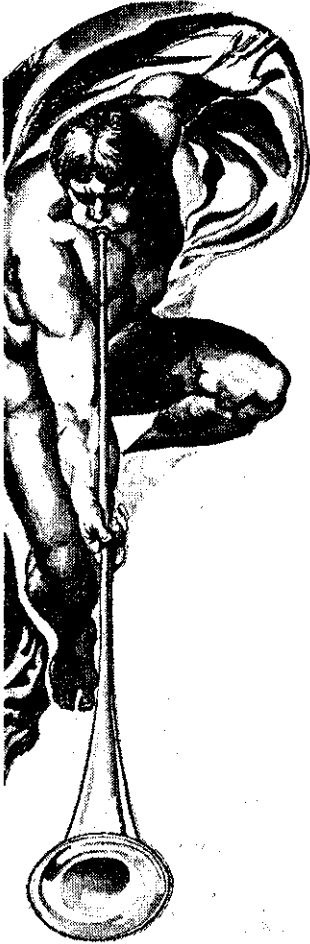


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The
\$ 500,000
Rapture
Question

Introduction

Bible evangelicals are largely divided over one of the most-asked questions of our time--Will the Church go through the tribulation?

Believing our Lord's return is near and hastening, we would like to present a Bible-based answer to this all important question.

There is a growing number of Christians who no longer believe the event we call the rapture is imminent, believing instead, that the Church will have to go through the tribulation.

Thus, this is the reason for this booklet...

\$ The \$ 500,000 Rapture Question



Radio Commentator Ray Brubaker of
GOD'S NEWS BEHIND THE NEWS

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\$500,000 OFFER if pre-tribulation theory can be proven from the Bible. Contention is made by some that this theory of the "rapture before the tribulation" did not originate until around 1830.

However, quotations of early Church Fathers and the Didache indicate Christ's coming could be expected any time with the accompanying admonition urging readiness for this unknown event.

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The day of Christ's Coming is imminent but uncertain.

Would the Scriptures urge us to "look" and to "wait" for our Lord's coming if the Church must needs go through the tribulation?

Studies from the Greek text teach that Christ's coming is imminent, and that only the date is uncertain.

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It behooves us to be found ready whenever our Lord may come. However, the evidence is overwhelming that one of the purposes of the tribulation is for the chastening of lukewarm Laodiceans; whereas, the promise to Philadelphia believers is that of being kept from the hour of trial "to try them that dwell upon the earth."



Dr. Louis Talbot writes: "I believe the human imagination is absolutely incapable of picturing the awful days of the tribulation period. It will be the most awful time ever known, because it will be the first time the devil will be allowed to exercise such power. There will be signs in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. Great catastrophes like the one that once made of San Francisco a heap of ruins will be repeated, only on a far greater scale. The centers of a boasted civilization with the foundation of blood and tears will crumble to the ground. Intense heat will burn the grass and trees of the field. Pestilences like bubonic plague will carry off thousands. The sun will be darkened; the moon turned into blood; the stars of heaven will not give their light. It will be such a time of trouble as never was, "No, nor ever shall be."

Now, the question we might ask -- Will believers on earth at this time of unparalleled lawlessness have to suffer the consequence of the judgment seen pronounced upon the wicked? Will the Church have to go through the tribulation?

What did Paul mean when on account of man's rebellion against God there is this pronouncement of "Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." Rom. 3:9-10

Tribulation is the due of evil doers. And such tribulation such as the world has never seen, nor ever shall see again, said Jesus.

No wonder, Dr. V. Raymond Edman, former Chancellor of Wheaton College, has said: "The day of the Lord will bring the greatest tribulation ever experienced by this bewildered and bruised old world. As earth's first civilization declined into the unspeakable godlessness and wickedness of the days of Noah, so will the coming of the day of the Lord."

Dr. Oswald J. Smith notes: "Earth's darkest hour lies just ahead!" Dr. Smith, incidentally, believes the Church will go through this dark, dismal age of unparalleled death and destruction we call the tribulation period.

In his first book on prophecy, Dr. Smith wrote: "I have always held the view that the Rapture precedes the Revelation by some seven years, and that the Church, therefore, will not go through the Tribulation, but I do not want to be dogmatic about it and, if God should reveal the contrary to me, I will gladly accept it!"

We have great admiration for Dr. Smith and would hope everyone of the readers of this booklet would have the same open mind to the truth of God's Word.

More recently, Dr. Smith did change his position. He writes: "Now, after years of study and prayer, I am absolutely convinced that there will be no rapture before the tribulation, but that the Church will undoubtedly be called upon to face the Antichrist, and that Christ will come at the close and not at the beginning of that awful period."

Briefly, let us look into the Word of God to see what will transpire during this tribulation time. Then, ask ourselves the question whether we would be able to endure this time of trouble just ahead.

It would appear that the Tribulation dawns with the rise of Antichrist who will demand that all receive a mark of identification. Without this no man can buy or sell.

Stop and think for a moment. Just how important is your Social Security card? If now receiving the benefits of a monthly check, you would certainly not want to give up your card without a protest. "Where will I get enough money to buy groceries and pay my rent?" would be your cry.

