

Why I Believe The Scripture Teaches That The Christians' Deliverance And Translation To Immortality Happens At Jesus' Second Coming.

By Craig Cochran

(All scripture quotations are from the ESV)

Our Foundation

All life, practice & conviction must be based on what the Bible teaches. This is my deep conviction. We must believe what the scripture SAYS more than what we want to believe. God's Word stands far above what any man says or might say because it is always true! Proverbs 3:5-6 says, *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."* The only solidity that exists beyond this creation is Jesus and His word...and us if we are clinging to Jesus! Jesus said, *"For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."* (Matthew 5:18). And again, He says, *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away* (Matthew 24:35). And Paul says in (2 Timothy 3:16), *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,"*. God's truth has been written down for all of us to have His understanding to live our life by... *"that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."* (2 Timothy 3:17).

Perspective

We must remember that believers in Jesus are brothers and sisters in God's family not because we share the same end times beliefs but rather that we have the commonality of faith in Christ alone who saved us from our sins by his death on the cross! (John 3:16, Eph 2:8-9, Phi 3:3, Col 1:21-22) I have many very dear friends that believe that the scripture teaches that all Christians will escape the time of the tribulation. I listen all the time to people who believe this point of view and I am blessed immensely from them on many, many other things they share from scripture! These differences are not a place to separate from each other and choose not to fellowship. I do not have any problem with this difference of opinion, but I feel compelled to show why I have my conviction. I do not think this point is critical because what each of us believes will converge to a point in time when Jewish sacrifices will begin again. These restored sacrifices will resume at a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem which is something all Bible believing Christians know is coming according to scripture (2 Thess. 2:3-4, Matt. 24:15, Dan. 11:36-37,

Dan. 12:11-12). Being ready is of utmost importance...whether Jesus comes for us in a pretribulational rapture or being ready to suffer for Jesus at that point. I will be glad to be taken to be with Jesus forever! But if we are still here at that point then we will have to change our thinking of our time of deliverance and get ready to be faithful one last time ... "to the end" for Jesus.

And we must remember that God has used people of various end time beliefs for his glory! Martin Luther brought the light that we are saved by faith in Christ alone and not through the church ... but he was an Amillennialist¹ which is someone who doesn't believe in a literal 1000 year reign of Christ on earth that is coming in the future. And then there was William Carey who brought the Gospel to India who himself was a Post-millennialist² who is someone who thinks that Jesus will come after the millennium and that the world will get better and better and the nations will be converted to Christ until Jesus will finally come. As a matter of fact, many Christians in the beginning of the United States of America in the 1700s were Post-millennialists.³ Yet, still every believer in Jesus should want to know what God's word says about His coming even though there are other bigger issues. Paul's phrase was: What does the scripture say? (Romans 4:3 & Gal 4:30)

The Day Of The Lord

I believed in a pretribulation rapture at one time, but my mind was changed on this when I saw in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 and 2 how Paul explained the truth of the Rapture and Second Coming of Jesus. It all began for me when I understood that Paul defined the "Day of the Lord" by saying in chapter 2 verse 1 that it included the second coming of Jesus AND the rapture which is called "our being gathered together to Him...". This phrase – "our being gathered to him" must mean the same as the 1 Thessalonians 4:17 earlier reference to being caught up to meet Jesus in the air which is both referring to the rapture. This verse goes like this. *Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him,... (2 Thessalonians 2:1).* He grouped these 2 events and called them "The Day Of The Lord" and then said that the apostasy with the revealing of the antichrist would happen FIRST! He goes on to ask them if they remember that he had told them these things when he was with them in person! When reading this passage in the past, I realize now that I couldn't see the forest for the trees. The Day of the Lord had been defined in my mind as the whole 7 years of the tribulation period (Daniel's 70th week - Daniel 9:24-27) but that changed for me when I saw that Paul defined that phrase both in chapter 1 and chapter 2. We must remember that chapters and verses were not put in the Bible until much later.⁴ In other words, the inspired part was not the chapter and verses which are only there for our benefit to find scripture. Paul ONLY wrote a letter! Paul is saying when he says "Now Concerning" that he had just been talking about both of these events earlier in his letter and wants to explain them further. The

phrase – “our being gathered to him” then is a further explanation of the word “relief” early in 2 Thessalonians 1:7 which says, “*and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels...*”. Caught up (Rapture) (1 Thess. 4:17), Relief (2 Thess. 1:7) and “our being gathered together to him” (2 Thess. 2:1) all are one and the same.

The Day of the Lord is described in chapter 1 verse 6 as saying that the Thessalonians will get relief and the world will get affliction on the SAME DAY that Jesus comes with all the angels in flaming fire. Listen to this passage in *2 Thessalonians 1:6-8*. *since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.* It says here that the Thessalonians AND Paul would get relief from their afflictions on the SAME DAY that Jesus comes to bring affliction on those who are persecuting them—those who don’t obey the Gospel of Jesus. That day described here is when Jesus comes with angels in flaming fire which is His actual second coming to the earth described in Isaiah 66:15-16 and Revelation 19:11-21. Paul is saying that he did not expect to get relief before Jesus comes in His second coming but rather AT THAT TIME!

