

# **† Berean Bible Church. †**

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## **Statement of Faith.**

**I. ABOUT GOD.** We believe that there is but one true and living God. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is transcendent above all and at the same time immanently personal also. God is the sovereign Creator and Ruler of the universe. God has always eternally existed as three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three persons are co-equal, co-existent and are one God (Genesis 1:1,26,27; 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; I Peter 1:2; II Corinthians 13:14). He is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, holy, veracity, wisdom, immutable, wrathful, loving, just, infinite, possesses aseity, eternal and worthy of the obedience and worship of all beings.

**II. ABOUT THE FATHER.** He is the first Person of the Trinity and decrees all things according to His eternal wisdom and counsel. He is the Creator of all things, and absolute Ruler of the universe. He is sovereign in creation, providence, history and redemption. His title Father designates His relationship to the rest of the Trinity, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as mankind. He has decreed for His own glory all that shall come to pass. He continually upholds, directs and governs all creatures for His purposeful ends, yet He neither authors nor approves of sin. He only decrees sin and all sinful acts for His own holy ends and purposes. He is the moral Ruler and Judge of the universe and will hold all beings, men and angels, accountable according to His holy standards. He has chosen from eternity past who will be His own; He sovereignly saves them from their sin and adopts them to Himself for His glorious service and eternal purposes.

**III. ABOUT JESUS CHRIST.** We believe in the uncompromised deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His full humanity, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood on the cross, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension and glorification to the right hand of the Father, that He is Prophet, Priest and King, and in His present session as Advocate, in His personal return in power and glory to judge the living and the dead. He will judge believers according to their works of faith done in His name for rewards and unbelievers according to their sins committed and rejection of His atonement. Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Trinity, He possesses all the divine attributes and excellencies and is co-equal, co-substantial and co-eternal with the Father. During His incarnation He surrendered the use and prerogatives of divine attributes, but not the essence and possession of them. He fulfilled the holy requirements of OT Law for His elect completely during His incarnation, and we accept that His righteousness is imputed to us at the moment of repentance of sin and belief in Him. His death on the cross was historic, vicarious for us, voluntary, substitutionary, propitiatory and redemptive. By His work and choosing, we are justified before God. We believe that He raised was physically from the dead on the third day, that He walked the earth for forty days and then ascended into heaven from Mt. Olives to be seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again soon, not to atone for sins, but to judge the earth, and gather His elect to the kingdom of God on earth. Presently as Priest He mediates, is our advocate and intercedes for us before the Father.

**IV. ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT.** We believe the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, was active in the creation of the universe and all beings, is underived, co-existent and co-equal with the Father and the Son as God and contains all the attributes of deity. We believe that although He is eternally existent, yet He proceeds forth from the Father and the Son. He is present in the world to convict men of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to alert men of their need for Jesus Christ. He bears witness to the truth of God's Word, regenerates

man, and permanently dwells in each Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding, wisdom and of spiritual truth, conforming him to Christ-likeness, provides guidance in doing what is right and illuminates the Scriptures to him. The Holy Spirit applies redemption to the believer through the gift of faith which leads to salvation, sanctifies the believer unto holy living, and finally secures the salvation of the believer in Christ to full redemption, that is the taking up of the believer to heaven. The Christian is to seek to live under His power and control daily. The Holy Spirit bestows spiritual gifts as listed in the N.T. Scriptures and each believer receives at least one gift for the edification of the Church, service to Jesus Christ and to accrue rewards for all eternity (II Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7-13; 14:16,17; Acts 1:8; I Corinthians 2:12, 3:16, Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18; I Corinthians 12:7). The Holy Spirit also restrains sin in the world in the lives of non-believers.

**V. ABOUT THE BIBLE.** We believe that the Bible is God's Word in totality to all men; it is perspicuous (understandable) and the standard by which all will be judged. All 66 books were written by human authors, under the overriding supernatural inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is objective, propositional, revelatory, plenary and verbally inspired and breathed out by God. The Bible is the eternal supreme source of spiritual truth and authoritative for the Church, preaching, Christian belief and living. The very words themselves in the original Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic autographs are inspired in total without error or fallibility. The Bible is the complete, plenary Word of God with no additions or subtractions to be made from it or to it. Because all Scripture is inspired by God, it is truth without mixture of error (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20,21; II Timothy 1:13; Psalm 119:105,160,12:6; Proverbs 30:5).

We believe the very words are inspired, not just the thoughts of the writers and in the literal, grammatical-historical, lexical interpretation of all of Scripture. Although we do interpret the Bible literally, we believe this also means we must allow for figures of speech. We believe that each text must be considered in its literary context and accorded with the whole of Scripture theologically (*analogia scriptura*). We believe there is

only one proper interpretation to each text, yet there may be many and numerous applications. We believe that the power to save men from their sins and the power to sanctify them is found in the preaching of the gospel and the full counsel of the Scriptures (Rom.1:16;1Thes.2:13).

**VI. ABOUT MAN.** We believe that men and women are equally made in the spiritual image and likeness of God, to be like Him in character, not ontology. Adam was directly and immediately created by God out of the dust of the earth, and Eve was created from his side. Man was originally created innocent and sinless, in holy communion with God in the Garden, with a rational nature, with intelligence, volition, self-determination and moral responsibility before God (*posse non peccare*). He is the supreme object of God's affection in creation and the singular pinnacle of priority in God's redemptive history. But since the Fall of Adam in the Garden, all men are under the curse put upon Adam for his disobedience and they are therefore born with a nature of sin. In Adam man lost his innocence and incurred the penalty of sin which is spiritual and physical death and is now subject to the wrath of God. Man by ontology is a sinner, inherently corrupt and deemed unholy which separates him from God. Man is also marred by his own personal continual acts of disobedience and rebellion against God called sin. We believe that all men are born lost and sinful; man must be saved, born again, and that man's only hope for redemption and from the wrath of God is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

What Is Unregenerate (Unsaved) Man?

He is spiritually deceased and dead in trespasses and Sin (Eph. 2:1).

He is spiritually helpless unable to assist himself to believe in Jesus Christ (Rom.5:6).

He walks according to the course of this sinful world that is in rebellion to God (Eph. 2:2).

He is completely deceived and under the control of Satan (Eph. 2:2).

He is driven by the lusts of his sinful flesh and the his degenerate mind (Eph.2:3).

