

# Pretribulation Rapture Fact or Fiction

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Intro. There has been much debate over the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is even great disparity in one of the views, premillennialism, over the timing of the Rapture of the church. The question is, is there a pretribulation rapture of the church, or a mid, or post tribulation rapture. To get to the bottom of this controversy it is necessary to go to the Bible and let the word of God be the final arbitrator of our discussion.

First, we will define what we mean by “rapture” of the (ἐκκλησίαν) church. Then, we will ask several questions: first, “is the rapture biblically synonymous with the second (παρουσίαν) coming of Jesus. Second, we are going to ask, “is Jesus ever asked specifically about his (παρουσίαν) coming?” Third, “Does Jesus ever state that his (παρουσίαν) coming is after the great tribulation?” (4) “Are there specific references to believers in Jesus being persecuted in the book of Revelation past the time of what is generally given as the time of the pretribulation rapture of the (ἐκκλησίαν) church.” (5) Does Jesus teach his disciples that they will be persecuted? (6) Does the New Testament teach a **secret** (παρουσίαν) coming of Jesus. (6) Are believers in Jesus related to the Israel of God in the New Testament? (7) Are believers in Jesus considered by the Apostle Paul to be Abraham's seed (spiritual heirs)? (8) Are Gentiles included in the promises that God gave to Israel? (9) Is the Greek word for church (ἐκκλησίαν) only a New Testament term?

What is the “rapture” of the church (ἐκκλησίαν)?

The term “rapture” is not a biblical term. The actual scripture reference that the term “rapture” comes from is found in 1 Thessalonians 4: 17. In this passage, the Apostle Paul writes to the believers in Jesus, the Church, in Thessalonica concerning those who had “fallen asleep” (died). Paul starts his brief discourse in verse 13 and continues through chapter 5 verse 11.

Specifically, the term “rapture” comes from the Latin translation of the Greek word (ἄρπαγησόμεθα), pronounced in English harpagasometha, used in verse 17 translated in English as “caught up” (KJV, NIV)

1 Thessalonians 4: 13 – 5:11

“But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, **concerning them which are asleep**, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will **God bring with him**. 15 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 (precede) them which are asleep. 16 For the **Lord himself** shall descend from heaven with a **shout**, with **the voice of the archangel**, and with **the trump of God**: and the **dead in Christ shall rise first**: 17 Then **we which are alive** and remain **shall be caught up** (ἄρπαγησόμεθα) together with them **in the clouds**, to **meet the Lord in the air**: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

5:1 But of the **times and seasons**, brethren, ye have no need that I write to you. 2. For you yourselves know perfectly that the **day of the Lord** so cometh as a thief in the night. 3. For when they say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as **travail upon a woman** with child; and they shall not escape. 4. But ye, brethren, are **not in the darkness**, that that day **should overtake you as a thief**. 5. Ye are all **children of light**, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of the darkness. 6. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but **let us watch** and be sober. 7. For they that sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8. But let **us who are of the day**,

be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9. For **God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation** by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10. Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, **we should live together with him**. 11. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as ye also do.“ (KJV)

I have included the entire passage from 1 Thessalonians to point out several things. One of the things that the 1 Thessalonians passage points out is that the “rapture” is the ( “catching up” of **Christians to be with the Lord Jesus at His coming**. Therefore, a good definition of the biblical rapture of the church is, the bodily removal of living believers in Jesus to be with Him at his coming (παρουσίαν parousia).

Let us now discuss our first question. Is the rapture of the church biblically (the same thing) synonymous with the second coming of Jesus.? We take note that the Apostle Paul declares that he is speaking “according to the Lord's own word”. **We also take note that the Apostle Paul places this “catching up” of believers at the “coming” of the Lord.**

The word for “coming” of the Lord that St Paul uses here is the **Greek word παρουσίαν parousia**. This word is the same word that the other Apostles used in Matthew 24:3 There, the disciples said, ”Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy (παρουσίαν) **coming**, and of the end of the world? (KJV)

Eurica!, we have the answer to our second question: “is Jesus ever asked about his (παρουσίαν) coming?” The answer from Matthew 24: 3 is **yes, even using the same word** παρουσίαν that the Apostle Paul used in 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2: 1; 8; 1Corinthians 15:23.

As we noted earlier, the Apostle Paul said that his teaching came from the Lord, therefore, we are not surprised to find the **same word** being used for Jesus' second coming. We say **second** (παρουσίαν ) **coming**, of course, because in Jesus' first coming he gave his life as a ransom for many and secured an eternal redemption for all who will believe. (Hebrews 7:27)

Hebrews 9:27-28 “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; 28 So Christ was **offered to bear the sins of many**; and unto them that look for him **shall he appear a second time** without sin unto salvation.” This statement is in full accord with Acts 1:9-11 “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and **a cloud received him** out of their sight. 10. And **while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up**, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11. which also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This **same Jesus** which is taken up from you into the heaven, **shall so come in like manner** as ye have **seen him go** into heaven.” (KJV) From these passages we may gather several things. **First**, that Jesus is expected to come again, a second coming. There is no scriptural expectation of a third or a fourth coming of Jesus only a return, second coming. **Second**, his return is visible. **Third**, it is the same Jesus who was here the first time that is coming again bodily in real time. **Fourth**, he is coming in the clouds as he left in the clouds. **Fifth**, angels will be present. We should be doing as he instructed us to do.

