

IT COULD HAPPEN TOMORROW

FUTURE
EVENTS
THAT WILL
SHAKE THE
WORLD

GARY FRAZIER

...helps us understand
the wonderful plan God
has for our future,
both now on this earth
and in the life hereafter.

—Tim LaHaye,
co-author of New York Times
Bestselling Series Left Behind



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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the most inspiring woman I have ever known — my precious wife, Sandra, who makes every day a joy. Without her continuing encouragement, support, and unconditional love I am certain I would accomplish little in this life!

Salvation is the greatest gift ever given to mankind, but the love of a godly woman is a close second.

This book is highly recommended by:

“This book will not only inform you, it will inspire you and challenge you to increased evangelistic consciousness, greater missionary concern, and a desire to live a holy life in an unholy age.”

- **Tim LaHaye**, co-author of New York Times Best Seller *Left Behind*

“Gary Frazier’s passion in life is motivating followers of Christ regarding the return of Jesus. He communicates the prophetic Word with urgency and clarity!”

- **Charles Stanley**, author and Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA

Do you want to know how biblical prophecy is impacting your world? Allow Dr. Gary Frazier to separate fact from fiction for you.

Dr. Frazier, president of Discovery Missions, is a respected speaker and author of Bible prophecy and current events who has appeared on numerous documentaries, the History Channel, and national radio programs. He is the author of numerous books and is a contributor to the LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible and The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy. He travels nationally, speaking in many of America’s largest churches. Frazier attended Criswell College, Southwestern Seminary, and Louisiana Baptist University, holding several graduate degrees.



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FOREWORD

One of the best things about being asked to write a foreword to a book by Dr. Gary Frazier is that I get to enjoy reading it before it is published. When it comes to Bible prophecy, he is a good writer, clear and interesting. Gary and I have been friends for several years; in fact, we have spoken together at over 50 prophecy conferences in many of the great churches in the country. He, Dr. Ed Hindson, and I have seen hundreds come to Christ at these meetings and thousands find new meaning and purpose in life.

Studying Bible prophecy has many positive effects on both Christians and unbelievers. It helps us understand the wonderful plan God has for our future, both now on this earth and in the life hereafter. There must be some powerful reason that God made 28 percent of the Bible prophetic when it was first written. And there is! When it is fulfilled it proves beyond doubt that He is GOD. He even says that Himself. Read Isaiah 46:9–10 and you will see that He used fulfilled prophecy to prove that He was the only deity that the children of Israel should worship. For only He could “make known the end from the beginning,” and in that context He is pointing out that idols cannot forecast the future, but He does.

The best definition I have seen of true prophecy is “history written in advance,” and only God has done that which is recorded over one thousand times in Scripture. According to Dr. John Walvoord, the dean of 20th-century prophecy scholars, he has found over five hundred of those predictions that have already been fulfilled. That is no doubt what the Apostle Peter called “the sure word of prophecy.” Why is that important? One fulfilled prophecy would prove God had given it, but over five hundred fulfilled prophecies shrieks at us that the Bible, from which they all come, was inspired by God and is reliable! In fact, I like to think that those over five hundred fulfilled prophecies credential God, His Word, and His Son Jesus Christ (who fulfilled over 109 prophecies, proving He alone was the Messiah), and confirms that salvation comes from Him alone and that we can rely on the yet future prophecies of the end times to be fulfilled in the future, just as He fulfilled those that are now history.

Dr. Frazier uses many of these end-time prophecies to show how our generation could very well be the last generation before the Rapture. Not only does he describe the rapture and the surrounding events, he also puts into perspective the many other key subjects predicted for the near future. These events will cause “thinking” people to believe Jesus’ coming back to this earth is not only certain, it could very well be soon.

This book will not only inform you, it will inspire you and challenge you to increased evangelistic consciousness, greater missionary concern, and a desire to live a holy life in an unholy age — something we all need.

Dr. Tim LaHaye Palm Springs, California
co-author of the Left Behind Series

Introduction

FUTURE EVENTS THAT WILL SHAKE THE WORLD

Recently, while sitting in our den and surfing the 102 cable channels that make me crazy, I ran across a commercial that captured my attention. Of all places it was on the Weather Channel. Now I realize that no one under the age of 60 ever watches the Weather Channel, but I was captivated nonetheless. There on the screen, gleaming in the bright sunlight, was San Francisco, the famous Golden Gate Bridge and the beautiful bay. My thoughts raced back to the times my wife, Sandra, and I have spent visiting this destination and the many times we have enjoyed the fantastic sourdough bread in any number of the restaurants along the boardwalk. All of a sudden the picture began to change into a reddish color synonymous with disaster. The announcer's voice came in with this deep ominous tone and said, "The city by the bay, destroyed by a magnitude 9.5 earthquake. . . . It Could Happen Tomorrow!"

