

I THESSALONIANS 4

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Thessalonians chapter 4 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

As we will see, these last 2 chapters of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians he gives practical lessons on how the church is to walk, how we as Christians are to live, which is very important for us just as it was for the Thessalonians.

This evening we are going to see that the church is to:

Walk in Holiness – I Thessalonians - 4:1-8

Walk in Love – I Thessalonians 4:9-10

Walk in Honesty – I Thessalonians 4:11-12

Walk in Hope – I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Keep in mind that we are the church, believers are the church, not some building but the people of God and thus, this is how we are to walk!

Let me share this with you so you can see the importance of how we walk in the faith.

We are told,

How are we to gauge what is right and what is wrong? Perhaps we determine what is right and what is wrong on the basis of our upbringing and our family traditions. Perhaps we determine what is right and wrong on the basis of our modern culture and its influences – television, radio, movies, books, and any other means of communication that we currently have.

But as a Christian, our starting point should be the Word of God. What does the Word of God say about a particular situation?

The question of right and wrong is often described as a question dealing with ethics. The word *ethics* means a custom or usage or practice prescribed by law.

In the New Testament, the concept of ethics refers to a manner of life or a pattern of conduct within the Christian faith that produces goodness, purity, and holiness.

This covers a way of life as well as areas of decision making. To put it in terms that Paul uses in 1 Thessalonians 4, we are called to “walk” in a manner that pleases God.

Paul uses this metaphor of walking over thirty-two times in his letters to describe the Christian life. We are on a journey, and as we travel along, we are called by God to walk a certain way, which means we are to live in a way that is consistent with the Word of God.

- James H. Grant Jr., 1 & 2 Thessalonians – The Hope of Salvation, p. 89

Absolutely! Paul put it like this in Ephesians 4:1-3, **“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

And I like the way this is laid out for us here in I Thessalonians chapter 4. We are to walk worthy of this high calling by which we have been called because the Lord is coming back, and we need to be ready. Don’t lose sight of that hope or may we walk in that hope of the Lord’s return!

So with that as our background, let’s begin reading in I Thessalonians chapter 4 beginning in verse 1, and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

I THESSALONIANS 4

VERSES 1-2

As this chapter opens up, we see the word, “**Finally.**” When we see that word, we think that this is the conclusion to the letter. But, as Hiebert tells us, “The word rendered ‘finally’ (*loipon*) is an adverbial accusative, ‘as for the rest,’ and serves to mark a transition rather than a conclusion.”

In other words, what Paul means when he uses this word is that he is changing the subject and the idea here is that the subject is going to change to our walk, how we are to walk in the Christian faith!

And Paul tells them that they should “**abound more and more**” or their walk should keep growing!

If you are satisfied where you are at in your Christian walk, it shows that you are stagnant in your walk, you are backsliding, you are not growing.

Now you may not like that. In fact, you may feel that is a pretty harsh statement.

But it is true.

Think about this for a minute. On this side of heaven, we will or should be growing every day, moving forward, maturing in the faith.

That is what Paul is urging these believers and us to do. He wants us to super abound in our walk with the Lord.

Paul put this perspective on it as he tells us in I Corinthians 9:24-27, **“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”**

A fighter gets knocked down when he lets his guard down, and we as Christians can be knocked down by the enemy as we fall into sin when we let our guard down and don't fight to win the race. And when that happens, we can become disqualified for service unto the Lord!

Be careful and be wise!

Also, these are not suggestions that Paul was giving them, but commandments from the Lord.

Now I thought we are under grace, not the Law?

We are and thus, these are not laws for us to follow to attain some kind of righteousness but laws we follow out of love for the Lord.

Think of it like this, in marriage there are many things you can do and things you should not do in that relationship, not because there are these laws, but out of love and when those things are not followed, it shows that there is no love.

The same is true with our relationship with the Lord! Walk in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord.