Let us now go back to the 1 Thessalonian passage.

Does the 1 Thessalonian 4 -5 passage teach that this coming of Jesus is **before the great tribulation** period? In fact, does the 1 Thessalonian 4-5 passage say anything about any kind of tribulation at all?

You will notice the absence of any reference to the tribulation or the great tribulation. Do you disagree?

Fine, when you can put your finger on the word tribulation in this passage, I will agree with you. When you can put your finger on the words “before the tribulation” or “great tribulation”, I will agree with you.

The fact is that Dispensationalists say the rapture can happen at any time **without any signs**

**whatsoever.** Since Dispensationalists are so certain that the rapture takes place before the tribulation, how can they be so certain when their entire contention is **built upon the supposition** that there are no signs.

The entire first 300 years of church history is filled with persecution and suffering, starting first with unbelieving Jews. Leading Jews then incited the Roman government against Christians declaring them to be a variant sect and superstition who did not then fall under the Jewish exemption from worshipping the Emperor Caesar.

Someone may say, the 1 Thessalonians 4 passage doesn't say the second coming of Jesus is after the tribulation either and that is a good point. It does say that the taking up of believers is **at the (παρουσίαν) "coming" of Jesus.**

News flash, if the scripture doesn't say what you say, you are wrong.

Before you take that last statement too lightly consider this warning from Jesus in Revelation 22:18 "I warn everyone who hears the words of this prophecy of this book: **if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book**" (NIV) Consider also James 3:1 Not many of you should act as teachers my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." (NIV)

The same warning from Revelation 22 applies to this writer as it does to all.

Let's consider once again what the Apostle Paul does say in the 1 Thessalonian 4-5 passage.

First he is talking about the **state of those who have already died in their faith in Jesus.**

He says that the **dead in Christ rise first at the (coming παρουσίαν) of Jesus** but that resurrection is preceded by several things. **(1) Jesus himself** will come down from heaven. This coming παρουσίαν of Jesus is accompanied by: **(2) a shout (KJV) or loud command (NIV), (3) the voice of an archangel,** and **(4) the trumpet call of God,** after which the **dead in Christ shall rise first.** After all the above, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up (raptured) together with them in the clouds to **meet the Lord in the air...**" (5) Notice the scripture does not say that we stay with Jesus in the air.

The crazy thing about the current teaching of the pretrib rapture is that it is supposed to happen in such a way that every one is wondering where the Christians went. In other words the current teaching on the pretribulation rapture is that this coming of Jesus is a **secret** to everyone but the Christians who got raptured. Many books have been written emphasizing this **secret** rapture including the entire "Left Behind" series by Tim Lahaye and Jerry B. Jenkins but there are many others.

Lets consider a quote from Hal Lindsey in his book ***There's A New World Coming*** on pages 76-78. Here Lindsey discusses that there is some division about whether the church will go through the tribulation or not. Under the heading "Will The Church Go Through The Tribulation?" Lindsay says, "Part of the confusion on this issue rises **from a failure to distinguish two stages in Jesus' second coming.** One passage of Scripture speaks of Christ's coming in the air **and in secret,** like a thief coming in the night. Another part of the Scripture describes Christ's coming in power and majesty to the earth, with every eye seeing Him.

Both of these can only be true if there are **two separate appearances** of Christ in the future."

Pause here for a moment and ask a good question.

How could **Jesus come in the clouds,** with a **cry of command,** the **voice of an archangel,** living believers be caught up, and the **resurrection of Christians out of their graves** and it be a **secret?**

Lest anyone think that Bro Hal isn't referring to 1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17, he quotes it on page 76.

Go back and reread the 1 Thessalonians chapters 4 through 5 that I have already quoted above, or go read the reference in any Bible that you can find. When you have reread the passage, ask yourself once again **could (1) Jesus come in the clouds, with (2) a loud shout, (3) the voice of an archangel (4) the trumpet call of God, (5) living believers be taken up in the clouds and (6) the dead in Christ rise from their graves and it be a secret?**

**Let us answer a few questions.**

**How do you know Jesus is coming in the clouds if He can't be seen?**

**How do you know a shout is "loud" if you can't hear it?**

**How do you recognize the voice of an archangel if you can't see him and hear his voice?**

**How do you recognize "the sound of the trumpet call of God, if you can't hear it?"**

**How do you know that believers in Jesus are being taken into the clouds if you can't see it?**

**How would anyone know people were rising from their graves if you could not see it?**

Put your finger on the word "secret", or "veiled", or "hidden" in this 1 Thessalonian 4-5 passage.

Put your finger on the words "before the tribulation" in this 1 Thessalonian 4-5 passage.

Put your finger on **first stage** or **first phase of the coming of Jesus** in the 1 Thessalonian 4-5.

Those words are obviously missing from 1 Thessalonians, or 2 Thessalonians for that matter, so where does Bro Hal get the idea that Jesus' coming is a mystery or that it is in two phases?

**If you say the Bible says something and cannot put your finger on the words, doesn't that mean you are adding to the "words of this book" which is strictly forbidden by Jesus and John in Revelation 22:18.**

Let Bro Hal give us his reference. Bro Lindsey gives 1 Corinthians 15: 51-52 on page 76 of his above quoted work *There's A New World Coming*.

