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Must There Be a Pre-Tribulational Rapture? Or, Taking Away the Restraining Influence

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out
of the way"
(2 Thessalonians 2:7).

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Preface

Wild gyrations of the stock market, instability of the Russian ruble, meltdown of the Asian markets, possible Brazilian bank failure, scandal in the White House, North Korea test fires a missile over Japan, terrorists threaten America with weapons of mass destruction-- these are only a few of the events to remind us that we are soon to enter the Tribulation Week spoken of by the LORD Jesus Christ in His Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24). All of this is occurring while bureaucrats of all levels of government, university political scientists and economists, business advisors and analysts, etc. blanket us with assurances that the fundamentals are sound for a strong economy. They say that interest rates are low-- and may go lower, unemployment is down, gasoline is cheap and available for our vehicles-- why shouldn't we expect things to get better? "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14).

Those who read the prophetic Scriptures are increasingly persuaded that the "time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3; 22:10). We can progressively see more and more of what God sees, that sin is ever more prevalent. "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Daniel's 70th Week is ready to begin (Daniel 9:24-27). Israel has not only been back in the land as a modern nation since May 14, 1948, but it has recaptured Jerusalem and its Temple Mount since June 7, 1967. The LORD Jesus said, "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew 24:34). With the Terminal Generation already living and breathing-- as of June 7, 1967, a window of opportunity for God's people to be Raptured Home into the presence of the LORD Jesus, must be open. [See the "Terminal Generation" and "How Long Is a Generation?" sections of our article, "1998: Year of the Apocalypse (Part 3)" (written when I anticipated a May 31st 1998 Rapture) for how I have established a framework for the timing of the Tribulation Week.] To the Philadelphian Church, the LORD Jesus says, "I have set before thee an Open Door [i.e., the Pre-Tribulational Rapture], and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My Word, and hast not denied My Name" (Revelation 3:8). But, all of this talk of Tribulation is just the opposite of what the world would have us believe. God's Word assures us that we are not mistaken. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13).

2 Thessalonians Chapter 2:

The Restraining Influence Is Taken Away

Verse 1. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him" (2Thessalonians 2:1). The certainty is that when the LORD Jesus Christ comes the Second Time, He will gather His people together, both living and dead. Differences arise concerning the timing of this gathering, i.e., Pre-Tribulational, Mid-Tribulational, Pre-Wrath, Post-Tribulational, etc. Some-- like myself-- are willing to see more than one Rapture event-- but, when He comes He will gather His people. [See our article, "The Seventh Trumpet and the Second Rapture", for further contemplation.]

Verse 2. "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand" (2Thessalonians 2:2). Evidently, someone had written to the Thessalonians to give them an understanding different from what Paul had previously taught them. This had "shaken" and "troubled" them. The expression "day of Christ" is also correctly translated "day of the LORD". This, I believe, refers to the final 1,000 year period-- where 7,000 years equals 7 days. "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the LORD as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2Peter 3:8). The Day of the LORD would commence "immediately after the tribulation of those days" (Matthew 24:29). In other words, the Day of the LORD refers **specifically** to the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus Christ after the completion of the 70th Week of Daniel.

Verse 3. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2Thessalonians 2:3). What must precede the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus, where everyone sees Him, i.e., "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him" (Revelation 1:7)? Two things must occur:

- (1) the apostasy or "falling away" and
- (2) the revelation of Antichrist, the "man of sin... the son of perdition".

Apostasy-- literally, to stand away from (a formerly held position)-- is generally attributed to those who have never been saved, while I believe that it may refer to those who have been truly converted, as well. Even Paul taught the possibility of being a "castaway" (literally, disapproved). "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1Corinthians 9:27). I limit this thought of being an apostate, backslider, or "castaway"-- for those who have truly been converted-- to the point that the backslider will not die in his sin, i.e., the Holy Spirit will bring him to repentance before he actually dies. Thus, "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go My way, and ye shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come" (John 8:21). This apostasy has already begun.

The revelation of Antichrist will be accomplished by the "abomination of desolation" (Matthew 24:15), which was prophesied by Daniel and confirmed by the LORD Jesus Christ. "And he [Antichrist] shall confirm the covenant with many for one week [the 70th Week of Daniel]: and in the midst of the week [3 1/2 years or 1,260 days into the Tribulation Week] he [Antichrist] shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it

desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Daniel 9:27).

Verse 4. "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2Thessalonians 2:4). This is an accurate description of the Abomination of Desolation. Antichrist is only a man. This is part of the significance of 666. "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six" (Revelation 13:18). Since 6 is the number of man, i.e. man was created on the sixth day (Genesis 1:26-27), 666 is paramount to saying that Antichrist is only a man, man, man-- and certainly not God.