Similarly, to refuse this mark of identification required for all, will find one unable to purchase food or clothing, and unable to sell any produce or possessions.

How long would a person resist such a system?

There are many today who follow the fads and fashions because they feel they have to go along with the crowd, whether it's long hair or short skirts. You can be sure these same people would fall for the Antichrist program if they can't say "no" to the temptation to be different.

During the Tribulation there will be a one-world, religious-political empire, and to refuse loyalty to this system will bring death.

How many will have the courage that it takes to be different then, if they can't withstand the pressure to be different now?

Then the tribulation will be characterized by unspeakable woes, horrors, and judgments. Famine and pestilence will follow devastating wars and great earthquakes. There will be thunderings and lightnings rocking heaven and earth. Stars will fall from Heaven upon the earth making the waters bitter, and great hail weighing 55 to 100 pounds will not be uncommon. The sun shall scorch men with great heat before they suffer the judgment of darkness. Gross darkness shall cover the earth as the moon, too, shall become dark.

Another star is seen falling to the earth and the concussion splits open the earth, and the Bible describes the appearance of creatures like locusts with the ability to torment men five months. Their torment was like that of a scorpion when he striketh a man. Those bitten will wish they could die, but can't.

Noisome and grievous sores appear on the world's inhabitants, and they blaspheme the God of Heaven because of their pains and sores. The sea becomes as the blood of a dead man and all living things die. Amidst powerful earthquakes, mountains are leveled and the islands disappear into the sea.

Besides all the judgments herein described, we read of Satan himself actually dwelling upon the earth, ruling through his puppet, the Antichrist!

The imagination cannot begin to describe conditions that will then prevail. Mark reminds us, "Then shall be great AFFLICTION!" Noisome and grievous sores will afflict all who take the mark of the beast, and great pain will cause men to gnaw their tongues and blaspheme the God of Heaven. Paul tells us the day of the Lord will be as the travail of a woman with child from which there is no escape!

No escape! Those will be sad words to fall upon the ears of many whose fate will be a kind of hell on earth. For the tribulation is one awful time of sorrow from which there will be no escape once it comes.

However, we cannot help but believe there is escape from this awful holocaust seen coming upon the world. For, did not our Lord urge His disciples, saying: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man!"

Would our Lord hold out the possibility of escape if there were no escape? And did He not indicate the possibility of escaping "all these things" that shall come to pass?

That this promise of "escape" is conditioned upon our faithful watching and praying is certainly implied

here. So, let no one rest solely upon their decision for Christ that they may have made years or days ago. Rather, we are given explicit orders to make preparation for the day of Christ's appearing. A wedding is about to be consummated, and it cannot be that there isn't the necessary preparation. In fact, we read: "His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Rev. 19:7-8.

Did you hear it?

As Sarah Foulkes Moore, editor of the HERALD OF HIS COMING publication, sums it up: "All the Lord's emphatic warnings in His many parables in Matthew 24 and 25 are exhortations to uninterrupted watchfulness. He gave His disciples no reason to believe their readiness for the Rapture rested on any experience of salvation that they may have had. He made it pointed and plain that their conduct at the moment of the Rapture meant the winning of the prize. All teaching, all preaching, all activity, religious, secular, or otherwise that today ignores the Lord's solemn warning to His own to 'watch and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy' dissipates watchfulness and makes for sloth and carelessness."

Thus, this should be the believer's encouragement to watchfulness, prayerfulness and faithfulness. May we be reminded that the very nature of the word 'Church' implies a select company of saints that will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air at the Rapture. For the word 'Church' is the Greek word "Ekklesia" which means "called-out" ones.

And while we may have assurance of our salvation which rests upon the Word of God and the Spirit's witness to our own heart, let us not become lukewarm in our Christian experience but ever live in constant expectancy and readiness for that all-glorious event.

Again quoting Mrs. Moore: "Christ made ever-pressing the necessity of being ever ready. It is not without intent that He left the time of His Advent unknown in order to keep us in a constant state of instant readiness."

Thus, this constitutes our message. We would urge immediate steps be taken to come to a knowledge of such readiness that will find us escaping the coming judgment seen befalling the world. By trusting Christ as our Saviour and Lord, having renounced a life of sin through faith in His shed blood to cover past sin, and then by living daily for Christ through the help of the Holy Spirit, we can be ready for rapture!

For our Lord has urged us, saying: "Be ye ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh!"

WILL THE CHURCH GO THRU THE TRIBULATION?

Fred John Meldau, writing in **CHRISTIAN VICTORY** magazine, notes: "There is an ever-growing controversy on whether the Church will be raptured before, in the midst of, or at the end of the Great Tribulation."

Perhaps several definitions are in order.

First, most all are in agreement that the Great Tribulation is a time of intense suffering and agony for the whole world. Our Lord says: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be!"

As Dr. Charles J. Woodbridge writes concerning the Great Tribulation, he refers to it as "a specific era of anguish still in the future--a period of intense, excruciating sorrow and physical pain."



