

May 14/15, 2011  
Revelation 4:1-8  
*“Ready for the Rapture”*  
Pastor Gary Hamrick

The past few weeks we’ve been studying Revelation chapter two and chapter three, which deal with actual churches and the Church Age (the time between when Jesus ascended into Heaven and when he returns). We’re currently living in the Church Age, but there is another event on the horizon, which brings us to Revelation chapter four.

The Antichrist, war, famine, global economic collapse, the death of billions of people, global disasters, earthquakes, meteor showers, hail and fire are just a few of the events that the book of Revelation tells are coming upon the earth during the period called The Great Tribulation. This will be a time when God pours out his wrath upon a God-forsaking world with the intent that people would turn from their wicked ways and wake up to God’s message.

When The Great Tribulation happens (detailed in chapters 6-18), the big question is, “Where will Christians be?” The answer to this question depends on your eschatology (the study of End Time events). Cornerstone Chapel, along with many, many other pastors, scholars, and Christians, believe the Bible clearly teaches that Christians will be spared and will be kept safely in Heaven until the Tribulation is over.

This view is called the pre-tribulation view, which means that Christians are going to be taken from the earth before the Tribulation begins. One of the strongest pieces of evidence for this understanding is found in [Revelation 4:1](#). When John is taken up into Heaven, through this open door, at the sound of God’s voice, he is kept safe from the Tribulation that comes upon the earth.

John's experience is a picture or type of the Church that will be taken up into Heaven and kept safe there while the Tribulation comes upon the earth. This event is called the Rapture, which is a spectacular event that the Bible describes as a sudden, unannounced return of Christ in the clouds to physically, bodily remove only the Christians from the earth who are still alive sometime prior to the start of The Great Tribulation, so that they will not experience the devastating things that are coming upon the earth.

Jesus, in [Matthew 24:40-41](#), described it like this: *"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."* Notice that Jesus distinguishes between one man who is a Believer and one man who is not and one woman who is a Believer and one woman who is not. The Believer will be snatched up to Heaven and the unbeliever will be left behind and will go through the Tribulation.

In this study we'll learn about five reasons why Revelation 4:1 presents the picture of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church.

### The Absence Of The Church

1. The word *"church"* is mentioned 19 times in [Revelation 1-3](#), and then not again until [Revelation 22:16](#), which is after the Tribulation is over.
2. [1 Thessalonians 5:1-9](#) - *"Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 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."*
3. [Matthew 24:21-22](#) - *"For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened."*

4. **Daniel 12:1b** - *“There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people - everyone whose name is found written in the book - will be delivered.”*

#### The “Open Door” In Heaven

5. The “door” is standing “open” because the Church is going up.
6. The only other time Heaven is “standing open” is **Revelation 19:11**, when Jesus is coming down.

#### The Sound Of A “Trumpet”

7. The voice of God is like a “trumpet” and is a sound associated with the rapture of the Church.
8. **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.”* (Emphasis added)
9. **1 Thessalonians 4:14-18** - *“We believe that Jesus died and rose again so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 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.”* (Emphasis added)
10. The Greek word for “caught up,” is *harpadzo*, which means to seize or snatch.
11. The Latin word is *raptus*, which is where we get the English word rapture.

## The Invitation To “Come Up Here”

12. The only other time in the book of Revelation that God calls from heaven, “*Come up here,*” concerns the resurrection and ascension of the Two Witnesses in [Revelation 11:12](#).
- a. *“Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.”*

## The Return Of The Saints With Christ

13. Christians must be in heaven **during** the Tribulation, because Believers return to the earth with Christ **after** the Tribulation. (Emphasis added)
- a. [Revelation 19:14](#) - *“The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.”*
- b. [Jude 14-15](#) - *“Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.’ ”*
- c. [1 Thessalonians 3:13](#) - *“May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.”*
- d. [1 Thessalonians 4:14](#) - *“We believe that Jesus died and rose again so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.”*
14. [Revelation 19:7-8](#) indicates that the saints are the ones dressed in fine linen, white and clean, which means Christians will return with our Lord when he comes to the earth because Believers were in Heaven during the Tribulation.
15. [Mark 13:32](#) - *“No one knows about the day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”*
16. Jesus is God, but he divested himself of certain attributes in order to enter into the limitations of our world: he became tired, he was hungry, he had to walk places, etc.
17. Apparently, he also divested himself of certain knowledge, like this matter of the timing of his Second Coming; leaving it up to the Father.