According to Eph.4:18f, he is darkened in his mind and excluded from the life of God because of the hardness of his heart. He subsequently becomes persistently more hardened in his heart and is greedy for all sorts of sins.

According 1Jn.5:19, he is completely under the control of Satan.

According to Titus 3:3 he is foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, unable to escape himself, and spends his life in malice, envy and fails to love other people.

By his fundamental essence and nature he is a child of God's wrath (Eph. 2:3).

He suppresses the truth of God in all of his acts of unrighteousness (Rom.1:18).

According to Rom. 8:5-9 his mind is only on his sensual flesh and is hostile to God's glory and consequently he lacks peace in his soul. He is devoid of the Holy Spirit. He is not able to subject his mind to the law of God nor does he have any desire to do so. He cannot please God which means he is displeasing to God. His mind is set on spiritual death and he is hostile towards God.

Though having a general love for him (Matt.5:45), yet at the same time God is hostile towards him (Ex.22:24, Deut.32:21,22; Ps.90,7,11; Jn.3:36; Eph.5:6).

By his inner thoughts he has declared himself to be an enemy of God, Rom.5:10. *"For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God..."*

According to 1Cor. 1:18 the cross of Jesus Christ is irrelevant to him, his way of life and values, and is utter foolishness and useless to him.

According to 1Cor.2:14. he does not accept the holy things and thoughts of God. He cannot understand them. They are foolishness to him.

According to Jeremiah 17:9, his heart is deceitfully wicked above all else, and is desperately sick.

According to Gen 6:5, *"..the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He made man on the earth, and he was grieved in His heart."*

According to Rom.2. he is conscientious of God's law inwardly, but chooses to deny Him for his own glory anyway. And like the prostitute in Prov.7:14, he ostensibly offers his religious sacrifices to God, yet shows his spiritual hypocrisy in his practical immoral behavior and rebellion against God.

According to Ps. 66:3, he fakes obedience to God. *"Because of the greatness of Thy power, Thine enemies will give feigned obedience to Thee"*. Ps. 81:15, *"Those who hate the Lord would pretend obedience to Him."* So he is not irreligious, but has his preferred religion which does not

infringe too heavily upon his time, morality, sin or convenience. In 2Tim.3:5 Paul describes the ungodly, *"holding to a form of godliness, although they deny its power, avoid such men as these."* So in his religion he is ultimately able to create and chose the truths by which he will abide, and at the same time, avoid the truths of God's revelation.

According to Jeremiah 49:16 he is self-deceived. *"The arrogance of your heart has deceived you."* In James 1:22, he is also self-deceived in that he often is a hearer of the Word, but not a doer (even Herod loved to listen to John preach!).

According to Jeremiah. 51:17 in God's eyes, he is senseless, irrational and lost in a quagmire of non-truths and devoid of all wisdom, *"All mankind is stupid, void of knowledge."* Jer.10:14. *"Every man is stupid, devoid of knowledge."* Jer. 10:8, *"But they are altogether stupid and foolish."* Jer. 4:22, *"For My people are foolish, They know Me not. They are stupid children, and they have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, But to do good, they do not know."*

According to Jer.5:21, he cannot see or hear the Law of God. In Jn.8:44, he is a liar and murderer just like his father the Devil.

In Rom.1:18-23 he suppresses the truth of God to conceal his sin. That God exists is evident to him in creation, yet he refuses His love and free offer of grace. He refuses to honor God or give Him thanks. He is futile and self-deluded in his thinking. His foolish heart is darkened. He professes to be wise but is a fool. He willfully exchanges the true and living God for the gods of his own making. According to Rom.1:28, he has a depraved mind.

According to Rom.1:29-32, he is *"...being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, [he is a] gossip, slanderer, hater of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, an inventor of evil, [he is] disobedient to [his] parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful, and although [he] knows the ordinances of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, [he] not only does the same, but also gives hearty approval to those who practice them."*

According to 2Tim.3:2-5 he is a, *"lover of self, lover of money, boastful, arrogant, reviler, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossip, without self-control, brutal, hater of good,*

*treacherous reckless, conceited, lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God..."*

And Jesus said in Jn.3:19 that although the Light was brought to him, the wicked man preferred darkness because the darkness concealed his sinful deeds from the light.

When did this rebellion take place in man? Corporately, in the Garden at Adam's Fall (Rom.5:12). Individually, at the moment of each conception. Ps.51:5 David says he was sinful from the moment of his conception. *Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, in sin my mother's womb conceived me."*

So man of himself, is totally incapable of salvation because he is dead to the things of God. Therefore he cannot contribute anything meritoriously or efficaciously to his salvation and must be saved completely by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6a; Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:1,2; John 3:16). Unregenerate man is incapable of repentance and faith therefore both must be gifts from God (Eph.2:8,9; Acts 11:18). We also believe that believing man's physical body is not inherently evil, but will be fully reconstituted, fitted for existence in heaven, according to Jesus' resurrected body and resurrected to heaven.

**VII. ABOUT SALVATION.** Salvation is wholly of God, by His grace on the basis of the redemptive merits of Jesus Christ. At the cross Jesus bore the sins of His people, and the wrath and penalty from the Father for their sins. We deny that the works of men or any merit for their deeds contributes anything to the attaining or maintaining of their salvation. We believe that by grace men are saved through faith, it is a free unmerited gift from God to man. Man because of his sinful nature, can never free himself from the bondage of sin or compensate for his sinful status by self-improvement or good works. Only by repenting of his sins and trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can man be saved from sin's penalty, eternal condemnation, and be credited with the righteousness necessary for justification. Eternal life as well as the Holy Spirit is permanently imparted to the believer the moment one receives Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. All who desire to be saved must accept Christ as Savior and Lord (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8,9; John 14:6, 1:12; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26).

We believe man is saved by the preaching of the gospel

according to the Scriptures, and we believe that at the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit regenerates man and imparts the divine nature within Him. Regeneration is manifested by love for God, love for others, good works and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that each believer is elected by God before the foundations of the world, those whom He chose in Christ. He then sequentially saves, sanctifies and transfers them to His eternal kingdom for His glorious service. We believe election does not in any way negate the responsibility of each individual to confess and repent of their sins and believe in Christ alone for salvation. He who has Jesus as Savior must also receive Him as Lord. All who the Father calls will come to Him and He and the Son will in no way cast them out.