The question puzzling many is - Will Christ come before this Great Tribulation to rapture the saints? Or, is His coming confined only to the end of this period when He returns to establish His Kingdom?

TWO ASPECTS OF HIS COMING

That our Lord is coming again is a Scriptural certainty believed by most Church leaders throughout history.

John Knox, fiery Scottish preacher once shouted: "Shall our Lord not return?" He answered his own question by declaring: "We know that He shall return!"

The return of our Lord is mentioned 318 times in the Bible. But what some fail to see is the two aspects of His second coming.

This is clearly brought out in 2 Tim. 4:1 which refers to our Lord's "appearing" and His "kingdom". We read how our Lord shall "judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." As the quick and the dead are two different groups of people to be judged at Christ's coming, so His appearing and His kingdom are two different times of His coming.

I'm reminded of traveling through the country one day when I came across a sign up ahead which said "FOR SALE". I supposed the property was for sale. Then, as I got closer, I could see there were more words on the sign and I detected the word "fish." So, I thought the sign must be saying: "FOR SALE FISH!" I wondered, who would be selling fish out here in the country. The thought was foolish and absurd. By that time, I came upon the sign to notice that it actually read: "FOR SALE FISH WORMS!"

This is how some people read the Bible. They know it speaks of our Lord's second coming, but they fail to see the two aspects of His coming.

These two aspects are referred to in 2 Thess. 2:1, where reference is made to "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him."

When our Lord comes, He is seen establishing His kingdom as we pray, "Thy kingdom come!" Whereas, at our Lord's appearing, in the event we call the rapture, we are gathered together unto Him.

Even Malachi in the Old Testament speaks of "his coming" and "his appearing" relating these events to a time of purging and purifying.

This helps to explain the purpose of the tribulation and the involvement of the Church. For writes Malachi: "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap!"

Did you hear it?

A refiner's fire and fuller's soap speaks of the cleansing and purifying that must come to a complacent, indifferent, lukewarm, Laodicean Church as we approach the end of this age.

For Malachi goes on to declare: "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." In Scripture, SILVER speaks of redemption. So our Lord is seen purifying those whom He has redeemed.

It is true that the tribulation is a "time of Jacob's trouble" when God's purpose is to purge Israel. Malachi also mentions this, saying: "He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Mal. 3:3.

However, we must not overlook the fact that this age is going to end in a time of tribulation which will be for many a testing time. We repeat - God is left no choice but to allow many to be tested.

As Peter declares: "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 1:7. Notice, Peter links this trial of faith to the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Now, the question we would ask is - Will the Church go through this time of testing--this period of trial?

We would reply - It depends on which church you're in! We don't mean Baptist, Methodist or Presbyterian. Rather, the Scriptures would indicate that we are in either the Philadelphia Church or the Laodicean Church.

The Philadelphia Church represents those who are truly born again and living for Christ, momentarily expecting our Lord's coming. These are wise virgins who have oil in their vessels with their lamps who, when the Bridegroom comes, go in to the marriage and the door is shut.

For, concerning these Philadelphia believers, we read: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. 3:10)

Notice four things concerning these believers.

First, they not only "heard" the word--they "kept" it. Obedience is a requirement for being in this Philadelphia Church. It is also an evidence of our eternal salvation. As we read in Heb. 5:9, we're reminded that Christ is the "author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY him."

In the second place, concerning the Philadelphia Church we are told they will be KEPT from the hour of testing seen coming upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Dr. T. J. McCrossan, noted Greek author, comments: "This Philadelphia church will be here right up to the very moment this great trial or tribulation, which is to cover the whole inhabited earth, is about to begin. We know this because Rev. 3:10 literally reads, 'I also will keep thee (the Philadelphia Church) from, or away from, the hour or time (ek tes horas) of the trial, being about to come upon the whole inhabited earth to test or try them dwelling upon the earth.'"

What a blessed hope to be spared (kept) from this coming awful great tribulation.

In the third place, note that this coming tribulation will befall the whole world. Some think the tribulation is only for Israel, but as we read in Romans 2:9, "Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile."

Notice, the tribulation spoken of here is not only for both Jew and Gentile, but for evil doers. For that reason alone the true Church is not seen undergoing tribulation of the End-time.

Yes, "in the world ye shall have tribulation," said Jesus. (John 16:33). Trials, testing, suffering and pain are the lot of humanity including believers. As Paul declared, "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22) Many are undergoing tribulation today in countries such as Russia and Red China. But concerning this Endtime Great Tribulation, we see where the promise to "keep out from" is given those in the Philadelphia Church who are then warned: "Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev.3:11)

Finally, we believe it to be important again to stress that this tribulation is said to be for the purpose of TESTING and TRYING, although the Philadelphia Church will be kept from this hour of temptation.

In 2 Peter 2:9, we read: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation..."

The word for "temptation" used here is the same one used in Rev. 3:10, for the tribulation period. It is the Greek word PEIRASMOS, meaning "testing" or "trial."

Thus, it is from this time of testing that the Philadelphia Church will be spared.

