

**The 7-Fold Excellencies of the Mystery:
“The Catching Up (or Rapture) - Dispensationally Considered”**

Indeed, this is a grand subject, the “catching up”, or the “rapture” of the church, the Body of Christ. There are a number of scripture passages in Paul’s letters where we could logically have begun, and we chose the first letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 4. Today we will continue our fellowship around this teaching in the same letter, chapter 5.

Review (in our Last Fellowship):

- **In our previous fellowship we closely examined 1 Thess. 4, the entry point for our study of the Pauline revelation regarding the Rapture or Catching Up of the Church which is His Body.**

We looked at this key section regarding the Rapture of the Church of which we, under grace, are members today. That key section is found in 1 Thess. 4, verses 13 through 18 and is an introductory statement of the apostle Paul regarding this most critical subject. As we have pointed out, this event is the next event on our prophetic horizon. Therefore Paul’s teaching concerning it is most important for each of us.

Our key verses were these beloved statements concerning our upward calling which we shall reread for a remembrance of our teaching last time:

1 Thess. 4:13-18

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

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

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede [precede] them which are asleep.

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

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

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

- *The teaching here is summarized and underscored with these final two verses. This is the second phase of the rapture that is being revealed here - the translation of all living believers into heaven's glory.*
- *He writes that those who have gone on before will be resurrected first and so there will be no delay until the reunion with loved ones.*
- *So our reunion in the air will be BOTH with the Lord himself AND with our loved ones who have gone before.*
- *Praise God for such a comforting truth to be eagerly anticipated.*
- *However, we see such a difference between that teaching and with what has been revealed regarding the circumstances of believers living in the Great Tribulation period.*

We continue, today, with this great subject, Paul's revelation concerning the Catching Up (or, the Rapture) of the Church which is His Body, The Rapture Dispensationally Considered - Part II

Our Outline:

- #1: The Catching Up (or Rapture): Key Dispensational Distinctives Stated,***
- #2: Key Dispensational Distinctives Contrasted***
- #3: Key Dispensational Distinctives Used as the Foundation of His Exhortation***
- #4: The Central Exhortation Repeated!***

Our Scripture for Today:

1 Thess. 5:1-11

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.

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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.

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9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

I. The Catching Up (or Rapture): Key Dispensational Distinctives Stated

The teaching of 1 Thess. 5, is summarized here!

1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

- ***So the apostle had already taught them well regarding the Rapture and the Times & Seasons that would follow, the time of Jacob's Trouble, the Tribulation period (for example, in Jeremiah's prophecy, and in the book of Acts).***
 - ***Acts 1:6-7***

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know **the times or the seasons**, which the Father hath put in his own power.
 - ***Jer. 30:4-7***

4 And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah.

5 For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.

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.**

- ***The apostle had taught the Thessalonian believers well concerning the nation of Israel's future and the kingdom promises that were given to God's chosen people. Paul here reminds them of that teaching, NOT because they should prepare for that time, but rather because they needed to know that that period was not therefore something for them to be concerned about. Simply, the reason for that was that they would not be there in that time as the false teachers had been telling them.***

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

- ***They already knew so well what the nature of that time would be so there should have been no thought by the Thessalonian believers that they were now in that prophesied time.***
- ***That time was to be a time of "night" and apparent "peace and safety". In other words, it would be a time that had been prophesied when an apparent calm would descend on the earth and a time of great crisis would overtake the hearts and minds of men. Careful watchfulness would be required to avoid being deceived by the anti-Christ and his emissaries.***
- ***According to the prophecies found in both the O.T. and in the N.T., this time of great trial on the earth will be called the "Tribulation" and the "Time of Jacob's Trouble". This period will be a time of 7 years and will be divided into two 3 ½ year segments. During the first 3 ½ years, the turmoil after the Rapture will be followed by a proclamation of "peace and safety". The anti-Christ will accomplish this peace worldwide and this time of peace and prosperity will be dulling to the minds and hearts of many so that they are unprepared for the unveiling of Satan's anti-Christ at the mid-point of this 7 year period. At that point his true mission will begin to be known. But only those who have been waiting and watching for the signs of anti-Christ's presence will be ready and will be able to resist his temptations, the most powerful of which will be "the mark of the beast", Rev. 13, 14, 15, 16, 19 & 20. All that receive this mark will be eternally damned.***
- ***Apparently the false teachers had taught the believers in Thessalonica that they had somehow missed the Rapture and were convincing the brethren that they were now actually in the Tribulation. But they had been told by Paul that they would never experience that time, for that was the Time of Jacob's Trouble (Jer. 33), and not a place or time where the church which is his Body would ever find itself. It is no wonder that they would be been very upset and concerned as a result of that teaching.***

[Your comments?]

