

# The Day of God's Wrath

## Seven-sealed Scroll

God, the Father, gave Jesus Christ information about "things which must soon take place" (Rev 1:1) which constitutes a revelation because it is not something which has been heretofore shared. They are "the words of the prophecy" (:3) "which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants" (:1). Since Christ told John, "Write in a book what you see" (:11) we are to "heed the things which are written in it" (:3). When Christ received the revelation "He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John" (:1) who said "I heard behind me a loud voice" (:10). When he looked behind him he saw "one like a son of man" (:13) and then "fell at His feet like a dead man" (:17). The personage replied, "I am the first and the last, and the living One" (:17-18). He had said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega . . . who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (:8). Since the voice John heard was the ascended and glorified Christ and it was spoken "by His angel" (:1) then it is his one-and-the-same supernatural, spiritual presence. That doesn't mean that an unbeliever can't read it, but does it mean that that person will understand that "every eye will see Him . . . and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him"? (:7).

The scene is around God's heavenly throne where the elders say, "Worthy are You . . . for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created" (Rev 4:11). Then John saw "in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written in the inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals" (5:1). After the Lamb took the book they said, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals, for you were slain, and purchased [men] for God with Your blood" (:9). It was "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Ac 20:28). After Pentecost "the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved" (2:47). He "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession (Titus 2:14). The starting point for all this is that "the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Ps 24:1). God explained to the Israelites that, "The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me. Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land" (Lev 25:23-24). Boaz' close relative told him, "You may have my right of redemption" (Ruth 3:6) and therefore Boaz told the elders, "You are witnesses today that I have bought" the land (:9). "Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess" (:10) who became part of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Consequently Christ paid the ransom for us "having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12) making him "the mediator of a new covenant . . . since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions" (:15). "A covenant is valid only when men are dead" (:17).

## **The First Seal**

In Israel when property was purchased it was recorded in a scroll. Jeremiah was told to, "Buy for yourself my field . . . for you have the right of redemption to buy it" (Jer 32:7). He said, "I signed and sealed the deed, and called in witnesses" (:10). Then if the originator of the covenant dies, the will/deed is opened and the instructions in it are executed to fulfill the inheritance. "In the right hand of Him who sat on the throne [was] a scroll" (Rev 5:1). But it was "like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, 'Please read this,' he will say, 'I cannot, for it is sealed'" (Isa 29:11). Then a disconsolate John was told "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals" (:5). There were sticks on both ends of the scroll, and as the scribe recorded the document, it would be rolled and sections would be sealed with a clay marker having an authentic mark put on it so that only a person with a matching signet ring would be permitted to open the seal. Then "He came and took the [seven-sealed] book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne" (:7). He received the title deed to the earth and would proceed with its redemption and to repossess all that is his.

John "saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals" (Rev 6:1). He was the center of attention as the kinsman-redeemer as he broke the seals, however, the title deed of the earth wasn't a description of his inheritance, but rather describing the process of events involved in reclaiming what was his through a series of judgments. Each step is announced by one of the living creatures for something to take place. Firstly, a white horse appeared and "he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer" (:2). "The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the Lord" (Pr 21:31). "The day of the Lord is coming" (Joel 2:1) and "there is a great and mighty people" (:2). "Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like war horses, so they run" (:4). "The Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2Ki 6:17).

## **Day of Judgment**

John cited the event saying "love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment" (1Jn 4:17). Christ "came with thousands of His holy ones to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 15). It develops over time such as "because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Ro 2:5). God will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who . . . obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation" (:6,8) and they will have "tribulation and distress" (:9). Jesus warned, "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short" (Mt 24:21-

22). Ezekiel prophesied, "One third of you will die by plague or be consumed by famine among you, one third will fall by the sword around you, and one third I will scatter to every wind" (Eze 5:12). "Thus My anger will be spent, and I will satisfy My wrath on them" (:13). Revelation states that "a third of the" (Rev 8:7-9) "earth was burnt up" (:7), "sea became blood" (:8), "creatures in the sea died" (:9) and "ships were destroyed" (:9). Also "four angels . . . were released, so that they might kill a third of mankind" (9:15). Zephaniah prophesied, "Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the Lord! On it the warrior cries out bitterly. A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom" (Zep 1:14-15). Jesus prayed for protection for us saying, "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one" (Jn 17:15). The Greek words "tereo ek" mean to preserve out from within. The same words are used in "I will keep you from the hour of testing" (Rev 3:10). They were to hurt "only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" (9:4). The dragon "persecuted the woman" (Rev 12:13) "but the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of its mouth" (:16). Pretribulationists argue that God wouldn't subject his children to his own wrath so will rapture them beforehand. The solution is "to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1Th 1:10).

### **Comes to Judge**

Peter desired that God "may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you" (Ac 3:20). The purpose is that "times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (:19). Paul told the Thessalonians would they not be "in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?" (1Th 2:19). It would be a "period of restoration of all things" (Ac 3:21). However, those who don't "repent and return, so that [their] sins may be wiped away" (:19) "will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2Th 1:9). "The Judge is standing right at the door" (Ja 5:9) "who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom" (2Ti 4:1). He will be "dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel" (2Th 1:8).