Immediately the scene changed to Dallas, Texas, the city of my birth. There on the screen was Reunion Tower glistening in the bright Texas sunlight. Reunion Tower has replaced Southfork Ranch as the most recognized symbol of this great city in the south central

part of America. For several years during the Christmas season I would load the family into our Cessna 421 and head south after obtaining permission from air traffic control for low altitude flight, fly my family around downtown Dallas and Reunion Tower. We loved taking in the festive lights of the season. Reunion Tower was always especially beautiful because during the holiday season the blinking lights would change from white to red and green. Now, here on the screen the scene began to change once again to that same reddish color. The announcer stated, "Dallas, Texas, hit by an F5 tornado and is no more. . . . It Could Happen Tomorrow!"

By this time I am sitting on the edge of my seat and my mind is racing with thoughts of the possibilities of these events when the scene changes yet a third time. Manhattan, New York! Everyone recognizes Manhattan as one of the most striking symbols of economic prowess in the world today. Although the Twin Towers are no more, Manhattan is right there with Paris, Rome, London, and Tokyo as one of the great cities of the modern world. Manhattan was glistening in the sun, just as it was on September 11, 2001. Then all of a sudden there was that reddish hue again and the voice said, "Manhattan, with its 14 plus million people, has been hit by a tsunami and is no more. . . . It Could Happen Tomorrow!"

By this time I am walking around in front of my television talking to myself. I am certain you never do this but I did. I was saying to myself, they (that is the secular world) are finally starting to realize that the world as we know it is not going to just keep on going! Things are changing and they are changing fast. It has been my experience through these many years that society in general has a Hollywood view of the world. When I was a boy I remember watching wonderful westerns on TV. I would sit for hours glued to programs watching Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, the Lone Ranger, and a score of others fighting the bad guys and sometimes the Indians. (Oops — can I say that in our politically correct world without offending my Native American friends?) I remember scenes where the Indians would be chasing the good guys who were riding on

their white horses. The good guys would always outrun the Indians. In fact, I cannot remember a single time when the Indians caught up with the guy on the white horse. He always got away! This led me to believe for several years as a little boy that white horses were just faster than black or brown ones. Anyway, this hero just kept riding and riding and riding until the Indians finally gave up. The fact is, this is not reality! The truth is that in the real world the good guy was riding and riding and his horse got tired and eventually collapsed. The Indians caught up to the good guy and killed him! Hollywood sells fantasy and Americans buy into it as though it were reality.

Could it be that someone at the Weather Channel was tapping into reality? Is it possible that someone — maybe a producer or director of programming — was a believer? Could it be that someone had perhaps read the Bible and as a result was beginning to understand the seriousness of the world situation? I wanted to know more about this so I went to the Internet and pulled up the Weather Channel's website. I was surprised to find there was a host of weather-related events they were advertising as part of what would be an ongoing series. The thrust was the unexpected weather-related events and the shocking, life-altering impact they could make on society in a matter of seconds.

Finally, I thought to myself, *the world is waking up!* You see, as a preacher and teacher of Bible prophecy I have been saying for years we are living in the end times. I have been heralding a message of the soon return of Jesus Christ everywhere I go. I have spent hundreds if not thousands of hours studying and speaking on this incredible subject, yet the vast majority of people today are simply too busy to pay attention to what is happening around them! We are asleep. Could we be waking up? I truly pray it is so.