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.

- ***For the inhabitants of that time (notice the “they” in distinction to the “ye” in verse 1), the false teaching of the peace and the safety (propagated by Satan’s emissaries) would be compelling. The “they” versus the “we” or “you” distinction is kept clear throughout this section. It is critical to see that. Paul is not implying that the Thessalonians are part of the “they” grouping at all -- there is no possibility of that as he writes here.***
- ***In that day many would fall to Satan’s compelling message (and upon all those who were not ready and waiting -- you have read those Scriptures) and the judgment would come without warning. Compare (N.T.) Mt. 13, 24 & 25; Luke 21, the book of Revelation, and (O.T.) Jeremiah and Ezekiel.***

II. The Catching Up (or Rapture): Key Dispensational Distinctives Contrasted

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

- ***The Thessalonian believers (the “ye” again) were not living in the period of darkness. Therefore they could not be sleeping and under the influence of the false teaching of that time. This is not an exhortation to be watching and waiting here.***
- ***This is a statement of fact. They were not therefore in the period where those scriptures were applicable; so they should not have been deceived by these false teachers. That is Paul’s argument to begin with here.***
- ***Note well that this is a clear teaching on the dispensational distinction between the future Israel and the church which is his body.***

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

- ***Explaining this further, the Thessalonians (the “ye”) are the children of light and of day, were not “of” night or darkness, but “of” the light, children of the light.***
- ***They did not “belong” in that period of time since the purpose of that time had nothing to do with them as members of the Body of Christ; that time was the “day of Jacob’s Trouble” of Jer. 30:7***

[Any comments?]

III. The Catching Up (or Rapture): Key Dispensational Distinctives Used as the Foundation of His Exhortation

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as [do] others; but let us watch and be sober.

- **We see that the GRACIOUS EXHORTATION is directed to the “us”, Paul and the Thessalonians (and all of us by application)**
- **They were therefore exhorted (based on this statement of fact, this reality) to at all costs to avoid being drowsy and unaware but rather to remain alert and serious about the times in which they were living, knowing the tenor of the times. This was NOT so that they might escape the trials of that day through their alert obedience considering their “discerning” of the signs of the times as in the Kingdom exhortations. Rather, it is that they might REST in the grace granted to them! Praise the Lord.**

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

- **Again, the character of the Tribulation is being highlighted here. It will be a time of spiritual darkness and drunkenness due to the Satanic lies prophesied for that time, for signs, wonders, and miracles of the “man of lawlessness”. These signs will be everywhere to see. But many due to their blindness will not see the signs of the times and will therefore be unprepared.**
- **Only the elect remnant will be able to see these signs for what they really are.**

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.

- **But the members of the Body of Christ to whom Paul writes are RATHER of the Day, meaning they “belong” to the Day, they are “of” the dispensation of the grace of God. So they should respond appropriately with their hearts protected by faith and love and the heads protected by their hope of salvation, of deliverance!**

[Your comments?]

IV. The Catching Up (or Rapture): The Central Exhortation Repeated!

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

- **Note the clear switch from the “ye” to the “us” here! Now Israel WAS APPOINTED to wrath (see many scriptures noted above). And so the GRACIOUSNESS of this exhortation is proven here again -- God has not appointed us to wrath as he indeed has those living in the Tribulation**
- **Rather, he has appointed the Thessalonians and all members of the Body of Christ to deliverance, even to salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ**
- **Of course, this “deliverance”, this “salvation” is the very rapture itself.**
- **Believers living in the Tribulation period were not promised this for they**

were told that they must “endure to the end” to be saved and that they must keep “all” of the commandments.

