

I Will Keep You – Revelation 3:10-11

I. INTRODUCTION

A. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1. Our main text today is in Rev. 3, but I want to begin with this –

¹³But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep,[those who died in faith] lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

2. Word had reached Paul that there was some turmoil in the Thessalonian church
 - a. you see, Paul had taught them that the Rapture of the Church could come at any moment
 - b. but someone had been saying that you had to be alive at the Rapture, or you'd miss it and have to wait till the very end of the Millennium to be resurrected.
 - c. so Paul wrote to clear things up

¹⁵For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.

3. It's from this passage we draw the idea of the *Rapture of the Church*.
 - a. Paul describes it this way in 1 Cor. 15

⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

- b. I realize this sounds almost like a piece of science fiction, but it is absolutely true
 - c. there will come a moment, when all those who believe in Christ, both the living and the dead, will be instantly transformed from these mortal bodies into immortal bodies
 - d. then we'll be caught up to meet the Lord in the clouds.
4. The word "rapture" comes from the Latin Bible, where the words "caught up" in v. 17 are *rapio*.
 - a. the Greek word is *harpazo*
 - b. it means "to take something up suddenly with irresistible force."
 5. It's about the Rapture that I want to talk today.

B. Being Bereans

1. In Acts 17 we read about a city named Berea the Apostle Paul visited on one of his missionary journeys.
 - a. he went into the synagogue and preached all about Jesus out of the OT scriptures.
 - b. the people followed along with his teaching, and when he was done, they poured back over the scriptures to make sure what Paul had taught was indeed what the Bible said.
 - c. because it was, *many* of them came to faith in Christ.
 - d. the Bible calls the Bereans *noble-minded* because they looked to the Word of God as the test of what they believed.
2. May the people of CC be given the same title – noble-minded, because we look to the word of God to frame our faith.
3. I desire that you may be able to say, "Here's *why* I believe what I believe," and be able to show

from the scriptures the basis of your faith.

4. So today, we're going to take a look at why we believe in a *Pre-Tribulation Rapture*.
5. If you're a visitor or the subject of Bible prophecy is *new* to you, this may be brand new territory.
6. I trust you'll be able to follow along, because you'll see the evidence laid out in the scriptures.

II. REVELATION 3:10-11

A. Vs. 10-11

¹⁰Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

¹¹Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

1. We'll be looking at the particulars of this letter to the Church at Philadelphia in 2 weeks in our mid-week study.
2. For now, I'd just ask you to note the *promise* Jesus makes to this faithful church.
3. Because they'd kept His command to remain faithful in the face of hardship and persecution, Jesus promises to keep them from the hour of trial that's coming.
4. Take careful note of the promise Jesus makes –
 - a. He says He will keep them **from the hour of trial**
 - 1) the word “**from**” is the Greek word “ek” and means “out of”
 - 2) we get our word “exit” from it
 - 3) Jesus is not saying that he will keep them *through* the hour of trial, but that He will take them *out of* it.
 - b. then notice Jesus doesn't promise to keep them out of *the trial*
 - 1) it's out of the very **hour** or *time period of the trial*.
 - 2) they won't even be around!
5. Consider the scope of this coming trial – it **comes upon the whole world!**
 - a. there isn't one corner of the earth that won't be affected by this trial
 - b. it's global in scope!
6. Then note its purpose – it comes to **test those who dwell on the earth**.
 - a. that phrase, “those who dwell on the earth” is used 9 times in 7 verses in Revelation
 - b. it refers to *unbelievers* who live on the earth during the horrific events of chs. 6-19
 - c. a period of time that's called *the Tribulation*.
 - d. the word “test” means to prove something by subjecting it to stresses that'll reveal its true nature.
 - e. that's what the *Underwriter's Laboratories* do to products they test.
 - 1) they subject them to all kinds of challenging stresses to see what becomes of them
 - 2) they drop them, sink them, burn, electrocute, freeze and boil them
 - 3) they subject every product to whatever kind of trauma they may encounter in the real world.
 - 4) if it still works after all the tests, then the product gets the coveted UL stamp of approval.
 - 5) the point of every test is to reveal the true nature and character of what's being tested.
 - f. the purpose of the Tribulation is to prove what's *really* in the heart of sinful man.
 - g. God pours out His wrath on earth, and the result is that the earth dwellers, instead of *repenting*, become even more bold and brazen in their rebellion.
 - h. the Tribulation *proves* that what keeps people from coming to faith in God is not a lack of evidence but a willful heart of unbelief.