And the first one that Paul will deal with is our ***WALK IN HOLINESS!***

VERSES 3-8

People want to hear what God's will is for their life and then when you tell them, they don't want to hear it because it goes against what they want to do.

And here, as Paul describes our walk in holiness, he starts out by saying, "**For this is the will of God . . .**" I Thessalonians 4:3.

So what is God's will for our lives?

Paul tells us here that God's will for our lives is our sanctification, HAGIASMOS, (hag-ee-as-mos') in the Greek and it means to be set apart.

We are to be set apart from sin and unto God.

And we see specifically here, Paul speaks of sexual purity, that we are to abstain or stay completely away from any thought or behavior that goes against God's Word in regard to sexual sin.

You think sexual sin is just a problem in our day, not at all. You see, Paul gave these commands to a first-century Roman culture that was marked by sexual immorality.

At this time in the Roman Empire, chastity and sexual purity were almost unknown virtues.

Nevertheless, Christians were to take their standards of sexual morality from God and not from the culture. That is something that many Christians are not doing today, they are allowing the culture to guide their behavior!

To give you an idea how bad things were in Paul's day, how messed up their thinking was, listen to what the ancient writer Demosthenes said in regards to their view of sex: "***We keep prostitutes for pleasure; we keep mistresses for the day to day needs of the body; we keep wives for the faithful guardianship of our homes.***"

So sexual immorality was just a way of life for them, it was normal, and thus, Paul says as Christians we are not to travel down that road. Why? Because we are not controlled by our lustful passions, but by the Spirit of God!

And today, in the days we are living in, sexual sin is at the forefront and we are instilling these sexual sins to our children at a very young age!

Let me share this with you and you may be shocked by what the article is saying, but this is what is being taught to children in the public-school system. This article is from October of 2019 and we are told,

The sex and gender revolutionaries have officially taken over the Austin Independent School District [Texas] without firing a single shot.

In spite of overwhelming opposition from parents and pastors, the district's trustees voted early Tuesday morning to implement a pornographic sex-education policy that includes instruction on anal sex and how to place a condom on an erect penis. . . .

The radical sex-education policy will provide graphic instruction on gender identity and mandated support of the LGBT movement.

Students in grade school and middle school will also be taught how to get an abortion or obtain birth-control pills without parental permission or consent.

The school district will also begin instructing students to no longer use words like "mother" or "father."

"Use gender inclusive language," the district's material mandates. "It is important to avoid terms which refer to only 'male' or 'female' identities when speaking with young children as this can limit their understanding of gender into binaries and can exclude children who may not identify within these identities."

The district's curriculum recommends "integrating" words like parents or guardians instead of mom or dad. . . .

To force this kind of pornography on school children is nothing more than government-sanctioned child abuse. The district's policy is all about grooming children for sex.

As one parent declared, "The curriculum is an attack on Christianity and family and on parental rights." . . .

More than 100 citizens spoke at Monday night's district meeting and the overwhelming majority were opposed to the policy.

Sadly, the sex and gender revolutionaries have already commandeered a number of public schools around the nation. Instead of teaching our kids math and science, they are trying to convince little boys that they are really little girls.

- <http://bit.ly/2r3FbeC>

What is the will of God for us, for our children? "**. . . that you should abstain from sexual immorality.**" I Thessalonians 4:3.

Satan hates anything of God and thus, what we see in this world is this opposition to the things of God and it is permeating our society today!

As we see this sexual freedom, sexual immorality increasing, there are many consequences to that including pregnancy, divorce, suicide, as well as an increase in sexually transmitted diseases. Listen carefully. We are told,

Rates of syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia have climbed for the fourth consecutive year in the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced Tuesday at the National STD Prevention Conference in Washington.

Last year, [2017] nearly 2.3 million US cases of these sexually transmitted diseases were diagnosed, according to preliminary data.

That's the highest number ever reported nationwide, breaking the record set in 2016 by more than 200,000 cases, according to the CDC.