I can say with reasonable certainty that long ago when Noah began to build the ark, no one paid any attention to him. Why should they? It had never rained upon the earth. The populace at that time had no idea what rain was and how it could affect their day-to-day

lives. No doubt Noah verbally warned his neighbors that something dreadful was going to happen soon. However, then as now, it appears the warning fell on deaf ears. No doubt, Noah was called a prophet of doom. I feel certain people saw him as a negative individual who was not much fun to be around. Yet he was right! God had told him that He, that is God, was going to destroy every living creature on the earth except those inside the ark. (See Genesis 69 for a full explanation.) To the surprise of Noah's world, one day a drop of water fell from the sky, and then another and another. Then a spring burst forth from below the earth. People were shocked! Nothing like this had ever happened before. (The earth before the worldwide Flood existed with a terrarium-like effect. See *The Genesis Record* by Dr. Henry Morris for a complete explanation). Water began to fall in greater amounts. The ground became saturated as the water level continued to rise. Finally, people began fleeing to higher and higher ground but to no avail. The waters continued to rise until there was no place left to run. The entire population of the earth, as well as all the animals, perished. The only survivors were inside the ark! What was the difference between those who lived and those who perished? Answer: Eight people listened and heeded God's warning. Untold thousands paid no attention! In fact the Bible says, "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of man" (Matthew 24:37-39).

Fast forward a few thousand years to our day. The prophetic word of God, found only in the sacred Scriptures, warns us regarding the condition of our world in the last days. Christ Himself tells us of impending wars, rumors of wars, ethnic conflicts, spiritual deception, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. Jesus said these things would be signs to us that we are in the last days, and yet most are ignoring the warnings that have been given.

That's what this book is about. It is a book of warnings! I believe with all my soul God wants us to be prepared for the disasters that are taking place and those that will come in the near future. This book is about future events that will shake the world — events prophesied long ago by God's ancient prophets and Jesus Himself. Events we should be watching for as well as events that will happen after God's children are gone. Events that are as certain to take place as the sun is to rise in the east and set in the west. I know I will be misunderstood by some, considered a prophet of doom by others, and largely ignored by most. That is okay. I must be true to my own soul and warn as many as possible of the lateness of the hour. Time is running out! As one long-running daytime soap says, "As the sand is through the hourglass, so are the days of our lives!"

That said, this is not a book of doom and gloom. Rather it is a message of hope! In fact, I believe the only ones alive today who have a message of hope for tomorrow are those who know Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives and His Word! Read on and be challenged with hope for the future.

Chapter 1

THE GREAT DISAPPEARING

Ashley laid her six-month-old baby girl, Madison, in her crib, quietly turned out the light and paused at the door for one last glimpse before returning to the living room. Ashley and her husband, Bill, relaxed on the sofa and began to talk about the events of their day. Suddenly, for some strange reason, Ashley jumped from the sofa and immediately bolted to Madison's bedroom and opened the door. She stood in the doorway with disbelief in her eyes. The crib was empty and Madison was gone. It happened just that fast, in the blink of an eye. This same scene played out over and over again in untold thousands of homes in America and throughout the world. One can only imagine the thoughts racing through the hearts and minds of those who found loved ones gone or instantaneously vanish before their eyes. How will people respond? What will they think? Where will they turn? How would you respond and, more important, would you be ready?

What do you suppose would happen if 100 million people vanished from this planet? One can only imagine the terror that would result in such a catastrophic occurrence. Will those who find themselves left behind notice that millions of people were missing. How will it be explained, and by who? Where did they go? Who took

them? Why didn't they take me? These are very logical questions, in light of what would have taken place. There is no doubt in my mind that when this worldwide event occurs, the media will be racing to offer one suggestion after another. I can picture reporters standing in the middle of the street attempting to be heard over the screaming of those whose loved ones have simply vanished. No doubt, the networks will feature 24-hour coverage of this incredible event. I can just imagine some of the ideas that will be discussed at news desks around the world. Some will say there has been an abduction by aliens or "space brothers" of all those who needed to undergo evolutionary reprogramming. Others will no doubt speak about the fact that we have long believed that there is life on other planets and now an invasion has finally taken place. But wait a minute. I'm getting ahead of myself. Allow me to go back to the beginning, where the story really starts. Let's go back to creation.

Back to the Beginning

God had a plan when He created the galaxies, put the stars and the planets in their place, and created the animals, and lastly, humanity. Scripture clearly says that God already knew the beginning from the end, and that He has had a plan for the earth we occupy since before its creation. Revelation 13:8 says, "All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast — all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world." Even the crucifixion of Christ was a part of God's plan before there was ever a need for His sacrifice. The Bible is our guide to that plan, and in it we can find a clear, accurate, and reliable picture of what has been and what is yet to come in our world's future.

