

Faith Is Action

October 2018 • USPS 184720 • Volume 57 • Number 10

In This Issue:

RAPTURE OR WRATH?

RAPTURE OR WRATH?

SHARON HARDY KNOTTS

Perhaps the biggest issue today concerning the *rapture* of the Church: *When will it happen?* Some Christian ministers say that the Church will go through half or all of *the seven-year Tribulation*. I believe Scripture plainly proves that the Church will not go through *any* of the Tribulation.

Escape All These Things

In His *Olivet Discourse* recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 & Luke 21, Jesus stated the signs and events that will take place during the Tribulation: Wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes in divers places, distress of nations, the seas roaring, men's hearts failing them for looking upon those things coming on the earth; the powers of heaven shall be shaken. In Luke 21:36, He added this postscript: *"Watch therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."*

Jesus plainly stated that there will be people who are found worthy

to escape all these terrible events of the Tribulation, and during that time, they will be in the presence of the Son of man. In order for this to be fulfilled, they must have been *caught up* to meet the Lord in the air as Paul described in his first letter to the Thessalonians.

In His letter to the church of Philadelphia, Jesus promised: *"Because you have kept the word of my patience, I will also keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth"* (Rev.3:10).

The seven churches to whom the seven letters were written are symbolic of the seven church ages that would exist from the first century in John's day until the end of the church age. This promise is to all who keep the Word of His endurance throughout the entire church age. Some teachers, however, claim that the word *from* infers that the saints will be protected while yet being on the earth. But the original Greek text says otherwise: The preposition ΕΚ

means *out of*. It is translated thus 799 times in the New Testament, and clearly denotes *to be removed from*, which means believers will be *kept out of the Tribulation*.

Delivered From Wrath

Paul addressed this in his letter of 1Thessalonians: *“For they themselves show us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come”* (1:9-10). Paul instructed believers to wait for Jesus from heaven—not for the rise of Antichrist! Again, the Greek word *from* is ΕΚ, meaning *out of the wrath to come*. He described how we will be delivered out of this time of wrath:

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (go before) them which are asleep (in death). For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God (SHOFAR): and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words” (1Thess.4:15-18).

How could we be comforted about going through the Tribulation

when many saints will incur the wrath of Antichrist and be martyred? This promise cannot refer to those saints who will be slain during the Tribulation (Rev.6:9-11, 7:9-14). We are comforted because we know we will not be here to experience the terrible Tribulation: ***“For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him”*** (1Thes.1:9-10).

In his second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul revealed more about the departure of the Church *before* the revelation of Antichrist: *“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as the day of Christ is at hand. 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; who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God....*

“And now you know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now lets will let until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and

shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2Thes.2:1-8).

Apparently, after his first letter to the Thessalonians, false teachers had come claiming that Paul had written a new letter in which he stated that *the day of Christ—the Tribulation—* had already come. Thus, Paul wrote to them not to be shaken from their belief of the rapture to come, nor to be troubled that they were left to go into the Tribulation. He admonished them not to let anyone deceive them, because *that day* could not come until three things happened:

First: *There has to be a falling away.* This refers to great apostasy which has already begun.

Second: *The man of sin—Anti-christ—must be revealed.*

Third: *The thing that is "withholding" him from being revealed must be taken out of the way.*

In Greek, *falling away* is APOSTASIA which means *to depart or to apostasize into false doctrine.* It also means *the actual departure* of someone or something. Early editions of the English Bible translated this "*the departure.*" I think this meaning fits this context best, because in verse 7 of the KJV, *let* means *to hinder.* The "*hinderer*" of the man of sin being revealed must first be taken out of the way. In Greek, the term for *withholding* means *to hold back, to restrain.* The Church is the restrainer which must be removed in order for Antichrist to be revealed. When the Church departs, he will be revealed.

John's Revelation

The book of Revelation itself is proof that the Church will not be on earth during the Tribulation. The key is verse 1:19 when John was told: "*Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.*" These are three divisions of a clear timeline: The past, the present, and the future:

1. *The things which you have seen:* John's vision of Christ in the midst of the seven candlesticks which represent the seven churches (Rev.1:11-18).

2. *The things which are:* The letters to the seven churches on earth, which typify the seven church ages (Rev.2:1-3:22).

