
THE COMING OF THE LORD AND THE TRIBULATION

(Notes by Craig Munro)

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INTRODUCTION

The present phase of the Kingdom in mystery¹, the inter-advent period of the Messiah, will soon come to an end. The first sign that it will soon end is the first stage of the return of the Lord Jesus, which will be to the air for the Church. The 'Church Age' which has known the descent of the Spirit of God, the preaching of the Gospel of the Grace of God and much more, now awaits the soon return of the Lord Jesus. There are many differences between the coming of the Lord Jesus to the air for His people and His coming to Earth to reign with His people. It is one coming but in two stages. His coming to earth to be Saviour was in two stages. The first stage was to rural Bethlehem away from the public gaze, and then the second stage was a public appearing in Jerusalem as Messiah, riding on the back of a donkey.² His second coming will be no different – it will be in two stages. The first stage will be *to the air* privately for His people;³ the second stage will be publicly *to the earth* in judgment to reign in His Kingdom.⁴

The second stage of the Lord's second coming to reign as King on earth was mentioned often in the Old Testament, but not the first stage – what we call the Rapture, the Lord's return to the air. Paul defends the resurrection from the Old Testament scriptures in 1 Corinthians 15, but he does not do this when describing events surrounding the Rapture. This was a new revelation (called a 'mystery') for the Church⁵ and Paul commences discussing the Rapture by saying, '*by the word of the Lord*'⁶ – in other words the truth of the first stage of the Lord's second coming for the Church was truth uniquely revealed in the New Testament alone.

¹ Matt. 13. 11: 'He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.'

² Matt. 21. 1-16

³ 1 Thess. 4. 17: 'Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.'

⁴ Zech. 14. 4: 'And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south';

2 Thess. 1. 7-8: 'And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁸In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

⁵ 1 Cor. 15. 51: 'Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.'

⁶ 1 Thess. 4. 15: 'For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.'

THE RAPTURE

What does the word Rapture mean?

The word rapture means '*caught up*'⁷ and has the idea of a 'snatching' or 'catching' away. It was used in Greek literature to describe a mother 'snatching' her child from danger or of a thief 'snatching' his booty quickly. So, the Lord will catch away his people suddenly and silently from this world. The law of gravitation will be offset – '*caught UP*' and the law of decomposition will be offset – '*dead in Christ shall rise first*'.

Will the Rapture be only for the Church?

Yes. The fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians is a passage that emphasises the Lordship of Christ, and yet it is interesting to note the one verse where there is an exception is the verse that describes who will be resurrected and raptured. It does not say the 'dead in our Lord Jesus Christ' but '*the dead in Christ*'⁸ i.e. all saved (in Christ) will rise to be with Him. The expression 'in Christ' appears 77 times in our Bible and on each occasion is unique to the Church. Israel are described as dying '*in faith*'⁹ but never '*in Christ*'. Paul adds: '*We shall **all** be changed*'.¹⁰ Our participation in the Rapture does not depend on how loyally we have acknowledged His Lordship but simply on the fact that we are in Christ. There is nothing 'partial' about the Rapture.¹¹ All the Church will go at the same time

Why is the time of the Rapture withheld?

God knows that if we could predict the actual date of the Rapture or indeed anticipate pre-rapture signs, there would be that real danger that we could be occupied with the 'event' more than the 'Person of Christ'. It would also rob of us of 'urgency' in our Gospel witness and remove the need to be 'watchful' in personal holiness.¹²

⁷ 1 Thess. 4. 17

⁸ 1 Thess. 4. 16: 'For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.'

⁹ Heb. 11. 13: 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off...'

¹⁰ 1 Cor. 15. 51

¹¹ Rom. 8. 23: 'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.'

¹² 1 John 2. 28: 'And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.'

What happens after the Rapture?

Whilst there may be a transition period, the Bible speaks of a specific period of seven years of carnage and turmoil on earth prior to the time when the Lord comes back to the earth, the Tribulation¹³ or Daniel's 70th week.¹⁴ The longest descriptions of this period are found from Revelation chapter six through to Revelation chapter 19 but Mathew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 also provide extensive descriptions of this period, particularly the last part of this period. The last half of this seven-year period is called the '*great Tribulation*'¹⁵ and lasts 1260 days¹⁶ or 42 months of thirty days¹⁷ or 3.5 years.¹⁸ The question might be asked: will the Church go through this period of Tribulation?