I personally believe that God's plan is a 7,000-year plan. I realize we are told by the academic world that the earth upon which we reside is millions of years old. In fact, if you visit the Grand Canyon and read the literature provided at the visitor's center, you will be told it was formed 270 million years ago. Was anyone there to substantiate this? Is this fact? I do not concur with the theory of evolution. I know it's hard to read

the Bible and at the same time go through our public education system, where you'll be taught this unfounded theory as though it were fact. I might remind those who believe in evolution that even the founder of the theory of evolution, Charles Darwin, admitted that evolution was only a theory. A theory is something that hasn't been proven in an observable, verifiable way. No one has ever seen a monkey evolve into a human. A fish has never been seen sprouting legs and walking out of a body of water onto dry land. Therefore, to teach or accept a theory as fact is academic deception, and believing it takes a giant leap of faith. Since this is true, why not simply accept the creation record in Genesis as being fact? Frankly, I am persuaded it takes a greater step of faith to accept evolution than to simply accept the biblical record.

As I stated, God's plan is a 7,000-year program. From creation to the call of Abraham was two thousand years. From Abraham to Jesus Christ was another two thousand years. From Jesus Christ to the end of the era in which we now live is going to be two thousand years, and then all that's left is the return of Christ and His one-thousand-year reign on earth. I believe this because I believe God is organized. He does not work randomly, as we can see in nature itself. Right now, you might be asking yourself, *How he can say that the time from Christ's sacrifice to His return will be two thousand years when we have already passed the year A.D. 2000?* The fact is, we know that our calendars are not accurate. Your calendar may tell you it's been more than 2,000 years since the time of Christ, but its accuracy was in question from the time it was created. When the sixth-century scholar Dionysius Exiguus created the Gregorian calendar that we use today, he based it on the birth of Christ and the beginning of the Christian era. However, he didn't use an accurate date for the birth of Christ. Since his starting point wasn't accurate, we already know that the year 2000 wasn't really 2,000 years from the time of Christ. That's just one error among many.

We can see evidence of God's ordered, 7,000-year plan when we look at how God works. He created all that exists in six, literal 24-hour days, and rested on the seventh. God initiated seven Jewish

feast days, and seven is God's number of perfection. This by itself would not be very good evidence, except that in the New Testament the Apostle Peter states, "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (2 Peter 3:8).

As I write these words, I am keenly aware that much of modern Christianity and the entire secular academic world dismiss this thought as foolishness. However, this makes perfect sense to me, and as I look at the big picture of God's plan, it fits perfectly with the prophetic teaching of God's Word. I believe it will make perfect sense to you as well, when you've read what God's plan holds in store for us next, and see the convincing proof that exists for our generation being the final generation that will see Christ's return.

The Bible begins with God creating the world we now live in. He created Adam and Eve, and placed them in a controlled environment with virtually everything they could possibly need or even want. He only placed one restriction on their lives in the Garden of Eden. They were not to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve chose to break this command, and sin entered into the world. Over a process of time, as the earth was populated and sin continued to corrupt the lives of the people, God's plan called for the destruction of the world with a global Flood, sparing only eight people — Noah and his family. Following the Flood, these eight people began to repopulate the earth. Once again man's sinful nature led to the continued violation of God's plan of obedience for humankind.

Eventually, God spoke to a man named Abraham, and through Abraham and his wife, Sarah, God miraculously brought a child into the world named Isaac. Thus began the Jewish race upon the earth. The Jews were God's chosen people in a wicked world, and it would be this race that God would use to send a living sacrifice, capable of covering the sins of the world. Jesus, born to a virgin girl named Mary in a small village in Israel called Nazareth, lived upon the earth for 33½ years and was crucified upon a Cross. Three days

later He rose from the dead, walked among the people of this earth, and was witnessed by as many as 500 people at one given time before ascending into heaven from the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Fifty days after His Resurrection, Christ's Church was born on the Jewish festival of Pentecost, when the followers of Christ received the Holy Spirit, as had been promised by Jesus before His death and Resurrection. Pentecost began the world's final two-thousand-year period, before God's plan will be concluded with the physical reign of Christ upon the earth, known as the Millennial Reign. This period in which we now live will draw to its end in an event known as the Rapture, when Christ will receive unto Himself every person on this globe that has trusted Him as the Savior of his or her soul and the Lord of his or her life.

Jesus described His return and the gathering of the Church in Matthew 24:40–41, when He said, “Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.”

