

## The Pre-Wrath First Resurrection, The Dead in Christ Shall Rise First...

1Th. 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

1Th. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

1Th. 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep.

1Th. 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: **and the dead in Christ shall rise first:**

1Th. 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1Th. 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1Th. 4:15 NIV 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.

1Th. 4:16 NIV 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.**

The verses above are the primary scriptures that people think of when they discuss the "rapture" of the church, especially verse 14:17. However, in discussing the subject with most people it seems that they brush right over the resurrection of the dead saints at the time of the rapture, before the living saints. Everyone seems to envision Jesus taking the living believers off of the earth seven years prior to his return and then the rest of the dead being raised at another special resurrection at the end of the tribulation period. This viewpoint is not scriptural. The dead saints must go first according to Paul's writing to the Thessalonians.

You may ask, what difference does it make when the dead go up? Well, it makes a lot of difference if we want find out when the rapture takes place. If we can find out when the dead go up, then we know that the living will immediately follow,

and that will be the time of the rapture of the living that everyone is looking for and desiring to partake in!

So, our question is, when will the righteous dead be raised? If we can answer that question we can pinpoint the timing of the rapture in the prophetic scenario. Luckily, we don't have to guess. The scriptures tell us when the resurrection of the righteous dead will happen, and also the unrighteous dead.

### **The Dead Will Be Raised at "The Last Day"**

John 6:39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

John 6:40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 11:24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." (Lazarus, one of the righteous dead will go up in the rapture at the beginning of the "Last Day.")

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. (The wicked will also rise on the "Last Day" but at the very end of the 1000 years. More on that later.)

The resurrection of the dead will take place at "the last day." Some may think that "the last day" is just a euphemism or a metaphor meaning "the end of time." For those of us who believe in the 7000 year theory of God's program for mankind it means much, much more than that. It also meant much more than that to the early church fathers, such as Barnabas.

Paul had a partner in preaching the gospel named Barnabas. He also wrote a book known as "the Epistle of Barnabas." This book was read in the early churches and used as a tool to assist in understanding the scriptures. Although this book is not a part of the bible, it is useful because it takes us back to the early days of the church and shows us what was being taught about prophecy while the apostles were still alive. Barnabas no doubt received his teaching from Paul who received it directly from the Lord by divine revelation. (Note: non biblical quotes will appear in blue)

Gen. 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

**Barnabas 23:1-6** "Furthermore, it is written concerning the Sabbath, in the Ten Commandments, which God spoke on Mount Sinai to Moses, face to face; Sanctify the Sabbath of the Lord with pure hands and a clean heart. And elsewhere he said; If your children shall keep my Sabbaths, then will I put my mercy upon them. And even in the beginning of creation he makes mention of the Sabbath. And God made in six days the works of his hands; and he finished them on the seventh day, and he rested on the seventh day, and he sanctified it. Consider, my children, what that signifies. He finished them in six days. The meaning of it is this; that in six thousand years the Lord God will bring all things to an end. For with him one day is as a thousand years; as he himself testifies, saying, Behold this day shall be as a thousand years. Therefore, children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, shall all things be accomplished. And what is it that he said, and he rested the seventh day: he means this; that when his Son shall come, and abolish the season of the Wicked One, and judge the ungodly; and shall change the sun and the moon, and the stars; then he shall gloriously rest in that seventh day."

Barnabas goes on to say in his book, that following the one thousand year heavenly Sabbath, the eighth day, the new world will begin, a time without time.

Throughout the bible, God gives us clues that the present world as we know it, will last for seven thousand years. The last one thousand years will be the heavenly Sabbath day, one thousand years of peace under the rule of Jesus Christ, followed by the eighth day, the new creation.

**Psalms 90:4 KJV** For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

**2 Peter 3:2-4 & 8-9** I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

Notice the clue that Peter gives us, that a day is to the Lord like a thousand years. These scoffers will forget that we are counting time on the Roman calendar, which is about 30 years ahead of God's calendar as best we can calculate. God's calendar for human events began on the day and the hour that

he created Adam. We don't know exactly when that was, but we can come pretty close to calculating when 4000 years were completed. More about that later. Note: many thought that the 6000 years would be completed in about the year 2000, but they forgot that the Roman calendar is at least 30 years in error. The year 2000 on the Roman calendar was only about 1,970 years from the end of the first 4000 years, which occurred at the ascension of Jesus Christ. More on that later.

