

HELP IS ON THE WAY!

Recently a friend of mine asked, “Why do you think that we don’t talk much about the Second Coming of Jesus like we used to?” I think it’s because we’re so comfy here in the world as it is (that is, in the U.S. anyway). We don’t seem to think that we need Jesus to come back and fix it – at least we’ve pretty much lost touch with that need. As far as we can see (which is not very far), it isn’t all that broken. And, what is in disrepair, we’re sure we can fix it ourselves.

That we don’t emphasize Jesus’ Return might also be due to our weak view of *Him*. I mean, when you start reading what’s in the Bible about the Coming of the Lord, you’re hip deep in some straight talk about a very big God with a very big stick! It might make some people uncomfortable talking about God as *Ruler*, or *Judge*, or as the One Who does demolition in order to rebuild.

Yet another reason the Return of Jesus might be being downplayed these days is the rabid over-attention that the subject received in some earlier eras. When I say, ‘over-attention,’ I’m referring not only to a *volume* of teaching but also to a particular way of *viewing* eschatology (the biblical doctrine of the end times). Many, in my opinion, over-emphasize the *timing* of events and the “signs” leading up to His coming. Jesus Himself spoke of such signs (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21). But to make *the signs* the primary theme of our Blessed Hope, is to miss the real hope of His Coming.

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:6-11

This interaction between Jesus and the disciples captures the spirit of what I’m trying to say. His early followers (much like His later ones) were preoccupied with three things

...with **prophecy** (“*at this time...*”)

...with **personal advantage** (“... *restore the kingdom to Israel*”)

...with **profound experience** (“...*looking intently into the sky*”).

Jesus, on the other hand, was more concerned that they (we) be much more occupied with the *power* He gives us to be witnesses to lost people, and use that power until He does come.

Nevertheless, the Bible is absolutely full of prophecies, promises, whole chapters, and entire letters about the Return of the Lord. Someone counted 300 references to the Second Coming in the New Testament alone – one of every 30 verses! In this brief paper we’ll cite a sample of those passages, offer some humble interpretations, and hopefully bring you some encouragement along the way. Why? Because, **HELP IS ON THE WAY!**

If you're well versed in Second Coming doctrine, you might be a little surprised, if not disappointed, with the approach taken in this paper. It's anticipation, not curiosity which motivates my appreciation of this theme in Scripture. We won't be taking any current events and plugging them into Bible verses, a practice that you might call, "Newspaper Exegesis." I am not nearly as interested in **when** He chooses to return, as I am in **Who** will be returning, **what** His returning will entail, and **why** He's returning to begin with.

Recently, I brought to our church service a pretty needlepoint with a design of cut flowers. First, I showed the back side of it and explained that this is how much we currently perceive of Jesus, and how much we actually understand of His Return (its timing, implications, dynamic). We appreciate the bright colors, but frankly, it's a bit non-descript (if you know what I mean). It's more of a conglomeration of colorful thread than the work of art that we know (by faith) which is on the other side. That "other side" is what God sees and what He tells us about through His prophets. And, it's that "other side" that He will someday show to us when He turns it over, and we see what He sees (at least more of what He sees!).

Today we're living in anticipation of Him turning over His work of art, knowing that when He does, it will all become clear (clearer) to us. We live by faith now – faith that the beauty that we do see (albeit a bit jumbled...) will give way to amazing clarity and definition when Jesus comes.

*"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror.
Then we shall see face to face."*

Frankly, if you just *know Jesus* better and follow Him more closely after reading this simple paper, my hope will be fulfilled. The reason we call the final book of the Bible, "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Revelation 1:1) is because it's a book whose purpose it is to "*reveal*" Jesus, not *conceal* Him! It's a book about Jesus – a book showing us *the rest* of the Jesus that we might have missed when we read the other parts of Scripture. After reading Revelation and studies like this one, you should be able to testify to the fact that you *see Jesus better*! You might not be able to identify the antichrist, the great prostitute of Babylon, or know for sure the identities of the Two Witnesses of Revelation 11. But, if you know Jesus better, serve and love Him more, then be glad. You're *getting revelation*!

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While you're reading this paper on the Coming of the Lord, I strongly urge you to be reading the most significant Bible book on the topic: *Revelation*. Throughout this text I've placed questions

and exercises for each chapter of the book of *Revelation*. I encourage you to read the book and use these as an aid to doing your own investigation - with a goal of "Getting Revelation."

Getting Revelation

Revelation 1 – Notice the very first words of the book, "The revelation of Jesus Christ..." This is key to this book. Look in this chapter and throughout the book for references, descriptions, and praises of Jesus!

A SCRIPTURAL SURVEY OF THE SECOND COMING

Let's begin with a survey of what the Bible says about Jesus coming back. We'll make a few comments here and there throughout this section, but this will mostly just be an outline of some key passages all adding up to telling us with certainty that - HELP IS ON THE WAY!

HE'S COMING – Here are the TERMS (The language describing His Coming)

You'll find a variety of important terms in the New Testament for the Return of Jesus. Each describes in it's own way what it means for Him to come back to earth to set up His Kingdom.