No matter how hard we try, I don't believe it's possible for anyone to comprehend what this earthshaking event will really be like. Perhaps it's this wonder and mystery that makes the Rapture such a controversial topic in our world today. There is much disagreement, even within the Christian community, regarding the Rapture, and the secular world mocks those who find hope in Christ's promised return for His followers. However, needlessly divisive arguments among Christians, and the opinions of those who don't know any better, make Christ's promise no less real and imminent, as we will see.

What Exactly Is the Rapture, Anyway?

According to the manufacturers of Ping golf clubs, it is the newest and best driver on the market, the Rapture 460. However, this is not the Rapture we are seeking to define in this context. The word “Rapture” comes from a Latin word which has its root in a Greek word meaning to catch up or snatch up. Therefore, when one speaks of the Rapture, one is speaking of an event in which

Jesus Christ will appear in the sky to snatch all true believers up to Himself, and ultimately to heaven.

Many today say that the very idea of the Rapture is traceable only back to the 1860s when a preacher by the name of John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) began to spread this idea among his followers. The Rapture skeptics also point to a young Scottish girl by the name of Margaret McDonald who supposedly had a vision and, from that vision, the idea of a Rapture taking place before the Tribulation period was born. Further, they point out that the word *Rapture* never appears in Scripture. If you point out that the Bible was written in Koine Greek, and not English, they will respond only with a blank stare. It never occurs to them that an English word would be decidedly out of place in Greek writings, and they don't bother to examine what the Bible does say about this prophetic event.

All of these arguments are nothing more than smoke and mirrors. The biblical teaching of the Rapture comes from the Lord Jesus Himself, as well as from the written word of the Apostles. Jesus said to the disciples, as recorded in John 14:1–3, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

The fact is, Jesus was speaking to those who, by faith, committed themselves to Him. In other words, this earthshaking event is not for everyone, but only for those who love Christ and are looking for His return. The disciples and the early followers of Christ expected Jesus to return in their lifetime. I believe, based on the writings of the Apostles Paul, Peter, and James, that the Bible teaches an eminent return of Christ for His Church.

Since Jesus might come again for His followers at any moment, we must be ready for His return at all times. In addition, I believe His return will precede a seven-year, worldwide tribulation, when God finally judges the wicked nations of the world and those who rejected Christ.

This teaching is commonly known in Christian circles as the Pre-Tribulation view of the Rapture. Is it a new idea? No. However, it is a rediscovered teaching that was lost to the Church for hundreds of years as the world languished through what is labeled historically as the Dark Ages. In the thousand-plus years of the Dark Ages, most could not read, and illiteracy reigned. The Bibles that existed were found mostly in churches, chained to lecterns, and read only by the clergy. In addition, government-controlled religion was the order of the day, and what Scripture the masses did hear was often chosen with politics, money, and power in mind, rather than the spiritual growth of the Church. The result was that some of the great truths of God's prophetic Word were lost to most, and remained so until the period known as the Enlightenment to the secular world, and the Reformation to the Christian world.

The idea that someone might be translated from earth directly into heaven without seeing death is also not a new idea. In the Old Testament, Enoch was taken into the presence of God while still very much alive (Genesis 5:18–24). Hebrews 11:5 tells us that, just as will be the case with the Rapture, faith was a requirement for Enoch to be translated into the presence of the Lord. Likewise, Elijah was taken up into heaven like a whirlwind because of his faith, and was seen no more (2 Kings 2:11–12).

So we can see that the translation of a living human on earth into the heavenly realm has been used by God in the past to bring believers into His presence, but what about the translation of the entire body of believers, prior to the Tribulation? It is a fact that the early Christians looked forward with hope and longing to a time when Christ, as He promised in Matthew 24, would return and translate all believers into the heavenly realm to be with Him in His Father's house. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:51–52, "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."



THE 15 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE Rapture/Blessed Hope

1. Christ comes in the air for His own
2. Rapture/translation of all Christians
3. Christians are taken to the Father's house
4. No judgment on earth at the Rapture
5. The Church is taken to heaven at Rapture
6. The Rapture is imminent
7. No signs for Rapture
8. For believers only
9. Time of joy
10. Comes before the day of wrath
11. No mention of Satan
12. The Judgment Seat of Christ
13. Marriage of the Lamb
14. Only His own see Him
15. The Tribulation begins



