Excursus #2

Examination of the Doctrine of The Rapture of the Church

- In discussing the doctrine of the rapture of the church, the first thing that should be pointed out is that the word **"rapture"** is not found in Scripture.

  - But although the word "rapture" is not found in Scripture, it is described in various passages.

- The English word "rapture" is translated from the Latin word ***raptō***, meaning **"to siege and carry off; to pluck up; to forcibly take and carry off."**

  - In the Greek language, the Latin word ***raptō*** is translated by the Greek word *harpazō*, which also means "to carry off by force."

  - This concept of being "forcibly taken and carried off" is described in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 . . .

    1 Thessalonians 4:17— Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up [*harpazō*] ***together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.***

- We see the use of the word *harpazō* in other synonymous passages of Scripture.

  Acts 8:39— When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.

  2 Corinthians 12:2-4— 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— 4 was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

  Revelation 12:5— And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

  - In these three passages the word *harpazō* has the same meaning . . . "to be taken and carried off." In Acts 8:39 it describes the taking of Philip after he had evangelized the Ethiopian eunuch. In 2 Corinthians 12 it is used to describe the Holy Spirit "taking" Paul up to heaven to reveal things to him about heaven. In Revelation 12:5 it describes the "ascension" of the Lord to heaven. In all three instances it is God who is the One acting upon Philip, Paul and the Lord Jesus.

- As previously stated, the word **"rapture"** is not found in Scripture, but it is described. In fact, **there are 6 rapture events described in the Bible**.

  - In Genesis 5:24 we read that ***Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.***

- In 2 Kings 2:11 we read of Elijah's rapture . . . ***as they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.***

- In Acts 1:9 we have the rapture, or ascension, of the Lord Jesus.

- In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 we just read of the account of the "rapture" of Paul when he is given the opportunity to see heaven.

- In 1 Thessalonians 4:17 we read of the rapture of the church.

- And in Revelation 11:12 we see the rapture of the two witnesses of God . . . ***and they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.***

- In the New Testament there are three passages that describe the rapture of the church.

  John 14:1-3— 1 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.
  2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

  1 Corinthians 15:51-52— 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

  1 Thessalonians 4:13-18— 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- In comparing the three passages above, several observations can be made:

  - First, note in John 14:3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16 that **the Lord, Himself, comes** to receive those who are taken.

  - Second, note in 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16 that the arrival of the Lord at the rapture is preceded by the blast of a ***trumpet***.

  - In all, from 1 Thessalonians 4:16 we see that there are **3 distinct signals given** to announce the arrival of the Lord: 1) ***the Lord Himself will descend with a shout***; 2) ***the voice of the archangel***; 3) ***the trumpet of God***.

- D. Edmond Hiebert says of the rapture . . . "clearly the rapture does not seem to be a silent affair. It seems that a tremendous reverberating sound will actually encircle the earth. See Acts 9:7 and 22:9 in the account of Saul and those with him who heard the sound of a voice, but did not hear articulate words, and saw no man."

The sequence of events that occur at the Rapture

- From the various rapture passages, especially from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, we see the components and sequence of events at the actual rapture event:

  1. A three-fold signal, described above, precedes the arrival of the Lord.

  2. The souls of those saints who have died prior to the rapture will accompany the Lord at His arrival (1 Thess. 4:14)

  3. The bodies of the dead saints will be raised, immortal and incorruptible, as they are reunited with their returning souls (1 Cor. 15:42-44, 52-53; 1 Thess. 4:14-16).

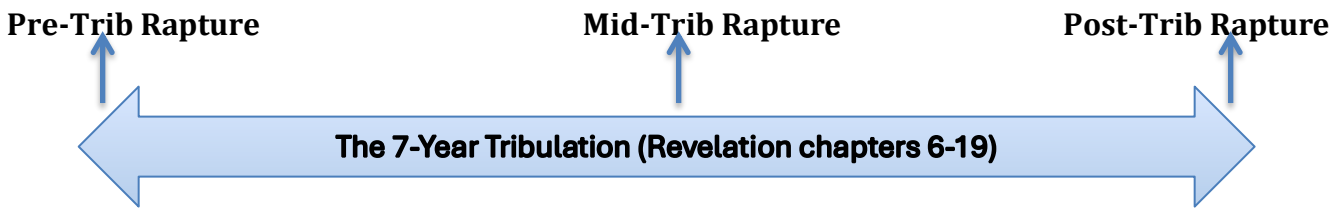
  4. The bodies of the church-age saints who have not died will be changed at the moment of the rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

  5. All the resurrected and changed church-age saints will be ***caught up*** to meet Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4:17; John 14:3).