On the other hand, Dr. McCrossan gives four reasons why the Laodicean Church will go through this awful time of Great Tribulation.

First, because the Lord says: "I will spue thee out of my mouth!"

The second reason for believing the Laodiceans go through the tribulation is because they are void of Christ's righteousness. These Laodiceans are counseled to "buy of Christ... white raiment" that they may be clothed. The "white raiment" notes McCrossan, "is the righteousness of saints mentioned in Rev. 19:8, the only raiment that will assure us a place at the wedding supper."

The third reason why we believe the Laodicean Church will go through the Great Tribulation is because Christ made no provision to have it escape just before the tribulation comes to pass, as in the case of the Philadelphia Church.

Finally, this church goes through the tribulation because the very name "Laodicean" means "the people rule!" Says McCrossan: "In this church the people will assert their rights, and refuse to have their lives and conduct regulated by Christ and His Word."

Notice, too, the outstanding characteristic of this church is its "lukewarmness." And it is to this church our Lord says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent!"

Amidst the chastening fires of earth's judgment there will come forth this great multitude of whom it is said: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 7:14)

God's will is that we come clean now, that we repent from sin now, in order that we may be ready for Christ's coming. Or else, there is the danger of being left behind to go through this time of physical suffering and mental anguish seen coming upon the whole world.

Today we hear a lot about "believe, believe, believe." And, believe we must! But it is evident from the Scriptures that God doesn't accept our faith unless it is conditioned upon our repentance. We must turn from sin if we are to be genuinely converted.

So the tribulation time will be for some, for the purpose of suffering, in order to be purified. As Peter declares: "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath CEASED FROM SIN." Suffering is one of God's ways to chasten His own. God punishes the wicked, but chastens His children. As we read, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth

every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons!" (Heb. 12:6-8)

The result of this chastening is that we might be "partakers of His holiness." Heb. 12:10.

God's purpose is to present unto Himself a sanctified people. So in this same passage we're reminded to "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb. 12:15.

Again we read in Ephesians where God's purpose is to present to Himself, "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5:27.

Are we a part of this Church?

As to the question - Will the Church go through the tribulation, we repeat--it all depends what church you're in--Laodicean or Philadelphian?

May the Lord lead us to see that if we are in the true Church, we will be looking for our Lord's appearing, and not for the tribulation. Furthermore, we will get ready for this all-glorious event. As John declares: "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure!"

God grant it. Amen.



TWO ASPECTS OF OUR LORD'S SECOND COMING

in chart form

Many Scriptures suggest to us that our Lord is soon to come "for His saints", and then after the tribulation He will return to the earth "with His saints."

His coming for His saints we call the RAPTURE or APPEARING.

His coming with His saints to judge the world and set up His kingdom is in reality His second coming.

That there are these two aspects of our Lord's return, is suggested by such scriptures as Luke 17:22 and 26 where reference is made to the "days of the Son of man", and 1 Tim. 6:14-15 where at our Lord's return "in his times he shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Scriptures which more clearly define this division might be cited as follows:

- a. 2 Tim. 4:1 which speaks of "his appearing and his kingdom."
- b. 2 Thess. 2:1 which mentions "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him."
- c. Malachi 3:2 which refers to "his coming" and "his" appearing."
- d. Luke 12:38 where our Lord's coming may occur in the "second watch" or "third watch". (See Psa. 90:4 where a "watch" is spoken of as a thousand years.)

RAPTURE.....compared with SECOND COMING

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Referred to as the "day of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8) | Spoken of as the "day of the Lord." (2 Pet. 3:10) |
| A time of Rewards. (2 Tim.4:8; 1 Pet.5:4) | A time of judgment for the ungodly. (2 Thess. 1:7-9) |
| Our Lord comes for His saints. (1 Thess. 4:16-17) | Our Lord returns with His saints. (Rev. 19:11-14; Jude 14; 1 Thess.3:13; Zech. 14:5) |
| Our Lord appears in the heavens as saints rise to meet Him. (1 Thess.4:17) | Our Lord comes to the earth, judges the nations, and establishes His kingdom. (Zech. 14) |
| Those who are ready will accompany our Lord "to the marriage." (Matt.25:10) | Others will be ready only when our Lord returns "from the wedding." (Luke 12:36) |
| This event is believed to occur "in a moment," hidden to earth's inhabitants. (1 Cor.15:52) | Whereas, at our Lord's coming "every eye shall see him." (Rev. 1:7) |
| The thought of His appearing brings comfort to the saints. (1 Thess. 4:18) | Thoughts of the Day of the Lord produce fear. (Amos 5:18; Mal.4:5; 1 Thess. 5:2) |

THE \$ 500,000 PROPERTY OFFER

More and more ministers, many of these noted evangelical leaders, are expressing belief that the Church will go through the tribulation.

One minister offered \$10,000 as a reward for anyone who could show from the Scriptures proof for the "pre-tribulation" theory.

Another offer of \$500,000 in valuable property was made to a nationally-known radio broadcaster if he could furnish evidence that Christ will come for His own before the awful Great Tribulation.