There is further evidence that in at least 3 places the phrase “The Day Of The Lord” was referring to Jesus’ actual second coming to the earth. *For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. (“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”) And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon (at the 6th bowl Rev. 16:14-16).* Also, Joel 2:32 says, “*And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.”* Peter quotes this passage in Acts making at least 3 places that this phrase describes Jesus’ second coming as the day of the Lord. Jesus also describes His coming which is also AFTER the tribulation and AFTER that the sun and moon grows dim and the stars start to fall from the sky (just like Joel said) in Mathew 24:29-31.

In 2 Thessalonians the context is such that they thought that the Lord’s coming had arrived. But Paul said that there are some things that have to happen first. He said in verse 3 that the apostasy (*rebellion* in the ESV; *falling away* in KJV) will happen first AND the man of lawlessness will be revealed. Paul said he will oppose all that is worshiped and proclaims himself to be God. He further explains that he had told the Thessalonians these things before when he was with them. We know from Acts that Paul was with them only about 3 weeks until he had to leave (Acts 17:1-3). Listen to this whole passage. *Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be*

from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? (2 Thess. 2:1-5). Paul is alleviating their concern that the Day Of The Lord, of which he defines, had not yet come since the Apostasy that culminates in the revealing of the man of lawlessness who demands worship above everything worshipped MUST HAPPEN FIRST...and THAT had not yet happened!

What Is Revelation 3:10 Saying?

God's word never contradicts itself because it has one author and so any apparent contradiction in Revelation 3:10 to what Paul said very directly cannot exist. The letters to the churches in Revelation were written to seven churches that had unique situations which starts out saying "to the church at Philadelphia write" for example. This passage goes like this: *Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth (Rev. 3:10).* This passage is clearly saying that the recipients of this letter would be spared the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world. This clearly refers to the time of tribulation that the rest of Revelation is talking about. These passages speak of situations that Jesus knew existed in each of the seven churches. If we say that this promise of exemption applies to all Christians, then we must do the same with what is said to the other churches as well. Consider what Revelation 2:10 says about the church in Smyrna. *Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).* Should we say this applies to all Christians that they will suffer tribulation for 10 days? If we accept one, we must accept the other as applying to all Christians. The tribulation time of the end has not come yet and so for the church in Philadelphia at that time Jesus kept His promise to them! Yet clearly there is a part that applies to all Christians which is in each of these seven messages to those churches by saying, "the one who conquers" to which He gives a promise that applies to all Christians everywhere at all times. There are 4 reasons that the exemption from the "hour of trial" was only for the Philadelphian Christians at that time:

- 1) The promise was to them because the letter was addressed to them and they had kept his word. They had been through the fire and came out as gold.
- 2) The Church of Smyrna though not reproved but just like Philadelphia was given something specific to them. They were fixing to go through the fire. Jesus said they would have tribulation 10 days. It is clear that this promise is not for all Christians everywhere.

- 3) There is other evidence that Jesus can and make promises for 1 individual or to a church. Peter was told by Jesus that he also would die by crucifixion in John 21:18-19. This was very specific - only for 1 person - Peter. Should we say that every Christian will die by crucifixion?
- 4) Scripture never contradicts itself because it has one author. The rest of scripture speaks with one voice that the rapture coincides with the coming of Jesus to earth in judgment and to begin his earthly reign.

The Restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2

2 Thessalonians 2:6-8 says, *And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.* I used to believe the restrainer in this passage refers to the Holy Spirit in the church and therefore Paul was saying, in my mind, that the church would be removed from earth. But Paul has already answered the question of the timing of the rapture as relating to the coming of Jesus earlier in this letter which we have already discussed.

It is interesting that the restrainer is referred to as “he” in the passage quoted above and the Holy Spirit is referred to as “he” in other passages (John 14:16-17,26; 16:7-8,13-14). It stands to reason that only God the Holy Spirit could restrain the evil that Paul describes is coming with the lawless one. But there is something else also referred to hence Paul’s usage of the phrase “*what is restraining*”. I used to say that I would like to be a fly on the wall in Thessalonica where Paul preached and told what and who the restrainer was! The interesting thing is that they knew, he says, what is restraining the coming of the lawless one. The NEW thing they now know is the Gospel of Jesus...something they previously did not know! They KNOW it since they received it! The rest of this letter mentions in context that THAT is the difference between the righteous and those who would believe the lie that is coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:10b-12 says, “...they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Jesus said in Matthew 24:14 that the Gospel would be proclaimed to all the world and then the end would come. In other words, there will come a time that everybody will reject it and then the end would come. And that is why Paul would say in the same passage previously that the Apostasy comes first and THEN the man of sin is revealed in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

The lie that those who reject Jesus and His Gospel, would believe, is that the man of lawlessness ought to be worshiped. The “restrainer” then, is ***the Holy Spirit working through the spread of the Gospel!*** This is given further evidence as being exactly what Paul is referring

to by what he says in the next 2 verses in 2 Thess. 2:13-14: *But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Also listen a few verses later to 2 Thess. 3:1: *“Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you,”*. The lawless one cannot come until the Holy Spirit working through the spread of the Gospel goes as far as He can go into the world’s acceptance! This is the same thing Jesus said in Matt. 24:14 which says, *And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.* So Paul is saying that the world will come to a point, that it will as a whole reject the Gospel of Jesus, which is the Apostasy, and only then will the man of lawlessness be revealed since the Holy Spirit working in spreading the Gospel will be put out of the way!