B. To The Churches

1. Jesus spoke this word to the Church at Philadelphia in ancient Asia Minor.

2. What He says here at special application to them in that day.
3. But it also carries significance to us today.
4. Don't forget that each of the 7 letters of chs. 2 & 3 end with the exhortation –

Let Him who has an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

5. The promise that Jesus made to the historic church of Philadelphia continues on and finds an even more significant fulfillment for the whole church in the last days.
6. In fact, Jesus wants us to understand it that way as He referred here to an hour of trial that would test *the whole world*.

C. The Reasons We Believe The Rapture Comes Before The Tribulation

1. I want to briefly lay down 13 reasons why we believe in a *pre-tribulation rapture*. [\[1\]](#)
2. [Study sheet]
3. But more importantly that you can use to be Bereans and study this subject on your own.

III. THIRTEEN REASONS

1 – The Blessed Hope

1. The first reason we believe the Rapture takes place *before* the Tribulation is because it's called the *Blessed Hope* in Titus 2:13

... looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,
2. Remember what Paul said in 1 Thess 4:18 that we read earlier?

Therefore comfort one another with these words.
3. If the Rapture doesn't occur until the middle or end of the Tribulation, where's the comfort in that?
4. Let's say you had never heard of the Rapture *before* and I was teaching it for the very first time.
 - a. and let's pretend that I was telling you all about the Last Days
 - b. and I told you about the horrors of the Tribulation
 - 1) all the death and destruction that will take place
 - 2) I did a review of all the terrible things we find in the Book of Revelation
 - 3) plagues, pestilence, famine, drought, economic and social upheaval on a scale never seen in history
 - 4) a third of the earth's population is wiped out, then another fourth!
 - 5) the rise of the antichrist and false prophet
 - 6) and finally, the Battle of Armageddon, earth's worst and bloodiest war
 - c. and then I say, but comfort one another, cause when it's all over, we'll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air
 - d. you'd think I was nuts!!!!!! There's no comfort in knowing you've got to pass through all of that to get to the Rapture!
 - e. the **ONLY** comfort you could gain was by hoping the Last Days were a long way off in the future and that the return of Jesus was no where near.
5. But that isn't at all what the Bible tells us our attitude ought to be!
 - a. we ought to be hoping and looking for the Rapture..
 - b. the comfort of the blessed hope, the Rapture, comes from knowing it comes *before* the hour of trial that is coming upon the whole earth.

2 – God's Wrath

1. In Revelation 6:15-17 we learn that the Tribulation is a time of God's wrath being poured out on the earth-dwellers.

¹⁵And the kings of the earth, the great men, ¹⁶the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

2. Yet 1 Thess 5:9-11 says

⁹For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. ¹¹Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

3. We who've been born again are not appointed to God's wrath and that is precisely what the Tribulation is – the hour of God's wrath, testing the hearts of the earth-dwellers.
4. Friends, God's wrath against our sin was fully satisfied in the Cross of Jesus Christ.
 - a. when Jesus declared, “It is finished” he meant that the holy demands of God's justice were completely satisfied
 - b. Jesus took our place on the Cross as the object of God's wrath
 - c. therefore, it would be UNJUST for God to inflict His wrath on us!
5. We can't be here for the Tribulation because it is the hour of God's wrath and we've been saved from that very thing!

