

14 - What is the Rapture 1 Thess 4:13-18

The last time we looked at the first resurrection of Revelation 20 and verses 4-6, but we could not finish the subject. John tells us that the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished (verse 5). We have determined that the first resurrection is a part of the resurrection of the just. John further tells us that the first resurrection and the resurrection of the rest of the dead (for they lived not again until the 1000 years were finished, vs 5) are separated from each other by 1000 years.

The Bible teaches that the just (those whose heart is circumcised, Deut 30:6; or, who are born again, Jn 3:3, for these terms are synonymous, and have saving faith) shall be resurrected and shall enjoy an eternity with the Christ, the son of David-the son of God. This was the promise from the very beginning, when Jehovah promised that the seed of the woman would destroy Satan and redeem his people, Gen 3, verses 15 and 21. Job understood this and exclaimed, *For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me,* Job 19:25-27. Paul tells us that Abraham was willing to offer up his son Isaac because God had told him that in him was the Savior-King to come, therefore Isaac, Abraham reasoned, would have to be resurrected, Heb 11:17-19. David speaks of the wicked being destroyed and the righteous inheriting the land, and that, forever in Psalm 37. David knew that *God will redeem my soul, that is both Christ and his, from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me,* Ps 49:15. Paul knew and wrote to the Thessalonians that *the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* Let us examine this Scripture and ask the question: what does it mean to be caught up together...to meet the Lord in the air?

Now let us reason together for a moment. When Christ comes again, there will be Christians alive at that time. There also will be multitudes that have died in Christ. Those who are alive shall be transfigured, as Jesus was (Matt 17:1,2). As Paul taught in 1 Cor 15:51-54, ⁵¹*Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, that is, die, but we shall all be changed,* 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.* ⁵³*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* ⁵⁴*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 word translated *changed* is “metamorphoo,” from which we get our English word “metamorphosis.” It means to change the form, to transform, to transfigure. Paul tells us what will happen when the Lord returns in Phil 3:20 and 21, *For we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.* The three disciples got a glimpse of that on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Therefore, when the Lord Jesus, the Christ, returns the second time, the dead in Christ shall be resurrected and the living believers shall be transformed with incorruptible and immortal bodies. These two groups shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, as Paul in 1 Thess 4:16 and 17 tells

us, 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:* 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.

These seemingly simple, clear statements have caused great disruption in the church! Some have called this the Rapture! What is the Rapture? Where does that term come from? Is the term Biblical? To answer this we must go back to Jerome, who lived from 347-420 AD and translated the Scriptures into Latin. Latin became the “theological language” up to and through the reformation of the 16th century. Jerome translated the Greek verb *harpazesometha* in 1 Thess 4:17, which is the 1st person plural, future passive indicative of *harpazo*, with the Latin verb *rapiemur* from which we get the word Rapture. The KJV translates this word in 1 Thess 4:17 by the English words *shall be caught up*. But the Latin word Rapture describing the catching up together of the resurrected and transfigured saints has stuck in some churches. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who shall catch up his people. John 6:40 - *And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day*. The Lord told his disciples in Jn 14:3, *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you (by catching you up) unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*.

This word, translated *shall be caught up*, is used 13 times in the N.T. and is translated take by force, Matt 11:12; catcheth away, Matt 13:19; take by force, Jn 6:15; catcheth, Jn 10:12; pluck out, Jn 10:28 and again in 10:29; caught away, Acts 8:39; take by force, Acts 23:10; caught up, 2 Cor 12:2 and 2 Cor 12:4; again caught up in, 1 Thess 4:17; pulling out, Jude 1:23; caught up, Rev 12:5. This verb is in the passive voice. Verbs in the active voice show the subject acting; verbs in the passive voice show something else acting upon the subject. You see this in the additions –take by force, catch away, pluck out, catcheth up, pulling out. This shows that this is the Lord’s doing!

From this we must conclude that the Rapture is a Biblical teaching. If one would prefer an English word, we could use the word “Translation,” for they shall be translated from earth to meet the Lord in the air! I have heard many Christians say, “I don’t believe in the Rapture. The word Rapture isn’t even in the Bible!” But do they believe in 1 Thess 4:17? The Lord Jesus will return one day, and when he comes, he will raise those who have died believing in him and will transform living Christians. These both, then, will be *caught up*, Raptured, translated, if you will, *to meet the Lord in the air*. If one does not believe this, he does not believe this plain statement in 1 Thess 4:17. I suppose most of these Christians, who object to the term Rapture, are saying that they do not believe in the timing of the Rapture. They do not believe in a Premillennial, Pre-trib rapture! But they must believe that the resurrected dead and the changed living will be translated or transported to meet the Lord in the air. Therefore, they must believe in the Rapture, if they believe the Bible is the Word of God.

