

## COUNTDOWN TO THE RAPTURE

By Shane Shaddix

We will begin@ rapture (blast-off) or the catching up of the saints. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "...the dead in Christ shall rise (resurrect) first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds...". So we see that the resurrection precedes or occurs before the catching up or rapture.

- (1) RESURRECTION
- (0) RAPTURE—BLAST OFF

This happens at the "...coming of the Lord..." 1 Thessalonians 4:15; "... we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord...". James writes of this coming in his epistle "to the twelve tribes which are SCATTERED abroad... "James 1:1. It must be pointed out that this epistle was written to a group that existed at the time the epistle was written and not specifically to Jews living some 2000 plus years later and definitely not Jews living in Jerusalem, for James addresses the letter to the twelve tribes SCATTERED abroad.

### GIVE THE MORE EARNEST HEED

To identify the addressee of the epistle, let us turn our attention to Acts 6:7 "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Now Acts 8:1 "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all SCATTERED abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria." Now in Acts 8:4 we read "Therefore they that were SCATTERED abroad went everywhere preaching the word." So we see that James is addressed to believers (the church), many of which were Jews and great company of which were priests.

So can we then agree that James is written to believers (those "obedient to the faith"), that is, the church? Is it then not profitable to us for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness??

If so, then now let us turn our attention to James chapter 5, where after he accuses the rich of condemning and killing the just, he exhorts the brethren to be patient unto the coming of the Lord, vs. 7, and to "be patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.", vs. 8. Then in vs.9, he exhorts "Grudge not one against another, brethren,...behold, the judge standeth before the door." Then in verse 10, James turns our attention to the suffering "prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord; for an example of suffering, affliction, and patience." Then in verse 11, James points us, the church, to Job as an example of a suffering prophet. All this is in context of persecution and the coming of the Lord.

Should we not then turn our attention to the words of the prophet Job, when discussing the coming of the Lord? Let us first see if our Lord thinks Job is a credible witness.

The book of Job opens up declaring the perfectness and uprightness of Job and stating that he was one that "feared God and eschewed evil." (Job 1:1) Our Lord then affirms this declaration, in vs. 8, where he

"said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil." And if not yet convinced that Job is a credible witness, our Lord repeats his affirmation of Job in chapter 2 and verse 3. "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? And still he holdeth his integrity, though thou movest me against him without a cause." Now if we skip to the end of the book of Job, we see our Lord's rebuke to Eliphaz when he says "... for you have not spoken of me the thing which is right, as my servant Job hath." (42:7) Then, in vs. 8 our Lord repeats His affirmation of Job, where He says to Eliphaz "... my servant Job shall pray for You: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that you have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job."

So I think if our Lord four times affirms Job as a credible witness, and James in his epistle, in context of the persecution of the just and coming of the Lord, points us to Job as a suffering prophet who has spoken in the name of our Lord, then it would behoove us to give the more earnest heed to the things Job spake, especially those things concerning our Lord and his coming.

We have already established, from Paul's letter to the church of the Thessalonians, that the resurrection precedes the catching up of the saints. Now we will learn from Job what precedes the resurrection.

Job makes a profound statement in Job 14:12.

"So man lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

Notice in this verse that there is no resurrection till the HEAVENS BE NO MORE. This is a common theme in many scripture passages dealing with our Lord's coming. Peter says it this way: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise...". So, we see that in the Lord's coming, THE HEAVENS SHALL PASS AWAY with a great noise. In Revelation John says it this way "and the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together" Revelation 6:14. Then again in Revelation 19:11 John writes " And I saw heaven opened,...", Isaiah also describes this event in his writings; 51:6 "... for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke,..." and then again in 64:1; "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, ..." Our Lord himself said, as recorded in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

Let us now give a recount of this event which must precede the resurrection:

Job 14:12        "...heavens be no more..."

11 Peter 3:10    "...heavens shall pass away..."

Revelation 6:14    "...the heaven departed as a scroll..."

Revelation 19:11    "...heaven opened..."

Isaiah 51:6        "...the heavens shall vanish away like smoke ..."

Isaiah 64:1        "...rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down ..."

Matthew 24:35     “Heaven and earth shall pass away...”