Justification is an act of God whereby He legally declares each believer innocent from guilt based on the imputed righteousness of Christ. Progressive sanctification applies to each Christian whereby he is set apart by God for good works and growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. As God works in him, he becomes more like Jesus Christ. He will have a life-pattern of increasing holiness and decreasing sinful habits. Positional sanctification is concurrent with salvation and is where each Christian is declared holy and is identified as a saint. Eradication of sin is impossible in this life and not experienced until the believer goes to heaven. Yet the Holy Spirit does enable the believer to overcome sin on a moment-by-moment basis.

Therefore the believer is redeemed from sin and saved permanently as he is kept by God's power and purposes, thus he is secure forever.

**VIII. ABOUT THE CHURCH.** We believe that all who place their trust in Jesus Christ for salvation are immediately placed into His spiritual body, the invisible Church, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Church in its completeness is world-wide in its extent and she is the bride of Jesus Christ, and He is her glorious Head. The Church began on the Day of Pentecost and will be completed at His Rapture of the Church, which is His coming for His own people. The invisible Church is distinct from ethnic Israel, she is unique as an organism, and made up of only N.T. born-again believers. There are currently non-Christians (tares) mixed in with God's people during the gathering on Sundays, the visible church, yet the Lord will

remove them from among their midst when He comes. We believe each local church is independent, able to govern themselves among themselves, yet may be voluntarily interdependent on other churches, cooperate together with and associate with, and join with other ministries for growth, mutual edification, evangelism and common service to Christ.

The local church is to be ruled by the elders of the church who meet the qualifications as laid out in 1Tim.3 and Titus 1. The church is to spiritually submit to these elders as they lead the church in growth in Jesus Christ. Each church is autonomous, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations. The Scriptures regulate the church for the preaching of the Word, praise, prayers, worship, evangelism, discipleship, individual accountability, fellowship, the Lord's Table, Baptism and church discipline. The Holy Spirit sovereignly places each person in the local church and equips them as he chooses to serve Christ' body according to their individual giftedness.

The "One-Anothers" of Scripture: Rom.12:5 we are *"members of one another"*; Rom.12:10, *"Be devoted [dedicated] to one another in brotherly love."*; Also in Rom.12:5 Paul says we are to *"give preference to one another."* Rom.12:16 *"Be of the same mind towards one another"* (Live in a state of continual harmony and concord, and pray the same good for everyone which you desire for yourselves.); Rom.13:8 *"love one another"* [cultivate loving relationships, and not just with those who are like you].

Rom.15:7 *"receive [welcome] one another"*; Rom.15:14 *"admonish [counsel] one another"*; Rom.16:16 *"Greet one another with a holy kiss (showing affection and commitment to the people in the Church)."*; 1Cor.12:25, *"have the same care for one another"*; Gal.5:13 *"serve one another"*; Gal.6:2 *"bear one another's burdens"*; Eph.4:2 *"..with all humility and gentleness, with patience, forbearing with one another in love"* (forbearance is the exercise of self-restraint in the face of provocation, it doesn't hastily retaliate or promptly punish); Eph.4:32, *"be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another"*; Eph.5:21, *"be subject to one another"*; Phil.2, *"consider others more important than yourself."*; 1Thess.3:12, *"abound in love towards one another."*; 1Thess.4:18, *"comfort one another"*; 1Thess.5:11, *"edify one another"*; Heb.3:13, *"exhort one another"*

Heb.10:24, "let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds"; Heb.10:25 "encourage one another to attend the gathering of us together"; James 4:11, "do not speak evil of another brother"; James 5:9, "Do not complain against one another"; James 5:16, "pray for one another"; 1Ptr.3:8, "have compassion on one another"; 1Ptr.4:9, "Be hospitable to one another without complaint"; 1Ptr.4:10, use your God-given spiritual gift to serve one another; 1Ptr.5:5, "clothe yourselves with humility and be subject to one another"; 1Jn.1:7, "if we walk in the light we have fellowship with one another."

In addition, the church is to discipline its members who persist in sin according to Matt.18:15-22 and Gal.6:1f. The goals and purposes of all church discipline are for the purity of the Church and for restoration, not condemnation of the individual.

The ultimate purpose of the church is to glorify God, build itself up by the instruction of the Word and keep the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and Baptism. Only believers may participate in these ordinances.

## **The Christian Church. Ontology and Missiology.**

### **What The Church Isn't:**

- ◆ A building (1Cor.3:16).
- ◆ An organization initiated and sustained by human effort (Gal.1:11,12; Acts 2:47).
- ◆ A political system by which an earthly nation is to be established (Phil.3:20).
- ◆ Called to convert by military or political powers (Matt.26:52).
- ◆ Only one or a collection of denominations.
- ◆ To isolate and sequester itself from the unsaved people of the world (Jn.17:15).
- ◆ Authority over Christ, His Word, nor the dispenser of supernatural grace (Eph.1:18).
- ◆ Limited to one race, socio-economic, national, geographical, or political group or boundary (Eph.2:14; Col 3:11).
- ◆ The Church is not to be defined sociologically.
- ◆ To be governed spiritually by any local, state or federal government (Eph.1:18; 1Ptr.5:1-3).

- ◆ Infallible, nor the sole dispenser of saving and forgiving grace (Gal.2:11f).
- ◆ The Kingdom of God (the Kingdom culminates in the eschaton comprised of all believers of all times, Rev.20:6;21:2).
- ◆ Governed by a succession of Apostles (1Ptr.5:1-3).
- ◆ An organization that alters its ontology (nature), doctrine and purpose to accommodate transient cultural mores, methodologies and forms.
- ◆ Called to be primarily and foremost a political force or agent of change and reform in culture (2Tim.3:1f, 3:13; 1Tim.4:1).
- ◆ Allowed to compromise pure biblical truth and non-negotiable doctrines for the sake of association with other religious, political, or academic organizations (Col.2:8,20). Nor is the Church to be defined by its social impact or political actions.
- ◆ A continuation of the elect nation of ethnic Israel. Since ethnic Israel was not the Church of God (in the N.T. sense) in the O.T., the redeemed of Christ in the N.T. are not a perpetuation of the O.T. national elect Israel (Rom.9:6, 11:25; Matt. 16:18).
- ◆ To regulate or have jurisdiction over the non-spiritual matters of its members (Rom.14:1;1Cor.7:36,39).

**What the Christian Church Is:** What makes the Church of Jesus Christ unique from all other human, social institutions or religious organizations?