Isaiah in speaking of the rebellion of the people of Israel in his day was told to write down God’s words for the time to come! Listen to Isaiah 30:8-14: *And now, go, write it before them on a tablet*

and inscribe it in a book,
that it may be for the time to come
as a witness forever.
For they are a rebellious people,
lying children,
children unwilling to hear
the instruction of the LORD;
who say to the seers, “Do not see,”
and to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us what is right;
speaking to us smooth things,
prophesy illusions,
leave the way, turn aside from the path,
let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.”
Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel,
“Because you despise this word
and trust in oppression and perverseness
and rely on them,
therefore this iniquity shall be to you
like a breach in a high wall, bulging out and about to collapse,
whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant;
and its breaking is like that of a potter’s vessel
that is smashed so ruthlessly
that among its fragments not a shard is found

with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern.” This Isaiah passage is referring to the coming Apostasy when the Holy Spirit will be out of the way! But the Gospel of Jesus cannot be stopped until it accomplishes what it was sent to do (Isaiah 55:11)! It is interesting at this point to remember that Jesus said in John 17:15: *“I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.”* Paul said further in his discussion after talking of the coming of the lawless one these words in 2 Thess. 3:3: *“But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.”* Why would Paul say this if the restrainer was anything but the Holy Spirit working through the spread of the Gospel? He is saying that believers would be protected now from evil and would not be deceived by the delusional lie that the lawless one should be worshipped that unbelievers will succumb to.

Last Day Evidence From John 6

John 6 describes the resurrection of believers in Jesus as being on the last day in 4 places in that chapter. 1) *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day (John 6:39).* 2) *For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” (John 6:40).* 3) *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:44).* 4) *Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:54).*

The Testimony of Matthew 24

Listen to Matthew 24:30-31: *Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* This passage describes a gathering together of Jesus’ “elect” AT HIS SECOND COMING. Who are these elect? Jesus said that these people who are the elect will be hated by all nations for His name’s sake. Who only could be hated because of Jesus but believers in Jesus? Jesus is giving signs of his coming just like Paul described in 2 Thessalonians 2 and so how could Jesus’ gathering described in Matthew 24:31 and Paul’s gathering in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 be different gatherings? Also there is a trumpet described as blowing right before believers are gathered to Jesus in verse 31 which is how Paul described the time of our translation in 1 Corinthians 15 saying it happens “at the last trumpet” (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

Matthew 24 must be meant for all Christians benefit whether they are also Jewish or Gentile because the “you” in “you will be hated by all nations for my sake” of Matthew 24:9b

can only mean believers in Jesus regardless of their background. Jesus was talking to Jewish disciples in chapter 24 answering their questions of the future and since in verse 14 He mentions that this Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations, He shows the solidarity that exists between Jewish and Gentile believers as they are one family. Luke 24:46-47 reminds us: *...that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.* Jesus had said that the kingdom would be taken from the Jewish nation and given to a people producing its fruit as in Matthew 21:43 which says, *Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.* The Kingdom has been given to all believers in Jesus. Listen to Romans 9:24 which says, *even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?* Paul said that the Gospel was the power of God to salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Greek in Romans 1:16!

Right after Jesus describes His coming with power and glory in verse 30-31, He says in verse 40, *Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.* The “taken” is a reference to the gathering of believers in verse 31 and those left behind are those judged just like in Noah’s day and Lot’s day. The Greek word translated “taken” is a word used also in Luke 9:28 where it says, *Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.* The work taken means: *receive, accept, be taken along, be taken with, learn by tradition, take along, take aside, take over, take with* according to the *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament by Timothy and Barbara Friberg*. The word taken can also mean taken to judgment as in John 19:16-17 which says, *So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.* The context becomes the deciding factor as to what a word means in the case of the word taken. In Luke 17:35 some have said that the taken was for judgment and those left are believing survivors because the people asked “where, Lord”. Listen to Luke 17:37, *And they said to him, “Where, Lord?” He said to them, “Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.”* It just so happens that the context was the judgment that is coming when Jesus is revealed but that also Lot’s escape was the immediate context right before it was said that one would be taken and the other left. Therefore, taken would then mean “those escaping judgment”. So, could it not be that the question “where” was answering where those left behind would be?

“Where” could also be asking where this separation will take place since Sodom and Gomorrah was the location of the separation being discussed by Jesus in the context and is probably what the “where” is referring to. Jesus’ answer is that the separation will be where the corpse is where also the vultures will gather meaning that where it takes place is not the important issue **BUT THAT IT WILL BE OBVIOUS WHEN IT TAKES PLACE!** So, Luke’s use of taken and left does not change the definition of taken in Matthew chapter 24 verse 40. The main

point is that when Jesus comes in his second coming that there will be a separation of the righteous and the unrighteous **AT THAT TIME!**

And Jesus speaks of being ready immediately after the taken and left discussion as in Matt. 24:40-42: *Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.* Many times in Matthew 24:42-44; 25:13 (3 times) and Mark 13:32-37 (3 times) we are told to be ready and to be awake for what is described as his coming after the tribulation! One coming is described in both Matthew and Mark and they both are AFTER the tribulation of believers. Why would Jesus tell his followers who would be hated by all nations for HIS name to be ready for His second coming after the tribulation if our gathering was not also at that time?

