

THE RAPTURE

PART I

THE MYSTERY OF THE RAPTURE

Scripture declares "the rapture" — the removal of Christians from the earth at the end of this dispensation — to be *a mystery*, something often overlooked or glossed over when dealing with this subject.

"Behold, I shew you a mystery..." (I Cor. 15:51ff).

Seeing the rapture introduced in this manner though *relates something quite indispensable about the subject*. The word "mystery" moves matters, at the outset, *to a realm of study not often taken into account when dealing with the rapture — drawing from the Old Testament Scriptures*.

The very fact that the rapture is "a mystery" *inseparably connects the origin of any and all teaching concerning the rapture with Old Testament revelation, particularly with typology in this revelation*.

And to ignore the manner in which the rapture is introduced is *to ignore the God-provided connection with the Old Testament and the typology found in the Old Testament*. It is *to ignore one of the numerous ways God has structured His revelation to man*.

And doing this is to ignore a facet of Biblical revelation, which, in this case, is *to ignore information which God has deemed necessary for man to properly understand the rapture*.

Use of the Word "Mystery" in the N.T.

The word "mystery" is used twenty-seven times in the New Testament.

It is used one time in each of the three synoptic gospels, for the same event — *the mysteries of the kingdom* (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10).

It is used twenty times in the Pauline epistles.

Paul used the word numerous times to reference *the gospel which he had been called to proclaim throughout the Gentile world* (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3, 4, 9; 6:19; Col. 1:26, 27).

He used the word to reference *Israel's blindness*, awaiting the fullness of the Gentiles, to be followed by Israel's salvation (Rom. 11:25, 26).

And, as previously seen, among several other usages, Paul used the word to reference *the coming resurrection of Christians and the corresponding removal of the living at the end of the present dispensation* (I Cor. 15:51ff).

The word is not used in Hebrews or the general epistles, but it is used four times in the Book of Revelation. It is used of *the seven stars* (1:20), of *God* (10:7), and of *the Woman and the Beast* (17:5, 7).

Meaning of the Word "Mystery" in the N.T.

The word "mystery" is an Anglicized form of the Greek word *musterion*. The word has to do with *something hidden, a secret*. It has to do with *something beyond human comprehension, something which cannot be explained by human endeavors, human ingenuity*.

In the light of the exact meaning of this word, note R.C.H. Lenski's comments in his New Testament Greek word studies on the use of *musterion* in Matt. 13:11:

"These are 'mysteries' [the mysteries of the kingdom] because men by nature and by their own abilities are unable to discover and to know them. It must 'be given' to a man 'to know' them. This divine giving is done by means of revelation..."

In this respect, seeing that the word "mystery" is used of the rapture, one must then understand the meaning of this word and how it is used in the New Testament. Then, one can proceed from that point and know that matters concerning things dealt with through the use of this word *cannot be explained through human comprehension. Divine intervention must be involved*.

God must make things pertaining to a mystery known to

an individual; and God makes things known today through *one means alone — through His Word.*

Thus, understanding what is involved in the use of the word “mystery” and that this word is used to reference the rapture, one can know that the only possible way to learn things about the rapture is *through Divine revelation, i.e., through the Word of God, through comparing Scripture with Scripture.*

And this must be done, not just through using the New Testament, but particularly by going back to the Old Testament as well. As will be shown, the word “mystery,” in reality, reflects back far more on Old Testament Scripture than on New Testament Scripture.“

“A mystery” in the New Testament does not have to do with something completely new, something not dealt with at all or unknown in the Old Testament (a common misconception which is often taught concerning the meaning of the word).

This, of course, couldn’t be true, for, there is nothing in the New that cannot be found after some form in the Old (*ref. next section in this part of the article*).

Rather, “a mystery” in the New Testament has to do with *an opening up and an unveiling of something previously introduced and dealt with in the Old Testament.* “A mystery” has to do with *additional revelation, commentary, on that already seen in the Old Testament, allowing the Old Testament revelation to be fully opened up and revealed (e.g., note that a full revelation of the Son in the Book of Revelation [Rev. 1:1] allows the “mystery of God” [Rev. 10:7] to be correspondingly fully opened up as well, for Christ is God manifested in the flesh).*

And the preceding is exactly what is in view through referring to “the rapture” by the use of the word *mystery.* There is an opening up, an unveiling of that previously revealed concerning the rapture, which, of course, would necessitate prior revelation on the subject.