3 – Lot

1. In Genesis 18, Lot and his family were delivered from the flaming judgment of God on wicked Sodom.
2. God didn't protect them IN the judgment, He removed them FROM the very time and place of the judgment and took them up into the hills.
3. In 2 Peter 2:9, Peter speaks of Lot as an example and says

. . . the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,
4. What's interesting is that the word translated “*temptations*” is the same word for *tribulation*.

4 – Enoch

1. In Genesis 5 we read about Enoch.
2. His story is interesting because we read he never died, God simply took him one day!
3. This occurred prior to the Flood, which was God's judgment on a rebellious world
4. Now, someone might counter and say, but what about Noah?
 - a. he was a righteous man too but he went *through* the Flood,
 - b. being protected by God in the ark
 - c. isn't that a better picture of God protecting the Church during the Tribulation?
5. No – Noah *isn't* a picture of the Church – He's a picture of God's sovereign protection of *Israel* during the Tribulation, a subject that gets much coverage in the Book of Revelation as we'll see.
6. Noah pictures Israel, while Enoch represents the Church, which is raptured *prior* to judgment.

5 – Daniel

1. Did you ever wonder where *Daniel* was when Shadrach, Meshech and Abed-nego were in the fiery furnace in Daniel 3?
2. They were there for refusing to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's image.
3. By the way, Nebuchadnezzar serves as a fitting picture and type of the antichrist who makes an image and demands the world worship it.

4. Where was Daniel? Did he bow to the image? No way! So why wasn't he with his three friends?
5. That's the point! That's he's not even mentioned is a *mystery* – foreshadowing the mystery of the Rapture of the Church.
6. Like Noah - Shadrach, Meshech and Abed-nego represent Israel and how God will preserve them during the fiery trial of the Tribulation.
7. But Daniel's absence pictures the Church's absence from the very hour of the trial.

6 – We Are To Pray For Escape!

1. I'm a bit weary of those who mock the Pre-Tribulation position and say it's *escapist*.
2. They say that countless believers have faced tribulation, persecution and martyrdom – why should we hope to escape it?
3. The answer to that is simple – the trouble previous generations of Christians have faced came from this corrupt and rebellious world system that hated them; it was satan's wrath they endured.
4. Jesus told us to expect THAT kind of trouble.
5. But the trouble of the Tribulation comes from God's hand – it's His wrath as we've already seen, and Jesus already paid for that for us.
6. In Luke 21:34-36 Jesus said –

³⁴“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.

- a. the “Day” He means here is the Day of the Lord, which *begins* with the Rapture!

³⁵For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

- b. there's that phrase – “earth-dwellers” again

³⁶Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

7. Compare what Jesus says here Luke 21:36 with what he tells the Philadelphians in v. 11

Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

8. The Pre-Trib rapture isn't *escapist* – it's the very thing Jesus told us to look and pray we'd be ready for.

7 – The Jewish Wedding Ceremony

1. In John 14 Jesus spoke some incredibly comforting words -

¹“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father's house are many dwelling palces; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

2. Being Gentiles brought up in the 20th Century, we miss out on how the *original disciples* would have hear and understood this.
3. You see, Jesus is using the terminology of the Jewish wedding ceremony.
 - a. once a man and woman were betrothed, he would return to his father's house and add on a new room.
 - b. once the room was nearing completion, he would send a friend to go tell the betrothed that the time for the wedding was almost there
 - c. she would get ready, but rarely knew the precise moment of his arrival; it was part of the suspense and romance of the event that she had to wait without knowing the precise hour of his arrival.

