

By Jan Lilleby

This article is written to point out important Bible truth

regarding the so-called 'Rapture' of saints found in 1 Thes 4 and add this to my first article on this subject – called

“Will the Christian Church Be Raptured Up Into Heaven

In Clouds, Meeting Jesus in the Air?

This new article will therefore overlap it slightly

When Paul wrote his epistles, especially those he wrote in the same time as described in Acts 28 – 62 AD, all of his teaching was centered on the doctrinal basis of The New Covenant for Israel and the imminent return of Jesus Christ to come and establish the earthly Millennial Kingdom in THEIR LIFETIME. It all hung on whether Israel would come to faith in Jesus Christ and to repent taking the water baptism. Acts 2:36-38.

Paul remarks the importance of the New Covenant in Heb. 8-9 chapters, see Heb. 9:15 for instance. This New Covenant was introduced/established by Jesus during the Last Supper the evening before His crucifixion (Luke 22:19, 20). Via Heb. 9:15 we learn that this covenant is the very same one prophesied by Jer. 31:31-34. It was promised to Israel only! The entire time of the apostles – as reported in Acts 28 – 62 AD – did not the dispensation of the Church exist, neither was the free Grace Gospel of Paul revealed to the world. The apostles preached only what we call *The Gospel of the Kingdom on earth*, the Millennial Kingdom (see Dan. 2:44).

What was taking place in Acts was that God had a private dialogue with His ancient people, the Jews, and He would have them repent to Jesus as their Messiah and be baptized (see Acts 2-3 as already referred to). The Jews were already the people of God on earth, so what really happened was that God would have them to CONFIRM THEIR STANDING WITH HIM, as He now had sent them His Messiah Jesus.

The Book of Acts starts with showing Jesus teaching His disciples to preach the *Kingdom of God* which was the Millennial Kingdom on earth Acts 1:3; and in Acts 28:31 we find Paul still pounding on the Jewish door at Rome, as he tried to convince them of Jesus as their Messiah. The entire Acts history is about that Kingdom for Israel, which should have been established as soon as Israel had repented.

THE RAPTURE MENTIONED IN 1 THES. 4:14-18

Reading, Amplified Bible, - *“For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will also bring with Him through Jesus those who have fallen asleep (in death). -*

- For this we declare to you by the Lord's (own) word, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall in no way precede (into His presence) or have any advantage at all over those who have previously fallen asleep (in Him in death). - - For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a loud cry of summons, with the shout of an archangel, and with the blast of the trumpet of God. And those who have departed this life in Christ will rise first. - - Then we, the living ones who remain (on the earth), shall simultaneously be caught up along with (the resurrected dead) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so always (through the eternity of the eternities) we shall be with the Lord! - - Therefore comfort and encourage one another with these words."

Paul's using of the words *We, You, The dead in Christ, Them, and Each other* - has to be understood as his words spoken exclusively to the nation, Israel's Christ-believers. This is not written to 'All the Christians in the entire world' - like we would have said it in our time. He actually (in Galatians) called such Jewish believers and their proselytes for "*Israel of God*".

But in the times after Israel's fall from God as His nation, as Paul wrote the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians in which he reveals and establishes the dispensation of the Church, the Body of Christ, - then there was no longer any preaching or any offer to Israel to get the Kingdom on earth. It had been postponed to a future far ahead, and the apostles simply stopped preaching it. Instead they got on with the preaching and teaching of the new free Grace Gospel revealed to Paul, an international gospel for all people on earth, as opposed to the previous Gospel, that of the national message to Israel of a Kingdom.

Another matter is, that during the Great Tribulation which shall come upon Israel in the end times, that Kingdom-Gospel will be preached to them again, Mat. 24:14. This will be the main message which the 144 000 tribal Jews shall preach to Israel while the tribulation rages. As opposed to the times of the apostles, when Israel had it preached to them under God's grace, it will be under a time of judgement and doom when they shall hear the Kingdom-Gospel anew. And no grace, because if they refuse to believe it when the tribulation is raging, they will perish and cannot be given salvation.

Israel was from that point in time, when Paul confronted them in Rome in 62 AD, no longer the nation of God, but they had been put down a notch to just being one nation among all other nations on earth! Eph. 2:14, 15. There are no longer 'Jews first, then Gentile' Rom. 1:16.