Paul's revelation was that "in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2Ti 4:8). "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (Rev 3:11). Christ's appearing is called an *epiphaneia*. It is bringing forth into light causing something to shine. An epiphany is a sudden, intuitive perception into the reality of something. "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1Pe 5:4) and "at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation" (4:3). "When He appears we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1Jn 3:2). This is because we

"abide in Him . . . and [will] not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming" (2:28). This is possible as we are "children of God" (3:1). The "Father has bestowed [this] on us . . . [and] for this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him" (:1).

## **God Judges**

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Gal 6:7). God has built a cause-and-effect into life which automatically judges. "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near" (Dt 32:35). "I will repay', says the Lord" (Ro 12:19). "God is not one to show partiality" (Ac 10:34). There is "no injustice with God" (Ro 9:14). He is "the one who impartially judges according to each one's work" (1Pe 1:17). "We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things" (Ro 2:2). "How unsearchable are His judgments" (Rev 15:3). "Righteous and true are your ways" (:3).

What you do makes a difference because it determines whether you will "inherit the kingdom" (Mt 25:34). What qualifies is if you help feed, clothe and house people, and visit people when they are sick or in prison (:35-36). They "were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds" (Rev 20:12). It should make one take notice that his actions are actually recorded. "Whatever good thing each one does, he will receive back from the Lord" (Eph 6:8). "You recompense a man according to his work" (Ps 62:12). Paul quotes this regarding "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteousness judgment of God, who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS" (Ro 2:5-6). Jesus says "My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev 22:12). "By perseverance in doing good . . . [you receive] eternal life" (Ro 2:7). "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life" (1Jn 2:25). "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3). "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (3:16). But "He who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (1Jn 5:12).

## **God is Just**

God is "the Judge of all" (Heb 12:23) but "not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son" (Jn 5:22). He is "the One who has been appointed by God a Judge of the living and the dead" (Ac 10:42). "God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (Ro 2:16). "There is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known" (Lk 12:2). Is there a time for this? "We will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Ro 14:10). "He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Ac 17:31). "Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (:30). He "is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). "He ordered [the Apostles] to preach to the people and solemnly to testify" (Ac

10:42) about it. "The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven . . . dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2Th 1:7-8). "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt 10:28). "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 6:23). "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish" (Jn 10:27-28). "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn 14:2). However, "He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Mt 25:41).

### **Judge of All**

Is God's judgment complicated because there are so many different people and religions? Perhaps it can be simplified to just the Jew and the Gentile. God "desires all men to be saved" (1Ti 2:4). It is evaluated when we all "appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2Co 5:10). "All the nations will be gathered before Him" (Mt 25:32). It is "on the day when . . . God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (Ro 2:16). God has clearly revealed his divinity and power such that it is obvious and "they are without excuse" (1:20) if they don't concur. This is at the "great white throne" (Rev 20:11). "The dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds" (:12). "He will separate them from one another" (Mt 25:32) and "say to those on His right, 'Come . . . inherit the kingdom'" (:34) and "those on His left, 'Depart from Me'" (:41). "Those who did the good deeds [will go] to a resurrection of life, [and] those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (Jn 5:29). We know God is fair because he "does not show partiality" (Dt 10:17) and "in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him" (Ac 10:34-35).

Judgment and reward are synonymous because "My reward is with Me" (Rev 22:12). God will "render to every man according to what he has done" (:12). He will "search the heart, . . . test the mind . . . [and] give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds" (Jer 17:10). Each will "be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done" (2Co 5:10). There are principles God judges by. "Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal 6:7-8).

### **Judgment**

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Gal 6:7). "In due time their foot will slip" (Dt 32:35). They are "selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness" (Ro 2:8), for there is "the truth of God" (1:25). "The Lord is righteous within her; He will do no injustice. Every morning He brings justice to light; He does not fail. But the unjust knows no shame" (Zeph

3:5). They are "indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph 2:3) and "obey unrighteousness" (Ro 2:8). They are "sons of disobedience" (Eph 5:6) and "storing up wrath" (Ro 2:5) for themselves because they are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph 2:3). "He who does not obey the Son . . . the wrath of God abides on him" (Jn 3:36). God "inflicts wrath" (Ro 3:5) on the unrighteous and "wrath and indignation" (2:8) "will come upon the sons of disobedience" (Col 3:6). "I will repay", says the Lord" (Ro 12:19). "God is not one to show partiality" (Ac 10:34). There is "no injustice with God" (Ro 9:14). He is "the one who impartially judges according to each one's work" (1Pe 1:17). "We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things" (Ro 2:2). "How unsearchable are His judgments" (Rev 15:3). "Righteous and true are your ways" (:3).

There is "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Ro 2:5). "The Lord of hosts will have a day of reckoning" (Isa 2:12). God said it is "'the day when I rise up as a witness'" (Zep 3:8). It is "the day of the Lord's anger" (2:3). "The day of the Lord is coming" (Joel 2:1). "That day is great, there is none like it" (Jer 30:7). It is "indeed great and very awesome" (Joel 2:11). "The great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Rev 6:17). "It will be darkness and not light" (Amos 5:18). They said "to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us . . . from the wrath of the Lamb'" (Rev 6:16). "They will not escape" (1Th 5:3). "The earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness" (Joel 2:12). "Who can endure it?" (:11).