- d. but finally the day would come and the groom would go forth to claim his bride
 - e. his friends would go with him and make noise, blowing trumpets and shouting to let everyone know the time for the wedding had finally come.
 - f. when he arrived, there was a huge feast – the wedding supper, after which the man would take his wife into the new room he'd made, and they would stay sequestered there for 7 days!
 - g. after which they would emerge and he would present her to the community as his beloved, snaring with him from then on in the life of the village.
4. This is how the Rapture will occur.
- a. we are now betrothed to Christ and He has gone to prepare our chamber
 - b. we do not know the day our hour of His return, but we do know the times and seasons because He's sent His friends, the prophets to describe them
 - c. when the time is ripe, He will come, with the voice of the archangel, a mighty shout, and the trumpet of God,
 - d. then He will take us to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and we'll be sequestered with Him in heaven for the 7 years of the Tribulation.
 - e. then when He comes again, emerging from Heaven in glory, we come with Him to rule and reign for a 1000 years.

8 – The Outline of Revelation

1. A Pre-tribulation rapture follows the outline for the Book of Revelation given to us in 1:19

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

- a. a 3-fold division of Revelation is given here
- b. **the things John had seen** – meaning the vision of Jesus in ch. 1
- c. **the things which are** – are found in chs. 2 & 3 in the message to the 7 churches
- d. and **the things which will take place after this** – are found in chs. 4-22
- e. in fact, that very phrase “after this” opens chapter 4

After these things [meaning chs. 2 & 3] I looked, and behold, a door *standing open* in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

- 2. What happened to John? After speaking to the churches, He was taken up to heaven – and it's from that vantage point that he saw a description of the terrors of the Tribulation!
- 3. It's interesting that the word “church” is used 18 times in chs. 1-3, but then isn't used *even once* until the very end of Revelation.
- 4. Chapters 6-19 which describe the Tribulation don't ever use the word “church!”
 - a. why?!
 - b. because the church isn't on earth – it's in heaven!
 - c. Chs. 4 & 5 describe the church in heaven, worshipping God
- 5. If the Mid-Tribulation Rapture position is correct, then chs. 4 & 5 would have to be placed after chapter 11, and if the post-Tribulation view is right, chs. 4 & 5 would have to be placed after chapter 19.
- 6. Only the Pre-Tribulation rapture makes sense of the flow of the Book of Revelation and follows the outline Jesus gave John in 1:19

9 – A Conditional Tribulation

- 1. In the Letter to the Church at Thyatira in ch. 2, Jesus rebukes the church for allowing a gross polluter of the Church to remain among them.
- 2. In v. 22 Jesus says -

²²Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into

great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

3. If the Rapture occurred *after* the Tribulation, this wouldn't make any sense.
4. This is one more proof that the Rapture occurs *before* the Tribulation and will sort out the *genuine believers* from those who are *mere professors*.
5. Genuine believers *will* repent, and so be delivered from great tribulation.

10 – Unknown Time Of Christ's Return

1. One of the most powerful proofs for the Pre-Trib rapture is that it's the only one that can account for the *repeated reference* to the coming of the Lord being at a time not expected.
2. Daniel 9 spells out clearly that there will be 1260 days from the time the Antichrist enters the temple in Jerusalem and declares himself god, till the Return of Jesus Christ.
3. Yet Matthew 24:36 makes it clear that no one knows the day of Jesus's Return.
4. The only way to reconcile this is to see the Rapture and the Second Coming as two different events – separated by 7 years.
5. The Jews of Jesus's day missed His first coming because they had misinterpreted the prophecies of His coming.
 - a. you see, one set of prophecies foretold a *suffering servant*
 - b. while the other set foretold a *conquering King*
 - c. they'd come to see the suffering servant prophecies as *symbolic* but interpreted the conquering king ones as *literal*.
 - d. so they looked for the Messiah to come in *Majesty* and missed His coming in *humility*.
6. We need to learn this lesson, for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ has *two phases*, just like the OT prophecies of the Messiah's coming.
 - a. before Jesus comes to earth in glory as the Conquering King,
 - b. He will come *secretly* in the clouds to receive His bride.
7. This coming, as Paul says in 1 Thess. 5, is like a thief in the night, not a King in the mid-day sun.
8. No one knows when Jesus comes in the Rapture, which is very different from His actual Second coming, which will be 1260 days after the Antichrist enters the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.