3. *The things which must be hereafter:* John was caught up to Heaven after the final Church age (Rev.4:1). In the first three chapters of Revelation, the Church is mentioned 17 times, but not again until chapter 19 at the *Marriage Supper of the Lamb.*

The Argument from Silence

There is a rule of scriptural exegesis known as *the argument from silence* which simply means that if something is not mentioned, that it does not exist in that situation, or perhaps not at all. A perfect example is the priest Melchizedek. Scripture gives no mention of his genealogy. Nothing is stated about his birth, parentage, death, or any others of his priesthood. He appears briefly as

“the priest of the Most High God” who blessed Abraham and received tithes from him (Gen.14:17-18). He then disappeared from the history of Scripture. Hence, the writer of the book of Hebrews declared by the rule of silence that Melchizedek is *“without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end-of-life, but made like unto the Son of God, abides a priest continually”* (7:3). He seems to have an eternal priesthood, because nothing is said about its end.

Likewise, the Church is never mentioned in Revelation chapters 6-18. Therefore, by the rule of silence, *the Church is not in the Tribulation*. Were the Church in the Tribulation, most assuredly, God would have spoken of or referred to it. Contrariwise, He never said, *“Let him that has ears hear what the Spirit says to the churches”* any time in chapters 16-18; while in chapters 2-3, He spoke this phrase seven times. Nothing similar is said until 13:9, in the middle of the Tribulation, when a voice says, *“If any man has an ear, let him hear.”* Why doesn’t it say *“what the Spirit says to the churches”*? The answer is obvious: the Church is not on the earth. The Church is in Heaven standing before the Son of man, waiting to return with Christ to fight His enemies at the battle of Armageddon (Rev.19:11-21).

The Things Hereafter

Revelation 4 begins the third

major division of the book: *“the things hereafter.”* Up to this point, everything happened while John was still upon the earth. The Church age closing, John then saw an open door into heaven: *“After this I looked, and behold, the door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet (SHOFAR) talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show you things which must be hereafter.*

“And immediately I was in the Spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat upon the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow around about the throne in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold” (Rev.4:1-4).

John was caught up as a type of the raptured Church to Heaven where he had a clear view of the events taking place on the earth, including the rise of Antichrist, the judgments and wrath of the Tribulation. John’s attention was first drawn to 24 elders seated upon thrones. They were clothed in white raiment and had golden crowns upon their heads. They represent the raptured saints. The term *elder* is never used of angelic beings, but always in reference to ministers who are *overseers* of God’s people, in both Old and New Testaments. In biblical numerology, the number 12

stands for government, and they represent the leadership of the two covenants. Their white raiment refers to “*the righteousness of the saints*” (Rev.19:8).

They wore golden crowns. There are two Greek words for *crowns* used in Revelation: **DIADEMA** is a crown of governmental *authority*. **STEPHANOS** is an *overcomer’s* crown like those given to victors in the Olympic and Roman games. These elders wore the **STEPHANOS**—*overcomer’s* crown. Paul referred to it in his final words to Timothy: “*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*” (2Tim4:7-8).

In Revelation 5, the 24 elders are seen and heard singing the song of the redeemed: “...*The four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth*” (vv.8-10).

These elders represent the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to the Church

that if we overcome, we will reign with Him on the earth (Rev.2:26, 3:21). Angels are never referred to as *kings and priests* in Scripture, but always as messengers and ministering spirits (Heb.1:14). This scene takes place in Heaven *before* the Lamb (Jesus) takes the book with seven seals and opens them, which releases the events of the Tribulation on earth (Rev.6:1-18:24).

The Rapture Riddle

Some point out that the word *rapture* is not in the Bible. And that’s true, but the event it describes is in the Bible. The word *rapture* is from Latin, which was an early translation of Scripture. The original Greek **HARPAZO** was translated in our English Bible as “*caught up*” in 1Thess. 4:17. It means to be caught up by a mighty power; to be seized. Early Christians used the Latin term *rapture* instead of *caught up*, because its meaning includes the ideas of excitement and joy, and this *catching up of the saints* is going to be an exciting and joyous event! When we use the term *rapture*, we are describing the event of Christ’s coming *in the air* to raise the dead in Christ, to change the living in Christ, and then to catch them up together in the clouds to meet Him in the air.

The Rapture Was A Mystery

Paul stated in 1Cor. 15 that the rapture was *a mystery* to the OT writers and to the apostles of the early church. The term *mystery* doesn’t

mean something you cannot know, but something you cannot know without revelation. It's the *veiling* of one of God's secret truths. It was a secret of God that wasn't known by the OT prophets. They were looking for Messiah to come to set up His Kingdom on earth, reigning from Israel. They knew nothing about the Church, which was another hidden mystery. Nor did the apostles know it, because on the Mount of Ascension, after His resurrection, they asked Jesus, "*Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?—Are you going to set up your kingdom now?*" Jesus replied: "*It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power*" (Acts 1:6-7). He was telling them that He was not going to set up His kingdom right then.