The term "ekklesia" ("ek" out, and "kaleo" to call) in N.T. Greek is often translated "church". The Greek word also was generally used in the secular arena in biblical times to describe a gathering or public assembly of people (Acts 19:32).

The English word Church derives from the Middle English words "kerke" and "kirche" which come from the Greek word "kuriake" meaning "from the Lord" (Gk. *Kurios* means "Lord"). The word and its' cognates stress the fact that the Church is the creation and property of the Lord.

In relationship to the Christian Church though the term is used in the N.T. to describe:

- 1) A small local, individual congregation of professing gospel believers (Rom.16:5).
- 2) The totality of gospel believers in a region or area

making up a number of individual, local churches (Acts 9:31).

3) Our Lord's universal Christian Church which is His mystical body (Eph. 1:22-23).

The **Church Visible** are those people who gather (normally together on Sunday morning, Acts 20:7; 1Cor.16:2) to attend christian worship services and identify themselves with a local congregation. They may or may not all be saved. The **Church Invisible** is comprised of those who gather together with the Church Visible who are truly repentant of their sins, forgiven by God and are joined to Christ by saving faith (Augustine, Luther).

The Church of Jesus Christ was inaugurated on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 with the descending of the Holy Spirit to permanently indwell and sanctify Christians for holy service to God and others. The Church will be complete when Christ comes for all believers at the Rapture previous to the Tribulation. At the Rapture, the dead in Christ will be reunited with their bodies, and Christians alive at the time, will be taken up in the air to always be with the Lord (1Thess.4:16-18).

The Gospel is to be preached in the Church for the warning and saving of sinners; Scripture is preached for the sanctification, edification, and exhortation of believers (1Cor.14:3).

Each church is to be individually and locally governed spiritually by a plurality of godly men called Elders [Gk. presbuteros] (1Tim.5:17; Acts 20; same as Shepherds [Gk. poimen], Overseers [Gk. episkopos], Bishops [epikopos], Pastors [Gk. poimen]). These men are to meet the qualifications for leadership as written in 1Tim.3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

The Church is to receive her financial support from the generous and joyful giving of those who attend (1Cor.9:11).

Each local church is independent, self-governed and self-sustaining in each geographical location (Eph.1:1; Phil.1:1; Gal.1:2), yet universal in its unity, mission and extent (Jn.10:16).

The local church is united by committed membership (Col.4:9).

The Church is established, subordinate to and governed solely by the authority of the Bible. The Church accepts the O.T. and the N.T. as canonical (inspired Scripture) and relevant for preaching and instruction today (Rom.15:4). The Church affirms all Scripture as being verbally (each word), infallibly (true) and plenarily (in totality) inspired (breathed out) by God and perspicuous (understandable). The Church is commanded to preach the entirety of the Bible (2Tim.3:16; Rom.15:4).

The Church is a divinely established institution and the entirety of its worship and works ought to be theologically driven by Scripture, not by creed, councils, tradition, people's expectations, programs, marketing techniques, poles, surveys, cultural norms, religious fads, sociologically, psychologically or methodologically.

The Church is the continued extension of Christ' physical presence on the earth and is to continue His labors of preaching the Kingdom of God, calling all to repentance, condemning sin and purifying the saints. The Church is the sole embodiment of the divine presence in man and activity on earth, as God's special agent.

The Church forms a spiritual unity of people in which Christ is the divine Head, she professes one faith, shares one hope, worships one Lord, and serves one King. She is the citadel of biblical and saving truth on earth (1Tim.3:15). And is to protect biblical doctrine and scriptural truths.

The Universal Church is the gathering of the elect of God from all over the world (Rev.5:9), those foreknown and chosen by Him from eternity past, before the foundation of the world (Rom.8:29).

They are the redeemed bride of Christ precious to Him and adopted into His family.

They are a unique people called out from the world, distinct for God's holy purposes.

They are bought with the blood of Jesus Christ as shed on the cross and owned by Him.

They are:

Chosen by the Father, the elect.

Founded upon the teaching of the Apostles and N.T. prophets (Eph. 2:20).  
 Those who have repented of their sins.  
 Washed from their sins, called expiation.  
 Released from the wrath of God, called propitiation.  
 Forgiven by the substitutionary atoning work of Christ on the cross.  
 A gift from the Father to the Son (Jn.17:24).  
 Justified by faith alone before God not capable of being condemned (Rom.8:1).  
 Regenerated and spiritually recreated by God (Eph.2:10).  
 Sanctified for purity and holy service to God (1Ptr.1:15,16).  
 Seated in the heavenlies with Christ (Eph.2:6).  
 Glorified together with Christ (Rom.8:29).  
 Reconciled to God and Adopted into His eternal family (Rom.8:16).  
 Baptized in and given new spiritual life by the Holy Spirit (1Cor.12:13).  
 Baptized by water subsequent to personal faith in Christ (Matt.28:19).  
 Ruled by Christ who is their Head (Col.1:18).  
 Lead by the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:14).  
 Gifted by the Spirit for service to the Church and God (1Cor.12).  
 Taught by the Holy Spirit (1Jn.2:27).  
 Sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph.1:13).  
 Disciplined by the Father who loves them (Heb.12:5-11).  
 United by the spiritual life and love of Christ (1Cor.12:13).  
 Destined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom.8:29).  
 Glorified and suited for eternity in heaven (Col.1:22).  
 Perfected in the Kingdom of God (Eph.1:3,4).  
 Sole recipients and repository of the Word of God.  
 Guardians of the Special Revelation of God (2Tim.2:2).