This alone would tell a person that *foundational material for both can, and must, be found in the Old Testament, for, again, there is nothing in the New that does not have its roots someplace in the Old.*

The entirety of the Old Testament is about *the person and work of Jesus Christ* (Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39-47). And the New

Testament, continuing from the Old — with “the Word” (the Old Testament Scriptures) *becoming* “flesh” (John 1:1, 2, 14) — must be viewed *in exactly the same light*.

Nothing in the New Not Previously Seen in the Old

According to John 1:1, 2, 14, the incarnation was simply the Word (the Old Testament Scriptures) becoming flesh. There is *the written Word* (which is living [Heb. 4:12]), and there is *the living Word* (which is the written Word, inseparably connected with the Word made flesh).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God...

And the Word was made flesh [*lit.*, ‘the Word became flesh’]...”
(John 1:1, 2, 14a).

For example, as previously seen, the Book of Revelation — which begins, “The revelation [‘opening up,’ ‘unveiling’] of Jesus Christ...” — is simply an opening up of the Old Testament Scriptures *through a Person, through the Word which became flesh*. And any thought of an opening up of the Old Testament Scriptures in this respect extending to and having to include an opening up of the New Testament Scriptures as well could only be *completely out of place*, for there is nothing in the New that cannot be found, after some fashion, in the Old. If there were, there could not be *the necessary corresponding completeness* between the written Word and the living Word at a time before the New Testament even began to be penned.

The New Testament, *at any point, of necessity*, can only have to do with revelation which can be seen as having an Old Testament base. Revelation in the New Testament *must* bear the same inseparable connection with the Word made flesh as revelation in the Old Testament bears.

Thus, the existence of the Word made flesh *preceding* the existence of the New Testament clearly relates the truth of the matter concerning the content of the New Testament. The New

can only be *an opening up and revealing of that previously seen in the Old*. To state or think otherwise is to connect the Word made flesh with one Testament and disconnect Him from the other — *an impossibility*.

In short, *the Old Testament is complete in and of itself*; the Word made flesh incorporates *this same completeness*, and the New Testament adds *nothing per se* to this completeness. Any supposed subsequent addition would be impossible, for *this would be adding to that which God had already deemed complete through the incarnation, the Word made flesh*.

(Note that the Word became flesh before any part of the N.T. was written. Since the incarnation [the Word becoming flesh] is simply the O.T. Scriptures being manifested in another form, completeness in God's revelation of Himself, His plans, and His purposes *has to be seen in the O.T. Scriptures alone*.

If this is not the case, if the N.T. Scriptures adds anything not seen after one form or fashion in the O.T., then the Word becoming flesh before a single word of the N.T. had been penned *could only be seen as incomplete*.)

The preceding is why Christ, shortly after His resurrection, began at "Moses and all the prophets" (an expression covering the whole of the O.T.) when He appeared to and began *making Himself known* to the two disciples traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-31). The living Word, using the written Word, began putting together different facets of *a word picture pertaining to Himself*. And He could have gone to *any part of the Old Testament* to accomplish the matter, for *the whole of the Old Testament was/is about Him*.

Through this means, those being addressed would be able to see one (the word picture) alongside the other (the Word made flesh). And, comparing the two, they would be able to come into an understanding of not only *the identity of the One in their midst* but an understanding of *that which had occurred in Jerusalem during the past several days as well*.

This is the manner in which God has put matters together in His Word, making Himself, His plans, and His purposes known

to man. And this is why the Son — God manifest in the flesh, the Word made flesh — undertook matters after exactly the same fashion when making Himself, His plans, and His purposes known to two disciples walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the day of His resurrection.

Then, the same thing is seen when He appeared to ten of the eleven remaining disciples (with Thomas absent) in Jerusalem a short time later (Luke 24:36-45; John 20:19-29).

And this is the manner in which all Scripture *must* be studied. The New Testament is simply an opening up of the Old Testament, whether dealing with the written Word or with the Word made flesh.

And when dealing with the rapture, particularly since it is referred to as “a mystery,” any proper study on the subject *MUST begin in the Old Testament, for that’s where all the basics can be found.*

Begin in the Old Testament, and you won’t go wrong. Begin elsewhere, and you likely will go wrong.

PART II

AS SEEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WORD PICTURE, FORMED FROM THE TYPES

The complete Old Testament word picture pertaining to the removal of Christians at the end of the present dispensation, commonly called “the rapture,” encompasses a number of types.