RAPTURE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

Glorious Appearing

1. Christ comes with His own to earth
2. No one is translated
3. Resurrected saints do not see Father's house
4. Christ judges inhabitants of the earth
5. Christ sets up His Kingdom on the earth
6. Can't occur for at least seven years
7. Many signs for Christ's physical coming
8. Affects all mankind
9. Time of mourning
10. Immediately after Tribulation
11. Satan bound/bottomless pit for 1,000 years
12. No time or place for Judgment Seat
13. His Bride descends with Him
14. Every eye shall see Him
15. 1,000-year Kingdom of Christ begins

A Biblical View of the Rapture

It should be enough that the Bible clearly teaches a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, but for those who need more than the perfect Word of God to convince them, there are a number of historical sources that prove a much earlier belief in the eminent return of Christ and a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, than skeptics would lead us to believe. One of these sources is the Pseudo-Ephraem sermon, written by the Syrian, Ephraem in A.D. 372.¹ Three historical references state that this sermon was written by Ephraem, and several scholars have concluded that, whether it was written by Ephraem in the fourth century, or later, it was clearly written before the sixth century — over 1,000 years before Darby concluded that a complete Rapture of the Church would occur before the tribulation.

In section 2 of Ephraem's sermon, he wrote of the end times, saying, “. . . and there is no other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one in the completion of the Roman kingdom. Why therefore are we occupied with worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world?” Later in Section 2 he continues, “For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins.” Obviously, this agrees with the Pre-Tribulation view of the Rapture. We need not concern ourselves with stockpiling food, preparing for war and destruction, or the worries of the world during the end times, because we will be spared God's judgment on the wicked.

Ephraem goes on to say in section 4, “Because those very much horrible nations, most profane and most defiled, who do not spare

1. <http://www.biblefacts.org/church/ephraem.html>.

lives, and shall destroy the living from the dead, shall consume the dead, they eat dead flesh, they drink the blood of beasts, they pollute the world, contaminate all things, and the one who is able to resist them is not there.”

It's clear that this sermon from the fourth century taught the same Pre-Tribulation view of the event we call the Rapture well before the Reformation, when this doctrine was restored, and long before Darby came to the same conclusion.

There are also later historical sources that predate Darby's teachings. Morgan Edwards, a well-respected pastor of the Baptist Church in Philadelphia during the 1760s and the premier Baptist historian of his day, is just one of them. He published his seminal works, “Millennium” and “Last Novelties,” in 1881, which contained some of his writings from the early 1740s. His earlier writings indicate that, while Edwards believed in a Rapture of the Church at the midpoint in the Tribulation, he clearly interpreted Scripture to say that believers would be spared from wrath and would be snatched away to face judgment at the Bema seat in heaven before Christ returns to establish his millennial kingdom. Like Pre-Tribulationists, he saw Christ's return for His Church as a separate event from His return at the end of the Tribulation.

I've shown that the belief in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the saints is not a new idea cooked up by heretics in the 1800s, but let's look in depth at the most important source of truth we have. The very Word of God clearly tells us that Christ will return for His Church before the rise of Antichrist and the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation.

The Difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming

The first thing we need to understand is the difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ. When Christ returns before the Tribulation, He will come to gather the saints, both the living and the dead, and they will join Him in the clouds. All believers will be taken to be with Christ in His Father's house in

heaven. However, when Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation, He will come with all power and glory to bind Satan and defeat the wicked nations of the earth, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. Most importantly, when Christ returns following the Tribulation, the Saints will already be with Him!

Let's look at the difference in Scripture. First Thessalonians 4:16–18 says, “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.” Notice that in this verse believers will be caught up in the air and will be taken to be “with” Christ in His Father's house. Now, consider Matthew 24:30–31 which reads, “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.” In this verse, when Christ returns to judge the nations after the Tribulation, believers are gathered from one end of the heavens to the other. In other words, when Christ returns to defeat Satan, the Church will already be in heaven.

Another example can be found in John 14:1–4. Here, Jesus comforts believers by telling them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” Once again, Jesus promises to return and take believers to be with Him in heaven. However, in Revelation we read about a very different event at the Tribulation's end.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations (Revelation 19:11–15).

In these verses, as Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation to defeat the Antichrist and his followers, the Saints return with Him. They are not being gathered to Him and taken into heaven, as with the Rapture passages. Proponents of the Post-Tribulation view will argue that the Church still could have been caught up in the air after the Tribulation, and just prior to Christ's return, only to turn around and come right back down for the final battle between good and evil. However, we've already seen that the saints are gathered from the corners of heaven, and not from the earth below, before the glorious appearing of Christ.