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

- ***This gracious exhortation continues with these words introduced with the expression “our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us”! Here is the basis of the grace we have been offered and within which we live. The entire basis for the graciousness of God towards the Thessalonians is declared to be simply this: he died for them and us! The sins were paid for in full. Paul always comes back to his death and often his resurrection -- both are in his closing statement here! Amen.***
- ***But the consequence of his death and resurrection is this quite remarkable truth stated here, “that whether we wake or sleep” “we should live together with him”.***
- ***Now, as we finish today, let’s not miss something here that is so critical to our full understanding of this teaching. The wording here is significant and often ignored, with some lack of clarity in understanding often resulting.***
 - ***We have in this letter two different Gk. words usually translated by a single English word “sleep”.***
 - ***In 1 Thess. 4:13, 14, &15 & John 11:11 it is used figuratively of the sleep of death.***
 - ***But that is not the Gk. word used here in verse 10. You can see these distinctions with any Greek study aids, even with the simple Strong’s Lexicon and Concordance.***
 1. Greek: κοιμάω English transliteration: koimao (Strong’s: G2837) - sleep, a word that is used **both** of real literal sleep and figuratively of death as in as in 1 Thess. 4:13, 14, &15 & John 11:11
 2. Greek: καθεύδω English transliteration: katheudoo (Strong’s: G2518) - sleep, a word never used of death, the opposite of watching or being alert, namely being drowsy spiritually!
 3. Greek: γρηγορεύω English transliteration: gregoreuoo (Strong’s: G1127) - watch

My Paraphrase therefore:

6 “Therefore let us not be drowsy, as [do] others; but let us be alert and be sober.

7 For they that are drowsy are drowsy 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,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we are alert or drowsy, we should live together with him." 1 Thess. 5:6-10

- ***We could compare this with Matthew's gospel (the parable of the Ten Virgins) so that we might better see the profound differences here.***

Specifically, Matt. 24:42 & 25:13 and Mark 13:33-37:

Mat 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Mar. 13:33-37

33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping (and NOT "dead")

37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

- ***What we see here in 1 Thess. 5 is a gracious exhortation indeed:***
 - ***We have not been appointed to wrath (much unlike the nation of Israel, which was appointed to wrath, the wrath of the time of Jacob's Trouble -- Jer. 30:7 and the Great Tribulation, Matt. 24:21-31). Rather, we have been appointed to "salvation".***
- ***This is entirely based on our Lord Jesus and what he accomplished on our behalf in his death by dying "for us". He died "on our behalf" or "instead of" us and that has made all the difference, hasn't it?***

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

- ***And so, by being caught up each and every one to heaven's glory in the Rapture with the Lord of glory, the believer's promise of a heavenly hope and inheritance under grace shall therefore be fulfilled.***
- ***So they (and we) should all be comforted due to the gracious essence of the exhortation provided and the sureness of the promise given -- all***

should be therefore built up and edified by these blessed words.

Conclusions / Exhortation:

- ***Our Outline:***
 - #1: The Catching Up (or Rapture): Key Dispensational Distinctives Stated***
 - #2: The Catching Up (or Rapture): Key Dispensational Distinctives Contrasted***
 - #3: The Catching Up (or Rapture): Key Dispensational Distinctives Used as the Foundation of His Exhortation***
 - #4: The Catching Up (or Rapture): The Central Exhortation Repeated!***
- ***What a blessing indeed to live under the dispensation of the grace of God with promises that relate directly to the fulfillment of his promises toward us -- AND NOT TO PLACE OURSELVES UNDER ISRAEL'S PROMISES THAT ARE SO DIFFERENT IN ESSENTIAL WAYS!***
- ***We have been endowed with such grace without limit and therefore may rest always in his comfort, for:***

1 Thess. 5:9-10
9 "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,
10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake (**gregoreuoo**) or sleep (**katheudoo**), we should live together with him."
- ***Praise God for his grace and truth. Amen and amen.***

For Your Study: Some Key Scriptures other than from Paul relevant to 1 Thess. 5:

Key Scriptures

Matt.13, 24 & 25, Luke 10, 18, 21 and others

New Testament

Mat. 24:37-42 **37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.** 38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. **42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.**

What do we learn here?