Although this should suffice as scriptural evidence that this is indeed an actual event that precedes the coming of the Lord and the resurrection, it is in no wise an exhaustive list for David and Paul both write of this event.

So let us now take a look where we are now in the countdown to the rapture. Shall we?

- (2) HEAVENS BE NO MORE
- (1) RESURRECTION
- (0) RAPTURE

The idea of “the heavens be no more” is for sure hard to grasp mentally. I believe that’s why our Lord gave us so many illustrious descriptions of it. Our Lord also exceeds his own standard; “At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses shall the matter be established”, when describing to us this phenomenon of “the heavens shall vanish away...” in conjunction with his coming.

For the sake of clarity, let’s look at a couple more witnesses. In Psalm 102:25-26, the psalmist writes: “... the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish...”, and then Paul quotes this passage in Hebrews 1:10-12 “...and the heavens are the work of thine hands: they shall perish; ... and as a vesture thou shalt fold them up, and they shall be changed.”

So we see Job is in good company when describing this event.

Before moving to our next count in the countdown, it would do us good to deal with the fact that Job does not distinguish between the just and the unjust in Job 14:12. He just refers to man in general. It seems as though Job knew that the resurrection would be one of the just and the unjust. This is exactly what our Lord says in John 5:28-29 “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And some shall come forth; they which have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation...” To this agrees Paul when he says in Acts 24:15 “... there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust ...” Daniel also affirms this in his writings in Daniel 12:2 where he writes “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt.”

And yes, Daniel does say many and not all as our Lord does in John 5:29. This is because many bodies of the saints would be resurrected before the resurrection “at the last day” that is mentioned by our Lord in John 6:39, 40, 44 & 54. This is attested to in Matthew 27:52, “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection...”. The apostle Paul gives agreement to this when he writes to the church of God at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. In chapter 15 and verse 20 he writes “but now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

Notice that firstfruits is plural and slept is past tense. This firstfruits resurrection was prophesied in Isaiah 26:19a where it is written “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.”

So, in conclusion, we learn that the resurrection that Job attested to in Job 14:12 is the general or ingathering resurrection at the last day and not the firstfruits resurrection that took place at the time of Christ's resurrection.

#### THE DARKENING

Now when we look at Revelation 6:14, we see events mentioned that precede the passing away, departing, or vanishing of the heavens.

Revelation 6:12-14 "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."

So we see that before the departing of the heaven is mentioned, there is mentioned a great earthquake, and then the darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars from heaven. Whether these events are consecutive or simultaneous, is not exactly clear. As for our countdown to the rapture, I will list them in the order which they appear. No doubt, they all must occur before the catching up of the saints, and therefore, we shall treat them all as individual signs pointing to the rapture.

The last event to be mentioned before the heavens departed is the sun becomes black as sackcloth of hair, the moon becomes as blood, and the stars fall unto the earth. This event I will refer to as the darkening. As with the previous event discussed, we will see in scripture, multiple witnesses to this event given in conjunction with the advent or coming of the Lord; also referred to as the day of the Lord. Following is a list (not in anywise exhaustive) of these witnesses.

- Isaiah 24:18 "... the foundations of the earth do shake..."
- 24:19 "... the earth is utterly broken down... the earth is moved exceedingly..."
- 24:20 "The earth shall reel to and fro..."
- 24:23 "Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed..."
- Joel 2:1-2 "... for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of Gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,..."
- Joel 2:16 "... let the bridegroom go forth out of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet."

"CLOSET" is equated to darkness in:

- Luke 12:3 "Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and That which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

Then in Joel 2:31 “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great And terrible day of the LORD come.”

And in Joel 2:10 “The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:”

In Joel 3:15-16 “The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; And the heavens and the earth shall quake: but the LORD shall be the hope of his People, and the strength of the children of Israel.

So we see, as established by much scripture and with multiple witnesses, that there will be a darkening prior to our Lord’s return. This would explain why Paul writes in I Thessalonians 5:2, “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” Then in I Peter 3:10, we read “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise...”

If we back all the way up to the beginning when our Lord created the heavens and the earth, we find, “... and the darkness he called Night.” Genesis 1:5

We also learned from Revelation 6:12-14 that this darkening happens prior to the heavens departing as a scroll when it is rolled together.

