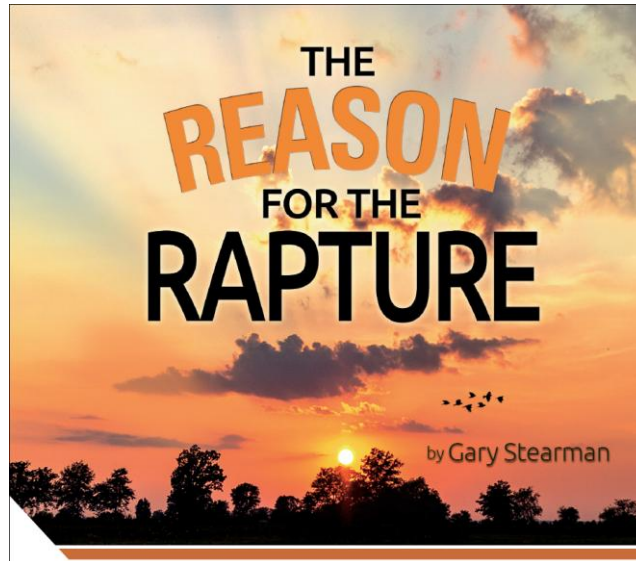


[The Reason for the Rapture](#)

By Gary Stearman June 16, 2020



A Special Note from the Ministry of Rock of Offence

This is a local copy of the original study - provided in the event the online version becomes inaccessible. It is reproduced under the "Fair Use" provision found under the disclaimer below.

On a few occasions, we find either a commentary or Bible study from an outside ministry that is just too important to ignore. The following study entitled; "The Reason for the Rapture" by Gary Stearman - sheds light on this important future event and addresses popular doctrinal misconceptions that lead Christian astray in their understanding of the Bible. Gary takes the reader through Scripture and church history to answer the all important question as to why the Rapture of the Church must take place.

Due to the importance of this subject, we wanted to make his research available, while giving full credit to the author. The original article on the Prophecy Watchers website can be accessed by clicking on the title heading above.

Fair Use Disclaimer

Due to the non-profit research and educational nature of the Rock of Offence website, we qualify under Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107 of the “fair use” clause for copyrighted materials. For this reason, any copyrighted work on this website is provided under the “fair use” provision without profit or payment for non-profit research, educational and discussion purposes only.

Providing this information should not necessarily be interpreted as our complete agreement with the theology, eschatology or political views of Gary Stearman or the ministry of Prophecy Watchers and its staff. It should also be understood that they may not necessarily agree with all the teachings found on our website.

Each day brings us closer to the day of resurrection ... the rapture of the Church. Certainly, there is nothing new about this, except for the accumulation of critical indicators. Mystery Babylon is poised to rise again, national Israel becomes daily more resolute and the Middle East is positioning itself along the lines of biblical prophecy. Russia and Iran (old Persia) are at the forefront of agitation. Most especially, the world is increasingly characterized by raging apostasy. Our reason for excitement is much greater than in past generations.

Since the days of the Apostles, Christians have watched for the return of the Lord with great expectancy. Paul even wrote to the Thessalonians, warning them against misguided agitators, who were spreading false information that God’s judgment (the Tribulation) had already begun! Essentially, these foolish “authorities” were throwing cold water on the greatest hope given to the Church.

And this was around AD 51! It would be well over ten years before Paul finished and circulated his complete teaching about the life and destiny of the Body of Christ, the Church. We should never forget that from the very beginning of the Church Age, believers have been frustrated, confused and puzzled about the order of prophetic events.

It is the business of Satan and his minions to sow the seeds of confusion. Furthermore, there are many “church authorities,” who present themselves as eschatological experts, and are quite bombastic about naming particular dates or windows of time for the rapture.

In the past, the subject of the rapture has waned almost to the level of being forgotten for a little while. Then, for a variety of reasons, interest in it rises again. Occasionally, it escalates to the point that it becomes a vital issue, with accompanying emotion and vitriolic disagreement. At each peak,

several competing camps weigh in upon the matter, bombarding each other with proof texts and theoretical challenges.

We seem to have reached such a peak again, when many have established prophetic proofs, measured by a number of standards, which we shall discuss later in this article. Something we often recall is the year 1988, when a variety of “proofs” were published. This was the year that brought us the ubiquitous little white booklet (3.2 million copies), with its distinctive red-letter title, offering “*88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988.*”

This particular year also happened to be a year of great excitement among Christians. About two decades before, in 1967, Israel had won a war that allowed them to reclaim the Temple Mount, if only briefly. Then, in 1973, fighting against astronomical odds, Israel had won the “*Yom Kippur*” war. To prophetic observers, it seemed that Israel was favored by the Lord, and poised to take charge and reclaim the land grant that God promised Abraham. The mechanism of this process is clearly described by the Old Testament prophets.