**Gen. 2:17** But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

**Gen. 5:5** Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

The bible states that Adam lived 930 years, but it also states that Adam would die on the day he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and Eve along with him. Did God make a mistake, or did he mean something else.

The book of Jubilees also states that one day in heaven is like a thousand years. (Jubilees is an ancient Jewish rabbinical history book)

**Jubilees 4:28-29** And Adam died, and he lacked seventy years from one thousand years, for a thousand years are like one day in the testimony of heaven. And therefore it was written concerning the tree of knowledge: "On the day which you eat of it you will die." And for this reason he did not complete the years of this day, for in it he died.

God also gives us another clue in the bible that the world will go on as normal for six thousand years when he states that the punishment of the Jews for rejecting Christ will last for two thousand years.

**Hosea 5:14-15** "For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah. I will tear them to pieces and go away; I will carry them off, with no one to rescue them. Then **I will go back to my place** until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me."

The preceding verses are referring to God's dealings with the Jews after they rejected Christ. Notice in Hosea 5:15 he says that he will go back to his place. This happened when Christ ascended to sit at the right hand of the father after being raised from the dead, he went back to his place, heaven, in approximately 30 AD according to our best estimates.

**Mark 16:19** After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.

He will not return until the time comes when the Jews admit their guilt in rejecting their Messiah, and seek Christ.

Hosea 6:1 & 2 "Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. **After two days, he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.**"

This may require some thinking here. We note in verse 2 above that a countdown started when Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. The countdown is this; that Christ will revive and restore Israel 2000 years (2 days) after he left and ascended to heaven. We know it wasn't 48 hours after he left (two 24 hour days) or none of us living today would have been born before the return of Christ. So this verse must be referring to two heavenly days of one thousand years each. Notice also that it says that on the third day they will live in his presence. This is a reference to the Millennium, when Christ will reign on Earth.

The thinking part comes here; If the 7000 year theory is correct, then when Jesus ascended 4000 years must have been completed. Why? Because if you add 2000 more years to 4000 you get 6000. If the theory is correct then based on our best estimates of time from the day Jesus ascended into heaven, allowing 30 years of error in our calendar, (+ or – 15) then the 6000 years will be completed sometime between 2015 and 2045.

So, all we have to do is wait and watch and we will see if this theory is true or not. If it is not true, that is no reflection on God being true to his word. We have simply misinterpreted the scriptures. If it is true many alive today will live until the rapture takes place and be a part of the generation that never sees death.

**1Cor. 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.**

**1Cor. 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,**

When our earthly body falls off and is replaced with a new body, the old one is technically dead, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God in Heaven.

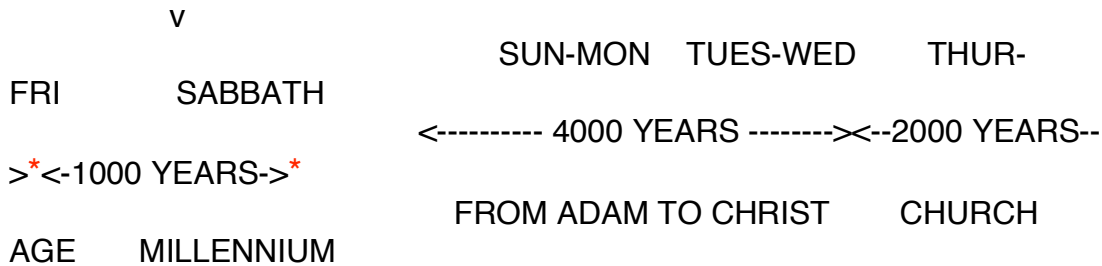
God cannot lie, and he will keep every jot and tittle, (similar to every comma and apostrophe) of his word.

**Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;**

Matt. 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

### The Heavenly Week

#### The Last Day



The red asterisks in the diagram above signify where the two general resurrections mentioned in the bible are said to take place. One at the beginning of the last day (the rapture) and one at the end of the last day. (The resurrection before the "last judgment," sometimes called the great white throne judgment or the judgment of the wicked.) We can be sure that is quite correct because we have more scripture from the book of Revelation that gives us more details. The diagram below simplifies the two resurrections as far as timing goes.

Rapture - 1000 years - 2nd

Resurrection

Revelation 20:6 "Blessed and holy are those who have part in **the first resurrection**. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years."

Rev. 20:5 (**The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.**) (2nd resurrection)

Revelation states clearly that there will be 1000 years between the two resurrections, the first being the resurrection of the righteous commonly called the rapture and the second being the resurrection of the wicked and of the righteous who died after the first resurrection took place. Take a look at the chart again and you will see clearly where the two resurrections take place in the prophetic scenario.