  6. All the church-age saints will return with Christ to His Father's house in haven to dwell with Him in the place prepared for them (John 14:2-3).

Three Major Rapture views

- While there are many views concerning the rapture, there are **3 primary views**.
- The **Pre-Tribulational view** sees the rapture event occurring prior to the beginning of the 7 year Tribulation, described in Revelation chapters 6-19.
- The **Mid-Tribulational view** sees the rapture event occurring at the mid-point (3 ½ year point) of the Tribulation.
- The **Post-Tribulational view** sees the rapture event occurring at the end of the Tribulation.



Why a Pre-Trib Rapture?

- Of the 3 most popular rapture views, the Pre-Tribulational rapture view has the most Scriptural and logical support.

- The strongest single point in favor of a Pre-Trib rapture is the doctrine of imminence, which we examined in Lesson 9.

    - If the return of the Lord to take the church-age saints to heaven is an imminent event, then it must precede any events of the tribulation.

    - The problem with the Mid-Trib and Post-Trib views is that they teach against the imminent return of the Lord. We learn from Daniel and Revelation that the tribulation lasts for 7 years and is preceded by the signing of a 7-year covenant of peace between Israel and the anti-christ. Knowing that these events will occur on the tribulation timeline, we can accurately calculate the date of the rapture in the Mid-Trib and Post-Trib views, thereby denying the imminence of Christ's return.

Is the Rapture the same as "the second coming" of Christ?

- Some people believe and teach that the rapture and the second coming of the Lord are the same event. This is especially true of those who hold to a Post-Trib view of the rapture, since the Post-Trib view sees these two events happening at the same point in time . . . the end of the Tribulation.

- But the rapture and the second coming of the Lord are two distinct events.

    - The rapture is the Lord's coming for the church-age saints, to take them to heaven to be with Him.

    - The "second coming" of the Lord is the Lord's triumphal return to the earth at the end of the Tribulation in which He judges the nations, casts out the unbelievers and institutes the Millennial Kingdom.

- Evidence of this difference is seen in the description of the two events.

    - In the rapture passages we learn that the Lord comes in the clouds, but does not return to the earth. In stead, we rise to meet the Lord in the air.

    - On the other hand, in Revelation 19:11-21 we see that the Lord returns to the earth in judgment, seizing the Beast and False Prophet and throws them into the Lake of Fire, and casts Satan into the Abyss for 1000 years.

Understanding the significance of John 14:1-3

- In our exploration of the doctrine of the rapture, it is helpful to examine one of the significant passages in that doctrine . . . John 14:1-3.

    John 14:1-3— 1 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.
    2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

- **The problem:** In John 14:1-3 Jesus is dealing with the problem of His disciples being ***troubled*** by His statement in John 13:33, ***"Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'"***

    - The disciples were distressed and disturbed by the Lord's revelation that He was leaving them.

- **The Comfort:** In response to their troubled hearts, in John 14:1 the Lord comforts them, ***"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me."***

- **The Preparation:** Having comforted the disciples in v. 1, in v. 2 the Lord explains the purpose for His departure and why He is leaving the disciples behind . . . ***In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.***
    - The Lord states that His going away was to make preparations for the disciples to come to be with Him in the future.

- **The Promise:** Then, having explained the preparatory purpose of His departure, in v. 3 the Lord then makes a two-fold promise . . . ***If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.***

    - The first promise is that ***I will come again***. With this promise the Lord is giving assurance to the disciples that His departure was only temporary . . . that He was promising to return for them.

    - The second promise expands on the first promise . . . ***and receive you to Myself***. The use of the word ***receive*** (Greek: *paralambanō*) means that Jesus' return was not to re-join them, but to take them to the place that He had been preparing. Jesus was not coming back to them to stay but to take them to a new place to be with Him.

- It is significant to note that the Greek word *paralambanō* is also used in Matthew 1:20 & 24 and translated ***take***, describing the action of a bridegroom **"taking"** his betrothed wife unto himself.