In 1988, excitement rose to fever pitch. It had been forty years since Israel’s statehood in 1948 – forty years, the number of testing! Many of the faithful expected the Lord’s return in that year ... soon!

ARE WE THERE?

And here, a fine distinction must be made by those who expect the any-moment return of the Lord. There is a big difference between “soon” and “imminent.” The former means that something will come within the lifetime of the believer, sooner rather than later. But the Bible speaks of Christ’s return for the Church as happening imminently – at any moment – without the necessity of any event coming to pass between the present time and His coming.

In the middle of the first century, the Apostle Paul taught his early followers that the Lord might return at any moment, perhaps in the next few seconds. No prophecy needed to be fulfilled before this coming. This is referred to as the doctrine of imminency. For example, he writes in the *present tense* as he refers to faith of the believers in Thessalonica, assuring them:

“9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; 10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (I Th. 1:9,10).

The verb tense that Paul uses here intends the assurance of the continuous present, as spoken in modern English: “Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.” In other words, he wants those then alive to be watching for the rapture, which he presents as imminent. Paul uses such language repeatedly. This is demonstrated again and again. Here is another quote that comes a little later in the same letter:

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” (I Th. 2:19).

Here, Christ’s coming for the Church (the rapture) is a promise, which those *then alive* would take personally, as applying directly to them. Paul never spoke of the rapture as an event in the far future, but as a distinct and real possibility that might occur within the lifetime of any believer who read his letters.

SOON?

Returning to the year 1988 and the word “soon,” most of us can clearly recall that around this time preachers around the world began to proclaim, “Jesus is coming soon!” Certainly, they also believed that He might come imminently. But, soon? That implied an arrival within the next few years. Certainly, there was nothing wrong with their level of expectation. Given world events and the prophetic truths of the end times such excitement was – and still is – perfectly justifiable.

(Incidentally, this current year has witnessed the appearance of another little white booklet with a red-letter title: **“17 REASONS Why the Rapture Will Be on September 22nd, 2017.”** This date happens to fall on the second day of Rosh HaShanah, at the beginning of the Jewish New Year, 5778).

But to say that He is coming soon is far different from saying that His coming is imminent. Why were they making this proclamation? Clearly, they had picked up on clues that linked developments in Israel with the teachings of the prophets. Then and now, prophesied events in the Land of the Bible are developing on a daily basis.

The Middle East is a boiling pot of conflict, and the nations at the center of the action are all mentioned in prophecy. Iran (Persia), Iraq (old Babylon), Kuwait, Saudi Arabia (Sheba and Dedan), Syria (Damascus), Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia and others are all prominently mentioned in Scripture. And they are all falling under the control of the master plan that has long been the dream of the Islamic Brotherhood, that is, the destruction of Israel.

Most of all, Russia is moving southwest, to Crimea and Ukraine. Moreover, governments throughout the region have been contacted by this great power to the north. Russia has offered them “aid” as it wraps its tentacles around their oil wealth and strategic locations. Of course, that “aid” includes military pacts and armaments that will fuel the great wars predicted by several Old Testament prophets.

Will the Church go through these wars? It may or may not see their opening phases, but will most likely not see their full advance; their most extreme horror is reserved for the Apocalypse, when the church will be absent from this Earth. With believers’ global influence gone, secular powers can be brought to their fullness. All of this is perfectly in keeping with the idea that the Church might be caught away at any moment.

FORTY, THE NUMBER OF TESTING

The 1988 rapture theory offered many hopeful scenarios – mathematical, calendrical or Scriptural – that made the rapture a sure thing in that year. But at their core, each of these systems were driven by the fact that modern Israel, founded on May 14th, 1948, had arrived at its fortieth birthday. Israel, God’s timepiece, had gone through its modern “wilderness march,” and would now arrive at the promised Land, meaning that it was highly probable that the Church would be taken out of the way so that the events of the end times could come to culmination. Scriptures like the following were referenced:

“After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise” (Num. 14:34).

All the mathematics and biblical proofs for the 1988 rapture were driven by this simple Scriptural truth ... and they were wrong. But there is nothing wrong with being watchful. In fact it is encouraged. In Paul's own reassuring words:

"4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:4-9).

