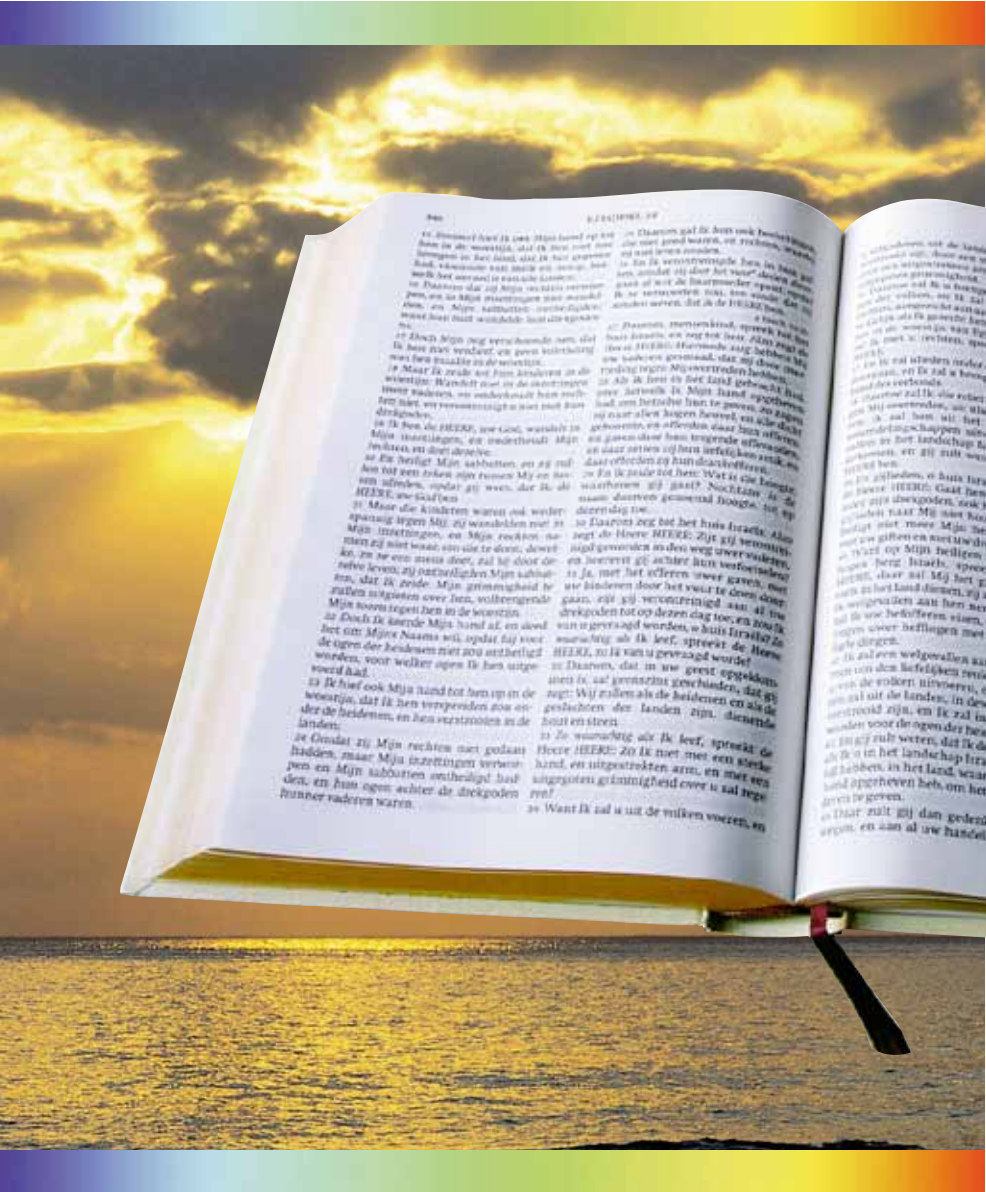


# The 'rapture' of the Church



All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for proof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

(2 Timothy 3 : 16-17)

No. 23-E

Bible study

# The idea is ...

## **1 Thessalonians 4 : 17**

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Without doubt, the 'rapture of the Church' is one of the most discussed topics among those who look forward to the day "when my Jesus I shall see". A lot is said and written about 'the rapture' and even put on film. Of course, the moment of this event is of interest; after all, the Bible does not leave us in the dark about the time in which we are now living. Is it before, during or after the Great Tribulation that we shall "meet the Lord in the air"? These discussions about the how and when, unfortunately often blur what they should really be about. What is 'the rapture'? What does 'the rapture' look like and who are involved? What is the purpose of this event? These questions require Bible study, because only the above verse speaks about being "caught up [...] in the clouds".

However, the other Scriptures clearly show us what it is really about. That is our revelation "before the judgment seat of Christ". This salvation with eternal glory entails that we will discard the earthly body in a 'flash' in favour of a changed and glorified celestial body. With that, we are allowed to continue in the position in which we have been placed since our regeneration. This imperishable life in Christ, in heaven, will be shown to Israel and the nations at the return of Christ from the sky.



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# 1. Introduction

What does the Bible say about the 'rapture of the Church'? The term 'rapture of the church' sounds familiar to us. However, it will appear that the term 'rapture of the Church' is not found as such in the Bible or in the original text of the Bible! The question we should ask ourselves is: What terms are used in the Bible for this event?

When we study the subject in the New King James Version, only in 1 Thessalonians 4 : 17 we encounter the expression "caught up in the clouds". Because this is the only Scripture that speaks about a 'rapture', being "caught up in the clouds", there are many misunderstandings about what our future expectation really is. In the churches, for example, people have usually never heard of the 'rapture of the Church'. That is because the expression is nowhere in the Bible! The misunderstanding appears, among other things, from a movie made years ago about the 'rapture of the Church'. The title of that movie was, completely inappropriate, 'As a Thief in the Night'. In connection with the rapture of the Church, the Bible says that the Lord will not come as a thief in the night. The expression "as a thief in the night" was derived from Matthew 24 and 25, 1 Thessalonians 5 : 2 and 2 Peter 3 : 10, among other Scriptures. The statements in Matthew 24 : 40-43 are not at all about the rapture, nor are they about the Church.