God is "the Judge of all" (Heb 12:23) but "not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son" (Jn 5:22). He is "the One who has been appointed by God a Judge of the living and the dead" (Ac 10:42). "God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (Ro 2:16). "There is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known" (Lk 12:2). Is there a time for this? "We will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Ro 14:10). "He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Ac 17:31). "My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, all my burning anger" (Zep 3:8). "Therefore wait for Me,' declares the Lord" (:8). "You who are longing for the day of the Lord, for what purpose will the day of the Lord be to you?" (Amos 5:18). "Wait for His Son from heaven . . . who rescues us from the wrath to come" (1Th 1:10). "Perhaps you will be hidden" (Zep 2:3).

### **Day of God's Wrath**

The day of the Lord is characterized by divine wrath. It is "that hour which is about to come upon the whole world" (Rev 3:10). "All the earth will be devoured" (Zep 3:9). "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble" (Joel 2:1). There will be "'men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world'" (Lk 21:26). "All the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came" (Rev 11:18). One

purpose was "to destroy those who destroy the earth" (:18). It "is about to come upon the whole world, to test" them (Rev 3:10). They are "those who dwell on the earth" (Rev 3:10;6:10;8:13;11:10;13:8,14;17:8). "The great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (6:17). Is the divine wrath also poured out on the church? It is inconceivable that the church would be exempt from this retribution if it is experienced everywhere. "It is the time of Jacob's distress" (Jer 30:7). However, "in that day it will be said to Jerusalem: 'Do not be afraid, O Zion'" (Zep 3:16) for "he will be saved from it" (Jer 30:7). "In the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle" (Ps 27:5). Fortunately, "we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (Ro 5:9). "God has not destined us for wrath" (1Th 5:9). He "rescues us from the wrath to come" (1:10). "I also will keep you from the hour of testing" (Rev 3:10).

John wrote the prophecy to the church in Philadelphia saying, "I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door" (Rev 3:8). "You have kept My word, and have not denied My name" (:8) and "have kept the word of My perseverance" (:10) and therefore "I will keep you from the hour of testing" (:10). Philadelphia was only one of the seven churches the letters were written to which would imply that those promises wouldn't necessarily apply to the other churches. Philadelphia was 952 feet above sea level and was likely considered a fortress city. It was an agricultural center, manufactured textiles, and produced leather. Its location was as a gateway to the high central plateau and it was on an important trade route. The "hour of testing" (:10) is prophetic of the future which many compare to the period where "he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week" (Da 9:27). It is a certain future "hour" (Rev 3:10) similar to that "My time is not yet at hand" (Jn 7:6) but that "the time is near" (Rev 1:3) and will be that "My time is at hand" (Mt 26:18). However, the praeterist believes that Revelation only figuratively describes the events that took place in John's lifetime. Furthermore, the historicist takes Revelation as God's prophetic program from the apostles to the end of the age which would be a panorama of church history. But the futurist postpones the events to seven years before and just after the Second Coming. Also, the dispensationalist sees the temple being rebuilt and sacrifices being restored.

## **Tribulation**

John received "the Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:1) which was composed of "things which must shortly take place" (:1). They are "the words of this prophecy" (:3) pertaining to "the time [which] is near" (:3). Firstly it is addressed to "the seven churches which are in Asia" (:4). John was instructed to "write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this" (:19). They apply in a contemporary way locally to those Asian churches and prophetically to "the mystery" (:20) to be unveiled. Some Bible students interpret the seven churches figuratively as dispensational history representing the stages of growth of the church through time. That would mean that Ephesus was the starting point but that they had already "left your first

love" (2:4). The letters were written because Christ knew believers would have challenges and difficulties and must become "him who overcomes" (:7). If you follow this line of reasoning the last-day church would be Laodicea which was "neither cold nor hot" (3:15) and said "'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'" (:17). The letter was sent "to the seven churches" (1:11) in Asia and would have been circulated for all to read. Each church had individual issues but the overall message would be studied. Of interest to some would be "things which will take place" (1:19) in the "near" (:3) future. For instance, Smyrna was "about to suffer" (2:10) persecution to be "tested" (:10) and "have tribulation ten days" (:10). On the plus side the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia were the only ones that Christ's revelation had nothing "against" (2:4;:14;:20;3:2;:15). But specific warning and counsel apply to each church individually so you can't generalize and apply everything to everyone. For instance, Jesus told Philadelphia, "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (3:10). Many prophetically refer to this as when "there will be great tribulation" (Mt 24:21) which defines the Great Tribulation. The church of Philadelphia is supposed to be spared according to some people's exegesis. But Smyrna was told "the devil is about to throw some of you into prison" (2:10) and they should "Be faithful until death" (:10). "For the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Mt 24:22).

Jesus prophesied, "There will be a great tribulation such as not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall" (Mt 24:21). Luke records, "There will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people" (Lk 21:23). One of the elders said, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation" (Rev 7:14). Jesus told them, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). He "disarmed the rulers and authorities . . . [and] triumphed over them through Him" (Col 2:15). The Bible is a spiritual book, so what is tribulation? James said to regard it as advantageous "when you encounter various trials" (Ja 1:2) because they require faith to be victorious (:3). Peter said to "not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you" (1Pe 4:12) because then you "share the sufferings of Christ" (:13). Paul said that God's defenses would enable you to "stand firm against the schemes of the devil" (Eph 6:11). He said the conflict was "against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (:12) and we would need faith to defend against "the evil one" (:16). Jesus prayed that the Father would "keep them from the evil one" (Jn 17:15). Satan takes advantage of every opportunity but God said, "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution" (Dt 32:35). God doesn't punish every little mistake because he is "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness" (Ps 103:8). But "the anger of the Lord burned against Israel" (2Sa 24:1) and then "Satan stood up against Israel" (1Ch 21:1) which "incited David" (2Sa 24:1) "to number Israel" (1Ch 21:1). Moses told Israel that intermarriage would "turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you" (Dt 7:3-



4). Eschatologically speaking "destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape" (1Th 5:3).