Will the Church go through the Tribulation?

The answer to this question is an emphatic 'No'. We will list seven reasons why the Church will not go through the Tribulation.

¹³ Matt. 24. 21: 'For then shall be great Tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be';

Matt. 24. 29: 'Immediately after the Tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken'

¹⁴ Dan. 9. 27: 'And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week (*means in context a week of years*): and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.'

¹⁵ Matt. 24. 21

¹⁶ Rev 12. 6: 'And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.'

¹⁷ Rev. 11. 2: 'But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.'

¹⁸ Rev 12. 14: 'And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.' Time equals 1 year, times equals 2 years, and half a time equals half a year and so added together give 3.5 years.

SEVEN REASONS EXPLAINING WHY THE CHURCH WILL NOT GO THROUGH THE TRIBULATION

(1) No, because the coming of Christ to the air was believed to be imminent.

The early Christians did not anticipate going through a period of extensive world-wide judgment upon earth, because they were expecting the return of Christ at any moment.

- They took the words of Christ at face value.¹⁹

[It would be strange if the Lord's words were interpreted to mean that they should wait another 2000 years before He returned. That would hardly have been a comfort, as the truth of the coming again of the Lord was intended to be.²⁰]

- They greeted each other with '*maranatha*', believing that His coming was soon.²¹ John ends the Bible saying, '*even so come Lord Jesus*.'²²
- They held out to one another the possibility of not dying.²³ Their core belief was, '*we shall not all sleep*.'²⁴

['*After my departing*', in Acts chapter 20,²⁵ does not mean 'after I die' but 'after I depart the coasts of Ephesus and am no longer physically with you'. Only Peter knew he would die.²⁶ Paul lived with the possibility of death and resurrection at the same time. It was only right

¹⁹ John 14. 1-3: 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And 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 21. 22-23; 'Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. ²³Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?'

²⁰ 1 Thess. 4. 18: 'Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

²¹ 1 Cor. 16. 22

²² Rev. 22. 20

²³ 2 Cor. 5. 1-2: 'For we know that if [please notice the 'if' – it was a possibility that their earthly house (their body) need not be dissolved and they be naked in death, but clothed upon] our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:'

²⁴ 1 Cor. 15. 51: 'Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed'

²⁵ Acts 20. 29

²⁶ John 21. 18-19: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. ¹⁹This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.'

at the end, in 2 Timothy, Paul's last letter, that we learn that Paul knew that he would soon die.^{27]}

- They comforted each other with the thought of his imminent coming,²⁸ saying it was a '*little while*'.²⁹
- They regarded the first evidence of salvation to be found '*waiting for His Son from heaven*'.³⁰ Looking for Him became the Christian's occupation.³¹ This would be unusual behaviour if it were accepted that His coming could not take place until after a world-wide apostasy some millennia in the future.
- They warned against behaviour that would be unbecoming at His return.³²

²⁷ 2 Tim. 4. 6: 'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.'

²⁸ 1 Thess. 4. 13-18: 'But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

²⁹ Heb. 10. 37: 'For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.'

³⁰ 1 Thess. 1. 10

³¹ Tit. 2. 13: 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ';

Heb. 9. 28: 'So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.'

³² 1 John 2. 28: 'And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.'

(2) No, because the structure of the book of Revelation does not allow it

Revelation 6 to 18 is the Tribulation period, and the Church is not mentioned once in this section, despite the fact that the book is written to the 7 Churches.³³ After chapter three we never read again of the Church, until we see her coming out of heaven in chapter 19. Almost in every chapter in this section (Chapters 4 - 18) we can see things which would exclude us. Can we pray the prayer of Rev. 6. 10?³⁴ That prayer is not how our Lord prayed in Luke 23. 34!³⁵ In Revelation 7 there are two groups of people, Jews and Gentiles, quite distinct, but in the Church God has '*made in Himself of two one new man*'.³⁶ There are no such distinctions in the Church. Additionally, in Rev. 19. 1-10 the Church is in heaven before the return of Christ to earth. The Lord comes as King of Kings out of Heaven to reign from verse 11 onwards in this chapter.³⁷ But the Church (the bride) is in Heaven clothed in righteousness from verses 1-10. How did she get there? She was transported there beforehand. When the world is cursing God for His judgments,³⁸ the Church will be in heaven with Christ.