The Old Testament word picture begins with the account of “Enoch” being removed from the earth preceding the Flood (Gen. 5-11a) and progresses from that point through other types such as the accounts of “Lot and his family” (Lot, his wife, and his two virgin daughters) being removed from Sodom preceding the destruction of the cities of the plain (Gen. 18, 19), “Rebekah” being removed from Mesopotamia following the search for and procurement of the bride for Isaac but preceding Abraham’s remarriage (Gen. 24, 25), and “Ruth” appearing on Boaz’s threshing floor preceding the redemption of the inheritance (Ruth 3, 4).

Each type presents *a different facet of the matter, showing a different part of the complete Old Testament word picture, with the complete picture being seen only through viewing all of the types on*

the subject together, comparing Scripture with Scripture in this respect.

ENOCH

In the type dealing with *Enoch* in Genesis chapter five, the genealogy in this chapter moves through *ten generations* — from Adam to Noah. Within this genealogy, Enoch was *the seventh* from Adam, and Noah *the tenth*.

“Seven” and “ten” are two of several numbers used in Scripture to show *completeness*, with each showing a different aspect of completeness. “Seven” shows *the completeness of that which is in view*, and “ten” shows *numerical completeness*. In each case, at a terminal point in each of the two sets of generations — *seven generations* extending to Enoch, and *ten generations* extending to Noah — Divine intervention into the affairs of man is seen.

At a terminal point in the first set of generations, a man was removed from the earth alive; then, at a subsequent terminal point in the second set of generations, a man (along with his family) passed safely through a time of destruction, with the remainder of the world perishing during this time.

That to which this introductory, overall type points (the antitype) is simple and easy to see, though this type only presents particular facets of the complete picture.

“Enoch” being removed from the earth preceding the Flood typifies *Christians* being removed from the earth preceding the coming Tribulation; and “Noah” passing safely through the Flood typifies *Israel* passing safely through the coming Tribulation, with Gentile world power destroyed and Israel then occupying the nation’s proper place in relation to the remainder of mankind (*cf.* Gen. 9:26, 27; 10:10; 11:1-9).

The things seen in Gen. 5-11a form a foundational type upon which all subsequent Scripture dealing with the subject must rest (similar to Gen. 1:1-2:3 forming a foundational framework upon which all subsequent Scripture rests). And, in complete accord with that established in this foundational type, the things foreshadowed by events in the type will occur in the antitype *when matters have been brought to completion relative to both the Church and Israel.*

The Church at this time, typified by “Enoch,” *the seventh from Adam*, will be removed; and Israel at this time, typified by “Noah,” *the tenth from Adam*, will pass safely through the worldwide destruction which will follow the Church’s removal. At a future time, God will intervene in the affairs of man once again, supernaturally bringing matters foreshadowed by events in this complete, overall type to pass.

This is the first part of the picture presented in Scripture. Then, from here, to complete the picture, an individual has to move to subsequent types dealing with the subject.

Each subsequent type presents a different facet of the picture and further adds to that which, in the end, sets forth *a complete word picture, given to shed light upon and help explain the antitype*.

LOT AND HIS FAMILY, REBEKAH

Lot and his family were removed prior to the destruction of the cities of the plain in Gen. 18, 19; and in Gen. 24, *Rebekah* was removed following a successful search for a bride for Isaac (a search and removal which followed Sarah’s death [ch. 23] but preceded Abraham again taking a wife [ch. 25]).

The first type (from Gen. 18, 19) clearly reveals Christians being removed *prior to the destruction of Gentile world power* (cf. Luke 17:28-30), and the second type (from Gen. 24, 25) clearly reveals Christians being removed *prior to God’s restoration of Israel* (cf. Rom. 11:25, 26).

Some students of the Word, going no farther than this in the types — working from an incomplete word picture — have concluded that the Church is destined to pass through most or all of the Tribulation. They look upon the future destruction depicted by the Flood and the destruction of the cities of the plain as foreshadowing a destruction occurring at or near the end of the Tribulation. And, understanding matters in this respect, they look upon Enoch’s removal preceding the Flood and Lot and his family’s removal preceding the destruction of the cities of the plain as typifying Christians being removed at or near the end of the Tribulation, preceding a destruction occurring at this time.

Then, the antitype of Rebekah's removal preceding God's restoration of Israel in Gen. 24, 25 would be understood in a similar sense, for God will not actually restore Israel until the Tribulation has run its course.