Let us look at this passage and see if it talks about a secret coming of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15: 51-52 "Listen, I tell you a **mystery**: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**. For **the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.**" (NIV)

You will notice the word "mystery" in the passage.

Does the word "mystery", from the Greek word *musterion* (Gk. **μυστήριον**) really mean secret?

Bro Hal explains, "The **mystery revealed here is the promise** that a certain group of people wouldn't have to die before going to be with the Lord, but would be changed from mortals to immortals without going through physical death." (p. 76)

From this explanation we see that Bro Hal is talking about "**mystery**" as something that wasn't previously revealed in the Old Testament but is revealed in the New Testament. In other words, "**mystery**", doesn't mean **secret**.

In fact, every usage of the Greek word *mystery* (*musterion*, **μυστήριον**), in the New Testament, is talking about something previously concealed, or not known, or not understood, but was then being revealed. No one needs to believe this author. Just check it out for yourself.

**Does the Bible actually teach a secret coming of Jesus?**

**No!** In fact both Jesus and the Apostle Paul warn believers to not be deceived. (Matthew 24: 4; 2 Thessalonians 2:3). Jesus clearly says in Matthew 24:24-For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Lo **I have told you beforehand**. 26. so if they say to you, 'Lo, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out; if they say to you, 'Lo, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27. For as lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming (*parousia*) of the Son of Man."

Notice that phrase "**I have told you before hand**". Jesus tells us what is going to happen before it happens so that we can confirm the will of God in the events taking place.

**A secret coming of Jesus is a complete fabrication** made up in the mind of someone back in the early 1800's and repeated by a multitude of individual teachers, preachers and reference Bibles. **It** (a secret coming of Jesus to rapture the church) **is Fiction not a fact.** If Jesus was going to come to take the believers in Jesus out of the world "before the Tribulation," He certainly would have informed his followers Himself so that that we could point to His words in recorded scripture.

Now let us consider once again what the Apostle Paul does say in the quoted passage from 1 Corinthians 15: 51-52

Notice, **this revealed mystery of Jesus' coming** is accompanied by (1)**the blast of the last trumpet and (2)the dead being raised imperishable, and (3)living believers being instantaneously changed from a mortal body to an immortal one.**

Did anyone notice the similarity between the 1 Thessalonian 4 passage and the 1 Corinthians 15 one? Let's review the similarities. **First**, "the last Trumpet" would be the same as the "Trumpet call of God". **Second**, the dead being "raised imperishable" includes the "dead in Christ rising first". **Third**, believers being "caught up" into the clouds would necessarily include being, "changed from a mortal to an immortal body."

When will these things happen?

To answer that question we need to read 1 Corinthians 15 in over all context.

What is the Apostle Paul discussing in 1 Corinthians 15? Verses 1-11 are discussing the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Verses 12-34 are discussing the resurrection of the dead. Verses 35-58 discuss the nature of the resurrection body.

The Apostle Paul lays out a brief sequence of events in verses 21-25.

1 Corinthians 15:21-25 says, "For since by man came death, by man came also resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in **Adam all die**, even so in Christ shall **all be made alive**. 23But **every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming (parousia)**. 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power." (KJV and I added the English transliteration of the Greek word for "coming" that Paul uses here.) From this passage, the answer to our question of "when will these things happen" is **at the second coming (parousia)** of Jesus Christ.

You will notice however that this **scripture did not say that any of these events are "secret"**. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul says after **this "coming" the end comes** when Jesus has defeated every power and authority and delivers the Kingdom to God the Father.

Another thing we observe in this **1 Corinthians 15: 23 passage** is that the Apostle Paul gives the proper "order" or "sequence" of events. Christ Jesus' resurrection came **first** because He was the, "first fruits", which means that Jesus was the first one resurrected like Christians will be in the future. **Second**, after Jesus' resurrection comes **the resurrection of believers at his coming**. **Third, then comes the end when the Kingdom is delivered to God the Father after Jesus has defeated every enemy.** Notice, there is no reference to another coming of Jesus because the **last enemy defeated is death**. St Paul does not tell us here whether the second coming of Jesus is before, after or in the middle of the Tribulation period. We should add that St Paul's discussion of the resurrection includes all people not just believers.

We are given however, an "order" of how events unfold and, although it is obviously a brief outline, **it does not include a pretribulation secret rapture at a secret coming of Jesus.**

**Has someone been adding to the words of scripture by saying that it teaches something that it does not say?**

Let us now consider question three.

**Is there any scripture reference to the coming of Jesus that places Jesus' coming (παρουσία parousia) after the Great Tribulation?**

**Yes.**

We have already referenced Matthew 24: 3 but let us look at it again and consider the rest of the chapter.

Matthew 23:1-3 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 3And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, **when shall these things be?** And what shall be **the sign of thy coming** (παρουσίαν), and of **the end of the world?**

Notice that the disciples asked Jesus about three things. The disciples asked Jesus specifically about the **(1)destruction of the temple**, which he had just prophesied. **(2)what shall be the sign of thy coming**, (παρουσίαν parousia) before he died and was resurrected and **(3)the end of the world literally the end of the age**, the Greek word for “world” is not used. With these things on the table it is not surprising that Jesus' answer covers things the disciples could not comprehend at the time.