## Matthew 24 : 40-43\*

- 40 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken *[taken away, arrested]* and the other left *[forgiven]*.
- 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken *[accepted]* and the other left.
- 42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.
- 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

These Scriptures speak of the end of a period of forty years, following the rapture of the Church. They relate to the beginning of the thousand years, when the Kingdom of Christ is established over the nations and over all people on earth. For that occasion, all unbelievers will be removed from the earth. Those who are taken away, will die. One does not go up, but down. Those who are left, will enter the Kingdom. This is what the Lord will do when He judges all living humanity from the throne of

His glory (Matthew 25 : 31-34). Other Bible verses that are used to verify the rapture of the Church are 1 Corinthians 15 : 51 and Revelation 12 : 5. 1 Corinthians 15 leads to confusion because the term 'rapture' does not occur there. Revelation 12 : 5 is not accepted, because it is a vision. An honest Bible study on this subject cannot be done by only studying that one verse from 1 Thessalonians 4 : 17. We will succeed if we examine the Scriptures about the future of the Church. We should investigate how the present dispensation **see note 1** will end. In this dispensation, God is gathering a people for His Name, a people with a heavenly calling. (Acts 15 : 14; Ephesians 2 : 6; Hebrews 3 : 1) This present dispensation is called "the dispensation of the grace of God". (Ephesians 3 : 2)

When dealing with the rapture of the Church, little attention is paid to the how and why. Usually it is about when the rapture will take place. Will the rapture take place before, during or after the Great Tribulation? We are expected not to make any statements about the exact time. Many believers oppose to the idea that the Great Tribulation would come. They think (and by doing so place themselves above God) that there has been enough oppression of this world in general and of the Jewish people in particular. According to them, the Bible does not speak of a Great Tribulation. We should not speak at all about the destruction of Jerusalem in the near future. They hope that God will forget about it and will not do anything; after all, God seems to be sleeping! That is why we should encourage Him to do everything possible for us. They think that Israel has had enough tribulation and that there should be peace in Jerusalem. They assume that there will be no oppression if they keep asking God to spare Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, we must then cover an important part of the Bible, as the Bible has continuously been covered over the centuries. The Bible teaches that the Church is taken away from this earth, before the Jewish people's history continues in Daniel's 70th week. It goes without saying that the Church will be taken away from the earth well (3.5 years) before the Great Tribulation (which begins halfway through the 70th week). There has always been tribulation to the benefit of the believers. (2 Timothy 3 : 12; 1 Peter 4 : 12, 13)

## Heaven

The problem with regard to the rapture of the Church is not the origin and destiny of the Church, but the essence of the Church. As long as one speaks of the Church of the ages that began with Adam and lasts until the last day, it makes no sense to speak about the destination of the

<b>Note</b>	<b>1</b>
A dispensation is defined by God's actions in a certain period of salvation history.	

\* Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV).

Church. The Church we are part of has a heavenly destination that we do not achieve by our physical death. Like: "Then we will go to heaven and then we will receive glory." After all, we already are in heaven! Once there will be a transition from this visible world to the unseen world. This transition is not a displacement over a distance of billions of kilometres. Heaven, in actual distance, is not far away. There is a great distance between the visible and the unseen world, but that is not a distance in kilometres. As believers, we are part of the heavenly world that extends to the face of the earth.

All Old Testament believers from before our dispensation (from before the death and resurrection of Christ) will have a future destiny on the new earth. These believers will "raise up at the last day". (John 6 : 39, 40; John 11 : 24) All people who will come to believe after our dispensation (from the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel) also have an earthly future destination. To them the Kingdom on earth has been promised. The Old Testament believers enter the Kingdom only after the last day. On the last day, the old earth will be replaced by a new one. The New Testament believers of after the rapture of the Church will enter the Kingdom more than 1000 years before the last day. A heavenly future destination is therefore not the rule, but the exception. 'Heaven' does not mean the same as 'eternal life' or 'hereafter'. Heaven is that higher place, the unseen (spiritual) world. The rule is: Christ came to the world, but the world (the nations) did not know Him. (John 1 : 10) He came to His (the people of Israel), but His own did not receive Him. (John 1 : 11) The world and His people together form all the peoples of this earth. Nevertheless, there appears to be a believing remnant from the Gentiles (the nations) and from the Jewish people in our days. The exception to the rule is us, the Church of Christ, who submits to God's Word.

### **The people's assembly**

Mankind in general does not want to know anything about the God of Israel and the God of Hosts. They make themselves a god and a self-made religion. The world has let go of God. The other side of the story is that God has let go of the world. (Romans 1 : 26, 28) God only has mercy on those who submit to Him in faith. This Church of exceptions has become a people that has recognized the God-appointed King. (Psalm 2 : 6) Since we are God's first people under the new covenant, we are 'a Church of the firstborn'. (Hebrews 12 : 23) We are described as 'the general assembly' or 'the people's assembly' (the legislative assembly) in the Kingdom of Christ that will soon be revealed over the entire earth. We are not just His subjects, but together with Him we are called to rule over the Kingdom.

The parliament consists of people who are selected from the people to rule the state (city) together with the king. The Greek term 'ekklesia' (the ones called out) is a synonym for 'the people's assembly'. The 'ekklesia' consists of people who have been called from the people and placed above them to participate in the work of the King. That is why we are not destined for the earth, but for heaven. According to Jewish concepts, those called out constitute the council of elders (firstborn). The Old Testament law, after all, says that every firstborn is destined for the Lord Himself. (Among others Exodus 13 : 2; Numbers 3 : 13) The firstborn was the property of the Lord and should be sacrificed to Him in the temple. Samuel, for example, was brought into the temple and was part of the house of the high priest.

A parliament or government body is also referred to as a 'body'. We as a Church are the Body of Christ. (Colossians 1 : 24) We are the executive body of Christ Himself. If He who is our Head reveals His Kingdom and keeps it for eternity, then He will do it through His body (through you and me). Our real future is that we are called to share the glory and lordship of Christ in a heavenly position. Only by the change of our body will we enter that future. That is a necessity; it is not a goal in itself. Therefore the Bible does not speak about it extensively. Through the change of our body we become invisible from one moment to the next. Then, just like the angels (who are now in our midst), we are part of that invisible world. For the world we suddenly disappeared.

From the fact that we have a heavenly future, we could conclude that we are going to heaven in the future. In practice, this is the denial of a much more important biblical truth. As far as we will go to heaven in the future, it is because we are already in heaven! The more emphasis there is on going to heaven in the future, the more, in practice, we are denying that we are already in heaven! (Ephesians 2 : 6) This is apparent, among other things, from the songs we sing. Where, however, it is established that we are already in heaven with Christ, the future expectation is a self-evident matter. A physical admission to heaven hardly plays a significant role. Why should we go to heaven when we are already there? It is about the position that we already occupy before God. The rapture of the Church derives from the present position of the believer and of the Church.

In connection with the future and the final destination of the Church, we find numerous Scriptures. The Scriptures of interest speak of:

1. The redemption of our body
2. The salvation from the (future) wrath

3. The judgment of our works
4. Receiving an inheritance
5. Receiving glory
6. Revealing glory
7. Exaltation or entering something
8. The appointment as son (= receiving inheritance)
9. Salvation in the future
10. Receiving the wages, crowns
11. We will be like Him (to the body, the same form)
12. Being caught up in the clouds
13. The judgment seat of Christ
14. The revelation of the sons of God

The conclusion from these terms, in advance, is that we are waiting for the appointment as son (as Church and as an individual) and to receive the inheritance and our glory. After we are officially appointed as sons of God, we will be revealed as such. The creation, in fact, awaits the revelation of those sons of God (of the redeemed Church). (Romans 8 : 19) That is at the return of Christ. As long as we are in this body, we will not be appointed as sons of God. The redemption of our body thus takes place before the Lord will appear in glory! We will then be revealed with Him (the Son) in glory. (Colossians 3 : 4) That is why we are going to meet Him. (1 Thessalonians 4 : 17)

## 2. Romans 8

In this study we will systematically go through the Bible. The first Scripture is Romans 8. This is one of the highlights of the New Testament letters.