### **Great Tribulation**

Paul confessed that "among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (Eph 2:3). Therefore "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Ro 1:18). But God supplied a solution that "even when we were dead in our transgressions, [he] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Eph 2:5). "Having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (Ro 5:9). "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Ro 8:1). "God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation" (1Th 5:9). "Since we are of the day . . . [we put on] a helmet, the hope of salvation" (:8). Nevertheless, James observes to "consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (Jas 1:2-3). The concordance describes trials with the Greek word *peirasmos* meaning temptations and testing. It is derived from *peirazo* (Gr.) meaning "to make proof of and put to the test." Paul strengthened "the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'" (Ac 14:22). "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2Ti 3:12). The concordance defines tribulation as affliction or distress. Jesus encouraged them saying, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). He said, "'Keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man'" (Lk 21:36). Tribulation sounds more severe than trials. Paul spoke proudly of the Thessalonians "for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure" (2Th 1:4). Jesus told the church in Philadelphia that since you "have kept My word, and have not denied My name [and] you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing" (Rev 3:8,10). The believers in Macedonia and Achaia reported that the Thessalonians had "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1Th 1:9-10). We are being saved but will also be protected from "'that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth'" (Rev 3:10).

### **Affliction**

Does the serious tribulation begin at a certain scheduled time? "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority" (Ac 1:7). "'Of that day and hour no one knows'" (Mt 24:36). "You do not know which day your Lord is coming" (:42). "'The Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will'" (:44). But there is a schedule, because in Jesus' situation, he recognized that "'the hour

has come" (Jn 17:1). Christ told the church in Philadelphia, "I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world" (Rev 3:10). He didn't say that to the other churches. When did they think that would be? There were "the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do" (1Ch 12:32). The churches had the Old Testament for reference, and by then, the gospels and Paul's letters had been circulated. Jesus said, "I am coming quickly" (Rev 3:11). Would they have interpreted that as coming within their lifetime, or did they have insights into prophetic leaps into the future? Daniel was told, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time" (Da 12:9). There is an announcement coming instructing to, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come" (Rev 14:7). "Therefore be on the alert" (Mt 24:42).

Tribulation was already present. Paul acknowledged that the Thessalonians had "received the word in much tribulation" (1Th 1:6). Jesus taught "affliction or persecution arises because of the word" (Mt 13:21). John said that he was a "partaker in the tribulation . . . because of the word of God" (Rev 1:9). Paul taught the word and cited "all of our affliction" (2Co 7:4) and asked them to "share with me in my affliction" (Php 4:14). He said "do not lose heart at my tribulation on your behalf" (Eph 3:13). They were "servants of God . . . in afflictions, in hardships, in distress" (2Co 6:4). He explained "our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life" (1:8). He acknowledged the "great deal of affliction . . . and their deep poverty" (8:2). He cited the "persecutions and afflictions which you endure" (2Th 1:4). Nonetheless "near is the great day of the Lord" (Zep 1:14). "Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it" (Jer 30:7). "The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it? (Joel 2:11). "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will" (Mt 24:21). "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short" (:22). John "saw under the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (Rev 6:9). "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation" (7:14). Therefore you shouldn't generalize from what was said in Revelation about being kept from "the hour of testing" (3:10).

### **Suffered Affliction**

Paul addresses the subject "with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him" (2Th 2:1). Jesus had said, "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn 14:3) which concurs with "thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1Th 4:17). That location has been previously described as heaven. John reports that "I saw heaven opened" (Rev 19:11) "and the armies which are in heaven . . . were following Him on white horses" (:14). "The powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky"

(Mt 24:29-30). "He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect" (:31). "So shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (:27).

Paul wanted to help the Thessalonians about "a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come" (2Th 2:2). Apparently there was false doctrine circulating concerning "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (:1). The coming is synonymous with the day of the Lord. It seems that their tribulation was so severe that they thought the Great Tribulation had arrived and they had missed "the coming . . . and our gathering together to Him" (:1). Paul recounted that they had "endured the same suffering" (1Th 2:14) and "persecutions and afflictions" (2Th 1:4) which "we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer" (1Th 3:4). Paul didn't want them to be "quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed" (2Th 2:1) and had sent Timothy to them "to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith" (1Th 3:2). Paul comforted them saying that God would "repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you" (2Th 1:6-7). This would be "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire dealing out retribution" (:7). "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (Col 3:4). It will be "when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day and to be marveled at among all who have believed" (:10). Those Thessalonian saints and believers mentioned are they "who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord" (1Th 4:15) who are the same "saints [present] on that day" (2Th 1:10). "For just like the lightning . . . so will the Son of Man be in His day" (Lk 17:24). "In that day the Lord will be the only one" (Zec 14:9) "for it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord" (:7). They knew the "times and epochs" (1Th 5:1) where "the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night" (:2). It would be as stalked by a robber because they are obliviously saying, "Peace and safety" (:3). But that "day should [not] overtake you" (:4) because you are "of the day" (:8) and "are not in darkness" (:4). The "coming of the Lord" (1Th 4:15) will be "on that day" (2Th 1:10). Even though they knew "the times" (1Th 5:1) Christ warned, "Be on the alert, then, for you do not know the day nor the hour" (Mt 25:13). "Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes" (Lk 12:37).