"It is time that President Trump and [Health and Human Services] Secretary [Alex] Azar declare STDs in America a public health crisis," David Harvey, executive director of the National Coalition of STD Directors, which co-hosted the conference said Tuesday.

In 2013, there were 1,752,285 total cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis diagnosed in the United States. That number grew to 1,811,850 in 2014; 1,945,746 in 2015; 2,094,682 in 2016; and 2,294,821 in 2017, according to the preliminary CDC data.

"We're talking about millions of infections with just these three infections," said Dr. Edward Hook, endowed professor of infectious disease translational research at the University of Alabama at Birmingham's School of Medicine and scientific committee chair of the National STD Prevention Conference.

It's concerning to see such tremendous and significant increases in STD rates across the country, Hook said.

"Gonorrhea diagnoses that were reported to the CDC increased by nearly 67%. Diagnoses of primary and secondary syphilis increased over 75%, and chlamydia rates continued to increase," he said. "It's important to remember that while these are preliminary data, and the data are eight months out of date. There's absolutely no reason to think that the increases that are being described by the CDC haven't continued into 2018."

They spend so much time and money trying to figure out what to do and things are not working but God has the answer. AIDS, STD's can be done away with in a generation and that is exactly what Paul is talking about here!

“... that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.” I Thessalonians 4:3-4.

In other words, sexual activity between a husband and a wife and this epidemic would be done away with. But instead, we are teaching children, younger and younger children how to have sex and guess what, they are doing what they were taught to do!

May we do what God has called us to do and not listen to what the world is telling us to do!

And think about this for us as Christians. As Christians, we are not like animals that are controlled by their lusts, their body appetites. We are controlled by the Spirit of God who speaks to our spirit and thus, we should be able to control our bodies, not succumb to the fleshly impulses!

And whoever goes down that path of sexual sin, transgresses the will of God, there are consequences to their actions because they are taking advantage, taking something greedily for their own personal gain.

You see, the adulterer takes advantage or defrauds his spouse and children.

The fornicator defrauds his future spouse and children.

I don't believe you hear this too often in the church, but as Christians we are to take charge of our bodies, of our holiness.

Yes, Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 5:23, **“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

But we must also walk in holiness, purpose in our heart that we will not go down that path!

It is as Paul said in I Corinthians 6:18-20, **“Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”**

God has His role and then we can resist the work of the Holy Spirit or submit to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but it is our choice!

Now, if you violate the will of God, if you are involved in sexual sin, you are turning your back to God.

This is not a suggestion and I don't care how you try to rationalize it, if you are involved in this you are in sin.

God has called us to a higher standard to live by, don't lower the standard so you can justify your sin.

Peter tells us, **“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”** I Peter 1:13-16.

Does this mean that the Thessalonian believers were involved in sexual sin?

I don't believe so, but since this lifestyle was all around them, since it was considered a normal part of their life, it was a warning to them to flee these things, to stay away from them, to walk in holiness and not immorality!

What a great warning to us as sexual sin today is thought of as a normal part of our life. We see it on television, at the movies, on billboards, magazines and even among family and friends who are involved in these things and thus, we are to *walk in holiness* and not to succumb to this sin!

VERSES 9-10

In these verses Paul admonishes the Thessalonian believers to ***WALK IN LOVE!***

Paul uses two words for love here in I Thessalonians 4:9.

He starts out with a brotherly love or the Greek word is ***PHILADELPHIA***.

Then, when he speaks of God teaching us to love, he uses the Greek word ***AGAPE***.

Look at how this is played out.

First of all, we are to have that affection that brothers and sisters in Christ should have, that brotherly type of love.

Then, we are to have that love that can only come from God, that unconditional love or ***AGAPE*** love! God is teaching us, by His Spirit, how to love sacrificially! Both are important as we ***WALK IN LOVE!***

In Romans 5:5 Paul tells us, **“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”**

Then why did Paul even bring this up, this basic principle that the Holy Spirit gives to us, the love of God?

Because we need to be reminded, we can allow things to get in the way of receiving God's love or we can let things get in the way of expressing God's love to our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

If you are doing that now you are living in rebellion against God, you are in sin.

