Christ will actually appear, that He will be seen and will be manifested in a visible way. (John F. Walvoord, *"New Testament Words for the Lord's Coming."*)

These words, then, emphasize three great facts in relation to the second advent: Christ will be visibly present, His glory consequently will be fully revealed, and He Himself will be fully manifested.

II. THE PARTIAL RAPTURE THEORY

The first theory associated with the translation of the church is not concerned with the time of the translation in relation to the tribulation period, but rather with the

Prophecy III

subjects to be translated. It is contended that not all believers will be taken at the translation of the church, but rather only those who are "watching" and "waiting" for that event, who have reached some degree of spiritual attainment that makes them worthy to be included. This view has been held by such men as R. Govett, G. H. Lang, D. M. Panton, G. H. Pember, J.A. Seiss, and Austin Sparks to mention but a few. The view is stated by Waugh, who says:

"But there are not a few - some of them deep and prayerful students of the Scriptures - who believe that only a prepared and expectant section of believers will then be translated. They believe that a clear inference from Luke 21:36 is that those Christians who do not "watch" will not "escape all these things that shall come to pass", and will not be accounted worthy "to stand before the Son of Man." They gather from such passages as Phil. 3:20; Titus 2:13; 2 Tim. 4:8; Hebrews 9:28, that those only will be taken who "wait", "look for", and "have loved His appearing."

A. The doctrinal difficulties of the partial rapture theory.

The partial rapture position rests on certain misunderstandings of the doctrines of the Word.

1. The partial rapturist position is based on a misunderstanding of the value of the death of Christ as it frees the sinner from condemnation and renders him acceptable to God. This doctrine is bound up in three New Testament words: propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption. In regard to propitiation Chafer writes:

"Christ by having His own blood sprinkled, as it were, over His body at Galgotha, becomes the Mercy Seat in reality. He is the Propitiator and has made propitiation by so answering the just demands of God's holiness against sin that heaven is rendered propitious. This fact of propitiation existing is to be believed.

Propitiation is the Godward side of the work of Christ on the cross. The death of Christ for the sin of the world changed the whole position of mankind in its relation to

God, for He recognizes what Christ did in behalf of the world whether man enters into it or not. God is never said to be reconciled, but His attitude toward the world is altered when the world's relation to Him becomes radically changed through the death of Christ."

In regard to RECONCILIATION the same author says:

"Reconciliation means that someone or something is thoroughly changed and adjusted to something which is a standard, as a watch may be adjusted to a chronometer...By the death of Christ on its behalf, the whole world is thoroughly changed in its relation to God...The world is so altered in its position respecting the holy judgments of God through the cross of Christ that God is not now imputing their sin unto them. The world is thus rendered savable.

Since the position of the world before God is completely changed through the death of Christ, God's own attitude toward man cannot longer be the same. He is prepared to deal with souls now in the light of what Christ has accomplished... God ... believes completely in the thing which Christ has done and accepts it, so as to continue being just although able thereby to justify any sinner who accepts the Savior as his reconciliation."

Concerning REDEMPTION, he writes:

"Redemption is an act of God by which He Himself pays as a ransom the price of human sin which the outraged holiness and government of God requires. Redemption undertakes the solution of the problem of sin, as reconciliation undertakes the solution of the problem of the sinner, and propitiation undertakes the problem of an offended God...

The redemption provided for and offered to the sinner is a redemption from

Prophecy III

sin...Divine redemption is by blood - the ransom price - and by power.

The result of this threefold work is a perfect salvation, by which the sinner is justified, made acceptable to God, placed in Christ positionally, to be received by God as though he were the Son Himself. The individual who has this perfect standing of Christ can never be less than completely acceptable to God. The partial rapturist, who insists that only those who are "waiting" and "watching" will be translated, minimizes the perfect standing of the child of God in Christ and presents him before the father in his own experimental righteousness. The sinner, then, must be less than justified, less than perfect in Christ."

2. The partial rapturist must deny the New Testament teaching on the unity of the body of Christ. According to 1 Cor. 12:12-13, all believers are united to the body of which Christ is the head (Eph. 5:30). This baptizing experience is true of every regenerated individual. If the rapture includes only a portion of those redeemed, then the body, of which Christ is the head, will be a dismembered and disfigured body when it is taken to Him. The building, of which He is the Chief cornerstone, will be incomplete.
3. The partial rapturist must deny the completeness of the resurrection of the believers at the translation. Since not all the living saints could be raptured, logically, not all the dead in Christ could be resurrected, inasmuch as many of them died in spiritual immaturity. But since Paul teaches that "we shall all be changed," and that all those that "sleep in Jesus" will God bring (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:14), it is impossible to admit a partial resurrection.
4. The partial rapturist confuses the Scriptural teaching on rewards. The rewards are gratuitously given by God as the recompense for faithful service. The New Testament is very clear in its teaching about rewards

(Rev. 2:10; James 1:12; 1 Thess. 2:19; Phil. 4:1, 1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Peter 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:8). Nowhere in its teaching about rewards is the rapture included as the reward for watching. Such a teaching would make rewards a legal obligation on the part of God, rather than a gracious gift.

5. The partial rapturist confuses the distinction between law and grace. If this view is correct, the believer's position before God, eternally, would depend on his works, for what he did and what attitudes he developed would then be the basis of his acceptance. It scarcely needs be said that acceptance by God will be solely on the basis of the individual's position in Christ, not his own preparation of himself for the translation.
6. The partial rapturist must deny the distinction between Israel and the church. It will be observed in the discussion of problem passages to follow that he uses Scriptures that are applicable to God's program for Israel and applies them to the church.
7. The partial rapturist must place a portion of the believing church in the tribulation period. This is impossible. One of the purposes of the tribulation period is to judge the world in preparation for the kingdom to follow. The church needs not such a purging judgment unless the death of Christ be ineffective. From these considerations then, it is believed that the partial rapture position is untenable (baseless - unreasonable).

B. Problem passages.

There are certain passages which the partial rapturist uses to support his position, which, at first glance, seem to support this view.

1. Luke 21:36, "Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." It will be observed that the primary reference in this chapter is to the nation Israel, who is already in the tribulation period, and therefore this is not applicable to the church.