RUTH

However, when the typology from the Book of Ruth is added to the word picture — *showing Ruth appearing on Boaz's threshing floor prior to the redemption of the inheritance* — viewing this type in the light of the antitype (I Thess. 4:13-5:10; Rev. 1:10ff; 4:1ff), additional light is cast upon particularly *the timing of events shown by the previous types*. And this additional light — a vital and necessary part of the complete word picture — will show, beyond question, *that any interpretative ideology which uses the previous types to teach that the Church will go through any part of the Tribulation is erroneous*.

The type in the Book of Ruth and the antitype in the Book of Revelation clearly show *exactly* the same chronology — *the Church appearing on Christ's threshing floor, at His judgment seat (cf. Ruth 3, Rev. 1-4), prior to the redemption of the inheritance (cf. Ruth 4, Rev. 5ff)*.

The Church is seen being dealt with following the rapture in Rev. 1:10ff and 4:1ff. Then the scroll containing the terms for the redemption of the inheritance is introduced in ch. 5, with the redemption of the inheritance brought to pass through the breaking of the seals on this scroll in chs. 6ff (*ref. Part IV in this article*).

And the judgments brought to pass through the breaking of the seals on this scroll, as clearly seen in Rev. 6-19, has to do with *ALL of the judgments occurring throughout the seven-year Tribulation*, not with just those occurring at or near the end.

(Note that *the typology of the Book of Ruth ALONE* will show that the Church *cannot possibly be here on earth during any part of the Tribulation*.)

HARMONY, THE COMPLETE WORD PICTURE

And it should go without saying that *harmony must exist* in the chronology of events seen in the types in the Books of Genesis and Ruth.

The chronology of events seen in these types must be in complete agreement with one another, along with that seen in the antitype in the New Testament — an agreement which will show the Church being removed preceding any part of the Tribulation, necessitating the whole of the Tribulation being in view through the destruction depicted by events during both Noah's and Lot's day.

In this respect, Enoch's and Lot's removal, preceding respective destructions during their day, foreshadows *the removal of Christians preceding any part of the coming Tribulation.*

And, along with the preceding, viewing matters *from the standpoint of the complete word picture, along with the antitype*, this removal must be seen as one which will include *all Christians*, faithful and unfaithful alike (e.g., not only those having walked with God, *as Enoch*, but also those having involved themselves in the affairs of the world, *as Lot*).

Scripture plainly states,

"For we must ALL appear before the judgment seat of Christ [note ALL seven Churches in Christ's presence in Rev. 1:12, 13, 20, following v. 10]; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord [Where? Note the context. This terror occurs *at the judgment seat* (cf. Heb. 10:30, 31)], we persuade men..." (II Cor. 5:10, 11a).

The division of Christians relative to matters pertaining to faithfulness or unfaithfulness, *according to Scripture*, occurs *at the judgment seat following the removal of Christians from the earth*, not by a supposed selective resurrection and/or rapture (a companion erroneous teaching pertaining to Christians going through the Tribulation [not all Christians in this case, but many]).

And it is plain from the chronology of events set forth in the type in the Book of Ruth and in the antitype in the Book of Revelation (the same chronology is seen in both) that events surrounding the judgment seat *must occur at the end of the present dispensation, preceding the Tribulation.*

Thus, a complete word picture on the one hand and that which the word picture foreshadows on the other hand is *one of*

the major ways that God has structured His Word; and through this structure, God has revealed numerous things which He would have man know about His plans and purposes.

Accordingly, to arrive at a proper understanding of the things which God has revealed, man *MUST* study the word after the fashion in which it has been structured. He *MUST* set the complete word picture from the Old Testament alongside the antitype in the New Testament and run all the checks and balances, comparing Scripture with Scripture.

ONLY in this manner can man avail himself of a major part of God's revealed Word to find out exactly what the Scriptures themselves teach.

That which man may have to say about anything within the whole of the matter is of *no moment*. *Only that which Scripture reveals is of any moment whatsoever, and that which Scripture reveals is of infinite moment.*

PART III

AS SEEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ANTITYPE, IN I THESSALONIANS 4, 5

In I Thess. 4:16, 17, the Lord Himself is seen descending from heaven, though not coming all the way to the earth. Christ, after descending to a place above the earth, will “shout” (*lit.*, ‘issue a command’). The voice of “an archangel” (a chief angel [*cf.* Dan. 10:13, 21]) will sound, and “a trumpet” will be blown.

