

A stylized mountain range graphic in white and light blue. The word 'ENCOURAGEMENT' is written in a bold, blocky font across the top of the mountain. Below it, the word 'HOPE' is written in a similar font, with the 'H' and 'O' of the second line overlapping the 'H' and 'O' of the first line. The background features a dark blue gradient with faint, radiating lines.

ENCOURAGEMENT
HOPE

A study from the books of Thessalonians

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

1 Thessalonians 1:1





ITALY

ADRIATIC SEA

M A C E D O N I A

Philippi

Thessalonica

Berea

Troas

AEGEAN SEA

ASIA

A C H A I A

IONIAN SEA

Athens

Ephesus

Corinth

PELOPONNESE

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Macedonia and Achaia

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CRETE



We give thanks to God always for all of you,
making mention of you in our prayers;
constantly bearing in mind your work of faith
and labor of love and steadfastness
[endurance] of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ
in the presence of our God and Father,
1 Thessalonians 1:2-3



Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives [ψυχή *psuche*, souls], because you had become very dear to us.

1 Thessalonians 2:8



But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us. For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy. 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20



Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-3



But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you,

1 Thessalonians 3:6



as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith? 1 Thessalonians 3:10

*New believers still have lots to learn; spiritual growth is never ending



Outline of 1 Thessalonians

Chapters 1–3 contain personal messages of commendation for the Thessalonians and explanations of the missionaries' activities and motives.

Chapters 4–5 record practical instruction in matters of the Thessalonians' deficiencies, plus practical exhortations to proper behavior in view of the truth.

1 Thessalonians chapter 4

This letter was written in approximately 50 AD.

Chapter divisions were added to the scriptures in 1228 AD.

Verse divisions were added to the New Testament in 1551 AD.



Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2

*Sometimes followers of Jesus do not need to LEARN more, they need to OBEY what they have already learned.



For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality [*πορνεία porneia*]; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel [body] in sanctification and honor, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4

*Christians are to avoid and abstain from any and every form of sexual practice that lies outside the circle of God's revealed will. The Thessalonians lived in an environment in which sexual looseness was not only practiced openly but was also encouraged. In Greek religion, prostitution was considered a priestly prerogative, and extramarital sex was sometimes an act of worship. To a Christian the will of God is clear: holiness and sexual immorality are mutually exclusive.

not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother [fellow believer] in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 1 Thessalonians 4:5-6

* Knowing God is basic to living a holy life. Maintaining a vital relationship with God is essential to maintaining a clean walk before God. – Bible Knowledge Commentary



What is God's plan for sex?

- One man and one woman in a faithful, committed marriage relationship

What is NOT God's plan for sex?

- Anything else



How can I break the cycle of sexual sin?

1. Surrender your life to Jesus as Savior
2. Understand God's biblical standards
3. Ask God for forgiveness and cleansing
4. Pray for spiritual self-discipline and self-control
5. Seek accountability from a fellow believer
6. Seek to honor and obey Jesus daily



For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification [ἁγιασμός *hagiasmos*]. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8

The Greek noun *hagiasmos* (“holiness”) occurs here for the fourth time in eight verses (3:13; 4:3–4). The verb *hagiazō* [“sanctify”] is used in 5:23. -Bible Knowledge Commentary



Now as to the love [φιλαδελφία *philadelphia*] of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love [ἀγαπάω *agapao*] one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all **Macedonia**. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more,

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10



and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet [ἡσυχάζω *hesuchazo*... restful, settled] life and attend to your own business and work with your hands [be self-supporting, responsible], just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

Let your foot rarely be in your neighbor's house, or he will become weary of you and hate you. Proverbs 25:17



But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

The prophecy of the Rapture is as sure to be fulfilled as the prophecies of Christ's death and resurrection.