Prophecy III

- The things to be escaped are the judgments associated with "that day" (vs. 34), that is, the Day of the Lord. Watchfulness is enjoined upon the church (1 Thess. 5:6; Titus 2:13) apart from being found worthy to participate in the translation.
2. Matthew 24:41-42, "Two women shall be shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Again, this passage is in that discourse in which the Lord outlines His program for Israel, who is already in the tribulation period. The one taken is taken to judgment and the one left is left for the millennial blessing. Such is not the prospect for the church.
 3. Hebrews 9:28, "...unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The phrase "unto them that look for him" is used here as synonymous with "believers" or "the church" since this attitude constitutes the normal attitude of God's redeemed. Believers are those that "look for the Saviour" (Phil. 3:20) or anticipate the "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). These who look for him are not contrasted with those who do not look for him in this passage. It simply teaches that as he appeared once to put away sin (vs. 26) and now appears in heaven for us (vs. 24), to that same group He will again appear (vs. 28) to complete the work of redemption. The inference is that the same group to whom He appeared, and for whom He now appears, will be one to whom He will appear.
 4. Philippians 3:11, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Some hold that Paul was in doubt about his own rapture. The context does not support this view. Verse 11 looks back to verse 8 where Paul reveals that, because of the superior value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, he gave up all in which he had trusted that he "might win Christ," and, having found Christ, "attain unto the resurrection of the dead." The resurrection, thus, is seen to be the result of "winning Christ," not the result of preparing himself for the translation. He has revealed the innermost secret of His service, a complete devotion to Christ since He met Him on the Damascus road.
 5. 1 Corinthians 15:23, "...every man in his own order." This is made by the partial rapturist to teach a division in the ranks of the believer in the resurrection of the church. However, it must be noted, Paul is not giving instruction on the order of the resurrection for the church, but rather the divisions or "marching bands" within the whole resurrection program, which will include not only church saints, but also Old Testament saints and tribulation saints as well.
 6. 2 Timothy 4:8, "...unto all them also that love his appearing." This is used by the adherents of this position to show that the rapture must be a partial one. However, it is to be noticed that the subject of the translation is not in view in this passage, but rather the question of reward. The second advent was intended by God to be a purifying hope (1 John 3:3). Because of such purifying a new life is produced because of the expectancy of the Lord's return. Therefore those that truly "love his appearing" will experience a new kind of life which will bring a reward.
 7. 1 Thessalonians 1:10, "And to wait for his son from heaven...which delivered us from the wrath to come," and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 together with 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 are used by the partial rapturist to teach that the church that was unprepared for the rapture will meet the Lord in the clouds on His way to the earth at the second advent. Such a view coincides with the interpretation of the post-tribulationist and will be shown to be contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures.
- An examination of the Scriptures used by the partial rapturists to support their position shows that their interpretation is not

Prophecy III

consistent with true exegesis. Since this view is out of harmony with true doctrine and true exegesis, it must be rejected.

THE POST-TRIBULATION

RAPTURE THEORY

A theory coming into greater prevalence at the present time to explain the time of the translation of the church in relation to the tribulation period is the post-tribulation rapture theory. This theory holds that the church will continue on the earth until the second advent at the end of this present age, at which time the church will be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord who has come into the air on His way from heaven to earth for the second advent, to return immediately with Him. Reese, a leading exponent of this theory, states his proposition thus:

"The church of Christ will not be removed from the earth until the Advent of Christ at the very end of the present Age: the Rapture and the Appearing take place at the same crisis; hence Christians of that generation will be exposed to the final affliction under Antichrist."

I. THE ESSENTIAL BASIS OF POST-TRIBULATION RAPTUREISM

Before considering the arguments used by the advocates of this position, one should observe the essential basis on which post-tribulationism rests.

- (1) Post-tribulation must be based on a denial of dispensationalism and all dispensational distinctions. It is only thus that they can place the church in that period which is particularly called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7).
- (2) Consequently, the position rests on a denial of the distinctions between Israel and the church.
- (3) The position must rest on a denial of the Scriptural teaching concerning the nature and purpose of the tribulation period. Whereas Scripture uses such terms as wrath, judgment, indignation, trial, trouble, and destruction to describe this period, and states that the divine purpose in the period is to pour out judgment on sin, the

advocate of this position must deny this essential teaching of the Word.

- (4) The post-tribulationist must deny all the distinctions observed from the Scriptures between the rapture and the second advent, making them one and the same event.
- (5) The post-tribulationist must deny the doctrine of imminence, which says that the Lord may come at any time, and substitute the teaching that a multitude of signs must be fulfilled before the Lord can possibly come.
- (6) The post-tribulationist denies any future fulfillment to the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, claiming for it an historical fulfillment.
- (7) The post-tribulationist must apply major passages of Scripture that outline God's program for Israel (Matt. 13; Matt. 24-25; Rev. 4-19) to the church in order to support his views. It will thus be observed that the position rests essentially on a system of denials of the interpretations held by the pre-tribulation rapturist, rather than on a positive exposition of Scripture.

II. THE ESSENTIAL ARGUMENTS OF THE POST-TRIBULATION RAPTUREIST

A. THE HISTORICAL ARGUMENT.

There are several major arguments on which the post-tribulationist rests his case. The first of these is the historical argument. His position is that pre-tribulationism is a new doctrine, arising in the last hundred years, and therefore to be rejected because it is not apostolic.

In reply to the argument several things are to be noted.

- (1) Such an argument is an argument from silence. If the same line of reasoning were followed one would not accept the doctrine of justification by faith for it was not clearly taught until the Reformation. The failure to discern the teaching of the Scripture does not nullify that teaching.

Prophecy III

(2) The early church lived in the light of the belief in the imminent return of Christ. Their expectation was that Christ might return at any time. Pre-tribulationism is the only position consistent with this doctrine of imminence. If an argument from silence be followed, the weight of evidence favors the pre-tribulation view.

(3) It should be observed that each era of church history has been occupied with a particular doctrinal controversy, which has become the object of discussion, revision, and formulation, until there was general acceptance of what Scripture taught. The entire field of theology was thus formulated through the age. It was not until the last century that the field of Eschatology became a matter to which the mind of the church was turned.

This whole concept of the progress of dogma would be our strongest argument against the post-tribulation rapturist who argues that the doctrine must be rejected because it was not clearly taught in the early church.

B. THE ARGUMENT AGAINST IMMINENCY.

A second major argument of the post-tribulation rapturist is the argument against imminency. It is evident that if belief in the imminent return of Christ is the Scriptural doctrine then the church must be raptured before the signs of the tribulation period unfold. The adherent of that position discounts all the Scriptural admonitions to the church to watch for Christ and bids us watch for signs.

