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**Reasons
to Believe in
a Rapture
Before the Great
Tribulation**

**The Living Truth Fellowship
www.TLTF.org**

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The sacred name of God, Yahweh, is indicated by “LORD.”

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This book was originally written by Mark Graeser, John Schoenheit, and John Lynn while they all worked together in ministry. They are now working in separate ministries, and the one with which John Lynn is now affiliated is The Living Truth Fellowship, Ltd., by whom this book is now being re-published.

God bless you as you take this step in your journey of coming unto a knowledge of the truth.

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Christians have adopted many views about the appearing of Christ. The main ones are called “pre-tribulation,” “mid-tribulation,” “mid-wrath,” “post-tribulation” and “amillennial.” From our studies, we have distilled twenty-three reasons to believe in a pre-tribulation “Rapture,” or “Gathering together,” and we submit them for your consideration.

1. A pre-tribulation Rapture is demanded by a dispensational/administrational view of Scripture, which sees a distinction between the Kingdom purpose of God and the “Mystery” [Sacred Secret] purpose that was not yet prophesied in the Old Testament. Since there is no one verse that would establish the timing of the Rapture as pre, mid or post Tribulation, it is the *scope of Scripture* by which we must determine how to rightly divide the Word of truth regarding this issue.

2. Israel must continue to be a specific entity, distinct from the Church, so that God can fulfill His promises to them that are not as yet fulfilled. Many prophecies that were made to Israel concerning their judgment and their glory remain unfulfilled. Unless there is a distinction recognized between God’s purposes for Israel (to restore them to a glorious kingdom) and to the Church of the Body of Christ (whose citizenship is currently in heaven, seated with the Lord, etc.), many parts of the Bible cannot be reconciled without *allegorizing* promises that would have been understood *literally* by the people to whom they were given. The result of such semantic shenanigans is that God then becomes a liar.

3. The Great Tribulation [GT] (Matt. 24:21 - KJV) is a specific judgment against Israel, the necessary consequence of their unbelief and disobedience. God swore in His wrath that they would not enter into their rest without judgment. It is called “Jacob’s trouble,” and refers to a time of judgment as mentioned in Jeremiah 30:7; Deuteronomy 30:1–3; Isaiah 61:2 and 3; Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 54:7–17 and Jeremiah 30:11. It is called “Jacob’s” trouble because Israel was referred to as “Jacob” when they walked in their own fleshly ways instead of being obedient to God.

The GT is a time of chastening for the nation of Israel to bring them to repentance and to prepare them to receive their promised Messiah. The other purpose of the GT is to punish the nations, not only for their sins, but also for their treatment of His chosen people (Isa. 63:1–6; Ezek. 38:14–23). The Old Testament prophets have much to say about these two purposes, but they say nothing whatever about the purpose of God in the Body of Christ, much less anything about a time of chastisement for this Church.

4. The Tribulation is one of the major themes of Old Testament prophecy, and the people and events of the Tribulation are clearly predicted. Since there is not one word about the Body of Christ in Old Testament prophecy, it is logical to conclude that the Body has no place in the Tribulation, especially since there is no statement in Scripture contrary to that fact. If the Church of the Body is to be the main participant in the Tribulation, why is there much mention of Israel, but not a word about the Body of Christ?

5. Something happened to suspend the prophetic clock after the “69th week” of Daniel 9:24–27. The Church of the Body, kept secret and unprophesied, would qualify as something sufficiently momentous that God would suspend His regularly scheduled program and insert a “parenthesis” into prophetic history. Once this unprophesied period is complete, then Daniel’s “70th week” will begin, and the Tribulation period will take place. Without the insertion of the Church Age into this flow of prophetic history, there is no logical explanation for the undeniable period that has elapsed between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel 9 without resorting to an allegorical view of Scripture.