I know, some of you may not agree with that statement, you might be thinking I've gone a little too far, but listen to what John tells us because he went just as far.

In I John 2:9-11 John tells us, **“He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”**

I find it interesting that when we are involved in situations like this, we can justify our behavior. Why is that?

Because we have closed our eyes to the truth, blinded them so we can't see.

What is the solution?

Repent before God; restore the relationship with the brother or sister in the Lord for as Jesus said, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

People are watching us, what are they seeing?

May we ***WALK IN LOVE!***

VERSES 11-12

Paul tells us here that we are to ***WALK IN HONESTY!***

And we see here that Paul's first point is that we should live quiet lives, we should not be anxious, worried, going crazy over things because of what we see happening, but we should be at peace knowing God is in control.

Also, we should not be exalting self!

In regard to this, one writer put it this way as he shows us the successful cult that is leading many people to Hell, more than any other cult out there. What is that cult? He tells us,

This cult has a god (the self), an army of priests (celebrities), a set of scriptures (tabloids and the like), a creed (the demand for "excitement"), and countless places of worship (amusement parks, theaters, concert halls, sports arenas, and every TV is a little chapel). This cult seduces people into living their lives for one thing – the thrill of the moment. But these thrills are quickly over and forgotten, and all that is important is the next fun thing. This cult numbs us so that the only question we ask is "Is it fun?" It never wants us to ask, "Is it true?" "Is it right?" "Is it good?" "Is it godly?"

- Source Unknown

Folks, God is not interested in making us happy, that is not His purpose. He is making us holy and there are times we might not like it, but it is what is needed in our lives to purge out the garbage that is there, to be more like Him!

And I will tell you this, if you are surrendering your life to the Lord, if you are following Him, then your joy will be full!

It is as David said in Psalm 16:11, **“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”**

Secondly, Paul tells us we are to mind our own business or don't stick your nose in where it doesn't belong, don't be a busybody!

In II Thessalonians 3:11-12 Paul once again picks up on this as he tells us, **“For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.”**

How can we stop being busybodies?

That is Paul's next point!

We are to work with our hands, we are to supply the needs for our family and our own needs!

That is one way to stop being a busybody, be so busy you don't have time to stick your nose in other people's business!

Now to the Greeks, work done with the hands was degrading, thus, they made their slaves do the work.

Sadly, many Christians do the same today; they expect others to supply their needs because they don't want to work.

I don't understand this mentality, especially among Christians.

Paul said in II Thessalonians 3:10, **“For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”**

And in I Timothy 5:8 Paul tells us, **“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”**

Why is this such a big deal to the Lord?

Paul tells us it is because the unsaved are watching us and we are to be examples to them of what God has done in our lives.

If we seek attention, if we are all worried, if we are a busybody, if we are lazy, it sheds a bad light upon God, it is a bad witness!

You see, by our actions, by what we say we are going to influence people either to Jesus or push them away from Him!

Thus, ***WALK IN HONESTY!***

Now in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 Paul is showing the Thessalonians how they are to ***WALK IN HOPE*** – the hope of the soon return of Jesus Christ for His bride, the church, we call it the Rapture!

And sadly, many are ignorant about this or they see it as some kind of allegory, as not being true. Some even say that if you believe in the Rapture you are not a believer and you will be deceived by the Antichrist and go to Hell!

Listen carefully to how Paul opens up this section, because we should not be ignorant of this event, ***THE RAPTURE!***

VERSE 13

In speaking of the Rapture of the church, Paul tells us that he doesn't want us to be ignorant about this event, and yet, the church is truly ignorant about it.

Like I have said, some feel there is no such thing as the Rapture, others feel it is at the end of the Tribulation Period, some in the middle of that seven year period of time or the 3½ year mark, others say it is just a little past the half-way mark! All kinds of confusion and, like Paul said, ignorance.