The doctrine of imminency is taught in Scripture in such passages as John 14:2-3; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 4:16-17; Titus 2:13; James 5:8-9; Revelation 3:10; 22:17-22. The early church held to the doctrine of imminency. Clement wrote in the First Epistle to the Corinthians:

"Ye see how in a little while the fruit of the trees come to maturity. Of a truth, soon and suddenly shall His will be accomplished, as the Scriptures also bear witness, saying "Speedily will He

come, and will not tarry"; and "The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Holy One, for whom ye look...Wherefore, let us every hour expect the kingdom of God in love and righteousness because we know not the day of the Lord's appearing."

In the Didache we read:

"Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ye ready, for ye know not the hour in which our Lord cometh."

Cyprian says:

"It were a self-contradictory and incompatible thing for us, who pray that the kingdom of God may quickly come, to be looking for a long life here below."

C. THE PROMISE OF TRIBULATION.

A third argument of the post-tribulation rapturist is the argument based on the promise of tribulation given to the church. Passages such as Luke 23:27-31; Matthew 24:9-11; Mark 13:9-13, which are addressed to Israel and promise them tribulation, are used to prove that the church will go through the tribulation period. In addition, passages such John 15:18-19; and John 16:1-2,33, which are addressed to the church, are also used. Their argument is that in the light of such specific promises it is impossible to say that the church will be raptured prior to the tribulation period. Their argument is substantiated by citing the persecutions recorded in Acts into which the church came (Acts 8:1-3; 11:19; 14:22; Rom. 12:12) as being a partial fulfillment of those warnings.

1. In reply to this argument it is necessary to notice, first of all, that Scripture abounds in promises that Israel will be brought into a time of purging to prepare them as a nation for the millennium to follow the advent of Messiah. However Israel and the church are two distinct entities in the plan of God and must be so regarded.
2. Further, it must be noticed that the term tribulation is used in several different ways in Scripture. It is used in a non-technical,

Prophecy III

non-eschatological sense in reference to any time of suffering or testing into which one goes. It is so used in Matthew 13:21; Mark 4:17; John 16:33; Romans 5:3; 12:12; 2 Corinthians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; Revelation 1:9. It is used in its technical or eschatological sense in reference to the whole period of the seven years of tribulation, as in Revelation 2:22 or Matthew 24:29. It is also used in reference to the last half of this seven year period, as in Matthew 24:21. When the word tribulation is used in reference to the church, as in John 16:33, it is used in a non-technical sense, in which the church is promised an age-long opposition from the god of this age, but it is not teaching that the church will be brought into the period technically known as the tribulation. Otherwise one would have to teach that the tribulation has already existed for over nineteen hundred years.

D. THE HISTORICAL FULFILLMENT OF DANIEL 9:24-27. A fourth major argument of the post-tribulation rapturist is the historical fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel. It is held that the prophecy, particularly that of Daniel 9:24-27, has been historically fulfilled in its entirety. That there is no gap between the 69th and 70th week of the prophecy.

1. In reply to this interpretation it can be noted that the six great areas of promise in Daniel 9:24 are related to Daniel's people and Daniel's holy city, that is, related to the nation Israel. These promises are the logical outgrowth of God's covenants with that nation. Israel as a nation has not yet experienced her national salvation. The church can not be now fulfilling these promises.
2. It is of importance to note that the prophecies of the first sixty-nine weeks were fulfilled literally. Thus a literal fulfillment of the seventieth week, both as to time and events, is made necessary.

The post-tribulation rapture interpretation is out of harmony with the principle of literal interpretation. The prophecies cannot be spiritually interpreted and fulfilled historically, therefore it must be denied.

DANIEL 9 AND THE TRIBULATION

WHY THE TRIBULATION?

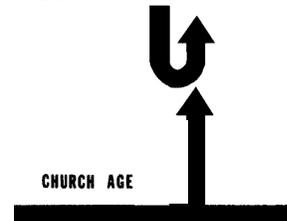
Answer: National Chastisement for Israel's Sin.
Daniel 9:24

- 7 (weeks) = 49 years - Jerusalem rebuilt (v. 25)
- 62 (weeks) = 434 years - Messiah to come (v. 26)
- "Cut off" = the Crucifixion
- (v. 26 is an undeterminable period of time - it is now, the Church age - Grace)

Scofield says:

"These are the 'weeks' or, more accurately, sevens of years; seventy weeks of seven years each. Within these 'weeks' the national chastisement must be ended and the nation re-established in everlasting righteousness (v. 24). The seventy weeks are divided into seven = 49 years; sixty-two = 434 years; one = 7 years v.(25-27). In the seven weeks = 49 years, Jerusalem was to be rebuilt in troublous times. This was fulfilled as Ezra and Nehemiah record. Sixty-two weeks = 434 years, thereafter Messiah was to come (v. 25). This was fulfilled in the birth and manifestation of Christ. Verse 26 is obviously an indeterminate period. The date of the crucifixion is not fixed. It is only said to be after the threescore and two weeks. It is the first event in verse 26. The second event is the destruction of the city, fulfilled in A.D. 70. Then, 'unto the end,' a period not fixed, but which has already lasted nearly 2000

RAPTURE OF THE SAVED



1 (week) = 7 years - The tribulation (v. 27)
70 weeks

Prophecy III

years. To Daniel was revealed only that wars and desolations should continue (cf. Mt. 24:6-14). The N.T. reveals, that which was hidden from the O.T. prophets (Mt. 13:11-17; Eph. 3:1-10), that during this period should be accomplished the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven (Mat. 13:1-50), and the outcalling of the church (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 11:25). When the Church-age will end, and the seventieth week begin, is nowhere revealed. Its duration can be but seven years. To make it more violates the principle of interpretation already confirmed by fulfillment. Verse 27 deals with the last week. The 'he' of verse 27 is the 'prince that shall come' of verse 26, whose people (Rome) destroyed the temple, A.D. 70. He is the same with the 'little horn' of chapter 7. He will covenant with the Jews to restore their temple sacrifices for one week (seven years), but in the midst of that time he will break the covenant and fulfill Dan. 12:11; 2 Thess. 2:3,4. Between the sixty-ninth week, after which Messiah was cut off, and the seventieth week, within which the 'little horn' of Daniel 7 will run his awful course, intervenes this entire Church-age. Verse 27 deals with the last three and a half years of the seven, which are identical with the 'great tribulation' (Mt. 24:15-28); 'time of trouble' (Dan. 12:1); 'hour of temptation' (Rev. 3:10). (See 'Tribulation', Psalms 2:5; Revelation 7:14.)"