6. There was a period of time between the sufferings and the glory of Christ that the prophets and others inquired into without success (1 Pet. 1:10–12). That is because it was a *Sacred Secret* kept hidden by God. It was known that the Gentiles would be blessed by the Messiah, but not that they would be *full* heirs and partakers of the promises to Israel, nor that the Church of the Body of Christ would be a “new man” comprised of neither Jews nor Gentiles, with

its own promises and riches, the “...unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8), independent of the “New Covenant” to Israel.

7. The Church that began on the Day of Pentecost is united by one spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), and is an assembly of former Jews and former Gentiles. Galatians 3:28 says “There is neither Jew nor Greek... for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:15 (NASB) says “... that in Himself [Christ] He might make the two [Jew and Gentile] into one new man...” The “Church” specifically built by Jesus in the Gospels period was composed of Jews only—the circumcision.

Romans 15:8 (AMP)

For I tell you that Christ (the Messiah) became a servant *and* a minister to the circumcised (the Jews) in order to show God’s truthfulness *and* honesty by confirming (verifying) the promises [given] to our fathers,”

The Apostles were told they would judge the twelve tribes of Israel when Jesus established his kingdom. This program was suspended and is being held in abeyance until the fullness of the Gentiles is complete. After the Rapture, the earth will again be populated by Jew and Gentile, exactly as described in the book of Revelation. 144,000 Jews will be saved out from “the multitude” of saved Gentiles. This separation in the book of Revelation is exactly what we see in the Old Testament and the Gospels, and is contrary to what we see in the Church Epistles. Therefore, the book of Revelation must describe a time after the present administration of the Secret ends.

8. The Bible describes different “comings” of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ comes *for his holy ones* (Christians), we will meet him *in the air* (1 Thess. 4:13–18). There is no such meeting described or even hinted at in the Old Testament, the Gospels or the book of Revelation. Clearly, the Rapture cannot be the same event as the Lord returning to the Mount of Olives *with* ten thousand of his *holy ones*, because he then comes *to the earth* (Zech. 14:4; Jude 1:14 - KJV). Ezekiel 37:11–14 says that when the Old Testament Jewish believers are raised from the dead (at the Resurrection of the Just), they go *into the Promised Land*. The Gospels also clearly say that

Jesus Christ comes *to the earth* and conquers it, gathering the people from the four corners of the earth and separating the sheep from the goats. If this coming is the same as the Rapture of the believers (i.e., the “sheep”), wouldn’t there only be *goats* left on the earth? How then would he find any *sheep* to separate from them?

9. Just as there was a distinct event that initiated the Age of Grace, the outpouring of the gift of holy spirit on the Day of Pentecost, so there must be a distinct event to close this age. A Rapture of all Christians living and dead would qualify as such an event.

10. This truth of a Rapture of the Church is set off with the phrase, “...this we say unto you by the word of the Lord..” (1 Thess. 4:15 - KJV), indicating that this truth is a special revelation theretofore not known. It is also for those “in Christ,” a phrase indicating those who are born-again believers in the Body of Christ. Chapter 5 describes the coming of Christ back to earth at the “Day of the Lord” (1 Thess. 5:2 and 3) and the sudden destruction of the ungodly, or those who are not Christians. Of this event, Paul says Christians have no need to know the “times or the seasons,” because that day of destruction will come as a “thief in the night,” and we will have been raptured.

11. 1 Corinthians 15:51 indicates that his coming in the air and the sudden transformation of believers is a [“Sacred Secret”], or previously unrevealed truth. In contrast, all throughout the Old Testament is the promise of his coming to the earth to establish his kingdom. There must be a difference between what was “secret” and what was well known.

12. The Second Coming of Christ to the earth is preceded by many signs in the heavens and on earth (Matt. 24:29-31; Luke 21:25–28; Acts 2:19–21; Rev. 6–19). There are *no signs* to herald Christ’s coming for his Church. This event will come in a split second (the “twinkling of an eye,” etc.), so that the ungodly will not even recognize what has happened. This is not the case with the Second Coming of Christ to the earth, when “...every eye shall see him...” (Rev. 1:7 - KJV).

