

Glory to Glory Ministries – Minot, ND

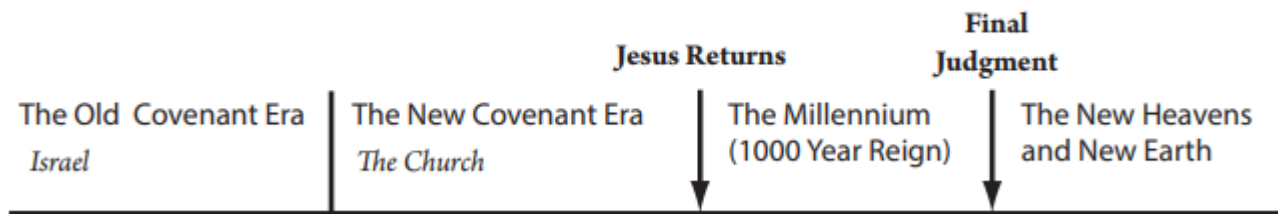
Lesson 8: Revelation Chapter 4 verse 1 and the Rapture

1. The Creatures in Heaven worship the One on the Throne Revelation 4:1-11.

- a. **Revelation 4:1 (NKJV)** After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”
- b. The Heavenly Court in Context
- c. **(v1) After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven.**
 - i. “ John is now swept up in the Spirit to the very door of Heaven. There he beholds a vision of a sovereign God in full command of the course of human affairs as they move swiftly to their denouement. On the plane of history, the church appears unable to resist the might of hostile worldly powers, but the course of history is not determined by political power but by God enthroned and active. At his appointed time the scroll of destiny is to be handed to the Lamb, who himself will open the seals, bring history to a close, and usher in the eternal state. The great throne room vision of chapters 4 and 5 serves to remind believers living in the shadow of impending persecution that an omnipotent and omniscient God is still in control.” (Mounce, 1997)
- d. **(v1) And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”**
 - i. Many ministers who are pre-millennialist, those who believe in the return of Christ prior to the establishment of the 1000-year millennial kingdom, believe that this is the rapture of the Church.
 - a. First – A quick look at the three major views as to how the 1000-years fits in History.

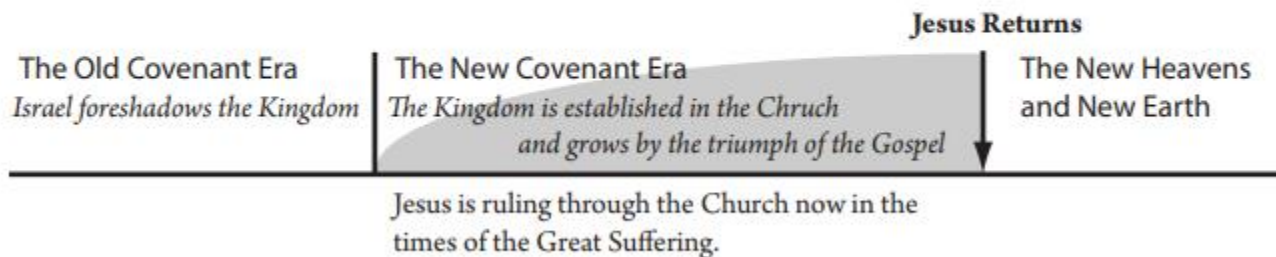
- 1 **Premillennial** - Jesus arrives BEFORE the 1000-years.

PreMillennialism



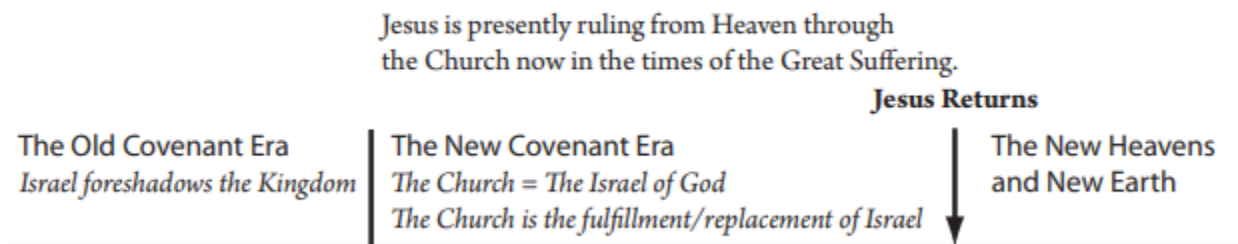
- 2 **Postmillennial** - Jesus arrives AFTER the 1000-years.