The rapture discussion has been hotly argued for over a century now. It began in earnest in the 1870s, when the land of Israel began to be repopulated with Jews. The revivals and missionary movements of that time brought the First Zionist Congress of 1897. Foreseeing the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, Jews and Christians worked together. As Israel returned to the Land, the rapture began to loom large as a real possibility.

The idea of a pretribulation rapture began to be taught in earnest. Others (preterists) rose to say that it would be impossible, because the Tribulation has already taken place ... long ago, in the first century. Still others (posttribulationists) taught that yes, the Tribulation lies ahead, but the Church is scheduled to pass through it, enduring its rigors to the end ... its entire seven years. Others (midtribulationists) say that no, the Church will only go through the first three-and-a-half years of this horrific period, not the violent wracking tortures of the second half. And the discussion will no doubt continue, with varying degrees of passion.

Following the 1988 disappointment, a new group (pre-wrath) arose to say that the Church would experience everything but the last year or two of the Tribulation ... missing only God's full wrath, which they reckon to be limited to that short time.

Why is there such disagreement upon a subject that seems so clearly laid out?

Paul writes, *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Th. 5:9)*. The *"salvation"* mentioned here is not the initial receiving of Christ by the believer, but the act of being removed from the earth before the Tribulation. Still, there is a great misunderstanding of the rapture. And His wrath begins with the opening of the first seal.

At this point, we're going to ask a question that's not often discussed.

WHY IS THERE A RAPTURE AT ALL?

Why has God planned a removal of the Church from the Earth? If the Lord is coming back to set up His Kingdom (which He certainly is), why doesn't He simply return, resurrect the righteous dead and proceed with it from that point? Why would He bring the righteous – both living and dead – upward into the air at the rapture, when all He would have to do is resurrect believers at His Second Coming?

This raises still another question. At the Second Coming, who will serve at His throne as His earthly representatives? Those steeped in *"supersessionism"* – that is, replacement theology – say it will be the Church, which has superseded Israel.

In that case, what happens to the twelve tribes of Israel, and all the prophecy that speaks of their priesthood, rising to service again in the end times? And what are we to do with the Antichrist's temple, mentioned by Daniel, Jesus and Paul? It must be administered by an Israelite priesthood, not the Church. The evil one is able to convince the Jews that He is their Messiah.

Where would Christians fit in this scheme?

Answer:

They would not fit at all.

Do the passages that speak of the rapture (I Thessalonians, Chapter 4) also speak of Jesus establishing His throne at the Second Coming? They do not. Actually, they speak of a coming judgment, coming just after the rapture. But why is there a rapture?

1. Is the rapture an escape from the world's troubles?

Many deride the rapture as a "great escape," and claim that it misleads Christians, who should be preparing for toughening times, but instead, are living in the vain hope that before times get really horrible, they will be taken from this earth. These critics teach that the concept of the pretribulational rapture was invented out of whole cloth in the nineteenth century, never having been taught before that. They are partly correct; the rapture was taught in the early Church, but the rapture was not taught while Israel was in exile. Once the Jews returned, the rapture question began to be emphasized once again.

Still, they scoff at Christians whom they perceive as naively believing in such an escape. For them, the rapture is a denial of the Lord's ability to take the well-prepared Christian through the perilous times that lie just ahead.

2. Is the rapture holding off until the last sinner to be saved, has been added to the Church?

Some teach that the rapture operates on some kind of "quota system." They believe that the timing of the rapture is dependant upon a certain number of saints, predestined to salvation, who must be saved before the Church can be taken out of the world. When that number is reached, the Lord will give the word. Then, the rapture will take place. These people can be heard to say, "When the last saint is saved, the Church will be taken home."

This idea makes the rapture completely dependent upon the Church. It says, in effect, that there is no real reason for the rapture, and it makes the timing of the Tribulation rely upon the development of the Church. Under this thinking, one might even come to believe that the faster we get Christians saved, the sooner the rapture will come. But certainly, the rapture is never pictured as being linked to the success of the Church. On the contrary, the latter-day Church exists within the deteriorating environment that is described as coming just before the rapture.

3. Is the rapture an escape from the trials of the Tribulation period?

Critics of the pretribulational rapture often criticize it as a desire to flee the rigors of the coming Tribulation. They teach that the Church must, in some way, prepare for the coming of the Kingdom, by participating in it. Perhaps, they say, we will be God's representatives during the great judgments to come. But the Church is never seen in this role. Quite the opposite, it is well out of the way before those judgments take place.