E. THE ARGUMENT FROM THE WHEAT AND TARES.

Another argument used by the post-tribulationist is the argument based on the tares in Matthew 13. The pre-tribulation interpretation is said to be that angels will bind the tares at the end of the age, prior to the rapture but will translate the church, represented by the wheat out of the field, and leave the tares, bound unto judgment, in their place until the second advent. Alexander Reese observes that this explanation seems to violate the Lord's words: "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matthew 13:30). It would seem that Reese has a justifiable complaint against this interpretation

It must be borne in mind that the purpose of Matthew 13 is not to divulge the history of the church, but the history of the kingdom in its mystery form. The time is not that of the church - from Pentecost to the rapture - but the entire age from the rejection of Christ to His coming reception. The Lord is indicating that during the age there is to be a sowing of the seed (the parable of the sower) and also a counter-sowing (the parable of the tares), and that this condition will continue throughout the age. At the end of the age there will be a separation of those who were the children of the kingdom and those who were the children of the evil one. Since the rapture question is not in view in the parable, it can not be used to support post-tribulation rapturism. The tribulation period ends with judgment on all enemies of the King. Thus every unbeliever is removed. Following these judgments the kingdom is instituted into which the righteous are taken. This is perfectly consistent with the teaching of the parable.

From the above considerations of the arguments presented by the post-tribulation rapturist it can be seen that his arguments are far from being "well-nigh unanswerable." Though many of the arguments may sound weighty, they can be met through a consistent interpretation of the text.

Prophecy III

THE MID-TRIBULATION RAPTURE POSITION

A view less prevalent than the post-tribulation rapture theory to explain the time of the rapture in relation to the tribulation period is the mid-tribulation rapture theory. According to this interpretation the church will be raptured at the end of the first three and one-half years of the seventieth week of Daniel. The mid-tribulation rapture view is essentially a compromise between the post-tribulation and pre-tribulation positions. It concurs with the pre-tribulation view in holding that the church will be raptured as an event distinct from the second advent, that the restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2 is the Holy Spirit, that the church is promised deliverance from wrath. In common with post-tribulationism it holds that the church is promised tribulation on the earth and is in need of purging, that Scripture does not teach the doctrine of imminence, and that the church is seen on the earth after Revelation 4:1.

I. THE ESSENTIAL BASIS OF MID-TRIBULATION RAPTURISM

In studying the mid-tribulation position it is well to observe that many of its essential basis are those of the post-tribulation position. (1) Mid-tribulationism must either deny or at least weaken the dispensational interpretation of the Scriptures, and, (2) deny the strict distinctions between Israel and the church. This is observed in that this position places the church in the first half of the last seven years of the period determined upon Daniel's people and city. (3) The position must rest on a view of the tribulation that divides the period into two separate and unrelated halves, so that the church can go through the first half, even though, it has no part in the last half. (4) The position must deny the doctrine of imminence, for all the signs of the first half of the week apply to the church. (5) The position must deny the concept of the church as a mystery, so that the church age may overlap God's program with Israel. (6) The position must depend, to a certain extent, on the spiritualizing method of interpretation. This is particularly evident in the explanation of the positions of Scripture dealing with the first half of the tribulation period.

II. THE ESSENTIAL ARGUMENTS OF THE MID-TRIBULATION RAPTURIST

A study of the arguments used by mid-tribulation rapturists to support their view reveals that they use many of the same arguments of the post-tribulation rapturist.

A. THE DENIAL OF IMMINENCE.

First, the mid-tribulation rapturist denies the doctrine of imminence. However, it is evident that the New Testament writers themselves believed in an imminent return. There is a distinction between the soon coming of Christ and the imminent coming. Scripture nowhere taught that the coming would be soon, but it consistently taught that the coming could be expected at any time.

B. THE PROMISE OF TRIBULATION.

A second argument is the argument that the church was promised tribulation and, therefore, can expect to experience the first half of the tribulation period. This question has been dealt with previously.

C. THE DENIAL OF THE CHURCH AS A MYSTERY.

A third argument of the mid-tribulationist is an argument that essentially denies the mystery concept of the church. It has been shown previously that this present age is a mystery and the church program in this present age is itself a mystery. It has been demonstrated that the mystery program must be brought to termination before God can and will deal with Israel to complete the covenant program. God is not carrying on two programs, but one. There is no overlapping of the covenant program with the mystery church program. When the program with the church began that with Israel had already been interrupted.

D. THE DURATION OF THE TRIBULATION PERIOD.

A fourth argument used by the advocates of this position is the argument that the tribulation period is only three and one-half years in length. After showing how Daniel's seventieth week is to be divided into two parts, Harrison, says:

Prophecy III

"This should moreover save us from the common mistake of speaking of the Tribulation as a seven-year period. The Bible never so refers to it; rather, it begins in the middle of the seven. It is the latter three and a half years. All that leads up to it Jesus refers to as merely "the beginning of sorrows."

1. While it is recognized that Daniel gave notice that the seventieth week was to be broken into two parts (Dan. 9:27) and while the Lord, speaking of this same period spoke of the latter half of it as "great tribulation" (Matthew 24:21), yet nowhere in the Scriptures is this period divided into two unrelated parts, each with a different characterization. The mid-tribulation view essentially divides the seventieth week into two disassociated parts, while still calling it the "seventieth week," holding that the church may go through the first half because it has a different characterization than the last half. This, it is impossible to do. The unity of the seventieth week of Daniel in the program for Israel prevents us from dividing it into two separate parts.
2. Further, it is necessary to observe, if the church goes into the first three and a half years of the tribulation, the 144,000 would be saved into the church, since the church is still on the earth. Yet these are seen to be Jewish witnesses during the entire period. If they were saved while God is still adding to the body of Christ, and if, when the translation took place, they were left behind, the body would be dismembered and incomplete.
3. Again, if the tribulation period is to be dated from the making of the false covenant (Daniel 9:27), the church would know the time of the translation. While signs were given to Israel preceding the advent of the Messiah, no such signs were given to the church. The time of His coming for the church is a divine secret and men will not be able to determine the time by any such sign.

E. THE IDENTITY OF THE LAST TRUMP.

A fifth argument of the mid-tribulation rapturist is the argument that the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15 and the last trump of 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16 are identical. The argument rests on the use of the word "last" in connection with both events. "Last" can mean one of two things: last in point of time, or last in point of sequence. The word "last" may signify that which concludes a program, but is not necessarily the last that will ever exist. Inasmuch as the program for the church differs from that for Israel, each may be terminated by the blowing of a trumpet, properly called the last trumpet, without making the two last trumpets identical and synchronous as to time.