Now, at last, if you have read this far, we are getting back to the rapture. We see from scripture that there are only two general resurrections left to occur, at least that is all that we are told about. If there are any more than these two they are pure speculation because there is no scriptural evidence, at least none that I have ever seen to indicate a third general resurrection seven years before the

return of Christ. There have been individual resurrections in the scriptures, one being Lazarus, but other than Jesus Christ, who received his new spiritual body after his resurrection, they have all died again. Jesus is the only one alive who currently has his immortal body.

So, if there is another general (meaning large and comprehensive) resurrection other than the two mentioned in Revelation, there is nothing about it in the bible. If there is another one, Paul didn't know about it. In the verse below he was only speaking about the believers resurrection, not the last judgment. If you read 1st Corinthians chapter fifteen you will see that clearly.

**1 Cor. 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.**

So, now comes the question? If there are only two general resurrections left to happen (and the rapture has to be a general one, not a special one because it includes all of the dead saints) when will it happen? By that I do not mean in what year will it happen, but when will it happen in the sequence of other prophetic events that we have not yet discussed? We know where the resurrections happen now in relation to the millennium, but how about in relation to the tribulation period? We will explore that next.

### **The Possibilities**

The problem with it (the rapture) happening too early is that it leaves a lot of people out of experiencing the millennium, because after it happens no one can be raised from the dead for 1000 years. So, it has to include as many people as possible because that is God's will. It has to include all to whom God has promised participation in the millennium.

First of all it has to include all of the dead believers from Adam to the last person to die before it takes place. Why? Because the old testament saints such as Abraham and David were given promises by God that can only be fulfilled in the millennium. So, when the old testament saints go up, we go up.

Who else needs to be included? Well, of course Lazarus, the Apostles and all of the dead new testament saints. So, when they go up, we go up. Lastly it has to include both those called the "Tribulation Saints," and it has to include the "Two Witnesses." Then, after that, all of the living believers go up, and that would be us if we live that long and make it that far.

**Rev. 6:9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.**

You may ask “why do those called the “Tribulation Saints” have to go up in the rapture? Can’t they have their own special resurrection at the end of the tribulation? Well, yes they could if God wanted it that way, but that won’t be necessary because the verses pertaining to the “Tribulation Saints” occurs in Revelation chapters six and seven and the first resurrection doesn’t occur until chapter eleven. So, there is no need for a special resurrection just for them. They are going up in the first resurrection anyway, so no special one is necessary.

Rev. 7:9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

Rev. 7:10 And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

Rev. 7:13 Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

Rev. 7:14 I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

If you read Revelation chapters six and seven you will see that they are in heaven, a great multitude of them, before the end of the millennium, so they have to go up at the rapture. Chapters six and seven are showing the history of the martyred saints from beginning to end, so it is not implying here that the rapture took place earlier than that. It is simply showing that they (the martyred saints) will be a part of it when it happens and will be in heaven praising God immediately afterwards.

It will be clear to you when you see what God is doing in chapter seven. Let’s look at it.

Rev. 7:1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

Rev. 7:2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

Rev. 7:3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

Rev. 7:4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

In chapter seven God sends angels to seal 144,000 Israelites. Why is he sealing them? He is sealing them so that they cannot be killed during the rest of the time that remains before the physical return of Jesus Christ to earth. (His 2nd coming, not the rapture)

Luke 13:35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

God is here sealing the people who will live to greet him when he returns to fulfill the scripture, "you will not see me again until you say; "blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." The sealed 144,000 Israelites will live through "the wrath of God" and greet Jesus at his 2nd coming when he returns to Israel, when his feet touch the mount of olives. They will fulfill prophecy.

So, are there any scriptures that tell us when all of the saints and the prophets go up. Yes, there is. We don't have to guess.

Anyone who misses the rapture and gets saved and dies before the return of Jesus Christ will not live again until the 1000 years are completed. They will not participate in the millennium.

That brings us to the "Two Witnesses." They are the two men who have never died, Enoch and Elijah. They must die and be raised up with the rest of the old testament prophets at the rapture so that they can participate in the "Marriage supper of the Lamb" and in the millennium." This was the nearly unanimous position of the early church fathers.

Revelation 11:3-6 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the Earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the Earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Neither Enoch or Elijah has ever died, and they do not belong to the sign of the fig tree generation, the people who have been promised that some of them will live to see the coming of the Lord. Therefore, they both must return and die at the hand of the Antichrist before the first resurrection can take place. The early church writers were all in agreement that the Two Witnesses would be Enoch

and Elijah.

