

Why Tarry the Rapture?

Or, Prepare Ye the Way of the LORD

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight"

(Luke 3:4).

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Preface

The following is written as encouragement to those who would claim by faith the promise of a Pre-Tribulational Rapture. "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" (Luke 21:36). When we can better understand the LORD's reasons for tarrying, it makes waiting easier. Four times in the Book of Revelations, the LORD Jesus said, "I come quickly" (Revelations 3:11 especially to the Philadelphians; and 22:7,12,20 to anyone who has an ear). Even the Apostle John voiced his hearty approval to the LORD's promise to come quickly-- "Amen. Even so, come, LORD Jesus" (22:20). Take heart. Hang on. The LORD will not disappoint.

Do We Look Forward More to Leaving Than Seeing Jesus?

Though we do earnestly look forward to the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, we should be looking forward **more** to seeing the LORD Jesus. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1John 3:2). When we are rightly walking with the LORD, He is our Beloved LORD, and we are His Beloved Bride. "My Beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away" (Song of Solomon 2:10). [To read a short but wonderful exposition of the Pre-Tribulationally Raptured Bride's relationship to the LORD Jesus Christ, see J. Hudson Taylor's "Union and Communion".] The Psalmist rightly noted that his sought for deliverance would not only be escape from his persecutors, but also the occasion for praise to the LORD. "Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name" (Psalm 142:6-7).

If we have a Pre-Tribulational Rapture to look forward to, why does the LORD tarry? "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:37). We can be very sure that the LORD Jesus is coming as quickly as it is wise for Him to come. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly" (Revelation 22:20). It seems proper to say that our LORD must be making the finishing touches upon the preparations for His coming and our gathering. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him" (2Thessalonians 2:1). The prophets Isaiah and John the Baptist would understand the necessity for enough time to prepare the way for the coming of the LORD. "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make His paths straight" (Luke 3:4).

But, Who Are We to Expect a Pre-Tribulational Rapture?

Our deliverance will be the Pre-Tribulational Rapture; but, why should we be delivered in this miraculous fashion when others more worthy have suffered and died? "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:)" (Hebrews 11:35-38).

We do not deserve better treatment than our predecessors; but, it appears to be the LORD's purpose to set things in motion by the sudden (but not permanent) withdrawal of the restraining influence of His Spirit which resides in His people. "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He who now letteth [restrains] will let [restrain], until He [the Holy Spirit] be taken out of the way [via the Pre-Tribulational Rapture]" (2Thessalonians 2:7). This indicates an event that is now called the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. [See our article, "[Must There Be a Pre-Tribulational Rapture?](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Prophecy/Must.Pre.Trib.Rapture.html)" -- <http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Prophecy/Must.Pre.Trib.Rapture.html> - for a more developed discussion of this question.]

Why Doesn't Everyone Believe in a Pre-Tribulational Rapture?

Obviously our understanding or misunderstanding of Bible prophecy will not force the Sovereign God to change His mind at our whim. "The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand" (Isaiah 14:24). Good men and women-- who have been revealed the reality of the suffering, persecution, and martyrdom of the Church in the Tribulation Week-- understand that the present professing Church must essentially enter Daniel's 70th Week (Daniel 9:27) to see God's judgment. But, who is to be judged? Backslidden professing Christians must be the first to be judged. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" (1Peter 4:17).

Why must the backslidden professing Church experience God's judgment? The backslidden will experience God's judgment because they refused to rightly judge their own sins. "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1Corinthians 11:31). Because the professing Church today is essentially a mirror of the world, the professing Church is inexcusably sinful. Sin is sin. Only repented and confessed sin is forgiven and cleansed. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1John 1:9).

It would be excusable if Christians are not capable of walking without known sin; but, just the opposite is true. Read how the Apostle John taught his little children the impossibility of walking in the darkness of sin while maintaining the integrity of a Christian profession. "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the Truth: But if we walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son **cleanseth us from all sin**" (1John 1:5-7).

If we think that we can accomplish a walk without known sin without the moment by moment direction of the Holy Spirit, then we are sadly deceived. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). It is the very working of the Holy Spirit in us-- with our cooperation-- that makes us willing. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Our obedience is only doing what we should have done. "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). No one will be able to stand in the presence of God and declare that they have made

themselves worthy-- without His grace. Instead, we can only bow in worship and praise of the Worthy Lamb That Was Slain (Revelation 5:12) and declare: "Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (4:11).