His "coming" (Greek term: *parousia*)

- *John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*
- *1Cor. 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*
- *Acts 1:11 This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.*
- *1Ths. 4:15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.*
- *1 John 2:28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.*
- *2Pet. 1:16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

How sure are you that God kept His many promises and sent His Son Jesus to earth the first time? You can be sure that He'll keep His Word and return. If He came once, you can rest assured He'll come again, just as He said!

His "revelation" (Greek term: *apocalupsis*)

- *1Cor. 1:7* Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be **revealed**.
- *1Pet. 1:7* These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire —may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ **is revealed**.
- *1Pet. 1:13* Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is **revealed**.

This term, “apocalupsis” is the same as the name of the final book of the Bible: “Revelation.” It actually means to “uncover,” as in the *unveiling* of a fine work of art. It’s been covered while people gathered to see it. The artist then tears off the sheet as the spectators applaud and appreciate the masterpiece. In the same way, to us, Jesus is partially veiled, not entirely clear, in some ways an incomplete reflection of what He’s really like. But some day, *the rest of Him* will be revealed. We’ll see Him as He really is!

**If He came once, you can
rest assured He’ll come again,
just as He said!**

His "appearing" (Greek term: *epiphaneia*)

- *Titus 2:13* while we wait for the blessed hope -the glorious **appearing** of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,
- *2Tim. 1:10* but it has now been revealed through the **appearing** of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.
- *Hebrews 9:28* So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and **he will appear a second time...** to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him

The Greek term used here is the word from which we get our word, “epiphany.” It means a shining forth, a glorious manifestation. It tells us that when He comes, He will *shine forth* in all His glory and in all His power!

Getting Revelation

Revelation 2 – To each of the churches he makes a promise for “overcomers.” Take note of the 4 promises in this chapter.

His "Day"

- *1Ths. 5:2* for you know very well that **the day of the Lord** will come like a thief in the night.

- *John 12:48* There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last **day**.
- *Rom. 2:5* But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for **the day of God's wrath**, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.
- *2Tim. 1:12* That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for **that day**.
- *Jude 6* And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home -these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on **the great Day**.
- *Luke 17:24* For the Son of Man **in his day** will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other.

His day will be different from all other days. He's given man his day, and Satan his day. But there'll be a day when there are no more days to follow. Time will be no more, but not till God has had His day! That'll be *the Day (when help is on the way)*!

Getting Revelation

Revelation 3 – To each of the churches he makes a promise for “overcomers.” Take note of the 3 promises in this chapter.

HE'S COMING – Here's HOW (The manner of His Coming)

When you scan the Bible for references to the Lord's coming, you'll notice a number of descriptive elements to how He returns. While much of what is in store for us is yet mystery, there are a few things He's decided to make clear to us about the manner of His Return.

It will be sudden and unexpected

- *Matt. 24:39* ... **they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.**
- *Matt. 24:42* "Therefore keep watch, because **you do not know on what day your Lord will come...** So you also must be ready, because the **Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**
- *Matt. 24:50* The master of that servant will come on a day **when he does not expect him** and at an hour he is not aware of.
- *Matt. 25:13* "Therefore keep watch, because **you do not know the day or the hour.**
- *Rev. 16:15* "Behold, **I come like a thief!** Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

Contrary to the many attempts at date-setting, Jesus made it clear that the timing of His Return was not going to be able to be figured out, and that many will be caught unaware. The point? If you're not ready, get ready. And if you are ready, stay that way!

*His day will be different from all other days.
He's given man his day, and Satan his day.
But there'll be a day when there are
no more days to follow.*

Getting Revelation

Revelation 4 – Revelation is a book with the “throne” in constant view. Identify all the references to “throne(s)” in this chapter.

It will be visible and physical

- *Matt. 24:27 For as lightning that comes from the east is **visible** even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*
- *Acts 1:11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, **will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.**”*

Several (including the Jehovah's Witnesses) have predicted a now by-gone date for the return of the Lord. When He didn't come as promised, the excuse was made that He did indeed come, but without anyone noticing. Although the Rapture portion of His Return (more on that later) might very well be a more private and quiet event, when He comes to earth to establish His rule, it won't be something that can be kept secret. He's the King returning with fire in His eyes. And His coming down will be as visible as His going up!

**If you're not ready, get ready.
And if you are ready, stay that way!**

It will be full of splendor, power and glory

- *Matt. 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come **in his Father's glory** with his angels.*
- *Rev. 19:11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. **His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns.** He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.*

*Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.***

- *Luke 21:27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud **with power and great glory.***

He came the first time as defenseless baby in an obscure Jewish village barn. When He returns, it will be clear to the entire world, that His Maker has come! While His first advent was as a *Lamb*, His Return will be as a *Lion*. Two thousand years ago, it was for *Incarnation*. The Return will be a *Coronation* of the Eternal King of Kings!

Getting Revelation

Revelation 5 – Since Revelation emphasizes the “worthiness” of God and Christ, find and mark all the references to His “worth.”

It will be accompanied by saints

- *Jude 14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, **the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones***
- *Zech. 14:5 You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and **all the holy ones with him.***
- *1Ths. 3:13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus **comes with all his holy ones.***
- *1Ths. 4:14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.***
- *Col. 3:4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, **then you also will appear with him in glory.***

All those who've died or been "caught up with the Lord" in the Rapture will be part of His unimaginably huge entourage, accompanying Him in His victorious return to take over planet earth!