The Signs Of Jesus' Coming

Jesus gave many signs of His coming that He said we will see. The big one is the abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke of. Paul also mentioned this one as being before the "Day of the Lord". There are many signs Jesus spoke of but they are all pointed out to us that we might know the season of His coming. He later said in Matthew 24 that no one knows the day or hour. We know the season because of the signs but the day or hour we do not know. Even Daniel in all the precision of the Lord's coming that he saw, was not given the day or the hour. He was only told that there would be 1290 days after the sacrifice is cut off but blessed would be the person who arrived at the 1335th day! (See Daniel 12:11-12). Signs are given that we might be prepared! Jesus said that only the Father knows the day and hour which was true of Galilean Jewish weddings. Only the father of the groom would decide the hour and day of his son's wedding.⁵ There are no signs given that precedes the rapture mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:50-53 nor in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 because it did not serve Paul's purpose in each of the places. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 says, *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.* The question was whether the believers at Thessalonica who had died would be in Jesus' kingdom when He comes. Paul affirms as the main point in this passage that they certainly WOULD BE...and would PRECEDE those believers who were still alive

when He comes. Paul taught that the resurrection of believers would happen at the coming of Jesus to affirm the hope that we believers have of FOREVER BEING TOGETHER even if we die...and those dying would be FIRST! And those still alive will be caught up to Jesus AFTER the resurrection! As it will be then ALL BELIEVERS, dead or alive will MEET the Lord together in the air alive in immortal bodies when He comes! There was no need for preceding signs to be mentioned here in THIS passage except to give hope and to answer the question of the Thessalonians.

The “Who Will Live In The Flesh During The Millennium” Question

Many have thought that there could be no rapture to Jesus at His second coming because then there would be nobody to populate the Millennium in the flesh. The Millennium is the reign of Jesus on this earth for a thousand years... something clearly taught in scripture in many, many places both in the Old Testament (Isaiah 2:1-4, 11:1-16) and in the New Testament (Revelation 20:2-6). Since all the wicked who took the mark of the beast will have been killed when Jesus comes. And if there is a rapture of all believers on the last day, how could the Millennium of a thousand years have people living in the flesh?

We know that Paul says in *Romans 11:25-27*, *Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”* This passage refers to Jesus’ second coming as being the time when the Jewish nation will all be saved by turning to Jesus. The “fullness of the Gentiles coming in” is referring to the gathering of all believers to Jesus. Paul is saying that at the coming of Jesus the partial hardening of the Jewish nation will be lifted which will happen right after the rapture of believers in Jesus. He says that all Israel will be saved at that moment because they will call on Jesus when they “look on Him whom they pierced”. *Zechariah 12:10-13:1* says, *And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves. “On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.* Clearly the Jewish

nation that is left will turn to Jesus at His coming. Consider what Isaiah says in *(Isaiah 66:8)*, *Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children.* Jesus Himself said that the Jewish nation will not see Him again until they say blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord referring to Himself in Matthew 23:39. Joel 2:32 says that there will be survivors of the day of the Lord in Jerusalem! And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. *For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls (Joel 2:32).* So the Jews will live on in the flesh into the Millennium which was told them in the Old Testament! The Jews will come to Jesus as a nation actually BECAUSE OF the presence, perseverance, persecution, and rapture of believers. Listen to what Paul says in Romans 11:28-32. *As regards the gospel, they [the Jews]+ are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you [the Gentiles]+ were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.* Paul then says that God's wisdom is amazing!

So how will there be Gentiles who live on in the flesh into the Millennium? Joel 2:32 says: ***And It shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved... and among the survivors will be those whom the Lord calls*** meaning there will be Gentile counterparts who also call on Jesus after the rapture who also obviously did NOT take the mark of the beast. AND these survivors never previously believed on Jesus in order to be caught up in the Rapture to Jesus. Everything will be building to a climax up to the moment Jesus comes! Consider Zechariah 14:16 which says, *Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.* There will be survivors of the nations that survive the day of the Lord! Look at Isaiah 60:12-16 but focus on verse 14 which says, *The sons of those who afflicted you shall come bending low to you, and all who despised you shall bow down at your feet; they shall call you the City of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.* Those who were young or very young who are obviously survivors of the day of the Lord will come to honor the Lord in Jerusalem. Also consider Micah 7:17 referring to the day of the Lord where he says, *they shall lick the dust like a serpent, like the crawling things of the earth; they shall come trembling out of their strongholds; they shall turn in dread to the LORD our God, and they shall be in fear of you.* So, it will happen that people will turn to the Lord AFTER the rapture and before the judgment ... and therefore will NOT be judged at Jesus' Second Coming which is both on the same day!

The Description Of Christ's Coming In The New Testament

Christ's Second Coming is described as "revelation" (1Peter 1:13), "appears" (Col. 3:4, 1 John 3:2), "appearing" (1 Tim 6:14, 2 Tim. 4:1), "the appearing" (Titus 2:13), "is revealed" (1 Peter 4:13). We are waiting for Him to be revealed from heaven according to scripture. (1 Cor 1:7, Phil. 3:20-21, 1 Thess. 1:9, Titus 2:13) from which He is described as a Savior. The resurrection of dead believers (1 Cor. 15:20-23, 1 Thess. 4:13-16) and the transformation of living believers is described as happening at His coming (1 Cor 15:51-55, 1 Thess. 4:17, Col 3:4, Phil 3:20-21, 1 John 3:2)! These things happen at His Appearing/Revelation from heaven.