Even some of those who believe and teach a Pre-Tribulational Rapture will not be Pre-Tribulationally Raptured, because of **unwillingness** to admit and confess sin. "Not every one that saith unto Me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven" (Matthew 7:21). If it is objected that sin is no longer an issue to the Christian, then why would the Apostle John be led of the Spirit to say that walking in known disobedience makes one a liar? "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1John 2:4). The Apostle John goes so far as to say that only those who walk in known obedience can have any assurance of eternal life, i.e., knowing Jesus Christ. "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1John 2:3).

Also, I believe that some who-- even receiving prophetic revelations-- have no expectation of a Pre-Tribulational Rapture for themselves or the Church, may be pleasantly surprised. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the Power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20). This is not to detract from the reality of their message to the professed Church-- REPENT OR ELSE! "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth" (Revelation 2:16). Unfortunately, the primary message to the Church through the modern prophets must be that of Tribulation and not Rapture. "My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? For My people is foolish, they have not known Me; they are sottish [literally, foolish] children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jeremiah 4:19-22).

What or Who is the LORD Preparing?

The LORD Jesus Christ is Preparing His Church. The Bride of the LORD Jesus Christ is still being completed. "And the LORD added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Not just the addition of people who are ready to go, but also additions to her character in her growth in grace, are necessary before our LORD Christ (Colossians 3:24) is ready to take her. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Peter 3:18).

Opportunities to witness for the LORD Jesus Christ may come in different forms. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8). Christian example is a form of Christian witness that "speaks"-- not so much by words as by action-- for the LORD to those who know you profess Christ. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). An American World War I hero, Sgt. Alvin York, had the unique opportunity to survive the battlefields of Europe, distinguishing himself in combat, while holding out so distinctive a Christian witness that Hollywood finally chose Gary Cooper to portray his story in a major motion picture. However, most Christian example does not gain the attention of the world. So, "whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the LORD, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23).

Soul-winning is the concerted effort to engage people in a conversation about the eternal destiny of their soul, while holding before them the need of making a decision to turn to the LORD. "The fruit of the

righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). The LORD Jesus demonstrated the technique when He encountered the Samaritan woman at the well at the city of Sychar. He turned a request for a drink of water into a means to bring this woman to the Messiah. "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee Living Water" (John 4:10). All Christians should aspire to win souls as the Master did. C. H. Spurgeon's classic, "The Soul Winner", promoted this very theme.

Because circumstances vary, some may be more inclined to the role of the intercessor, i.e., intercessory prayer. These intercessors are those who provide the logistical support to make the Kingdom of God go forward. "And He [Jehovah] saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained Him" (Isaiah 59:16). "George Mueller of Bristol", a classic work by A. T. Pierson, shows how George Mueller endeavored to set before the Church an example of what God would do for orphans-- and the Church-- in answer to prayer. Reese Howells, whose story is told in Norman Grubb's "Reese Howells: Intercessor"-- gave the Christians of this century a close glimpse of what even a Welch coal miner could accomplish in bringing people into the Kingdom through intercession. "And the LORD said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled" (Luke 14:23).

Beyond the addition of greater numbers to the Body of Christ is the need we all have to become more like our Master. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby" (1Peter 2:2). This growth in grace knows no limitation in its pursuit of becoming more like Christ. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). The simplicity or complexity of our daily needs is sufficient opportunity to drive the Saint to new discoveries of all that the LORD Jesus Christ is to the Christian. "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1Corinthians 15:28).

Jehovah is Preparing Israel. The modern Nation of Israel seems to understand the precariousness of their national existence in light of the bitter opposition of the Arab world, but few comprehend the reality of a soon appearing of the Messiah-- the Second Time! "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen" (Revelation 1:7). The more conservative of the religious Jews (still unconverted) in Israel are expecting a Messiah, but this is only a small minority. "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).

Who but the LORD Jesus could have known that Israel would be decommissioned as a nation and restored as a modern nation nearly 2,000 years later? But, Jesus predicted that Israel would have a Temple when the End Time would draw to a conclusion. This is clear from His reference to the "abomination of desolation" [Antichrist] standing in the "holy place" [the Temple] (Matthew 24:15). He spoke these words in 32 AD. Now Israel is a nation (since 1948) possessing Jerusalem's Temple Mount (since 1967), but no Jewish Temple yet exists. This will shortly be changed.

If the LORD were to forget Israel, He would have to forget His covenant with Abraham. "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing" (Genesis 12:2). He would have to forget His Covenant with David. "Then will I stablish the throne of thy [Solomon's] kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel" (2Chronicles 7:18).