The **first thing that Jesus told the disciples was a warning against being deceived** by false Christ's which I assume includes false teaching

Matthew 24: 4- **“Jesus answered: Watch out that no one deceives you.** 5For many will come in my name, claiming “I am the Christ,' and deceive many. 6You will hear of wars and rumors of war, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. **8All of these are the beginning of birth pains.**9 **Then they will deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.”**

Hey, wait just a minute. If the church is going to be raptured out before the tribulation, why doesn't Jesus just come out and say it. In stead, he tells these 12 apostles that they will be afflicted and killed for his name's sake. Let's get back to what Jesus actually says.

Matthew 24:10. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11. And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many. 12. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13. But **he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved.** 14. And **this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.** 15. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,) 16. Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountain. 17. Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: 18. Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter neither on the Sabbath day: 21. For **then shall be great Tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.** 22. And **except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.”**

Wait just a minute! If the elect (ἐκλεκτοῦς) which is the root word from which we get the word for church) are in this tribulation, so is the church and Jesus says so from the very beginning. In fact it is precisely **because the church (elect) is in this Great Tribulation that the days are shortened.**

Matthew 24:23. “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets (ψευδοπροφήται), and shew great sign and wonders; insomuch that, **if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect.** 25. Behold, **I have told you before.** 26. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. 27. For **as lightning cometh out of the east, and**

**shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming (παρουσία) of the Son of man be.** 28. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”(KJV)

Wait just a minute! Jesus just said that **his coming (parousia) was going to be like lightning that flashes all the way across the sky** (seen by all)! In fact, he specifically points out that if someone has to be told that he came in some secret way **“believe it not.”**

You will notice that I keep emphasizing the usage of the Greek word **parousia (παρουσία) for Jesus' coming back to this world.** I do this to emphasize that Jesus and the Apostle Paul talked about Jesus' second coming (bodily return) **using this word.** I believe that when they both use the same word they are talking about the same event, and I am sure that the laws of Greek grammar are on my side.

Some writers have argued that the word parousia is a general term and it can be used of the coming of a king, a dignitary, or any one. Even if parousia is a general term, we are seeing that the Apostle Paul and Jesus are **talking about his parousia, referring to Jesus' second coming** not his first.

Matthew 24: 29 “Immediately **after the tribulation of those days** shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the **sign of the Son of man in Heaven:** and then shall **all tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds** of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with **a great sound of a trumpet,** and they shall **gather together his elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Let us make some observations. **First,** Jesus just stated that his coming (παρουσία) **“in the clouds”** would be **“after the tribulation of those days”**, a tribulation that he described as being the great tribulation”. **Second,** The believers in Jesus (his elect) are caught up by the angels **into the clouds.** **Third,** this rapture will be accompanied by the sound of a Trumpet (Paul says Last Trumpet or Trumpet of God) **Fourth,** this coming (**sign of the son of man**) is seen by all. (This is confirmed by Jesus himself in Revelation 1:7)

Why would anyone teach a secret coming of Jesus when Jesus warns that it is not going to be secret?

Well, he did not actually say his coming (parousia) was not secret **he just specifically said it was as visible as lightning shining across the sky.** Adding all things together, Jesus coming (parousia) is not ever taught in the scriptures of the Christian Bible **to be secret.** Even if we don't “know the day or the hour” that only means unexpected at that time, not secret. We must always be reminded that Hebrews 9:27. says, “And just as it is appointed for men **to die once, and after that comes the judgment,** 28. So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear **second time,** not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him” (RSV) **Jesus' coming for us takes place for us when we pass from this life into the next.** To be absent from this body is to be in the presence of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8 says, “We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord” then in verse 10. Paul says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.”(RSV)

If you say that the scriptures teach a secret coming of the Lord Jesus, give the New Testament book, chapter, and verse, where it actually says it. Let me save you some time; it isn't there. No secret coming of Jesus before the tribulation is taught in any verse of actual scripture in the original Greek, language that the New testament was written in.

Yes, this writer has carefully read all the passages of Jesus' second coming in Greek. In fact he has carefully read and noted the context of every New Testament scripture where the Greek word **παρουσία** for Jesus' coming is used.

The destruction of the Temple took place in 70 AD. This author does concede that many, if not most, of the early Christians living in the time of the destruction of Herod's Temple in Jerusalem would have seen this singular event as a fulfillment of the Olivet discourse recorded in Matthew 24-25; Luke 21; and Mark 13. It is also highly likely that the early Christians continued to see the Roman government and its opposition to, and persecution of, Christianity as the Beast Government of Revelation.

Now we can answer question 4; **Are there specific references to believers being persecuted?**

Yes, we saw Jesus reference to believers being persecuted in Matthew 24:9 as well as other verses.

Is there a reference in the book of Revelation to believers in Jesus being persecuted past the time of the supposed rapture?

Yes.