Postmillennialism



- 3 **Amillennial** - Jesus returns at the End of the 1000-years but has been ruling all along - this view treats the whole passage as pure symbolism.

Amillennialism



2. The rapture.

- a. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50-53

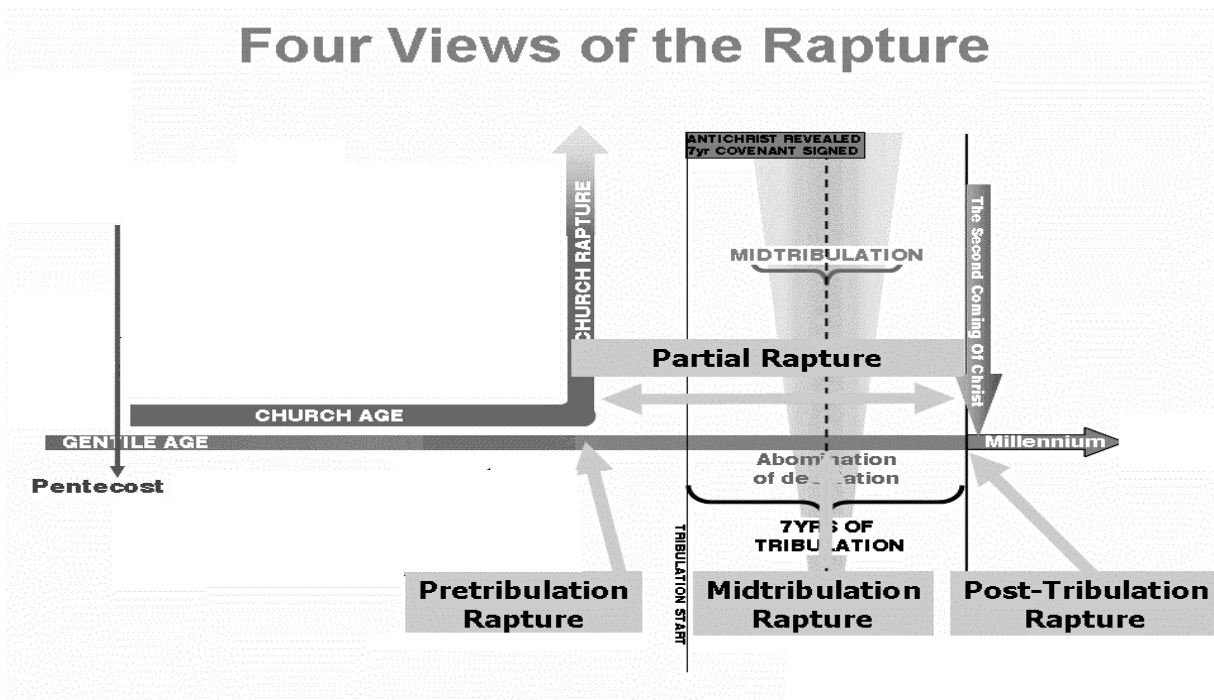
- i. **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NKJV)** But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.
- ii. **1 Corinthians 15:50-53 (NKJV)** Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
 - a. The Rapture / The Translation-Resurrection / The “Catching Up”
- iii. Why call it the “rapture” when it is not in the Bible? Many words we use to describe biblical truth are not found in scripture.
 - a. “Trinity” – describes the biblical truth that God exist in Father, Son & Holy Spirit.
 - b. The term “rapture” comes from the Latin word raptus used in the translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17. English translation as “suddenly caught” or “snatched up.” .
- iv. The term “Rapture” is used to reference to what happens to believers (both dead and alive) at the return of Christ for His bride.

b. The timing of the rapture debate:

- i. Timing of this Rapture is a topic of much debate.