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-16

Those “who fall asleep” are Christians who die. The figure of “sleep” for death is common in the New Testament (Mark 5:39; John 11:11). This is not sleep of the soul because Paul wrote elsewhere that a Christian who is absent from his body is present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 5:10). It is rather the “sleep” of the body in the earth until it is resurrected, changed into a glorious body, and reunited with the soul (1 Cor. 15:35–57; 2 Cor. 5:1–9). – Bible Knowledge Commentary



Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up [ἄρπάζω *harpazo*] up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.
1 Thessalonians 4:17-18

The Latin Vulgate translates the Greek ἀρπαγησόμεθα as *rapiemur* meaning "we are caught up" or "we are taken away" from the Latin verb *rapio* meaning "to catch up" or "take away."

What is the Rapture?

- Latin term *rapio*, which means to “snatch away” or “carry off,” is the root of the English word “rapture”
- Greek *harpadzo* ἄρπάζω
- Hebrew *lakakh* לקַח
- English word “rapture” is not found in your Bible
- The rapture event in end times prophecy is God’s taking the followers of Messiah Jesus out of the world instantaneously.
- The main biblical passage for the rapture of the church is 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17. Other texts used to support the doctrine of the rapture are John 14:1–3 and 1 Corinthians 15:51–52.

The Bride and Groom

- The New Testament portrays the Church (believers in Jesus as Savior) as the Bride of Christ in Ephesians 5:22-33.
- Jesus uses the illustration of an Ancient Jewish wedding ceremony
- “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself**, that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” John 14:1-6



The Shofar is Sounded as the Groom Comes for His Bride

The blasts of the shofar will herald the return of Yeshua (Jesus) and the resurrection of the dead. Jesus will return with a shout and the "shofar call of God" at the event known as the **Rapture of the Church**.

“For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with **the trumpet** [shofar call] of God, and the dead in Christ [Messiah] will rise first.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16

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

Since Rosh Hashanah is the “Day of the Sounding of the Shofar” it looks forward to the moment when we hear the great sound of the shofar during the last days. At this time, God will transform the bodies of believers who have died, giving them new, immortal bodies. The sounding of the shofar thus encourages us to remember that our present bodies are only temporary, but we look forward to our eternal bodies, in which we will see the Lord face to face and be with Him forever. - Chosen People Ministries



When will the Groom (Jesus) return for the Bride (Church)?

“But of that day and hour **no one knows**,
not even the angels of heaven, nor the
Son, but the Father alone.”

Matthew 24:36



Examples of Rapture in the Bible

1. Enoch (Genesis 5, past)
2. Elijah (2 Kings 2, past)
3. Jesus (Acts 1, past)
4. Philip (Acts 8, past)
5. The Church (1 Thessalonians 4, future)
6. The Two Witnesses (Revelation 11, future)

Rapture is **not** a hidden or mysterious concept in the Bible and is **not** limited to the New Testament



Raptures in the Bible - Enoch

Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and became the father of Enoch. Then Jared lived eight hundred years after he became the father of Enoch, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died. Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. Genesis 5:18-24

*Like the living believers at the Rapture of the Church, Enoch did not die and will never die



Raptures in the Bible - Elijah

As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. Elisha saw it and cried out, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw Elijah no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over. 2 Kings 2:11-15



Raptures in the Bible – Ascension of Jesus

And after He (Jesus) had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.” Acts 1:9-11

*Mount of Olives is the place of Jesus’ ascension and place of His future return



Raptures in the Bible - Philip

The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. **When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him,** but went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea. Acts 8:34-40



Raptures in the Bible – Two Witnesses

Then there was given me [Apostle John] a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days (exactly 3.5 years using a 360 day calendar), clothed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire. Revelation 11:1-6