It is important to note that John himself is exiled on the island of Patmos as a "servant" for the "word of God" and "the testimony of Jesus Christ". Revelation 1:2. The opening of the 5<sup>th</sup> seal reveals "souls of those who had been **slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained**" Revelation 6:9-11. While the "servants of God" are sealed to protect them from God's wrath in Revelation 7: 3, the two witnesses in Chapter 11:8 are killed by the beast from the Abyss in the **city where "their Lord was crucified"**. Chapter 12 tells about Satan's pursuit of, and war against, the rest of the woman's offspring "those who keep God's commandments and **hold to the testimony of Jesus**". Chapter 14: 12-13 "calls for the patient endurance on the part of **the saints who keep God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus**" and proclaims a blessing on those, "who **die in the Lord from now on.**" In Revelation chapter 16:15 Jesus says, "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

Wait just a minute! Here in **Revelation 16:15**, near the end of the Tribulation, **Jesus is still saying, "Behold I come like a thief!"**

How can that be?

Is the rapture about to take place?

In Revelation 17:6 the great Harlot is said to be, "**drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.**"

All of these references in the book of Revelation, which are generally considered to be in the time of Tribulation, illustrate that the church is very much still here in that time. **It would be redundant for the word church to continually be used after chapter 3 when believers in Jesus are specifically mentioned.** By the way, we should remind ourselves that in the New Testament the command of God is stated in 1 John 3:23 "**And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. 24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him...**" (KJV)

The argument that the church is not in the book of revelation past chapter 3 because it is not named is as ridiculous as pretending the book of Romans is not to the Roman Christians after chapter 1 since the church name is only mentioned in chapter 1:7. Oh, wait a minute the word "church" wasn't used it says in verse six they were the, "called to belong to Jesus Christ. 7. To all in Rome who are loved by God **and called to be saints.**"

Why is it that no one is ignorant enough to pretend the book of Romans is not to the believers in Rome after chapter 1? They would be laughed out of town. Yet supposed Bible believers will come to the book of Revelation and propose all kinds of preposterous reasoning to pretend the church, as a



whole beyond the specific churches named, is the recipient of the book **but taken out after chapter 3.**

Fortunately for us, the apostle Paul did not just write 1 Thessalonians he also wrote 2 Thessalonians.

It appears that there was either some misunderstanding from 1 Thessalonians or the need to address the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming (parousia) of Jesus in greater detail. The Apostle Paul addresses the fact that the Thessalonian Christians are already experiencing persecution in chapter 1. He then picks up on the theme of Jesus return in Chapter 2.

2 Thessalonians 2: 1. “Now we beseech you, brethren, by **the coming** (παρουσίαν parousia) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2. That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand (has already come NIV). 3. **Let no man deceive you by any means:** for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4. Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 5. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6. And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. (KJV) 7. For the secret power of lawlessness is already work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will over throw with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming (παρουσίαν parousia). 9. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders, 10. and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11. For this reason God sends on them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and 12. so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.” (NIV)

Notice that the Apostle **Paul does not tell the Thessalonian Christians (church) that they will be raptured out before they start experiencing persecution.** The fact is that these believers were already being persecuted.(Acts 17:1-9) The Apostle Paul lays out what these believers should expect before the same coming (παρουσίαν parousia) of Jesus that he talked about in 1 Thessalonians 4. Notice what the Apostle Paul says will take place **before the return of Jesus. First,** he expects **misleading teaching concerning the coming of Jesus** so he tells them to not be misled. In fact he tells them their might be false prophecies, reports or even pretended letters from the apostles themselves saying that Jesus had already returned. You see, just as Jesus said, His return (παρουσίαν parousia) will be unmistakable (Matthew 24:27). **In other words, if you have to be told that Jesus came back it is not him.**

What happens in the entire *Left Behind* series? People suddenly have disappeared and nobody knows what happened to them. (See book 1 *Left Behind* starting on page 16 and following by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins.) According to Jesus and Paul, Christians just disappearing is not going to be the case with the coming of Jesus. In **Revelation 1:7** the Apostle John writing the message from Jesus, says, “**look he is coming in the clouds, and every eye will see him. even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of.**” (NIV)

A **second** thing we see in 2 Thessalonians 2 is a **warning to not be deceived** because rebellion (NIV) a falling away (KJV), literally **apostasy, comes first.** This can only mean that gross unbelief and contradiction of Jesus. Etc. Etc. While most Bible believers would absolutely see the falsehood in examples 2, 3 and 4 above they go right along with example 1. Why? Can anyone not see that there is strong delusion going on here? Believers in Jesus from the most fundamental of Christian circles are buying into a secret rapture of the church ignoring the fact that it is total fiction. People involved with and believing the secret rapture before the second coming of Jesus are certainly as deceived as

Jehovah's Witnesses, or Mormons or, Moonies for that matter. I have talked to people wrapped up in many kinds of deception but I have never talked to anyone more deceived than those who believe, without any clear Bible teaching, in a secret catching up of Christians before the second coming of Jesus Himself. Satan is behind this kind of deception, and he has a reason for pushing it so hard.

Another thing that the apostle Paul says must happen first is the **revealing of the man of lawlessness**. The Greek word for the **revealing** of this man of sin, also known as antichrist, is the same word that we get apocalypse (Revelation) from. The "man of sin" or lawlessness, that Paul speaks of, is also known, in the book of Revelation, as the "beast" Revelation 13: In Revelation 13:7 He was given power to **make war against the saints**, and to conquer them." (NIV) In the New Testament, **"saints" is equivalent to the church** since the Apostle Paul writes to the **saints** in various churches ( see Colossians 1:2, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 1)

How could anyone absolutely contradict both our Lord Jesus and his apostles John and Paul and still be considered fundamental Bible believers?