### Romans 8 : 14-30

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these **are (become) sons of God.**

It is the intention (it is our calling) that we would be led by the Spirit of God to the appointment as sons.

15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption **see note 2** (*lit. sonship*) by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

In verse 15 that Spirit is called "the Spirit of sonship".

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

We are now children of God (since the resurrection of Christ). That is, we are born of God. (John 1 : 13)

17 And if children, then **heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ**, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

That means that in the future we are destined to inherit from God and therefore with Christ. Christ is the Son and thus the Heir of God. If we are heirs of God, it is our calling that we, like Christ, will be made sons of God (kings and priests). Verse 17 speaks not only about being children and heirs. For the inheritance does not come automatically. That was not the case with the Lord Jesus, so not with us either. You can be born as an heir, but that does not mean that you inherit. Esau, for example, was an heir (a firstborn), but he is called a fornicator. (Hebrews 12 : 16) Verse 17 also speaks of suffering and being glorified with Christ. The Lord Jesus went the way of suffering (from humiliation and obedience) to eventually be made a Son or to be glorified. "For the joy that was set before Him, He ran the race and endured the Cross". (Hebrews 12 : 1, 2) The result of that career is that He is now seated at the right hand of God. Christ has now received His inheritance. Where we are part of that same calling, we are expected to be followers of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11 : 1) We should follow His footsteps, that we might come to the same destiny. (1 Peter 2 : 21) We should live by faith! From Romans 8 : 14-17 it appears that we would be made sons, that we are destined to inherit and that we are destined for glory. These three concepts always come back in connection with the future of the Church.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Verse 18 also speaks of suffering in this present time and about glory that will be revealed in us. There is a causal relationship between suffering and glory; exactly as in verse 17. The glory that we get is proportional to the suffering of today. We suffer because of the fact that we have made

**Note** **2**

"Adoption" is not a literal translation of the Greek word "huiiothesia". It might be better translated as "sonship". It is about the idea of placing a son, a placement of us in the position of sons. Thus the term "huiiothesia" means "standing as sons".

ourselves exceptions. We suffer because we went outside the camp. (Hebrews 13 : 13) We suffer because in our minds (in our faith), we have distanced ourselves from the prevailing beliefs in the world. In this life, during our service to the Lord, we are changed by the renewing of our thinking (mind). We are now conformed to His image. So, we already receive glory now. That glory is invisible to us. The authorities and powers in heaven to whom the riches of God's grace would be shown, do see that glory on us. (Ephesians 2 : 7; Ephesians 3 : 10) The glory that we receive is the result of the working and power of God's grace in us. That glory will soon be revealed to us! It is a Biblical principle that things can only be revealed when they are already there. 'Revealing' means 'unveiling'. Something must be present under this veil. In this way we already receive an inheritance, but it is kept for us in heaven. (1 Peter 1 : 4)

19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly **waits for the revealing of the sons of God.**

Verse 19 says that the creature (the creation, female instead of neuter) eagerly waits for the revelation of the sons of God. The hope of creation (of the world) is the revelation of the sons of God. These sons of God must first be officially ordained to be revealed to the creation. The revelation of the sons of God is not the rapture of the Church. At the earliest the revelation takes place seven years later. We are then revealed with Christ in glory. Christ, the King, is anointed. All power and authority in heaven and on earth is given to Him. (Matthew 28 : 18) Why does He not do anything with it yet? The waiting is for the sons of God (the Church). Christ is forming His government at this time. Since Christ is already on the throne, He is in no hurry. Everything is finished (arranged). For the time being the world is left to its fate and has to be patient for a while.

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Verse 22 says that we know that the creation groans together (in its entirety) and is together (in its entirety) in travail until now, because of the revelation of the sons of God.

23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly **waiting for the adoption (lit. sonship), the redemption of our body.**

Verse 23 says that we ourselves, who have/are the firstfruits of the Spirit (born again of the Spirit), also groan within ourselves. Thus it is not just the world, but also us expecting the appointment as sons: the redemption of our body. In so far as the creation waits for the return of Christ, whereby He will set things right in this world by separating and subjugating the peoples, it first awaits our appointment as sons. That is the first point on God's agenda. God does not do that like a thief in the night. God will not steal us, because we are His property! After that we will be revealed with Christ, the Son par excellence, in glory. (Colossians 3 : 4) This first happens to Israel (especially to Judah), and then to the nations. Our expectation will be redeemed first and only then the expectation of the world.

The appointment as sons is the salvation of our body. This is one and the same event, just as it was with the Lord Himself. He rose from the dead and on that same occasion it was said to Him: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You". (Acts 13 : 33, 34) At that time, He was appointed as Priest and as King. His appointment as Son implied His resurrection from the dead. The other way around: His resurrection from the dead was the basis for His appointment as Son. He rose in glory, and a name was given to Him, which is above every name. (Philippians 2 : 9) In the Bible, the expression "redemption of our body" is never the indication of our physical death, although we use this term in our everyday language for dying: 'being redeemed from suffering'. But the "redemption of our body" is not the laying off of the old body. That is death and destruction. That is the work of the enemy and that is not salvation anyway, is it? Death is the last enemy to be destroyed. (1 Corinthians 15 : 26) In the Bible, the "redemption of our body" is always the indication of the end (purpose) of our present dispensation of grace. It is our final glorification and appointment as sons in the future. The redemption of our bodies is connected with what we call 'the rapture of the Church', or with our revelation before the judgment seat of Christ.

### **A glorified body**

When as believers we die, we open our eyes in heaven. We are always in heaven, but we do not see that with our earthly eyes. After we die we have different eyes and a different body (a different form), a heavenly body. That heavenly body can be a wonderful prospect for us, especially when our earthly body causes us a great deal of trouble. That heavenly body is not yet a glorified body! A heavenly body does not necessarily belong to the new creation. Heaven is not the new creation, but the unseen world. This invisible world is part of the old creation to a certain extent. Angels are heavenly beings with a heavenly body. That heav-



only body belongs to the old creation. In the future it will become clear whether the heavenly body has glory. That glory is therefore not revealed when we die physically. At the Salvation Army they talk about "promotion to glory". This promotion would be received at the time of death. That is a misunderstanding. We all, including those who have died in Jesus before, are waiting for this glorification. We only receive glory when we are appointed as son.

24 **For we were saved in this hope**, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

Verse 24 says that we have been saved in hope. That hope is the appointment as sons when our bodies will be redeemed. (Verse 23) Our hope is that when we are appointed as sons we will no longer remain in this old humiliated body, because our heavenly status does not befit an earthly body.

25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

Verse 25 says that with patience (the sufferings of the present time) we expect the glory promised to us.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Verse 26 is about our realisation that we are too weak for such a high calling. We do not have to fulfil that calling in our own strength. The Spirit (the power of God) helps our weaknesses. The Spirit does His work in us, as we also saw in Romans 8 : 14 and 15.