³³ Rev. 1. 4: 'John to the seven Churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne.'

³⁴ Rev. 6. 10: 'And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?'

³⁵ Luke 23. 34: 'Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.'

³⁶ Eph. 2. 15: 'Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;'

³⁷ Rev. 19. 1-11: 'And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: ²For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. ³And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. ⁴And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. ⁵And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. ⁶And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. ⁷Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. ⁸And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. ⁹And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. ¹⁰And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. ¹¹And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.'

³⁸ Rev. 16. 11: 'And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.'

(3) No, because the New Testament explicitly teaches the reverse

To the Church at Philadelphia:

‘I also will keep thee from [‘out from’ – i.e. never in it] the hour of temptation [Tribulation], which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly.’³⁹

To the Church at Thessalonica:

‘For God hath not appointed us to [Tribulation] wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ’;⁴⁰

‘Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him [i.e. His return to the air], 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 [better, with the majority of manuscripts, ‘the Lord’] is at hand’.⁴¹

Paul explicitly taught that the day of the Lord, which definitely encompasses the Tribulation period, would come after the apostasy had taken place’.⁴² The Thessalonian saints need not be worried and concerned by reports that this day had commenced; they were to look for the Lord from Heaven instead: they were safe from this Tribulation wrath.

³⁹ Rev. 3. 10-11

⁴⁰ 1 Thess. 5. 9

⁴¹ 2 Thess. 2. 1-2

⁴² 2 Thess. 2. 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’.

(4) No, because otherwise the imagery of the Old Testament would be lost

The Rapture is prefigured in the life of Joseph: Joseph married Asenath in Genesis 41. Joseph, a picture of the Saviour, did this before the seven years of famine and the time of testing of his brethren in chapters 42-47 of Genesis. We do not read of Asenath in these times of famine or trial. This is a beautiful picture of the Church escaping the seven years of *'Tribulation which will come on all the earth'*.⁴³ Enoch was taken up to glory alive before the judgements of the flood in Noah's day:⁴⁴ this is a picture of the saints being raptured prior to the judgement of God on earth. Abraham was up in the height of Hebron (picture of heaven) and was spared the wrath that fell upon Lot down in the plains of Sodom (picture of earth).⁴⁵ While this New Testament truth is not explicitly taught in the Old Testament, it seems likely that God has left pictures latent in the Old Testament scriptures for us to enjoy. They do not prove the point, but they are consistent with the New Testament teaching.

⁴³ Rev. 3. 10

⁴⁴ Gen. 5. 24: 'And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.'

⁴⁵ Gen. 19. 27-28

(5) No, because the general flow of prophecy demands otherwise.

The general flow of prophecy in the New Testament is as follows: Israel has been set aside,⁴⁶ whilst Gentiles are brought in.⁴⁷ Israel, however, will be taken up again (*'graft in again'*) once the Church is taken away. The Church is something new⁴⁸ and not an extension of Israel. By insisting that the Church goes through the Tribulation it removes the distinction of the Church and Israel and seems to run counter to this general pattern of prophecy.

⁴⁶ Matt. 21. 43: 'Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.'

⁴⁷ Romans 11. 11-26: 'I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. ¹²Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? ¹³For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office. ¹⁴If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. ¹⁵For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? ¹⁶For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; ¹⁸Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. ¹⁹Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. ²⁰Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: ²¹For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. ²²Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. ²³And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. ²⁴For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? ²⁵For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. ²⁶And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob'.

⁴⁸ Eph. 2. 15 (note the word 'new') and Matt. 16. 18 (note the word 'will' i.e. something future and not made out of the old material of Israel).

(6) No, because the “gaps” in scripture suggest otherwise

- Our Lord stopped halfway through a sentence when reading Isaiah 61 verse 2, as recorded in Luke 4. 16-20.⁴⁹ He knew the difference between the ‘*acceptable year of the Lord*’ (Church period) and the ‘*day of vengeance*’ (Daniel’s 70th week). These events do not blend into one another.
- The gap between the 69 weeks (Dan 9. 24-26⁵⁰) and the 70th week of Daniel’s prophecy (Dan. 9. 27⁵¹).
- The gap between Zechariah 9. 9 and Zechariah 9. 10.⁵²
- The gap between Isaiah 52. 14 and 52. 15.⁵³

⁴⁹ Isa 61. 1-2: ‘The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; ²To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;’

⁵⁰ Dan 9. 24-26: ‘Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. ²⁵Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. ²⁶And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.’