### **What is the Church's Mission?**

- 1) To Glorify God through:
  - a) Meeting on the first day of the week (Jn.20:19,16; 1Cor.16:2; Acts 20:7).
  - b) Prayer (adoration, confession of sin, thanksgivings, supplications).
  - c) Bible Study

- d) Worship-singing of spiritual songs and psalms.
  - e) Fellowship-edification, comfort, sanctification (holiness), admonishment and correction.
  - f) Service-in individual spiritual giftedness
  - g) Evangelism.
  - h) Preaching the Scriptures, which should emphasize the transcendence of God as well as His immanence; and include the full counsel of God as contained in all the Scriptures. Preaching also calls for obedience to the Word of God.
  - i) Sacrificial giving.
- 2) To edify itself (Eph. 4:12-16).
- a) Equip the saints for service.
  - b) Build the body of Christ (Col.1:28).
  - c) Attain the unity of the faith(Eph.4:13).
  - d) Attain the true knowledge of the Son of God.
  - e) Attain maturity for the purpose of discernment, growth and unity.
  - f) Be established in love and holiness.
  - g) Meet the needs of its poor members and bear one another's burdens.
  - h) By stimulating one another to love and good deeds (Heb.10:24).
  - i) Restoring the one who has fallen in sin (Gal.6:1f).
- 3) To be established in and maintain purity by:
- a) Purging from the Father (Heb.12:6).
  - b) Purging from the Church (1Cor.5:).
  - c) The believer's self-purification (2Cor.7:1).
- 4) To educate (disciple) its members.
- a) To hold God's Word as the absolute standard of truth for faith, correct doctrine, salvation and condemnation (Jn.17:17).
  - b) To define essential Biblical doctrines and contend earnestly for them (Judel:3).
  - c) To equip members with the spiritual weapons for warfare (Eph. 6:10-18).
  - d) To encourage and assist members in discovering their spiritual gift(s) and mobilize them for service to Christ.
  - e) To teach for the edification of the individual, marital and family unit.
  - f) To instruct for sanctification (personal holiness).
  - g) To warn against sin.

- 5) To evangelize the lost of the world.
  - a) Make disciples by sending missionaries who will teach the nations to observe all that Christ has commanded (Matt.28:18).
  - b) Pray for missions and missionaries (Matt. 9:38).
  - c) Give financially and materially to missions (1Cor.9).
  - d) Each church member personally preaching the gospel in their life-setting.
  - e) Baptize new converts in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt.28:18-20) and assimilate new members into the body of Christ.
  - f) By helping to relieve suffering in the world.
  
- 6) To act as a restraining force against evil and enlightening force in the world.
  - a) By being salt and light in the world (Matt.5:13-16).
  - b) By extending the Christian's righteous influence, which holds back lawlessness, (2Thess.2:6) through individual member's community, legal, educational, and political involvement.
  - c) Because of the Christian's presence, God holds back worldwide judgment (Gen.18:22-33).
  - d) By proclaiming the gospel, judgment to come and the manifold wisdom of God (Eph.4:10).
  
- 7) To promote all that is good.
  - a) To think, act and speak what is good to all men, especially to believers (Gal.6:10).
  - b) Redirect all thinking to spiritual and eternal ends (Col. 3:1,2; 2Cor.4:18).
  - c) Live in such a manner as demonstrating love, grace, mercy, conviction, and truthfulness so as to be a testimony of Jesus Christ by example.
  - d) By individual member's legal, educational and political involvement as good citizenship would require.
  - e) By obeying all laws (that do not contradict Scripture) and paying taxes (Rom.13:1f).
  
- 8) Issue the Ordinances:
  - a) The Lord's Supper.
  - b) Water Baptism.
  
- 9) Support and Edify Christian Marriage and the Family.
  - a) Encourage and enhance the marital union through spiritual growth and preaching on marriage.

b) Assisting parents in training the next generation of believers (children and youth) to live godly in an evil age.

10) Protect and be the guardian of the Bible, true faith, doctrinal purity and eternal salvation as being exclusively through Jesus Christ alone by personal faith alone which is all by God's grace.

Wayne Grudem states in his Systematic Theology, An Introduction To Biblical Doctrine (Zondervan, p.874.), that the "signs of a more-pure church are":

1. Biblical Doctrine (or right preaching of the Word).
2. Proper use of the sacraments (or ordinances).
3. Right use of church discipline.
4. Genuine worship.
5. Effective prayer.
6. Effective witness.
7. Effective fellowship.
8. Biblical church government.
9. Spiritual power in ministry.
10. Personal holiness of life among members.
11. Care for the poor.
12. Love for Christ.

Following is a somewhat altered, compressed and selective listing of characteristics of a healthy Church from Les Lofquist's (IFCA Exec. Director.) article, "Church Growth or Health."

Godly Leaders.

Functional Goals and Objectives.

Active congregational Discipleship.

Community Penetration.

Active Church Membership and Involvement.

Concern for One Another.

Devotion to the Family.

In Depth Bible Teaching and Preaching.

A Willingness to Change.

Great Faith.

Willingness to Sacrifice.

Heartfelt Worship.

Specific Objectives.

Relational Groups.

    Congregational Meeting.

    Bible Study Groups.

    One-on-One Discipleship Groups.

Strong Trained Leadership.  
Participatory Decision Making.  
Activities and Programs That Meet the Needs of the Church.  
High Visibility.  
Adequate Facilities.  
Sound Financial Resources.  
Biblical Priorities in Spending and Management.  
An Atmosphere of Genuine Love and Encouragement.  
Gospel Communicated Clearly.  
Holiness Among Members.  
Mobilized Prayer Base.  
Ordinances Regularly Practiced.  
Evangelistic Emphasis.  
Increasing Bible Knowledge and Obedience.  
Saints Equipped to Serve in Areas of Giftedness.  
Biblical Philosophy of Ministry and Serving.  
Life-Changing Worship Service.  
Biblical Vision.  
Mobilized Serving Laity.  
Assimilation of New Members.  
Committed Membership.  
Emphasis on Unity in the Body.  
Truth and Justice Oriented Ministry.  
Biblical, Theological and Doctrinal Growth in Members.  
Biblical Understanding of Worship, Holy Spirit, Preaching,  
Conversion, Justification, Evangelism, Church Discipline,  
spirituality, Election, Sanctification, Perseverance,  
Glorification.

**IX. ABOUT ETERNITY.** We believe man was created to exist forever from the moment of his creation. He will either exist eternally separated from God by sin and unrepentance in hell, or in union with God in heaven through forgiveness of sin and salvation in Christ. To be eternally separated from God and in torment is to be placed temporally in Hades, but eternally and physically in Hell. Unbelievers souls are placed in Hades when they die which is a temporal holding place of unsaved dead. Then at the Great White Throne judgment at the end of the Millennium, their bodies are raised and joined with their souls and they are judged and cast into hell with Satan and his demons. But to be eternally in union with Jesus is eternal life in His presence. The saved of Christ receive eternal life the moment they believe in Christ. Heaven and Hell are actual places of eternal existence, not merely states of existence (John 3:16; John 2:25; John 5:11-13; Romans

6:23; Revelation 20:15; Matthew 1:8, Matthew 2:44-46).