Resulting from Christ’s command, “the dead in Christ” (those having died throughout the 2,000-year dispensation, Christians) will be raised. Christ, Who is “the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25), *must be present* to give the command in order for the dead to be raised (*cf.* John 5:28, 29; 11:25, 43). Then, living believers — those Christians alive at the end of the present dispensation — will be caught up together with resurrected believers to meet the Lord in the air.

The One New Man

Near the end of the past dispensation, God interrupted His

dealings with Israel seven years short of completion, set Israel aside, and began to call *an entirely new nation* into existence. This new nation is not Jewish; nor is this new nation Gentile. Rather, this new nation is comprised of believing Jews and believing Gentiles, who have become *new creations* “in Christ” (II Cor. 5:17); and these *new creations* “in Christ” form *one new man* (Eph. 2:11-15).

During the present dispensation, God is dealing with this *new man*, not with Israel. And this *new man* — referred to as *a nation* (cf. Matt. 21:43; I Peter 2:9, 10) — is exactly as Scripture describes. *It is a nation completely separate from all other nations on earth — separate from either Israel or the Gentile nations* (Gal. 3:26-29).

And God has set aside an entire dispensation in which He will deal *solely with this new man*.

(In the preceding respect, there is *absolutely no place* in Christendom for distinctions to be made between saved Jews and saved Gentiles. Both are *new creations* “in Christ,” part of *the one new man*, wherein distinctions between those comprising this *new man* cannot exist [Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 2:11-15; 3:1-6].

But in Christendom today, completely contrary to Scripture, certain individuals from both groups [from saved Jews, and from saved Gentiles] attempt to form distinctions between the two groups.

For example, there are congregations of saved Jews calling themselves “Messianic Jews” or “completed Jews” [both misnomers], distinguishing themselves from saved Gentiles. And there are groups comprised of saved Gentiles who look askance at saved Jews, somewhat forcing these saved Jews to meet together in separate places, often forming the previously mentioned “Messianic congregations.”

All of this — by saved Jews or by saved Gentiles — forms no more than *vain attempts to build up a middle wall which has been broken down by Christ Himself* [Eph. 2:14].

And, as well, there is *absolutely no place* in Christendom for *the new creation* “in Christ” to go back to the old creation in Jacob [cf. Isa. 43:1, 7; II Cor 5:17] and attempt to bring things from this old creation over into the new [cf. Matt. 9:16, 17].

And the opposite of the preceding is equally true, something often seen among the saved from certain Jewish groups — saved Jews viewing themselves as *a saved part of the Jewish nation, a first-fruit*, rather than a part of *the one new man*.

[Note that the preceding will be true of the 144,000 in Rev. 7, 14 (saved during the last seven years of the previous Jewish dispensation, following the completion of the present dispensation and the removal of the one new man via the rapture).

But this is not true of all of saved Jews during the present dispensation, preceding this time. Saved Jews during the present time are part of *the one new man* and will be removed with saved Gentiles, equally part of *the one new man*, with no distinction (now or then) existing between the two].

God has set Israel aside for a dispensation; and He is, today, dealing with *the one new man* "in Christ," not with Israel. And for *the one new man* to go back to Israel [a nation set aside] and bring things having to do with this nation over into things having to do with *the one new man* [the Law, rituals, ceremonies, etc., or vice versa, as previously seen] is not only completely out of place but serves to break down distinctions which God established between the two creations, *adding to an already existing confusion.*)

The Spirit of God is in the world today searching for a bride for God's Son, with the search being conducted among those comprising *the one new man*. And once the Spirit has completed this work, *the one new man* will be removed, with a view to this *new man* being dealt with in relation to the reason he had been called into existence. Then God will resume His dealing with Israel (during seven unfulfilled years, completing not only Daniel's unfulfilled Seventieth Week but Man's Day as well).

God's dealings with both *Israel* (*the old creation in Jacob*) and *the Church* (*the new nation, the one new man, the new creation "in Christ"*) must be kept separate and distinct from one another. To have God dealing with either *Israel* during the present dispensation, or *the Church* once God resumes His dealings with Israel, is *completely foreign* to the way in which Scripture sets forth God's dispensational dealings with man.

Israel has been set aside, and God is presently dealing with a new nation; and, following the completion of God's present dealings with this new nation, He will remove this nation, turn back to Israel, and complete His dispensational dealings with Israel. The whole of the matter is that simple.

The one new man — comprised of those “in Christ,” *all Christians* — will be removed at the end of the dispensation. And this will be for reasons having to do with two nations — both *the one new man* and *Israel*. God will complete His dealings with one nation (*the one new man*), *in the heavens*, in relation to this nation’s calling; and God will complete His dealings with the other nation (*Israel*), *on the earth*, in relation to that nation’s calling.