So let us now take a look at where we are in the countdown to the rapture. Shall we?

- (3) THE DARKENING
- (2) HEAVENS BE NO MORE
- (1) RESURRECTION
- (0) RAPTURE

Though I have given much scripture to establish the Bible’s clear teaching on the darkening, it is in no wise an exhaustive list of the scriptures which give evidence on the subject. This teaching can in no way replace or be a substitute for personal Bible study.

So in Revelation 6:12-14 we also notice that there is a great earthquake that either coincides or precedes the darkening that takes place before the Lord comes. Because of the order in which the events are listed, I would assume them to be consecutive events, though we cannot be sure. And if consecutive, they may overlap. Who knows, one may lead to, or cause the other. Nevertheless, a sure sign that precedes the rapture is the “great earthquake”.

Let us once again check our countdown to the rapture:

- (4) GREAT EARTHQUAKE
- (3) THE DARKENING
- (2) HEAVENS BE NO MORE
- (1) RESURRECTION
- (0) RAPTURE

Now moving forward in our discussion we learn from our Lord that the darkening is consecutive to the “great tribulation” and follows “immediately after the tribulation of those days”. Let’s look at our Lord’s words in the gospel of Matthew. Shall we?

Matthew 24:29-31 “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 heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 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.”

And we know that “the tribulation of those days” is the “great tribulation” because it is mentioned in the same passage just seven verses prior, in verse 21. Then in verse 22 we read “And except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” We also see that this time of “great tribulation” mentioned by our Lord in Matthew 24:21, is also, in Mark 13:19, described as a time of “affliction such as was not from the beginning of creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.” Now in verse 13 of this same passage, we read, “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake...”

So we see that the greatness of the tribulation and affliction is not a reference to the severity of the affliction upon the individual Christian, but rather a descriptor of the scope of the tribulation. It will be WORLDWIDE! All men, that is, all nations will hate, afflict, persecute, imprison, and kill Christians.

The world has been killing God’s elect for centuries, but we have always had a place to flee or scatter to.

We now understand our Lord’s words in Matthew 24:22 “And except those days” (days of great tribulation and affliction) “be shortened” (shortened by the darkening) “there should no flesh be saved” (what flesh?) “...but for the elect’s sake: those days those days shall be shortened.”

Who are the elect mentioned in this passage? No doubt, it is GOD’S PEOPLE, the redeemed, the saints, the chosen of God, for Mark’s gospel, chapter 13 and verse 20; a parallel passage to Matthew 24:22, reads “... but for the elect’s sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened those days.” Now, without any doubt, I know I am chosen of God. Paul writing “to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus” Ephesians 1:1, says “According as he hath chosen us in him...” verse 4. Also our Lord says in both Matthew 20:16 “... many be called, but few chosen.” And then in 22:14, “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

These few are the same few our Lord spoke of in Matthew 7:14 where he says: “Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it.” So we see that the few are not the called, but they which are called and chosen; hence, “the very elect” of Matthew 24:24.

If this is not yet clear, then now would be a fitting time to consult the Apostle Peter on the question of who the elect are. Peter writes to the “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; Grace unto you and peace be multiplied.” So we see then that the elect are those on whom the blood of Christ has been applied when they obeyed that Holy Ghost conviction, and this all by the grace of God. This is why in

Romans 11:5 it is called “the election of grace”. We learn, in Romans 11:7, when taken in context of chapter 10, that the election are those who have obtained the righteousness of God by faith.

Another help, in understanding who the elect are, is found in I Thessalonians 1:4 where Paul writing “...unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ...” says in verse 4; “Knowing brethren beloved, your election of God.”

Also while on this topic, we find a very interesting verse in Revelation 17:14 which reads “...the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.” This scripture is in full agreement with what the Bible teaches throughout its entirety.

So let's now take a look at our countdown to the rapture.