28 And we know that **all things work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Verse 28 says that we know that all things work together for good to those who love God (practical love = to serve). All things in our lives will

always work together for good. Some therefore afterwards note that even things, which they regret, nevertheless cooperated for the better. I will not deny that. However, we cannot conclude that the things that went wrong were wanted by God. That all things work together for good, means that even though God has not wanted certain things, He is just doing those things for good. Those things that God has wanted will work for good anyway. When we look back in our lives, we see that. When we trust in the Lord, our way will be His way. Whichever way and whichever direction we take, that way is the way of the Lord. The Lord will use everything for the good of those who love Him! The "good" in Romans 8 : 28 is our appointment as sons. To this end we are called according to His purpose. God uses all things to educate us and to make us grow in faith. God uses everything to make us spiritually mature, so that we might bear spiritual responsibility. We should be able to share not only in His glory, but in His reign in the future. That is the purpose of God for our lives. God can use everything for that!

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined **to be conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

On the occasion of the rapture of the Church we are conformed to the image of God's Son. That is not at our death, but at the end of this dispensation, when the Church is finally glorified. 2 Corinthians 3 : 18 says that we are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. That is now during our service to the Lord! This is made visible at the rapture of the Church. Christ would be the firstborn among many brethren, among many fellow heirs (sons). We would share in the blessings of Christ. Those blessings are mentioned in Ephesians 1. In Ephesians 1 : 19 it says that the power of Christ works in us. That means that that force brings about the same in us as it did in Christ. That power made us alive in the first place and would then give us a position in heaven, far above all government and power and also far above the angels.

30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also **glorified**.

If God has known us beforehand (verse 29), then He has also predestined (ordained) us to be made sons. He therefore called us. He also justified us. On the basis of the foregoing, God will glorify us in the future.



From Romans 8 it is demonstrated that the so-called rapture of the Church takes place before the return of Christ. However, the second coming of Christ is not the same as the last day. If one asks why God does nothing in this world, then the answer is: "That is because we (the believers) are still here." We must first be glorified. Hopefully we have made ourselves available for this and are pursuing it. We serve the world by reaching out to that appointment as sons in the future. That is the only biblical way.

### 3. Romans 5 : 1-8

In Romans 5 we also find keywords that relate to our future.

- 1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 2 Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and **rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**

We now stand in this grace. We now rejoice in the hope (expectation) that we will receive glory from God and that He will make it public. Our hope is our future expectation and that is crucial for our present. Our present is again decisive for our future. When we know where we are and where we need to go, our life path is determined to a large extent.

- 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

The idea here is the same as in Romans 8 : 18, namely that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. When we glory in tribulations, it does not mean that we glory in the Great Tribulation (the second half of the 70th week of Daniel). We glory in tribulations in general. That tribulation brings suffering with it. James even says: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials." (James 1 : 2)

- 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

This verse corresponds to Romans 8 : 14. The Spirit would lead us to our future destiny, or to our glory.

- 6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.
- 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.
- 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

In this logical explanation it is said that the Lord Jesus died for us when we were still powerless, ungodly, sinners and enemies. Now we are children of God. What is the Lord doing for us now? The answer is in Romans 5 : 10.

- 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.
- 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we shall be saved from wrath through Him.**

We will be saved from wrath. It does not say: 'saved from the Great Tribulation'. In verse 9 it is about the wrath that is now over the world. That is because God has let go of this world. (Romans 1 : 18-32) We are now saved from that wrath. (1 Thessalonians 5 : 9) 1 Thessalonians 1 : 10 speaks of the wrath to come. The redemption of wrath is our hope and expectation for now and the future.

Romans 5 and 8 speak extensively about our future. However, in this context we did not come across the term 'rapture'. Not even the idea that we would go up slowly during the rapture. We should thus master another biblical terminology.

### 4. Romans 11

In Romans 11 the same idea is put forward as in Romans 5 and 8.

#### **Romans 11 : 25**

- 25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel **until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.**

This Scripture deals with the future conversion of Israel; more specifically with the conversion of the Jewish people. The blindness of the Jewish people will be lifted after the "fullness of the Gentiles has come in". The fullness of the Gentiles is next to "their fullness" (the fullness of the Jews) in Romans 11 : 12. The fullness of the Jewish people is a converted Jewish people. The fullness of the Gentiles refers to converted Gentiles, namely the Church. The fullness is a fruit, a fulfilment. The Church will come in. Where the Church will come in and how that will happen is not mentioned here. That does not belong in the letter to the Romans, but in the letters to the Ephesians and the Hebrews. Here Romans 8 : 19-21 is confirmed, namely that both the Jewish people and the whole world are waiting for the Church to come in first. We know that the Jewish people will come to believe after the 70th week of Daniel. We will disappear at the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel. We will then enter into heaven.

## 5. Romans 14 : 10-13

10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all **stand before the judgment seat of Christ.**

Romans 14 : 10 is not the normal way of speaking about the future of the believers in our dispensation. The term "judgment seat of Christ" is used here in a very specific context. "But why do you judge your brother" already indicates this specific connection. The basic idea is that we should not judge our brothers. Our brothers and us will be judged by Christ Himself. How will that happen? That is already explained in Romans 5, 8, and 11. As far as individual believers are to be judged, we should not do it, but the Lord! Therefore, here is not dealt with the event as such, but it is about the principle. Judging each other is not up to us. That is summarized in Romans 14:

12 So then **each of us shall give account of himself to God.**

This not only applies to the future, but is also valid now, says the following verse.

13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

It is about our personal responsibility as children of God. We perform this service directly under the leadership and responsibility of our High Priest. Put differently: it is about the service that we fulfil as members of the body of Christ under the leadership of our Head.

## 6. 1 Corinthians 3 : 9-18

1 Corinthians 3 also speaks about the future of the Church. In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul speaks about his ministry. He says that his ministry is directly related to the ministry of every believer. For the work of God in our day consists of the construction of the Church. This construction is compared on the one hand to agriculture and on the other hand to the construction of a dwelling (temple) for God Himself. (1 Corinthians 3 : 9) Hebrews 3 : 6 says that we are the house of Christ.

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

Paul says that as a wise master builder he laid the foundation of the House at Corinth. For that Church in Corinth arose by the evangelizing work of Paul. Another builds on that foundation. But "... each one take heed how he builds on it". For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3 : 11) Jesus the Man was greatly exalted, and He was appointed by God as Lord and as Christ. (Acts 2 : 36). The foundation is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is the foundation and the source of our service.

12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

13 **Each one's work will become clear [...];**

This is also a Scripture related to our future and the judgment before the judgment seat of Christ. Our work is the work that has been done by our body. That can be our own work, namely the work of the natural man. Those works are considered wood, hay and stubble (straw). These materials burn very well. It is comforting to know that all our own works will disappear. That is not a negative, but a positive thought. The work that is considered gold, silver and precious stones will remain because it is fire-resistant. This work will continue to exist. It is the representation

of the work of Christ in and through us. The old goes away and the new will remain, if that exists. The result of our service to the Lord will be revealed to you and me. This will happen at the moment of our physical redemption, or at the moment of the change of our body. Then we will see the glory that is the result of our service to Him and of our change to His image.