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it was for *Incarnation*.
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Getting Revelation

Revelation 6 – Find the verse which seems to indicate that there is a sovereign plan regarding martyrdom. What do you make of it?

It will be "Soon"

- *Rev. 3:11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*
- *Rev. 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*
- *Rev. 22:7 "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."*
- *Rev. 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."*

Soon to Him might not be soon to you. But as a day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day - stay alert, today just might be the day!

HE'S COMING – Here's WHY (The purpose of His Coming)

History is not really ours, it's *His-story*. Jesus' Coming will mark the end of human history as we now know it, and make clear to all what the goal of history has been all along. History is not circular or aimless. History is going somewhere. It's moving toward a goal. That goal is the perfect kingdom of God, His righteous rule throughout the universe, and our participation in it. Jesus' Return gives meaning to history! Without it, earth-life is like a ladder that leads to nowhere.

His Coming is the final victory over evil, the removal of all that's opposed to God and what's right. When Jesus comes, He will put an end to every impediment to the righteous rule of God. He will do away with everything that prevents us from being all that He's always meant for us to be. He will execute the final defeat of sin, Satan, sickness and suffering. It will mean the vindication of all those who've suffered for righteousness' sake and the reward of those who have persevered till the end.

When He comes, it will be...

Getting Revelation

Revelation 7 – Locate the worship that goes on in this chapter. Remember, they're the experts, being in the eternal state already. What do you learn from them?

To reveal His glory:

- *Col. 3:4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

- *2Ths. 1:10 on the day **he comes to be glorified** in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.*

The goal of goals is the glory of God. This is the clear message of the entire Bible. When Jesus comes, we'll see and participate in the glory of God as never before in human history. His glory (as the prophet says) will cover the earth as the water covers the sea. His splendor will be clear to all and be enjoyed by all.

To reward believers:

- *2Tim. 4:8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will **award to me on that day** —and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*
- *Matt. 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then **he will reward each person** according to what he has done.*
- *1Cor. 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. **At that time each will receive his praise from God.***
- *1Pet. 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, **you will receive the crown of glory** that will never fade away.*
- *Phil. 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, **will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.***

**Jesus' Return gives
meaning to history!
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To raise the dead in Christ:

- *1Cor. 15:22 For as in Adam all die, **so in Christ all will be made alive.** 23 But each in his own turn: "Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.*
- *1Ths. 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, **and the dead in Christ will rise first.***

Getting Revelation

Revelation 8 – Compare verses 3-5 with Revelation 5:8. Why do you think he would associate “prayers” with “incense” rising?

To judge the sinful:

- *Jude 14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to **judge everyone**, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."*
- *2Ths. 1:6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. **He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.** They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power*

To bind and destroy Satan:

- *Rev. 20:1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and **bound him** for a thousand years.*
- *Rev. 20:10 And the devil who deceived them, **was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur...** to be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

To judge the antichrist, false prophet, and their armies:

- *2Ths. 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will **overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.***
- *Rev. 19:19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. **The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword** that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.*

To bring peace to the earth:

- *Isa. 2:4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their **swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.***

Getting Revelation

Revelation 9 – How does the massive destruction by fire relate to Peter's understanding of the event of the last days? (2 Peter 3:7-9)

To deliver creation from the curse:

- *Rom. 8:19* The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that **the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay** and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

To bring relief to suffering saints:

- *2Ths. 1:7* **and give relief to you who are troubled**, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.
- *1Pet. 1:7* These have come so that your faith —of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire —**may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor** when Jesus Christ is revealed.

To restore all that was lost in the fall of man:

- *Acts 3:21* He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to **restore everything**, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

To complete His saving work:

- *Hebr. 9:28* so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but **to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him**.
- *1Pet. 1:5* who through faith are shielded by God's power **until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time**.

Salvation is a many-splendored thing.

- We have been saved from the **penalty** of sin (Justification).
- We are being saved from the **power** of sin (Sanctification).
- We will someday be saved from the **presence** of sin (Glorification).

It's that final stage for which we patiently wait. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Getting Revelation

Revelation 10 – Find the verse that says, “There will be no more delay!” Compare that with Psalm 40:17; 70:15; Hebrews 10:37; Isaiah 60:22. Take heart, there will be day with no more delay!

HE'S COMING – Here's what WE DO (Our attitude toward His Coming)

“When is He coming? Is it before or after the Great Tribulation? Who is the antichrist? Will he be from the U.S., the Middle East, or Europe? Will the Millennium literally be 1000 years long?”

While those are valid questions, maybe we should be asking more things like, “What does His coming have to do with *me*? How should *I* be living in light of His coming? If it's true that He is coming *tomorrow* - how should I think, talk, and act *today*?”

Jesus told us how to live in the light of His Return - “*Occupy till I come,*” (Luke 19:13). It's true that some people are so *occupied with occupying* that they have little interest in the actual Return of Jesus. They've got things they want to do, and would, if they had the choice, postpone His Coming in order to do them! On the other hand, many are so *occupied with His coming* that they do little or nothing to *occupy until He comes*. They spend all their time and energy studying their prophetic charts of the last days and have nothing left for living responsible last day lifestyles.