18. We don't know the exact date when Christ will return, but we can know the seasons and recognize the times.
- a. **Matthew 24:32** - *"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near."*
19. There are no Biblical prophecies yet to be fulfilled before Christ can return.
20. **2 Peter 3:11-12a** - *"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming."*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Revelation 4:1-8** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Read and discuss **1 Thessalonians 5:1-9** and **Mark 13:32**.
  - a. Have you been approached by anyone who believes the Day of Judgment will be Saturday, May 21, 2011, as predicted by Harold Camping? <sup>1</sup>



Screenshot - Thursday, May 19, 2011 at 9:34 a.m.

- b. Read and allow time to discuss recent articles by Washington Post staff writer, John Kelly. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Familyradio.com

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/the-end-of-the-world-upside-and-downside/2011/04/29/AFI36HUF\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/the-end-of-the-world-upside-and-downside/2011/04/29/AFI36HUF_story.html) and [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/may-21-the-end-of-the-world-a-good-newsbad-news-view/2011/05/03/AFHf0oIF\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/may-21-the-end-of-the-world-a-good-newsbad-news-view/2011/05/03/AFHf0oIF_story.html)

- i. How would you respond to the online comments made by people who mock the Lord, as well as well as the fact that the Lord will return one day,<sup>3</sup> and when he returns he will come as the Judge?<sup>4</sup>
- ii. Read and discuss these online responses to John Kelly's articles.



**ms\_mbacpa** wrote:

I love how people like to quote or reference the Bible out of context and/or without having read the whole thing. Matthew 24:36 clearly states: "No one knows about that day or hour. Not even the angels in heaven know. The Son does not know. Only the Father knows." I think that if Jesus himself said he won't even know when The End will be until God tells him, no amount of human calculations will convince me otherwise. So John, while you cut the grass and get your earthly house in order, I do hope that you've got your spiritual house in order as well. No amount of stockpiling toiletries and non-perishable foods will do any of us any good. I do share your sentiment in blowing off this May 21 hype, but just know that the "21st" could easily be today or tomorrow. Instead of living every day as if it were your last, live everyday at peace with relationship with God (if you choose to have one—which I highly suggest) and prepared to answer for all of the choices you've made in life...good and bad.

5/2/2011 12:40:05 AM EDT



**AndrewfromNH** wrote:

Gosh. My wife's birthday is October 21. So after 5 months of pre-total-Apocalyptic events, I still won't know whether I need to get her birthday gifts? What kind of prophets are they?

The first predicted end of the world that I remember came, I think, when I was in third grade. There were two more the same year. I've lost count since then. I've read about the followers of some of the people who made these predictions, and even the ones who had given away their chattels or otherwise burned symbolic bridges in preparation for the End of All That Is were happy to go along with the corrected dates that usually followed the ones that had just passed.

This desire to suppress any trace of common sense matches the mind set of the birthers, who are still arguing about the reasons why President Obama isn't qualified to hold that title. Only the end of the world will ever take their focus off that specific belief.