Not only would the LORD have to forget His previous Covenants to forget Israel, but it would jeopardize

the veracity of the New Covenant that the Church presently has with her LORD. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a **New Covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they brake, although I was an Husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Not only will God not forget Israel, but He is just as ready to graft Israel back into the olive tree-- when they repent-- as He was willing to cut them out of the olive tree for their unbelief. "For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off [unbelieving Israel], and thou, being a wild olive tree [the Gentiles], wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee [not an idle threat, but a sober warning]. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue [continuing in faith is always a condition of continued reception of the blessing] in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again [Israel may and will be restored when she repents and returns in faith]. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" (Romans 11:16-24).

The LORD God is Preparing the World. Every opportunity to get the lost saved must be wisely chosen before the LORD Jesus Christ returns. The LORD Jesus' Great Commission has not yet been withdrawn. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20). Until the LORD closes the door for the Believer, the Great Commission stands. "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it" (Revelation 3:8).

There will be a great deal of people converted to the LORD Jesus Christ during the Tribulation Week (Revelation 7:9). Even after the Beginning of the Tribulation Week, Scripture records several instances of the presence of Christians in the Tribulation.

First, the 5th Seal Judgment indicates that the Church has enough Godliness for a number of Saints to witness a "good confession" (1Timothy 6:13) through martyrdom. "And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (Revelation 6:9). This indicates a Great Revival has occurred, because the Church has responded to the call for repentance, i.e., "Repent; or else" (2:16) following the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. The LORD comforts these translated martyrs, and He explains that others will be joining them through a similar martyrdom. "And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (6:11). I believe that these martyrs are essentially those who should have gone at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture but were not ready, i.e., walking without **known** sin.

Second, the 144,000 "servants" of God are mentioned in Revelation 7:1-8 as being sealed by God "in their foreheads" (7:3). Preservation and protection of the godly is the motivation of the sealing of the 144,000. "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (7:3). It is notable that these are described as coming from "all the tribes of the children of Israel" (7:4)-- Judah (12,000), Reuben (12,000), Gad (12,000), Aser (12,000), Nephtalim (12,000), Manasses (12,000), Simeon (12,000), Levi (12,000), Issachar (12,000), Zabulon (12,000), Joseph (12,000), and Benjamin (12,000). These same 144,000 are later described as "virgins", "redeemed", and "firstfruits". "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (14:4). Note that they are sealed before the opening of the 7th Seal Judgment (8:1)-- which I believe occurs at the Middle of the Tribulation Week. [See "Tribulation Timeline: When Shall These Things Be? (Part 2)" for a chronological outline of the unfolding of the Seven Seal Judgments.] Therefore, the 144,000's career takes place during the second half of the Tribulation Week after Israel flees "into the mountains" (Matthew 24:16) after the "abomination of desolation" (24:15).

Third, Christians-- "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (Revelation 7:9)-- who are gathered around the Heavenly Throne, are declared to have come out of "Great Tribulation" (Revelation 7:14). The LORD Jesus referred to the time following the Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:15), at the Middle of the Tribulation Week, as "Great Tribulation" (24:21). I believe that these Christians-- who come out of the Great Tribulation, or the second half of the Tribulation Week-- are the ones that the LORD said would be killed the same as their 5th Seal Judgment brethren (Revelation 6:11).

Fourth, after Israel has been taken over by the Antichrist at the Middle of the Tribulation Week (Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15), much of Israel will flee. Those who flee are not yet converted, but they are close to the Kingdom of God. However, eventually they will repent and turn to the True Messiah, i.e., the Nation Born in a Day (Isaiah 66:8). "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (Revelation 12:6). "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the Commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (12:17). This "remnant of her seed" (12:17) are probably the 144,000 (7:1-8), who were already converted prior to Middle of the Tribulation Week.

Fifth, in the 5th Trumpet Judgment (Revelation 9:1-12) demonic locusts are only to hurt "those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads" (Revelation 9:4). The Trumpet Judgments stretch from the center of the Tribulation Week to 8-9 days before the End of the Week. Even in the midst of the Tribulation Week, God still "knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of temptations" (2Peter 2:9). [See our article, "[Tribulation Timeline: When Shall These Things Be? \(Part 3\)](http://Whatsaiththescrpture.com/Timeline/Timelin_Trib_Timeline_Pt_3.html)" -- http://Whatsaiththescrpture.com/Timeline/Timelin_Trib_Timeline_Pt_3.html -- , for a fuller description of the Seven Trumpet Judgments.]