    - In such a case, the bride is not longer under her father's authority because her bridegroom is "taking" her . . . she is now in her husband's care.

    - We will examine this concept in greater detail.

- **The Purpose:** In the closing phrase of John 14:3 we see the purpose of Jesus' coming . . . **to receive His own unto Himself**.

    - As John 14:3 reveals, the coming of the Lord at the rapture is <u>not</u> for the purpose of Him coming back to dwell on the earth, but the taking of His own to dwell with Him in heaven.

    - The John 14:3 passage is a new and unique revelation. Jesus is speaking of something <u>never</u> before revealed . . . bringing His own to His Father's house. Remember, the Jews have always been looking for their Messiah to return to set up an <u>earthly</u> kingdom.

    - It wasn't until after Pentecost that the Holy Spirit revealed these things to them. Later, in his writings, the apostle Paul further reveals the nature of our being taken to heaven.

What is the relationship between John 14:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18?

- First, the Lord's coming in John 14:3 involves a descent from heaven by Christ, Himself, and corresponds to 1 Thessalonians 4:16 . . . ***the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven . . . .***

- Second, the exegesis of John 14:3 shows that in conjunction with the Lord's descent from heaven, believers will be **moved from earth to meet Him**.

    - Harmonizing with John 14:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:17 states that believers ***will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air***.

    - Thus, both passages present a coming of Christ that involves a movement of believers from the earth to meet the Lord.

- Third, the purpose of the John 14:3 "coming" is so that believers can be with Him where He is. This purpose corresponds to the purpose we see in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 . . . ***thus we shall always be with the Lord.***

- Fourth, Jesus' teaching in John 14:2-3 was to calm the troubled hearts of His apostles. In like manner, the teaching of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 was to give comfort to the troubled hearts of the saints in Thessalonica who thought they had missed the Lord's return.

    - Jesus' promise to come and receive believers in John 14 finds its full meaning in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, as revealed through the apostle Paul.

- A.W. Pink states that Jesus' promise to come again and Paul's 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 statements refer to the same coming . . . the rapture of the church.

The Jewish Marriage analogy—a picture of the Pre-Trib Rapture

- As mentioned earlier, in John 14:3, Jesus uses the verb translated ***receive*** (Greek: *paralambanō*), which means "to take from another." Implicit in the use of the word is the <u>action</u> described in Matthew 1:20, 24 where Joseph took Mary as his wife . . . a bridegroom taking his betrothed wife unto himself.

- Jesus' disciples would have understood the significance of this word. But it would not be until the mystery was revealed (Ephesians 5:22-33) that the church the bride of Christ that the full significance of the Lord's statement would be understood.

- Because of the use of the word *paralambanō*, there is an analogy between the Lord's statement in John 4:1-3 and the Jewish wedding custom of that time that has many similarities.

The Analogy Examined

1. In the Jewish wedding custom, the bridegroom leaves his father's house and travels to the home of the prospective bride.

    - Jesus left <u>His</u> Father's house in heaven and came to earth, the home of His prospective bride.

2. The Jewish bridegroom went to the bride's home to obtain her by establishing a marriage covenant.

- Jesus came to earth to obtain the church by establishing a covenant in His blood. As 1 Corinthians 11:25 says, ***this is the new covenant in My blood . . . .***

3. The Jewish bridegroom paid a purchase price by which he established the marriage covenant and through which he obtained his bride.

- Jesus paid a purchase price by which He established the new covenant and through which He obtained the church . . . the price was His own life. As 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 state, ***for you have been bought with a price***.

4. Once a marriage covenant was established, the Jewish bride was set apart exclusively for her groom.

- The church has been sanctified . . . consecrated, set apart . . . exclusively for Christ (Eph. 5:25-27; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Cor. 6:11; Heb. 10:10; Heb. 13:12).

5. The Jewish bride and groom drank from a cup of wine as a symbol of the marriage covenant that united them as husband and wife. Though not yet legally married, they were legally betrothed to one another.

- Christ has given the communion cup as a symbol of the new covenant that has united Him and the church spiritually.