⁵¹ Dan. 9. 27: ‘And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.’

⁵² Zech. 9. 9: ‘Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass;’

Zech. 9. 10: ‘And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.’

⁵³ Isa. 52. 14: ‘As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men;’

Isa. 52. 15: ‘So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.’

(7) No, because otherwise the Scriptures would be contradictory

The New Testament teaches that ‘*we shall **all** be changed*⁵⁴ at the Rapture that is, that we will all have resurrection bodies⁵⁵, in which there is ‘neither marrying nor giving in marriage⁵⁶’ (teaching of the Lord Jesus to the Sadducees). At the Rapture, the dead saints are raised **before** living saints are changed, both meeting in the air at the same time.⁵⁷ However, in the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures it would seem as if the dead saints are raised **after** the return of Christ, to join the living saints on earth.⁵⁸ There are many examples in Scripture to uphold the fact that the Church will all have resurrected bodies at the Rapture,⁵⁹ but we know of no scripture to show that living saints on earth who survive the Tribulation will have their bodies changed into a “resurrection body” when the Lord comes in glory. Indeed, the fact that children will be born during the millennium precludes it. The truth that ‘*we shall **all** be changed*’ can only be true at the Rapture. It cannot be true at the manifestation, as there will still be death in the Millennium so not **all** will have resurrection bodies in the Millennium.⁶⁰ It is the children born to these people that will be part of the rebellion at the end of the

⁵⁴ 1 Cor. 15. 51

⁵⁵ Phil. 3. 20-21: ‘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.’

⁵⁶ Matt. 22. 30: ‘For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.’

⁵⁷ 1 Thess. 4. 15-17: ‘For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.’

⁵⁸ Dan 11.45-12.3: ‘And he [Man of Sin] shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him. ¹And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. ²And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever’;

Matt. 8. 11: ‘And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.’

⁵⁹ Phil. 3. 21: ‘Who 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.’

⁶⁰ Zech. 14. 17-19: ‘And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. ¹⁸And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. ¹⁹This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.’

Millennium⁶¹. By insisting that the Church goes through the Tribulation and that the return of Christ for the Church to the air (Rapture) and the manifestation of Christ to the earth happen at the same time makes these prophetic Scriptures contradictory. The '*scripture cannot be broken*'.⁶²

⁶¹ Rev. 20. 7-9: 'And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, ⁸And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. ⁹And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.'

⁶² John 10. 35

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST FOR THE CHURCH AND FOR JUDGMENT UPON EARTH

A number of differences between the Rapture of the Church to the air and the manifestation of Christ to the earth are summarised in the chart.

<p style="text-align: center;">The Return to the Air</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Return to the Earth</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">New Revelation in New Testament Returns for the Church (1Cor. 15. 51; 1 Thess. 4. 15)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Revealed in Old and New Testament Returns for the Kingdom (Zech. 14; Matt. 24; 2 Thess. 2)</p>
<p>Comparison</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marks the end of the Church period and the beginning of Daniel's 70th week*. (1 Thess. 5. 9; 2 Thess. 2. 1-6; Rev. 3. 10; Compare Rev. Ch. 2-3 with Ch. 4-19) • The "Fullness of the Gentiles" complete (Rom 11.25) • The change of body will come in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15. 52) • Resurrection of all "in Christ" [i.e., the Church – 1 Thess. 4:16] * (although there could well be a transition period before the Tribulation period commences) 	<p>Comparison</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marks the end of Daniel's 70th week and the beginning of the Kingdom period (Dan. 9. 27; 2 Thess. 2. 3-8; Matt. 24. 15 Dan. 2. 44; Matt. 24. 31; Zech. 14. 9) • The "Times of the Gentiles" concluded (Luke 21. 24) • Will come like a thief in the night (Matt. 24. 43-44; 1 Thess. 5. 3) • Resurrection of all who "are Christ's" [i.e. OT saints, Tribulation saints 1Cor. 15. 23; Dan. 12. 2; Matt. 8. 11; Rev. 6. 9-11; 7. 14]
<p>Contrast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returns to the Air (1 Thess. 4. 17) • Dead saints raised before living saints are changed, meeting in the air (1 Thess. 4. 15-17) • Blessing for the Church: "Comfort" (1 Thess. 4. 16-18) • Expected at any moment (Rev. 3. 11; 22. 20; Heb. 10. 37; 2 Cor. 5. 1; 1 Cor. 15. 51-52; 2 Thess. 2. 1) • Comes in Person (1 Thess. 4. 16: "Himself") • No signs in the sky to precede this event 	<p>Contrast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returns to the Earth (Zech. 14. 4) • Dead saints raised after the return of Christ to join the living saints on earth (Zech. 14. 14; Dan. 11. 45-12. 3). No record of living saints being changed. • Vengeance on Enemies (2 Thess. 1. 8) • Expected after the apostasy of the man of sin (2 Thess. 2. 3-6) • Comes accompanied with Angels (2 Thess. 1. 7) • Sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens and stellar activity will precede this event (Matt. 24. 29-30)