Two other places in scripture describe His Appearing/Coming as being a public revealing: One is by Jesus in Matthew 24:30-31 (*...then all the tribes of the earth...they will see...*) and the other is Revelation 1:7. (*...every eye will see him, even those who pierced him,...*) If there was a difference between the appearances/revealings of those 2 clearly public and those not explicitly said so but describe Christ as being revealed from heaven then why did the writers of the New Testament (Paul, Peter & John) not describe the difference? Also here is something that made me change my mind. I began to ask myself why would not the believers in Jesus be transformed at Christ's Second Coming to earth described in Revelation 19 since they will see Him in His glory? Even more importantly why would Christ not tell us if there were 2 phases of His Second Coming? Abraham was told of the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18:17 and the prophets were informed of God's coming actions. Amos 3:7 says: *"For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.* How can all the appearances or revealings describing Christ's Second Coming, not be one and the same?

The 144,000 Sealed Servants Of God

God's wrath is always reserved for the unrighteous and therefore believers in Jesus do not receive the wrath of God because Jesus took it for us at the cross! The scripture says that Christians are exempt from God's wrath according to 1 Thess. 5:9 which states: *"For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* In the Old Testament there were those delivered from the wrath but they still were near the judgment of God as in the case of Noah and his family in the Ark where they felt and heard the rain and the flood. Lot and his daughters were aware of God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah as they hurried to get out of the vicinity urged on by angels. Could it not be so that Christians in the time of the great tribulation be near God's wrath but not the object as with Noah and Lot? But actually, Christians will be *persecuted* greatly in this time with many (a multitude without number standing before the throne in Revelation 7:9 who had come out of the great tribulation) suffering martyrdom. They overcome by not loving their lives even unto death. (Rev. 12:11). Could it not be that the reason the word "church" is not used in Revelation

chapter 4 through 21 is that church assemblies are outlawed in this time? Actually Daniel 7:25, 8:24, 12:1, Mathew 24:21 and Revelation 12:17 talk of great persecution for saints coming at the end of the world. Listen to Rev. 12:17 which says, *Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.*

The reason for the wrath of God in Revelation is because the world unites in rebellion against God and the gospel of Jesus. Even today God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness as Romans 1:18 says: *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.* But in Revelation the spirit of antichrist and rebellion runs rampant throughout all the world and therefore God's wrath is on a global scale. Revelation 6:1-2 says: *Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.* 2 Thessalonians 2:3 uses the definite article THE in the original language to refer to the coming apostasy which can be translated as THE REVOLT, REBELLION OR APOSTASY (FALLING AWAY IN KJV). It is THE REBELLION in this passage. The use of "The" means that it is one of a kind—it cannot be confused with any other rebellion!

Yet God always knows those who are his and never judges His own with the unrighteous! Remember Noah and also Lot! *"But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: The Lord knows those who are his, and, Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." (2 Timothy 2:19).* He would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for 10 but then actually led 3 (Lot and his 2 daughters) out by the hand BEFORE he destroyed those cities! Revelation 7:3-8 says the following: *saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:*

12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,

12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,

12,000 from the tribe of Gad,

12,000 from the tribe of Asher,

12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,

12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,

12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,

12,000 from the tribe of Levi,

12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,

12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,

12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,

12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.

Sealing God's people has meant that God marks His own with His Holy Spirit as in Eph 1:13 which states, *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

But the sealing or marking of God's people before judgment around them comes, has a precedent in Ezekiel 9:1-11 when among those living in Jerusalem God sealed His people with a mark on their forehead. After the sealing Ezekiel saw those without the mark killed because of the abominations in Jerusalem. Those sealed are described as those that sighed and groaned over the abominations being committed (vs 4). The scope of marking God's people in Ezekiel 9 was Jerusalem but here in Revelation 7 it is the whole world! The scripture says in Rev. 7:1-3: *After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. ² Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, ³ saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."* The marking of all the Lord's people in the scope of judgment was the precedent set in the Old Testament. Should not God mark all His people in the scope of judgment in Revelation 7 as in Ezekiel 9? God always knows to the last person who His people are and never brings His judgment meant for the unrighteous on the righteous!

It is important to note that in Revelations 7:4 John HEARD the number of the sealed! Right after this in Rev. 7:9 he LOOKED and saw a multitude that could NOT be numbered from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE! There is a relation here: he heard and then he saw! This is the same as in Revelation 5:5-6 where John HEARD that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah had been found worthy to open the seals but when he LOOKED, he saw a lamb! Hearing and looking were 2 different descriptions but the looking explained what was heard: the Lion was the Lamb which is referring to Jesus! Context is king. In chapter 7 John heard the number of the name but when he looked, he saw a multitude that could not be numbered from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne of God! The first description of the sealed is that they are servants of God. And since the multitude that John saw were BEFORE the throne, why would they not also be servants since they are BEFORE God's throne and therefore also be the sealed? In Revelation 19:10 the angel speaking to John describes himself as a fellow servant of God with John and his brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus! *Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19:10)* So the servants of God are those who hold to the testimony of Jesus meaning all believers regardless of their background!

Also in Revelation 14:1-5, the 144,000 are described as those redeemed from the earth and the firstfruits for God and the Lamb. Redemption is for all believers in Jesus! Revelation 9:4 says the 5th trumpet judgment would not affect those sealed of God. If the sealed does not include all believers, then some believers would be under God's judgment something not in line with God's character and previous pattern in all the Bible! Revelation 16:2 says, *"So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image."* This judgment is the first bowl judgment. The Beast (or Antichrist) has his mark on his worshippers in Revelation and so those who don't have his mark by implication would be those whose name is in the book of life of the lamb! Rev. 13:8 says: *and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.* Therefore, those not worshipping the beast have their names written in the Lambs Book of Life and know it ... or will soon find out that they are the servants of Jesus on the day of his coming!