Blasphemy is speaking evil against God, which is the same as shaking your fist in the face of God. Jesus said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men" (Matthew 12:31). Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven because it is resisting the very One who would give "repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth" (2Timothy 2:25); thus, making blasphemy against the Holy Spirit impossible to forgive.

Antichrist blasphemes the Holy Spirit. "And they worshipped the dragon [Satan] which gave power unto the beast [the Antichrist]: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (Revelation 13:4-6). This seals Antichrist's doom. "And the beast [the Antichrist] was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20).

Verse 5. "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" (2Thessalonians 2:5). The Apostle Paul reminds the Thessalonians that this Second Epistle is covering good, but old ground. This reminds us that much of prophetic teaching involves creative repetitions of the same message, i.e., "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10).

Verse 6. "And now ye know What withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time" (2Thessalonians 2:6). Or, "you know What restrains him [the Antichrist] now, so that he [the Antichrist] may be revealed in his time". Though he may even be amiable, intelligent, as well as powerful; Antichrist is as his "father the devil" (John 8:44)-- a murderer and a liar. Satan will be shown to the world to be the impostor that he is. "Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms" (Isaiah 14:15-16). Likewise, Antichrist and the False Prophet will be shown by the LORD Jesus to be only wicked and abominable men, when they are cast into the Lake of Fire at Jesus' Second Coming. "And the beast [Antichrist] was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning

with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20).

Verse 7. "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He who now letteth will let, until He be taken out of the way" (2Thessalonians 2:7). The Mystery of Iniquity is already at work. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). Though "we are not ignorant of his [Satan's] devices" (2Corinthians 2:11), we attempt to maintain our holy walk by avoiding the knowledge of wickedness to the degree that it is not our necessity to know the "depths of Satan" (Revelation 2:24)-- even to defeat him. This "Need Not to Know Basis" for the knowledge of wickedness is Christian simplicity or innocence. "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Romans 16:19).

"Only He who now letteth will let, until He be taken out of the way" (2Thessalonians 2:7) is another way of saying, "Only He (the Holy Spirit) Who now restrains will continue to restrain, **until** He (the Holy Spirit) be taken out of the way (at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture)." I believe that this verse is pivotal to this passage, and that it explains the LORD's purpose and necessity for a Pre-Tribulational Rapture. "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of Heaven. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the Name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His: And He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings: He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him. I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, Who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of Thee: for Thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter" (Daniel 2:19-23).

A Christian is one who is indwelt by the Spirit of God. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Romans 8:9). We are warned not to quench the Holy Spirit. "Quench not [literally, extinguish not] the Spirit" (1Thessalonians 5:19). To **extinguish** the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives most certainly is to grieve Him. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of Redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). When we grieve the Holy Spirit, we lose His testimony that we are His, i.e., that we are "none of His" (Romans 8:9). Though a truly converted Believer may lose this **testimony** of sonship, his final **perseverance** is assured. "And I give unto them Eternal Life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28). **However, if one never finally repents, he was never truly converted.** "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye [truly] believe not [as **demonstrated** by your life] that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

Only a deceived man will point to a past "conversion experience" while abiding in known sin. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him" (1John 3:6). It is only the Spirit of Christ working in us that keeps us walking without sinning, i.e., "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). This **alone** is the Spirit-filled Believer's claim to worthiness to the LORD, i.e., "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2Corinthians 3:5).

Suffice it to say that, only those who abide in Christ are **walking in obedience**, i.e., "If ye keep My Commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's Commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10). **Only those who are walking in obedience are walking in the Spirit.** "And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, **Whom God hath given to them that obey Him**" (Acts 5:32). Consequently, one of the primary sources of the Holy Spirit's influence upon the people of this world is the "salt" and "light" of the Believer's testimony and presence. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth **good for nothing, but to be cast out**, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:13-14).

If the Father were to remove His people from this planet, He would be **removing the primary means of His Spirit's influence upon this world**. This is exactly what is intended by the Apostle Paul's statement to the Thessalonians, "until He [the Holy Spirit] be taken out of the way" (2Thessalonians 2:7). This is the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. This is the method of the "Only Wise God Our Saviour" (Jude 25) in bringing about the "judgment of this world" (John 12:31) and the salvation and sanctification of the elect, i.e., specifically, those that remained because they were **not ready**. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2Timothy 4:6). Jesus has never altered His purpose to draw all men to Himself-- even in the design of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. "And I [Jesus Christ], if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (John 12:32).