The former nation possesses a *heavenly calling* and the latter an *earthly calling*; and it is only fitting that God will complete His dealings with each *in the place to which they have been called*.

The preceding is the clear teaching seen in both the Old Testament types and the New Testament antitypes, or anyplace else in Scripture. Biblical distinctions pertaining to both *Israel and the Church must be maintained, and Scripture must be allowed to speak for itself in that which has been revealed about both*.

In the Lord’s Day

If the entire *one new man* “in Christ” (comprised of both faithful and unfaithful Christians living throughout the dispensation) was not removed at the end of the dispensation (as seen in I Thess. 4:13-18), Paul could not have written that which is recorded in the verses which immediately follow (5:1-9). These verses continue from chapter four and have to do with both faithful and unfaithful Christians, removed from Man’s Day and placed together *at the same time and place in the Lord’s Day*.

Man’s Day has to do with man upon the earth throughout a 6,000-year period. It has to do with that time when matters have been allowed to remain under Satan’s control, with man having his way and sway in the kingdom under Satan.

On the other hand, *the Lord’s Day* has to do with the Lord conducting affairs in His kingdom *throughout all time — past, present, and future* (“future,” to the end of the Millennium).

The Lord’s Day runs concurrent with Man’s Day for 6,000 years, though not encompassing affairs on earth during this time (when fallen man finds himself associated with Satan’s rule and reign). Only when Man’s Day ends, will the Lord’s Day encompass

affairs on the earth; and it will do so for a succeeding 1,000 years (for Christ and His co-heirs will then rule and reign over the earth, in the stead of Satan and his angels).

Note that Abraham, following death, saw the Lord's Day (John 8:56). This was almost 4,000 years ago, in the middle of Man's Day, as it existed upon the earth. This could be true because Abraham, following death, no longer had a connection with Man's Day upon the earth. Rather, he then found himself removed from Man's Day and placed in the Lord's Day.

And exactly the same thing would be true relative to Christians, whether following death during the present time or when Christians are removed from the earth at the time of the rapture. Events pertaining to the rapture show this to be the case in no uncertain terms, with Christians removed from Man's Day and placed in the Lord's Day (while Man's Day continues on the earth).

Christians removed from the earth at the time of the rapture will find themselves in the Lord's Day (I Thess. 5:1-4), though Man's Day will still have at least seven years to run upon earth. And I Thess. 5:1ff clearly shows that the rapture (4:13-18) will include both faithful and unfaithful Christians. Both are seen together in the Lord's Day, with faithful Christians experiencing "salvation" and unfaithful Christians experiencing "sudden destruction," "wrath" (vv. 3, 9).

And either "salvation" or "wrath" would be in relation to that in view — *occupying or being denied a position with Christ in the kingdom.*

(There is a common but fallacious interpretation of I Thess. 5:1-4 which relates these verses to unsaved individuals left behind at the time of the rapture, to go through the Tribulation [with the advocates of this teaching referring to *the Tribulation* as "the Day of the Lord," or "the Lord's Day"].

This though cannot possibly be correct. Not only is such a teaching *out of line with the context* but the Lord's Day cannot begin on earth *until after Man's Day has run its course.* It cannot begin *until the Tribulation is over.*

Scripture is quite clear concerning the time when the Lord's Day

begins on earth. The Lord's Day begins on earth in connection with judgments at the time Christ returns to the earth [not at some point in time during the Tribulation, preceding Christ's return], and the Lord's Day will continue as long as this present earth exists.

Time in relation to the succeeding new heavens and new earth, following the Messianic Era, is called "the Day of God," *when God will be "all in all"* [Joel 2:27-32; 3:9-16; Mal. 4:5, 6; I Cor. 15:24-28; II Thess. 2:2, 3; II Peter 3:10-13].)

Only when Man's Day ends — at the end of the Tribulation, at the end of Daniel's Seventieth Week — can the Lord's Day replace Man's Day upon the earth. At that time, Man's Day will end on earth, and the Lord's Day will begin on earth.

This change will occur because *the Lord will then be present and reign supreme over the earth*, with the whole of God's affairs in His kingdom being brought under the scope of time referred to by the Lord's Day.