While we are not primarily interested in the monetary challenge of these offers, we are sincerely desirous to present a Bible-based discussion on questions relating to the rapture. We shall let you decide which interpretation you wish to follow.

Thus, we have produced this booklet entitled, "The \$500,000 Rapture Question." Here are some observations.

Among those who believe that the Church will go through the tribulation is Dr. Oswald J. Smith, well-known missionary statesman and evangelical leader, who writes: "Now, after years of study and prayer I am absolutely convinced that there will be no rapture before the tribulation, but that the Church will undoubtedly be called upon to face the Antichrist, and that Christ will come at the close and not at the beginning of that awful period."

Dr. Smith speaks of the influence of other writers on the subject, including that of Augustine who declared: "The kingdom of Antichrist shall fiercely, though for a short time, assail the Church."

H. A. Baker wrote: "For eighteen centuries the fundamental principle of tribulation to glory was the universal belief of the truly born-again members of the Church."

However, Harnak, the great patriotic scholar, taught quite the opposite, suggesting that in the apostolic churches the idea of EXPECTATION was "inseparable from the Gospel!"

It is pointed out by some that a great number of Bible scholars and noted Christian leaders reject the idea of an imminent rapture. Among the names given are: A.J.Gordon, Dr. Carl F. Henry, Dr. Harold J. Ockenga, G. Campbell Morgan, Bishop Frank Houghton, Dr. A.B.Simpson, Dr. Horatius Bonar, George Mueller, Charles Spurgeon, and Hudson Taylor.*

It is also indicated that in 1831 a certain woman claimed revelation that the true Church would be caught up to heaven before the tribulation.

It is further claimed that John Darby, active among the Plymouth Brethren, influenced many including C.I.Scofield, who made the view popular in the Scofield Bible.

Today we'd like to give you three major Scripture portions which some say indicate our Lord will not return until AFTER the tribulation.

First, there is our Lord's teaching in Matthew 24:29-31 which states: "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 heaven shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

We would point out, however, in verses 27-28, just preceding this passage, we read: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the son of man be. For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

So we ask - Could this not represent the swift action of our Lord's coming at the rapture?

For like an eagle seizing its prey, so our Lord comes for His own. The word "carcass" is the Greek word, PTOMA, meaning "a body fallen in death," which could refer to the saints who will be resurrected at our Lord's coming.

* It is erroneous to assume that all of these men believed the Church would go through the tribulation. Rather some believe in the select-rapture which will find all who were not ready for Christ's Coming facing tribulation judgment.

The second Scripture used by certain Bible teachers to refute the idea of a rapture before the tribulation is found in 1 Cor. 15:51-52 where we read: "Behold I shew you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump..."

Now we must examine this Scripture closely as at one time I, myself, was almost convinced that these verses linked the rapture to the sounding of the "last trump" of Revelation.

Now notice, this verse says we shall be changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump..."

Could it be that this change takes place at both the time of rapture as well as at the revelation of Jesus Christ? Notice!

When our Lord suddenly appears from heaven at the rapture, we shall arise to meet him "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye!" Literally, in an atom of time, we shall receive our glorified bodies.

Then again this change will take place "at the last trump." Bible teachers who do not accept the rapture say the "last trump" refers to Rev. 11:15-18 where we have an angel sounding the seventh trumpet, an event which occurs at the end of the tribulation. For we read, "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great..."

Did you hear it?

According to this Scripture, the blowing of the seventh trumpet occurs following the period of wrath seen sweeping the earth. So this would contradict the Scripture which tells us, "God hath not appointed us to wrath!" (1 Thess. 5:9)

It is true that at the blowing of the seventh trumpet of Revelation there will be a time of resurrection and giving of rewards. And at this time the saints will be judged.

But we believe there is a rapture that will occur before this final resurrection of saints that died during the tribulation period.

Finally, a third Scripture used by those who do not believe in a rapture as occurring before the tribulation, is 2 Thess. 2: 1-3. These verses tell us - "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 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 is at hand. 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."

Now we're told Antichrist must come first and then there will follow the coming of Christ.

However, again we would point out that Paul here is referring to the "Day of the Lord."

Notice chapter one of 2 Thessalonians where Paul speaks of the Lord being revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire....this is not the rapture, but the revelation!

So, in this second chapter, Paul is saying this "Day of the Lord" will not come until Antichrist first appears.

Thus, Antichrist's appearance is followed by the Revelation of Christ when He returns in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Did you hear it?

This appearance of Christ is to bring wrath on the ungodly, and not to catch away a bride.

So, again, we cannot accept the belief of some that this passage relates to the rapture. Rather, it refers to the revelation when He shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire to punish the wicked. Thus Paul goes on to assure us not to be troubled or shaken in mind concerning the coming of Christ and our gathering together unto Him, which event we believe to be the rapture.

These are rather difficult verses to explain. Unless you have your Bibles open and following, it is not always clear to present these wonderful truths.

Be assured, however, the important thing is to be ready whenever our Lord does come.

For He hath said, "Be ye therefore ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE ...

A NEW BELIEF?