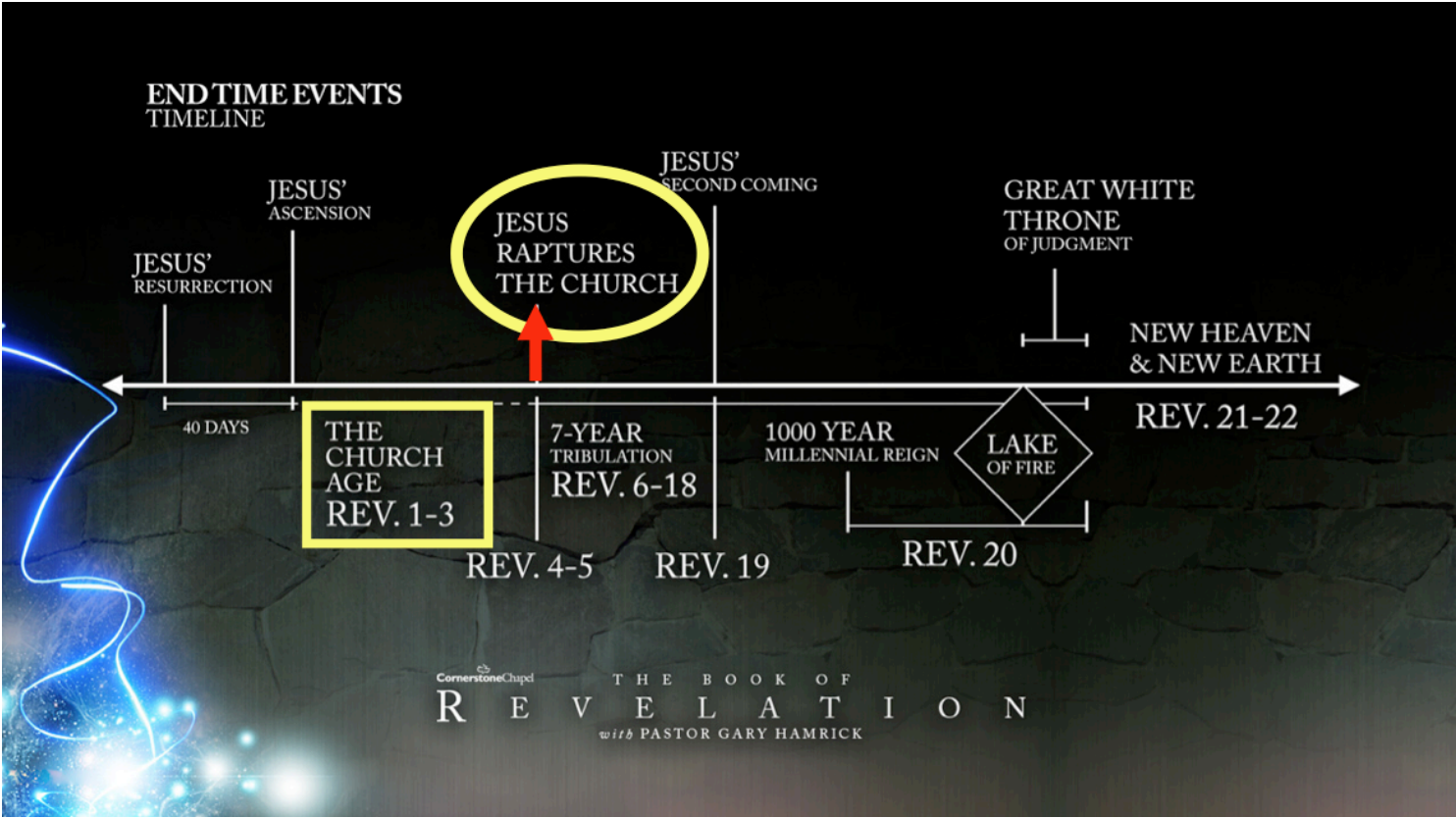
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4. Read and discuss [1 Thessalonians 4:14-18](#).
  - a. Is the Pre-Tribulation Rapture the position taken by other churches you've attended?
  - b. If not, what was the church's theological understanding regarding the Tribulation, etc.?
  - c. Did Pastor Gary's message help you change your mind about the answer to the question, "Where will Christians be?"
5. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: give thanks to the Lord for the promise to Christians that he will rescue them before the Great Tribulation.

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<sup>3</sup> Jesus first came as Savior, but when he returns he will come as Judge.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/the-end-of-the-world-upside-and-downside/2011/04/29/AFI36HUF\\_allComments.html#comments](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/the-end-of-the-world-upside-and-downside/2011/04/29/AFI36HUF_allComments.html#comments)



Note: Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).