In Revelation 14 the 144,000 it is said that they were singing a new song before the throne (*with the sound of harpists playing on their harps*) and that no one could learn that song but them. But then in Revelation 15 there is the group that is singing the song of Moses and the Lamb (*with harps of God in their hands*) because they had conquered the beast and were standing beside the sea of glass. Both groups had something going on with harps! The sea of glass is before God's throne according to Rev. 4:6. Therefore, this group singing in chapter 15, must be the 144,000 of chapter 7 and 14 who had conquered the beast by not loving their lives unto death! Rev. 12:11 says: *And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.*

And it might seem that those sealed in Revelation 7 are all of Jewish origin but a look at the context and all of Revelation will show differently. The language used is *"sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel"*. He did not say *"sealed from every tribe of the sons of Jacob"* in which case ethnic Israel would clearly be the sense. So, then the real question here: is Israel used in the ethnic sense (Israel according to the flesh--1 Cor 10:18) or in the sense of the real people of God today through faith in Jesus? (Gal 3:26; 3:29; 6:16). The Gospel has always been "...to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16) since they were the first people God called to Himself. So, would it not stand to reason that He would describe His people in Jewish terminology? Believers in Jesus have been described in Jewish terms before.

- 1) Romans 2:29 says that the believer is **the Jew who is one inwardly**. Rev 2:9 & 3:9 says that in that time that there were some who said they were Jews but were not, meaning that the Jew by blood was not God's people automatically even though they were Jewish.

- 2) Philippians 3:3 says that those who glory in Jesus are **the circumcision!** Since circumcision was a sign for God's original people, the real people (the circumcision) of God today are those that glory in Jesus!
- 3) Believers are described as the **children of promise like Isaac.** (Gal 4:28, Rom 9:6-8) This means that all believers in Jesus are children of promise like Isaac was as a promised child and not like Ishmael who was a child of the flesh.
- 4) Believers are described as **sons of Abraham** in Galatians 3:7,29 because believers have faith in God's promises like Abraham did! Jesus said some Jewish people were not sons of Abraham (John 8:39-40) because they did not do the works of Abraham. To one that repented Jesus said he was a son of Abraham as with Zacchaeus in Luke 19:9.
- 5) Paul even describes believers in Christ as **The Israel of God** in Galatians 6:16! *For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.* (Galatians 6:15-16) It is very clear from Paul's writings and in Galatians that the nation of Israel is distinct and NOT meant in this context. He says that the believers in Christ are the children of promise like Isaac (and not Ishmael) in Galatians 4:28 and also would say that not all that descended from Israel BELONG TO Israel in Romans 9:6-8. That is why Paul said there was a pruning going on in Romans 11:17,19-21. But Romans 11 also describes that the believing gentiles have been grafted in as His people! This is the whole point of Paul's discussion in Romans Chapters 9 – 11. 1 Cor 10:18 says to consider the people of Israel and the footnote in the ESV and NASB says the Greek means "Israel according to the flesh". If there is an Israel according to the flesh, then there would also be the Israel spiritually- something that Paul is saying throughout the whole book of Galatians and in Romans 9-11.
- 6) Peter in 1 Peter 1:1 describes believers as **elect exiles in the Dispersion,** which is a phrase that harks back to the time when the Jewish exiles were in the Babylonian and then later in the Persian empire, away from their homeland. This term was used because we are not home yet, just like the Jewish exiles were not home! 1 Peter 2:11 says that the believing recipients of the letter were sojourners.

The tribes of Dan (Judges 18) and Ephraim (1 Kings 12:25-33) are not mentioned in this list: tribes who were known to have gone into idolatry! Joseph and Levi were added to this list to make 12. There were 12 tribes originally, so 12 is the number of completion: meaning ALL GOD'S PEOPLE! Therefore, in light of Revelation and the whole Bible, the sealed must include ALL those who are servants of Jesus!

The Message Of The Book Of Revelation

The book of Revelation has a message from Christ to be obeyed. Listen to what Rev. 1:3 says, *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.* Revelation 22:7 says, *“And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”* And Revelation 22:9 says, *but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”* Other than chapters 2-3 what is there to obey or keep if the translation of all believers in Jesus does not happen at the same time that Jesus comes to rule the world from Jerusalem? It is interesting that Jesus says in chapter 22 that He sent this message of Revelation for the churches. Listen to Rev. 22:16: *“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”* Why did the churches need to know the message of Revelation if it would not apply to them?

There is strong evidence that the rapture of the church is actually in Revelation chapter 14. Listen to Rev 14:14-20: *Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.” So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped. Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, “Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe.” So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.* The description of one seated on the cloud like a son of man must mean Jesus who swings His sickle and reaps the harvest of the earth. What can this reaping mean but the catching away of the believers in Jesus before his judgment? Daniel saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds in Daniel 7:13 which is a clear reference to Jesus. And Jesus made mention before Pilot that he would be coming in the future on the clouds of heaven in Mathew 26:64 and Mark 14:62! There is another angel mentioned in the above passage that swings his sickle AFTER the one like a son of man swings his sickle first. This second harvest was obviously for judgment since the grape harvest was thrown into the winepress of the wrath of God and the blood flowed for 1600 stadia which is about 184 miles according to the ESV Bible text note. This second harvest is an obvious reference to the battle of Armageddon which happens at Jesus' second coming to earth (Rev. 19:11-21). And Jesus had said that the separation of the righteous and the unrighteous would happen at the end of the age in the parable of the weeds of Matthew 13:36-43. Matthew 13:39b-40 says, *The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and*

burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The good grain and the weeds are separated at the same time in this story in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.