A letter that has come to my desk asserts that the Pre-tribulation theory of the coming of Christ did not begin until 1830.

Furthermore, this letter claims to have offered property valued at \$500,000 if this theory could be proved from the Bible.

Dr. John Walvoord, president of Dallas Theological Seminary writes: "In the early Church there was daily expectation continued among the early Church fathers." (Moody Monthly, January, 1955)

Exhortations to "wait" and "look" cannot be explained if great tribulation comes first, notes Walvoord.

While we recognize there were those who also held the position that certain definite signs must be fulfilled before Christ would appear, there was the constant reminder that Christ's Return was ever imminent although no man knew the day nor the hour.

Examples we might cite include Hermas, believed to have been mentioned by the Apostle Paul in Romans 16:14.

In a vision Hermas was told: "You have escaped from the great tribulation on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt in the presence of the beast....Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If ye, then, prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it, if your heart be pure and spotless, and ye spend the rest of your lives serving the Lord blamelessly."(from The Shepherd of Hermas, about 100-120 A.D.)

Here, then, is evidence of one closely associated with the Apostle Paul who verifies the fact of belief in the possibility of escape from coming tribulation of those who were faithful in making preparation for our Lord's Return.

Other quotations include:

Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (220-250 A.D.) "Let us ever in anxiety and cautiousness be waiting the second coming of the Lord..."

Clement of Rome (about 95 A.D.) and undoubtedly a fellow-laborer with Paul, wrote in his Second Epistle, "If therefore we shall do what is just in the sight of God, we shall enter into His kingdom, and shall receive the promises which neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man. 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."

An outstanding quotation comes from the Didache, a treatise of the early Second Century in which the urgency of readiness was stressed. We quote: "Watch for your life's sake; let your lamps be not quenched and your loins be not ungirded, but be ye ready, for you know not the hour in which your Lord cometh!"

This seems to be the only safe, scriptural position.

Archbishop Trench similarly spoke of the daily expectation of Christ's coming as "possible any day, impossible no day."

Martin Luther declared: "Christ designed that the day of His coming should be hid from us, that being in suspense, we might be as it were upon the watch."

D.M.Panton, noted British scholar, writes: "God has not revealed the date of the second coming of Christ, in order that we may always be watchful; nor has He revealed the standard of holiness for rapture, in order that we may be always pressing on to perfection."

It is said of the saintly Horatius Bonar, his last act before turning to his pillow upon retiring was to look up to the heavens and whisper, "Perhaps tonight, Lord?" In the morning, his first movement was to greet the day with the appeal, "Perhaps today, Lord?"

But is this not the scriptural way? Should we not be concerned that we might be ready at any hour of the day our Lord might come?

In Mark's gospel we have this parable. Read it carefully:

"For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

Watch ye, therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!"
(Mark 13:34-37)

Here mentioned are four times of the day our Lord may return. And in view of His unannounced coming we are commanded to Watch! For our Lord reminds us this message is not only for His disciples but for all.

Previously our Lord had related the parable of the fig tree. This we believe symbolizes the return of Jews to Palestine and the restoration of Israel as a nation.

It is in view of this event that our Lord's coming is said to be at the "doors" (plural) referring to both His appearing and glorious return.

And, it is also in view of Israel's revival as a nation that we are reminded "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done!" In other words, it is generally believed that those on earth who see Israel back in her land will witness the consummation of all things which includes the return of Christ back to this earth.

Then we read, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is."

Of this we believe we can be certain. Witnessing Israel's restoration to her land, we believe we can expect our Lord's Return to be near and hastening.

In Psalms 102:16 we read, "When the Lord shall build up Zion He shall return in his glory."

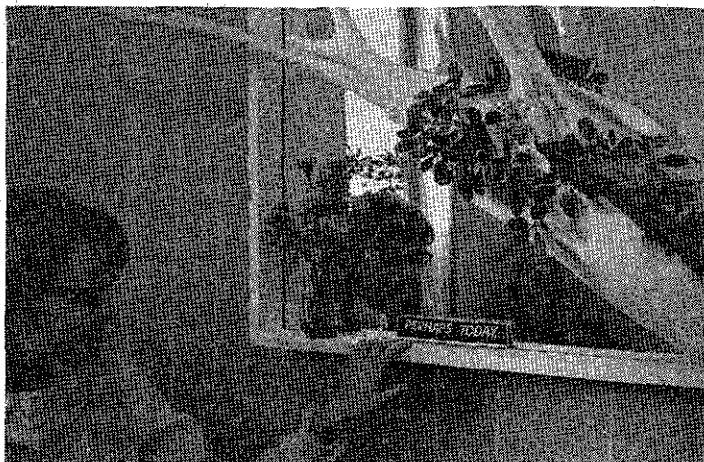
While some may argue that Israel's return is in unbelief, nevertheless, the evidence would substantiate God's dealings in preserving and protecting against all odds. Surely God's miraculous leadership is very much in evidence.

Israel is back in her land, and nations within Europe are fast forming the revived Roman Empire as evidenced in ten nations now seeking to become a part of the Common Market. Eventually we can expect one called Antichrist who will head this economic-political federation who will make a covenant with Israel as predicted in Daniel 9:27.