Christ is the *first fruits* of the resurrection of the just, 1 Cor 15:20 and 23. We saw last time that the word *first* here is first in order or importance, not in time. All that are Christ’s, including those who are transfigured or transformed, shall participate in the resurrection of the just. Included in the resurrection of the just are Enoch and Elijah (transformed and translated or Raptured), and Moses, (evidently resurrected) (Matt 16:28 – 17:1-5, Mk 9:1-7: Lk 9:27-36), even though they lived prior to the resurrection of Christ, the firstfruits.

The Scriptures describe two phases of Christ's Second Coming, one at the beginning of Daniel's Seventieth Week and one at the close. They describe, first, a Coming of Christ **for** or **in behalf of** his people as here in 1 Thess 4 and also in 1 Cor 15:51 and 52. Again notice that in both of these passages Christ comes **for** those who *sleep in Jesus*, **for** those who are *dead in Christ*. The wicked are nowhere to be found here. Also notice that the pre-trib position looks for Christ to return first, this is our hope, while the post-trib position looks for the Antichrist to come before Christ.

Let us read again 1 Thess 4:13-18. 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.* Those who are asleep are those believers who have died. ¹⁴ *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.* Their bodies are in the grave; their souls are brought by Christ! 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 precede them which are asleep.* 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:* Their souls will be reunited with their bodies and resurrected. 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.* ¹⁸ *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

1 Cor 15:52, *the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* Here is the resurrection and transformation.

Secondly, other passages speak of Christ coming **with** his saints. When *the day of the LORD cometh*, the LORD *will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle*, Zech 14:1,2. *Then the LORD shall go forth against those nations to battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives*, (verses 3,4), just as the angels told the disciples, Act 1:11,12. And then Zechariah exhorts in verse 5 – *And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and **the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.*** Not the souls of them, but the saints, themselves, in their resurrected bodies. And then Zechariah tells us in verse 9, *And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one LORD.* John tells us in Rev 20 the events which shall follow. Notice also 1 Thess 3:13, where Paul exhorts them to *abound in love one to another, and to all men, to the end he may stablish their hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.* Rev 19:14, *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.* Jude 14,15 - *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

Please notice also that in the 1 Thess 4 passage Christ comes to reunite the souls of departed believers with their bodies and to transform living believers, that is, **for** his people. This is in contradistinction with the Zechariah and other passages which speak of Christ coming **with** his saints to destroy his enemies and deliver his people.

Page.27

Again notice, the Scriptures teach regarding the one Second Coming that it is represented as having two phases, one when everyday life is normal and one when there is distress on every hand. *Please turn to*

Luke 17:26-30. ²⁶ And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. ²⁷ They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. ²⁸ Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; ²⁹ But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. ³⁰ Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. This teaches us that we should be ready for the return of the Lord Jesus, for we know not the day or the hour when he shall return.

So Christians should be watching for the Lord can come at any moment to receive his people. This surely challenges us to live every day for Christ. We should make the most of our lives in doing the things that we would want to do, if Christ is coming very soon. Our chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. We glorify him when we love him with all our heart, when we study and consult his word at all times, when we seek his face in all that we do, when we are the light and salt of the earth. We look for the first phase of his coming, when we shall be changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air!

But then turning to Luke 21:24-28 we see that there is a time of trouble, when Christ returns, called in Jer 30:7 Jacob's trouble. See Rev chapters 6-19. Luke 21, ²⁴ And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Now these times are still in progress, where the Gentiles dominate Jerusalem, which is also a time when the Gentiles are presented with the Gospel, Rom 11:25. ²⁵ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; ²⁶ Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. ²⁷ And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory, this time to deliver and restore Israel. ²⁸ And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

The nation of Israel has been a stiff necked people from the very beginning. Moses told them, *For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death,* Deut 31:27? Isaiah told them they would reject the Messiah, Is 53:1-3, and indeed they did. Zech 11:12 prophesied that he would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver and Judas betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver, Matt 26:15. When Pilate wanted to let him go, the Jews cried out, *Let him be crucified. Let his blood be upon us and upon our children,* Matt 27:22,25. Because of this Zechariah prophesied in chapter 11:4-6, *4 Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter, referring to the followers of Christ; 5 Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not. 6 For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbours hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.*

In their unbelief the Jews will make a covenant with the Antichrist, who will break that covenant and persecute them violently, Dan 9:26,27; Matt 24:15. Rev. chapters 6-19 speaks of this tribulation period. However, the Lord will not cast them off forever. Rom 11:7b-29 and following speaks of national Israel's *Page.27* apostasy and salvation.