- ii. In his book “Three Views on the Rapture, Douglas Moo helps us focus on the important things: “The truth of the imminent coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is an important and indispensable element of biblical truth. That this coming is to be premillennial the Scriptures plainly state. That a time of unprecedented Tribulation will immediately precede that coming and that living believers will be raptured into the presence of Christ at His coming are also plainly stated. But the time of that Rapture with respect to the Tribulation is nowhere plainly stated.
- iii. He goes on to say this about his individual beliefs: “... this conviction is founded upon logic, inferences, and legitimately debated points of exegesis, I cannot, indeed must not, allow this conviction to represent any kind of barrier to full relationships with others who hold differing convictions on this point. May our discussions on this point enhance, not detract from, our common expectation of the “blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13)
- iv. The teaching of the rapture is basically a debate among Premillennialists centered on the timing of it.

3. Various views on the timing of the Rapture.



a. The Partial Rapture view

- i. The partial rapture view is one that deals with the extent of the Rapture more than the timing of the Rapture. It states that only those who are waiting, watching, and faithful (those who are mature in Christ) will be raptured before the Tribulation. Then, Jesus will rapture the other immature believers as they wake up as well as those come to faith during the Tribulation. (Truth Seekers Fellowship, 2017)

The Partial Rapture View



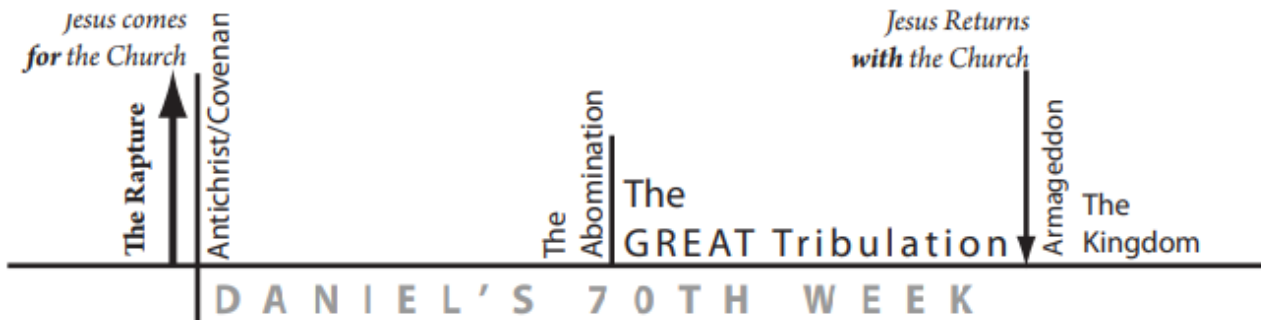
- a. The parables in Matthew 24 and 25 are often used to support this view.
- b. Revelation 7:9, 14; 12:5; 16:15 are presented as timing for these various rapture events.
- ii. Those who debate against this theory have concerns with:
 - a. They believe it violates the nature of the whole Church being the body of Christ.
 - b. They point out that the rapture is never presented as a “reward” only for the mature.
 - c. They interpret rapture passages to indicate that all Christians are in view.

b. Pre-Tribulation view:

- i. Became popular by the teachings of John Nelson Darby in the mid 1880's. However, this was not a new revelation in the 19th century. There is commentary from early church fathers going back to 150 ad.

- ii. This view teaches that the Rapture will occur before the seven year “tribulation” begins.