Witnessing these Endtime Events we are commanded to "Watch!". Two Greek words are used by Jesus. After relating the parable of the fig tree, He declared, "Take ye heed, Watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is!" The word "watch" is the Greek word "agoupneite" which means, "Stay awake! Remain alert! Be on your guard!"

As one of the conference speakers in New York emphasized, "One of the main jobs of the Church today is not only to get Christians awake, but to get them out of bed."

So, "Be ye ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh!"



THE BLESSED HOPE

THE IMMINENCE OF CHRIST'S RETURN

It would seem to us that to expect the tribulation rather than rapture, and anticipate Antichrist rather than Christ, takes away the glorious aspect of the blessed hope and destroys the Scriptural teaching of the imminence of our Lord's return.

The Bible teaches that the day of Rapture is imminent but uncertain. "No man knoweth the day nor the hour," said Jesus.

Lt. Col. Delcourt of the French Salvation Army said recently: "The Lord's return is imperative and imminent because of the terrible state of the world today!"

Indeed, signs all around us would reveal our Lord's coming to be near and hastening. Israel is returning to her land, Europe is seen uniting, and the world is as it was in the days of Lot and the days of Noah.

As one prophetic conference speaker related -- it is not just a sign here and there, but a combination of major signs all happening at the same time that reveals our Lord's coming is imminent.

Arthur Petrie, writing in PROPHECY MONTHLY, calls attention to 1 Thess. 1:10 where we have the words: "And to wait for His Son from heaven." The word used here for "wait," he notes, is a present infinitive, and means to be constantly waiting for a person who went away, to come again.

Another verse stressing the imminence of our Lord's coming in Philippians 3:20: "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we LOOK for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Notice, the Greek word for "look" is in the present tense, and might be rendered-- we are always and constantly expecting the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ. H.A.W. Meyer, New Testament Greek scholar, says: "This word denotes the patient, attentive waiting, which never slacks until realized."

Professor A. T. Robertson, another noted Greek scholar, says of this word "look" which is the Greek word, APEK-DECHOMETHA.... "The picture is like that of a wife who watches at evening for her husband, who tarries. She steps out of the door, down the steps, finally out of the gate and looks away down the street with longing for his coming."

The idea of imminent waiting for our Lord's return is likewise expressed in such verses as 1 Cor. 1:7 where we read, "That ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Also in Titus 2:11-13 we read: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; LOOKING for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

According to these verses we are to be looking and waiting for our Lord's return.

As the author and publisher, Gordon Lindsay, writes: "Now, there are some who say that preaching the imminency of Christ's second coming is wrong, that Christ cannot come now, and He will not come until after the Great Tribulation. This is a matter of tremendous importance.

"If no phase of the second coming of Christ can occur until after the reign of the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation, we must admit that the preaching of Christ's imminency is wrong. But this would make the words of Christ to become a puzzle. For He says, 'Watch ye therefore for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.' (Matt. 25:13)

"If Christ cannot come until after the tribulation, which lasts for three years and a half, then His coming is not imminent. We would not, then, be in hourly expectancy. We should instead keep our eyes open for the rise of the Antichrist; then after he achieves power, we are to wait for three and a half years to elapse and then only could we expect the rapture to take place.

"Clearly if that is true, the major part of evangelical preaching on the second coming of Christ would have to be changed. The teaching of the imminency of His coming would be altogether erroneous."

Other quotes might be given stressing the imminency of our Lord's return. There is Archer Butler who said long ago, "It is His purpose thus to live in our faith and hope, remote yet near, pledged to no moment, possible at any; worshipped not with the consternation of the near, or the indifference of a distant certainty, but with the anxious vigilance that awaits a contingency ever at hand."

Also quoting Joseph Seiss who writes: "Ever, as the Church moves on through time, and above all in the days in which we live, the next thing for every Christian to be looking for in this world is the coming of Christ to fulfill what is written in this Book. The Bible tells of nothing between us and that day."

Yes, our Lord's coming is imminent. Only the day and hour are unknown.

Finally, we would give warning to those who no longer look for the rapture, but patiently prepare for the coming awful great tribulation. There is a danger of accepting the role of the servant in the parable who says in his heart, "My Lord delays His coming." (Matt. 24:48)

As Dr. M. R. DeHaan points out: "Nowhere in all the Scriptures do we find a more solemn judgment pronounced than upon the servant who said in his heart: 'My Lord delayeth His coming.'"

Asks DeHaan: Just what is implied in "delaying our Lord's return?" Simply stated, he notes, "It is to deny the imminency, that is, the 'any moment' return of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Notes DeHaan: "There is not one verse in the entire Bible which tells us to look, wait, watch, or prepare for any single event other than the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus, we, too, encourage all to be constantly looking for our Lord's coming, and to so live as to be ready. For He hath said, "Be ye therefore ready also for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

SUMMARY...BE READY!

Dr. Francis Schaeffer, author of *THE CHURCH AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY*, sees an Endtime Church where no gospel is preached, and likens this generation to that of ancient Israel which went whoring after idols.