The three phases of all responsible Bible study are:

- Investigation (asking the question, What does the Bible say?)
- Interpretation (asking the question, What does it mean?)
- Integration (asking, What will I do about it?).

An enormous portion of the prophetic Scripture regarding the Coming of the Lord speaks to that final question. He's coming. What will we do about it? How should we think about it? How must we act on it?

Getting Revelation

Revelation 11 – God's reign includes both blasting (judging) and blessing. Can you find that concept in this chapter? Hint: It's alluded to during the 7th Trumpet.

It encourages us to eagerly and responsibly wait for Him

- *Phil. 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And **we eagerly await** a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ*
- *1Cor. 1:7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as **you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.** 8 He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- *2 Timothy 4:8 There is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord will award to me on that day - - and not only to me, but also to all who have **longed for his appearing.***

Notice the poignant terminology describing how we should be waiting for Him to come, “*eager... longing...*” Is that your present posture toward His arrival? Are you passionate about seeing His face and serving His Kingdom? Do you long for His appearing?

It encourages us to be good stewards of our gifts for Christ

- *Matt. 25:14* "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and **entrusted his property to them.**
- *Matt. 24:44* So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. 45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 **It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.**
- *1Pet. 4:7* The end of all things is near. Therefore ... Each one should **use whatever gift he has** received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

We each have an heavenly assignment here on earth. Let's be faithful to that assignment until He returns and gives us the "Well done!"

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that they do little or nothing
to *occupy until He comes.*
They spend all their time and energy
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It encourages us to abide in Christ

- *1 John 2:28* And now, dear children, **continue in him**, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.
- *Jude 21* **Keep yourselves in God's love** as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.
- *Rev. 3:11* I am coming soon. **Hold on to what you have**, so that no one will take your crown.

Getting Revelation

Revelation 12 – See if you can find at least 6 different titles and job descriptions for Satan in this chapter.

It encourages us to not worry

- *John 14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*

It encourages us to pray

- *1 Pet. 4:7 The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.*

Isn't that an interesting application of the Lord's Return? 'You don't have much time, so get your head together and your life in order SO THAT you can pray!'

It encourages us to refrain from judging others

- *1 Cor. 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.*

Getting Revelation

Revelation 13 – From this chapter, how do you see the antichrist as a spirit, a worldview, and a person?

It encourages us to be holy

- *1 Ths. 3:13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.*
- *1 Ths. 5:23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- *1 Tim. 6:14 ...to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
- *1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*

Do you get what John is saying in that last passage? When He's revealed for *Who He is*, we'll be revealed for *who we are in Him!* Paul says something similar in Romans 8:19...

"Creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed... and will be brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."

Our final blessed destiny is linked to the Return of Jesus as is the restoration of the physical planet earth. We'll come into our own at the same time as the rest of the created order – that time being the Day of the Lord!

The New Testament writers are emphatic about the immanent return of the Lord inspiring us to a greater passion for obedience and holiness. He's coming, so let's get ourselves cleaned up for the wedding! The wedding of the Lamb and His Bride (us!) is the only wedding in history where the bride doesn't know date. So she has to get ready, stay ready, and live ready. Having her hair in curlers, dressed in stained clothing going down the aisle just won't do.

Getting Revelation

Revelation 14 – What two names are written on the foreheads of the 144,000? Compare this with what you read in 13:16-18. What is the significance of this?

It encourages us to be patient and persevering in our present circumstances

- *Hebr. 10:36 **You need to persevere** so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay.*
- *James 5:7 **Be patient**, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, **be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.***
- *Revelation 14:12 **This calls for patient endurance** on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.*

Don't give up - He's right around the corner! Hang in there. HELP IS ON THE WAY!

**'You don't have much time,
so get your head together
and your life in order
SO THAT you can pray!'**

Have you watched a video tape of a sporting event because you weren't able to watch it live? I usually try to keep from knowing who has already won the game so that I can enjoy the drama as it unfolds. But if somehow I've discovered the final outcome, I'll watch the tape with a different attitude. I know who's won already! As I'm watching it, and my team seems to go into a slump, I don't so readily become frustrated or discouraged. I look for the point of the game when the tide will turn, when the direction of the momentum changes. I know it's going to, because I know who wins. I snuck a look at the back of the book (*the box scores in the Bible*). I know who wins! I can hold on and not get too down, while I eagerly await the Star of the team to come on the field and win it all!

WHAT DOES REVELATION MEAN (What is Apocalyptic)?

An unveiling...

We've already defined "apocalupsis" as the unveiling / the uncovering of Jesus. So the purpose of the Book of Revelation (*The Apocalypse*) is to *uncover Him*, not *cover Him*! We're supposed to get a *clearer* view of Him from the John's revelation of Jesus, not be more in the dark. If you shy away from this great book (as well as other apocalyptic sections of the Bible) because you can't understand it all, I hope you'll reconsider and just look for Jesus. He's "revealed" in the book. It's all about Him!

