

Revelation (2020) – 4C

- Having finished our background work in Daniel 2, 7, and 9, we are ready to return to the book of Revelation

4C-1

- The last time we were studying in the book itself, we finished Chapter 3 and the seven letters to the church
 - This was the section that Jesus called the things that “are”
 - That section taught us about the Church Age, a period of history still ongoing

4C-2

- The Church occupies the last days of a present age that Jesus called the Age of the Gentiles

4C-3

- That age is centered on Israel and on Jerusalem
- According to Jesus in Luke 21, the age is defined as a period of history when three things will remain true for Israel
- Israel is under threat of Gentile attack, scattered outside their land and their city is trampled by Gentiles

4C-4

- That led us outside the book of Revelation for a while to Daniel to study the age in detail
 - We learned the age started in 605 BC with Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Jerusalem
 - It progresses through four different kingdoms and eventually it comes to its end with the Second Coming of Christ
 - At the very end, the age experiences dramatic events including the consolidation of all authority on earth to ten rulers
 - And then finally to one world leader who persecutes believers and opposes God before coming to his end at Christ’s hand
- Daniel also told us that this age had a time limit of 70 seven-year periods
 - But that 490-year period wasn’t contiguous...Daniel told us that it included a break or pause of an unknown period
 - That break will finally end and the final seven years of that Age will play out

- We are currently living in that pause, and as Paul told us, the pause was necessary to make room for the Gentile church
- So we are living in the pause created for us, but sooner than later the pause will give way to Daniel's final seven and the age will end

4C-5

- But the book of Revelation has three parts, not just two, and that third part will now become the main focus of our study
 - Jesus called Part 3 "the things that take place after these things"
 - It tells of the events that take place after the church age has ended
 - These chapters tell the story of Daniel's final seven year period before Christ's Second Coming
 - And before we move into those chapters, what should we call Daniel's final seven, this final period of the age?

4C-6

- The period goes by numerous names in the Old and New Testament

4C-7

- But one of the more common terms in the New Testament is the "day of the Lord"

4C-8

2Pet. 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

- Peter describes the day of the Lord as a surprise when the world endures great destructive forces

- Paul describes it this way:

4C-9

1Th. 5:2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

1Th. 5:3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

- Like Daniel earlier, Paul confirms this is a dark day of destruction that comes upon the whole earth
- And it is also a surprise to all who dwell on the earth

- One term for this period found in the Old Testament stands out:

4C-10

[Jer. 30:7](#) 'Alas! for that day is great,

There is none like it;

And it is the time of Jacob's distress,

But he will be saved from it.

- This is a time specifically intended for Israel (Jacob), Jeremiah says

4C-11

- And we remember from Daniel 9:24 that this seven year period was specifically part of a plan for Israel and Jerusalem

4C-12

- So the final period of seven years is the day of the Lord, Israel's final accounting and in the Church, and it's come to be known by one name more than any other –

4C-13

4C-14

- It's commonly called the "tribulation," which means affliction or anguish
 - The Hebrew root word means to compress or constrict, like grapes in a press
 - It's also the most common term used for this period of time in the New Testament

4C-15

- The seven year Tribulation can be subdivided into smaller periods, which we'll do later in a lesson introducing the Tribulation
 - But for now we need to understand how we transition from the Church Age into Daniel's final seven years of tribulation
 - Chapters 4 & 5 provide that transition
 - They are one continuous scene, but we will take it in sections

4C-16

[Rev. 4:1](#) After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

[Rev. 4:2](#) Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.