13. If the coming of Christ for his Church is placed on a timetable of events, it loses its imminence. He then cannot come until certain things happen, especially the Great Tribulation. This would seem to contradict 1 Thessalonians 4:18, which says that we are to comfort one another with the words that pertain to his coming to meet us in the air. Titus 2:13 refers to our hope as “blessed,” and if our hope must be preceded by a horrendous persecution and tribulation, it hardly seems like a “blessed” event. It is logical, though sad, that because of this teaching that the Church must endure the Tribulation, many believers throughout Christian history have prayed that the Day of the Lord would *not* happen in their lifetime.

14. 2 Thessalonians 2:1 refers to “...the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (his Second Coming to the earth to rescue Israel and establish his Kingdom) and “our gathering together unto him” (the Rapture of the Church). Verse 2 says, “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.” Paul is denying the teaching that the “Day of the Lord” had already come, a teaching that apparently was being attributed to him (“...report or letter supposed to have come from us...”). Only those who had been taught that there was a Rapture before the *Tribulation* would be “unsettled or alarmed” at the thought that the Day of Christ had begun and they were still on earth. Because Paul had taught them that the Rapture would come first, they would be *very* concerned that either they had been left behind or that Paul had been wrong. Verse 5 indicates that he had been among them teaching on this subject. Someone who had not been taught a pre-Tribulation Rapture would simply say, “The Day of Christ is here, so hold on to your hat.”

15. “The day of the Lord,” according to 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (NASB), “...*will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.” The first event, “apostasy,” clearly comes “first.” This had already begun happening before the end of Paul’s life, as indicated by Acts 20:29 and 2 Timothy 1:15. The second event is the revealing of the man of sin, but this verse does not necessarily say that this revealing must take place *first*, before the Rapture. There are two possible

interpretations of this aspect of the verse. One, the man of sin must be revealed *before* the Day of the Lord. The other option is that he will be revealed *in* the Day of the Lord. The second interpretation fits with the other clear verses about the Rapture, that we are to be waiting for the coming of Christ, and not for signs (1 Thess. 1:10). If the Antichrist must come first, then would we not be looking for *him* first, instead of for *Christ* first?

16. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-11 indicates that the man of sin cannot be revealed until there is a removal of a restraining power. There is no better explanation for what could be restraining the revelation of the Antichrist than the presence of the Church of the Body. Once Christians are gathered together by Rapture, there will be nothing to restrain the advent of the Antichrist, and he will move ahead to deceive the earth.

17. At the Second Coming of Christ to the earth, angels will announce his coming and gather all the faithful Jews back to their homeland. All will see the Lord coming in glory and will mourn (Matt. 24:30). On the contrary, when the Church is raptured, the earth will be left in “powerful delusion” (2 Thess. 2:11).

18. In a post-Tribulation position, there is no place for the judgment seat of Christ to take place, wherein Christians will be judged for the things done in their body, and either rewarded or punished. Christ simply comes to the earth and deals with all the Christians on the earth without distinction between those who have responded to the Gospel of Christ in the Church Age and those who have responded to the Gospel of the Kingdom. In the pre-Tribulation position, there are at least seven years between his coming *for* his saints and his coming *with* his saints, and in this period of time the judgment seat of Christ will take place.

19. The “churches” referred to in the book of Revelation are of a Jewish character. The issue as declared in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 is “...those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.” The “angel” or messenger of these churches was the second

in command in the synagogue, a position verifiably part of the synagogues of the first Century.

20. The latter part of Revelation includes a period known as “the wrath,” i.e., the wrath of God. Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9 specifically say that Christians are delivered from “coming wrath.”

21. When Jesus comes to the earth at his Second Coming, there will be no Rapture, but believers will remain on the earth in their natural bodies to be incorporated into the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 5:10; Matt. 25:31–46).