But he does not want us to be ignorant about this event and I believe that the Rapture of the church will take place prior to the start of the seven-year Tribulation Period and I will show you why in a few minutes!

In the Scriptures, when a believer dies it speaks of him going to sleep.

When you go to sleep there is rest, there is peace, there is comfort.

Now, when an unbeliever dies the Bible never speaks of him being asleep because they have no rest, no peace, no comfort.

When we die, as Christians, our body goes back to the dust of the earth and our spirit and soul go to be with the Lord.

That is our hope, it is not that we don't sorrow when a love one dies. We are sad, but we also know that we will see that person one day in glory if they are a believer in Jesus Christ.

It is like sending a loved one off on a long trip, you will see them again but it will be a long time before it happens and thus, you are sad, you sorrow, but not like the unsaved will sorrow.

You see, for the unsaved there is no hope for them in death, as Barclay points out for us:

In the face of death the pagan world stood in despair. They met it with grim resignation and bleak hopelessness. Aeschylus wrote, "Once a man dies there is no resurrection." Theocritus wrote, "There is hope for those who are alive, but those who have died are without hope." Catullus wrote, "When once our brief light sets, there is one perpetual night through which we must sleep." On their tombstones grim epitaphs were carved, "I was not; I became; I am not: I care not."

- William Barclay, The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, p. 203

What a sad place to be, but in Christ our hope is that as He rose from the dead God will raise us up one day in glory.

Why be in a place where there is no hope when Jesus wants to give you hope?

VERSES 14-17

Hopefully you will see that this event, the Rapture is something that is very clear in the Scriptures and it is something we should be looking for, the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for His Bride, the Church!

First of all, in I Thessalonians 4:14, the word "**if**" does not indicate doubt or being unsure but because of the fact that the Lord rose from the dead He will bring with Him on that day those who have fallen asleep in Christ, it is our hope!

In John 14:19 Jesus said, "**. . . Because I live, you will live also.**"

But for the unbeliever there is no hope, he will have an eternity to think about the wrong decision he made and regret every moment as he is in the Lake of Fire while we rejoice with our Lord!

And Paul tells us that this was not his idea, but it came from the Lord and Paul establishes that fact up front, which is important for many even today as they deny the teaching of the Rapture of the church.

Also notice that Paul speaks of two groups of people who are involved in this event; those who are alive and those who have fallen asleep or have died in the Lord.

There might have been some concern with the Thessalonian believers that those who have gone to be with the Lord were going to miss out on something, but that is not the case. All Christians will participate in the Rapture.

Also, there is an order that Paul tells us about. The dead will rise first and we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to be with the Lord! Very simple and clear.

And we see that this is done with a shout of authority and as Jesus speaks forth, as the trumpet sounds, and like I have said, the dead in Christ will rise first, they will get their resurrected bodies, and we too will be caught up with them and get our resurrected bodies.

You see, Paul told us in I Corinthians chapter 15 that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and thus, we must be changed.

In John 14:1-4 Jesus said this regarding these new bodies, **“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And 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. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”**

You see, these bodies of flesh are like tents; they are temporary dwelling places for our spirit and soul to dwell in.

But the Lord has a permanent abode for our spirit and soul to dwell in made by Him. In fact, He calls it a mansion that will never fade away as compared with these tents that are fading away.

That is what they will receive and we who are alive when the Lord returns, will receive!

And I want you to notice how fast this event takes place. It is not over minutes or hours or days, but we are told that this event happens in the twinkling of an eye, according to what Paul said in I Corinthians chapter 15.

And a twinkling of an eye speaks of the time it takes for light to go from the surface of the eye to the retina.

If light travels at 186,000 miles per second, it would take light 1.5 seconds to travel from the surface of the earth to the moon and the moon is some 239,000 miles away from the earth.

So then, in the twinkling of an eye light would only reach one foot off the surface of the earth!

Thus, no one will see it happen, it will be instantaneous, but they will feel the effects!