### **The Apocalypse of Peter**

Verily I say unto you, when the twigs have sprouted forth in the last days, then shall false christs arise and arouse false hopes, saying: I am the Christ, that has now come into the world. But, this deceiver is not the Christ. And those who reject him he shall slay with the sword, and there shall be many martyrs. Enoch and Elijah shall be sent to teach them that this is the Deceiver, which must come into the world, and do signs and wonders to deceive. And therefore, those who die by his hand shall be martyrs, and shall be reckoned among the good and righteous martyrs who have pleased God in their life."

### **The Gospel of Bartholomew (Greek Text)**

"And Satan said: Look carefully at who it is that is coming down, for it is Elijah, or Enoch, or one of the prophets that this man seems to be. But he answered and said: Not yet are the six thousand years accomplished, for the sum of the number is in my hands."

### **The Gospel of Nicodemus 20:1-4**

"Then the Lord after his resurrection, delivered the saints to Michael the archangel; and he led them into paradise. And two very ancient men met them and were asked by the saints, who are you, who have not been with us in Sheol, and have had your bodies placed in Paradise? One of them answering said, I am Enoch, who was translated by the word of God: and this man who is with me, is Elijah the Tishbite, who was translated in a fiery chariot. Here we have been, and have not tasted death, but we are now about to return at the coming of Antichrist, being armed with divine signs and miracles, to engage with him in battle, and to be slain by him at Jerusalem, and to be taken up alive again into the clouds, after three days and a half."

### **The Apocalypse Of Elijah**

Paraphrased From The Apocalypse of Elijah

Then when you hear that there is security in Jerusalem, tear your garments O priests of the land, because the Son of Perdition will soon come. In those days the Lawless One will appear in the holy places. He will say to the sun, "fall," and it will fall. he will say, "shine," and it will do it. He will say, "darken," and it will do it. He will say to the moon, "become bloody," and it will do it. He will go forth with them from the sky. he will walk upon the sea and the rivers as upon dry land. He will cause the lame to walk, he will cause the deaf to hear, he will cause the dumb to speak. he will cause the blind to see, the lepers he will cleanse. The ill he will heal, the demons he will cast out. He will multiply his signs and his wonders in the presence of everyone. He will do the works which Christ did, except for the raising of the dead alone. In this you will know that he is the Son of Lawlessness, because he is unable to give life.

When Enoch and Elijah hear that the shameless one has revealed himself in the Holy Places they will come down and fight with him saying, are you indeed not ashamed? You have been hostile to those who belong to heaven. You have acted against those belonging to the Earth. You have been hostile to the thrones. You have acted against the angels. You are always a stranger. You have fallen from heaven like the morning stars. You were changed and your nature became dark. But you are not ashamed when you stand firmly against God. You are a devil.

The Shameless One will hear and he will be angry, and he will fight with them in the market place of the great city. He will spend seven days fighting with them and they will spend three and one half days in the market place dead, while all the people see them.

Then they will rise up and they will scold him saying, "O Shameless One, O Son of Lawlessness, Are you indeed not ashamed of yourself since you are leading astray the people of God? Do you not know that we live in the Lord. On that day they will shout up to heaven as they shine, and all the world will see them.

The Son of Lawlessness will persecute the saints and the priests, but Christ will pity those who are his own. He will send from heaven his angels, and the sound will move heaven and Earth when they give praise and glorify. Now those upon whose forehead the name of Christ is written and upon whose hand is the seal, both the small and the great, will be taken up upon their wings **and lifted up before his wrath.** Then Gabriel and Uriel will lead them into the Holy Land. They will eat from the tree of life. They will wear white garments, they will not thirst. The angels will watch over them and the Son of Lawlessness will not be able to prevail over them.

Then sinners will groan upon the Earth saying, what have you done to us O Son of Lawlessness, saying I am the Christ when you are a devil. You are unable to save yourself, so how can you save us? Woe to us because we listened to you.

In the time when these documents were written (100-300 AD) the common belief was that the Two Witnesses who would withstand the Antichrist and later be slain by him, would be Enoch and Elijah. As you can see in the Apocalypse of Elijah, the rest of the living saints go up a short time after they go up. There is a time gap because all of the dead have to go up before the living. God could do it instantly if he wanted to, but he won't because he is letting the angels help. In much the same way he could preach the gospel instantly to everyone in the world, but he doesn't because he wants us to help and earn rewards for ourselves for all eternity.