The Pre-Tribulation view



- iii. The imagery of Jewish Betrothal and Wedding ceremonies are drawn on as the backdrop of what will happen.
- a. Jesus is betrothed to His Bride -the Church.
 - b. He leaves to prepare a place for her.
 - c. He returns at an unexpected time to claim her.
 - d. He takes her away in private to consummate the marriage.
 - e. The wedding guests celebrate for seven days.
- iv. Proponents believe:
- a. The Fire Bible commentary on Revelation 4:1: “AFTER THIS. This phrase seems to indicate a passage of time. It appears that instead of one continuous vision, John was given insight into various times and events of the future (see 7:1, 9; 15:5; 18:1). For this reason, we have this change of scene and time. Many Bible scholars and interpreters believe that at this point in Revelation (i.e., before the fulfillment of the events described from here forward), Christ has already taken the “overcomers” out of the world. Thus, the catching up of the true church to meet Christ in the air (see Jn 14:3...) takes place before the tribulation period (chs. 6–18...). This belief is based on the following statements:
- 1 (1) Beginning with 4:1, the terms “church” or “churches” no longer appear until 22:16.

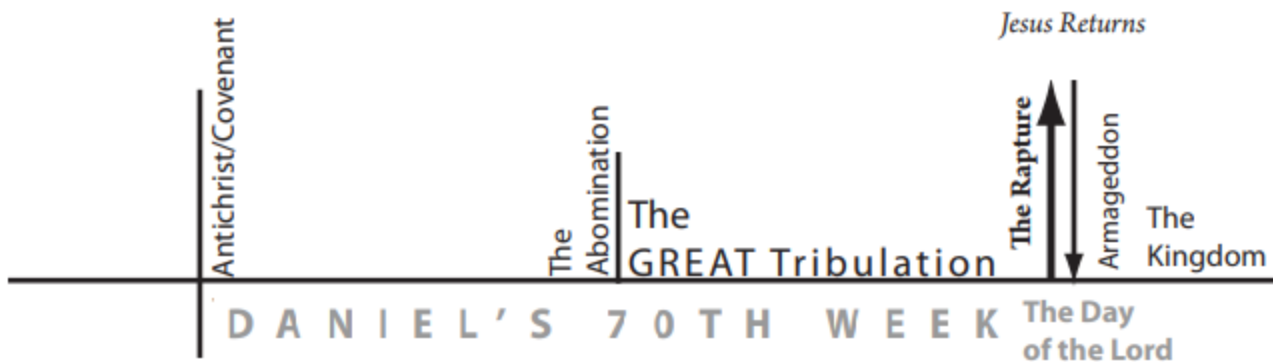
- 2 (2) The bride of Christ (i.e., the church) appears in ch. 19 already with Christ in heaven before he returns to earth to judge the wicked and to reign on earth for a thousand years, closing out time as we know it (see 20:4...)
- 3 (3) The promise given to the Philadelphia church to spare it from the time of worldwide trial pertains to all believers who stand true to Christ before the tribulation (see 3:10...) ” (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)(outline format added)

- b. This easily explains how the Church will be kept from “the hour of testing” coming on the whole earth and thus the Wrath of God (Revelation 3:10).
- c. Keeps a strong distinction between God’s future purposes for the Church and Israel.
- d. This view leaves an interval of time after the Rapture but before the end for both Jews and Gentiles to come to faith.
- v. Critics argue:
 - a. Too strong of a distinction between God’s future purposes for the Church and Israel.
 - b. Makes the second coming of Jesus distinct from the Rapture.
 - c. Makes the Rapture “secret” - only “seen” by believers.
 - d. Places much emphasis on Revelation 3:10 - “kept from the hour...” - referring to the Rapture.

c. The Post-Tribulation view:

- i. The Rapture will occur after or at the end of the Tribulation.
- ii. The Rapture occurs at the same time as the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth.