[Rev. 4:3](#) And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

Rev. 4:4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

- This is an amazing scene and the most detailed description of the Lord’s throne room found in the Bible
 - All three members of the Godhead are present in these two chapters
 - And throughout the scene we see exclamations of praise for God
 - It will begin with “Holy, Holy, Holy”, and then three times God is declared worthy of honor, power, judgment and glory, etc.
 - And that’s followed by a fourth declaration of honor and glory at the end of Chapter 5...it’s nonstop praise for God
 - We can’t overstate how worthy our God is to receive praise from His creation, and in Heaven there will be no doubt
 - John says a door is open to Heaven and Jesus calls John to come up (to Heaven)
 - We know it’s Jesus calling because John says it’s the same voice he heard earlier, the one like a trumpet
 - And we know the scene is set after the Church Age has ended
 - Jesus says He is showing John what must take place after these things, meaning after the things of the church
 - And the details within this scene serve to confirm for us that the Church Age has ended
- The first thing John sees is the Father God, seated on a throne, and Chapter 4 focuses on the Father
 - God the Father is described as appearing like jasper and sardis
 - Jasper is the ancient term for a diamond
 - And the sardis stone was first mined in the city of the same name, and it’s fiery red in appearance
 - So the two together suggest a bright, dazzling, fiery light around the Father along with an emerald green rainbow

4C-17

- This vision is similar to the one Daniel saw of the Ancient of Days in Chapter 7
- But elsewhere John tells us in 1 John 4:12 that no one has seen the Father at any time
 - So like Daniel, we know John witnesses a vision prepared for Him
 - It's a representation of the Father, not the Father's actual appearance
 - The point is to give John something He can understand so as to communicate a message to him through this vision
- And that story centers on events taking place around the throne, beginning in v.4 with twenty-four elders praising the Father
 - They are seated on thrones of their own, they are wearing white garments, and they are adorned with crowns on their heads
 - The word elder is always used in connection to human beings who lead God's people
 - Israel had elders over them since the time of Moses and the Church is led by elders, of course
- So in calling these characters "elders" John is indicating that they are human beings
 - And this is the first time "elders" are described as present around the throne of God
 - In earlier visions of God's throne given in Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel there is no mention of elders
- These twenty four elders wear clothes that symbolize righteousness by faith
 - The Bible says that by our faith we have received Christ's righteousness

2Cor. 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- And figuratively speaking, we are said to put on Christ's righteousness as if wearing clothing

Gal. 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

- And remember, earlier in studying the letter of Sardis we learned that white garments represent the works of the saints

Rev. 19:8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

- So these men are believers present in the Heavenly throne room
- Secondly, they are sitting on thrones indicates they have ruling authority
 - And we know that Jesus says that the Church saints will have positions of authority to reign in the Kingdom with Jesus

Luke 22:28 “You are those who have stood by Me in My trials;
Luke 22:29 and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you
Luke 22:30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- Later in Revelation 20:4 we’re told that the saints will receive thrones to judge in the Kingdom

Rev. 20:4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

- Thirdly, they are wearing crowns John says, and the Greek word he uses for crown is *stephanos*
 - That Greek word specifically describes an award for excellent performance
 - It’s the same Greek word used for the wreath given to an athlete who competes in the Greek Olympic Games
 - And as such, it lines up with other Scripture that says crowns represent the eternal rewards available to believers

1Cor. 9:25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

[2Tim. 4:8](#) in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

- So crowns are tokens representing believers' eternal rewards that eventually become our inheritance in the Kingdom
- These elders represent the leadership of the church throughout the centuries
 - Obviously, over 2,000 years, there have been far more than 24 elders in the church
 - But the Lord couldn't show John every person who has ever served as an elder in the church
 - So the Lord showed John a certain number to represent all leaders
 - We would expect the Lord to use "7" to represent 100%, but here He uses 24 to represent all the leaders of the church
 - The number 12 represents government or leadership over God's people (i.e., 12 tribes govern Israel, 12 apostles governed the church, 12 months govern the year, etc.)
 - And doubling a number means to emphasize or make complete the concept behind that number
 - So double 12 (24) means all the leaders of the church
- Next, in v.5 John describes seven lamp stands burning fire around the throne of God
 - John explains that these lamp stands represent the seven Spirits of God
 - Like the Father, the Spirit of God is not visible, so if the Spirit makes His presence known to us, He must take some other form
 - He often appears as fire or a dove or in this case a lamp stand
 - But here He's described as the "seven" Spirits of God, similar to the way Isaiah describes the Spirit in 11:2 using seven characteristics
 - Once again, we know the number seven means 100%