11 – Tribulation Is Unnecessary For The Church

1. In Jer. 30:7, the Tribulation is called *Jacob's trouble*.
2. It's called this because it's a unique time in which God awakens *the Jews* to embrace Jesus as their Messiah.
3. In Deut 4, Moses made this remarkable statement –

²⁹From there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. ³⁰When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice ³¹(for the LORD your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.

4. All of God's promises to Israel will be fulfilled and it's during the Tribulation that He will move decisively to make Himself known to her.
5. But in order for God to make Israel the *focus* of His redemptive attention, He will need to switch that focus *off* the Church.
6. The only way to do that, and not violate His promise to never leave nor forsake us is to take the church *out of the earth* and transport her to heaven.

12 – Squares With 70 Weeks of Daniel

1. This is a rather complex and involved proof, but one of the most powerful.
2. Let me try to summarize it as quickly as possible.

3. In Daniel 9, God told the prophet that 490 years had been set aside for God to deal with the Jews and Jerusalem in a special way of focus.
4. The first 483 of those years were fulfilled right down to the very day!
5. That leaves one last period of 7 years.
6. If the first 483 years were literal, we have to accept the last 7 as literal as well.
7. Now, God said these 490 years were *all* set aside for God's unique focus on Israel.
8. So just as with #11, in order for God to turn his attention to the nation of Israel, He must turn His focus away from the Church, and the only way He can do that is if the Church has been raptured and is with Him in heaven.
9. The church wasn't here for the first 483 years of Daniel's prophecy; it's not going to be here for the last 7 either!
10. And by the way – as Daniel foretells, that last 7 years begins when the Antichrist forges a special agreement with many nations that appears to have something to do with the City of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple
11. In light of all that's taking place in the Middle East today, and how the nations of the world are lining up trying to figure out what to do to bring peace, this all becomes very interesting to students of the Bible.

13 – The Rapture Is Imminent!

1. Finally, the apostles and the early Church all believed in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.
2. We know that because they believed Jesus could come *at any moment* – but they knew they weren't in the Tribulation!
3. We find the expectation of Jesus' coming all over the letters of Peter, Paul, and John!
4. The writings of the earliest of the church fathers carry a *very* strong expectation of the Lord's coming for the Church.
5. This simply isn't what we would find if they believed and taught a mid or post-tribulation rapture.
6. They took Jesus' words *literally and seriously* when He said, "Watch and be ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes." [Matthew 24:42 25:13]

IV. CONCLUSION

A. It Matters What You Believe!

1. The timing of the Rapture is not an essential of the faith.
2. And good people do disagree!
3. But we ought not say that it *doesn't matter* what a person believes about this issue – it does matter!
4. You see, it's inevitable that when one believes the Rapture takes place is going to effect the way they live.
5. If I believe the rapture is *before the Tribulation* then I am going to live as if it could be any moment – so I'll be watching and ready for Him.
6. In 1 John 3:2-3 John writes –

²Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

7. If I hold to a mid or post-trib position, then quite frankly I'm probably not very hopeful of the Lord's coming!
 - a. I'd prefer it was stuck way off in the future because I don't want to have to endure the Trib.
 - b. and if it is near, I won't be looking for Jesus so much as I'll be looking for the evidences that I'm in the Tribulation.
 - c. instead of looking for Christ, I'll be looking for antichrist, knowing I have to see *him* before

I'll see Jesus.

8. Also, if I have to endure the Tribulation, instead of keeping a light touch with the world, I'm going to be highly motivated to *dig in*.
9. I'll develop a survivalist mentality, and start building a shelter and storing food and figuring out how not to take the mark of the beast.
10. So it *does* matter when you believe the Rapture takes place because what we believe is the basis for how we live.
11. Folks – I'm not looking for antichrist – I'm looking for JESUS CHRIST!

B. Are You Ready?

[\[1\]](#) Adapted from Jon Courson