### **Hour of Testing**

Jesus said, "I will keep you from the hour of testing" (Rev 3:10). This has a temporal connotation. To "keep from" is a phrasal verb composed of a verb and preposition. A preposition is a word which begins a prepositional phrase which contains an object of the preposition and certain modifiers. It describes a grammatical relationship with the verb in the containing clause as well as a semantic relationship with the other words in the sentence. The latter can be either spatial, temporal or logical. The "from" adjunct to the verb "keep" can represent spatial movement as with designating a starting point and then going somewhere. It could also represent separation in time as with the example "an hour from now." Jesus foretold his death saying, "Now My soul has become

troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour" (Jn 12:27). "When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son" (Gal 4:4). The hour of time is synonymous with the purpose or essential characteristic of the situation. To "save from" is similar to "keep from." Jesus prayed to be delivered from an experience within a period of time. Accordingly, to be kept from "the hour of testing" (Rev 3:10) is to be protected from the experience of testing and not removed from its period of time. Testing reveals the true character of someone by breaking something down as if to demonstrate failure. It was to "test those who dwell upon the earth" (:10) "that you may be tested" (2:10). It is a "fiery ordeal . . . for your testing: (1Pe 4:12). "The testing of your faith produces endurance" (Ja 1:3) so you can even "test yourselves to see if you are in the faith" (2Co 13:5). Therefore the lexical and contextual makeup of "keep you from the hour" (Rev 3:10) must be considered. The verb means to "protect" or "preserve" which would be from what was experienced during the time period rather than meaning that a person would be temporally removed from the period itself. Therefore protection from "the hour" would not be by physically removing believers but by supernaturally preserving them.

## **The Day of the Lord**

### **Day of the Lord**

Scripture seems to treat the time of the end of the age as the day of the Lord. Everyone who "believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (Jn 6:40). "You were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30) by "the Holy Spirit" (:30). Paul said "the Lord will award me on that day" (2Ti 4:8) the "crown of righteousness" (:8). Paul told the Philippians "be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ" (Php 1:10) "so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory" (2:16). God will "confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 1:8). But "you do not know which day your Lord is coming" (Mt 24:42). "Be on guard, so . . . that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap" (Lk 21:34) for you "will not escape" (1Th 5:3). "The day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night" (:2). Why would Paul mention this if there was a pretribulation rapture which would extradite them from the threat? He encouraged them saying they were "not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief" (:4). "Let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober" (:6) "since we are of the day" (:8). Jesus advised watchfulness saying "you also must be ready" (Mt 24:44) and "keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape" (Lk 21:36). Therefore, Christians are present when the events of the day of the Lord arrives.

Although the Great Tribulation is never specifically included in the day of the Lord, it is associated with judgment and destruction of the ungodly. "The great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Rev 6:17). They "gather them together for the war of the great day of God" (16:14), "You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes

under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,' says the Lord of hosts" (Mal 4:3). It is "a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities" (Zep 1:16). "The Lord will appear over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning; and the Lord God will blow the trumpet, and will march in the storm winds of the south" (Zec 9:14). "The Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle" (14:1). "In that day the Lord will be the only one" (:9) "for it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord" (:7). "So will the Son of Man be in His day" (Lk 17:24). "Who can endure the day of His coming?" (Mal 3:2).

## **The Great Day**

When will the Second Coming occur? Jesus explained that before it takes place "there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall" (Mt 24:21). Verse 27 then states "so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." Then Jesus says that "immediately after the tribulation of those days" (:29) "the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky" (:30). It seems that Daniel had prophesied of the same period saying, "There will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time" (Da 12:1). "For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of the part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day" (Lk 17:24). "His day" (:24) is equivalent to "the coming" (Mt 24:27) in the identical passage in Matthew. "In that day the Lord will be the only one" (Zec 14:9) "for it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord" (:7). "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him" (Rev 1:7).

"The Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!" (Zec 14:5). It will be "at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints" (1Th 3:13). Enoch "prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones'" (Jude 14). The purpose will be "to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds" (:15). Furthermore, "the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire" (2Th 1:7). The purpose will also be "dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (:8). "The Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle" (Zec 14:1). "The armies which are in heaven . . . were following Him on white horses" (Rev 19:14). "In the last days mockers will . . . [ask], 'Where is the promise of His coming?'" (2Pe 3:3-4). Consider rather "when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Lk 18:8). "Who can endure the day of His coming?" (Mal 3:2).