Now here is where people get confused. Paul tells us that we will be **“caught up”** which comes from the Greek word HARPAZO, and that word means to take by force, to seize.

And the argument is that the word rapture is not in the Scriptures. That is true, the word “*rapture*” is not in the Bible, it was taken from the Latin Vulgate, the Latin word RAPTURUS is used for “**caught up**” and from that word we get our English word *RAPTURE* from.

And some will argue that this is not what this word means, but it has been altered to fit what we want it to say.

Some believe it just means that we too who are alive will be with our dead family and friends one day! That same Greek word is used for Phillip being caught up in Acts 8:39 and of Paul in II Corinthians 12:2. They were taken away, just as the church will be caught up or taken away with the Lord comes for His Bride!

Also, to make it say something else makes no sense because in I Thessalonians chapter 5 Paul is speaking of the Day of the Lord and how we are not appointed for that day and thus, we must be removed before that takes place. Let me explain it like this.

Before World War II started, Japan and Germany called their ambassadors home, they left America and went to their own home countries, why? Because war was about to break out and their countries wanted them to be home before war was declared!

So too with our Lord, before He declares war on this earth, before He pours out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world, He will call His ambassadors home, you and me!

Remember, this is not our home, for our citizenship is in Heaven and that is where we are called to go, to be with our Lord.

Thus, Paul tells us in Titus 2:13, “**looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.**”

That is what we are doing and in knowing He is coming back, in knowing we will be with Him, what should we do? Paul told us, “**Therefore comfort one another with these words.**” I Thessalonians 4:18.

Now, if you don't want to use the word “*rapture*” then call it the “*great snatch away!*” That is what the Greek word means but I like rapture better!

And where do we meet the Lord?

We meet Him in the air, and in His second coming we come with Him and He comes back to the earth to set up His kingdom and every eye will see Him.

There is a big difference between the rapture of the church and the second coming of Jesus Christ; they are not the same event!

Now some will argue that this idea of the rapture of the church is a new idea, brought about mainly by John Darby. They will tell you that this was not taught for some 1800 years!

Now I am not sure why they say that it was not taught for 1800 years because Paul taught it in I Corinthians chapter 15, Jesus spoke of it in John chapter 14 and clearly Paul taught that the Church would be caught up to meet the Lord in the air in I Thessalonians chapter 4 and this could take place at any time. Paul thought it would happen in his day and he was looking for it!

A writer who thinks this is just ridiculous to believe in the Rapture, that it is not Scriptural, had this to say. He wrote,

. . . Rapture doctrine is one of the most recent “new doctrines” in the history of the Church. The only doctrine more recent is the invention of the sinner's prayer for salvation by Billy Sunday in 1930, which was made popular by Billy Graham in 1935.

. . . The fact that John Nelson Darby invented the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine around 1830 AD is unquestionably true. All attempts to find evidence of this wild doctrine before 1830 have failed, with a single exception: Morgan Edwards wrote a short essay as a college paper for Bristol Baptist College in Bristol England in 1744 where he confused the second coming with the first resurrection of Revelation 20 and described a “pre-tribulation” rapture. However Edwards ideas, which he admitted were brand new and never before taught, had no influence in the modern population of the false doctrine. That prize goes to Darby.

. . . Prior to 1830, no church taught it in their creed, catechism or statement of faith.

. . . Darby has had a profound impact on religion today, since Darby’s “secret rapture” false doctrine has infected most conservative, evangelical churches. While the official creeds and statements of faith of many churches either reject or are silent about Rapture, neither do they openly condemn this doctrine of a demon from the pulpit.

. . . While not all dispensationalists believe in the Rapture. All those who teach the Rapture also believe in premillennialism. Both groups use Israel’s modern statehood status of 1948 to be a beginning of a countdown to the end.

- <http://www.bible.ca/rapture-origin-john-nelson-darby-1830ad.htm>

Let me say this. For those who have this notion that it was not taught for 1800 years, that there is no evidence prior to 1830 when John Nelson Darby introduced this doctrine, is fake news! Sorry, but it is. Let me show you what I mean.