As we shall discuss later, the Church is simply not seen in Scripture that describes the events of the Tribulation.

An objective study quickly and emphatically reveals a basic truth: The reason for the rapture is quite clear. It will come specifically to make way for the rise of Israel as prophesied in the Old Testament. With the Church in its present position, Israel cannot rise to its prophesied destiny.

ISRAEL'S CONTROVERSIAL RETURN

From its very beginning in the first century, the era of the Church has been marked by a central dispute, involving the prophetic destinies of Israel and the Church. Within the institutionalized church, there has been fundamental disagreement about the centrality of Israel in the plan of God.

Early in the 5th century, AD, the major theologian of the Roman church, Augustine, established their basic theological position regarding Israel.

His doctrine was amillennial. That is, he regarded the present age as the prophesied Millennium; it was not a thousand-year period in the future. Taking this position, he reasoned that since the Tribulation comes before the Millennium, it must already be past. He and others were predisposed to connect it with the defeat of Israel in the years between 70 and 135 AD. Israel was regarded in the past tense; the Church would then rise as the world's leader. It would progressively purify the world until Christ returned again in the Second Coming.

To a greater or lesser degree, Augustinian eschatology came to dominate the Roman Catholic church, and the state churches of Europe and America in the centuries following the Reformation. In short, the reformers threw off the constraints of Roman Catholic legalisms, but retained its view of the last days.

To this day, in fact, they have set Israel aside in the plan of God, bringing monumental consequences to the interpretation of Bible prophecy. A major theology, stating that the church has replaced Israel, has grown to such proportions that it sets the standard for organized Christianity.

But with the return of Israel to the promised Land, a dramatic situation has developed, in which Israel is the world's pariah. The tiny new nation is considered by the world at large as a presumptuous upstart, without any real reason for existence, except for their collective suffering in the Holocaust era of World Wars I and II. Their great despair at the end of this period provided the momentum for their return to the land of Israel. Today, those memories have faded, and the Gentile world has an increasing tendency to scoff at their right to exist as a nation.

This growing problem now threatens to bring a major war to the Middle East. Israel's legitimacy is being seriously questioned by the nations, as they meet in infamous concord in the same U.N. building where members awarded justice to the Jews in 1947.

MYSTERY OF TWO HOUSES

In parallel with these developments, a very small wing of the Church began to grow in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It taught that the classic disagreement between the Church and Israel as claimants to the Kingdom could be resolved. It contended that the Lord works through successive periods of time, called "dispensations." Today, in the dispensation of the Church, individual salvation is at the center of God's plan; after that, in the dispensation of the Kingdom, Israel will reign. The transition between these two time periods will be marked by catastrophic convulsions that will bring the collapse of the Gentile power that now controls the world.

Dispensationalism revived the Apostolic teaching that there are two houses of faith in the plan of God ... that the age of the Church is finite, and will come to an end, dictated by God's timing. At that point, Israel will rise to predominance again, amidst the tumult and chaos of the Tribulation. Out of that upheaval will come a renewed Israel, a new Temple and a thousand-year Kingdom ruled by Christ on Earth.

Paul, writing to the Church in Rome, lamented the fact that national Israel had rejected its Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. But he never went so far as to condemn Israel to a spiritual death. Quite the contrary. In Romans, Chapter 11, he asks a rhetorical question that resounds through the centuries:

"1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew ..." (Rom. 11:1, 2).

Here, Paul's question is asked and answered in no uncertain terms. His rhetoric begins with the certainty that Israel had denied its Messiah and received the consequences of that act. But he quickly follows that observation by saying that God has not irrevocably cast them off.

He goes on to say that in the plan of God, Israel is to play an ongoing role, because it has among its numbers an elect lineage:

"5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. 7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded 8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear); unto this day" (Rom. 11:5-8).

It is extremely important that today's Christians understand that what Paul refers to as the "*present time*" extends all the way to our day. It is his way of stating truth about the current dispensation.

In effect, he is saying that “under the present conditions,” Israel is still under God’s grace. The nation has not been cast aside, nor will it be. It now operates under the conditions of “the election of grace.” Nothing could be clearer.

Paul also asks another question that brings forth an amazing truth that is generally overlooked. Certainly, it is not usually used to support the idea of a Pretribulation rapture. Yet it is one of the greatest proof texts in the entire Bible. It makes a statement that can’t be ignored. Israel’s fall brought salvation to the Gentiles. In other words, the cataclysmic defeat of first-century Israel *had a purpose*. This is simply another way of saying that the fall of Israel brought a new dispensation:

“11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. 12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? (Rom. 11:11,12).