The Post-Tribulation view



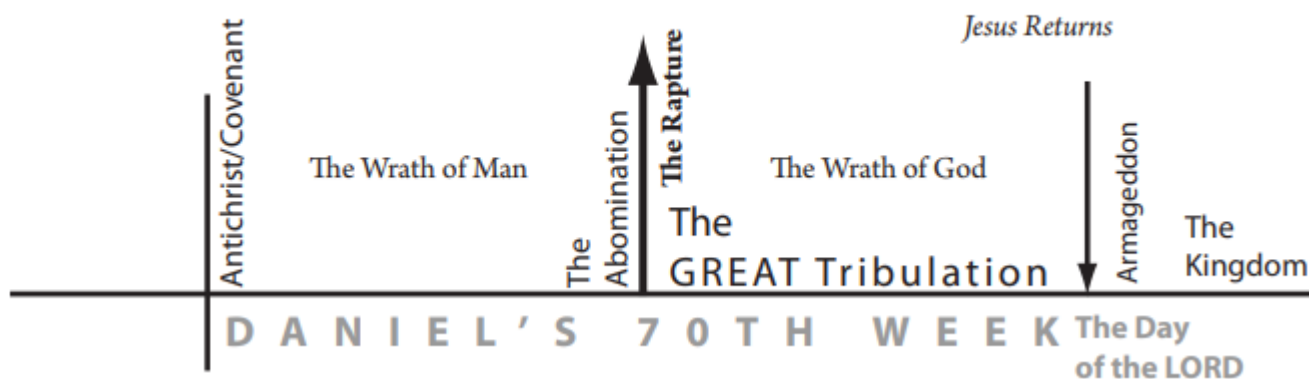
- iii. This view has gained wide acceptance with recent scholars:
 - a. One reason is related to the link of the language used in 1 Thessalonians 4 to similar language used in the Greco-Roman world about the visit of an Emperor or King to a city.
 - b. The “appearing/arriving” (Parousia) in 1 Thess. 4:15 of the dignitary was met with a delegation from the city who would go out to “meet” in 1 Thess. 4:17 then accompany him back to the city.
- iv. Proponents believe:
 - a. Refers to the passages that indicate that the Church should be prepared for the Day of the Lord which seems to be part of the “arrival” of the Lord Jesus.
 - b. They believe this is the least complicated. Simply taking the language in all the relevant passages at face value.
- v. Critics argue:
 - a. How do we then explain keeping us from the Wrath of God during the “Great Tribulation.”
 - b. How to distinguish God’s plans for the Church and His plans for Israel in the Last Days.
 - c. Has difficulty explaining who will populate the Millennium.
 - 1 If everyone is Raptured at the end, there is no one righteous left in non-glorified bodies to populate the Kingdom.

- d. The “sheep and goat” judgment of Matthew 25:31-46 seems to occur after the 70th week but before the Millennium.
- e. This judgment will keep the unrighteous from entering the Kingdom.

d. The Mid-Tribulation view:

- i. Makes a distinction between the 70th Week of Daniel and the Great Tribulation.
- ii. Emphasis is placed on the Middle of the Week (3.5 years) and the revealing of Antichrist.