Therefore, we can already at this point conclude surely that the doctrine of a coming rapture as well as a raising of dead believers in same instance, - never was offered to us, the Church, we who are under the free international Grace Gospel given through Paul's ministry - and to whom the hope of salvation was the heaven up above the heavens (Greek,

Ephiouranos) and not the earthly Kingdom, the Millennia. The doctrine of a rapture for the believers was *only valid to those who belonged under the Acts period and the preaching of the Millennial Kingdom to Israel.* It all was *suspended* in the same instance as Israel fell away from God as we learn from Acts 28:25-28. Paul was the messenger of the judgement upon the disobedient Jewry, quoting the Sanhedrin at Rome Is. 6 of their deafness, blindness and lack of understanding, and their lack of repentance.

THE CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF THE RAPTURE DOCTRINE

In Christendom there has been a very unfortunate understanding of what Paul meant would happen regarding the rapture. The *main misunderstanding* is that they believe that Jesus should come down to the clouds, to rapture the believers up to Him and *from there take them into heaven!* This is a total misunderstanding. Bible says otherwise.

This intervention by God – the resurrection of the dead and the immediate rapture of them together with those who were alive – would happen at the coming (Greek, *Parousia*) of the Lord **DOWN TO EARTH.**

Paul says nothing at all of any 'flight' of the believers into heaven up above, I can assure you. It cannot be found in the New Testament at all.

They were intended to be *brought down to earth* (Jerusalem I believe) with Him. The prophet says, He, at *that day* should set foot upon the Mount Olives which then will split into a valley etc. see Zec. 14:4, 5.

We are talking of a so-called 'Fresh ware' doctrine, and thus it had a 'Sell-by-date' – Paul taught of the believer's salvation in light of the *imminent coming of Jesus in their own life time.* This had an unwritten date stamped on it, and that date-stamping has to do with the 30-some years we find in Acts. A time period that ended with Israel's fall, not salvation!

And Paul's rapture-doctrine *has no longer relevance* after that Israel fell away from God. It was *cut off* the lot. None of the things which belonged to that 30-year period has any continuance or any fulfillment of any sort; it was laid flat and irrelevant all at once. And in 70 AD God had the Romans destroy Israel utterly.

It is one certain point in Paul's Acts doctrine however, that has relevance still: The yet unfulfilled prophecy of the anti-Christ to come and seduce Israel and destroying her. See II Thes. 2:6-9. And also, like I just mentioned, the Kingdom-Gospel shall again be preached to Israel – but then under judgement and tribulation. Tough times!

Anti-Christ has not yet shown up in Israel, but he will come soon I am sure. It is possible that Paul, as he wrote this, he might have had the impression that anti-Christ would meet up in *his life time*, and not far into the

future...almost 2000 years later. I believe this personally.
Well, we know that anti-Christ did not come in the apostles' time on earth, however the *great falling away* came, which was that *fall of Israel* I mentioned above. Israel today is without question a platform/podium for this devious person who will try to stand forth as Israel's Messiah.

LO AND BEHOLD! AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL 70 AD, GOD COMES UP WITH A WHOLE NEW CREW!



If we read Rev. 20:4 we will understand that it is a whole new crew, a whole new way of preaching – actually the whole end-time stage is a huge play directed and kept going by God Almighty and Christ; God holding the steering wheel.

The verse shows the dead martyrs being raised from the dead, and they were killed because they refused to follow anti-Christ taking the mark of the beast upon their hand or forehead,

“Then I saw thrones, and sitting on them were those to whom authority to act as judges and to pass sentence was entrusted. Also I saw the souls of those who had been slain with axes (beheaded) for their witnessing to Jesus and (for preaching and testifying) for the Word of God, and who had refused to pay homage to the beast or his statue and had not accepted his mark or permitted it to be stamped on their foreheads or their hands. And they lived again (was resurrected) AND RULED WITH CHRIST A THOUSAND YEARS”.

Please don't tell me that this special 'congregation' of saints and martyrs must sort under Paul's rapture-doctrine in 1 Thes. 4!

Because it is obviously a totally different crew, totally different dispensation (that of the Great Tribulation in Israel), and even the Law of Moses is back in the saddle again demanding believers in this tribulation to obey the Law. And the Law maker is present there together with the prophet Elijah. The two witnesses in Rev. 11 are the leaders for all Jewish believers and their eventual proselytes at that time. At least for the first 1260 days, equal to 3 ½ years, Rev. 11:3. The 42 months mentioned in verse 2 points to the final half of the tribulation when anti-Christ starts his raid against the Jews.