This is an astounding statement! Israel’s fall brought with it a blessing to the entire world system. It is perfectly logical, then, to conclude that when Israel once again rises to power (“their fullness”), the world of the Gentiles will fall. This is, in fact, the major theme of the book of Revelation, which details the collapse of Gentile world power and the reinstatement of Israel.

At one point, he even describes the age of the Church by using the word, “dispensation”:

“If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward” (Eph. 3:2).

This simple fact is made so utterly clear that it can’t be misunderstood, except by those who are driven by an agenda that is unalterably biased in favor of a continuing dominant and unbreakable Gentile world power. In the following passage, Paul concludes his dissertation, stating that the mystery of the two houses will conclude with the collapse of Gentile domination and the subsequent salvation of national Israel.

Paul earnestly pleads that the Church keep Israel’s prophesied future in the center of its thinking. Otherwise, there is the tendency to believe that Israel has forever lost its Scriptural promise ... the promise that it would return in power. You can hear the passion in his words.

*“25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.** 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. 28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. 29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. 30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: 31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. 32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. 33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Rom. 11:25-36).*

Romans 11, which begins with Paul's sorrow over his people's spiritual failure, ends on this high note of glory. Paul wonders aloud at the astonishing truth that Israel's great diaspora fulfills a major part of God's plan for the ages. He foresees the regathering and rising again of Zion and the redemption of national Israel.

Israel, in Paul's time, was the enemy of the Gospel, yet it remained the beloved of God, because of the promises He made to their forefathers. Not only that, the Old Testament contains a profusion of prophetic references to the coming change from Gentile to Jewish world power. Interestingly, they are all focused upon the Day of the Lord.

WHAT IS THE DAY OF THE LORD?

Properly viewed, the phrase, "Day of the Lord," is, first of all, a phrase that marks the great transition from the age of the Church to the Age of the Kingdom. It appears under this title 25 times in Scripture. Under other names, such as "The Tribulation," "The Day of Israel's Calamity," or "The Wrath of God," it is found in over 40 additional biblical passages.

Every biblical reference to it presents it as a time of unprecedented anguish, both in scope and scale. It will be the worst catastrophe to hit this planet since mankind began to walk upon its surface. Its judgments are aimed first at national Israel in the rise of the Antichrist, then at the wicked world system of Mystery Babylon.

The prophet Isaiah notes that one of its purposes is to purge the Land of Israel of the sinners within it:

"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it" (Isa. 13:9).

Jesus, Himself, said that it would become the most horrific series of events in the history of the world:

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mt. 24:21).

This time of unprecedented calamity will also bring perhaps the greatest revival in the history of the world as 144,000 representatives from the twelve tribes of Israel (not the Church) are sealed, and go forth to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to the entire world.

Finally (and still centered upon Israel and the Jewish people) the Day of the Lord will bring down the pride of the twelve tribes. Characteristically, the Jews are quite proud of their ability to survive, no matter what befalls them. They have 2,000 years of history in this position. Since their return to the Land, they have won a series of wars, often against overwhelming odds. As a result, their self-sufficient pride is one of their chief cultural characteristics.

The prophet Ezekiel makes it more than clear that the Day of the Lord will at last bring Israel to her knees. Harkening back to the wilderness march of the Exodus, God speaks through Ezekiel, telling His people that they will undergo yet another wilderness experience, just like the one they endured after their ancient departure from Egypt. In the end, they will repent and turn again to the Lord:

“33 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: 34 And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. 35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. 36 Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD. 37 And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: 38 And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezek. 20:33-38).

No matter what biblical reference you study, you will find that the Day of the Lord is not only centered upon Israel, but extreme in its effects. Often it has been held up as a kind of day of salvation for Israel. And those in the Church who are convinced that they will go through the Tribulation, think that they will be able to survive, and even thrive. But there are many warnings about the severity of this day.

AMOS AND JOEL

The prophet Amos sounds a special warning about the day, noting that its intended recipient is Israel. In the context of the rapture, this is most important, since the church is never intended to experience the Tribulation:

“Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel” (Amos 5:1).

In verse 18 of this chapter, Amos specifically warns Israel about the severity of that day:

“Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light” (Amos 5:18).

And in verse 20 of the same chapter, Amos puts a note of finality on the matter:

“Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?” (Amos 5:20).