PART IV

AS SEEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ANTITYPE, IN REVELATION 1-4

Christians at the time of the rapture will be removed to appear before the judgment seat of Christ in heaven. And events of this judgment will occur *immediately following the rapture, before events of the Tribulation begin on earth*.

Christ is not judging today. Rather, He is ministering as *High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of Christians*. And He will not act in the capacity of Judge *until* He completes His present high priestly ministry, which will last throughout the present dispensation.

Thus, Christians will not be judged *until the present dispensation has run its course and Christ returns for His Church*. Once these things occur, the judgment of Christians will ensue; and this judgment, as seen in the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation, will be completed before God resumes His national dealings with Israel during the Tribulation.

Christ as Judge

In Rev. 1:13, Christ is seen dressed in the type garments worn by both *a priest and a judge*; but the position of the girdle about the breasts rather than around the waist indicates that Christ, in this passage, is exercising *a judicial* rather than a priestly role. A priest would be girded about the waist, signifying *service*; but the girdle placed about the shoulders or breasts indicates *a magisterial* function (*cf.* John 13:2-5; Rev. 15:6).

Aside from the preceding, the entire scene is *judicial*, not priestly. *Brass, fire, and a sword* are mentioned in connection with Christ's appearance, which speak of *judicial activity*. And Christ's countenance is described by the expression, "as the sun shineth in his strength," which has to do with His glory, to be manifested during that coming day of His power (a 1,000-year period of judging those upon the earth [*cf.* Ps. 2:1-9; Rev. 2:26, 27]).

Then, more information is given, which will help to ascertain exactly what is being depicted by the scene at hand. The Apostle John was transported into "*the Lord's day [the Day of the Lord]*" (v. 10), and the vision of Christ which he saw depicts Christ as He will appear *following* the completion of His high priestly work, *anticipating* His long-awaited regal work. The entire scene in Rev. 1:13-18 is prophetic, depicting Christ as *Judge in the midst of the seven Churches at the conclusion of the present dispensation, anticipating that coming day when He will exercise governmental power and authority over the earth.*

The chronological arrangement of events opening the Book of Revelation sets forth the fact that God will deal with the Church in judgment *before* He deals with Israel and the nations after this fashion (*cf.* I Peter 4:17-19). The Church will be removed from the earth and taken into the heavens; and the Church will be dealt with judicially before the Tribulation begins on earth.

A review of the first five chapters of the Book of Revelation reveals that there will have to be an interval of time between the removal of the Church and the beginning of the Tribulation. That is, the present dispensation will run its course, the Church will be removed, and certain events will then transpire in heaven (while the Church is in heaven) before the Tribulation begins on earth

(which, when it begins, will fulfill seven uncompleted years of the previous dispensation).

These events — occurring while the Church is in heaven, preceding the beginning of the Tribulation on earth — concern *the Church coming under judgment* (as revealed in chapters one through three); and these events also concern *the relinquishment of crowns* which Christians will wear during the Messianic Era (ch. 4), along with *preparations to redeem the domain* over which Christians will rule at this time (ch. 5).

(The event marking the beginning of the Tribulation on earth is not the removal of the Church, as is often taught, but the ratifying of a seven-year covenant between the man of sin and many in Israel. The Tribulation, which will ensue following the ratifying of this covenant, will last exactly seven years, completing the full four hundred ninety years of Daniel's prophecy concerning Seventy Sevens "determined" upon the Jewish people [Dan. 9:24-27].)

The Complete Church

The seven Churches in the presence of Christ in Revelation chapter one depict *the Church as a whole* coming under judgment at the conclusion of the present dispensation; and the fact that this judgment will occur in heaven and has to do with issues pertaining to the judgment seat of Christ becomes evident as one studies the opening chapters of this book.

"Seven" in Scripture is *God's number*. It is a number showing *completion*. It is used more specifically to show *the completion of that which is in view*, and in this case, the Church is in view, with "seven Churches" showing *the complete Church* (all Christians, faithful and unfaithful alike).

The seven Churches named in the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation, though referring to seven existing Churches in the Gentile world (in Asia [1:4]) during the first century, depict *completion in relation to the Church*. These seven Churches represent Christianity *as a whole* — both on earth during the present dispensation (chs. 2, 3) and in heaven at the conclusion of the dispensation (chs. 1-4, as a whole).

Chapter one introduces the matter at hand, (judgment awaiting *all Christians*); chapters two and three then continue from chapter one and form a commentary on this judgment; chapter four has to do with events following this judgment but preceding the Tribulation; and chapter five leads into that section of the book covering the Tribulation (6:1ff).