Jesus was the first to give a hint of the rapture. In John 14:1-3, He told His disciples that He must go away, and they were grieved. (If I had been there, I would have been grieved too.) But He said, "*Let not your heart be troubled.... In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*" Here's the first hint of the rapture: "*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, you may be also.*"

But they didn't understand. The revelation of this mystery was later given to Apostle Paul, which he

unveiled in three different letters. It's important to understand the mentality of Paul's time: The Greco-Roman world did not believe in a bodily resurrection, including some Jewish sects. In John 6, at the time of Passover, Jesus declared that He was "*the living bread from heaven*" and that His coming was "*to do the will of Him that sent me.... that of all which he has given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*" This is a clear reference to the resurrection which He repeated three times: "...*Everyone that believes on the Son has everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day*" (vv.39-40, 44, 54). A great part of the Jews did not believe in a resurrection, such as the sect of the *Sadducees*, whom Jesus rebuked for their error (Matt. 22:23-32).

The Greeks did not believe in a bodily resurrection. They believed that when you die, you go to the dark kingdom under the earth called *Hades*, and you never got out. Jesus referred to this when He said to Peter, "*You are Peter, but upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of **Hell** shall not prevail against it*" (Mt.16:18). The Greek word is **not** GEHENNA meaning *hell fire*, but **HADES**, because the gates of Hades were prevailing against the OT saints who were in Abraham's Bosom awaiting their redemption. Jesus shed more light on this in the account of the beggar Lazarus in Luke 16.

Prior to this, they did not under-

stand it, and Heb. 2:15 states that *“all their lifetime they were subject to bondage, full of fear, because of the uncertainty of death.”* But when Jesus *“tasted death for every man”* (Heb.2:9), He took authority over death. Paul revealed in Ephesians 4:8 that when Jesus died, His spirit descended into the lower parts of the earth. There He yanked the gates off of Hades House, took the keys from the death angel, *“captivated those in captivity and led them on high”*, transferring the portion of Hades where the righteous were in Abraham’s Bosom to the immediate presence of God in Heaven. The NT revelation states: *“To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord”* (2Cor.5:8). Hence, there’s no more fear of death for the Christian!

First Revelation of the Rapture

After his successful missionary tours and church planting throughout the regions of Macedonia, Paul received a letter from the saints in Thessalonica. They were standing firm in the face of great persecutions, but they had a question for Paul: Because some of the older saints were dying, with their old background and mindset, they were troubled whether they were lost in Hades House. *What happened to the saints who had died? Where were they?*

In his reply, Paul shared his first revelation of the rapture. In every chapter of 1Thessalonians, he referred to *the coming of the Lord*, and in 4:13 he plainly declared: *“But*

I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” He was saying that those who die in Christ have a hope! They’re not stuck in Hades House! They’re not doomed to oblivion forever! *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him”* (v.14).

Herein is the foundation of the Gospel! This is the foundation of our salvation! It was the message Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost—the message of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus is not resurrected, then no one can be saved. It is the heart of the Gospel—*“That if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that **God raised Him from the dead**, you shall be saved”* (Rom.10:9-10).

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep” (v.15). In the KJV, *prevent* means *precede* or *hinder*. In other words, the living saints are not going to hinder them or go ahead of the dead in Christ.

Now for the greater revelation: *“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first”* (v.16). God is going to blow the **SHOFAR** that raises the dead! The Jewish people were taught

that at the resurrection Jehovah will blow the **SHOFAR** seven times, and the dead would rise after the seventh blast. Paul said in 1Cor. 15:51, *“at the last trump we shall be changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air.”*

The voice of an archangel refers to a mighty messenger, and Jesus is the mighty Messenger who calls the dead out, because at the tomb of Lazarus, He said to Mary, *“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die”* (Jn.11:25). He was talking about the rapture-resurrection, but they didn’t get it at the time. He told His disciples: *“For the hour is coming, and now is, that they that sleep in the grave, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear His voice shall come forth unto everlasting life”* (Jn.5:25-29). When Jesus said, *“Lazarus, Come forth!”* he heard His voice and was catapulted out of the tomb.

At the rapture-resurrection, all this will happen in a fraction of a second. The Lord will call a command to wake up the dead. Paul described it in his second letter about the rapture: *“Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”* (1Cor.15:51-52).