1. They must be ready for the judgment to come always
2. Only those who watch and are obedient will be accepted
3. The reference is to the times of Noah - judgment will fall as Noah had prophesied
4. When the call came, only those who were listening and waiting were ready to enter the ark
5. Verse 51 makes it very clear that those who are not obedient to these commandments will be lost.

Mat 25:31-46

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth [his] sheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came **unto me.**

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed [thee]? or thirsty, and gave [thee] drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took [thee] in? or naked, and clothed [thee]?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done [it] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done [it] unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:
 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison,
 and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of the least of these, ye did [it] not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

What do we learn here?

1. The requirements for entry into the Kingdom at the Lord's second coming are very strict indeed and few will qualify, it seems.
2. The consequence of not fulfilling his commandments is severe (v. 46), even everlasting punishment. This is the Lake of Fire where the Devil that deceived them will be imprisoned as well for all eternity (see Rev. 20:15 & 21:8).
- 3.

Luk. 21:34-36 34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. 35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

What do we learn here?

1. These verses and the previous context make it so clear what the Tribulation will be like for God's people, Israel. Waiting and readiness with all seriousness for the Lord's return is required
2. There is an issue of worthiness that mercy may be shone at that time
3. Acceptance is conditional indeed at the end of the Tribulation when Christ returns
- 4.

A Few Additional N.T. Scriptures

2 Pet. 3:10-14 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11 "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. 14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such

things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

What do we learn here?

1. The end of the Trib and the beginning of the kingdom will surely come as a thief in the night
2. Obedience and diligence is a requirement in preparation for that day

Rev. 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. **If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.**

What do we learn here?

1. Watching and waiting is a requirement
2. Those watching will know that the time is near; those not watching will not know that the Lord will come as a thief on the night
- 3.

And, a Few Relevant Old Testament Scriptures

Jer. 7:29 Cut off thine hair, *O Jerusalem*, and cast *it* away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

What do we learn here?

1. The times of the Tribulation are dire indeed -- serious preparations are needed
2. Israel and Jerusalem will be at the center of this time of trial
- 3.

Jer. 10:10 But the LORD *is* the true God, he *is* the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

What do we learn here?

1. The wrath will come
2. And the wrath will come upon the entire earth, not only on Israel and Jerusalem
- 3.

Jer. 30:4-12 **4** And these *are* the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. **5** For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. **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. 10 Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make *him* afraid. 11 For I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished. 12 For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise *is* incurable, *and* thy wound *is* grievous.

What do we learn here?

1. The coming Trib is indeed specifically designated for Israel in a way distinct from the Gentiles -- this will be the Time of **Jacob's** Trouble
2. This is not a time of peace but a time of trial
3. But the promise is there for the obedient remnant -- the Lord will preserve them!
4. And they shall be regathered from among the nations -- Israel and the nations are distinct in this plan of almighty God for the times and the seasons of the Tribulation
- 5.

Ezek. 38:19 For in my jealousy *and* in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;

What do we learn here?

1. Again, God will bring his judgment and even his wrath against his own people
2. Israel will be the specific focus
3. The wrath of God will fall on Israel for purification and preparation for blessing
- 4.

Zeph. 1:7-18 7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD *is* at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. 8 And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel. 9 In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit. 10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, *that there shall be* the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills. 11 Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off. 12 And it shall come to pass at that time, *that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.* 13 Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof. 14 The great day of the LORD *is* near, *it is* near, and hasteth greatly, *even* the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. 15 That day *is* a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of

clouds and thick darkness, 16 A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. 17 And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

What do we learn here?

1. God's wrath will fall in the Day of the Lord
2. This will be a time of great darkness and dread of his wrath
3. The distress will fall upon all, not only on the unbelievers
4. This is the passage of greatest detail in the prophetic Scriptures regarding the nature of the great tribulation period, the second 3 ½ years of the Tribulation. This time is called "the Tribulation, the Great One", literally translated, in Rev. 7:14.
- 5.