(Note: When studying the Book of Revelation, look for the book's own built-in interpretation, as in chapters one through four. A unit of truth will be given; then, following Scriptures will provide commentary upon this unit of truth, allowing the Holy Spirit Himself to interpret that which He gave through John [e.g., cf. 12:1-6 and 12:7-17; cf. 12:1-17 and chs. 13, 14; cf. 12:3; 13:1-18; 17:1-7 and 17:8-18].)

The trumpet beckoning to John in Rev. 4:1 can only be synonymous with the trumpet in Rev. 1:10. Chapter four drops back and begins at the same place as previously seen in chapter one — with the removal of the Church to be judged.

In this respect — because of the revealed events which follow in each instance — the trumpet in these two sections can only be the trumpet which will be heard when the Church is removed from the earth at the end of this dispensation, subsequently appearing in the presence of Christ to be judged, as revealed in chapters one through three (cf. I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16-5:9). Then, sequences of events, revealed throughout the remainder of the book, begin to unfold.

John, transported into the Lord's Day and moved into a future time in chapter one, was instructed to record that which he saw and send the record to seven existing Churches in Asia. These Churches, along with a brief description of each, are seen on earth in chapters two and three; but the scene back in chapter one, as well, has them in the presence of Christ in heaven, at the end of the dispensation, about to come under judgment.

An overcomer's promise is listed for each Church in chapters two and three, and in chapter one the Churches are seen as they are about to be judged relative to *works* in relation to these overcomer's promises. Chapters two and three not only furnish the background material to show *why* and *on what basis* the judgment set forth in chapter one will occur, but these chapters actually *have to do with that judgment*.

Note that several of the epistles begin with descriptions of Christ from chapter one, *as Judge* (e.g., 2:1, 12, 18). Then note the structure of each of the seven epistles to the seven Churches. All seven are structured *exactly the same way*:

- 1) I know thy works.
- 2) Judgment is then seen to be on the basis of these works.
- 3) This judgment is with a view to showing whether the Christian has overcome or has been overcome.
- 4) There is an overcomer's promise concluding each epistle, and these overcomer's promises are *millennial* in their scope of fulfillment.

Christians will be judged on the basis of *works*, with a view to *showing whether they have overcome or have been overcome*; and this will be with a view to their *realizing or being denied regal promises and blessing in the Messianic Era which follows*.

As previously seen, John's experience of being transported into the Lord's Day in chapter one is synonymous with his being removed from the earth at the beginning of chapter four. But judgmental scenes and events depicted in chapters one through three are not repeated in chapter four. Rather, events pertaining to the judgment seat shift to related events which will immediately follow this judgment.

The scene in heaven throughout chapter four provides additional details concerning the seven Churches in the presence of Christ in chapter one. *All Christians*, comprising the complete Church, will appear in the presence of Christ in that future day. And the things seen in these opening chapters have to do with that which Christians will both see and experience in that future day.

(For additional information on Revelation chapter four, refer to Chapter VII, "Crowns Cast Before God's Throne," in the author's book, "The Time of the End.")

By way of summation, to grasp exactly what is being taught in these opening chapters of the Book of Revelation, keep several things in mind:

1) The main tenor of thought throughout these chapters is “*judgment*,” first upon the Church and then upon Israel and the nations. The book begins with events occurring in that future day when Christians will be judged, after being removed from the earth; and the book then leads into the judgments of the Tribulation which are to come upon the earth-dwellers. These things (affecting the Church, Israel, and the nations) will come to pass at the conclusion of the present dispensation, preceding the Messianic Era.

2) All *seven Churches* are seen in Christ’s presence during this time, even the lukewarm, naked Church of Laodicea which had shut Christ on the outside (1:12, 13, 20; cf. 3:14-21). The seven Churches, denoting *completeness* both upon the earth (chs. 2, 3) and in heaven (chs. 1-3), reveal that *every* Christian will be removed from the earth at the termination of the present dispensation to appear before Christ in judgment.

This is completely in line with any Scriptural teaching on the subject. The widespread teaching that either all or part of the Church will remain on earth during the Tribulation has no basis whatsoever in Scripture. The Scriptures teach, unequivocally, that *the complete Church* — all of the saved from the entire 2,000-year dispensation — will be removed before the Tribulation begins; and that *the complete Church* will, at this time, appear before the judgment seat of Christ in heaven — a judgment which, as previously seen, will be completed before the Tribulation even begins on earth.