"... the purpose of all I have shown you is to tell about Jesus"
(Revelation 19:10 TLB)

I know who wins! I can hold on and not get too down,
while I eagerly await the Star of the team
to come on the field and win it all!

All the symbols...

Granted, Revelation and other apocalyptic literature are often intentionally ambiguous. It's full of symbols and enigmatic pictures. That's because symbols are one of the best ways to express the powerful and mysterious truths contained in these books. Symbols have the ability to describe the indescribable. Think about our country's national flag (a symbol). Just the thought of it probably says more than a dozen adjectives of what this country means to you.

It's my view that many of the things described in apocalyptic literature are not meant to be "photographs of objective facts." They're more like symbolic representations of unimaginable spiritual realities. When we get to heaven we might find that God doesn't literally sit on a throne, since He's an eternal spirit who neither sits nor stands. The picture of God seated on a throne is a symbolic way of saying that He's King and He's sovereign all by Himself!

Symbolism also has the ability to *conceal* precise details. There are some things we *should* know for certain, like the goal and outcome of history. But it seems that God isn't interested in us knowing exactly how it all unfolds. In other words, God uses this kind symbolic communication to tell us what He wants us to know, while at the same time keeping much of it a great mystery. With that in mind, be encouraged to look for clarity on the *big picture*, and leave the *small picture* details to God.

"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law."
(Deuteronomy 29:29)

Getting Revelation

Revelation 15 – God's justice and righteous judgment is a prominent theme throughout the book. Find in this chapter how that theme is rehearsed as a worship theme.

Humility is a very important key to interpreting the apocalyptic / prophetic literature of the Bible. Let's be diligent workmen to mine the truths God has left there for us to find, while constantly admitting that what we've actually "found" could possibly be more of an invention of our own than a gem left by the God. One of the great Apocalyptic preachers responded humbly to God when asked, "Will these bones live again?" He said, "Lord, You know!" (Ezekiel 37:3) I love those three simple words:

Lord...

You...

Know...

Because You're the Lord, You know. I really don't know the answer to your question, but one thing I do know is that *You know!*

So then, what is *clear* in these highly symbolic Scriptures? What do we *know*? What can we know *for sure*?

We know for sure that...

- *He's coming back to earth...*
- *He's the earth's only and rightful King of kings...*
- *He's taking back the planet and its inhabitants when and how it pleases Him...*
- *He's going to judge evil and reward righteousness...*
- *He's going to fulfill every promise, and every prediction of His final triumph...*

Of these things, we can be sure. Exactly how they look without the filter of symbolism we won't know until we see them first hand.

Let's be diligent workmen to mine the truths
God has left there for us to find,
while constantly admitting that
what we've actually "found"
could possibly be more of an
invention of our own than
a gem left by the God.

Getting Revelation

Revelation 16 – Instead of turning to God, it seems that many people will curse God during the last great tribulation period. Find three references to such in this chapter and pray for people that you know who need to know Him.

Four Views... ppt diagram???

There are four main views of the Bible's apocalyptic literature. They're usually known by these terms:

- *The Preterist view*
- *The Historicist view*
- *The Idealist view*
- *The Futurist view*

The **Preterist** view is that the book of Revelation is primarily about the first century church and its struggle with Rome. The tribulations that the book describes are all fulfilled in what the Roman emperors inflicted upon them. The seals, the trumpets, the vials of wrath all have to do with first century events, and are all fulfilled by Nero's (*The Beast*) persecution of the Christians and Titus' decimation of Jerusalem in AD 70. The book served its primary purpose in strengthening and encouraging the first-century church in its present trial.

The **Historicist** view is that Revelation is an inspired forecast of history, especially a broad outline of the history of the Western world. This view outlines the book in groups of centuries. Vision after vision, seal after seal are seen to have successive correspondence with the progress of history leading up to the final day of the Return of the Lord. The early chapters correspond with the first few centuries, and later chapters with later centuries, and so on.

The **Idealist** view claims that the book primarily portrays the spiritual conflict between the kingdoms of God and of Satan. It depicts the fight of faith in which we are presently engaged, and has little to do with any past or future reference to any specific person or event. It has more to do with principles than predictions and challenges Christians of every era to be overcomers.

The **Futurist** view posits that what you read in Revelation is essentially all about the last days leading up to the final conquest of the coming Lord. The book exclusively deals with the final hour of history just prior to the return of Jesus and gives a blow by blow account of how it all unfolds in that future time.

Getting Revelation

Revelation 17 – Why do you think that the world's anti-God system, especially in its final stages is depicted in this chapter as a "great prostitute"?

It seems to me that there is an element of truth in each of these views. None of them is exclusively correct. Each one is insufficient by itself. Together they form a composite of how we should view the book of Revelation; and give us a holistic concept of all of Apocalyptic literature. To me this is the genius of the Bible which is relevant to every age of history.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable (to every age and people)..."