The marriage of the Lamb is described by those in heaven as having come... with the Second Coming of Christ pending in Revelation chapter 19. Rev. 19:6-8 says: *Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,*

“Hallelujah!

For the Lord our God

the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult

and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come,

and his Bride has made herself ready;

it was granted her to clothe herself

with fine linen, bright and pure”—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. Right after this declaration that the wedding of the Lamb has come, Jesus comes from heaven and is revealed as riding on a white horse which symbolizes victory as Roman generals would return to Rome on a white horse when victory had been theirs! ⁶ And Christ is in fact victorious in Revelation 19 over the army gathered against Him, the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon! Christ’s revealing and the wedding are spoken of in close proximity here as they are both mentioned in chapter 19.

Paul says in Romans 8:17,23 that we are fellow heirs with Christ and that we are awaiting the glorification of our bodies. Listen to Romans 8:18-25: *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.* The wedding of the Lamb must be when we are glorified in Christ’s presence through resurrection for dead believers and translation to immortality for living believers. This happens when he is revealed as we see in Revelation 19 and of which Peter and Paul spoke of in Col. 3:4; 1 Peter 1:13 & 1 Peter 4:13. Even Daniel foresaw the wedding of the Lamb when he said in Daniel 7 that the Kingdom will be the Lord’s which is Jesus and also the saints! Listen to Daniel 7:27: *And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole*

heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.' Why would heaven itself say that the wedding of the Lamb has come when Jesus is at the cusp of coming from heaven if it also was not at the cusp? And Jesus said in Matt. 16:27 these words: *For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.* Luke 14:14 says we will be repaid at the resurrection of the just! Being repaid at the revelation of Christ's glory and the redemption of our bodies is the same thing!

2 Thess. 1:9-10 must also be heard in this context: *They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.* That day of eternal destruction for some is also the day that Jesus is glorified in His saints...all who have believed! The phrase "all who have believed" implies resurrection for believers not living since "relief" for living believers happens the day Jesus is revealed from heaven with His angels according to 2 Thess. 1:7.

1 Thess. 4:13-17 speaks of followers of Christ being caught up to be with Him when He comes. And then in just a few verses later Paul mentions the day of the Lord, referring back to Christ's coming when believers are caught up to be with Him. He says on THAT DAY there will be sudden destruction for the children of the night and darkness! Listen to these verses in 1 Thess. 4:16 – 5:5: *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words. Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.* Remember there were no chapters and verses put in by Paul: He only wrote a letter and he defines his own words (the day of the Lord)! Matthew 13:36-43 says in the explanation of the parable of the wheat and the weeds that the righteous and the unrighteous will be separated at the end of the age. Revelation 19's description of the wedding of the Lamb at Jesus coming in judgment is supported in many places in scripture!

The Testimony Of The Early Church ⁷

What scripture says is of FIRST AND UTMOST importance but there is strong evidence that the early church fathers believed just what we are describing. The early church fathers before about 325 AD, believed that Christians would face the time of tribulation before Jesus came. They generally all believed in a literal Millennium⁸ (Pre-Millenniumism), that Jesus would come before the Millennium, that the nation of Israel would be saved when Jesus comes⁹, and that our translation to immortality would happen right after the tribulation and which was right before the Millennium. It was not the scripture but other factors that eventually moved Christians away from believing in a literal Millennium and changing their eschatology, the belief of last things.¹⁰ But consider a few quotes here regarding the timing of our translation in their minds of that time.

Justin Martyr (100-165 AD)

...He shall come from heaven with glory, when the man of apostasy,⁴²⁰ who speaks strange things against the Most High, shall venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us the Christians,...*(Justin Martyr in Dialogue With Trypho 110)*

Irenaeus (130-202 AD)

And the [the ten kings represented by the ten horns of the beast in Rev. 17:12] will ... give their kingdom to the beast and put the church to flight” *(Against Heresies 5.26.1)*

Tertullian (ca 150 - ca 229 AD)

Now the privilege of this favour awaits those who shall at the coming of the Lord be found in the flesh, and who shall, owing to the oppressions of the time of Antichrist, deserve by an instantaneous death,²⁷³ which is accomplished by a sudden change, to become qualified to join the rising saints; as he writes to the Thessalonians: “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. 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: then we too shall ourselves 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.”²⁷⁴ *(Tertullian—On The Resurrection of the Flesh 41)*

The Didache (late 1st century or early second century AD)

16 “Watch” over your life: do not let “your lamps” go out, and do not keep “your loins ungirded;” but “be ready,” for “you do not know the hour when our Lord is coming.” 2Meet together frequently in your search for what is good for your souls, since “a lifetime of faith will be of no advantage” to you unless you prove perfect at the very last. 3For in the final days multitudes of false prophets and seducers will appear. 4Sheep will turn into wolves, and love into hatred. For with the increase of iniquity men will hate, persecute, and betray each other.