Paul gives an answer in 2 Thessalonians 2: 10 of what takes place before the coming of Jesus and it is that because they do, "not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved....", God will send them a strong delusion, "that they should believe a lie." (NKJV)

Paul says that before the coming ( parousia) of Jesus, this man of lawlessness, or sin, is **going to claim that he is god** and set himself, above all others, to be worshiped. Paul literally says this man will set himself up in the temple to be worshiped.

It is interesting that Paul uses the same word for temple here in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 that he uses in 1Corinthians 3:16 when he says, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you?"

The Greek word **ναός** pronounced **naos** is used of the holy of holies (inner shrine) where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. In 2 Thessalonians, as well as 1 Corinthians 3, and Ephesians 2: 21 the word **ναός** naos does not mean that a physical temple will have to be built. Instead, it means that the Antichrist will have taken the place of the real God in the hearts and minds of men. We know that this is what Paul means because he goes on to explain that people are **deceived** because they **"refused to love the truth and so be saved"**.

Another thing that we learn from 2 Thessalonians 2 is that the coming of the lawlessness one will include **counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders**. These works are probably real but they lead people to worship another god, (the Antichrist) instead of the real one true God, known to us only by and through Jesus.

Part of God's judgment on mankind includes the sending of the "strong delusion" so that they believe the lie that the Antichrist is god because they "delighted in wickedness." (NIV)

Remember that the Apostle Paul, who was trained by Jesus himself, tells the same church of 1 Thessalonians that Jesus' coming (parousia) that he described in his earlier letter, when Christians are raptured (caught up) can not take place **unless these specific events take place first**.

Obviously, if all of these things must take place **before Jesus' parousia** someone is seriously misleading a major portion of the church.

Let us consider our questions once more. (1)"is the rapture biblically synonymous with the second coming (parousia) of Jesus? Dispensationalists say "no" but the Apostle Paul says Yes, or at least he writes that it does take place at the parousia in 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-17 and includes the resurrection of the dead in Christ.

(2) Is Jesus ever asked specifically about his coming (parousia)?" Yes, in Matthew 24:3.

(3) Does Jesus ever state that his coming (parousia) is after the great tribulation?" Yes, Matthew 24:29-31 Verse 29 states, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days..... 30 they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven... 31 He will send His angels with a great sound of

a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect....”

(4) “Are there specific references to believers in Jesus being persecuted in the book of Revelation past the time of what is generally given as the time of the rapture of the church.” Yes, see references above.

(5) Does Jesus teach his disciples that they will be persecuted? Yes, Matthew 24 and other passages.

(6) Does the New Testament teach a secret coming of Jesus? No! There is not one scripture in the New Testament that teaches a secret coming of Jesus to resurrect believers and take living believers to be with Him

(7) Now we need to consider the question; Are believers in Jesus (including Gentiles) related to (included in) the Israel of God?

The Apostle Paul declares in Romans 9:6 “It is not as though God's word had failed. **For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.** 7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, 'through a Isaac shall your offspring come.’ 8 In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.” (NIV) The apostle Paul touches on this same theme in Galatians 3:6-9. “Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” 7. Understand, then, that those **who believe are children of Abraham.** 8. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed in you..” 9. So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”

(8) Are believers in Jesus considered by the Apostle Paul to be Abraham's seed (spiritual heirs)? Yes, see Galatians 3:7 above.

(9) Are Gentiles included in the promises that God gave to Israel? Yes to both questions consider the following quote.

Paul ends chapter Galatians 3: saying, 26. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27. for all of you who were united with Christ in baptism have been clothed with Christ. 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, for you are **all one in Christ Jesus.** 29. If you belong to Christ, **then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**”(NIV) Paul concludes Galatians in chapter 6:15-16 by saying, Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; what counts is **a new creation.** Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even **to the Israel of God.** (NIV) Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if **anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

A number of preachers have decried the teaching of “replacement theology”, such as John Hagee and others. By replacement theology they mean that the church replaces Israel. Actually, the church is never said to replace the real Israel.

**The real Israel of God was always made up of believers; that is why it traces its beginning to Abraham (Abram) who believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.** Any one who does not understand that all New Testament believers are part of the original Israel of God are contradicting the Apostle Paul who includes Gentile believers in Jesus in the Olive tree of believing Israel in Romans 11. Furthermore, consider this passage from the apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:19-22

“19 Consequently, **you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,** 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a **holy temple** (ναὸν ἅγιον) in the Lord. 22 and in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

What is the **great mystery** that was hidden in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament?

Paul says, Ephesians 3: 4-6 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand **my insight into the mystery of Christ**, 5. which **was not made known** to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6. **This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body**, and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus.

Why are we looking at these passages about the Gentile believers being part of the real Israel of God? Precisely because certain preachers and Bible teachers contradict the clear teaching of the New Testament. They act as if the Old Testament takes precedence over the New Testament.

Many people assume that because Revelation 7 lists the 12 tribes of Israel that the rest of the book is to Israel but let us take a closer look at the twelve tribes listed. The 12 tribes of Israel as listed in Revelation 7 verses 5-8 are: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin.