Chapter 19 of John's Revelation provides even further proof that we are indeed in heaven before the glorious appearing. At the beginning of chapter 19, you'll find a description of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Verse seven says that the Bride of Christ (the Church) has made herself ready, and we read of great rejoicing and preparation in heaven for the glorious appearing. If the marriage supper of the Lamb happens before the glorious appearing, then the Church must be present in heaven. What is a marriage supper without the bride?!

We're also told in Revelation 19:8 that believers are made ready for the marriage supper by their righteous acts. Since it is the judgment seat of Christ where these righteous acts (or lack thereof, as the case may be) are judged, the judgment of believers must also

take place after the Rapture, while the Church is in heaven. This is further demonstrated in Ephesians 5:27, which describes the Bride of Christ (the Church) being presented to the bridegroom at the marriage supper of the Lamb without stain or wrinkle, or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Since believers will only exist in this state after the bema seat judgment (the final judgment for believers), when the Church has been cleansed and made whole, we must conclude that the final judgment for believers takes place in heaven before the marriage supper of the Lamb. As we learned earlier, the marriage supper comes before Christ returns to defeat the Antichrist and issue final judgment on those who followed him during the Tribulation. Believers can't be on earth with those who are suffering through the Tribulation and the rule of the Antichrist, and be in heaven being judged for their works by Christ at the same time. The fact is, they were raptured seven years earlier and have been resting in the rooms Jesus went to prepare for them, when they are gathered together for these final events before the glorious appearing of Christ.

As these verses show, Christ gathers His Church to be with Him in heaven before the tribulation begins, and those same believers return with Him for the final battle at the end of the Antichrist's seven-year reign. But we need not depend only on these verses for scriptural proof.

Now that we understand the difference between the Rapture and the glorious appearing, let's look deeper into what Scripture has to say about the timing of the Rapture. There are three main views on the Rapture's timing. There are other less widely held views, but they are so lacking in scriptural support as to be not worth mentioning here.

One Rapture theory, the Mid-Tribulation view, holds that believers will be raptured at the midpoint of the tribulation, exactly 3½ years before Christ's glorious appearing. The Post-Tribulation view, on the other hand, sees believers going through the entire Tribulation period on earth, and only when God's judgment on the

nations is over, will they meet the Lord in the air at His glorious appearing. They will then turn around and follow Christ right back down for the final battle of Armageddon. There are some slight variations in those beliefs, but that's the gist of it. As you will see, the Pre-Tribulation view is the only view that allows for an imminent, unexpected return of Christ, both of which Scripture tells us are necessary characteristics of the Rapture.

As we examine the timing of the Rapture, you might be surprised to learn that there are actually several verses in the Bible that tell us in no uncertain terms that Christians will not suffer through the Tribulation. So how can anyone believe in a Mid- or Post-Tribulation Rapture if this is true? To that, I can only say, people see what they want to see sometimes. Perhaps guilt over how they've lived their lives causes them to feel they deserve to be judged along with the wicked. Perhaps, as with the Catholic belief in purgatory, they feel they should have to take part in Christ's sacrifice by suffering for some of their sins, even though the Bible tells us we are saved by grace and not by anything we can do. Whatever their reasons, they must ignore a great deal of Scripture to believe that we won't be kept from the wrath of the Tribulation. Take, for example, these words from Paul:

But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him (1 Thessalonians 5:4–10).

It can't get any more straightforward than that. Followers of Christ are not destined to suffer God's wrath, but to live with the Lord. As we learned earlier in verses 16 through 18, the dead in Christ, along with those who are still alive, will be caught up in the air to be with the Lord in heaven. Verses 9 and 10 reveal the timing of this event. We will be raptured before God pours out his judgment on the nations during the Tribulation.

God felt it was so important for us to know this fact, so that we would not fear His judgment on the world, that He repeated this assurance several times in Scripture. Romans 5:9 says, "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" Paul also said in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 "to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead — Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath."

As further evidence of this precious truth, numerous verses indicate the absence of the Church during the Tribulation. For example, 2 Thessalonians 2, verses 3 and 6 through 7, say that the Holy Spirit won't be present on earth during the Tribulation. However, Jesus told us in John 14:16–17, when He promised to send us a counselor and comforter to be with us in His absence, that the Holy Spirit would dwell within the hearts of believers forever. If the Church were on earth during the Tribulation, then it couldn't be said that the Holy Spirit had been taken out of the way. We can reason from this, then, that the Church, along with the Holy Spirit, is removed before the Tribulation begins.

