Appendix E

The Biblical Basis for the Pretribulational Rapture of the Church

The Bible provides several passages that give the truth of the "rapture" of the church. Here are five, with the important phrase italicized:

> John 14:2-3 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. If I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again and receive you to Myself*, that where I am, there you may be also.
>
> 1 Cor 15:51-52 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but *we will all be changed, 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 will be changed*.
>
> Phil 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, *from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body* of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.
>
> 1 Thess 4:16-17 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 will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain *will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*, and so we shall always be with the Lord.
>
> 2 Thess 2:1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and *our gathering together to Him*

These passages only tell us of the *fact* of the rapture; they say nothing of the *timing* or *when* in God's prophetic plan or calendar it will occur. While this requires more study than proving the deity of Christ (for example), with a little time and study you can have a biblical understanding for when Christ will return for church age saints.

While an exhaustive study is more than can be accomplished here, a basic survey of the Scripture's teaching can be given, focusing on four basic lines of truth:

The Purpose of the Tribulation.

1) During this period God will render judgment on the exceeding and unrepentant sinfulness of the wicked (Rev 9:20-21; 14:14-19).

2) Israel will be chastened for her millennia of unbelief ("Jacob's trouble," Jer 30:7; Dan 12:1) but because of this judgment, the nation will turn to God and be born again (Dan 12:1; Zech 12:10; Rom 11:26).

3) In addition to God's salvation of individual Israelites, a large number of Gentiles will also be saved (Zeph 3:9; Rev 7:9-17).

4) The church is never identified as present during this period of judgment.

God's Promises to the Church.

5) God has promised to protect the church by removing it from the time of world-wide judgment during the Tribulation (Rev 3:10).

6) God has promised that He will not allow the church to go through the period of His wrath in the end times (1 Thess 1:10; on "rescued" cf. 2 Pet 2:5, 7 – neither Noah nor Lot went *through* God's judgment on the ungodly but were delivered from such).

7) God has promised that through Jesus Christ Christians will have no part in the coming day of judgment (1 Thess 5:9).

The Place of the Church in the Book of Revelation.

8) An honest, simple reading of this epistle has to recognize that while the church is often mentioned in chapters 2-3, it is never mentioned in chapters 4-19.

9) These sixteen chapters describe the time of wrath (6:15-17; 14:10; 15:1; 19:15) from which God has promised to deliver the church.

10) Where is the church during the Tribulation? From 13:6 ("his tabernacle, those who dwell in heaven") and 19:1-10 ("the marriage of the Lamb…his wife has made herself ready") church age saints are in heaven and they will follow Christ when he returns to the earth at His Second Coming (19:14).

Christ Can Come at Any Moment.

11) In passages that clearly talk about the rapture, no mention is made of any event that must happen before Christ's return for the saints.

12) When Paul spoke of the rapture he included himself as a potential participant (1 Cor 15:51-53; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:15-17).

13) Christ's coming is described as being "at hand" (Rom 13:12; Jas 5:8-9; Rev 22:7, 12, 20) and Christians are exhorted to look for Christ's return (1 Cor 1:7-8; Phil 3:20; Titus 2:13).