There seem to be a number of observations which make it impossible for one to identify these two trumps. (1) The trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52, even the mid-tribulationist agrees, sounds before the wrath of God descends, while, as it has been shown, the chronology of Revelation indicates that the trumpet in Revelation 11:15 sounds at the end of the time of wrath, just prior to the second advent. (2) The trumpet that summons the church is called the "trump of God," while the seventh trump is an angel's trumpet. (3) The trumpet for the church is singular. No trumpets have preceded it so that it can not be said to be the last of a series. The trumpet that closes the tribulation period is clearly the last of a series of seven. (4) In 1 Thessalonians 4 the voice associated with the sounding of the trumpet summons the dead and the living and consequently is heard before the resurrection. In the Revelation, while a resurrection is mentioned (11:12), the trumpet does not sound until after the resurrection, showing us that two different events must be in view. (5) The trumpet in 1 Thessalonians issues in blessing, in life, in glory, while the trumpet in Revelation issues in judgment upon the enemies of God.

Examination of the mid-tribulation rapture position has shown us that the essential

Prophecy III

arguments of the view will not stand the examination of true interpretation of Scripture and must be rejected as false.

THE PRE-TRIBULATION

RAPTURE THEORY

The third prevalent interpretation of the question of the time of the rapture in relation to the tribulation period is the pre-tribulation interpretation, which holds that the church, the body of Christ, in its entirety, will, by resurrection and translation, be removed from the earth before any part of the seventieth week of Daniel begins.

I. THE ESSENTIAL BASIS OF THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE POSITION

Pre-tribulation rapturism rests essentially on one major premise the literal method of interpretation of the Scriptures. As a necessary adjunct to this, the pre-tribulationist believes in a dispensational interpretation of the Word of God. The church and Israel are two distinct groups with whom God has a divine plan. The church is a mystery, unrevealed in the Old Testament. This present mystery age intervenes within the program of God for Israel because of Israel's rejection of the Messiah at His first advent. This mystery program must be completed before God can resume His program with Israel and bring it to completion. These considerations all arise from the literal method of interpretation.

II. THE ESSENTIAL ARGUMENTS OF THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURIST

A number of arguments may be presented in support of the pre-tribulation rapture position. While not all of them are of equal weight, the cumulative evidence is strong.

A. THE LITERAL METHOD OF INTERPRETATION.

It is frankly and freely admitted by amillennialists that the basic issue in the controversy between pre-millennialists and themselves is the issue of the method of interpretation to be employed in the interpretation of prophecy. Allis says "The question of literal versus figurative

interpretation is, therefore, one which has to be faced at the very outset." He admits that if the literal method of interpretation of the Scriptures be the right method pre-millennialism is the correct interpretation. Thus we can see that our doctrine of the pre-millennial return of Christ to institute a literal kingdom is the outcome of the literal method of interpretation of the Old Testament promises and prophecies. It is only natural, therefore, that the same basic method of interpretation must be employed in our interpretation of the rapture question. It would be most illogical to build a pre-millennial system on a literal method and then depart from that method in consideration of the related questions. It can easily be seen that the literal method of interpretation demands a pre-tribulation rapture of the church.

B. THE NATURE OF THE SEVENTIETH WEEK.

There are a number of words used in both the Old and New Testaments to describe the seventieth week period, which, when considered together, give us the essential nature or character of this period:

- (1) wrath (Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 5:9; Zeph. 1:15, 18);
- (2) judgment (Rev. 14:7; 15:4; 16:5-7; 19:2);
- (3) indignation (Isa, 26:20-21; 34:1-3);
- (4) punishment (Isa, 24:20-21);
- (5) hour of trial (Rev. 3:10);
- (6) hour of trouble (Jer. 30:7);
- (7) destruction (Joel 1:15);
- (8) darkness (Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:14-18; Amos 5:18). It must be noted that these references describe the period in its entirety, not just a portion of it, so that the whole period bears this characterization.

C. THE SCOPE OF THE SEVENTIETH WEEK.

There can be no question that this period will see the wrath of God poured out upon the whole earth. Rev. 3:10; Isaiah 34:2; 24:1, 4-5, 16-17, 18-21, and many other passages make this very clear. And yet, while the whole earth is in view, this period is particularly in relation to

Prophecy III

Israel. Jeremiah 30:7, which calls this period "the time of Jacob's trouble," makes this certain. The events of the seventieth week are events of the "Day of the Lord" or "Day of Jehovah." This use of the name of deity emphasizes God's peculiar relationship to that nation. When this period is being anticipated in Daniel 9, God says to the prophet, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city" (v. 24). This whole period then has special reference to Daniel's people, Israel, and Daniel's holy city, Jerusalem. Since the church had no part in the first sixty-nine weeks, which are related only to God's program for Israel, it can have no part in the seventieth week, which is again related to God's program for Israel.

It must be concluded that, since every passage dealing with the tribulation relates it to God's program for Israel, the scope of the tribulation prevents the church from participating in it.

D. THE DOCTRINE OF IMMINENCE.

Many signs were given to the nation Israel, which would precede the second advent, so that the nation might be living in expectancy when the time of His coming should draw nigh. Although Israel could not know the day nor the hour when the Lord will come, yet they can know that their redemption draweth nigh through the fulfillment of these signs. To the church no such signs were ever given. The church was told to live in the light of the imminent coming of the Lord to translate them in His presence. (John 14:2-3; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Tim. 6:14; James 5:8; 1 Peter 3:3-4). Such passages as 1 Thessalonians 5:6; Titus 2:13; Revelation 3:3 all warn the believer to be watching for the Lord Himself, not for signs that would precede His coming.

E. THE WORK OF THE RESTRAINER IN 2 THESSALONIANS 2.

The Thessalonian Christians were concerned for fear that the rapture had already taken place and they were in the day of the Lord. The persecutions which they were enduring, as referred to in the first chapter, had given them a basis for this erroneous consideration. Paul writes to show them that such a thing was impossible. First, he shows them in verse 3 that the day of the Lord could not take place until there was a departure. Second, he reveals there was to be the manifestation of the man of sin, or the lawless one, further described in Revelation 13. Paul's argument in verse 7 is that although the mystery of iniquity was operative in his day, that is, the lawless system that was to culminate in the person of the lawless one was manifesting itself, yet this lawless one could not be manifested until the Restrainer was taken out of the way. In other words, some One is preventing the purpose of Satan from coming to culmination and He will keep on performing this ministry until He is removed (vv. 7-8). The only One who could do such a restraining ministry would be the Holy Spirit. Thus, this ministry of the Restrainer, which will continue as long as His temple is on the earth and which must cease before the lawless one can be revealed, requires the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, for Daniel 9:27 reveals that that lawless one will be manifested at the beginning of the Week.

F. DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE SECOND ADVENT.

There are a number of contrasts to be drawn between the rapture and the second advent which will show that they are not viewed as synonymous in Scripture. The fact of two separate programs is best seen by a number of contrasts drawn in Scripture between two events. (1) The translation entails the removal of all believers, while the second advent entails the appearing or manifestation of the Son. (2) The translation sees the saints caught up into the air, and in second advent He returns to earth. (3) In the translation Christ comes to claim a bride, but

Prophecy III

in the second advent He returns with the bride. (4) The translation results in the removal of the church and the inception of the tribulation, and the second advent results in the establishment of the millennial kingdom. (5) The translation is imminent, while the second advent is preceded by a multitude of signs. (6) The translation brings a message of comfort, while the second advent is accompanied by a message of judgment.

G. THE PROBLEM BEHIND

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18.

The Thessalonian Christians were not ignorant of the fact of resurrection. This was too well established to need presentation or defense. That which elicited this revelation from Paul to them was their misunderstanding of the relation between the resurrection and the saints who were asleep in Christ to the rapture. Paul writes then, not to teach the fact of resurrection, but rather the fact that at the rapture the living would not have an advantage over the dead in Christ. If the Thessalonians had believed that the church would be going through the seventieth week they would have rejoiced that some of their brethren had missed this period of suffering and were with the Lord without experiencing the outpouring of wrath. If the church were going through the tribulation it would be better to be with the Lord than to have to await the events of the seventieth week. They would be praising the Lord that their brethren were spared these events instead of feeling that those had missed some of the Lord's blessings. These Christians evidently believed that the church would not go through the seventieth week and in their anticipation of the return of Christ mourned for their brethren, whom they thought had missed the blessing of this event.

H. THE SILENCE CONCERNING THE TRIBULATION IN THE EPISTLES.

The Epistles of James, 1 Peter and, in a measure, 2 Thessalonians were specifically written because of the impending persecution of the church. Many passages, such as John 15:18-25; 16:1-4; 1 Peter 2:19-25; 4:12;

James 1:2-4; 5:10-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10; 2 Timothy 3:10-14; 4:5, were written to give a revelation concerning the persecution, give the reasons for it, and give help and assistance so the believer might endure it. Evidently the writers of the epistles had no knowledge that the church would endure the seventieth week, for they certainly would have given help and guidance to meet the most severe persecution men will ever have known, since they were concerned with giving help for the persecutions of a past day. They would not prepare for the persecutions common to all and neglect the outpouring of wrath in which the believer would need special help and assistance if he were to be in it.

I. THE SEALED 144,000 FROM ISRAEL.

As long as the church is on the earth there are none saved to a special Jewish relationship. All who are saved are saved to a position in the body of Christ as indicated in Colossians 1:26-29; 3:11; Ephesians 2:14-22; 3:1-7. During the seventieth week the church must be absent, for out of the saved remnant in Israel God seals 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe, according to Revelation 7:14. The fact that God is again dealing with Israel on this national relationship, setting them apart to national identities, and sending them as special representatives to the nations in place of the witness of the church, indicates that the church must no longer be on earth.

J. THE APOSTASY OF THE PERIOD.

The complete apostasy of the period on the part of the professing church prevents the church from being in the world. The only organized church ever mentioned in the tribulation period is the Jezebel system (Rev. 2:22) and the harlot system (Rev. 17 and 18). If the true church were on earth, since it is not mentioned as separate from the apostate system, it must be part of that apostasy. Such a conclusion is impossible. The believing witnesses, converted during the period, are specifically said to have kept themselves from defilement by this apostate system (Rev. 14:4). Since the church is not

Prophecy III

mentioned as also having kept herself from this system it must be concluded that the church is not there.

K. THE PROMISES TO THE TRUE CHURCH.

There are certain passages of Scripture which definitely promise the church a removal before the seventieth week.

1. Revelation 3:10.

"I will keep thee from the hour of temptation." John uses the word "tereo." Thayer says that when this verb is used with "en" it means "to cause one to persevere or stand firm in a thing"; while when used with "ek" it means "by guarding to cause one to escape in safety out of." Since "ek" is used here it would indicate that John is promising a removal from the sphere of testing, not a preservation through it. This is further substantiated by the use of the words "the hour." God is not only guarding from the trials but from the very hour itself when these trials will come on those earth dwellers.

2. 1 Thessalonians 5:9.

"God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." The contrast in this passage is between light and darkness, between wrath and salvation from that wrath. 1 Thessalonians 5:2 indicates that this wrath and darkness is that of the Day of the Lord. A comparison of this passage with Joel 2:2; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Amos 5:18 will describe the darkness mentioned here as the darkness of the seventieth week. A comparison with Revelation 6:17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19 will describe the wrath of the Day of the Lord. Paul clearly teaches in verse 9 that our expectation and appointment is not to wrath and darkness, but rather to salvation, and verse 10 indicates the method of that salvation, namely, to "live together with him."

3. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10.

Again Paul clearly indicates that our expectation is not wrath, but the revelation of "his son from heaven." This could not be unless the Son were

revealed before the wrath of the seventieth week falls on the earth.

A number of reasons for belief in the pre-tribulation rapture position have been presented. Some of them are particularly applicable to the mid-tribulation rapture position and others applicable to the post-tribulation rapture position. It should be borne in mind that it is not claimed that all the arguments have the same importance or weight. The pre-tribulation doctrine is not based on these arguments singly, but rather they are considered as cumulative evidence that the church will be delivered by rapture before the inception of Daniel's seventieth week.

THE EVENTS FOR THE CHURCH FOLLOWING THE RAPTURE.

There are two events portrayed in Scripture into which the church will be brought following the rapture which have special eschatological significance: the judgment seat of Christ and the marriage of the Lamb.

I. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

In 1 Cor. 5:10 and Romans 14:10, although in the latter passage the reading is "judgment seat of God", it is stated that believers are to be brought into an examination before the Son of God. This event is explained in more detail in 1 Cor. 3:9-15. A matter of such seriousness demands careful attention.

A. The meaning of judgment seat - Bema -

a raised place mounted by steps; a platform, tribune; used of the official seat of a judge, Acts 18:12, 16. Associated with this word are the ideas of prominence, dignity, authority, honor and reward rather than the idea of justice and judgment.

B. The time of the bema of Christ -

immediately following the translation of the church out of this earth's sphere. Luke 14:14 (reward associated with resurrection) 1 Thess. 4:13-17.

C. The place of the Bema of Christ -

in the sphere of the heavenlies. 1 Thess. 4:17 and 2 Cor. 5:1-8.