6. The Jewish groom then left the home of his bride and returned to his father's house for a period of time.

- On the day of His ascension, Christ left the earth, the home of His bride, and returned to His Father's house in heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

7. The Jewish groom remained separated from his bride for a specified period of time.

- Christ has remained separated from His bride and we are now living in that period of separation time between His departure and His return.

8. During this period of separation the Jewish bridegroom then began preparing a home for his bride.

- As Jesus states in John 14:2, ***I go to prepare a place for you***.

9. It was only after the bridegroom's father was satisfied that a satisfactory home has been prepared for the bride and satisfactory preparations had been made for the wedding that the bridegroom was given permission to go to get his bride.

- In the same way, Jesus says of the day of His return in Matthew 24:36, ***"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.***

10. At the time appointed by his father, the Jewish bridegroom, along with male escorts, leave the groom's house to ***take*** (*paralambanō*) the bride from her home.

- Christ, along with an angelic escort, will leave His Father's house to ***take*** the church from the earth (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

11. The Jewish bride always waited expectantly, looking for her bridegroom because she did not know at what time he would come for her.

- In Matthew 25:1-13, in the parable of the ten virgins, the picture is of ten virgins awaiting the return of the bridegroom. In Matthew 25:6 we read of the bridegroom's return . . . ***"But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'***

- In the same way, the church expectantly waits and eagerly looks for the return of Christ (the doctrine of imminence) because we do not know the time He will come for us (Titus 2:11-13; 1 Cor. 1:7).

12. As just stated in Matthew 25:6, the Jewish groom's arrival was preceded by a shout, announcing his arrival to his bride.

- Likewise, Christ's return at the rapture will be preceded by a shout (1 Thess. 4:16).

13. With the arrival of the bridegroom, the bride then left her house and returned with the bridegroom to his house for the wedding ceremony.

- In the same way the church will leave the earth and accompany the Lord to His home in heaven.

14. The Jewish wedding party would return to the bridegroom's home to find the wedding guests assembled for the wedding.

- Christ and His church will return to the Father's house to find the Old Testament saints assembled as the wedding guests (Rev. 19:7-9).

15. The Jewish bride and groom remained in seclusion for a period of **7 days** after they arrived at the grooms' father's house.

- In the same way, after the rapture, the church will accompany the Lord and enter into a period of seclusion with Him for **7 years** (corresponding to the length of the Tribulation).

16. Then, after their 7 days of seclusion, the Jewish bride and groom would then emerge with the bride's veil removed for all to see.

- In the same way, in Revelation 19:14 we see that the church will accompany the Lord on His triumphal return to the earth at the end of the Tribulation.

- This beautiful picture shows Christ's loving protection of His bride, the church. Having suffered the wrath of God on her behalf, He stand ready to deliver her from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10). Just as an earthly bridegroom would in no way subject his bride to danger, so too, Christ will not subject His bride to the same.

- The fact that there are so many similarities between the Lord's instruction regarding His departure & return and the Jewish wedding process is strong evidence for a Pre-Trib rapture.

    - Knowing the degree to which humanity will suffer during the Tribulation, the question for those who hold to a different view is, **why would God allow His Son's bride to suffer terribly at His hand, and only then come for her after she had been bloodied and beaten by His wrath?**

    - The picture that comes to mind is of a beaten and bloodied bride showing up to her wedding in her torn and ruined bridal gown.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE SECOND ADVENT