Now, In order for the saints to participate with Christ in inflicting judgment upon his enemies and inherit the promised, covenanted, everlasting, Theocratic Kingdom they must have participated in the resurrection of the just. Notice Daniel 7 and especially verse 21. ²¹ *I beheld, and the same horn (the Antichrist) made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;* ²² *Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.*

The Second Coming of Christ will not simply be one moment of time, just as the First Coming was not in one moment of time. The First Coming lasted 33 years and included many acts! Among them are his birth, his conversing with the doctors in the temple at 12 years of age, his ministry beginning at 30 years of age, his death, resurrection and ascension to heaven. His Second Coming will include many acts, his coming for and with his saints, his rule over the nations of the earth, etc. This second coming will last for all eternity for he will not leave the earth once he returns. We will speak of the perpetuity of the earth in a future sermon, but you might consider in the meantime Romans 8:19-23. Just as the First Coming had many acts, so too the Second Coming will have many acts.

The Lord's people from the beginning knew of the resurrection of the dead and the blessedness to follow, at least the Bible-believers knew it. As Job testified long ago, ²⁵ *For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:* ²⁶ *And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:* ²⁷ *Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.*

The Lord Jesus told Martha, ²⁵ *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:* ²⁶ *And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in 1 Thess 4:13-17. ¹³ *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that is, Paul wanted them to know that their dear departed loved ones were not forgotten, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope, that is, unbelievers who have no sure hope, but Christians have a blessed hope, which is the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, at his Second Advent, Titus 2:13. The key that opens eternity is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here, dear friends, is the Christian's blessed hope. Among the many promises made to Abraham was that he would inherit the land in the resurrection, Heb 11:16-19. This hope was the anchor of his soul, sure and steadfast, and was based on the fact that Jesus entered into the presence of God as his and our forerunner, Heb 6:13-20. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him, that is, the spirits of just men made perfect to be reunited with their risen bodies. 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, or precede, them which are asleep. 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: 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. Paul here enlightens them to the fact that those who have died in Christ will not be forgotten. They will be raised from the dead, and those living believers will be changed and both*

Page.27

will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air.

1 Corinthians 15:51, *Behold, I show you a mystery* supplements 1 Thess 4:13, *But I would not have you to be ignorant*. As we have seen, it is not the resurrection that the Thessalonians were ignorant of, neither was this the question of the Corinthians. In 1 Cor 15, the *mystery* revealed is the transformation of the living believers and dead saints. Paul reveals this mystery in verses 51- 55.

⁵⁰*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.* ⁵¹*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,* ⁵²*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* ⁵³*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* ⁵⁴*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.* ⁵⁵*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

Even today, the return of Jesus and the resurrection and eternal life is not in serious theological dispute. Who is ignorant that being a Christian gives one the promise of eternal life? But everyone argues about the rapture or the translation, and particularly, the timing of it. Yes, those who have died in Christ will rise and living believers will be changed and be caught up or translated or raptured when Christ returns. And there will be more resurrected after this, as Rev 20 shows.

Although 1 Cor 15, which also mentions those who sleep, who shall be raised, and the living saints, who shall be transformed, is the most commonly mentioned parallel passage, 1 Thess 4 more strongly parallels John 14:1-3, with several key events given in the same order.

Thessalonians	~ John
vs 13 that ye sorrow not	~ vs 1 Let not your heart be troubled
vs 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again	~ vs 1 ye believe in God, believe also in me
vs 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord	~ vs 2 if it were not so, I would have told you
vs 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven	~ vs 3 I will come again
vs 17 caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air	~ vs 3 and receive you unto myself
vs 17 and so shall we ever be with the Lord.	~ vs 3 that where I am, there ye may be also.