## **Day of Reckoning**

Christ's appearing is called an epiphaneia. It is a bringing forth into light causing something to shine. An epiphany is a sudden, intuitive perception into the reality of something. His appearance is "when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and be marveled at among all who have believed" (2Th 1:10). Therefore, it is important "that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord

Jesus Christ" (1Ti 6:14). "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those [who have died, and] . . . we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord" (1Th 4:14-15). "In Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order . . . who are Christ's at His coming" (1Co 15:22-23). We will be "caught up together . . . to meet the Lord . . . and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1Th 4:17). Peter says "when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1Pe 5:4) and "at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation" (4:13). But we must "abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming" (1Jn 2:28). John explains "it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (3:2). "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (1Th 4:16). "Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming" (2Th 2:8).

The circumstances of the Second Coming are that "the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle" (Zec 14:3). He "will have a day of reckoning against everyone who is proud and lofty . . . that he may be abased" (Isa 2:12). He will "execute judgment upon all, and to convince all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds" (Jude 15). He will "render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire" (Isa 66:15). He will "deal out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2Th 1:8). "The Lord alone will be exalted in that day" (Isa 2:17). "It will be a unique day which is known to the Lord" (Zec 14:7). "In that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one" (:9). "The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn" (Mt 24:30). "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (:30).

## **Last Trumpet**

The day of the Lord is associated with judgment. Believers coexist with unbelievers since "'both [are] to grow together until the harvest'" (Mt 13:30). Then Jesus will say, "'First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up'" (:30). Then in judgment "'He will separate them one from another'" (25:32) and "'say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me'" (:41). There was war between the two sides at this time. "It was given to him to make war with the saints" (Rev 13:7). "The beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him" (19:19). But "destruction will come upon them suddenly . . . and they shall not escape" (1Th 5:3). "These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction" (2Th 1:9). He will bring lawlessness "to an end by the appearance of His coming" (2Th 2:8). "From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that He may smite the nations" (Rev 19:15) "dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2Th 1:8). "The rest were killed with the

sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse" (Rev 19:21). "The Lord will slay [the lawless one] with the breath of His mouth" (2Th 2:8).

Jesus told his disciples that "the Son of Man [must] be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life" (Jn 3:15). Paul explains that the perishable cannot "inherit the imperishable" (1Co 15:50). Therefore "at the last trumpet . . . the dead will be raised imperishable" (:52) and "this mortal will have put on immortality" (:54). When does this occur? It happens at the "last trumpet" (:52). "With the trumpet of God . . . the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1Th 4:16). Jesus said, "He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect" (Mt 24:31). God used trumpets to call Israel together and direct their movement in the wilderness. "The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of ram's horns before the Lord went forward and blew the trumpets" (Jos 6:8). John reported "I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and seven trumpets were given to them" (Rev 8:2). Eventually "the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever'" (11:15). "At the last trumpet . . . we shall be changed" (1Co 15:52). The seventh trumpet is the last trumpet. This event is synonymous with "an hour [that] is coming and now is; when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live" (Jn 5:25). "Every one who beholds the Son, and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (6:40).

### **Last Trumpet**

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There is a Festival of Trumpets in the Feasts of Israel. It is one of three parts (one is the Day of Atonement) of the Feast of Tabernacles which occurs in the last month of the religious year. The first tripartite feast is composed of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. The second is Pentecost. God instructed Moses, "These are the appointed times of the Lord . . . which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them" (Lev 23:4). "Celebrate your feasts, O Judah; pay your vows" (Naham 1:15). The Feast of Tabernacles celebrates Israel entering the Promised Land. They blew trumpets for the ten days of the Feast of Trumpets. The feasts are reminders of what God did historically for Israel. Also, Jesus pointed out that Moses "wrote of Me" (Jn 5:46) and "all the prophets and the law prophesied" (Mt 11:13) which means there would be a future fulfillment of the feasts in the life of Jesus. There is also an experiential fulfillment in a believer's life. They "will go up from year to year to worship . . . to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zec 14:16). Whoever "does not go up to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them" (:17). "Blow the trumpet in Zion . . . for the day of the Lord is coming" (Joel 2::1). "What will you do on the day of the appointed festival and on the day of the feast of the Lord?" (Hosea 9:5).

### **Redemption Near**

We are to anticipate the return of Christ with expectancy. "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah" (Mt 24:37). "They were eating and drinking . . . until the day Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away" (:38-39). It is cited by two heavenly representatives saying, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Ac 1:11). "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (Col 3:4). "As to this salvation, the prophets [testified] of the grace that would come to you . . . [and were] seeking to know . . . the glories to follow" (1Pe 1:10-11) the sufferings of Christ. "In Christ all shall be made alive but each in his own order" (1Co 15:22-23). Consequently "you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30). So "straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Lk 21:28). "Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him" (Heb 9:28). You "are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1Pe 1:5). "We through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness" (Gal 5:5).

They asked, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming?" (Mt 24:3). Jesus answered, "This gospel of the kingdom shall [first] be preached in the whole world" (:14). "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky" (:30). However, he explained "you do not know which day your Lord is coming" (:42). "For this reason you must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when



you do not think He will" (:44). "What I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'" (Mk 13:37). "Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes" (Lk 12:37). Be a person "who knew his master's will" (:47) because "from everyone who has been given much, much will be required" (:47-48). However "do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will" (1Co 4:5) "bring about justice for them quickly" (Lk 18:8). "He who is coming will come, and will not delay" (Heb 10:37). "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits . . . [so] you too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near" (Ja 5:7-8). Jesus instructed Thyatira saying, "What you have, hold fast until I come" (Rev 2:25). He said, "Behold, I am coming quickly" (22:7). He "will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him" (Heb 9:28).