In Rev. 7 we find the more correct description for this entirely new group/body of believers: The 144 000 elect

tribal 'evangelists' – 12 000 out of 12 Israel's twelve tribes, and Moses and Elijah being prophets will know how to select those 144 000 out of the Israeli population when it is started by them coming down from heaven. They have *divine wisdom from God*, and they name these 12 000 from each tribe by NAMES OF THE TRIBES, and these are, *Tribe of Judah, tribe of Reuben, tribe of Gad tribe of Asher, tribe of Naphtali, tribe of Manasseh, tribe of Simeon, tribe of Levi, tribe of Issachar, tribe of Zebulun, tribe of Joseph, tribe of Benjamin.* Rev. 7:4-8.

There is no way that these can use the New Covenant doctrine of Paul such as found in Thessalonians, and especially not the doctrine of rapture in 1 Thes. 4. Paul taught Grace in connection to the message of the New Covenant. But the preaching of this covenant during the tribulation will – as I already pointed out – be not under Grace but under judgement. Very different from the time of the apostles.

These are the saints described in Rev. 20:4 being resurrected after first having been killed by anti-Christ. The ones to be ruling together with Christ in His Kingdom on earth, will be elected from the 144 000 – so that there will be some from each of the twelve tribes.

Therefore I find it obvious that Revelation 20:4 **out rules** 1 Thes. 4.

In Revelation 20:4 it says that there will be resurrection of the saints from the Great Tribulation, but nothing is said of a supposedly rapture of the saints. It is entirely absent. Only the two witnesses (see Rev. 11:11, 12) were raptured and taken into heaven. That's it.

Only just reading of these 144 000 Jews, set them *entirely and decisively apart* from the Jewish Messianic believers in Paul's time and we know thus that they are under a totally *different commission* than that of the apostles, Rev. 7:3, 4 is showing us that these 144 000 tribal Jews were sealed (marked) on their forehead – and it may be understood also, that the 144 000 are elected from the population for a special ministry to preach and witness to Jesus (*...sealed the bond servants of our God upon their foreheads v.3*).

What was that 'seal' exactly? Rev. 14:1 tells us they had been sealed on their foreheads with the NAME of the Lamb (Jesus) and His Father's NAME (Jehova). If we were allowed to stand right before one of those 144 000, and reading what was inscribed on their foreheads, we would read, **JESUS JEHOVAH.**

You may chew a bit on this!

Furthermore – we find that these 144 000 were all **entirely in celibacy**, none had ever been with any woman, they had **not said any lies** upon their lips, for they are blameless before the throne of God. They followed the Lamb wherever it goes, it says. Rev. 14: 2-5. You cannot find anything like this in Acts or in epistles written during Acts period. This is entirely outstanding, it is literary a *whole new*

crew of anointed evangelists – they follow the Lamb wherever it goes. No one can be member of this group of 144 000 tribal Jews, unless you actually is a genuine Jew from the line of Abraham.

The well-known nonsense we have heard of from the work and writings of the Watchtower Society (JW.org) called often for 'Jehovah's Witnesses', and their weird lies, is that people within that heretical sect think they are among the 144 000. They are totally confused – for the Bible tell us exactly who they are and from where or what they come.

One must be a genuine Jew, and one must be found in existence as the Great Tribulation starts up, one must have a lifestyle of one hundred percent celibacy, and one must be a believer who never ever spoke a lie. And you must be wearing a written notice on the forehead, reading 'Jesus Jehovah'. Try and fit in to this parameter!

Again, it is entirely obvious that these in no way are obliged to keep the same doctrine as that which Paul taught the Thessalonians. They never will have any rapture – but they get a resurrection so they can be rulers on thrones assisting their King Jesus at Zion, in the new fourth temple (see Ezek. 47). There will be no general rapture of saints after the Acts-period. We find only one special rapture mentioned, in Rev. 11 regarding the two witnesses taken up to heaven.

Originally, when we are speaking of thrones and ruler ship with Christ, we recall Mat. 19:28 when Jesus told His disciples,

"Truly I say to you, in the new age (the Messianic rebirth of the world), when the Son of Man shall sit down on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel."

But that was only spoken by Jesus and promised them IF Jesus had come from heaven in their life time. Because of Israel's disobedience and unbelief He could not come from heaven. Israel got destroyed by the Roman army as we know in 70 AD. The Second Advent was postponed into the future, which is in our days really, for it will not be long before Jesus shall come from heaven.