There's no doubt that John (by the Holy Spirit) was addressing believers in his own day as the **Preterist** position holds. All Apocalyptic literature applies directly to the original recipients of the prophecies. But that can't exhaust the meaning of what is being prophesied. Revelation is written to seven very real first century churches in Turkey with needs, struggles, challenges, problems, and compromises. This amazing letter provided comfort, conviction, and clarity first of all *to them*. Of course God was aware of and concerned for their purity, their plight, and their need for

spiritual power. He sent them this incredible writing to give courage to the people in those churches, who were undergoing the severest trials and persecutions for their faith. But the Eternal God, in His infinite wisdom was authoring a book that would speak powerfully to Christians everywhere and at all times in their space-time situations.

But its impact doesn't stop there. The circumstances of the first century Christians serve as a *backdrop* for the universally and eternal relevant message of the book, which then goes on to pertain to the contemporary situations of every generation after them. You might want to take time to notice the repeated emphasis on the concept of "forever" in Revelation. It's not a just a book about the first century, the ensuing centuries, or the simply the final century. It's a book with an eternal perspective. It takes into account *their time*, *our time*, and someday – *no time!*

The *Historicist* View has its merits, primarily reminding us of God's providential involvement in every age, right up to its final scene. That being said, this view is, in my opinion, rather strained and subjective, especially as it is based primarily on a Western world timeline (the Protestant Reformation, the French Revolution, World War I being key events). It cites western civilization as its primary spectrum for the fulfillment of prophecy.

The *Idealist* (or Spiritual) view is helpful in saying that in the Apocalyptic visions and symbols we have vivid illustrations of spiritual principles and issues. Our personal and present warfare is greatly depicted in the chapters of Revelation.

"The great battle of the earth was to be the war between the forces of good and evil, between the forces of Christ and Antichrist. In John's day, the struggles of God's people with the tyranny and paganism of Rome, was symbolic of the universal struggle of Christians everywhere against the power of Satan, and the ultimate victory which Christ will bring to all those who persevere. He wrote Revelation to give us a picture of that struggle, and through prophetic visions, to reveal the victorious outcome of the last, and final battle." (Author unknown)

On the other hand, the view pretty much plays it safe and refuses to assign anything specific to the book's prophetic symbols. Revelation claims to be a book of prophecy, a letter from Jesus through John to tell the church about its last day future.

"... what is now and what will take place later."
(Revelation 1:19; 22:7, 10, 18, 19).

Getting Revelation

Revelation 18 – Locate the four references to Babylon as the "great city," and then find the references to her being abruptly destroyed (hint: look for the three times a very short period of time is mentioned that it will take to decimate Babylon).

The pure *Futurist* view is, in my opinion, too concrete, too sure that *this means that*, and *that means this* about the future of the world. It tends to be rather dogmatic in its interpretations of the visions of John and majors on questions like, "*Who's the antichrist? When will the Rapture be?*" It depends on chronological charting of final time events. Its proponents seem to have answers to more questions than God even encourages us to ask. The strength of the view is that Revelation,

though rooted in a space-time situation, *is* about the future - *the last day of the last days*. It is indeed a book of predictive prophecy. Though its symbols are enigmatic, they are clear enough for us to know some things for certain about the future.

"Revelation is a visual aid to the Christian who ponders the future and who wonders how the reverses and contradictions of the present life can possible eventuate anything but disappointment and disaster. It is God's panoramic answer to the believer's doubts and fears... a pictorial promise of victory."

(Author Unknown)

Dress Rehearsals...

The purpose of biblical prophecy is not so much to give a precise chart of the future, as it is to give a prophetic perspective of the present, and how we might prepare for the future. There's a fluidity about apocalyptic images. They certainly mean things, but keep in mind, the operative term is "things," not just one thing.

For instance, is the woman pictured in Revelation 12, Mary (the mother of Jesus), or Israel, or the last days people of God? My answer is, "Yes." And when she escapes from the dragon, is she representing the Jews escaping from Pharaoh, or the Jews from the Romans, or the church in Acts, or the church in the last days? Yes again. I think these are "dress rehearsals" for the final event. And when the prophet tells us what he sees, the church in each age is supposed to see something in their own time that at least parallels what was predicted to happen ultimately in the final hours of human history.

Revelation has past, present and future implications and applications. Antiochus Euphianes (2nd Century BC), the Roman emperors (the two centuries surrounding the life of Jesus), Adolf Hitler (the 20th Century) are all *forerunners* of the final Antichrist. They each gave to their generations a *preview* of the real thing to come. After seeing the aforementioned *mini-antichrists*, we are forewarned and more adequately prepared to identify and resist the *final last days bad guy*. John told us that there are "many antichrists," as well as a "spirit of antichrist" in the world today (1 John 2:18; 4:3)

In the same way, the signs surrounding the Return of the Lord seem to have shown up in some form throughout all of history to remind each generation to be watchful. In the production of any play you have "Dress Rehearsals" prior to opening night. The purpose of these is to get everyone ready for the real event. One of God's ways of speaking to each generation about its present and its future is to stage repeated dress rehearsals. "Behold (i.e. notice the signs, the dress rehearsals), I'm coming soon!"

Getting Revelation

Revelation 19 – Compare the preparation of the Bride in this chapter with what Jesus taught in Matthew 22:11-14.