- So seven lamp stands of fire is a symbolic way of saying 100% of the Spirit is present in the throne
 - Obviously, the Spirit being a spirit is present in all places at once, yet in the same way, the Spirit can also choose to be nowhere for a time
 - So if 100% of the Spirit is present in Heaven, then it means He is nowhere to be found on earth at this moment
 - And if the Spirit is not present on earth for any time, then the Church cannot be present on earth at that time either
 - For Jesus made clear that His presence would remain with the Church until the end of the Age
- 4C-18**
- Therefore, by what John witnesses the suggestion is that the entire church must be present in the throne room
 - And the structure of Revelation gives support to this conclusion
 - We note that this scene immediately follows Part 2, the things that “are” in Chapters 2-3
 - So as we enter Chapter 4, we know that the times that “are” (i.e., the Church Age on earth) has ended and new things have begun
 - The outline of the book of Revelation itself confirms that the time for the Church on earth is over
 - And if all the leadership of the church is present then surely all the Church under its care is present
 - And if the entire Holy Spirit is present, then the entire body of Christ must be present
 - Though we don’t hear of the multitudes of the Church saints, the 24 elders and the lamps lead us to that conclusion
 - But that conclusion brings important considerations, and so we would really like additional proof before we move forward in that view
 - And two key details in the description of those 24 elders give us firm proof that the Church has left the earth and is in this scene
 - To understand those two details, we need to step out of the book of Revelation for a moment

- We need to look at what other Scriptures teach about the end of the Church Age

4C-19

- Beginning with understanding another key term: the coming of the Lord
 - Like the “day of the Lord” this term is easily misunderstood
 - It sounds like the Second Coming of Jesus, but when viewed in proper context, we find it’s talking about something else

4C-20

James 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.

James 5:8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

James 5:9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

- In v.8 James says the coming of the Lord is near and ever present
 - But those words were written in the first century, long before the events of the Church Age much less Daniel’s final seven year period
 - So James couldn’t be talking about the Lord’s Second Coming
 - That event was not possible in James’ day, nor even is it possible in our day today since we still have need for more to happen
 - So we know that there is an ever-present possibility of the Lord’s return for the Church and in John 14, Jesus promised this would happen

4C-21

John 14:1 “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

John 14:2 “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

- Jesus tells the disciples that in His Father’s house are many dwellings
- The “Father’s house” is a reference to the Heavenly realm, the same scene we just observed in Revelation 4

- In that place, Jesus says there is plenty of room for His disciples
- Jesus tells His disciples that He will leave them for a time so that He may be where the Father is and prepare a place for them
- And Jesus says we can be sure that He will return for us one day
 - His return for the Church takes a very certain form
 - Jesus comes to receive us to Himself so that where he is we may be also
 - In other words, Jesus will take the Church off the earth and bring us back to the throne room of God
- This promise is very different than the Second Coming of Christ described elsewhere in Scripture
 - Daniel tells us that Jesus' return will be followed by a Kingdom on the earth where Jesus rules with us
 - But here we have a promise to return just long enough to receive the Church to Himself and bring us back to heavenly dwelling places
 - This is a different event than Jesus' Second Coming with an opposite outcome to the Second Coming
 - Instead of Jesus on earth ruling a Kingdom, we find the Church in Heaven with Jesus
 - That's an event not mentioned at all in Daniel and not connected to the events of the Age of the Gentiles
 - In John 14 Jesus is promising something in addition to what we know is coming according to Daniel
 - Furthermore, the timing of these two events is very different
 - The New Testament also tells the Church that the coming of Christ is ever possible and not dependent on any other event
 - James said Jesus is right at the door and was telling his first century readers to expect Jesus at any time
 - But we've seen how the Second Coming of Jesus awaits the end of the Age and is dependent on other events happening first

- For example before Christ returns, the Age of the Gentiles must play out to conclusion
- So that among other things, ten kings must take control over the world and later give power to a single man who rules the entire earth
- Those things haven't happened yet, so the Second Coming isn't possible yet
- But the coming of the Lord for the Church is always possible because it's not dependent on anything
 - So there is a promise for the Church to be removed from the earth in a day to come
 - And we know this promise must precede the end of the Age, because at the end of the Age Jesus comes to earth to remain
 - Moreover, we will be with Jesus in that moment, because Daniel says we receive the Kingdom

Dan. 7:27 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'