PRAISE GOD FOR HIS UNSEARCHABLE GIFT, THE LORD JESUS, AND HIS FREE AND FULL SALVATION ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORIOUS GRACE!!

AMEN. WE SHALL IN NO WAY BE FOUND IN THE TRIBULATION PERIOD BUT SHALL BE DELIVERED IN THE CATCHING UP BEFORE IT BEGINS. THERE IS LITTLE TO COMPARE BETWEEN THE SCRIPTURES GIVEN TO ISRAEL AND THE SCRIPTURES GIVEN TO THE CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST! BUT THERE IS VERY MUCH TO CONTRAST.

ISN'T HIS GRACE SO BLESSED?

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The Timing of the Secret "Catching Up" or Rapture of the Body of Christ:

The timing of the Rapture of Christ's Body is clearly PRE-TRIBULATIONAL. THIS IS EASILY SEEN WHEN WE HAVE EMBRACED BY FAITH THESE KEY TEACHINGS:

1. **The character of these times of grace and their abundance must be contrasted with the period of the great Tribulation --- THIS IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL.**
(1 Thess. 4 & 5, 2 Thess. 2 and really all of Paul's letters) in great contrast to the the prophetic revelation (for example, Matt. 13, 24, 25; Luke 21 and many others)
2. **Specifically, the working of God through our weaknesses, while fully revealing God's working according to the riches of His grace, is characteristic of this dispensation.** This must be contrasted with false signs and wonders and the visible working of Satan through his surrogates, Antichrist and the False Prophets, during the Tribulation. The present working of Satan in this grace dispensation (the Mystery of Iniquity or Lawlessness) is a ***distraction*** to the true working of God under grace designed to take the minds of the saints off of the pure revelation of Grace through the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul. Much of the Pauline revelation provides evidence of Paul's testimony in that regard. Strength through weakness is the theme. I will not give examples since they are everywhere.
3. **The exaltation of the Body of Christ into heaven's glory, the Rapture (composed of Jew and Gentile with no Jewish privilege at all) must be completed before God will again visit Israel** and reform and exalt their nation over the other nations of this world (Rom. 9-11, 2 Thess. 2)
4. **The expectation of the fulfilment of our heavenly hope at the rapture must be contrasted with the establishing of Israel's earthly hope in the Kingdom. We are looking for and expecting the blessed hope and upward calling, not the Tribulation with accompanying signs, wonders and miracles** (Tit. 2:13; 2 Tim. 4:8)
5. **And, most fundamental, the character of the gospel of grace must be contrasted with the gospel of the kingdom;** one excludes works while the other requires works. The gospel proclaimed is, of course, consistent with the working of God in a given dispensation, and finally, **the PRIORITY of the PAULINE REVELATION as the FULL REVELATION of God's Grace abundantly poured out today** (1 Cor. 15:1-10; contrast the gospel of the kingdom, Matt. 4:23, 9:35, 24:14; Mark 16)

6. For all of the above reasons, the rapture or catching up of the Body of Christ into heavens glory and the fulfillment therefore of our heavenly hope **MUST PRECEDE** the beginning of the time of Jacob's Trouble, the Tribulation Period.

Conclusions:

- The Pauline teaching concerning the Blessed Hope, the Rapture or Catching Up into heaven's glory **MUST** occur *before* the beginning of the time revealed in Scripture as the time of "Jacob's Trouble," at which point God will return his focus again to Israel and the its earthly and kingdom prophecies.
- **THE FINAL QUESTION:** Are we resting in truth of the Blessed Hope today?

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This is a grand subject indeed, the "catching up", or the "rapture" of the Body of Christ. There were a number of scripture passages in Paul's letters where we might have begun our fellowship last time. We chose 2 Thess. 2.

We also could have gone to 1 Corinthians 15 or to 1 Thess. 4 & 5 and you might have wondered why we did not start there since probably those are the most commonly referred to scriptures concerning the Rapture of the Church.

The 1 Thessalonians passage is where we shall continue today in our fellowship around the Pauline teaching regarding this most important subject. We will save the Corinthian teaching for our next fellowships, Lord willing.