Paul issued a warning to believers in his second letter to the church of the Thessalonians. He said, "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction" (2 Thessalonians 2:1–3). The word rebellion in this verse comes

from the Greek noun *apostasia*, and it is used only twice in the New Testament. One of those instances is found in Acts 21:21 where, speaking of Paul, it says “you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from (*apostasia*) Moses.” *Apostasia* is a Greek compound of *apo*, which means “from,” and *istemi*, which means “stand.” One of its meanings in the Greek Lexicon is “departure, or disappearance.” Interestingly, it is this definition that was used in the first seven English translations of the Bible. In fact, Jerome’s A.D. 400 Latin translation of the Bible known as the Vulgate renders *apostasia* with the word *discessio*, meaning “departure.” It wasn’t until the King James Version of the Bible was written that translators began using the new rendering of “falling away.” The earlier translations support the notion that this verse is referring to a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

We’ve established that the Holy Spirit will be “taken out of the way” during the Tribulation, allowing the Antichrist to deceive the masses without opposition or any resistance that might serve to restrain him in his pursuit of global rule. In Isaiah, chapter 26, we find yet further evidence that believers were taken out of the way before the Tribulation began.

But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead. Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer (Isaiah 26:19–21).

It is mind-boggling, really, that anyone could read these verses and not take from it an assurance that God will Rapture His Church before He pours out His wrath and judgment on the world. Remember, Jesus told His followers that after His Resurrection He

would be going to prepare a place for us. He promised to return at some later time and take us to be with Him, where we will dwell within the many rooms of His Father's house. These verses from Isaiah tell us that believers will be hidden in these rooms, while God punishes the earth's inhabitants for their sinful, rebellious ways.

A Matter of Common Sense and Logic

There is still one other way we can know with certainty that the Rapture will precede the Tribulation, and it's really a matter of common sense and logic. The Pre-Tribulation view is the only view that allows for the imminent return of Christ. Both the Mid-Tribulation and Post-Tribulation views would make it possible to know exactly when Christ will return. All one would need to do is count either three and a half years, in the case of a Mid-Tribulation Rapture, or seven years in the case of a Post-Tribulation Rapture, from the peace agreement between the Antichrist and Israel, and you would arrive at the date for Christ's return. So what's the problem with knowing the exact timing of Christ's return? The problem is, the Bible tells us that no one knows when Christ will return, not even the angels in heaven. It will be sudden and unexpected by every person on this planet. Consider the following verses and ask yourself why God would tell us to be on guard, always ready and alert, if we could predict when Christ was going to return.

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come (Matthew 24:42).

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him (Matthew 24:44).

No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father (Matthew 24:36).

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour (Matthew 25:13).

The answer is, He wouldn't warn us to be alert if He expected us to know when Christ was going to return. The Rapture will come like a "thief in the night," because there is nothing left to be fulfilled before Christ can return for His Church. It could happen tomorrow, and no prophecy would be left unfulfilled. You see, it's only a surprise if we don't need the Antichrist's rise to power and the Tribulation to happen first.

With a Pre-Tribulation view of the Rapture, no one can assume they have around three and a half, or seven years left to get their affairs in order and get right with God before Christ returns. It is the only view that makes sense in light of several verses that warn us to live as if Christ were returning tomorrow.

That is not to say we aren't supposed to watch for the signs of His return. While there are no prophetic events yet to be fulfilled before the Rapture can occur, there are many signs, including the signs Jesus told us to watch for, that indicate this is the generation that will be snatched up to meet the Lord in the air.

There's a reason Christ warned us 13 times in the New Testament to watch for the signs of His return, and be ready. He wanted us to be excited about His return, and be motivated by its imminence to save as many souls as we can in the time we have left. In the chapters ahead I will outline these signs for you, and together we will feel the same hope and assurance that sustained the Apostles and moved first-century believers to spread the good news far and wide, even while suffering horrible persecution for their efforts. As we watch the wicked world around us paving the way for the Antichrist's tyrannical rule, we will be able to look to the clouds with hope, and know that our rooms in heaven, prepared by Jesus Himself, await us.

Oh, by the way, remember Ashley and Bill, Madison's mom and dad? They went to church the next Sunday and listened while the preacher tried to explain away their sorrow. He gave a number of possibilities of what might have happened but nothing he said could fill the void that had been left in their hearts.