- So a day is coming before the Second Coming of Christ when Jesus returns, collects the Church and returns us to Heaven
 - That day is not connected to the end of the age and could happen at any time
 - And that fact brings with it some important considerations which inform our understanding of the scene in Revelation 4
 - First, we know when that day comes, we enter into the throne room of God with Jesus, for that's the promise in John 14
 - Secondly, we also know that if we are to enter the throne room of God, we must leave behind our current sinful bodies
 - Because Paul tells us that our present earthly bodies are corrupted and therefore may not enter into the heavenly realm

1Cor. 15:50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

- Our present, corruptible body cannot inherit the kingdom of God or enter the presence of God
- That's why when we die, our body stays behind and only our spirit enters the Heavenly realm
- But we're not destined to live eternally without a body
- On the contrary, the Bible teaches that we will one day be resurrected, into an eternal sinless physical body

4C-22

1Cor. 15:42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body;

1Cor. 15:43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

1Cor. 15:44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

1Cor. 15:47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

1Cor. 15:48 As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

1Cor. 15:49 Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

- There is a new heavenly body coming for every believer, and this new body is necessary to inherit the kingdom of God
- So when Jesus returns to collect the Church and bring us back to Heaven, He must give us a new eternal body at that time
- The manner of our resurrection is described in two passages:

4C-23

1Th. 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

1Th. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

1Th. 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1Th. 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

[1Th. 4:17](#) Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

[1Th. 4:18](#) Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- The movement here matches John 14
 - Us on the ground
 - Jesus coming down to meet us partway (in the clouds) to receive us
 - We move from there with Him
- Let's note for a moment in v.17 Paul says we will be caught up (as opposed to resurrected)
 - In the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible, this term is translated *raptura*, which becomes the word *rapture* in French
- Many have adopted the word rapture to describe the moment the Church is caught up to be with Jesus
 - That term reflects that we are changing into the new body without passing through death first
 - They are resurrecting but not actually since they didn't die...they are rapturing or being caught up
 - When this happens, we meet our brothers and sisters in the clouds and return to the Heavenly throne room with Christ
 - Paul gives us a little more detail in 1 Corinthians

4C-24

[1Cor. 15:51](#) Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

[1Cor. 15:52](#) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

[1Cor. 15:53](#) For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

4C-25

- The coming of the Lord involves a two part process beginning with the Lord descending from Heaven

- There will be a shout, and the word in Greek is *keleusma*, which means a military order
- Therefore, the removal of the Church begins when a heavenly order is issued
- Secondly, there is a trumpet call, and the mention of a trumpet connects this moment to the Feast of Trumpets or Rosh Hashanah
 - This feast is a picture of the Rapture, and it fits between the Feast of Pentecost and Yom Kippur, which is a picture of Tribulation
 - This reaffirms our understanding of the timing of the Rapture
 - It happens after the beginning of the Church (Pentecost) and before the start of Tribulation
- And at that signal, the dead in Christ rise (resurrect) first
 - And then secondly, those Christians who are still alive on earth are instantly changed into a new eternal body
- In fact, the writer of Hebrews says that no saints will be made perfect (i.e., receive a new glorified body) before the rest of the saints

[Heb. 11:39](#) And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

[Heb. 11:40](#) because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

- The writer says that the Old Testament saints never gained the promises of the Kingdom in their lifetime
 - That delay was necessary because they could not be made “perfect” apart from us, the Church saints
 - The writer is setting forth a biblical principle concerning glorification (or being made perfect)
- A saint from a given group cannot receive his or her new, perfect body apart from the rest of that group
 - So the Lord resurrects all Old Testament saints into new bodies together at the same time

- And the Lord resurrects all Church saints together at the same time as well
- And in particular, Paul confirms this in 1 Thessalonians 4 speaking about our resurrection moment when Christ comes for the Church

1Th. 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

- In explaining how we receive our new resurrected bodies, Paul says that all believers dead or alive receive new bodies together
 - So no Christian receives a new body apart from the rest of the Church
 - So the coming of the Lord for the Church is also the moment we are resurrected to receive new physical bodies
 - For that is the only way we can see Jesus' promise to bring us to His Father's house fulfilled
- The second implication of Jesus' promise in John 14 is that the coming of the Lord is also the moment we receive our eternal reward
 - Because the Bible says that our reward is assigned to us at our resurrection
 - First, understand that all Christians face a moment called the Judgment Seat of Christ