Depth perception... **mt range pic???**

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. 1 Peter 1:10-12

Have you ever noticed that when looking at distant mountain peaks, it's difficult to assess the distance of the expanse between them? It's a depth perception problem. That is something like what the prophets experienced. They knew that what they saw was not just for them and their generation, but was also for a time and people beyond them. There are prophecies in the Old Testament (especially Isaiah) when they predicted the first advent of the Lord, and then without hardly inhaling, they tell of His second advent, as though these two epic visitations occur one right after the other. A depth perception problem... The prophets themselves "*searched intently and with greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing...*" and were still left without a clear concept of how these great predictions would unfold.

Though it's, as they say, "later than it's ever been before," and we're living so much closer to the very end of the end, we still can't expect that biblical prophecy is going to automatically open up to us like a manual with bullet points. We still have a problem with depth perception...

**The purpose of biblical prophecy
is not so much to give a precise chart
of the future, as it is to give a prophetic
perspective of the present,
and how we might prepare for the future.**

Some view prophetic Scripture as "history written in advance." While that might sound good, it's simple not accurate. History unfolds, one event consecutive to another. But prophecy and apocalyptic portions of the Bible don't at normally intend to be taken in a sequential way. John does say in Revelation, "Then I saw... Then I saw... Then I saw..." He most likely means that this is the order in which he saw the visions, not necessarily intending us to expect the visions themselves to be come to pass in that same order. Apocalyptic visions don't intend a consecutive or chronological interpretation. This happens and then this happens, and so on. Most of this part of the Bible is not chronological, but discursive.

Spiritual speculation...

The Book of Revelation was not meant to be a mind-twister puzzle for relaxed and well-fed Christians with time on their hands to engage in spiritual speculation. It was sent first of all to a passionate yet persecuted, oppressed and weary church which didn't know how they would survive. No doubt it gave them hope, courage, and patience, knowing that God would finally get His glory, and they would someday share in that glory. I urge us to emulate their passion, thus

availing ourselves of the resource that Revelation and like biblical material affords us. Let's take courage from their writings, not find permission to argue over details of eschatological chronology.

Getting Revelation

Revelation 20 – Find and mark the references to thrones, reigning, authority, and the books. How are these concepts related to each other in the context of this chapter?

WRESTLING WITH THE RAPTURE

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." (1 Corinthians 15:50-54)

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17)

According to Paul, the Rapture is the precursor to Jesus' Second Coming. It's the first stage of His return to earth. It's where Jesus will come part way here to take home His last day people along with providing glorified bodies for previously deceased saints.

Have you noticed that we've come this far in our discussion of the Second Coming with hardly a mention of the Rapture of the Church? The concept of the Rapture of the last day church is often given prominence when talking about the Return of the Lord. Many, when teaching on the Second Coming, primarily emphasize the timing of the Rapture. Is it *before*, *during*, or *after* The Great Tribulation period? Does the last day church escape that horrible time coming on the earth, leave in the middle of it, or go through it, and then be taken up by the Lord after it's over?

The Book of Revelation was not meant to be a mind-twister puzzle for relaxed and well-fed Christians with time on their hands to engage in spiritual speculation

Frankly, my take is that though the Bible clearly promises a “catching away” of Christians prior to Jesus coming back to earth, the Rapture itself (let alone the timing of it) is not the emphasis of Scripture regarding Jesus’ Second Coming. It could be said that the teaching about the Rapture is almost an *afterthought* by Paul. Though for many, it has become *the main event* in the scheme of things to happen in the final days, it’s not really given that kind of emphasis in the Bible. In fact, it appears in clear language only two times in the New Testament (see the passages above).

I believe that *our leaving* is not nearly as important as *His Coming*. While many would focus their attention on the *disappearing of the church*, I think the Bible’s focus is on the *appearing of Christ*. I think we find even *less* importance given to the issue of *when* the Rapture occurs in relation to the Tribulation period of the last days. The main event is when Jesus comes and sets up His Kingdom, not when He pulls one generation of His followers out of the earth in order to give them glorified bodies.

Nevertheless, I will outline the three prominent views of the timing of the Rapture, and what I consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of each. It’s up to you to decide for yourself which seems to be the most in keeping with Scripture.

Getting Revelation

Revelation 21 – Find and mark all of the “no mores” and the references to what is not going to be part of the eternal state for believers (hint: I found at least 10).

THE PRE-TRIBULATION CASE:

This view is that Jesus will come and take His last day Church out of the earth before the final Great Tribulation takes place.

(It's Strengths)

- It substantiates the "any moment" and "be ready" passages (Matthew 24:42-43, 25:13; Revelation 3:3)
- It provides a good explanation for Revelation 3:10 and 1 Thessalonians 1:10; promising a rescue from the coming day of wrath
- It correlates with the purpose of the "Great Tribulation" – that it is to test last days Israel (Isaiah 26:20-21; Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1; Mark 13:19-20, Revelation 6-18)

- It provides a tenable explanation for the identity of the "one who holds it back" i.e. the Holy Spirit in the Church (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7)
- It provides a good explanation of Jesus telling the disciples to “pray to escape from what is about to happen” (Luke 21:36)

(It's Weaknesses)

- It makes it very difficult to interpret the Olivet Discourse with its emphasis on last days suffering saints (Matthew 23; Mark 13; Luke 24)
- It makes it difficult to understand why Christians are even warned about the final days Antichrist if they aren't going to have to deal with him at all (Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2)
- It provides no strong reference to the Rapture in Revelation (Revelation 4:1)
- It requires what seems to be three resurrections instead of two (Revelation 20:4, 20:5, 20:13), if you count the Rapture as one of the resurrections
- Its dependence on the absence of the mention of "the church" in Revelation 4-19 is a weak argument
- There isn't a clear statement in the Bible that the Second Coming happens in two stages (Rapture and Return)

I believe that *our leaving* is not nearly as important as *His Coming*. While many would focus their attention on the *disappearing of the church*, I think the Bible's focus is on the *appearing of Christ*.