And then the world deceiver will appear in the guise of God's Son. He will work "signs and wonders" and the earth will fall into his hands and he will commit outrages such as have never occurred before. 5Then mankind will come to the fiery trial "and many will fall away" and perish, "but those who persevere" in their faith "will be saved by the Curse himself." 6Then "there will appear the signs of the Truth: first the sign of stretched-out [hands] in heaven, then the sign of "a trumpet's blast," and thirdly the resurrection of the dead, though not of all the dead, 7but as it has been said: "The Lord will come and all his saints with him. Then the world will see the Lord coming on the clouds of the sky." (*The Didache 16:1-7 – "Teaching of The Twelve Apostles"*)

In discussing the rise of posttribulational interpretation even John Walvoord who wrote many books on Pretribulationism and who was president of Dallas Theological Seminary from 1952 – 1986 conceded that the early church believed the rapture and second coming were simultaneous for the first 2 centuries. But he went on to say that the early church had not reconciled their belief in the imminency of the rapture and Christ's coming with the events that scripture says precedes the second coming. He said that the early church fathers just had not had the opportunity to refine their understanding of the rapture. ¹¹

Conclusion

The whole spirit of the message of Revelation is to prepare Christians for what is coming...is it not? Revelation 13:7-10 says, *Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear:*

*If anyone is to be taken captive,
to captivity he goes;
if anyone is to be slain with the sword,
with the sword must he be slain.*

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

Jesus had also told the apostles to get ready for suffering that was coming in their ministry so that they would not be surprised. Listen to John 16:1-4 which says, *"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you."* It looks we will have to show our faithfulness one last time! I would rather be prepared for the worst and it get better than

for the best and it be worse. A good question to ask is will those prepared for the best case scenario, be prepared for a worst case scenario if it should happen? Maybe so since this time will be seen coming because it will not come out of the blue without warning signs.

There is strong evidence that the rise of Pretribulationism which began in the mid 1800s to early 1900s (*a few very early beginnings were in the 1600s and 1700s*) began as a reaction to the non-literal interpretation of end time events.¹² Specifically, it affirmed God's purpose for the Jewish nation to say that they will all be saved when Jesus comes to reign on the earth. It also affirmed the literalness of the Millennium both of which had been lacking since the time right after the early church fathers. But these 2 things – the eventual salvation of all remaining Jews at Jesus' coming in that they all will call on Jesus to save them and the literalness of the one thousand year reign of Jesus on this earth, affirmed by Pretribulationism, can also be affirmed WITHOUT a pretribulational rapture. Pretribulationism moved in the direction of getting end time events more correct and biblical than previously had been¹³. The order of end time events was correct with Pretribulationism but like an accordion stretched out, it put too much time between the Rapture and the Second Coming something the scripture does not do.

It may be difficult to believe what has been discussed here...but I am compelled by scripture. These are MY reasons for why I believe that our deliverance comes at the same time that Jesus is revealed from heaven when He comes to reign on this earth from Jerusalem. May the Lord bless and guide you from His Word!

But it must not be forgotten that the main focus of the passages dealing with Christ's coming is that Christians be ready by being busy with what is on God's heart! Listen to Matt. 24:44-47: *Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.* In 1 Cor. 15:58 after talking about our translation when Jesus comes, Paul says the following: *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.* And Jesus said in Matthew 24:13: *But the one who endures to the end will be saved.* And we have been commanded to make disciples of all the nations because all authority has been given to Him. He said He will be with us to the end of the age! (Matt. 28:18-20) Always remaining faithful to Jesus and being busy reaching people for Jesus is our proper focus to the end!

End Notes

* All scripture underlines are mine

† Bracketed text is mine

- 1 "Medieval and Reformation Millennialism" – Encyclopedia Britannica by Richard Landes
(<https://www.britannica.com/topic/eschatology/Medieval-and-Reformation-millennialism>)

- 2 "William Carey's Postmillennialism and World Missions" by Thomas Schirrmacher
(<https://chalcedon.edu/magazine/william-careys-postmillennialism-and-world-missions>)

- 3 *ibid*; also "American Postmillennialism: Seeing The Glory" by Stephen R. Pointer
(<https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/american-postmillennialism-seeing-the-glory>);
also... "The Future In Our Past: Postmillennialism In American Protestantism" by Nancy Koester
(https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/15-2_Revelation/15-2_N_Koester.pdf)
also...*The Blessed Hope* by George Eldon Ladd 1956, pgs. 41-43
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- 4 *Why Is The Bible Divided Into Chapter And Verses?* By Don Stewart
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- 5 *Ancient Jewish Wedding Customs And Yeshua's Second Coming* By The Messianic Prophecy Bible Project
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- 6 *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck on Rev. 19:11-13

- 7 All quotations are taken from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* by Roberts and Donaldson except the *Didache* quote which is from *The Apostolic Fathers* by Moody Publishers / also and as quoted in *First The Antichrist* by Bob Gundry 1997 pgs. 145-153

- 8 *The Millennial Views of Early Church Leaders* by Renald E. Showers
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- 9 *Rejection Then Hope: The Church's Doctrine Of Israel In The Patristic Era* by Michael J. Vlach
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- 10 *Rejection of Premillennialism & Development of Amillennialism* by Renald E. Showers
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- 11 *Posttribulationism Today—Part I: The Rise of Posttribulation Interpretation* by John F. Walvoord
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- 13 *The Blessed Hope* by George Eldon Ladd 1956, chapters 2 - 3