Other transformations, resurrections, and translations in the Bible. 1. On *an high mountain Jesus was transfigured and there appeared with him Moses and Elijah*, Matt 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-12, Lk 9:28-36. The disciples saw Moses, who apparently has his resurrected body, and Elijah, who was taken up *by a whirlwind into heaven* (2nd Kings 2:10,11) with Christ on that mount. 2. Enoch was translated or raptured. Paul wrote to the Hebrews, *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God*, 11:5. 3. Elijah was also translated in the sight of Elisha. 2 Kings 2:11, *And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.* 4. Jesus was translated to heaven in the sight of his disciples, Acts 1:11. 5. The Apostle Paul was *caught up to the third heaven*, 2 Cor 12:2,4. 5. The two witnesses will be caught up, Rev 11:12, *And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies*

Page.27

beheld them. 6. This is the same expression as is in Rev 4:1, which many have interpreted of the translation at *the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.*

The pre-millennial coming of Christ with its concurrent resurrection and transformation and translation of saints is well documented in the Church. Church historians agree that for the first three centuries pre-millennium theology was not only the predominate belief, but was almost the exclusive belief.

In an article by John Jefferson Davis entitled Postmillennial Eschatology and its Implications for Business, Ethics and Practice, he states: "It is commonly stated that the postmillennial outlook came into prominence through the writings of the Anglican scholar Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), but prior to the publication of his influential Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament in 1703, this approach to prophetic interpretation had been advanced by Puritan writers such as Thomas Brightman, William Gouge, John Cotton, and John Owen in the seventeenth century."

Interestingly Dr. Whitby, who was no friend of premillennialism, attests to the early church pre-millennial belief. G. N. H. Peters writes: Dr. Whitby (*Treatise on Tradition*) gives us the following often-quoted statement: "The doctrine of the Millennium, or the reign of saints on earth for a thousand years, is now rejected by all Roman Catholics, and by the greatest part of Protestants; and yet it passed among *the best Christians, for two hundred and fifty years, for a tradition apostolical*; and, as such, is delivered by *many Fathers* of the second and third century, who speak of it as the tradition *of our Lord and His apostles, and of all the ancients* who lived before them; who tell us *the very words* in which it was delivered, *the Scriptures* which were then so interpreted; and say *that it was held by all Christians that were exactly orthodox.*" It was received not only in the Eastern parts of the Church, by Papias (in Phrygia), Justin (in Palestine), but by Irenaeus (in Gaul), Nepos (in Egypt), Apollinaris, Methodius (in the West and south), Cyprian, Victorinus (in Germany), by Tertullian (in Africa), Lactantius (in Italy), and Severus, and the Council of Nicaea" (about A.D. 323). Even in his *Treatise on the Millennium*, in which he endeavors to set aside the ancient faith by his substitution of "a new hypothesis," he acknowledges, according to Justin and Irenaeus, that (ch. 1, p. 61) there were three sorts of men: (1) *The Heretics*, denying the resurrection of the flesh and the Kingdom of Christ on the earth. (3) *The believers*, who consented with the just, and yet endeavored to allegorize and turn into metaphor all those Scriptures produced for a proper reign of Christ, and who had sentiments *rather agreeing* with those heretics who denied, than those *exactly orthodox who maintained, this reign of Christ on earth.*"

The pre-millennial - pre-tribulational return of Christ was not developed, however, in the early church, although there were some elements discussed that are necessary to the doctrine. Notice:

The Shepherd of Hermas (95-150) In a vision the Shepherd meets a virgin, which in former visions, he knew to be the church. She asked him whether anything crossed his path. He responded, I was met by a beast of such a size that it could destroy peoples, but through the power of the Lord and His great mercy I escaped from it. (now notice this statement) She told him, *You have escaped from great tribulation* on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt in the presence of such a beast. She told him to Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If then ye prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it.

Ephraem of Nisibis (306-373) *Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and*

Page.27

prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that He may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms the world? Believe you me, dearest brothers, because the coming of the Lord is nigh,

believe you me, because the end of the world is at hand, believe me, because it is the very last time... "Woe to those who desire to see the Day of the Lord!...Because all saints and the Elect of the Lord are gathered together before the tribulation which is to about to come and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins.

And then **Dr. John Gill**, 1697-1771, a premillennialist, who was one of the most brilliant scholars of his day. This Calvinist Baptist theologian wrote a full commentary set on the Bible in 1748. In this commentary he made a statement in his notes on 1 Thessalonians 4 that supported a time difference between the rapture of the saints and the coming of Christ to earth. He said:

....here (that is in the air) Christ will stop, and will be visible to all, and as easily discerned by all, good and bad, as the body of the sun at noon-day; as yet He will not descend on earth, because it is not fit to receive Him; but when that and its works are burnt up, and it is purged and purified by fire, and become a new earth, He'll descend upon it, and dwell with his saints in it: and this suggests another reason why He'll stay in the air, and His saints shall meet Him there, and whom He'll take up with Him into the third heaven, till the general conflagration and burning of the world is over, and to preserve them from it...and the tabernacle of God shall be with men.