- (5)     GREAT TRIBULATION
- (4)     GREAT EARTHQUAKE
- (3)     THE DARKENING
- (2)     HEAVENS BE NO MORE
- (1)     RESURRECTION
- (0)     RAPTURE

So learning what we've learned, would it not make sense that God shortens the great tribulation by turning out the lights, or bringing about the darkening, as we have labeled it?, Seeing as how it is IMMEDIATELY after the tribulation that the darkening occurs. Could it be that the great earthquake and the darkening is what cuts the tribulation short or brings it to an abrupt end? How can the world afflict God's people when they find themselves without homes (lost to the great earthquake) and engulfed in utter darkness, thick darkness as the scriptures describe it? The world will not be able to persecute God's people who are hidden in darkness. And hidden by darkness we will be until “the Sun of righteousness arise(s) with healing in his wings...” Following this thought, let's look at some familiar scriptures and see if they ring with new meaning.

I Corinthians 4:5     “Therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts:”

Colossians 1:13     “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”

I Peter 2:9     “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:”

## THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

At this point, I would like to discuss the source or cause, if you will, of the “great tribulation”. Let us begin with Psalm 2:2-3. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” So we see here the kings of the earth (political/government officials) and the rulers (religious leaders) taking counsel together against the Lord and against his people (the Elect), the anointed (Christ), which includes those in Christ. Remember when Saul of Tarsus persecuted and made havoc of the church, the Lord struck him down with blindness as he was on the road to Damascus and questioned him asking “Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou me?” When Saul questioned “Who are thou Lord?”, the Lord answered “I am Jesus who thou persecutest...” So we see then, that Saul, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, persecuted the Lord when he persecuted the church. Saul was of his father the Devil, and the lust of his father he did do.

Speaking of the devil, let’s look at Daniel 7, shall we? In Daniel 7:20 & 24 we see the ten horns or ten kings that we also find mentioned in Rev. 17:12-14 where they made war with the Lamb and in Daniel 7:21 we find that “...the same horn made war with the saints...”

In Rev. 12:17 we read:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Rev. 13:4    “And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”

Rev. 13:7    “And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”

So we see that this dragon, or beast, or king is none other than the “prince that shall come” mentioned in Daniel 9:26 and in vs. 27 he commits the abomination of desolation that our Lord spoke of in Matthew 24:15 “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place...” and in Rev. 13:7 notice that power was given him over “all nations” therefore he is able to turn all nations against God’s elect, the saints, as mentioned already in Matthew 24:9. So we see the source of the days of “affliction” spoken of in Mark 13:19 or a time of “Great tribulation” as is written in Matthew 24:21; is none other than this prince that shall come; the beast or the dragon as he is called in other places; or Satan himself as mentioned in Rev. 12:9.

So, let’s recount to the rapture:

- (6)    ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION
- (5)    GREAT AFFLCTION OR TRIBULATION
- (4)    GREAT EARTHQUAKE
- (3)    THE DARKENING
- (2)    HEAVENS BE NO MORE
- (1)    RESURRECTION
- (0)    RAPTURE

### THE FALLING AWAY

This abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, as mentioned by our Lord in Matthew 24:15, is also found in II Thessalonians 2. We read in verses 1-4:

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 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. 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 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.”

So before the Lord comes and gathers his saints unto himself, there shall come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed. The revelation of the man of sin is described in detail in vs. 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.” And so, before this abomination of desolation happens there will be first a falling away which gives way to, brings about, or allows the revelation of the son of perdition. That phrase “falling away” is the Greek word Apostasia, which is the Strong’s Concordance #646, which is defined as a forsaking of, or defection from, truth.

So, now let’s look again at the countdown to the rapture, that is, the catching up of the saints.

- (7) A FALLING AWAY
- (6) ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION
- (5) GREAT AFFLCTION OR TRIBULATION
- (4) GREAT EARTHQUAKE
- (3) THE DARKENING
- (2) HEAVENS BE NO MORE
- (1) RESURRECTION
- (0) RAPTURE

As I am sure we can all agree, there seems to be a turning of the church from truth at this very time and season we live in. There also seems to be a turning of the world against any who would profess the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: the God and Author of the Bible.

In Matthew 24: Peter, James, John, and Andrew came to Jesus privately and asked him 2 questions. First is “when shall these things be?” and second is “what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” Before He answers their questions, He charged them in vs. 4 “Take heed that no man deceive you.”