**X. ABOUT ETERNAL SECURITY.** We believe that because God elected His Church to be the bride for His Son from eternity past, and that His election is settled in His eternal decrees. He secures that election and seals them through the Holy Spirit and gives man eternal life through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The believer is therefore secure in that salvation for eternity. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. In concurrent manner, it is the grace and keeping power of God that gives this security, yet the believer is required to exert self-discipline and effort to walk in a manner pleasing to God in good works (John 10:28,29; II Timothy 1:12; Hebrew 7:25; 10:10,14; I Peter 1:3-5; I John 5:11-13).

**XI. ABOUT HOLY LIVING.** We believe that the supreme task of every believer is to glorify God with the proper use of his time, talent, and possessions. The believer should live blamelessly before the world, be committed to a local church, be a faithful steward of his possessions, propagate the gospel through evangelism, and seek to realize for himself the full stature of maturity in Christ. To a greater or lesser degree for each person, justification always leads to a life of sanctification, according to the grace given each one (I Corinthians 10-31; Colossians 1-28; I Timothy 6:6-9, I Peter 1:14-15).

**XII. ABOUT ORDINANCES.** We believe the Church should observe regularly the two New Testament symbolic ordinances of water baptism (immersion preferably) and the Lord's Supper. These ordinances are observed in obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ as acts of love and devotion and are not considered to be necessary for our salvation.

**XIII. About Church Government.** We believe that the pattern for local church government in the book of Acts and the Epistles was for a church to have a group of godly men shepherding over and serving the flock of Jesus Christ, for its protection, governing, purity and spiritual

growth. For Example, 1Tim.5:17, "Let the elders who rule well..." Heb.13:17, "Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account."

1Ptr.5:1-3. 1) "Therefore, I exhort the elders (presbuteros) among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2) shepherd (poimein) the flock of God among you, exercising oversight (episkopos) not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3) nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to examples to the flock.

In v.3 Peter's point is that Shepherds are servants, not tyrants, not despots, but Christ-like examples to the church body. Matt.20:25-28. "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over [lit. lord down, domineer] them, and their great men exercise authority [down] over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant..."

We teach that all three terms for church leadership appear in Peter's text: Elder, Shepherd, and Overseer; and that they are synonymous; that is they describe the same person and office. One way of defining them is that "Elder" (presbuteros) is their title. Their heart-attitude is of a shepherd (poimein, pastor) and their duty is to exercise oversight (episkopos).

We see the same Acts 20:17&v.28. And each term has a little different nuance but describes the same person. We could say, Elder (Presbuteros) defines who he is; Overseer (Episkopos) defines what he does; Pastor or Shepherd (Poimein) describes his heart attitude-he leads the sheep with love, feeds them, and protects them.

Practically and biblically speaking then, in effect, elders rule the spiritual dimensions of church life and are examples of what it means to be spiritual to the flock.

Furthermore, the term "Elders" is always plural in reference to church leadership (1Tim.5:17, 1Ptr.5:1, Acts 20:17,28). Therefore the local church should have more than one ruling elder. And they are always Men. In 1Tim.3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 the adjectives are all masculine. Last of all we teach that their authority is not absolute. The elders provide the leadership for the local church and in the process they employ their spiritual giftedness, biblical instruction, talents, counsel and advise to the membership.

## XIV. About Eschatology.

### Q: What Is The Rapture and When Does It Occur?

We agree with the best of end-time scholarship, that the Rapture occurs between ch.3 and ch.4 of the book of Revelation.

This interpretation is even reinforced when we see how John divides up his book himself. In ch.1:19 Jesus tells John to write three things:

1) *"Write therefore the things which you have [just] seen.."* (looking back on ch.1:1-18, Jesus is seen in heaven walking among the angels and the churches).

2) *"..and the things which are (ch's 2&3-the seven churches in John's era).*

3) *"..and the things which shall take place after these things"* (ch.4 and following-all future).

In fact, chapter 4 starts off with those exact words, *"After these things.."* What things? The things written about in ch's 2&3.. indicating it's all future.

### Q: What Is The Rapture?: Origin of the Word: In

1Thess.4:17 Paul writes, *"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."*

Paul describes believers as literally being *"caught up in the air* (Gk. fut. Pass.).. to be with Jesus near the end of time as we know it. The Greek text literally is *harpazo* and it means to be snatched away eagerly and suddenly by force. The same word is used in Jn.6:15 where the crowds came to take Jesus by force (*harpazo*) to be their King. And in Acts 8:39 Luke wrote that after Philip had baptized the Ethiopian eunuch in the water, *"..the Spirit snatched Philip away.."* Then verse 40 says, *"..Philip [immediately] found himself at Azotus.."* (20 miles away). So he started preaching the gospel in all of the cities there. That the idea of rapture.. snatching away.

But the Latin version of the same 1Thess.4:17 text uses a different word than *harpazo*. The Vulgate uses the word *"rapturo"* meaning to lift up. That's where we get the term Rapture from.

### Rapture Definition (sequentially):

1) Jesus Physically descends from heaven.., with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with the sound of a

trumpet, to the earth only to the level of the clouds to receive His Church (1Thess.4:13-18). Note: This is not the second coming of Jesus to earth.

2) The dead In Christ Are Raised. All Christian saints since Pentecost (Acts 2) who have died prior to the Lord coming in the air, are raised up physically from their graves to meet Him and their souls in the air, which have been in heaven (2Cor.5:8; Phil.1:23).

3) The Living Christians Are Taken Up By Christ. Then after those dead Christian's bodies are raised to meet Jesus in the clouds to be joined to their souls, all living believers in Jesus Christ will be raised physically to be with Him.

4) Believers' Bodies Will Be Transformed. All saints as they are Raptured up will have their physical bodies transformed physically into bodies that are suited for eternity in heaven (1Cor.15:40-50, "*..flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*")

5) Jesus and Believers Return to Heaven. After being united with Jesus in the air they all return back to heaven to be with Him (Jn.14:3, "*..if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am you may be also.*"). Dr. Thomas says the Greek particle *sav* coupled with the aorist verbs denote actuality.. hence "*I shall go and prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you to Myself.*"

6) The Rapture Marks the End of Physical Death For All Believers. Whether their bodies are taken up alive or taken up from the grave, believers will never face the issue of death again. From this point on no believer will ever face death again. Paul wrote in 1Cor.15:54,55 that after the Rapture, when our perishable bodies have become imperishable, "*Death is swallowed up in victory, O death where is your victory? O death where is your sting?*"

**Q: Why Do We Believe In The Rapture?** (remember the NT idea of Rapture includes the raising up of Christians who are alive when Jesus comes and those whose bodies are in the grave).