What are the features of the Tribulation, prior to the Lord's return to judge the world?

A number of features will be true just prior to the coming of Christ to the earth. All these features have been seen at different times throughout history, but they will be redoubled in their intensity at this time. The Lord taught extensively about this period as recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21.

Seven features of the Tribulation:

1. **Anti-Semitism:** The Devil will single out Israel for attack, Jerusalem will be broken over 3.5 years and ultimately besieged (two thirds of the city of Jerusalem destroyed), but still spared.⁶³
2. **Religious Deception:** People will rise up making great claims to deceive.⁶⁴
3. **Military Propaganda:** Fake news about wars will be distributed to trouble people.⁶⁵
4. **Political instability:** Real wars between countries and power blocks will emerge.⁶⁶
5. **Geological and Economic catastrophe:** Natural disasters, pandemics and famines will multiply.⁶⁷

⁶³ Rev 11. 2: 'But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.'

Rev 12. 13-14: 'And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. ¹⁴And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.'

Jerusalem broken down: Matt. 24. 1-2: 'And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. ²And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'

Jerusalem besieged: Matt. 24. 28: 'For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together';

Luke 21. 20: And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

Jerusalem spared: Zech 13. 8: 'And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.'

⁶⁴ Luke 21. 8: 'And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.' (cf. Matt. 24. 4-5);

Matt. 24. 11: 'And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.'

⁶⁵ Luke 21. 9: 'But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.' Cf. Matt. 24. 6

⁶⁶ Luke 21. 10: 'Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:' cf. Matt. 24. 7.

⁶⁷ Luke 21. 11: 'And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.'

6. **Dissolution of family life/ Rampant individualism**⁶⁸
7. **Persecution of Believers**⁶⁹

We see all these features in embryo today, but they will be fully formed in the Tribulation period. What happens to the Kingdom in mystery at this point just prior to the second advent of Christ?

⁶⁸ Luke 21.16: 'And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.'

⁶⁹ Luke 21. 12: 'But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake';

Luke 21. 17: 'And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.'

Will God's Kingdom grow in the Tribulation despite all this opposition?

Yes, perhaps the largest 'revival' the world has ever known will take place at this time. 144,000 Jews will be raised up by God and it would appear that they will begin to preach the gospel of the Kingdom.⁷⁰ These men will not marry but devote themselves to the work of God and will be specially preserved.⁷¹ A colossal amount of people will be saved; who will turn to the Lord Jesus for salvation and will not accept the mark of the beast. This is described in full detail in the book of Revelation.⁷² They will all enter into the Millennial Kingdom. So, despite billions dying on earth through judgement there will be a vibrant, remnant, 'earthly' testimony being prepared to meet their Lord when He comes in manifestation with His Church from heaven.

Reflective question:

What are the major differences between the return of the Lord Jesus to the air and the return to the earth?

⁷⁰ Rev. 7. 4-8: 'And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. ⁵Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. ⁶Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. ⁷Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. ⁸Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.'

⁷¹ Rev. 14. 1-4: 'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. ²And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: ³And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. ⁴These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.'

⁷² Rev. 7. 9-17: 'After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; ¹⁰And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. ¹¹And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, ¹²Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. ¹³And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? ¹⁴And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great Tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. ¹⁶They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. ¹⁷For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'