4C-26

2Cor. 5:9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

2Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- We all appear before Christ for judgment at the same time, so the judgment seat moment happens only once
- Therefore, all believers are judged one by one in that moment and each receives his or her reward at that time
- Furthermore, the Bible says that this moment is connected to our resurrection moment

- Earlier in James 5:9 we read that the Judge is at right at the door and soon to arrive
- James was saying that the Lord comes bringing judgment for the Church
- Paul echoes these points

4C-27

1Cor. 4:5 Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

- He says that the Lord's coming will bring with it a judgment for all believers
 - And that judgment is for the result of assigning to each person praise from the Lord
 - So it's not a judgment for condemnation (see Romans 8:1), but rather it's a judgment for determining reward
- And speaking of his own reward in that moment, Paul says:

4C-28

1Th. 2:19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?

1Th. 2:20 For you are our glory and joy.

- Paul said the church in Thessalonica was a testimony to his good work
- And therefore, Paul said that church would become a "crown" for Paul, symbolizing a believer's reward
- But notice Paul connected his own reward not to the moment of his death but at the Lord's coming
- And still other passages connect Jesus' return with judgment and reward

Rev. 22:12 "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

[1Cor. 4:5](#) Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's **praise** will come to him from God.

[1Pet. 1:6](#) In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

[1Pet. 1:7](#) so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

- So the New Testament writers all agree that the Church is rewarded at the revealing of Jesus when He appears to resurrect the Church
 - So even if we die today, we don't receive our reward until the rest of the Church receives theirs at the resurrection
 - So all Church saints are resurrected together and all will be judged in the same moment
 - So that all receive their reward together
- 4C-29**
- Returning to the scene in Revelation 4, we can now see proof that the Church has been removed from the earth prior to that moment
 - The 24 elders are seated on thrones, wearing robes and have heads supporting crowns
- 4C-30**
- These details tells us they possess human bodies
 - They are not merely souls present in Heaven, but are present in physical bodies
- Paul told us earlier that only the heavenly body can enter the heavenly realm
 - So if they possess bodies, then these believers must possess the new eternal body
 - And if they possess the new eternal body, then they have experienced the resurrection
 - And if even one believer possesses the new eternal body, then the entire church has been resurrected

- And if the entire church has been resurrected, then the Lord has come for the church and removed it from the earth
- And if the church has been removed and resurrected then it has also received its reward
- These conclusions fit all the data we have in this scene
 - The 24 elders are present in the throne room in new glorified bodies, with their rewards and with all the Holy Spirit present around the throne
 - And of course, this scene in Revelation follows the end of the things that “are”
 - And it’s the beginning of the things that must take place after the Church Age
 - We should ask why does the Lord take this step of removing the Church so dramatically before the end of the Age?
 - Well, remember the two terms we learn today
 - The day of the Lord, or rather Jacob’s troubles, and the coming of the Lord or we could say the resurrection of the Church
 - They are connected only in the sense that one makes way for the other
- Paul explains it this way

4C-31

1Th. 5:2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

1Th. 5:3 While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

1Th. 5:4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;

1Th. 5:9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

- Paul points out that the day of the Lord (the tribulation) is not a day that the Church will experience
- Yet Peter said in 2 Peter 3 that the day would overtake the entire earth

4C-32

- How can a day of destruction that impacts the whole world not also impact the church?
- The only answer is the Church must be gone before that day comes
- So removing the Church is necessary before the seven year period can begin
- The church in Thessalonica was disturbed by stories they had missed the coming of the Lord and were now experiencing tribulation
- Next, Paul says that the coming of the Lord cannot happen until the apostasy of the church and the man of lawlessness is revealed

4C-33

2Th. 2:1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,

2Th. 2:2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

2Th. 2:3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

2Th. 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

2Th. 2:5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

4C-34

2Th. 2:6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.