13 [...] for **the Day will declare it**, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

That day is the day of Christ. (Philippians 1 : 6) It is the day of the judgment of Christ in connection with and of the Church. Fire stands for judgment. It is imagery for clarification. Our whole life comes, as it were, into the fire (the judgment) and everything that was from the flesh and from the old man disappears (burns). In the future, all of the old creation will disappear into the fire. (2 Peter 3 : 7) This also means that the old creation is changed from one moment to the next. This judgment does not follow the principle of our courts with a suspect, a prosecutor and a lawyer. In our case, the lawyer would be the Lord Himself, who stands next to us. This principle is not biblical. There is no discussion about the Lord's judgment. That judgment has been established for a long time! For the result of that judgment has already been achieved. Nothing will be added at the rapture of the Church. Only our body, of which we are prisoners, will be taken away from us. When the covering (the foreskin) is removed, it is revealed what has always been. The interior then becomes visible outside. When the egg hatches, the shell is broken, and the glory of the new life is revealed. Who we have become through and in Christ, is entirely (in one moment) revealed, after the rapture of the Church. Who we have become through grace can then be seen on our outside.

14 If anyone's work which he has built on it (on the foundation) endures, he will receive a reward.

15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

In the future our own works will disappear and be judged. If in our lives we have only worked from our own old man (our own insights and ideas), there will be nothing left of our work and therefore of our entire life. But ... "everything that was done out of love for Jesus, will keep its value and will continue to exist. Nothing is permanent here; everything however clean will once perish." (From an old Dutch hymn)

16 Do you not know that you (plural) are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

We are God's temple because the Spirit of God dwells in us.

17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

18 Let no one deceive himself.

We should be aware that we are the construction of God, individually, but also collectively as Church. God determines how it will be built. He will do it through us and in us. Our own works and ideas will perish. For many it will be a great disappointment, when everything they have built in this life, meaning well, appears to have no value for God. It starts to burn, that is, from one moment to the next the rapture of the Church will take place and all of its own works will disappear. For many this is not a hopeful thought. That is why many people hope that the rapture will not take place in the near proximal future.

## 7. 1 Corinthians 4 : 3, 4

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court (lit: *day*). In fact, I do not even judge myself.

Paul says that he leaves the judgment to the Lord. We should also do that. We should only submit to the Lord and His Word. We should make ourselves available to His service and He will work in us both to will and to do. (Philippians 1 : 6; 2 : 13) Whether the things that we do are things of the flesh, or things of the Spirit, we cannot determine ourselves. That is not necessary anyway, because everything of ourselves will disappear and everything of the Lord will remain.

4 For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but **He who judges me is the Lord**.

Paul is unable to judge himself. We can explain the work we do from the old man, but also from the work of the Spirit in us (from the new man). We cannot decide what our motives are. Is giving Bible study someone's

way of self-assertion, or is it the will of the Lord? For us it is merely important that God's Word is preached and that we study it. Why do we serve the Lord and why do we carry responsibility in a local church? Out of domination, pride or to serve the Lord? Both things could be true. In the future the Lord will judge that.

## 8. 1 Corinthians 6 : 9, 10

In 1 Corinthians 6, it deals with the believer's actions (walk) in general.

- 9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?
- 10 Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will **inherit the kingdom of God**.

This is about a legacy. It is said who will not inherit the Kingdom in the future. It does not say that such people will not enter the Kingdom of God. They enter the Kingdom on the basis of faith, despite the fact that they were fornicators or something like that. This is about believers in Corinth.

In the Bible, 'heritage' and 'wages' are synonymous. Someone who does not inherit in the Kingdom, receives no wages. In practice, one will not share in the reign of Christ. See also Galatians 5 : 21 and Ephesians 5 : 5. When the rapture of the Church takes place, it means that we might receive our inheritance (our wages). In 1 Corinthians 6 : 10 it is in the negative form: the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God. When we serve the Lord and His life is lived in us, we will inherit that Kingdom. The inheritance corresponds to the appointment as sons and the reception of glory. Every believer has entered the Kingdom, but whether he will inherit it, is still the question. We are all citizens of our country, but whether we will ever take part in ruling the country, remains to be seen.

## 9. 1 Corinthians 15 : 38-58

1 Corinthians 15 speaks in length about the difference in glory. There is a difference in earthly bodies and heavenly bodies.

- 38 But God gives it a body as He pleases [...].
- 39 All flesh (*body*) is not the same flesh, but there is one

kind (*allos*) of flesh of men, another (*allos*) flesh of animals, another (*allos*) of fish, and another (*allos*) of birds.

- 40 There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one (*heteros*), and the glory of the terrestrial is another (*heteros*).

The Greek 'allos' means: 'different of the same species'. The Greek 'heteros' means: 'different of a different kind'. In verse 40 it is explained that there is a difference between earthly and heavenly bodies. All earthly bodies (flesh of humans, animals, fish) are not equal (1 Corinthians 15 : 39) and all celestial bodies (sun, moon and stars) are not equal (1 Corinthians 15 : 41). For example, nothing is seen at new moon. At full moon there is. The trained eye sees that one star differs in glory from the other star. The colours and the amount of light of all the stars are different. All heavenly bodies are different.

- 41 There is one (*allos*) glory of the sun, another (*allos*) glory of the moon, and another (*allos*) glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.
- 42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it **is raised in incorruption**.
- 43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it **is raised in power**. (*This applies universally*)
- 44 It is sown a natural (*soul*) body, it **is raised a spiritual body**.
- 47 The first man was of the earth, made of dust (*physical*); the second Man is the Lord from heaven.
- 48 As was the man of dust (*Adam*), so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man (*Christ*), so also are those who are heavenly.

In essence, we are all equal (Adamic) and yet our bodies are not the same. We all look different. There is a difference in glory. In the resurrection we receive a body that is conformed to the resurrection body of Christ. But those bodies are different by a difference in glory. This is apparent, for example, from the resurrection body of Christ, which still bore the scars of His crucifixion. It was the same body but changed. The resurrection body of Christ bears His attributes (the traces of His life and death). That is how it will be with our bodies.

49 And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

This is about the change of the body.

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

Our flesh and blood (our bodies) have entered the Kingdom but cannot inherit it. If all is well, we have sacrificed our bodies of flesh and blood to the High Priest of the new covenant. He uses our bodies as tools (weapons, instruments) for the service in the Kingdom of God. (Romans 6 : 13) Before we are appointed as son or receive the inheritance (wages) that is kept for us in heaven, we will first receive another body. We already read that in Romans 8. We expect the appointment as sons, namely the redemption of our bodies. The redemption of our body is the replacement of our earthly body with a heavenly body.

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

The 'mystery' always speaks about our dispensation. Our dispensation is called "the dispensation of the mystery". (Ephesians 3 : 9) "Not [...] sleep" means that we may remain alive until the coming of the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4 : 15) In 1 Corinthians 15 it is about the physical resurrection from the dead. The normal idea is that the earthly body dies, but that the final heavenly glorious body will be raised on the occasion of the rapture of the Church. The question is: "What happens if you have not died physically and thus remain alive until the coming (lit. presence) of the Lord?" Paul explains that we will then be changed without dying, and that change is also mentioned in Philippians 3 : 21, that change will take place in a point of time, in an indivisible (Greek: a-tomos) moment.