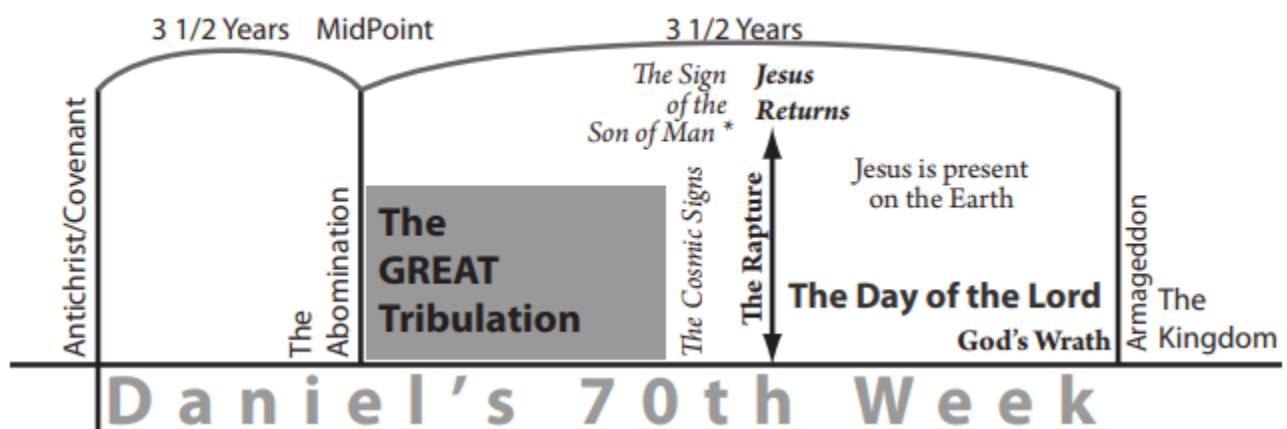
The Mid-Tribulation view



- iii. The first 3.5 years is characterized as the time of the “Wrath of Man,”
- iv. The final 3.5 years is defined as the “Wrath of the God.”
- v. The Church is raptured before the events of the Great Tribulation.
- vi. This view sees Revelation 14 as a description of the events concerning the Rapture.
 - a. First there is the vision of 144,000 standing with Jesus.
 - b. After this vision, three angels come forth declaring the Gospel and the eternal destruction that will come upon those who worship the Beast.
 - c. After this, there are two reaping’s of the Earth.
 - 1 The first (14:14-16) is taken to be Jesus “reaping” His people from the Earth (the Rapture),
 - 2 The second (14:17) is taken to be a reaping of the wicked for wrath.
- vii. Proponents believe:

- a. It correctly distinguishes Daniel's 70th Week and the Great Tribulation.
 - b. It is right to focus things on the middle of the final seven years as this is the beginning of the end.
 - c. Explains how the Church will see the rise of "The Man of Sin" (2 Thess. 2) and still be removed from the Earth before the Wrath of God.
- viii. Critics argue:
- a. Many of the arguments made by this view would fit a post-trib view better.
 - b. Makes a sharp distinction between the "Wrath of Man" and the "Wrath of God".
- e. **The Pre-Wrath view:**
- i. This view is the "youngest" of all the views. It was first presented in Marvin Rosenthal's book *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church* in 1990. The view was expanded in the writings of Robert Van Kampen (*The Sign and The Rapture Question Answered: Plain & Simple*). Recently a detailed presentation and defense of this position was given in H. L. Nigro's *Before God's Wrath: The Bible's Answer to the Timing of the Rapture*. (Truth Seekers Fellowship, 2017)

The Pre-Wrath view



- ii. This view teaches that God has only promised to keep the Church from His Wrath, not suffering and persecution. Therefore, the Church can expect to endure part of the persecution under the reign of Antichrist.
- iii. Three periods of Judgment in Revelation:
 - a. Seals
 - b. Trumpets
 - c. and Bowls (vials).
- iv. The first four Seals represent God setting the stage for the end. The Fifth Seal (The Cry of the Martyrs) represents the Great Tribulation.
- v. The Day of the Lord and thus the Wrath of God begins with the Sixth Seal.
- vi. This Sixth Seal also “includes” both the Trumpet and Bowl judgments.
- vii. Jesus will come for the Church (The Rapture) after the Fifth Seal (The Great Tribulation) but before the Sixth Seal (The Day of the Lord’s Wrath).
- viii. Proponents believe:
 - a. Gives an internally coherent presentation of all the facts given the in support of this view.
 - b. Gives a more detailed analysis of the judgments recorded in Revelation.
- ix. Critics argue:
 - a. This view is overly complicated and difficult to follow.
 - b. Draws too many inferences about the relationships of the different events.
 - c. Separates Jesus return to the at the time of the Rapture from His “return” in Revelation 19 to destroy the Beast and his armies.

4. Why do these views make any difference?

- a. Note: this section is adapted from “The End of All Things... Biblical Eschatology II” (Truth Seekers Fellowship, 2017)
- b. Many times, we simply believe what others have taught us to believe. This is an important part of tradition and passing our story and worldview from one generation to the next.