Pre-tribbers say the rapture is a signless event that could happen at any moment. They call it the imminent return of Christ or the doctrine of immanency. To bolster their doctrine of immanency, they quote Matthew 24:36 “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” Yet, the context of that verse is our Lord’s answer to the question the four above mentioned disciples asked: “what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” In verse 27 of this text through to verse 51, there are many signs and scenarios portrayed for us as pointing to or

as tokens of the Lord's return, or the coming of the Son of Man, as our Lord himself says it. Verse 33 says, "...when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." What things? These Signs!

Another argument used for the immanency of the rapture is I Cor. 15:51-52. "Behold, I shew 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." The problem with using this text is that the catching up is nowhere in this text. Not even in the entire chapter is the catching up of the saints mentioned. That which is going to happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, is the change of the saints. That is the resurrection of the dead saints; "the dead shall be raised incorruptible" and the change of those saints who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord; "and we shall be changed". Though the rapture may be consecutive with this event ,and may follow so close in time to it that we may not be able to comprehend the finish of the one event (the change) from the beginning of the other event (the catching up of the saints): they are in fact two distinct events.

This scripture also refutes their argument that the rapture is a mystery revealed to Paul and was unheard of before he penned this passage. The mystery Paul reveals is just what he said; "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." The rapture is not the mystery Paul shews to us in this passage. The mystery that Paul shews us is that those mortals who are in Christ and still alive at his return will also be changed (glorified). "This mortal must put on immortality", that is those mortal saints alive at Christ's return will put on immortality.

So we see that the mystery Paul shews us is not the rapture but rather exactly what the text says, WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP BUT WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED.

As far as the rapture being a mystery and NOT having been revealed prior to Paul's teaching on it, is contrary to the scripture passage in which Paul does teach the rapture. In I Thessalonians 4:13-18 Paul gives us one of the most detailed teachings we have on the rapture. But before he gets very deep into the details, he gives credit in verse 15, "this we say unto you by the word of the Lord". It sounds as though Paul is telling us: what I am saying is from the lips of the Lord; it is what I heard him teach.

When we look at our Lord's teaching on the matter and compare to Paul's, we definitely find very interesting similarities. For instance, in verse 14, the phrase "will God bring with him" is very similar to our Lord's words in John 10:16; "... these also I must bring...".

#### EVER BE WITH THE LORD

In John chapter 14 our Lord gives an exceeding great and precious promise of His coming again to receive us (his disciples) unto himself. Though there is no mention of the "catching up" here in this passage, there is no doubt, that in this passage, our Lord is referring to the same event that Paul wrote about in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and in II Thessalonians 2:1-3.

Our Lord says "I will come again and receive you unto myself..." in John 14:3 and Paul says "...coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him..." II Thessalonians 2:1. The language used in these two passages is very similar and most scholars would agree that our Lord, in John 14, is referring

to the rapture. We also know that if II Thessalonians 2:1 is not a reference to the rapture, then it must be a reference to an event that precedes the rapture, for we know that once the rapture takes place then "...so shall we ever be with the Lord". So if from the rapture we are ever with the Lord then there would from that moment on never be another gathering of us unto the Lord for we'll already be with him.

So we see then that II Thessalonians 2:1-3 is either a reference to the rapture or an event preceding the rapture. I can however find no scriptural evidence of an event in which our Lord comes and gathers his saints unto himself before we are "caught up" at the event referenced in I Thessalonians 4:13-18. We also know that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep, for the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. So then, it is accurate to say, there will be no gathering of the saints unto the Lord until the resurrection takes place.

Paul refers to the event he describes in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 as "...the coming of the Lord..." vs. 15. Because a "third" coming of the Lord is not ordained in scripture and because once we are gathered unto the Lord, so shall we ever be with him, then II Thessalonians 2:1-3 cannot be referring to an event following the rapture, yet some still believe II Thessalonians 2:1-3 is referring to an event following the rapture by at least seven years.

So in conclusion we see that the rapture was in fact, not a mystery first revealed by Paul, but was a teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ as attested to by Paul himself when he said "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord...".

And also we see it most logical that our Lord's words in John 14 "...I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there may you be also.", and Paul's words in I Thessalonians 4; "shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.", and also Paul's words in II Thessalonians 2:1 "...the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him," are all three, passages referring to the same event.