### **Blessed Hope**

We are to "wait for His Son from heaven" (1Th 1:10). This heavenly origin predicates the instruction to "lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Lk 21:28). We are "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:14). "We shall see Him just as He is. And every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself: (1Jn 3:2-3). "We exult in hope of the glory of God" (Ro 5:2). To rejoice is to celebrate something rewarding, and God's glory would certainly qualify. But since it is a hope it is unseen because "hope that is seen is not hope" (Ro 8:24). "Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off" (Pr 23:18). Central to this hope is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). This is the "hope that is in you" (1Pe 3:15) because it is the "hope of salvation" (1Th 5:8). Through rejoicing you proclaim "the hope and resurrection" (Ac 23:6). You rejoice because your "faith is the assurance of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1) since you know "hope does not disappoint" (Ro 5:5).

Hope is in being "fellow heirs" (Ro 8:17) in terms of "the revealing of the sons of God" (:19) regarding "the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (:21). We rejoice knowing "we have a building from God . . . eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1). We don't rejoice selfishly because "a horse is a false hope for victory" (Ps 33:17). Consequently one's "hope is in the Lord his God" (Ps 146:5) and "my hope is from Him" (Ps 62:5). Therefore rejoicing means resting on "the hope of eternal life" (Tit 1:2) and "looking for the blessed hope" (2:13). Hope is the end product of tribulation because it "brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope" (Ro 5:3-4). We are to rejoice in hope and persevere in tribulation (Ro 12:12). "This hope we have as an anchor" (Heb 6:19). The expectation is for "the redemption of our body" (Ro 8:23) because "in hope we have been saved" (:24). Tribulation causes you to remember and "this I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope" (La 3:21). "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Ro 15:13).

## Prepare for Coming

What mindset is necessary to comprehend and follow these scriptures? "We have the mind of Christ" (1Co 2:16). "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Ro 12:2). "Prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:13). "Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near" (Ja 5:8). "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21). "Abide in Him, so that when He appears we may have confidence . . . at His coming" (1Jn 2:28). Love one another "so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness . . . at the coming of our Lord Jesus" (1Th 3:13). Paul prayed "may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely . . . without blame at the coming of our Lord" (5:23).

What attitude should we have to be obedient to these instructions? "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (Php 2:15). We should be "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of . . . Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:13). "Wait for His Son from heaven" (1Th 1:10). Wait "eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 1:7) and "be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord" (Ja 5:7). Wait "anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life" (Jude 21). "The day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night" (1Th 5:2) but we "are not in darkness" (:4). "Since we are of the day, let us be sober" (:8). "To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation" (1Pe 4:13). "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (Col 3:4). "The proof of your faith . . . may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:7).

## Signs of Coming

Prophecy has made it known that the Messiah will establish the kingdom of God in Israel. "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed . . . [and] it will itself endure forever" (Da 2:44). Jesus was "questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming" (Lk 17:20). They asked as though they believed he was the Christ, however it seems that they were rather baiting him to commit himself. Jesus hadn't been advertising overtly who he was because it would have just precipitated unnecessary controversy. If we fast-forward to when Jesus was arrested and brought before the Council we see that Caiaphus, the high priest, asked him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" (Mk 14:61). Jesus answered, "I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (:62).

Later "the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" (Mt 24:3). Paul cited that "Jews ask for signs" (1Co 1:22). But Jesus explained to the Pharisees, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed" (Lk 17:20). The questions were in reference to his coming. It is the Greek word *parousia* pertaining to a presence or a

coming. It is from a root meaning to have come or being present. Jesus answered with a long discourse beginning at Matthew 24:4, Mark 13:5, and Luke 17:22. He states, "The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky . . . and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Mt 24:30). Mark quotes he will be "coming in clouds" (Mk 13:26) and "coming with the clouds of heaven" (14:62). Luke quotes "they will see the son of man coming in a cloud" (Lk 21:27). How much of a distinction should be made regarding coming "on", "in", and "with" cloud(s)?

## **Exult in Hope**

Words in Greek describing the Second Coming pertain to Christ completing his plan and manifesting himself personally to his saints. It is not just in a video clip but is a substantive delivery. He will "establish your hearts without blame in holiness" (1Th 3:13) resulting in "praise and glory and honor" (1Pe 1:7) and "grace to be brought to you" (:13) so that "you may rejoice with exultation" (4:13). It is "in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming" (1Th 2:19) of the "revelation of His glory" (1Pe 4:13) at the "revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 1:7). However, there is a readiness required of the believer. You are to "strengthen your hearts" (Jas 5:8) "so that the proof of your faith . . . may be found to result" (1Pe 1:7) in success. "Prepare your minds for action" (:13) because you will "share the sufferings of Christ" (4:13). "Keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely" (1:13) and "keep on rejoicing" (4:13). Ensure that "you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 1:7). This is to guaranty that you "may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming" (1Jn 2:28).