Prophecy III

D. The judge at the Bema of Christ -

the Son of God. 2 Cor. 5:10; John 5:22; Rom. 14:10.

E. The subjects of the Bema of Christ -

only believers. 2 Cor. 5:1-19. (notice how many times the first person pronoun occurs).

F. The basis of the examination at the Bema of

Christ - rewards, not sin. Salvation is not being considered. Rom. 8:1; John 5:24; 1 John 4:17. To bring the believer into judgment concerning the sin question would nullify the promise of God that "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Heb. 10:17.

Thus the judgment is not to determine what is ethically good or evil, but rather that which is acceptable and that which is worthless. It is not the Lord's purpose here to chasten His child for his sins, but to reward his service for those things done in the name of the Lord.

G. The result of the examination at the Bema of

Christ - rewards received or lost. 1 Cor. 3:14,15. That which endures the trial by fire (1 Cor. 3:13) will remain as reward. That which is burned up will be lost. See 1 Cor. 9:27. The word castaway (adokimos) means "found to be good-for-nothing". We know this has nothing to do with salvation because Paul writes in 1 Cor. 3:15, "he himself shall be saved: yet so as by fire." The five areas of reward are as follows:

- (1) An incorruptible crown for those who get mastery over the old man. 1 Cor. 9:25.
- (2) A crown of rejoicing for the soul winners. 1 Thess. 2:19.
- (3) A crown of life for those enduring trials. Jas. 1:12.
- (4) A crown of righteousness for loving his appearing. 2 Tim. 4:8.
- (5) A crown of glory for being willing to feed the flock of God. 1 Pet. 5:4.

II. THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB.

In many New Testament passages the relation between Christ and the church is revealed by the use of the figures of the bridegroom and the bride. John 3:29; Rom. 7:4; 1 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-33; Rev. 19:7,8, 21:1-22:7. At the translation of the church Christ is appearing as a bridegroom to take His bride unto Himself.

A. The time of the marriage is revealed in

Scripture as falling between the translation of the church and the second advent. (Rev. 19:7) This marriage is seen to follow the events of the Bema of Christ inasmuch as when the wife appears she appears in the "righteousness of the saints" (Rev. 19:8).

B. The place of the marriage can only be in

heaven. Rev. 19:14.

C. The participants in the marriage.

This event involves only Christ and the church. In this connection it seems necessary to distinguish between the marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper. The marriage of the Lamb is an event that has particular reference to the church and takes place in heaven. The marriage supper is an event that involves Israel and takes place on the earth. In Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24 and Matt. 25:1-13, where Israel is awaiting the return of the bridegroom and the bride, the wedding feast or supper is located on the earth and has particular reference to Israel. So we see that Israel, at the second advent, will be waiting for the bridegroom to come from the wedding ceremony and invite them to that supper, at which the bridegroom will introduce His bride to His friends (Matt. 25:1-13).

The church, which was God's program for the present age, is now seen to have been translated, resurrected, presented to the Son by the Father, and has become the object through which the eternal glory of God is forever manifested. The present age will thus witness the inception, development, and completion of God's purpose in "taking out...a people for His name" (Acts 15:14).

Study Questions for Prophecy III

1. List the four positions on the rapture and a sentence or two explaining each.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

2. The word eschatology means _____

3. Draw a time line from eternity past to eternity future.

4. Redemption undertakes the solution _____

Reconciliation undertakes _____

Propitiation undertakes _____

5. The correct position on the rapture is _____.

6. What 2 events for the church follow the rapture?

a. _____ b. _____

time: _____ time: _____

place: _____ place: _____

participants: _____ participants: _____

7. I have read _____% of the printed material.

8. I have looked up _____% of the Scripture references.

Exam Questions for Prophecy III

Student's Name: _____ **Teacher's Name:** _____ **Date:** / /

1. List the four positions on the rapture and a sentence or two explaining each.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

2. The word eschatology means _____

3. Draw a time line from eternity past to eternity future.

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Prophecy III

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION TO PROPHECY	1
THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH	4
I. DEFINITION OF TERMS	5
II. THE PARTIAL RAPTURE THEORY	5
THE POST-TRIBULATION RAPTURE THEORY	9
I. THE ESSENTIAL BASIS OF POST- TRIBULATION RAPTURISM	9
II. THE ESSENTIAL ARGUMENTS OF THE POST-TRIBULATION RAPTURIST	9
DANIEL 9 AND THE TRIBULATION	11
THE MID-TRIBULATION RAPTURE POSITION	13
I. THE ESSENTIAL BASIS OF MID-TRIBULATION RAPTURISM	13
II. THE ESSENTIAL ARGUMENTS OF THE MID-TRIBULATION RAPTURIST	13
THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE THEORY	15
I. THE ESSENTIAL BASIS OF THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE POSITION	15
II. THE ESSENTIAL ARGUMENTS OF THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURIST	15
THE EVENTS FOR THE CHURCH FOLLOWING THE RAPTURE.	18
I. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.	18
II. THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB.	19
Study Questions	20
Additional Outlines in the back.	

REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS BLOCK:

1. **Read all the material** for this block.
2. **Look up and read all the verses** in the material as you read through the material.
3. **Fill in the answers** to your **STUDY QUESTIONS** ahead of time so you will be better prepared for the EXAM during the final hour.
4. **T-H-I-N-K** as you read this material. **It will be a blessing to you.**