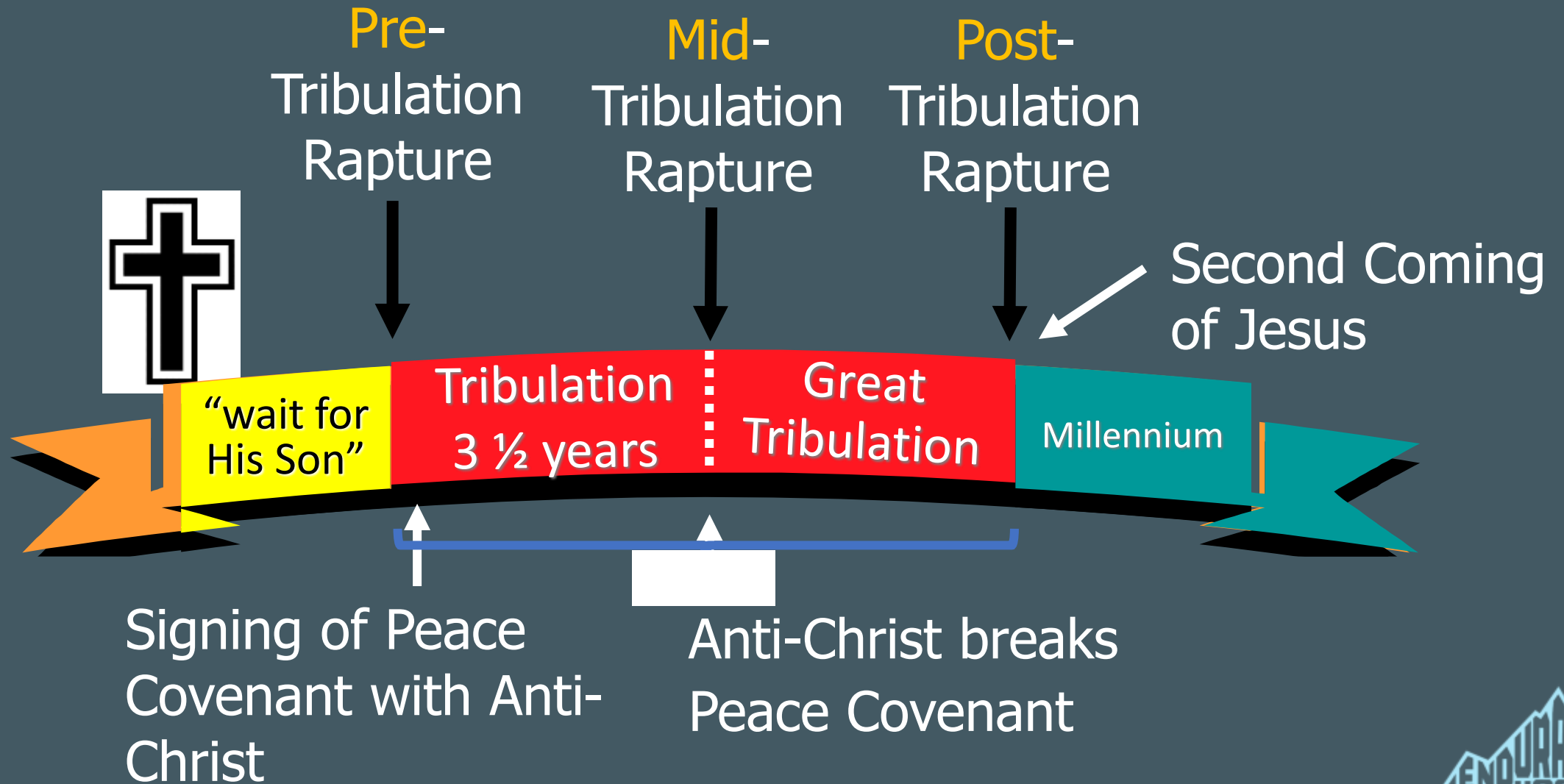


Raptures in the Bible – Two Witnesses

When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, **“Come up here.”** Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. Revelation 11:7-12