God will send the Two Witnesses before he pours out his wrath on the world, in order to be faithful to his own word. We have seen in the testimony of the ancients that Enoch and Elijah die when the first 6000 years are completed. Then they lie in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 ½ days and after that are raised from the dead. Let's see how the testimony of the ancients compares with Revelation.

Revelation 11:7-12 Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. "Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three and half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the Earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the Earth." But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.' And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

When they are raised the first resurrection or the rapture begins. They go up first, having been the last to die. The last shall be first, and the first last. After the dead are raised going all the way back to Abel, then the living (the saved) will begin to go up, starting with the oldest and ending with the youngest.

**Matt. 20:16** "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

When will it happen? When will the two witnesses be killed? As it says above, "when they have finished their testimony." What is their testimony and their job? I believe it is to call the world to repentance by initiating six of the seven trumpet judgments. God through the angels initiates the seventh. Their job is to give the world one last chance to repent before the rapture takes place. This is why the church is so confused on prophecy, because the traditional viewpoint has been that the seven seals and the seven trumpets are a part of God's wrath. Nothing could be further from the truth. The seven seals are the unveiling of the Antichrist, which God permits Satan to do when his time is short. The trumpet judgments are an act of mercy, not wrath. The preaching and miracles of the two witnesses are the epitome of the mercy of God, doing everything possible to bring men to repentance before his wrath is poured out so they can escape from it.

Once the two witnesses have finished their mission, God allows them to be killed. 3 ½ days later they are raised from the dead when the rapture begins to take place. It appears that it will not be an instantaneous thing that all of the dead are raised at the same moment. When it is our turn to go up we will be changed "in the twinkling of an eye" but we will not all be changed at exactly the same time.

The rapture will be a process. The two witnesses first, then the rest of the dead, then the living. God will do this so that even when we see the two witnesses lying in the streets of Jerusalem we will not be able to calculate the day or hour of the rapture. Some documents indicate that the entire process may take up to 40 days, so don't bother trying to figure out what moment you are going up, even if you see the two witnesses laying in the streets of Jerusalem.

Now, back to Revelation. When the two witnesses have finished calling down six of the trumpet judgments and are dead, The seventh angel will sound his trumpet and they will go up to heaven in a cloud.

Rev. 10:7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, **the mystery of God** should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

1Cor. 15:51 **Behold, I shew you a mystery**; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

1Cor. 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised** incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1Cor. 15:53-54 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

The great mystery of God spoken of here is the resurrection of the dead. We will see that clearly in verse 18.

Matt. 24:31 **And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.**

Rev. 11:15 **And the seventh angel sounded**; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Rev. 11:18 The nations were angry; **and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth.**”

It is the time for rewarding the old testament prophets, the new testament saints,

all who have ever revered God's name, and both the small and the great.

While some of your reading this may think, boy, if this is all true, things really look bleak. Maybe I just ought to pray to die before all of these things come to pass, I don't think I can take living through the tribulation until revelation chapter 11. Take heart, don't give up! You don't have to live through the "wrath" part of the "Great Tribulation."

At this point in time God has not even begun to pour out his wrath. Oh, there has been a little trouble from Satan and his crowd persecuting the saints, but God hasn't even begun to come on the scene yet. That doesn't happen until after the rapture. Notice in the verse above, AFTER the saints are in heaven the time comes for destroying those who are destroying the earth.

1Th. 5:9 **For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,**

Rev. 11:18 **And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come,....**

Rev. 15:7 **And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.**

Rev. 16:1 **And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.**

Rev. 16:17 **And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.**

When we go up, the wrath begins to come down. God will not pour out his wrath on his own blood bought people who have obtained salvation through Jesus Christ. Where a lot of people make a mistake in interpreting prophecy is that they confuse the acts of Satan and his Antichrist with the wrath of God. Satan has been tormenting the saved with every weapon at his disposal since he deceived Adam and Eve. We won't get away from that until we go up, but we will go up before God steps in and pours out His wrath on the world. It just won't happen in the 4th chapter of Revelation as some have taught, it happens during the 11th chapter, when the 7th angel sounds his trumpet.

After the rapture, anyone who is saved and dies will not live again until the thousand years are finished. They remain disembodied spirits for 1000 years. That is why God waits until the last second for the rapture, not because he wants to torture us with Satan's attacks, but because he wants to include as many people as possible in the millennium. Let's see what Peter says.

2Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

God wants to give everyone the opportunity to be saved, and many will be by the preaching of the Two Witnesses, before the rapture takes place. God is Love, and wants no one to experience his wrath unless even after the most convincing proof by preaching and miracles, they absolutely refuse to repent and reject him.

When the Antichrist and those in agreement with him have killed the Two Witnesses, the world will celebrate, thinking that they have won a great victory. Three and one half days later the first resurrection will occur and take the Two Witnesses and the saints out of the world. Then God will pour out his wrath upon the Earth. During this time of wrath being poured out, the church, the bride of Christ, will be in heaven celebrating the marriage supper of the Lamb. They will return with him one year later and watch him destroy the armies of the world at Armageddon.

(Mat 24:33 NIV) Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.

### **What About the Wrath Mentioned in Revelation Chapter six**

Rev. 6:16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

Rev. 6:17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

This is a good and legitimate question. The answer is that the Seven Seals are both actual events that affect 1/4 of the earth and overview of an overview of the entire tribulation period. The events outlined in the Seven Seals are repeated three times, first in the Seven Seals affecting as previously stated 1/4 of the earth. Then when the Seven Trumpets are initiated by the Two Witnesses the events are said to affect 1/3 of the earth's population. When the seven vials are poured out (God's Wrath) they affect 2/3 of the earth. Each judgment is more severe than the previous one, but only the third is categorized as God's wrath. The first set is Satan's wrath, which God permits, the second set is the Two Witnesses giving the world one last opportunity to repent and make the rapture, the third set is God's wrath after the rapture. So, the wrath mentioned in chapter six is simply looking forward to the time of the outpouring of the seven vials. For any unsaved person smart enough to recognize what is happening during the time of chapter six, they need to repent and get ready for the rapture. They still have a little time left to do so.

Zeph. 2:1 Gather together, gather together, O shameful nation,

Zeph. 2:2 before the appointed time arrives and that day sweeps on like chaff,

before the fierce anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the day of the LORD'S wrath comes upon you.

Zeph. 2:3 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD'S anger.

Prov. 22:3 A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

Prov. 27:12 A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.

Some may think that if we live into the beginning of the tribulation period that we have to go out and taunt the Antichrist and his henchmen until they chop off our heads. That is not what the scriptures say to do. Paul escaped those who wanted to kill him by being lowered out of a house in a basket. Peter was rescued from prison by angels. Other apostles were ordered to shake the dust off of their feet and go to another town when people rejected the gospel. Of course we should always be ready to give testimony to our faith, but we don't have to go out looking for trouble, as Proverbs instructs us in the verses above. We are promised in Luke 21:32 that some who are living when the signs of the end are taking place will not die before the return of Christ. Why shouldn't you be one of them?

### **Conclusion**

The teaching that the saints would go through part of the tribulation and be persecuted by Antichrist, and then the first resurrection would take place has been around since the beginning of Christianity. The teaching that the first resurrection will occur seven years before the return of Christ and the Church will never see or suffer the wrath of Satan through his imitation Christ has only been around since the 1800's. As for me, I'm siding with the early church fathers until proven otherwise by scripture.

Here is another way of looking at it. If one is prepared to fight against the devil if necessary but it never happens, then great! Rewards will be earned just for the effort of preparing mentally to do so. But, if one fails to prepare for the possibility that hard times may come before the return of Christ, and that we are just going to be raptured out of our Beamers and McMansions while we party like it's 1999, he or she may be sadly disappointed. It's better to prepare for something that may not happen than to fail to prepare for something that has a high probability of happening. If we mentally prepare for hard times and they don't come, we will still earn rewards just for watching for Christ's return and being ready like the wise virgins. God commands us to pray that we might escape his wrath.

Luke 21:36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all

that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

Case in Point: Times are already worse in the USA right now in 2009 than many thought it would ever get before the rapture. We in the evangelical world have preached that “perilous times would come” before the Lord’s return, but now that the beginning of the perilous times is here, some of us seem shocked. We think the rapture should have taken place already. Believe me, it can and will get much worse than it is now before the first resurrection.

Zeph. 2:3 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. **Seek righteousness, seek humility;** perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD’S anger.

Some advice: Seek righteousness, seek humility, get out of debt, be thankful to have the necessities of life and count anything beyond that as a special blessing, study the word of God continuously, and meet for fellowship and prayer often with other believers. By doing these things you will be preparing for the things that are to come, and if the rapture happens seven years before the return of Christ, Wonderful! Amen! Praise God!

Rev. 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**