The LORD Jesus called Enoch Home to Heaven-- a type of Pre-Tribulational Rapture-- because Enoch had the testimony of faith in God. "By **faith** Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that **he pleased God**. But without **faith** it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that **diligently** seek Him" (Hebrews 11:5-6).

How would the Saints' departure from this world at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture serve the LORD's purpose in the judgment of this world?

First, God loves to deliver His people from the jaws of the wicked one-- **not** confusing His people with the ungodly in His judgments, i.e., "That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: Shall not the Judge of All the Earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). Also, Paul's testimony to God's faithfulness in early New Testament times is consistent with Abraham's understanding. "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the LORD shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His Heavenly Kingdom: to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (2Timothy 4:17-18).

Second, the Backslidden Church will understand that they could have been ready, and should have been ready. This will work toward their repentance. "For the time is come that judgment must **begin** at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" (1Peter 4:17). The martyrdom of many of these who have thus judged their own sins, i.e., "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1Corinthians 11:31)-- because escape was not an option-- will announce to the world that the LORD Jesus Christ is the alternative to the

Antichrist.

Third, others will see the testimony of the Godly as well as the manifold judgments of God-- Seal Judgments, Trumpet Judgments, Seven Thunders, Fire from the Two Witnesses, Vial Judgments, etc. -- and repent of their wickedness. [See our articles, "Tribulation Timeline (Part 1), (Part 2), (Part 3), and (Part 4)" to see a discussion of these Judgments.] Some must have repented, even toward the End of the Tribulation Week, or else it could not be said to Babylon the Great-- the final form of the worldwide economic and material Babylon, which the United States' destruction will be only **representative** of the future destruction of this greater Babylon-- "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

Fourth, those who will never repent, will be **hardened** by the judgment of the removal of God's people at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. "Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said" (Exodus 8:19). This hardening process is necessary for the LORD to bring about the appropriate time to harvest the wicked. "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares [the wicked], and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat [the nation born in a day at the Second Coming-- Isaiah 66:8] into My barn" (Matthew 13:30). Also, the LORD will wait for the wisest time for the fullness of the world's iniquity, to harvest them. "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Genesis 15:16). In the meantime, He sovereignly directs the completion of man's wickedness, i.e., "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10). Thus, the LORD Jesus could direct the ungodly: "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers" (Matthew 23:32).

Finally, the LORD, Who is the Judge of All the Earth (Genesis 18:25), is "known by the judgment which He executeth" (Psalm 9:16). And, the Pre-Tribulational Rapture is definitely a judgment upon all those who were not taken, because God has sovereignly removed the presence of His Spirit through the removal of His people from the world; thus, He opens the floodgates to allow Satan, the "god of this world" (2Corinthians 4:4), to have greater sway over those who are thus imprisoned in this world. The resulting horror of darkness that Satan will bring upon the world will pale only in comparison to Jehovah's awesome judgments. "Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Exodus 15:11).

Verse 8. "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 Thessalonians 2:8). Who is "that Wicked" that is "revealed" and "whom the LORD shall consume" at "His coming"? This refers to the Antichrist, who will be consumed and destroyed by the LORD Jesus at His Second Coming. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called **Faithful and True**, and **in righteousness He doth judge and make war**. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and **His name is called The Word of God**. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And **out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword**, that with it He should smite the nations: and **He shall rule them with a rod of iron**: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty

God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, **KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS**. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast [the Antichrist], and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army. And **the beast [the Antichrist]** was taken, and with him **the false prophet** that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both **were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone**. And **the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse**, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19:11-21).

Verse 9. "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2Thessalonians 2:9). Notice again that the "him" of verse 9 cannot refer to Satan, who is referred to in the latter portion of the verse. "Him" obviously refers to Antichrist. A mistake often made by inexperienced Christians is to attempt to stand up to Satan without the armour of God. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). Thoughtlessly, the "accuser of our brethren" (Revelation 12:10) is often opposed with brashness instead of meekness. "Yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The LORD rebuke thee" (Jude 9). Resist the devil in faith "by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). "Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1Peter 5:9).

"Power and signs and lying wonders" (2Thessalonians 2:9) are available to Satan to deceive the world. Even the scientific minds of today will be no match for Satan. He will easily demonstrate the shortcomings of the scientific method in fathoming the power of the supernatural. Witness the world's reaction to the power of the False Prophet. "And he [**the second beast out of the earth, or the False Prophet**] exerciseth all the power of the first beast [**the Antichrist**] before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he [**the False Prophet**] doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast [**Antichrist**]; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast [**abomination of desolation**], which had the wound by a sword, and did live [**Antichrist's miraculous recovery from a deadly wound**]. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed [**i.e., Mark of the Beast**]" (Revelation 13:12-15).