We shall be caught up together in the clouds (1Thes.4:17). When Jesus took His followers to the Mount of Ascension, as He ascended, a cloud received Him and took Him out of sight. That’s why the world’s not going to know when we leave. They didn’t see Jesus go either. As the disciples beheld Jesus go into heaven, two men in white stood by them and said, *“This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:11). He went up in cloud, and He is coming back with clouds!

The Resurrection Dominoes

In this second revelation of the rapture-resurrection, Paul proved historically by multiple reliable witnesses that Jesus rose from the dead, thereby establishing the hope of the resurrection. In 1Cor. 15:4-7, he recounted how the risen Jesus was seen by Peter, James, all the apostles, and by over 500 people when He ascended to the Father (Acts 1:9-11).

“And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I’m the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed”

(8-11).

For Paul the bottom line was the people had heard and believed the message that Jesus was raised from the dead.

Then he went to the heart of the doctrinal error some were preaching: *“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?”* (v.12). Do you know there some are preaching this now? That there is no resurrection, no rapture, and we already are in the Kingdom? Now if this is the Kingdom when we are reigning with Christ, I’m disappointed. If this is the Millennial Reign when the devil is bound, *Lord help us when he gets loose!*

Paul’s pivotal defense is verse 13: *“But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:”* This sets up the subsequent dominoes of verses 14-19. *“And if Christ be not risen, then our preaching is vain,”* (third domino). *“And your faith is also vain,”* (fourth domino). In other words, “We are wasting our time preaching Christ; it’s useless if He is not risen, and your faith is useless if you’re believing in a dead Jesus.”

In verses 15-17 he repeated these points, adding the fact: *“And you are yet in your sins”* (fifth domino). If Jesus is not resurrected, you’re still a sinner under God’s judgment, going to Hades House, and you’re not coming out. Verse 18: *“Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are*

perished” (sixth domino). Those who have died in faith are stuck in Hades House! They are in the dark kingdom under the rule of death and can’t get out. They have no hope of eternal life!

Verse 19: *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”* (seventh domino). Paul effectively argued: *If there is no resurrection—then Christ did not rise.* Therefore—our preaching Christ is useless—our faith in Christ is useless—we are still in sin—the dead in Christ are perished—we have no hope of eternal life—so we are of all men most miserable!

The Good News

“But now is Christ risen from the dead...” He’s alive! *“...and become the firstfruits of them that slept”* (v.20). This means He is the guarantee that if He arose from the dead, so will we be raised. *“For since by man came death, by man also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming”* (vv.21-23). At the rapture, only the dead in Christ shall rise. All of Adam’s posterity shall be raised, but there are two general resurrections: *The resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the wicked* (Dan.12:2, Jn.5:29).

The next group to be raised after Christ is the saints, made up of those

who are asleep in Christ, and those who are alive and remain in Christ. They will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air (1Thes.4:16-17). Because Christ is risen from the dead and became the firstfruits of them that sleep in the grave, He is the guarantee of the resurrection of all men, “every man in his own order.”

The First Resurrection

The Greek term for *order* is a military word meaning *company*. There are 6 companies in the first resurrection (Rev.20:4-5), which Jesus called “*the resurrection of the just*” (Lk.14:14):

1) *Christ* the firstfruits. He’s the guarantee. If He isn’t risen, no one will be raised.

2) The *Church* at His coming in the rapture: Dead in Christ raised, living changed, both caught up.

3) The *144,000 Jews* (Rev.12:5, 14:1-5). They are sealed to go through the first half of the Tribulation, but are not hurt by the plagues. They are caught up as the *firstfruits of Israel*. (They are *not* the Church.)

4) The first group of *Tribulation saints* (Rev. 6:9-11).

5) The second group of *Tribulation saints* (Rev. 7:9-14).

6) The *two witnesses* who are on earth for the first half of the Tribulation. They are killed, and their bodies lie 3 1/2 days in the street; after which the Spirit of life comes into them, and a voice cries out from Heaven: “*Come up hither,*” and they are caught up (Rev.11:1-12).

The Second Resurrection

This is followed by the Millennial Reign when Jesus sets up His Kingdom and reigns with the saints 1,000 years. “*For he must reign until he puts all enemies under His feet, and the last enemy is death*” (1Cor.15:26). After the 1,000 years, is *the second resurrection of the wicked dead* who will be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment, found guilty and cast into the second death, which is the Lake of Fire (Rev.20:11-15). God will then make a new righteous kingdom that lasts forever and ever (Rev.21-22).