We have an ancient manuscript from 373 A. D., it is from Ephraem the Syrian or a writing derived from his teaching and is called, Pseudo-Ephraem. Thus, this manuscript is dated from 373 A. D. to 627 A. D., but long before the 1800’s of Darby’s day!

This is what it said,

All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins.

- Ephraem the Syrian
(AD 373 or Pseudo-Ephraem and early
seventh-century text based on Ephraem the Syrian)

Grant Jeffery writes,

While the text is attributed to Ephraem the Syrian (AD 373), his teaching was so popular in the early Byzantine church in Syria that numerous authors later wrote commentaries on his works and incorrectly attributed their later manuscripts to Ephraem the Syrian. These attributed works are designed as *pseudo* (false) if scholars are not totally convinced the books were actually written by the attributed authors. Some scholars have suggested that this text should be called Pseudo-Ephraem, while others conclude that Ephraem is the original author.

- The Popular Handbook on the Rapture, Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice, Ed Hindson, p. 107

Let's look at what this early church writing teaches because it lines up with the Pre-Tribulation Rapture teaching.

First of all, we see that **ALL** believers will be gathered together **BEFORE** the Tribulation Period begins! Notice that this writing teaches that the Tribulation Period did not begin yet, before the end of the first century!

Where will we be **TAKEN!** It says that we will be gathered together to the **LORD!** And through this there is a clear **DISTINCTION** between those who are living in sin in the Tribulation Period and those who have had their sins forgiven in Christ and are with the Lord!

So, to say that Darby invented this teaching in the 1800's is foolishness, it is not true, it is fake news to support the claim that the Pre-Tribulation Rapture was not taught in the church, it was!

We also have this ancient writing known as The Shepherd of Hermas (140 A. D.) and it seems to be speaking of a possible pretribulation concept of escaping the tribulation. It reads,

“You have escaped from great tribulation on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt in the presence of such a beast. Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If then ye prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it, if your heart be pure and spotless, and ye spend the rest of the days of your life in serving the Lord blamelessly.”

Then there is Irenaeus from 180 A. D. who wrote the following,

“And therefore, when in the end the church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, ‘There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.’”

Now let me also say this about Irenaeus. Sometimes it seems like he is speaking of the church going through the Tribulation Period and other times they are removed. But as you look at this writing it seems to be saying that he believed in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church!

I think it is important for us to understand that the early church did speak of the Rapture before the Tribulation period and the Lord's return was eminent or it can happen at any time.

Now just because the early church taught it or believed it does not make it right. What makes it right is because that is what the Scriptures are saying, that is what the Scriptures are teaching!

Now let me show you why I believe the Scriptures teach the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church.

To do that let me take you to the book of Revelation. Let's begin reading in Revelation 4, starting in verse 1 where John tells us, "**After these things 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.' Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.**" Revelation 4:1-2.

Notice that John opens up this chapter with the phrase, "**After these things . . .**" or *META TAUTA* in the Greek. After what things? After the things of the Church, I believe that is what John is telling us here. Revelation chapters 2 and 3 deal with the Church and Church Age!

Interestingly enough, the book of Revelation gives to us an outline. In Revelation 1:19. Jesus tells John, and us what this outline is all about. He said, "**Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.**"

Thus, the things that John *HAS SEEN*, are the events found in Revelation chapter 1. They are the things that God has shown him so far, the description of Jesus.

The *THINGS WHICH ARE*, speak of the events which are taking place now, the things of chapters 2 and 3, the things of the Church or the Church Age, as I have said.

Keep in mind that these letters Jesus wrote to these seven churches in the Roman province of Asia, modern day Turkey, actually existed during the time of John.

But as you read these letters you will see that they also portray church history from the first century up and through today and on into the last days church of Laodicea or the apostate church as well as the faithful church or the church of Philadelphia.

