



*“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” Titus 2:13*

## Calvary Chapel Distinctives: The Rapture of the Church, Part 4

Revelation chapter six begins the description of the Great Tribulation. As the Lord opens each seal of the scroll, a corresponding judgment is released upon the earth. As the first seal is opened, John writes, “And I saw, and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (v. 2). I believe this is the revelation of the Antichrist. Some believe the rider on the white horse is Jesus Christ! But, as we examine the passage, we see that war, famine, bloodshed, and a fourth of the people being killed follow this revealing. That doesn’t sound like the Kingdom of God and the glorious coming of the Lord! I believe this man is indeed the Antichrist.

I believe that the forces and the power of the Antichrist are in the world today and that the only thing keeping them from taking over is the presence of the Church. We have a little strength, not much, but enough to keep back the powers of darkness from taking complete control. I don’t believe that the Antichrist can take over until the Church is removed.

Paul tells us in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2:7–8). This lines up with Revelation chapter six, where the Church is in heaven as Jesus takes the scroll. As He begins to loose the scroll, the corresponding judgments are released upon the earth, and the wrath of God is poured out.

In Romans 5:9, Paul tells us that, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” He repeats this in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Church is not “appointed unto wrath.” In Romans 1, Paul writes, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (v. 18). It simply isn’t consistent with the nature of God to judge the righteous with the wicked.

Now it is true that in the world we Christians will have tribulation. The world hates us, so we shouldn’t be surprised at persecution. Jesus said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated

me before it hated you” (John 15:18), and “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33b). So, we will have tribulation, but what is the source of wrath against the Church? It’s not God, but Satan!

**Our Lord—the God of the earth—is righteous. He is fair, and He won’t destroy the righteous with the wicked.**

When Satan is the source of tribulation, you can expect the children of God to be the objects of persecution. But when God is the source of the judgment, it’s a different story. God has already judged our sins on the cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus bore the judgment of God for all of our guilt.

Remember when the angels were on their way to destroy Sodom? They stopped beforehand to visit Abraham. Scripture declares in Genesis 18:17 that the LORD Himself said, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” The cry against this city was so great that it was about to be destroyed.

However, when the angels came to Sodom, they found one righteous man, Lot, sitting at the gate. We know that he was righteous because Peter said his “righteous” soul was vexed “from day to day with their unlawful deeds” (2 Peter 2:8). The angels told Lot to take his family and flee because they could not destroy the city until they were safe (Genesis 19:22). Lot lingered too long, so the angels literally dragged him and his family out of the city. “Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven” (v. 24).

In this story, Lot represents the Church that is to be delivered. Peter, speaking of Lot, tells us, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Peter 2:9). God will deliver the righteous, but He will reserve the ungodly for the day of judgment.

Our Lord—the God of the earth—is righteous. He is fair, and He won’t destroy the righteous with the wicked. When God is the source of judgment, He will deliver the righteous before He judges the wicked.

I do not believe that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation. But there are certain Scriptures that people use to try to show that the Church will be there. In the next issue, we will consider these passages. ☞