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 incorruptible**, and **we shall be changed**.

The trumpet is an image of the powerful Word (the voice) of God. The blowing of the trumpet always involves gathering the people around the king. At the last trumpet, the Church will be gathered by Christ. It is our gathering together to Him. (2 Thessalonians 2 : 1) The last trumpet is related to the last event in connection with the fifth dispensation and the Church. That last trumpet will change us. When the trumpet strikes (sounds loudly), the dead will be raised incorruptible and those who are left alive, will also receive an incorruptible body on that occasion. We are not resurrected, but the corruptible body that we now have will be changed from one moment to another to an incorruptible body. In our evangelical jargon we usually call this the 'rapture of the Church'. However, the word 'rapture' does not occur in 1 Corinthians 15, while this chapter is one of the most extensive descriptions besides 1 Thessalonians 4.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

It does not say that our old body will fall away from us and that we will continue in another body. It will not happen that way. When we receive our heavenly body, it will turn out to be the changed body that we now have. What happens to our clothing, I do not know. The change has nothing to do with 'rapture' in the usual meaning of the word. After our change we will suddenly no longer be visible, but we will be just where we were. We have already been set in heaven with Christ. (Ephesians 2 : 6) Heaven extends to the ground and even right through us. We are part of the heavenly things and of the heavenly world. After our change, we will be 'invisible men'. No reference is made about relocation. We are in heaven and we remain in heaven. To what extent there will be a displacement in heaven itself remains to be seen. Probably distance and thus also movement does not play a role in heaven. Our change is necessary to receive the inheritance. As long as we are in this body, we do not receive the inheritance, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 15 : 50)

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15 ends with this remarkable verse. We are called to build with gold, silver, precious stones (1 Corinthians 3 : 12), so that we might receive the inheritance in the future. This means that our practical walk

and service (the work of the Lord) has everything to do with 'the rapture of the Church', or with our appointment as sons and the redemption of our body. Verse 58 means that as we are more or less steadfast, immobile and abundant in the work of the Lord, we will receive more or less glory. According to the Bible, that glory expresses itself directly in the body that we will receive. We are not looking forward to the general conversion of our bodies to heavenly bodies. We look forward to receiving wages, an inheritance, glory. The idea that the result of our lives here is expressed in the body that we will receive in the afterlife, was the common idea in the Greek world. In the afterlife, one would be rewarded for the life here and that reward would express itself in the outward appearance (the body) that one would have in the hereafter. It is therefore not necessary to explain this in the New Testament with great emphasis. It was an obvious idea there.

## 10. 2 Corinthians 3 : 18

In the second letter to the Corinthians, the preceding thought is discussed with more emphasis. 2 Corinthians 3 and 4 say that God has enabled us to be servants of the new covenant. (2 Corinthians 3 : 5, 6) We should put that skill into practice.

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding (reflecting) as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

This process is now taking place. With Moses the glory was visible, but with us that glory is still invisible. That glory will be revealed in the future. That is the rapture of the Church. Moses received the glory of the Lord and passed it on. (Exodus 34 : 29-35) Where we receive and pass on (reflect) the glory of the Lord, we (who are a mirror) are transformed. The Light of the Lord falls on us, as it were, and is reflected through us, by which we ourselves are transformed. We should keep our face uncovered, so that we may receive the full glory and pass it on. We should not lose heart. (2 Corinthians 4 : 1, 16)

## 11. 2 Corinthians 4 : 17, 18

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us **a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory**.

Our 'light affliction' is not the Great Tribulation. We can put this verse next to Romans 8 : 18. We suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him. (Romans 8 : 17) We expect a very great weight of glory.

18 (Therefore we do not lose heart), while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

We have put our hope on eternal things. We build our lives on invisible things. This verse can be placed next to Romans 8 : 24.

## 12. 2 Corinthians 5 : 1-11

1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Our earthly house (body) is a tabernacle or tent. Our earthly house is therefore a temporary house. A 'building' is a strong word for a 'house'. The term "made with hands" is used throughout the Bible to denote this present ancient creation. This creation is the work of His hands. (Psalm 8 : 7; 19 : 2) "Not made with hands" means "not of this old creation", but of a new creation! In Hebrews 9 : 11 it is clear: "[...] not made with hands, that is, not of this creation (this ancient creation)."

In 2 Corinthians 5 : 1 it does not only say that we expect an eternal heavenly body, but that we expect a body that is part of the new creation. Now the question is: when? Naturally we are focused on ourselves and on visible things. That is why we assume that it deals here with our physical death, namely when our earthly house is destroyed. This is not about our physical death. Paul usually reasons from the thought that we remain alive until the future of the Lord. The expectation of a physical death has no place in Christian life. Paul always speaks about the rapture of the Church in connection with the ultimate glory that will be revealed. It is not so much about the fact that we have an eternal building with God when we die (although this is true), but about our condition in the future. In verse 1 it is again about physical redemption.

2 For in this (tabernacle) we groan (Romans 8 : 23), earnestly desiring **to be clothed** with our habitation which is from

heaven.

- 3 If indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.
- 4 For we who are in this tent groan (Romans 8 : 23), being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but **further clothed**, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

"That mortality may be swallowed up by life" means that the mortal body is eaten by the new body that we will receive. So nothing will remain of the old, but it will be changed. Compare 1 Corinthians 15 : 53, 54. In connection to this Romans 8 : 23 speaks about the appointment as sons, namely the redemption of our body. 2 Corinthians 5 does not speak of the redemption of our body, but of a change of our earthly clothing. That is the same as getting another body. 2 Corinthians 5 is about the believer becoming undressed (naked), clothed and further clothed. In all three cases the believer does indeed receive a heavenly body. Some will be naked in that celestial body and will always remain so. That is not a matter of joy, because then it will be known how that came about. Others will be clothed or further clothed. Paul says we all want to be further clothed. (2 Corinthians 5 : 4) We should reach for that. It remains to be seen whether we will receive a new garment or a glorified body in heaven. Every believer will receive a heavenly body because he has been born again. That is salvation. We are, however, destined for salvation with eternal glory. (2 Timothy 2 : 10) We hope that our clothing will look as honourable as possible.

The difference in the believers being undressed, clothed and further clothed has a reason. The reason for these differences is explained in 2 Corinthians 3 and 4. These differences are related to the extent to which we have practiced our ability to be servants of God under the new covenant. (Compare 1 Corinthians 15 : 58) It has to do with whether or not putting our earthly bodies in service under the new covenant.

- 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing (clothing, further clothing) is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

Romans 8 : 15 said that God gave us the Spirit of the appointment as son. That Spirit would tutor us and bring us to that appointment as son, to our future glory.

- 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.
- 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.
- 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. (In the new house we will get in the future.)
- 9 Therefore (because we have the desire to be clothed and glorified in the future) we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

"To be well pleasing to him" means to serve Him. Romans 12 : 1, 2 states: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." As we are well pleasing to Him, we will receive glory through Him. Why else is this verse mentioned in this connection?