And lastly, this book is divided into ***THE THINGS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE AFTER THIS***, or after the Church Age comes to a close, the age of grace. You see, it is the same Greek word used in Revelation 4:1, ***META TAUTA***.

And thus, we see the last division of this book divided like this. Chapters 4-18 deal with the events leading up to the Second Coming of Christ, including the seven years of tribulation.

Chapter 19 deals with the Second Coming.

Chapter 20 deals with the aftermath and the setting up of the Kingdom of God on this earth.

And chapters 21 and 22 deals with the new Jerusalem, the new heavens and the new earth.

Look again at Revelation 4:1. As the Church Age comes to an end, John sees a door open in heaven. And then a voice, ***LIKE*** a trumpet is calling to him to come as God will show him what ***WILL*** or ***MUST*** transpire after the Church is removed from the earth.

Keep in mind that in the first three chapters in the book of Revelation the church is mentioned some ***19 times***.

Then we don't see the church mentioned again upon the earth until we come to Revelation chapter 19 as we come with the Lord back to the earth to set up His kingdom.

And in chapters 4 through 18 of Revelation, if the church is mentioned, it is in Heaven, never on the earth, which tells me that the church ***MUST*** be removed before the Tribulation Period begins.

Make no mistake about it, the rapture of the church is clearly spoken of in the Scriptures as Paul is trying to comfort these believers about the day of the Lord, something that they will not be a part of because the Lord will come for them before the Day of the Lord or the Tribulation Period begins.

Listen to how Paul closes out this chapter.

VERSE 18

Again, let's think about this. If we were to go through the seven-year Tribulation Period, these words would not be comforting to us.

But the hope of the return of Jesus for His bride, our eternal union with Him is a source of great comfort.

I know, some say it is escapism and Jesus did say that in this world we will have tribulation.

Here's the thing. Right now Satan and his forces are persecuting Christians all over the world.

But in the Tribulation Period it is God's wrath being poured out upon a Christ rejecting world.

In I Thessalonians 5:9 Paul makes this powerful point, "**For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.**"

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, "**For God has not appointed us to [incur His] wrath [He did not select us to condemn us], but [that we might] obtain [His] salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah).**"

I think that is very clear!

Also, in Revelation 3:10, Jesus' letter to the church in Philadelphia, the faithful church, said, "**Because 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.**"

This is important for us to see and understand. Jesus said, "**... 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.**"

That word, "**from**" is the Greek word EK and it means "*out of.*"

In other words, this trial that is coming upon the earth dwellers, not Christians for our citizenship is in heaven, has a definite period of time, and here it is spoken of as the, "**... hour of trial ...**" which speaks of the last 7-year period known as the Tribulation Period or the 70th week of Daniel.

God will keep us "**out of**" this period of time for God does not appoint us to wrath, but to salvation!

Remember, this is not our home, we are aliens and strangers just passing through, for our citizenship is in heaven and that is where we are called to go, to be with our Lord.

So, in knowing He is coming back, in knowing we will be with Him, what should we do?

Paul told us, "**Therefore comfort one another with these words.**" I Thessalonians 4:18.

Let me share with you these words from Tim LaHaye. He wrote,

When I was a boy, I took a tour of [the] Henry Ford factory in Dearborn, Mich. Then we saw an electromagnetic crane move over a large railroad car filled with what seemed to be junk steel.

At the flip of a switch, everything in that car leaped up to the magnetic crane. Then I saw a strange thing: some pieces of steel fell back into the car. I waited until others had left on the tour and then climbed up to look inside and find out why these pieces fell back in.

I found they were not steel at all. Lying on the bottom of the car were some old two-by-fours, a broom handle, and some broken pieces of wood. Only objects made of the right component responded to the magnet, the rest were left behind.

- Tim LaHaye

As I close this evening, may we not be a people that are anxious, worried, terrified of what is to come, for the Lord is coming back and we should be looking upward for our redemption is drawing near and we are comforted in that and can bring the comfort of God to others in Christ!

Thus, may we ***WALK IN HOPE!***