- c. In the West (particularly America) many hold to a Pre-Trib position because it brings comfort. This is understandable. However, we cannot fall into the trap of believing that Jesus will rescue us from all forms of suffering, affliction and persecution.
- d. Jesus will deliver us from the coming Wrath of God, but He never promises to deliver us from persecution, suffering and affliction.
- e. One final word about the coming Wrath of God. Exemption from God's Wrath does not exempt us from His judgment. In the letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation it is clear that Jesus calls these assemblies to repentance lest they face His disciplinary judgment. Peter also gives us a sobering exhortation: "For it is time for judgment to begin, starting with the house of God. And if it starts with us, what will be the fate of those who are disobedient to the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).
- f. In the context, Peter is discussing the suffering that the believers are presently facing and that in reality they are sharing in the suffering of Christ which makes them fit for His Kingdom.
- g. Whatever view we take on the Rapture, we must never think that this doctrine promises to protect us from the refining fire of suffering that God allows for His people which makes them worthy of His Kingdom.

5. **17 scriptural differences between the Rapture and the Second Coming.**

Note this section adapted from (Liebenberg, 2017)

Rapture	Second Coming
Jesus coming FOR His Bride John 14:1-3, 1 Thes 4:14-17	Jesus coming WITH His Bride Col 3:4, Zech 14:5, Jude 14, Rev 19:14.
Caught up with Him in the air 1 Thes 4:13-18	Jesus' feet touches the earth Zech 14:4; Rev 19:11-21; Ezek 11:23.
Believers taken first, unbelievers are left behind 1 Thes 4:13-18	Wicked are taken first, the righteous (Tribulation Believers) are left behind Matt 13:28-30
Purpose: To present the Bride to Himself and to the Father 2 Cor 11:2, Rev 19:6-9.	Purpose: To execute judgment on earth and set up His Kingdom Jude 14-15; Rev 19:11-21; Zech 14:3-4.

MARRIAGE: Marriage of Lamb in heaven after the Rapture.	WAR: Marriage is followed by war on earth at the Second Coming.
Happens in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (too fast for eyes to see) 1 Cor 15:52.	Slow coming, people will see Him come back Zech 12:10, Matt 24:30, Rev 1:7.
Only Believers will see Him. 1 John 3:2, 1 Cor 15:52.	Every eye will see Him Rev 1:7
Jesus descends with a shout (for resurrection) 1 Thes 4:16.	No shout mentioned Rev 19:11-21.
A resurrection takes place 1 Thes 4:13-18, 1 Cor 15:51-54.	No resurrection mentioned Rev 1:7, 19:11-21, Zech 12:10, 14:4-5.
Can happen on any Rosh HaShanah Rev 3:3, 1 Thes 5:4-6.	Occurs at end of 7-years of Tribulation Dan 9:24-27, Matt 24:29-30, 2 Thes 2:3-8.
No angels are sent to gather but they are present (resurrected people don't need angels to help them). -	Angels sent forth to gather people together for judgment Matt 13:39, 41, 49, 24:31, 25:31, 2 Thes 1:7-10.
Souls of those dead in Messiah return with Jesus to receive their resurrected bodies. 1 Thes 4:14-16.	Believers return with Jesus in bodies already resurrected riding on white horses Rev 19:11-21
Jesus does not return on a white horse.	Jesus returns on a white horse Rev 19:11.
For the Bride only (those in Christ) 1 Thes 4:14-17. 14	For redeemed Israel & grafted in Gentiles Rom 11:25-27, Matt 25:31-46.
A message of hope and comfort 1 Thes 4:18, Titus 2:13, 1 John 3:3.	A message of judgment Joel 3:12-16, Rev 19:11-21, Mal 4:5.
Satan will not be locked up Rev 13:2.	Satan will be locked up Rev 20:3.
No signs to indicate when the Rapture is going to take place 2 Peter 3:10.	Signs will proceed the Second Coming Matt 24:24.

6. Final thoughts:

- a. When it comes to the timing of the Rapture it may be best to have the attitude: I hope for the best, but I prepare for the worse.

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