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by
J. DWIGHT PENTECOST

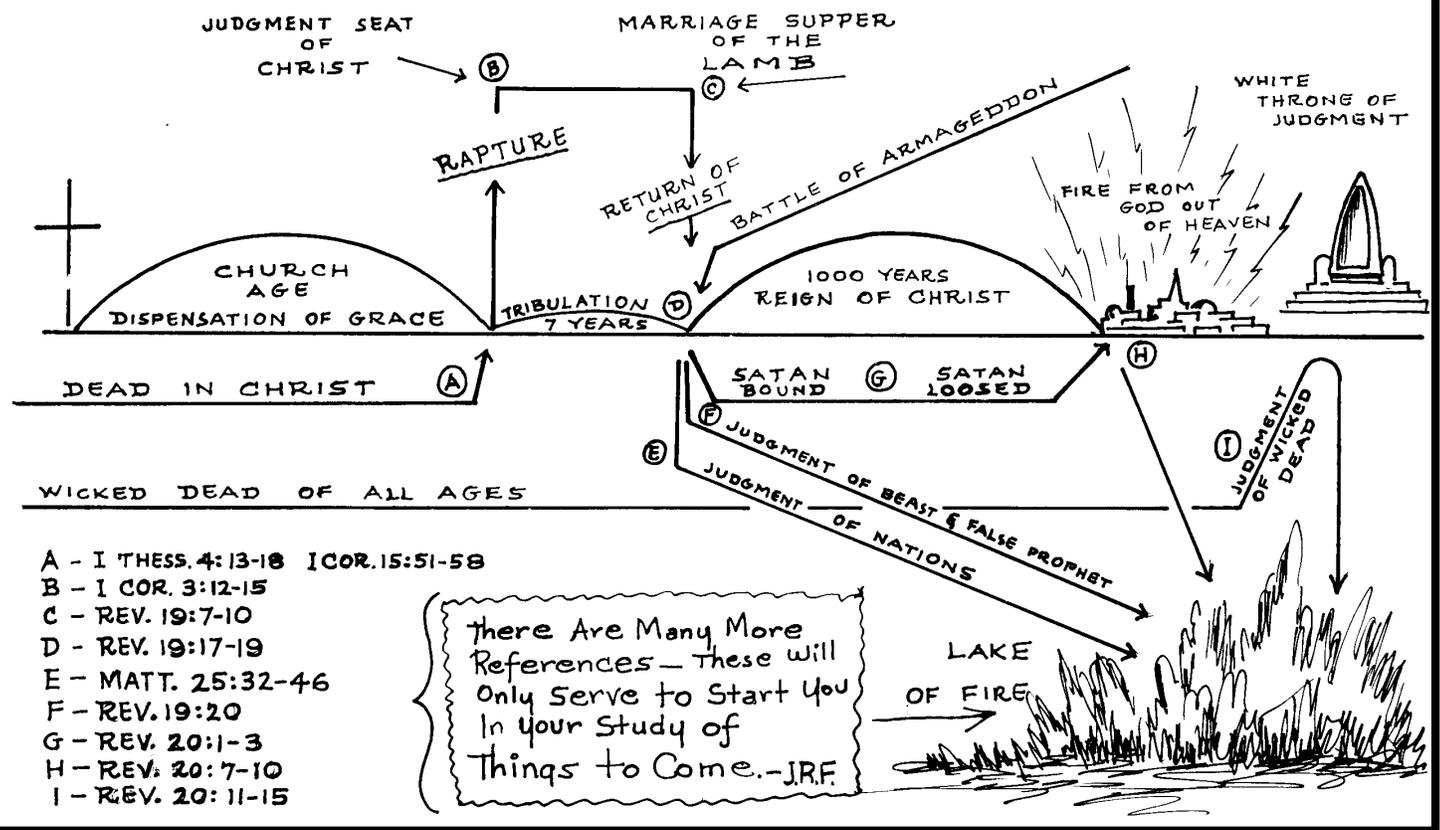
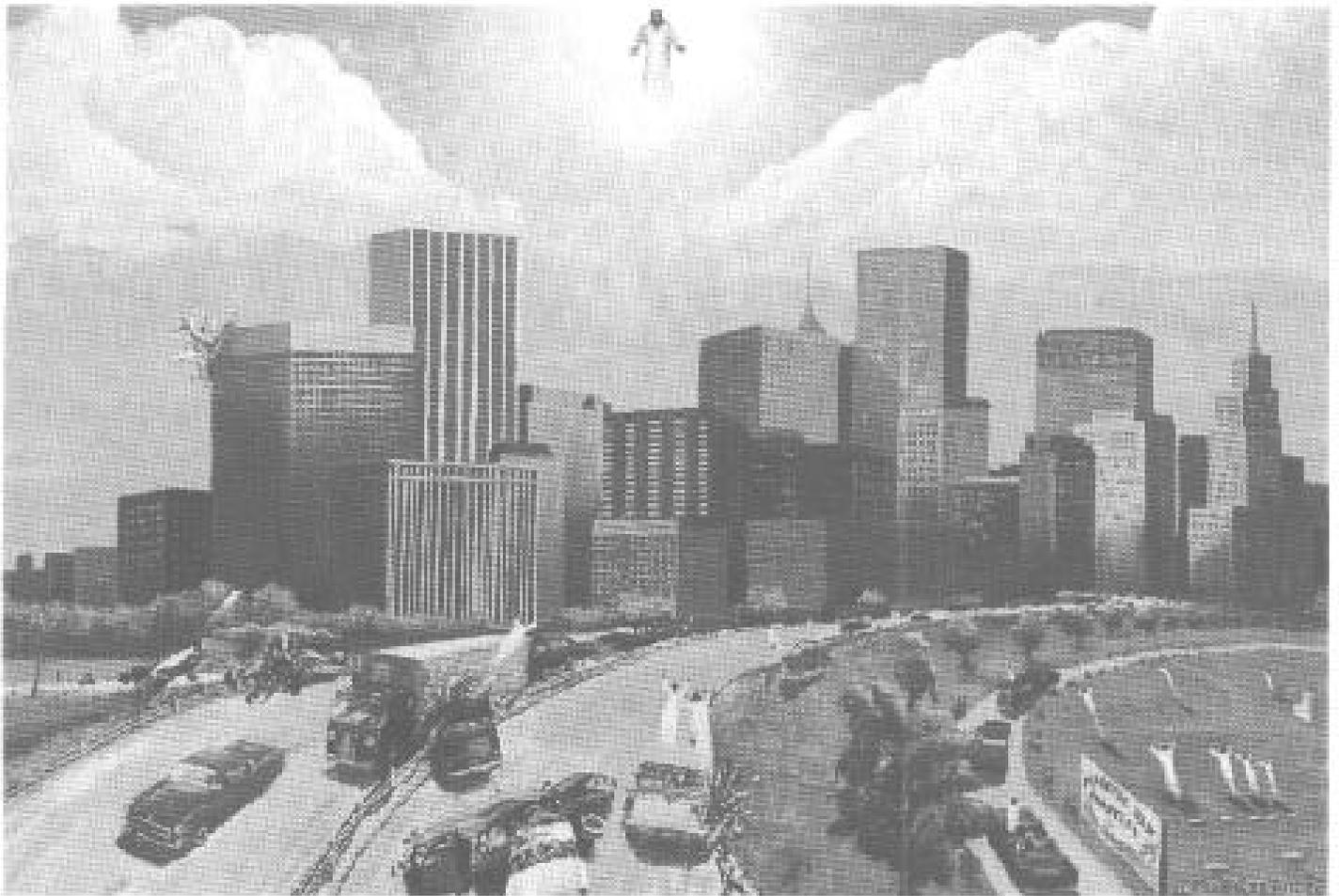


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133 Isarog Street, LaLoma, Quezon City 1114 R.P.



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