**A:** Because the OT itself is full of passages that predict a future resurrection of the dead, or the raising up of God's saints (The Resurrection of the dead is not completely equal to the Rapture, but the Rapture includes believers raising from the dead physically). The point is, the raising up of God's people to be with Him in heaven is not thoroughly a NT invention or even a new idea found only in the Church Age. Even long before one single letter in the

NT was written, every Jew in Jesus' day expected to be physically raised up from the dead someday.

For instance, in Jn.11:23 Jesus visits Martha and Mary after their brother Lazarus had died. By this time he had been in the grave for four days. Jesus then arrives on the scene and reassures the distraught Martha that her brother will rise from the dead physically. This apparently was no news to her nor was it shockingly outside of her current beliefs regarding death. As any good Jew would have responded as she did v.24, *"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."*

So every OT Jew was taught from the Torah and expected a raising up of God's people from the dead to be with Him in His kingdom. They believed that because the Torah itself predicted it.

For OT predictions of God's people being raised up, God promised the OT prophet Daniel that he would die, and yet be physically raised up from the grave. Dan.12:13, *"But as for you, go your way until the end (of your life); then you will enter into rest (die) and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age."* God told Isaiah in 26:19, *"Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits."* And the disheveled Job himself looked forward to his day of restoration when he would be physically raised up from the dead in Job 19:26, *"Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God."*

So for us to believe in a Resurrection and a taking up of God's people physically to be with Him in heaven is nothing new to the Scriptures. The OT proposes the truth also. (Although, please note that the OT saints will not be resurrected until the end of the Trib. Dan.12:13, *"But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."* What days was God referring to? In context, 9:24-27, the end of the seventieth week, which be at the end of the Trib. So all OT saints are resurrected at the end of the Trib.)

What is *somewhat* new in the NT is the doctrine that Paul predicts that many of God's NT era people will be taken up to heaven physically while still alive. The Rapture.

And yet in and of itself the Rapture is not *completely* foreign to the OT, because you'll remember, in the OT Enoch himself was Raptured and taken up to be with God immediately in Gen.5:24 as he walked alive on the earth. Then we also have the OT example of Elijah who was Raptured

and taken physically alive by God in 2Kings 2:11 and taken up alive in a whirlwind to heaven.

So the Rapture is not necessarily a completely new even to the OT. But it is more documented, pronounced and explained in the NT. This is one reason why we believe in a Rapture.

**A:** We also believe in a Rapture because Jesus verbally promised He would come to earth and get His Church and take them to be with Him in heaven.

*Jn.14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so I would have told you; for 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, you may be also."*

Jesus' words clearly imply a Rapture, or the taking away of God's people alive, because He said He was coming to earth again to receive His people. If all Christians simply died, He would not have to come to earth to get them for they would all be already with Him in heaven by then (2Cor.5:8; Phil.1:23).

But the fact that He has to come to earth to receive them implies that at least some will be alive when He comes for them. This is exactly what His disciples who heard Him at this time would have heard Him say. As some people who believe in Jesus remain on earth, He will come for them.

And this fits beautifully into what the two angels said to the disciples as they watched Jesus physically ascend into the clouds above in Acts 1:11, *"This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way, as you have watched Him go into heaven (physically)."*

**A:** Additionally, we believe in the Rapture because Paul tells the Church at Corinth that not all Christians will die. He states specifically that some Christians will be alive at the time of the when Jesus comes, and their bodies will be transformed into heavenly bodies, and then they will be taken up alive to be with Jesus in heaven.

*1Cor.15:51-53, "Behold, I tell you a mystery (something concealed in the OT but not fully revealed); we shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed (all Christian bodies in the grave and those alive), in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet*

*will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality."*

A: Furthermore, Paul promised the Rapture in 1Thess.4:16,17 where he wrote, *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."*

So in the future, Jesus will descend to the level of the clouds on earth. He will summons His children with a loud shout accompanied by a trumpet. The bodies of Christians who have died will first raise up out of the grave to be with Him in the air. When they all arrive, then we who believe in Jesus and are alive will rise physically and alive to be with Him in the air. Then we will all be transported back to heaven with Him.

That's why we believe in a literal Rapture or the taking up of God's people to be with Him. The OT prophets talk about God people rising physically to be with Him; Jesus predicted it; Paul predicted it.

**Q: When Will The Rapture Occur?**

A: For the most part, in the broad spectrum of evangelicalism, all eschatologies, or end-time scenarios, believe in a Rapture. In other words, that the Rapture occurs is a pretty much an agreed upon fact. But when it takes is a matter of much discussion (sometimes heated).

The first difference of when the Rapture occurs in many evangelical minds can be divided into two views: Those views are what we call the 1) Postmillennial view and 2) Premillennial view of the Rapture. Here, the main issue is when does the Rapture occur in reference to the Millennial kingdom (1000 yr. physical reign of Jesus on earth with His people)? Does the Rapture occur before the Millennium (Pre), or after the Millennium (Post)?

**1) Postmillennialism:** Postmillennialism includes Christians who are both Amillennial and Post-millennial. But both have in common the belief that Jesus comes at the end of the Millennial kingdom. In this construct, Jesus comes in the air to Rapture His people after the 1000 yr. millennial kingdom where he only spiritually ruled on earth through His Church. At the end of the Millennium they are taken up into the air to be with Him, and then they return

relatively immediately to the earth to rule and reign with Him now physically on earth.

**2) Premillennialism:** The Premillennial view states that Jesus comes physically to earth before His physical Millennial kingdom on earth. For them, the Rapture occurs before the establishment of Jesus physical reign in the Millennial kingdom on earth.

### **Three Views Of The Premillennial Rapture:**

Among Premillennial believers, that is those who believe the Rapture is before the Millennial kingdom, there are three views of the Rapture. They all agree the rapture is before the Millennial kingdom on earth, but they all differ on how the Rapture is timed with the 7 yr. Tribulation period. But what they have in common is that all three Premillennial Rapture views have Jesus coming before the Millennial kingdom.

The three main differing Premillennial Rapture views are:

1) **Pre-tribulational**, which says Jesus comes for His Church to be Raptured before the great 7 year tribulation period.