The Rapture	**The Second Advent**
Key Scriptures: *John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:50-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-17*	**Key Scriptures:** *Zech. 14:1-11; Matt. 24:29-44; Rev. 19:11-21*
1. Imminent. No "signs" precede this event.	1. Not imminent. This event is preceded by numerous and definite prophesied "signs."
2. Entails the removal of all believers, both dead and living, who are joined together instantly.	2. Entails the appearance of the Son of God.
3. Saints are ***"caught up"*** in the air, in the clouds.	3. Christ returns to the earth.
4. Christ comes to claim His Bride.	4. Christ returns with His Bride.
5. Christ returns with His Bride to heaven. The Tribulation follows.	5. Christ remains on earth and sets up His Kingdom. The Millennium follows.
6. When the saints are removed, only unbelievers are left to begin the Tribulation period.	6. When the unbelievers are removed, only believers are left to begin the Millennial Kingdom.
7. Brings a message of comfort and hope.	7. Brings a message of judgment.
8. Related to God's program for the Church.	8. Related to God's program for Israel and the world.
9. A mystery: never revealed in the Old Testament.	9. Clearly revealed and predicted in both Testaments. No mystery.
10. Immediately following, believers are judged (Judgment Seat of Christ).	10. Immediately following, Israel and Gentiles are judged (Judgment of Jews; Sheep-Goat Judgment).
11. Creation unchanged. Earthly curse remains.	11. Creation changed. Earthly curse is lifted.
12. Sin runs rampant and virtually unchecked after this event, as Satan holds full sway.	12. Sin is judged, Satan is removed, and righteousness fills the earth alter this event.
13. Occurs before ***"the day of wrath."***	13. Occurs after ***"the day of wrath."*** All the world will see (Rev. 1 :7).
14. Sudden. Instantly occurs, leaving the earth in confusion and chaos. Literally involves believers only.	14. Comes as a result of worldwide military conflict, occurring at end of Armageddon campaign. Literally involves entire world.
15. Expectation of the Church: ***''The Lord is near"*** (Phil. 4:5).	15. Expectation of believing Israel: ***"The kingdom is at hand"*** (Matt. 10:7; 24:14).

Contrasts Between The Rapture and Second Coming	
Rapture	**Second Coming**
resurrection	no resurrection
come *for* saints	come *with* saints
meeting in the air	meeting on earth
saints in heaven	saints on earth
no signs preceding	signs preceding
any-moment	not any-moment
saved	saved & lost
Satan not bound	Satan bound

Understanding the difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming

Evidence From 1 Thessalonians 5

1 Thessalonians 5:1-4— 1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;

- The broad "day of the Lord" does not include the Rapture. Both the Rapture and the broad "day of the Lord" are **imminent** events (***will come just like a thief in the night***).

- The broad "day of the Lord" includes The Second Coming (Narrow Day aspect).

Key Differences

- The Rapture is the removal of the righteous from the earth.

- The Second Coming is the removal of the wicked from the earth. It is a reverse order from the Rapture:
  - Examine the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, beginning in Matthew 13:24 . . .

    Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43— 24 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. 26 But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. 27 The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' 29 But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"
    36 Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." 37 And He said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, 38 and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. 40 So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, 42 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
    43 Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

    - Notice in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares that the wicked (the tares) are **gathered <u>out</u> of His kingdom**.

  - Next, notice in the Parable of the Dragnet in Matthew 13:47-50 . . .

Matthew 13:47-50— 47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; 48 and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. 49 So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, 50 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- Again, notice that ***the angels will come forth and take out the wicked***. And when will occur? As v. 49 states, ***at the end of the age*** . . . at the judgment of the Lord's Second Coming.

- Finally, notice the context of the Judgment of the Nations in Matthew 24:37-41 . . .

Matthew 24:37-41— 37 "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

- Many people mistakenly believe this to be a "rapture passage." It is not. This passage appears in the context of the Lord's judgment of the nations at His Second Coming.

- Note in v. 39 that ***just as in the days of Noah . . . they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away***.

- What happened in ***the days of Noah***? God judged the earth by a flood. It was a time of judgment, not blessing.

- In v. 40 & 41 we have examples of what will happen when Christ returns. The wicked we be the ones **taken away in judgment**, ***just as in the days of Noah***, leaving only the righteous on the earth to enter the Millennial Kingdom.

Further Scriptural Evidence For a Pre-Trib Rapture

Evidence from 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11— 1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus

Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

- First of all, what is the context of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11? As v. 2 states, it is in the context of **the coming of the day of the Lord**.

- The major subject in this passage is **the <u>broad</u> day of the Lord**.

  - There are **two aspects to the broad day of the Lord:**

    1. **Darkness**—in which divine wrath will be meted out.

    2. **Light**— in which God will bless the righteous by permitting entry into the Millennial Kingdom

- In this passage Paul contrast **2 groups of people—the saved and the unsaved**.

1. Contrasting Pronouns

  - The **saved** (the church saints) are identified by the pronouns ***you, yourselves, we, us*** and ***our***.

  - The **unsaved** (the wicked) are identified by the pronouns ***they*** and ***them***.

2. Contrasting Spheres— the habitual sphere in which one lives

  - Note in 1 Thess. 5:4 that the church saints are <u>not</u> "in" darkness. Instead, they are "in" light. The implication of this is that **it is the wicked who are darkness**.