"We exult in hope of the glory of God" (Ro 5:2). To rejoice is to celebrate something rewarding, and God's glory would certainly qualify. But since it is a hope it is unseen because "hope that is seen is not hope" (Ro 8:24). "Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off" (Pr 23:18). Central to this hope is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). This is the "hope that is in you" (1Pe 3:15) because it is the "hope of salvation" (1Th 5:8). Through rejoicing you proclaim "the hope and resurrection" (Ac 23:6). You rejoice because your "faith is the assurance of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1) since you know "hope does not disappoint" (Ro 5:5). Hope is in being "fellow heirs" (Ro 8:17) in terms of "the revealing of the sons of God" (:19) regarding "the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (:21). We rejoice knowing "we have a building from God . . . eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1). We don't rejoice selfishly because "a horse is a false hope for victory" (Ps 33:17). Consequently one's "hope is in the Lord his God" (Ps 146:5) and "my hope is from Him" (Ps 62:5). Therefore rejoicing means resting on "the hope of eternal life" (Tit 1:2) and "looking for the blessed hope" (2:13). Hope is the end product of tribulation because it "brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope" (Ro 5:3-4). We are to rejoice in hope and persevere in tribulation (Ro 12:12). "This hope we have as an anchor" (Heb 6:19). The expectation is for "the redemption of our body" (Ro 8:23) because "in hope we have been saved" (:24).

Tribulation causes you to remember and "this I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope" (La 3:21). "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Ro 15:13).

### **Patient Expectation**

We are to be "awaiting eagerly" (1Co 1:7) the Second Advent. This connotes an expectation of an imminent event. His "coming is near" (Jas 5:8) which implies it is close at hand. Does this mean that he could return at any moment without warning? There would be flexibility if you interpreted it as happening within a predicted, limited period of time as "when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door" (Mt 24:33). So you don't have to worry about constantly sitting on the edge of your chair with your bags packed. But you do have to "Be like men who are waiting . . . so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks" (Lk 12:36). However, "you do not know which day your Lord is coming" (Mt 24:42). Therefore, be patient like the farmer who knows when his crops will mature who is "patient about it" (Jas 5:7) "until the coming of the Lord" (:7). Its not as if they had been left completely in the dark because Jesus told them about the antichrist who caused tribulation and the apostasy. But Christ's return would not be immediate as witnessed by the "nobleman [who] went to a distant country" (Lk 19:12). Many prophecies had yet to be fulfilled and the "gospel of the kingdom shall [must yet] be preached in the whole world" (Mt 24:14).

Rapture advocates promulgate the imminency of the event since it is impending. They say it is signless so it can occur at any moment even though its inevitability may be postponed. Even Jesus said of that generation that "a sign will not be given it" (Mt 16:4). However, later his disciples asked, "When will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (24:3). Much later Jesus said, "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown" (Rev 3:11). Paul advised "let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near" (Php 4:5). James agreed saying "be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (Jas 5:8). They anticipated his return using the word "Maranatha" (1Co 16:22) which means "our Lord, come." They were so convinced that Paul suggested they be "awaiting eagerly the revelation" (1:7). He said "we eagerly wait for a Savior" (Php 3:20). Another observed that Christ would appear "to those who eagerly await Him" (Heb 9:28). Jude advised "keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life" (Jude 21). But Christ did not come as soon as they expected. Waiting then became an attitude they had to cultivate so they wouldn't be nervous and upset.

### **Position**

Is our spiritual condition mutually exclusive from our humanity? In a sense it is because "if anyone is in Christ he is a new creature" (2Co 5:17). A distinction drawn says to "be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10). That is why there is such an emphasis on he "who overcomes" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7).

We are not "perishing" (1Co 1:18) but "being saved" (2Co 2:15). We have an "inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1Pe 1:4). It is a process and you might wonder how you can accomplish this. Jesus said "the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (Jn 6:37). "I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (10:28). We are "protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation" (1Pe 1:5). "The Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one" (2Th 3:3). "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom" (2Ti 4:18). "It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Php 2:13). "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (1:6).

Proceed in such a way that you do "not lose heart . . . [for] we will reap if we do not grow weary" (Gal 6:8-9). It can be difficult because "you will be hated by all because of My name" (Mt 10:22) and "many will fall away and will betray one another" (24:10). John, himself, "was on the island of Patmos because of . . . the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 1:9). Consequently Jesus cited the perseverance of the Ephesians and that they did not "tolerate evil men" (2:2). You can wear out if you're not careful. Therefore "consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you do not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb 12:3). If you have a purpose you have a goal. Jesus told the Ephesians they "have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary" (Rev 2:3).

## **Perseverance**

"In hope we have been saved but . . . [it is] what we do not see" (Ro 8:24-25). Therefore it is "with perseverance we wait eagerly for it" (:25). "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing" (Rev 3:10). Paul pointed out to the Corinthians that it is "the gospel . . . in which you also stand by which you are saved" (1Co 15:1-2). But he cautioned them to "hold fast the word" (:2). Unless we know for sure we can lose focus. That is why John said "these things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1Jn 5:13). "We know that we are of God" (:19). Paul said "I know whom I have believed and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2Ti 1:12). Jesus told the Pergamum church that "you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith" (Rev 2:13). He told the church of Philadelphia, "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (3:11). How do you hold on and persevere? Jesus warned, "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up" (Jn 15:6). He also told the Philadelphia church "you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name" (3:8). The key to Thyatira's success was "your love and faith and service and perseverance" (2:19). "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in

Jesus" (14:12). Jesus spoke of "He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end" (2:26). He warned the disciples that "it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved" (Mt 10:22). If you persevere you will overcome. Rewards for the overcomer are listed in Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21.