The Out-Resurrection

The third letter Paul wrote concerning the rapture is Philippians. In Philippi there was a group of preachers and prophets who were saying that they had already reached spiritual perfection. They had “arrived” spiritually; therefore, because of their advanced spiritual position, they had a guarantee that they would be in the resurrection. Paul countered their claims in 3:10: “*That I might know Him...*” (Jesus) “*...and the power of His resurrection...*” In Greek, *know* means *to experience*.

Now if any Christian had ever experienced Jesus, it was certainly Paul! When Jesus revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus, He appeared in His glorious resurrected form. He knocked Paul right down on his face, and His blazing light blinded Paul for three days. But even after this supernatural experience of

Jesus, Paul said, “I’ve not reached perfection! I don’t have a guarantee that I’m going to be in the resurrection, because I haven’t reached perfection.”

“...*And the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; If by any means, I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead*” (vv.10-11). Paul said that he was still running to attain! If Paul didn’t know everything about Jesus, then none of us do. Not only did the Lord appear to him in His resurrected power on the road to Damascus, but later Paul was *caught up into the third heaven, into Paradise* where he saw and heard things he was not permitted to tell (2 Cor.12). I mean, if anyone could say that they knew anything about the Lord Jesus, it surely had to be Apostle Paul. God had given him abundant revelations; yet he said, “*I want to experience Him in the power of His resurrection and to know Him in the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*” In order to know Him in His powerful resurrection, we have to fellowship Him in His sufferings. That’s when we really fellowship with Him; when we die to our will and live to do His will. Paul said, “*I am crucified with Christ... and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God...*” (Gal.2:20).

In verse 11, Paul answered the questions: Why do I want to know Him in the power of His resurrection? Why do I want to fellowship

Him in His sufferings and be conformed to His death?

“*If by any means I might attain unto the **out-resurrection** of the dead.*” Note that I used the word *out-resurrection*. This is the only place in the Bible where the Greek word EXANASTASIS is found. In verse 10, Paul used the common word for resurrection ANASTASIS, but here the preposition EK was added, and it means *out of*. This is an important distinction. All mankind, since Jesus rose from the dead, is guaranteed to rise from the dead.

In verse 11, it was incorrect to omit EK—OUT FROM ENGLISH VERSIONS, because it misses the point that at the rapture, the righteous dead are raised *out from all the dead*. It explains why Paul wanted to attain unto the *out-resurrection* of the dead, to be among those who die in Christ and are caught up. He didn’t want to be *left in death* waiting for the second resurrection of the wicked.

“...*But I follow after...*” The word translated *follow* actually means *to run after; to pursue*. Paul was saying, “I’m running, I’m pursuing the prize ...*if that I may apprehend* (lay hold on) *that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus*” (v.12). Paul revealed that Jesus laid hold on us so that He could call out those who die in Christ, and change those who are alive and remain, take us to Heaven to give us our rewards, and make us rulers with Him. This is the ultimate purpose of our calling, to be in the *out-resurrection*.

In verse 13, Paul put it bluntly: *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended...”* I don’t count myself that I have it locked in that I’m going to go in the rapture! Jesus warned His disciples about those who said, *“The Lord delays His coming,”* and they began to be drunken and commit sin. The Lord came when they were not ready and appointed them their portion with the hypocrites.

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto the things which are before” (v.13). He used the imagery of the Olympic games, especially a foot race. The Greeks understood it, because they were the originators of the Olympic games. In this metaphor of a runner, the Greek terms mean *stretching out the head, arms, and whole body, straining forward for the winner’s tape*. The effort put forth is so intense that Paul said *“I **press** toward the mark for the prize...”* (same word as *“I **follow** after”* in v.12). It means: I’m running with all my might, all my energy, with every fiber of my being, for the mark! The mark is *the goal line*.

Called Up On High

“I press toward the mark for prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (v.14). The Greek actually says: *“the calling up on high,”* referring to the rapture. In the Olympics, when the winner crossed the finish line, the judges called him up

onto the winner’s platform to receive the prize. At the rapture, we are going to be called up to Heaven unto Jesus and the Father to receive the prize of eternal life and our rewards.

In his letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, *“I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Now there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day... and unto all them also who love his appearing”* (1Tim.4:7-8).

Please Note: Portions of this message are excerpted from The Rapture Riddle. The 2 CD set can be ordered at www.soundofffaith.org.