THE MID-TRIBULATION CASE:

This view is that the Great Tribulation will be broken into two sections, and that the Rapture will take place between them. The last day Church will endure the first half and escape the latter.

(It's Strengths)

- It helps answer the difficulties with the Olivet Discourse with its warning of future trial (“the beginning of birth pains”)
- It answers why the saints would be warned about the Antichrist, since they will be required to resist him
- It fulfills (to their satisfaction) the promise to escape wrath (Revelation 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:10), that is, if real “wrath” begins after the Rapture
- It explains why the mid-point of the Tribulation is given such prominence in the Bible (Daniel 7:25, 9:27, 12:7, 12:11; Revelation 12:14)

- It provides a couple of plausible references for the Rapture in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 11:3-15 or 14:14-16)
- It connects the "last trumpet" of Paul with the last trumpet of John (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 11:15)

(It's Weaknesses)

- It assumes there is no "wrath" manifested before the vials (Revelation 6:17)
- It requires (as does the Pre-Tribulation view) three resurrections
- It requires (as does the Pre-Tribulation view) a two-stage Second Coming

Getting Revelation

Revelation 22 – Compare this chapter (the last one in all the Bible) with the first few chapters of Scripture, especially Genesis 1:5; 1:26; 2:9; 2:10; 3:14. Ironic, isn't it?!

THE POST TRIBULATION VIEW:

This view is that the last day Church will experience the entire Great Tribulation period and be caught up to be with the Lord just prior to Him coming to earth to set up His Kingdom.

(It's Strengths)

- It provides the simplest interpretation of the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24) depicting believers enduring great trial in the last days
- It explains why Christians should know about the Antichrist since they'll have to resist him and endure his worst
- It provides the simplest explanation of the order of end times events and the rather subtle reference to the Rapture in the Bible
- It provides a good explanation for the phrase: "The Day of the Lord" (Revelation 16:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; John 6:39-40, 6:44, 6:54; Philippians 1:6, 2:16) i.e. that the Rapture and Return actually happen at once
- It provides an explanation for the volume of material on the Tribulation (Revelation 6-18; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; Daniel 7, 11) since believers will go through it all

(It's Weaknesses)

- It doesn't have a very good response to the promise to avoid the "hour of wrath" (Revelation 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:10)
- It doesn't have a good explanation for the imminent Return of the Lord passages, i.e. people could conceivably wait until the Great Tribulation begins to begin watching for the Lord to come
- It seems unfair that one historical segment of the Church would have to endure a time of "great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world... and never to be equaled again." (Matthew 24:21)
- The phrase "the Day of the Lord" could also refer to a whole scheme of events over a period of time, not requiring the Rapture and Return to be right next to each other chronologically

So, there you have it. As I see it, the timing of the Rapture of the last day Church is unclear. It doesn't seem to me that God intended for us to be dogmatic about it. There's a reason for that. Can you think of what it might be?

PREPARE!

...as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed... wait till the Lord comes... wait for his Son from heaven... wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ...

(1 Corinthians 1:7; 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Titus 2:13)

The term Paul uses in each of these passages is not a word which we would use for a patient sitting in a dentist's office *waiting* his turn to sit in the dreaded chair. It's not the same concept of a sick man dying of an incurable disease – just *waiting* with resignation till the end. The term involves eagerness, longing, expectancy. After all, it is – “the blessed hope!”

Have you seen a very close basketball game in its final minutes where one team seems to begin to watch the clock rather than play the game – resulting in a loss? Make sure your focus is not primarily on the clock of work events and your personal interpretation of last days prophecies.

“Keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come”
(Matthew 24:42)

Not, “watch the clock!” But...

- Watch your life!
- Watch for Him!
- Watch out for one another!

The following is a list of recommended commentaries and books on the Return of the Lord:

The Blessed Hope, George Eldon Ladd; Eerdmans Publishing, 1956

Daniel and Revelation – Riddles or Realities, Berkley Mickelsen; Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984

Interpreting Revelation, Merrill Tenney; Eerdmans Publishing, 1957

The Meaning of the Millennium, Robert Clouse; IVP, 1977

The Rapture, Gleason Archer; Zondervan, 1984

Revelation, George Eldon Ladd; Eerdmans Publishing, 1972

The Revelation, John Walvoord; Moody Press, 1966

Revelation – Four Views - A Commentary, Steve Gregg; Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997

What Must Soon Take Place, Gary Matsdorf; Straight Street Publishing, 1996