5. Morgan Edwards (1742-1795), the Founder of Brown University, published *Millennium or Last-Novelties* in 1788 in Philadelphia. The book was written in 1744. Edwards was a prominent Baptist Leader in his day. When he came to America he was recommended to a pastoral role by the famous John Gill. He founded the first Baptist College in the colonies. This college later became known as Brown University, a well known Ivy League University of our times. Edwards taught that Christ would return for his church saints 3.5 years before he returned to establish the Kingdom of Christ on earth, the 1000 year reign of Christ. He specifically said: *The distance between the first and second resurrection will be somewhat more than a thousand years. I say, somewhat more; because the dead saints will be raised, and the living changed at Christ's " appearing in the air" (1 Thes. iv, 17); and this will be about three years and a half before the millennium, as we shall see hereafter: but will he and they abide in the air all that time? No: they will ascend to paradise, or to some one of those many "mansions in the father's house of God" (John xiv: 2), and to disappear during the foresaid period of time. The design of this retreat and disappearing will be to judge the risen and changed saints; for "now the time is come that judgment must begin," and that will be at the house of God" (1 Pet. iv. 17): to this refers that part of my text, "and I saw thrones; and judgment was given," viz. 'the saints were judged, and their rewards specified; of which, mark hereafter. Knowing all this, the devil will follow to accuse the brethren to the judge; and will continue at it day and night in hope of preventing their acquaintance: their pleas against him will be those borrowed from the " blood of the lamb, and the word of their testimony:" by these they Will prevail in judgment; and their accuser will be hurled down to the earth by the strong arm of Michael; and with him will come, that notable voice; "Wo unto the inhabits of the earth for the devil is come down among you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time;" viz. three years and a half, as before (Rev. xii. 7-11). Add to the above, that between the end of the, millennium and the second resurrection the devil is to be let loose, and Gog and Magog's army to be destroyed, which will require a*
Page.27
considerable time, tho' John calls it "a little season." (Rev. xx. 3.)...

Another event previous to the Millennium will be the appearing of the son of man in the clouds,

coming to raise the dead saints and change the living, and to catch them up to himself, and then withdrawing with them, and observed before, This event will come to pass when Antichrist be arrived at Jerusalem in his conquest of the world; and about three years and a half before his killing the witnesses, and assumption of godhead. The signs of Christ's appearing in the clouds, will be extraordinary "wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes and famines," &c. (Matth. Xxiv. 6, -8.) I say extraordinary; for otherwise they would be no signs at all: because such things had been before, and have been since the wars,

Another event prior to the Millennium is the binding of Satan and shutting him up in the abyss for a thousand years (Rev. xx. 1, 2, 3.). An event this long foreseen and dreaded by the devils (Matth viii. 29.). Poor work do the Antimillenarians or spiritualizing Millenarians (who are much the same) make of this matter: They say that the devil was bound when Christ came in the flesh; because (surfeit) oracles were silenced, and possessions checked: but if the Devil has not been loose these thousand years past, and for seven hundred and forty –two years besides, he never was loose in his life...Is it not more like truth to say, that the devil has been loose, is loose, and will be loose, till the Millennium begins?" However, the wicked during that millennium cannot say, as they do now, the devil tempted us...

The last event, and the event that will usher in the millennium, will be, the coming of Christ from paradise to earth, with all the saints he had taken up thither (about three years and a half before to justify, against the accuser of the brethren; and to fettle their future business and rewards, "the time is come that "thou should give rewards to thy servant the Prophets, and the saints, &c... Millions and millions of saints will have been on earth from the days of the first Adam, to the coming of the second Adam. All these will Christ bring with him. The place where they will alight is the "mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east." Zech. Xiv, 4... "And now behold the son of David, Sitting on the throne of his father! Behold the prophecy concerning Jerusalem fulfilled. "The Lord is there!" Behold the happy millennium begun! O my God, let me be there, if it were only to be servant of servants to my lord the king!

You can see these quotes and others put forth by Thomas Ice, showing the pre-trib doctrine of the church. Notice these were all witten before the time of Margaret MacDonald and John Darby, who are often mentioned by anti pre-trib theologians, as the originators of this doctrine. As important and blessed as these doctrines are, what doth it profit us, if we should win the eschatological argument and loose our own souls. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved! Amen