22. Revelation 6:8 says that early on in the Tribulation a quarter of the earth’s population is destroyed (about 1.2 billion people). A cataclysmic event of this magnitude will be fairly obvious, especially with modern electronic media covering such an event. Apparently, this has not happened.

23. The 70th week of Daniel 9 is precipitated by a covenant made between the Antichrist and Israel. Israel has made many covenants with various parties, but there is no convincing evidence that any of them has been made with the Antichrist of Scripture.

[Note: We were assisted in this study by Dave Hunt’s *The Berean Call* newsletter, J. Dwight Pentecost’s *Things to Come*, and Charles Baker’s *A Dispensational Theology*.]

Further Study Material

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What Is The Living Truth Fellowship?

The Living Truth Fellowship is an international community of Christian believers connected by the love of God, the spirit of God, and a common belief of the truth as it is revealed in the written Word of God. We desire to make known that truth to as many people as possible. As a legal entity, we are a non-profit, tax-exempt United States (Indiana) corporation: The Living Truth Fellowship, Ltd.

The name of our ministry contains an intentional double entendre. The Word of God is the truth (John 17:17), and because it contains the very life of God (Eph. 4:18), it is the living truth (John 6:63; Heb. 4:12). As such, the word “living” is an adjective. But God intends that His truth be practiced, that is, He wants us to make “living” a verb by being living epistles of His truth. In that sense, being “verbal” means more than just speaking the Word; it also means doing it.

Our Father desires that we put His truth in our “inner parts” (Ps. 51:6) so that we might not sin against Him (Ps. 119:11). God looks on the heart of each person, and He does not measure the quality of one’s life by how much Bible he knows, but by how much knowledge of the truth he practices in his relationships, that is, how much of the heart of God does he manifest. We can objectively measure the quality of our lives by the quality of our relationships with people (Mark 12:28–31; 1 John 4:20 and 21).

Jesus Christ is our supreme example. In John 17:17, he said: “your word is truth,” and he exerted a lifelong effort to learn it precisely. But Jesus also LIVED the truth so flawlessly that he could say, I AM the truth (John 14:6). In other words, he BE true. And those are the two sides of the coin of truth, if you will: doctrinal and practical, propositional and relational. Without both sides, that coin won’t spend, that is, people won’t “buy” what we have to offer.

Our mission is to provide accurate biblical teaching so as to make known the Lord Jesus Christ, The Living Truth, and thus facilitate a worldwide community of mature Christians committed to following him by living the truth of God’s Word and sharing it with others.

We accomplish that mission by way of live teachers, camps and conferences for all ages and categories of people, books, newsletters, audio and video teachings, and internet outreach via our website. Those who choose to partake of and participate in these aspects of our ministry are free to utilize our resources as they see fit, whether by starting their own local fellowship or using our work in an already established group of Christians. Our goal is to provide avenues for individual Christians to exercise their unique callings in the Body of Christ.

The basis of all our belief and practice is the Bible, which is the revealed Word of God, flawless in its original writing by those 40 or so believers who wrote during a period of about 1500 years “...as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21 - NKJV). An honest look at the Bible reveals a coherence that is impossible for those writers to have achieved by collaboration. So-called “errors” or “contradictions” are due to man’s subsequent interference in the transmission of the text, or to mistranslations, or to misunderstandings of what is written. We seek truth rather than the religious traditions of men.

Our goal in setting forth the Scriptures is to enable each believer to understand them for himself so he can develop his own convictions, become an effective communicator of God’s Word, and fulfill his individual ministry in the Body of Christ. Jesus said that knowing the truth would set one free (John 8:32), and our teachings have practical benefit in terms of one’s quality of life—spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

One of our goals is to teach the Word to “...faithful men who are able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2 - NKJV). We plan to produce seminars and courses of study whereby those who so choose can become able ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We will ordain to Christian ministry those whom our faith community recognizes as meeting this criterion, whether by training in our ministry or via an ordination they received elsewhere that we recognize.