Would it not appear that as we come to the close of this Laodicean Age that God is left with no choice but to weed out the chaff and then take the grain into the granary.

This, then, we see as one of the purposes of the great tribulation. There must come a sifting time for those whose faith is shallow, lukewarm and indifferent.

For instance, today we have the Jesus movement. It's "cool" to be a Christian. And there are many who have jumped aboard the bandwagon who see Jesus as a revolutionary or superstar.

That a time of trial of men's faith is destined to come, is a certainty. Our Lord Himself raised the question, "When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?" The Apostle Paul spoke of those in the latter times who would "depart from the faith." (1 Tim. 4:1) Thus, there is coming this time of fiery trial at the end of this age for the purpose of purging and purifying.

Malachi writes: "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." (Mat. 3:3)

Did you hear it?

Fire and soap speak of purging and purifying. We read further: "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." Ask any Bible theologian and you will be told that silver speaks of redemption. Thus, we see our Lord purifying those whom He has redeemed.

A silversmith was asked - "Do you sit as you carry on the process of refining silver?" He replied, "Yes, I must sit and my eyes must constantly watch the silver as it is being cleaned. Should the silver be exposed to the extreme heat for too long a time it would be damaged." On the other hand, the silversmith replied, "My work is complete and in good order when I can see my own image mirrored in the silver."

In view of the coming of the Lord we are told: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:3)

But what if we fail to purify ourselves? Will we be left behind to go through the purifying judgment of the great tribulation?

Daniel, referring to the time of the end, writes: "Many shall be purified and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly." (Dan. 11:35)

That Laodicean believers will be spued out into the purging, purifying fires of the great tribulation is a Scriptural certainty. On the other hand, the promise to the believers who comprise the Philadelphia Church age which overlaps this period, is exemption from this trial of fire. For we read: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. 3:10)

Did you notice the purpose of this coming hour of testing is to "try them that dwell upon the earth"?

The Great Tribulation is for evil doers and not for obedient disciples. As we read in Romans 2:9 where we find, "Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile."

Some see the tribulation period as being for Jews only--their time of trouble. But it will also be a testing time for lukewarm Laodiceans who profess faith in Christ but in works deny Him. Thus, through testing seen coming--a trial by fire--many will be purged and purified as silver.

As a matter of fact, in Rev. 7:14 we read of a great multitude which no man could number of whom it was said, "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." As we see it, now is the time to come clean, forsake all known sin, and get ready for Christ's coming.

Does it not behoove us to be found living for Christ, obedient to His Word, sacrificial in our service, generous in our giving, fired up with a pentecostal zeal, filled with the Holy Spirit, and ready for the rapture!

Now some evangelical Bible teachers tell us that when the Lord comes He will take some from the tavern and some from the theatre and together we will proceed to the marriage supper of the Lamb. There will be a stopping off place for a time of judgment after which we will all be ready for that glorious wedding day.

However, as I read the Bible, it appears that we must make preparation now. We are to "lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us..." (Heb. 12:1)

In a time of serious affliction, the Lord showed me Hebrews 10:26, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." In other words, if we sin wilfully Christ cannot go back and die every time we sin. While it is true that He willingly and gladly forgives, yet there comes an end to His patience and He allows chastening to come our way.

Remember, to the Laodiceans our Lord says: "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten!" (Rev. 3:19)

Chastening is God's way of correcting His children. "For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Heb. 12:6)

The purpose of chastening is said to be that of perfecting us spiritually, for we read: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Thus, the tribulation is a time of chastening for Laodiceans. It is a time of intense suffering--"as travail upon a woman with child" (1 Thess. 5:3) Mark refers to it as a time of great "affliction."

What would be the purpose of this suffering? Again, we're reminded of the words of the Psalmist who said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." (Psa. 119:67)

Some do not recognize suffering as bringing men to repentance. But Peter declares otherwise, saying: "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin..." (1 Pet. 4:1)

A minister wrote that he did not always agree with us, but that "now it seems so clear to me that the Lord is coming for a Bride who is prepared, cleansed and obedient and that these are the ones who will reign with Him. What a new light this throws on suffering."

This, then is one of the reasons for the tribulation that will end this age. Through suffering great affliction, many will die as martyrs for their faith in Christ. That is how this age will end.

For this reason we believe God's purpose is to rapture the saints who have heeded this message and gotten the victory over sin through the shed blood of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. If the tribulation is for the purpose of purging, purifying--a time of trial--a period of chastening and affliction on account of sin, why should a born-again believer be subjected to this terrible ordeal if he is living victoriously over sin?

And, if not victorious over sin, may we be challenged to forsake every known sin...to follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14)

Decide now to come to know Christ as Saviour and Master. Surrender to Him as your Lord. Allow Him to purify your heart by faith believing He can perfect what is lacking in your life and then keep you ready for His unannounced return. Remember, He is the author and finisher of your faith. So lay claim to His promise that "he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Eph. 1:6)

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." What an assignment! But remember, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (1 Thess. 5:23-24)