- 10 For **we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Romans 14 : 12 states: "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (Romans 14 : 10) Christ will judge everyone's life and possibly reward him for "the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." 'Good' stands for the gold, silver and precious stones. (1 Corinthians 3 : 12) See also Ephesians 6 : 8. 'Bad' stands for wood, hay and stubble. Evil is not rewarded but burned. So, what do we carry away? A clothing or a further clothing, that is to say: a more or less glorious garment. In other words: we expect a more or less glorious body. In practice the meaning of 'clothing' and 'body' is the same. A person is in fact dressed in his body. We expect another body to replace this body. The glory of that body is determined by the degree to which God's grace has been shown by us (that is, the reflection of glory) or the extent to which the manifold wisdom of God has been made known by us. (Ephesians 3 : 10)

2 Corinthians 5 is obviously about our future destiny and about entering into eternity. We usually call this the rapture of the Church, but that word is not used in this Scripture. The rapture here is called 'our revela-



tion before the judgment seat of Christ'. At the moment He does justice (applies it) and judges, we receive another more or less glorious body. We will not stand in line before the judgment seat of Christ, so that for each of us personally it is determined what wages we will receive. This is not a biblical representation of things. The glory that we have already received in this life (but which is still invisible) will become visible to us before the judgment seat of Christ and be seen by us. This is seen within the heavenly things. Where we are dissolved from the earthly body and from the limitations that body implies, there we will not only see the Lord in His glory, but there we will also see ourselves and each other in glory.

11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men [...].

"Knowing [...] the terror of the Lord" has to do with knowing that we will be revealed before the judgment seat of Christ. The persuasion to faith was an important aspect of the ministry of the apostle Paul. The "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5 : 18) was given to him. It is undoubtedly true that we will be rewarded by the Lord when we bring others the Gospel. We are also rewarded when we love the brothers, when our love is unfeigned and when we dislike evil and adhere to the good (Romans 12 : 9-21). There is also reward if men love their wives and women are submissive to their husbands; when children are obedient to their parents and when we bondservants serve our masters according to the flesh (Colossians 3 : 18-25). Colossians 3 : 24 speaks of the reward of the inheritance. That is our reward, namely our inheritance for serving the Lord Christ. That is pleasing to God.

Serving the Lord as mentioned in Romans 12, Ephesians 5 & 6 and Colossians 3, is in accordance with the will of God for our lives. Moreover, this is described as the "fruit of the Spirit". Being "servants of the Lord" does not only imply preaching the Gospel, but it implies all aspects of our daily lives. Our lives should not be determined by the law (the old covenant), but by grace (the new covenant). Under the slavery of Egypt (under the law) the Israelites had to build with straw (Exodus 5 : 6-16). Living under grace implies that we forgive each other. When brothers and sisters have sinned against us, we can obtain our reward in heaven by forgiving them. These are practical things from our daily lives, with which we can serve the Lord. We will also be rewarded in heaven for the way we serve our boss. Where we are faithful to our obligations, He will give us our wages. Our practical service to the Lord is associated with the inheritance that we will receive in the future.

## 13. Galatians 5 : 16-23

In Galatians 5 the negative reasoning with respect to the future is mentioned.

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

The result of walking in the Spirit is that one does not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

That is the struggle of wood, hay and stubble as opposed to gold, silver and precious stones.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Romans 8 : 14 says: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Whoever is led by the Spirit of God is servant of the new covenant and not of the old covenant. The way to that appointment as son (future glory and inheritance) is not a way under the law, but the way under grace. (Romans 6 : 14) In Galatians 5 : 19-21 Paul mentions the works of the flesh. At the end of verse 21 he says:

21 [...] Of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those (believers from Galatia) who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Those believers have already entered the Kingdom, but they will not inherit the Kingdom of God. We are children of God. We are heirs of God, but will we also inherit? That inheritance does not come to us through the works of the flesh. That inheritance comes through the fruit of the Spirit.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

The good is the fruit of the Spirit, and the bad pertains to the works of the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of the new covenant and not of the old covenant (the law).

23 Against such there is no law.

## 14. Ephesians 1 : 5-23

In the letter to the Ephesians we do not read anything about the rapture of the Church. This is obvious, because the letter to the Ephesians assumes that we have already been resurrected with Christ and set with Christ in heaven. (Ephesians 2 : 6)

5 (God) Having predestined us to adoption (**appointment**) as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

In Romans 8 : 30 we read: "Whom He predestined, these He also called; [...]" What are we called for? To be appointed as sons. That is fundamentally the same as being predestined to appointment as sons. Since we have participated in the election of Christ, we are children of God. Since we have been drawn (chosen) from this present evil age, we are children of God. The destiny of children of God is that they would become sons of God (that they would inherit).

13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise;

We are sealed (have guarantee) with the Holy Spirit who was promised.

14 Who is the guarantee (advance, security) of **our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession**, to the praise of His glory.

The Holy Spirit is not the pledge of our salvation. The Holy Spirit is our salvation and He is our new life. That is for sure. The Spirit is the guarantee of our future inheritance, as long as that inheritance has not yet been revealed to us. When we let ourselves be filled with the Spirit (surrendering ourselves, making ourselves available), we will certainly receive that

inheritance. That inheritance is preserved for us in heaven. We do not get that inheritance because we are children of God. According to Biblical standards most children do not inherit. Only the Firstborn inherits. The Spirit Himself is our guarantee to the obtained redemption, that is, until we obtain redemption. Our guarantee is the Spirit of the appointment as sons. (Romans 8 : 15) The Spirit leads us to that appointment as sons. (Romans 8 : 14) We have received that Spirit, "that we might know the things that have been given to us by God." (1 Corinthians 2 : 12) We have received that Spirit, that He will guide us into all truth. (John 16 : 13) We already have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. (Ephesians 1 : 7) We still expect the redemption of our body in the future. (Ephesians 1 : 14, Romans 8 : 23) The Holy Spirit is the pledge of our inheritance to the praise of His glory. The glory that we now receive and that will be revealed to us in the future, is in essence the glory of Christ. The appointment as sons of Ephesians 1 : 5 is the redemption of our bodies of Ephesians 1 : 14. The obtained salvation is what we call 'the rapture of the Church'.

## His and our calling

In Ephesians 1 : 14, the apostle Paul speaks about our future. However, it makes no sense to speak of our future if we do not realize what our present position is in Christ. What are we saved for? What does the Lord want with us now? That is explained in Ephesians 1 : 18-23. The hope of His calling is also the hope of our calling. The riches of the glory of His inheritance are also the riches of the glory of our inheritance. The exceeding greatness of His power which works in Christ, is also the exceeding greatness of God's power, which works in us. We are identified (unified) with Christ. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in heaven in Christ. (Ephesians 1 : 3) In connection with that, Romans 6 : 5 says that we have been united together with Him (living organism). When the head (Ephesians 1 : 22) is destined for a certain purpose, then the body (the members) also participates. Head and body are not identical, but they totally occupy the same position. When we have learned to understand what Christ is called for, we also understand what we ourselves are called to do.