Just as Paul's teaching of the rapture/resurrection in 1 Thes. 4, so it is with Mat. 19:28 and Jesus promising His disciples to sit on thrones: It was to be held only as 'Fresh Ware' – it came with a 'Sell-by-Date' which was when Paul stayed in Rome until around 62 AD. Shortly after his release from custody and given free from all charges, he wrote his epistle to the Ephesians as well as the one to the Colossians, both containing the fresh revelation of the 'Mystery' – the free international Grace Gospel which we still have in Christianity. He stopped preaching the earthly Kingdom to Israel! (NOTE: It is discussed in Christianity among scholars whether the chains Paul mentioned in Eph. 3:1 (Paul, a prisoner of Jesus for you

Gentiles) was an undescribed *second jailing*). Peter and the eleven will not sit on thrones in the Millennium, but those in Rev. 20:4 will. All saints who have lived and eventually died since Paul got God's new Gospel revelation of free Grace are saved to go to heaven (Greek, *epiouranos*) and not to the earthly Kingdom in Israel. Those who are alive the day (see Eph. 4:30) God concludes the Church dispensation, will be *transferred supernaturally* into heaven by His immense power and might. They will actually never see death! But this must not be confused with the rapture-idea of Paul in 1 Thes. 4. We shall be swiftly taken into heaven (don't think vertical or horizontal) which is another dimension and outside and above the universe. This will happen the very same day as Moses and Elijah comes from heaven to direct and prophesy judgement on Israel and purge them and chastise them to start believing on Jesus as the Messiah. *The Great Tribulation.* Nothing whatsoever written in Revelation has anything to do with the Church, the Body of Christ. You will only find the Church in Ephesians and Colossians, because in the two writings Paul revealed the Mystery, the dispensation of the Body of Christ under His free Grace Gospel. We are NOT expecting any rapture as taught in 1 Thes. 4, but we will, quote, *"....appear with Him in glory"*. We shall come before Him in heaven. Those who died before this day of redemption (Eph. 4:30) shall be resurrected up in heaven. Let me end this exposition with some quotes, Eph. 4:30, *"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you were sealed for **the day of redemption.**"* Eph. 1:13, 14, *"In Him you also who have heard the Word of Truth, the glad tidings of your salvation, and have believed in and adhered to and relied on Him, **were stamped with the seal of the long-promised Holy Spirit.** - - That is the guarantee of our inheritance, in anticipation of its **full redemption** and our acquiring possession of it - to the praise of His Glory."*

ADDED TO THE ARTICLE Nov. 1st - 2021:

Within several denominations there exists a doctrine of faith which says that a Christian believer will spend a period of time between death and the resurrection. This will be in some kind of heavenly Paradise-like place. I have seen Pentecostal preachers write about this in books, and also seen articles written by pastors and

preachers, saying much of the same thing. They hold for true that when they die, they will enter such a place, but it is not yet the end-salvation – just an interim in 'Paradise', awaiting their resurrection. People dies at different time through history, but the resurrection will take place in one and the same day for all who died. Not only in the same day, but actually in the *same moment*.

The same preachers who says so, they also believe that there will come a rapture of the Church, like I have written above – that 1 Thes. 4 are for the Church of our time.

But, ...whoah...hold on for a moment!

Here we have a *spiritual doctrinal collision* – dead people being raised up from their graves, and who have lived in a heavenly place for quite a time – to be coming together with those believers who are alive – and the two groups are raptured up at the very same time...?

How can that be then, the 'dead' are placed in a certain part of heaven, much like a Paradise they say, - but at the time of the rapture, they all of a sudden will come out from graves on earth...?! And then, for the *second time* they will be lifted back into heaven, accompanied with those believers who are alive when this happens!

This just does not add up to anything we can call a Biblical truth. This is more like a fiction story, a spiritual fairy tale.

No serious Christian believer can hold for true that - first they go up to 'Paradise' at death, for then to abruptly be raptured-in-reverse back down to earth and put into their dead bodies, and finally resurrected back up to life and ultimately end up in heaven.

How about those hundreds of thousands of dead corpses which have rotted away and gone back to regular dust over the centuries past? What of bodies which were cremated, turned to ashes?

There simply are *zero examples* of anyone having been brought back to life *after* the body is entirely gone.

Such a fantasy scenario will never take place, I can assure you all!

This whole thing just confirms to us that my teaching here on the rapture as something which only sorted under the times of the apostles, and was a 'Fresh ware' – it would have happened *only if Jesus came back* during the time of the apostles.

In Jewry (as it was with Jesus, and Lazarus as well) – they used caves for grave site, and did not put the dead bodies in coffins six feet into the ground. They even had the tradition of *embalming* (only the outwardly) the dead bodies and perfuming them.

Paul's teaching had in mind the immediate *present and very near future*, thinking of Jesus returning, and not a time aspect of almost 2000 years.