2) **Mid-tribulation**, which says Jesus comes for His people in the middle of the Tribulation to Rapture and rescue them from His wrath being poured out on earth. They say the trumpet for the Rapture (as in 1Cor.15:52) is the same as in Rev.11:15 which is the seventh trumpet midway through the Tribulation. Also, only the last half of the tribulation (3 ½ yrs.) is where God's wrath is poured out so they say this is where we are taken up.

3) **Post-tribulational**, which says Jesus comes in the air for His Church to Rapture them at the end of the 7 year tribulation; at that point in time He takes them up with Him. Then He immediately comes with them back to earth to establish His Millennial kingdom.

**A:** To summarize what we believe, we believe in a pre-tribulational Rapture. That means we believe that this Rapture event, the snatching away of God's people physically from the grave and those who believe in Him and are alive, will occur at and mark the end of the Church-Age and initiate the beginning of the Great 7 Year Tribulation Period.

Now, since we do not know when the Church Age ends, that means we do not know when the Rapture will be.. which means it could occur at any time. The Rapture of Christ' Church is the next immediate event on the prophetic

landscape to occur. And it could transpire at any time now. This is why we talk about the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

Paul did not give us a day, hour, month or, even a year timeframe of when Jesus will come to Rapture His Church. Jesus and Scripture are clear, no man knows the day or the hour of when Jesus is coming (Matt.24:36). But, having said that, Paul did give us a soteriological timeframe; that is salvation itself becomes benchmark or point of reference of when Jesus is coming.

Paul did said say that ll attention towards Israel again to save them. You say, "Where do you read that?" In Rom.11:25 Paul writes that currently (in 58 AD), "*..a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (aorist); and thus ('ουτως, upon this condition) all Israel will be saved (Future, Indic. Pass.); just as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob' (quote from Isa.59:20). 'And this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins' (quote from Isa.27:9)." So Paul states that after the all of the Gentiles who are to come into the Church, are saved, then God will turn to His people the Jews for their salvation. When is that period where God turns His main attention to the Jews? Answer, after all the Gentiles are saved who are predestined to be saved (Church Age), the Tribulation! So I think the Rapture of the Church (Gentiles) happens after all of the Gentiles has come in, right before the Trib. begins.*

### **The Rapture Is to Save Us From God's Wrath.**

And for us to say that we believe in a pre-tribulational Rapture means that we believe that the saints of the Church Age will not go through the horrors of the 7 year Tribulation (where God's focus goes back to the salvation of Israel (Zech.13:7-9 says 1/3 of Israel will be saved during the trib.) and the judgment of the wicked on earth.

One of the many reasons we believe the Church in Jesus Christ will not go through the Tribulation is because the purpose of the trib. is threefold. 1) To save Israel, 2) and to judge God's enemies. 3) To cleanse the earth of evil for the Millennial kingdom to be established. The Church need not be on earth because she has nothing to do with any of those purposes.

Rev.6:17 says the trib. is a time of God's great wrath being poured out on the earth, "*..for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?*"

Yet for us believers, in 1Thess.5:9 Paul clearly states that, *"..God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."* And in 1Thess.1:10 Paul writes that we Christians turn to God, *"..to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the (note D.A.) wrath to come."* So I believe Christians will not go through the tribulation period because we have been saved out of God's wrath that is about to come upon the whole earth.

We also believe that the Rapture will occur at the beginning of the Tribulation because Rev.12 is a mini-synopsis of the Trib., and the focus is Israel and the Dragon's assault on her, not the Church.

Additionally, a rapture is senseless if it happens at the end of the Trib., for that would mean the saints are taken up into the clouds to be with Jesus and then immediately return with Him to earth to be with Him in His kingdom. Why have them go up at all at this point? He's on the way back down. Also, that doesn't appear to be a Rapture to protect God's people from His wrath which He said he would do (1Thess.1:10, 5:9).

**Who Will Populate The Millennial Kingdom?** Furthermore, if the Rapture occurs at the end of the Trib., who will be the mortals to populate the Millennial kingdom? Saints will be immortal. Non-believers are judged and cast into Hades or Gehenna.

**Only The Pre-Trib. Rapture is Unpredictable.** In addition, for the timing of the Rapture to be imminent and unknown it must occur before the tribulation. Because once the tribulation starts, we know that it will be 7 years until Jesus comes again. Therefore the time of Rapture would be knowable. Or even if we were in the tribulation and we saw the antichrist putting His image in the temple of the Jews, at that point we would know when Jesus was coming for us because Scriptures tells that's the 3 ½ yr. mark in the Trib.

**Paul's Preparation for The Thessalonians.** When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians they were deeply concerned about the end times. They thought perhaps they had missed it. So Paul comforts them by writing about the Rapture; noticeably he never prepared them for the Tribulation, but taught them about God snatching them away.

**The Church Isn't Mentioned During the Trib. Period.**

As the tribulation unfolds in its judgment as described in Revelation ch's 6-19 many people, Jews and gentiles, are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, and most of them are martyred. Some do live through the Trib; but in those 13 chapters in the book of Revelation where God's wrath is poured out, Jew and gentile are saved, ironically the corporate Church, the body of Christ is never mentioned, not even once.

**Q: Is The Holy Spirit Taken From the Earth at The Rapture?**

Incidentally, we do not believe the Holy Spirit is taken from the earth at this time as many believe (2Thess.2:7). Why? Because if the Holy Spirit would be taken from the earth, how would people be saved? (He testifies to Christ and is the regenerative agent who converts peoples' souls in the salvation event).

**Q: What Is The Difference Between the Rapture and The Day of The Lord?**

**A:** The Rapture is when Jesus comes in the clouds to raise up and take His Church and the bodies of all saints to be with Him in heaven.

In contrast, the Day of the Lord occurs at the end of the 7 year Tribulation, when Jesus physically returns to earth to wage war with His enemies and judge them in the Valley of Meggido, or Armageddon. The Day of the Lord in the OT and NT is always a time of God's judgment on His enemies.

So, the Rapture is not the same as the Day of the Lord, which is when Jesus returns to earth physically. This all appears to be Post-tribulational.

Matt.24:29-31 describes this event. Also Matt.25:31,34.

Post-trib. separation of believers from non-believers differs from the Rapture significantly (Matt.13:41,42, 49,50; 24:37-41).