Various views of when the Rapture occurs



The Pre-Tribulation Rapture

- The best inference of Scripture is that the Rapture will occur at the beginning of the Tribulation. We are told to watch for the appearing of the Lord. We are told "to be ready" (Matthew 24:44), "to be on the alert" (Matthew 24:42), "to be dressed in readiness" (Luke 12:35), and to "keep your lamps alight" (Luke 12:35). The clear force of these persistent warnings is that Jesus can appear at any moment.
- **Only the pre-Tribulation concept of the Rapture allows for the imminence of the Lord's appearing for His Church.** When the Rapture is placed at any other point in time, the imminence of the Lord's appearing is destroyed because other prophetic events must happen first.
- Nowhere are believers told to watch for the appearance of the Antichrist. On the contrary, we are told to watch for Jesus Christ. In Titus 2:13 Paul says we are to live "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Peter urges us to "fix our hope completely on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). John urges us to "fix our hope on Him" at His appearing (1 John 3:2-3).

Source: Dr. David Reagan



The Pre-Tribulation Rapture

- Another argument for a pre-Tribulation Rapture has to do with the promises of God to protect the Church from His wrath. The book of Revelation shows that the wrath of God will be poured out during the entire period of the Tribulation.
- The Bible promises that the Church will be delivered from God's wrath. Romans 5:9 says that "we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him [Jesus]." 1 Thessalonians 1:10 states that we are waiting "for His Son from heaven... who will deliver us from the wrath to come." The promise is repeated in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 — "God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."
- Regardless of when the Rapture actually occurs, the Bible teaches that societal conditions are going to grow increasingly worse the closer we get to the Lord's return. Christians will suffer tribulation whether or not they go into the Great Tribulation. We had better prepare ourselves for unprecedented suffering and spiritual warfare.