  - The result of the wicked being in darkness is stated in v. 4 . . . **the day of the Lord will overtake them like a thief.**

  - As we see, the judgment aspect of **the day of the Lord** is characterized by **darkness** and is reserved for those who are <u>in</u> the sphere of darkness, not for those who are <u>in</u> the sphere of **light** (v. 5— ***for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness***)

  - We see Old Testament affirmation of this in Amos 5:18-20 . . .

    Amos 5:18-20— 18 Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, for what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light; 19 As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, or goes home, leans his hand against the wall and a snake bites him. 20 Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, even gloom with no brightness in it?

3. Contrasting Natures

  - In 1 Thessalonians 5:5 we read . . . ***for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness***.

- Note a change in prepositions from v. 4 where we see the contrast of being **<u>in</u> darkness or light** to being **<u>of</u> darkness or light**. The preposition ***in*** refers to the sphere in which a person is <u>located</u>, while the preposition ***of*** refers to their <u>nature</u>.

- For an example, compare 1 John 2:15-16 with John 17:14 & 16 . . .

  1 John 2:15-16— 15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

  John 17:14, 16— 14 the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

- **Conclusion**: The wrath of God that is poured out during **the day of the Lord** belongs to those who are ***<u>in</u> darkness*** and ***<u>of</u> darkness***.

4. Contrasting attitudes and actions from 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8

- Notice in v. 6-8 that Paul describes those who are ***of darkness*** are **asleep**. In other words, they are **spiritually asleep . . . or indifferent**. This is in comparison to those who are ***of light*** who are watchful and alert.

5. Contrasting destinies

- In 1 Thessalonians 5:9 we read of the two contrasting destinies of those who are ***in*** and ***of darkness*** and those who are ***in*** and ***of light . . . For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ***.

- The word ***destined*** (Greek: *tithēmi*) means "to place, lay, set, appoint, ordain." In this verse this verb is used in the **aorist tense and middle voice**.

  - The use of the **middle voice indicates** that God, as the One taking the action, acted in His own interest.

  - And the use of the **aorist tense indicates** that God took this single action . . . in eternity past.

  - In other words, we see here in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 that God chose, in eternity past, those whom He would save, both eternally and temporally from His wrath during the day of the Lord.

- Here in 1 Thessalonians 5 Paul is stating that the electing grace of God will keep the church saints from the eschatological wrath of God and this is affirmed to be the eternal purpose of God in the phrase ***God has not destined us for wrath***.

  - To make this point more emphatically, in the Greek text the word ***not*** is placed at the beginning of the sentence. The statement literally reads ***<u>not</u> God has destined us for wrath***.

- **And what wrath has God destined us for?** The sudden destruction spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 . . . ***While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.***

Note two significant parallels between 1 Thess. 5:10-11 and 1 Thess. 4:16-18.

- First, in 1 Thess. 5:10 and 1 Thess. 4:16-17 we see references to those who are ***asleep*** . . . those saints who have died prior to the Lord's return for the church at the rapture. In both passages Paul speaks of the fact that those who are ***asleep*** will be gathered together with those who are ***alive***, and we will all be joined in resurrection with the Lord.

  1 Thessalonians 4:16b-17— 16 . . . the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

  1 Thessalonians 5:10— so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

- Second, in both passages Paul commands us to ***comfort*** or ***encourage*** one another with this instruction. The words ***comfort*** and ***encourage*** are the same Greek word, *parakaleō*.

  1 Thessalonians 4:18— Therefore comfort one another with these words.

  1 Thessalonians 5:11— Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Conclusion:

- "God has no intention that we should become subjects of His wrath, fall under His punitive action when the day of sudden destruction falls upon the unsaved . . . the divine wrath against sin was diverted from us when, by faith, we were united with "the Son of His love." Wrath is the destiny of Christ-rejecting souls."— D. Edmond Hiebert

- In answering the question, "what is the relationship of the church saints to the eschatological wrath of God?" we find the answer in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, and affirmed in Revelation 3:10 . . . ***Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.***

- The ***hour of testing*** that the Lord refers to in Revelation 3:10 is ***the wrath to come*** that Paul speaks of in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and from which we are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, ***God has not destined us for wrath.***