The message: Don't wish for the Day of the Lord, and don't desire to go through it. Many in the Church today are preparing for exactly that!

Speaking generally, those who follow the dispensational model of redemptive history interpret the Day of the Lord as the millennial kingdom, including its opening seven years of judgment, called the Tribulation. But again, it must be emphasized that this initial period of severe judgment is intended for Israel.

As the following Scripture from Jeremiah tells us, the Day of the Lord is directly centered upon Israel, so much so that it has Jacob's name attached to it. Furthermore, the Lord has the purpose of releasing Israel from the bondage of the world system, just as He freed them from Egyptian bondage in the days of the Exodus:

“6 Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? 7 Alas! for

*that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of **Jacob's trouble**; but he shall be saved out of it. 8 For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: 9 But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them” (Jer. 30:6-9).*

Here, Israel is depicted as experiencing birth pangs, even as Jesus said in the Olivet discourse, when He spoke of Israel during the Tribulation, describing their pain as, “... *the beginning of sorrows*” (Matt. 24:8). In the Greek language of the New Testament, “sorrows” is *hodin*, or “birth pangs.” Of course, the metaphor wouldn’t be complete without saying that the birth in question is that of national Israel, being born as a new, cleansed, and redeemed nation in the Kingdom Age.

From Jeremiah to Matthew and onward into the epistles, we encounter the same language. There can be no doubt that the Millennial Day of the Lord is initiated by a well-defined upheaval that lasts seven years and constitutes the birth of a new Israel.

CAUGHT UP

Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians is the definitive exposition of the rapture. When the blessed hope of the Church is mentioned, it is the passage we turn to first. But it must be stated that its context places the rapture at the beginning of an ordered series of events. Chapter 4, verse 17 speaks of the Church being,

“... caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

This statement leads directly into Chapter 5, directly addressing the subject of the Day of the Lord. This sequence is perfectly in keeping with the dozens of Old Testament passages that feature Israel as the key player. But in this case, modern Israel, experiencing the Tribulation, is referred to simply as “they,” while those whom Paul addresses in the Church are called, “you,” “ye,” “yourselves,” and “we.”

Those left behind to experience the Day of the Lord are called, “they.” They are seen calling for “*peace and safety*,” which has long been a slogan in modern Israeli politics. Even as we see Israel doing today, idealistically offering peace while encircled by nations that openly call for their complete annihilation. “They” are modern Israel.

“1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness” (1 Thess. 5:1-5).

The woman in childbirth is, of course, Israel. And “we,” members of the Church (the body of Christ) are not in darkness. We understand the fine distinctions of grace, which would never put the redeemed of the present age under divine judgment.

Yes, there are those who say that the Church can go through the Tribulation without being touched by God’s wrath ... sealed, as it were, against any difficulty that might come their way. But they should look again at the Day of the Lord.

There is nothing in Scripture that says a small, select group will escape the ravages of that terrible Day.

APOCALYPTIC AGONY

Isaiah's so-called "Little Apocalypse" sets the scene of the Tribulation. Note that it makes the point of saying that everyone is affected. We know from the figures given in Revelation that literally billions will die:

"1 Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. 2 And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. 3 The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word" (Isa. 24:1-3).

Geologists tell us that in the past the earth has wobbled from time to time. They always add that if it happens again, the surface plates on the planet will slide, producing titanic earthquakes and volcanoes. Isaiah describes exactly that:

"19 The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. 20 The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. 21 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth" (Isa. 24:19-21).

Isaiah also paints a picture of the horrific weather disruptions that will be witnessed in the Tribulation:

"And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones" (Isa. 30:30).

Revelation speaks of hailstones almost a hundred pounds in weight! Certainly, the Tribulation will feature the greatest display of breakaway plate tectonics ever witnessed by man. Imagine the following horrifying vision from Revelation 6:14:

"And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." Later in Revelation, the same theme is repeated: "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (Rev. 16:20).

And we must also mention the "great mountain burning with fire" that falls into the sea, as well as the infamous star called "Wormwood," which also falls from the heavens and poisons the waters, bringing death to many.

Add to these the unprecedented famines and plagues that wrack the entire globe, and you have some idea of the Day of the Lord.

The Church will be taken out of the way precisely because it is the Spirit-filled body of Christ, and must be removed in order that the program of God can proceed as prophesied. That program will establish Israel – *not the Church* – as head of the nations. And *that* is the clear and unequivocal reason for the rapture!