We should state at the outset that **this is not a literal list of the twelve tribes of Israel** because **it does not include all twelve tribes**.

How do we know this?

Compare this Old Testament list found in Genesis 49. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph, and Benjamin.

Can you see the differences? Observe that the Genesis 49 list starts with Reuben because he was the first born. The Revelation 7 **list starts with Judah because Jesus is the lion of the tribe of Judah** and the lamb that was slain in Revelation 5.

Notice also that **the tribe of Dan is missing from the Revelation list**.

Notice also that **Manasseh** is missing from the Genesis list. We would not expect Manasseh to be in the Genesis list because he was a son of Joseph.

The strange thing is that **Manasseh is included in Revelation 7** but his **brother Ephraim is missing**, and **Joseph the dad is included**.

Ephraim and Manasseh are both included in the land allocation lists in the Old testament and Joseph left out **because Joseph received a double portion** and Levi received no land allocation because that tribe was God's for the priesthood and Tabernacle/ Temple services.

All of these variations **prove one thing; the list of tribes in Revelation 7 is not literally Israel's 12 tribes**. Therefore, we should consider the list is given to make a point. Jesus was always the promised Messiah, Holy one, Redeemer and true Lord of the real Israel of God that was always made up of believers and never about blood descendants of Jacob (Israel)

When Jesus came into this world he clarified mankind's understanding of God, God's plan of salvation, and God's real people. Jesus revealed that God was more interested in what goes on in a man's heart than how he acts on the outside.

Jesus came to his own and they, most of them, rejected him, but to those who did receive him he gave the power to be sons of God even to those who believed in his name. John 1:11-12

(10) Is the Greek word for church only a New Testament term?

No, the Greek translation of the Old Testament contains the word ekklesia (**ἐκκλησία**) 86 times, according to John F. Walvord, Former President of Dallas Theological Seminary and holding to the pre-tribulation rapture falacy, and William Bell PHD, former professor of Dallas Baptist University holding to the historic premillennial post-tribulation.

Was the Greek word for church ever used of Israel in the Greek Old Testament translation?

Yes, the Greek word for church (**ἐκκλησία**) was used many times of the people of Israel in the Old Testament. Jesus didn't make up a new word for believers in Him as the revelation of the true God of all creation.

The word is used in relation to Israel and translated "assembly". Let us look at some of these

## references

The Greek word for church ἐκκλησίαν was used for Israel in the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament.

What is the Septuagint?

The **Septuagint** is, “the oldest Greek version of the Old Testament”,. It was “traditionally said to have been translated by 70 or 72 Jewish scholars at the request of Ptolemy II: most scholars believe that only the Pentateuch was completed in the early part of the 3rd century b.c. and that the remaining books were translated in the next two centuries.” <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/septuagint>

The Septuagint (LXX) is a Koine Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, translated in stages between the 3rd to 2nd century BCE in Alexandria, Egypt.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development\\_of\\_the\\_Hebrew\\_Bible\\_canon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_the_Hebrew_Bible_canon)

*We should examine some of these verses because the **Septuagint was the primary source of the scriptures for Jews during Jesus’ day because most of them no longer read the Hebrew that the Old Testament was originally written in. Just a reminder the Greek word that we are referencing is the New testament word for “church” ἐκκλησία.***

**Judges 20:2** *The chiefs of all the people, even of **all the tribes of Israel**, took their stand in the assembly (ἐκκλησία church) of the people of God, 400,000 foot soldiers who drew the sword.*

**Judges 21:5** *Then the sons of Israel said, “Who is there among **all the tribes of Israel** who did not come up in the assembly (ἐκκλησία church) to the Lord? For they had taken a great oath concerning him who did not come up (ἐκκλησία) to the Lord at Mizpah, saying, “He shall surely be put to death.” Notice in this quotation from the New American Standard version of 1995 did not include the second use of the reference to the ἐκκλησία assembly that is in the Greek Septuagint translation.*

**1 Kingdoms 17:47 (1 Samuel 17:47)** *“All those gathered (ἐκκλησία church) here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s and he will give all of you into our hands”. (New International Version)*

**3 Kingdoms 8:14 (1 Kings 8:14)** *“While the whole assembly (ἐκκλησία church) of Israel was standing there, the king turned around and blessed them.”(NIV)*

v. 65 *So Solomon observed the festival at that time and **all Israel** with him – a vast assembly, (ἐκκλησία (church)...*

**1 Chronicles 13:2** *“So David said to all the assembly (ἐκκλησία (church) of Israel.”*

**1 Chronicles 13:4** *“Then all the assembly (ἐκκλησία (church) said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.” (NASB)*

**1 Chronicles 29:1** *“Then king David said to the entire assembly (ἐκκλησία (church), My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen....” (NASB)*

v. 20 *“Then David said to all the assembly (ἐκκλησία (church), ‘Now bless the Lord your God.’ And all the assembly blessed the Lord, the God of their fathers...” (NASB)*

2 Chronicles 6:3 Then the king faced about and blessed all the **assembly** (ἐκκλησία (**church**)) of Israel, while all the **assembly** (ἐκκλησία (**church**)) of Israel was standing.”(NASB)

2 Chronicles 7:8 So Solomon observed the feast at that time for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly (ἐκκλησία (**church**)) who came from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt. (NASB)

2 Chronicles 10:3 “So they sent for Jeroboam, and when he and all (ἐκκλησία (**church**)) Israel came....”

2 Chronicles 20:5 Then Jehosophat stood in the assembly (ἐκκλησία (**church**)) of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD before the new court...”