Sixth, when Babylon the Great is judged toward the End of the Tribulation Week, an angel sounds a warning: "Come out of her, My people" (Revelation 18:4). I believe that this marks the Pre-Wrath Rapture, which occurs immediately before the pouring out of the Seven Vial Judgments (Revelation 16). [See our article, "[Tribulation Timeline: When Shall These Things Be? \(Part 4\)](http://Whatsaiththescrpture.com/Timeline/Timelin_Trib_Timeline_Pt_4.html)" -- http://Whatsaiththescrpture.com/Timeline/Timelin_Trib_Timeline_Pt_4.html -- , for more background information on the Vial Judgments. Also, our article, "[The Seventh Trumpet and the Second Rapture](#)" --

Finally, after the Tribulation Week, the LORD Jesus Christ will appear at His Second Coming. At that time a Nation Born in a Day will appear. This is the remnant of Israel that repents as the LORD returns. "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" (Isaiah 66:8). Gentiles will be converted at this time as well. "Thus saith the LORD GOD, Behold, I will lift up Mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up My standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me" (49:22-23).

These Believers will physically enter into the Millennial Kingdom as subjects of their King of Kings. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned [over the Nation Born in a Day, who physically entered the Millennium] with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

Those who do not repent and come to the LORD Jesus Christ are the unelect, who never were or would be converted. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2Peter 1:10). An accurate but unflattering description of them is given in Jude's Epistle. "But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our LORD Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 17-19). The LORD Jesus never said that all men would repent and live. "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14).

The LORD of the Harvest (Luke 10:2) has purposefully allowed the weeds, i.e., the unelect, to grow with the wheat, i.e., the elect, until the Final Harvest, to keep from harming the wheat. "Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into My barn" (Matthew 13:24-30). In the meantime, some that we thought were tares may repent and prove themselves to be wheat.

The Sovereign God is Preparing Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet. These central figures must be prepared to do their part in the LORD's closing act of this drama of love, betrayal of confidence, suffering, redemption, communion, rejection, and judgment. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10). The most deceived being in creation must be Satan. Who else would attempt to take the LORD Jesus' place in the Temple to be worshipped as God? Not only do Satan and his followers-- the Antichrist and the False Prophet-- deceive others, but they are deceived. "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2Timothy 3:13).

Satan is the epitome of ambition-- something the world loves to see in its own. "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne **above** the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north" (Isaiah 14:13). On the other hand, God's Saints are completely without ambition, except that God would be magnified. John the Baptist best summed it up with these words about the Master. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

The Antichrist and the False Prophet would be so pathetic if they were not so abominable. The "consummation" (Daniel 9:27) of their careers is already engraved in Scripture. "And the beast [the Antichrist] was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20). If they had only believed the Word of God, they would not have ended thus.

It will be no consolation to the Antichrist and the False Prophet when their "father the devil" (John 8:44) finds himself cast into the same Lake of Fire as they. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast [the Antichrist] and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10). Far from renewing their acquaintance from days gone by, they will share their just and endless torment. "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee [Satan] at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we [Antichrist and the False Prophet]? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" (Isaiah 14:9-12).

Conclusion

Time for preparation of the "way of the LORD" (Luke 3:4) is the reason why the LORD is tarrying the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. Preparation of the Church, Israel, the World, Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet are all necessary before the LORD Jesus Christ can withdraw the Restraining Influence of His Holy Spirit (2Thessalonians 2:7) which resides in His obedient servants (Acts 5:32). Patience is the virtue that we need to cultivate in the meantime. "And the LORD direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2Thessalonians 3:5). Let us "occupy" (Luke 19:13) with our LORD's business until He comes.

This is not intended so much to convince anyone of a Pre-Tribulational Rapture as it is to encourage those who are already persuaded. You are looking for Him as the prophet Isaiah did. "And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him" (Isaiah 8:17). All who love the LORD, should be as willing to stay as to depart. "For whether we live, we live unto the LORD; and whether we die, we die unto the LORD: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the LORD's" (Romans 14:8). After all, do we not say with our mouths and believe in our hearts: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21)?

I would hope that all those who would rightly understand the doctrine of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church, would understand that this event will only take place with a spotless Bride. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2Peter 3:14). This event is a reward for faith, not for sin and sloth. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

The LORD Jesus Christ gave us His best. Can we give Him anything less than a spotless life? "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4).

"Even so, come, LORD Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

Maranatha!