2Th. 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

2Th. 2:8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

- Apparently the church knew these two events were connected
 - But Paul reassures the church again that the day of the Lord could not have started yet because certain things hadn't taken place
 - The man of lawlessness, the eleventh horn of Daniel 7, the man who rules the world at the end, hadn't yet been revealed
 - And he must be revealed early in the Tribulation period

- And Paul goes on to say that until the One Who restrains his appearing must be removed first
 - So there is a “removal” required before the seven year period of Tribulation and the appearing of the Antichrist can begin
 - The Restrainer isn’t specified here, but given what we know about the coming of the Lord, we can propose an answer
 - The Spirit of God living in the body of Christ on earth restraining the mystery of lawlessness
 - Once He is out of the way, the final seven years of the age can play out
 - So once again, the coming of the Lord and removal of the Church is a prerequisite for the start of the Day of the Lord
- 4C-35**
- From what we’ve learned, we find an interesting comparison between the day of the Lord and the coming of the Lord
 - This comparison puts the two events in the proper perspective
 - The day of the Lord is for Israel and for judgment
 - It awaits the final seven years of the age and the revealing of the antichrist
 - It brings to an end the Age of Gentiles
 - The coming of the Lord is for the church and for reward at the resurrection
 - It is always possible and near
 - It happens before the lawless one is revealed and before the end of the age
 - And it brings to an end the Church age
 - Elsewhere in Matthew 24, Jesus says one more thing about the timing of His coming, something that has puzzled students for a long time

4C-36

Matt. 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

- Elsewhere in Matthew 24, Jesus says one more thing about the timing of His coming, something that has puzzled students for a long time
 - The mystery is solved by returning to John 14 and noting the language Jesus used in His description of His return
 - He refers to building dwelling places for us in Heaven
- Though Jesus *was* a carpenter, nevertheless we can't imagine that He is presently occupied constructing condos in Heaven for us
 - Jesus was speaking in a figure of speech which leads us to ask why did Jesus choose *this* metaphor?
 - Jesus is using language associated with the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony
 - So while it isn't familiar to us, it would have been very familiar to His disciples
- Jesus is comparing Himself to the groom in a Jewish wedding and He's comparing the Church to a bride
 - And of course, we know the New Testament uses those same comparisons
 - The Church is called the Bride of Christ and He is our Groom
 - And now we see how that comparison can be useful in understanding God's plan for the Church
- In that ancient tradition, a marriage was arranged by the family of the bride and groom
 - Specifically, the Father would send a servant to locate a suitable bride for his son
 - The servant visited the prospective bride and her family at her home
 - A negotiation followed, a price was paid and the contract was established
 - At that moment, the bride and groom were betrothed though they had yet to meet
 - At that point, the servant returns to report his success to the father, who then directs his son to begin building a home for his bride to be

4A-37

- The son begins building an addition on to the father's house, which will serve as his home
- Only after he has finished building the addition to the satisfaction of the father can the son claim his bride
- Meanwhile, the bride remains at her family home always ready for the groom to appear
 - She doesn't know when he will come because it depends on the father's judgment that the new addition is suitable
 - Therefore, she spent everyday in her wedding dress waiting to be claimed by her groom
- Once all is ready, the son travels to the bride's home to claim her in a surprise appearing
 - They travel back together to the father's house where the marriage is formally completed and consummated
 - The two remain together in the marriage tent for a week
 - When the week is complete, the two travel back to the bride's house to celebrate with the bride's family
- It's easy to see how the details in this ancient tradition reflect aspects of God's plan for the Church
 - God the Father sent a Servant (the Holy Spirit) to the bride's home (the earth) to find a suitable bride for the Son
 - The Spirit locates the Bride one believer at a time, entering into a covenant by which we are betrothed to our groom
 - We are given gifts by the Spirit to mark the entry into the covenant, and the Father pays a price to gain us in Christ's blood
 - Then the waiting begins
 - We don't know when the Son is going to return for us
 - So we are called to remain spotless and clean, ready for our Groom to appear
 - The day and the hour of that moment is unknown

- In fact, in Matthew 24:36 Jesus says not even the Son knows, which also fits the Jewish marriage ceremony
 - In the marriage ceremony, the son's opportunity to claim the bride depends on the father approving the new addition
 - Not even the Son knows when the Father will be satisfied, and so it is with the Bride of Christ