**Psalms 21:26 “From you comes my praise in the great assembly (church, ἐκκλησία); I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him”**

**Psalms 34:18 “I will give you thanks in the great congregation (church, ἐκκλησία); I will praise you among a mighty throng.”**

**Psalms 39:10 “I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation (church, ἐκκλησία); behold I will not restrain my lips, o Lord, You know.**

**Psalms 86:6 “The heavens will praise your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly (church, ἐκκλησία) of the Holy ones.”**

**Psalms 106:32 “Let them extol Him also in the congregation (church, ἐκκλησία) of the people, and praise Him at the seat of the elders.”**

**Psalms 149:1 “Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise in the congregation (church, ἐκκλησία) of the godly ones.”**

**Job 20:28 “I go about morning without comfort; I stand up in the assembly (church, ἐκκλησία) and cry out for help.”**

**Micah 2:5 “Therefore you will have no one stretching a measuring line for you by lot in the assembly (church, ἐκκλησία) of the LORD.”**

There are other references that could be included with these but these should be sufficient to document that the Greek word for church (ἐκκλησία) is used many times **in the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old testament in direct reference to Israel. Many assume that the church didn't begin until the day of Pentecost when in fact the word was used for the assembling (gathering together) of the people of Israel throughout the Greek translation of the Old testament that Jews had been reading for more than 200 years before Jesus was incarnated** by being born of the virgin Mary.

Church in the Greek New Testament

1. There are also references in the New Testament where **the Greek word for church is used of the people Israel. Look at Acts 7:38 which says, “This is the one who was in the congregation ( ἐκκλησία) in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to**

*him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you.” Consider also Acts 19:32 Where the apostle Paul was speaking to the Jews who had gathered to oppose and accuse him. “So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly (ἐκκλησία) was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together.” Also in verse 39 and 40, “But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in lawful assembly (church, ἐκκλησία). For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today’s events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering.’ After saying this he dismissed the assembly (church ἐκκλησία ekklesia). Look at Hebrews 2:12 that is quoting the Old Testament passage “saying, ‘I will proclaim your name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation (church) I will sing your praise.’” Hebrews 12:23 is also applicable “to the assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.”*

*The irony of all these references to the Greek word for church in the OT is that at least one Dispensational apologist that I am aware, John F. Walvoord, of Dallas Theological Seminary admits it.*

The New Testament word for church ekklesia is made up of two Greek words. Ek is a preposition translated “from” or “out of” joined with kletos translated “to call”, or “called”. Therefore, ekklesia means the “called out ones” or “assembly” in whatever area they were. The church of 1 and 2Corinthians are the gathered together assembly of believers in Jesus in that city or vicinity, which would be true of Rome, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Pergamum, Laodecia, etc.

Many people think that the church did not start until the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. If that is true then Jesus must have been mistaken in Matthew 18: 15-18 where he give's the guidelines for church discipline. “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. 18I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

If the church of Jesus did not start before Pentecost in Acts 2 then exactly what did Jesus mean in Matthew 16: 16-18 when he asked the apostles, “who do you say that I am?

“Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”. 17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. 18And I tell you that you are Peter εἰ Πέτρος (Gk. petros), and on this rock (Gk. καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ Petra) I will build my church (Gk οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ekklesia) , and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 20. Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.”

Notice that I put the Church discipline passage from Matthew 18 first and the Peter's confession

second for a reason. The reason is that you will note the “binding and loosing” phrases are identical. Specifically, what is bound on earth has already been bound in heaven, and whatever is loosed on earth has already been loosed in heaven. The phrase “already has been” either loosed or bound in heaven comes from the tense of the Greek verb.

An observation on the Matthew 16 passage sheds light on whether Peter is the foundation of the church or not. When Jesus says “you are Peter”, the Greek word is Πέτρος Petros for Peter. However, when he says, “upon this rock” he changes the gender of the pronoun from masculine to feminine or neuter with the Greek word πέτρα “petra”. If the foundation of the Christian church was indeed Peter, Jesus would have retained the masculine singular “os” ending so that it would have agreed with Petros in gender, number and case, as is required by Greek grammar. The use of the feminine or neuter ending of petra reveals that the church is built on something other than Peter. In the context of the passage, the only other thing that petra could refer to is **Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ**. We should point out that the Greek word for “church ἐκκλησίαν” is feminine in gender so the word petra does agree in gender with it.

The confession of Jesus as Lord is the key to a personal relationship with him and inclusion in the body of Christ, the church of the ages, which is the Israel of God. In the middle of the apostle Paul's 3 chapter discussion on the fact that “all Israel is not Israel” Romans 9:6. Indeed the way Jew and Gentile have a personal relationship to Jesus is by confessing Him as Lord and believing that he has been raised from the dead, according to Romans 10:9. Romans 10:9-13 “That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. 11. As the scripture says, “He who believes in Him will not be put to sham.” 12. For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him. 13. for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”