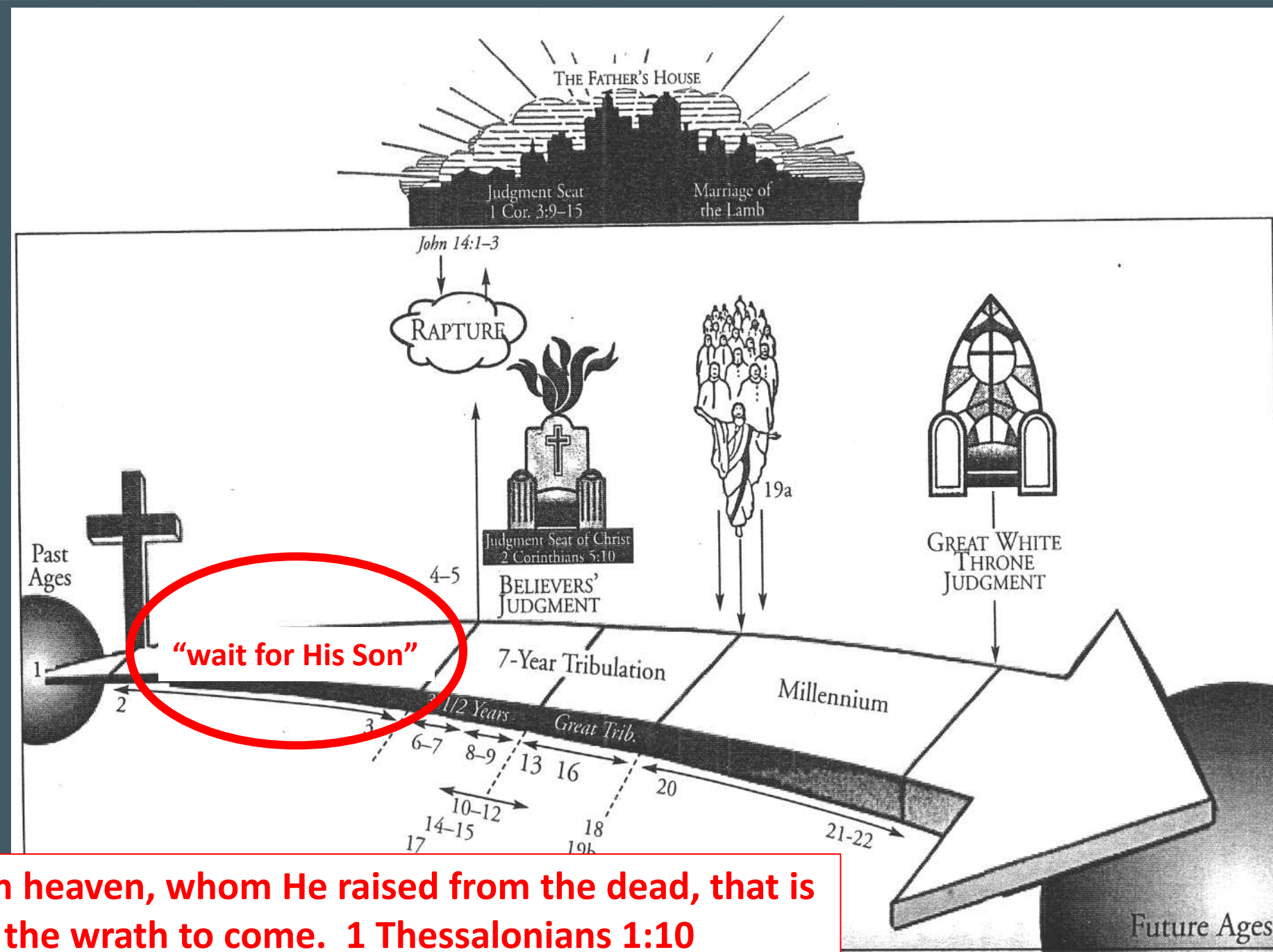
Source: Dr. David Reagan



We presently live in the gap between the 69th and 70th weeks (sevens) of Daniel's vision in Daniel 9.

The 70th and final week (7 years) will begin with the Great Tribulation.

The Great Tribulation begins after the Church of Jesus Christ exits the earth at the Rapture.



and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:10

So... When is the Rapture going to happen?

- Jesus said, “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.” Matthew 24:42
- Jesus said, “Therefore, be on the alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’” Mark 13:35-37
- The Bible teaches that Jesus can come at any moment. This is called the doctrine of **imminence**.



5 Callings for followers of Jesus who anticipate the Rapture

“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as **you see the day drawing near.**”

Hebrews 10:19-25



Q: Why would the Lord inspire Apostle Paul to write about two separate major themes in the same few verses of this letter... **biblical standards for sexual morality AND Rapture of the Church?**

A: As we are witnessing in our generation, as we get further away from the former, we are getting closer to the latter.



Jesus said, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:4-14



Bylaws of First Melissa, updated February 2016

- We are committed to the home and family as set forth in Holy Scripture. We believe God has ordained and created marriage to exist between one man (born biologically male) and one woman (born biologically female), with absolute marital fidelity.
- The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ died for the Church and will return soon to receive the body of Christ unto Himself. After the promised Rapture of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Titus 2:13, John 14:3, Matthew 24:30-31, 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, Philippians 3:20-21, Mark 14:62) and the taking home spiritually of all born-again followers of Jesus Christ, the assets of this church may be transferred to ministries or charitable organizations seeking to proclaim the saving gospel of Jesus Christ with people of all races and nationalities.



Next week...

1 Thessalonians chapter 5



Lessons for Us... 1 Thessalonians Chapter 4

- People who have been changed by the grace of Jesus are called to live changed
- Changed people have different moral standards than the culture that does not know God
- As followers of Jesus, we are to live in constant anticipation of the Groom coming for His Bride
- This anticipation motivates believers to lives of holiness and obedience
- As followers of Jesus, we are called to share our stories of life change by lovingly and courageously telling the gospel story



If I know Jesus, why should I care about the Rapture?

- Are you sure you will be “caught up”? Are you sure you are a Christ-follower? Or, are you simply a fan of Jesus?
- Why would you not want to share the amazing gift of salvation that you have been given by Jesus?
- What will you do with the time you have left?
- What will this church do with the time it has left?