Verse 10. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved" (2Thessalonians 2:10). Have you ever come across an acquaintance that would hardly let you get the words out of your mouth to make a reasonable point about the LORD? Only if you were to agree with something they said would they recognize that you said something? "But the **wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable,**

gentle, and **easy to be entreated**, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17). Those that "perish" employ the deceptive tools of unrighteousness. Why? Because "they received not the love of the Truth". If they would not turn to the One Who is the Truth (John 14:6), then they will not "be saved" (2Thessalonians 2:10).

Verse 11. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2Thessalonians 2:11). Antichrist is a deceiver. "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" (2John 7). However, if the Ancient of Days sees fit to bring "strong delusion" upon those whom He deems necessary to judge, not even Antichrist's lies are a match for the "strong delusion" that Jehovah directs at the "damned" (2Thessalonians 2:12).

Verse 12. "That they all might be damned who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2Thessalonians 2:12). **Judgment is the theme for those left behind by the Pre-Tribulational Rapture.** Certainly the Backslidden and the Elect-But-Not-Yet-Saved will eventually repent, but they must do it-- repent! "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, **except they repent** of their deeds" (Revelation 2:22). *The following is the **Scriptural test** to demonstrate whether or not one has truly repented, and thus can be assured of acceptance with God.* "And hereby we do know that we know Him, **if we keep His Commandments**. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is **not** in Him" (1John 2:3-4). All knowledge of your spiritual condition must be based **firmly and solely upon the testimony of the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures**. "And he that keepeth His Commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And **hereby** we know that He abideth in us, **by the Spirit** which He hath given us" (1 John 3:24).

Conclusion

Though the word "Rapture" does not occur in the Scriptures, it is the appropriate word and concept for both the event and the Promise of Pre-Tribulational Deliverance. The preceding has been an attempt to show the purpose and necessity of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture-- **to remove the Restraining Influence** (2Thessalonians 2:7) for the purpose and necessity of the judgment of the world.

I have made no attempt to demonstrate the necessity of the 70th Week of Daniel to restore the Nation of Israel back into her promised position of Divine favor. "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" (Isaiah 66:8). This restoration of Israel at the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus Christ will be set in motion by the events that follow the Pre-Tribulational Rapture.

It is important not to underestimate the value of the departure of even a relatively small group of Saints at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, i.e., not to despise "the day of small things" (Zechariah 4:10). The Pre-Tribulational Rapture will be instrumental in setting off a chain reaction of events for our LORD to "judge the world in righteousness" (Psalm 9:8). The Raptured Saints may not be missed by

their worldly neighbors simply because those neighbors may not realize how much they have been benefited by the presence of the Godly-- as well as their benefit from their relationship and dealings with them. "And Laban said unto him [Jacob], I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake" (Genesis 30:27). As insignificant as you may feel yourself to be, if you leave at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, then your small pebble will help to set off a landslide that will be felt at the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus Christ. "Whosoever shall fall upon that stone [Jesus Christ] shall be broken [saved]; but on whomsoever it shall fall [the Second Coming], it will grind him [judge him] to powder [in the Lake of Fire]" (Luke 20:18).

I am sure that many have their favorite Rapture Promise. Some may especially enjoy the Promise of the LORD Jesus to the Philadelphian Church. "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the Hour of Temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 3:10). Others may take especial delight in the LORD's provision for deliverance from the temptations of the Tribulation Week. "The LORD knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2Peter 2:9). Others may enjoy the Promise of being taken in the Pre-Tribulational Rapture with their loved ones. "Ye are called in one body" (Colossians 3:15). Still, others may enjoy the Promise of leaving while things are still under control-- at least for them. "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward [literally, rear guard]" (Isaiah 52:12).

My favorite Pre-Tribulational Rapture Promise is Luke 21:36. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." If we "watch" and "pray", then we shall be "worthy to escape". I like the part of the Promise that says that we can "escape all these things that shall come to pass". If we are to "escape **all** these things", then we will need to be Pre-Tribulationally Raptured.

Remember, Promises have to be claimed by faith. "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29). And, these Promises will sanctify us as well! "Whereby are given unto us Exceeding Great and Precious Promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Peter 1:4). [See our article, "Exceeding Great and Precious Promises", to see how our God has designed to make us like Himself.]

May we "be accounted worthy to escape" in the Pre-Tribulational Rapture! [See our article, "He Will Subdue Our Iniquities" for encouragement about how we can "be accounted worthy".]

Maranatha!