God has greatly exalted Christ. He has placed Him far above all government and power. Not only now in this age, but also in the age which is to come, so forever. (Ephesians 1 : 21) In short, all things have been put under his feet. (Psalm 8 : 6; 110 : 1) Christ has been given to the Church as head. We are the body of the one who is greatly exalted and to whom all things are put under Him. Our position is therefore the same as that of the head.

The body gives effect to the will of the head. If the head wants to reveal His Kingdom soon, He will reveal His Kingdom through His body. That is why the whole creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God.

The Church as the body of Christ is the fulfilment and thus the completion of Christ. (Ephesians 1 : 23) We could also say that the creation awaits the completion of Christ. Christ is not yet 'complete'. When Christ is fulfilled, the head and His body will reveal Him to Israel and to the nations. This idea is the background of 1 Thessalonians 4 : 17. It says that the Lord will appear as a thief in the night for Israel and the nations. (1 Thessalonians 5 : 2) However, the Lord will appear with His Church. That means that we will first meet Him. It is a strange way of saying it, because in 1 Thessalonians it is not only about the Church and its destination, but also about the return of Christ and everything related to it.

## 15. Ephesians 4 : 29, 30

29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it (that good word) may impart grace to the hearers.

"Necessary edification" means that the edification (improvement) is useful. (1 Corinthians 10 : 23) In that context it concerns the building up of the Church. "Good word" is useful, edifies and gives mercy. "Corrupt word" gives the law. We should therefore speak words that are edifying for the Church. The building up of the Church is God's work. Where we contribute to the work of God, we are servants of the new covenant. We then build with gold, silver and precious stones. In the future we will then receive glory.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed **for the day of redemption.**

The Holy Spirit of God wants to use our mouth and lips for speaking words that lead to a useful edification. When that does not happen, we grieve the Holy Spirit of God. He wants to lead us to the appointment as sons, to receive the inheritance. Therefore, we should not grieve or quench the Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 5 : 19) We grieve the Holy Spirit of God by not passing on the words of grace or by preaching the law, while we ourselves have been saved by grace. That sealing is not just so that we would be physically redeemed. We are sealed until the day of redemption. That

Spirit takes us to the inheritance. The inheritance (the wages) is there for those who have spoken good word for useful edification. The day of redemption speaks of our physical redemption in the future. The word 'day' often has the meaning of 'judgment'. We could also speak here of 'the judgment of redemption' or of 'the redemptive judgment'. At the time of our revelation before the judgment seat of Christ, we will be delivered from the body. It is not a day or a date, but an event that will make us appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We will be rewarded there.

## 16. Ephesians 5 : 5

5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, **has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.**

In Ephesians 5 : 1 and 2 it says that we should be followers of God and walk in love. These are the good things for which we will receive glory. Ephesians 5 : 5 is said to believers who have entered the Kingdom of God. They will have no inheritance if they are fornicators or something like that. They will receive a heavenly body and have a heavenly destiny, but they will not share in the glory and dominion of Christ. That is the result of building with wood, hay and stubble.

In Philippians 3 Paul speaks extensively about his future expectations in connection with his past and present. His future expectation is based on the life path of the Lord Jesus Himself, as summarized in Philippians 2. In Philippians 2 : 7 and 8 it says that the Lord made Himself of no reputation, took the form of a bondservant and came in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself and became obedient (faithful) to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

## 17. Philippians 2 : 9, 10

9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,  
10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.

Philippians 2 : 10 is a quotation from Isaiah 45, which extensively states what this verse means. Jesus Christ will judge all creation. It does not say

(what many think) that all creation will be saved by the Lord. Judging is exactly the opposite of saving. Jesus Christ has received the supreme position in creation, for He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the highest heavens. This is the result of His life of faith and of service to His heavenly Father. The apostle Paul is a follower of the Lord Jesus. Paul does exactly as He did. Paul also abandoned his old life. He considered what he was gaining (for example, religious matters) loss for Christ's sake. (Philippians 3 : 7) He considered everything damage (loss) and rubbish as compared to Christ. Christ should be his gain. (Philippians 3 : 8) Paul counted all things loss, so he could be part of the glory of Christ.

## 18. Philippians 3 : 10-21

10 That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

"To know" means "to have community" (participate). By the power of His resurrection we have the same position as Christ. (Ephesians 1 : 19, 20) The idea is that one would give up one to gain the other. Paul would be conformed to the death of the Lord Jesus and His suffering, namely give up the old, to be able to book the new as gain (glory).

11 If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul had long since been born again. He had long since received life from the dead. Here the idea is that the new life should actually be lived. What sense does it make to be born, if that does not lead to practical life? We are children of God. However, that is not the goal, but the basis. It is the basis of our path to the appointment as sons and our path to glory. Paul also took that way. He walked the race of faith to receive a crown. (1 Corinthians 9 : 25; 2 Timothy 4 : 8; Hebrews 12 : 1) But he says:

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

This is not an aspiration of believers to receive eternal life, but to live eternal life. It is not an endeavour to become a child of God, but to become

a son of God. It is not an endeavour to enter the Kingdom, but to inherit the Kingdom. Paul grabs for the purpose that Christ seized him for. That goal is to share in the glory of Christ.

13 But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the **prize of the upward call of God** in Christ Jesus.

It is written: "No one having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." (Luke 9 : 62) One should never look back. The natural man has a past. That past is getting stronger, because he increasingly looks back while getting older. The regenerated man has a future. The older a child of God becomes, the more he looks ahead. A child of God is becoming increasingly aware of what awaits him in the future. He is also aware that earthly life has nothing definitive to offer. We do not reach out to death, because that is not what is ahead. Paul always means future glorification and never physical dying. Paul expects a prize from God. That prize is the fulfilment of what he was seized or called for. That prize is the appointment as son and we do not receive it from people, but from God. The Lord is the one who judges. (1 Corinthians 4 : 4)

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

It is not about the personal testimony that Paul gives, but about the example for every believer. The first example was the Lord Jesus Himself. (Philippians 2) The second example was Paul himself. (Philippians 3) Both examples are focused on the huge exaltation in the future.

18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 Whose end (the result of their lives) is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

Here it also deals with believers who do not walk after the example of the Lord Jesus and of Paul. They build with wood, hay and stubble, but

nothing remains of that in the judgment (fire). Nothing remains of their practical life. Those believers who walk differently (they think of earthly things) also think they will receive glory, but they will not receive it. Their glory is in their shame (nakedness). It is better to bear the shame now, than in the future. When we will stand naked before the Lord in the future, we will also stand naked before each other. Peter says that those who think of earthly things are those who "busybody in other people's matters." (1 Peter 4 : 15) 'To think of earthly things' means to deal with this world.

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly **wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

In practice our citizenship is in heaven. "Our" indicates the believers who reach out to glory. It is about the practical walk in heaven. We are not going to heaven, because we are already there. There we have our rights and obligations. We are part of heavenly things. Heavenly forces work in and through us. We do not see that. On account of our walk in heaven we expect the Saviour who will save us. Our spirit is already saved (redeemed) by God, because we allowed it. Our soul is now being saved (redeemed) by God if we allow it. In the future our body will be saved (will be redeemed) by God. The salvation of the body originates from the salvation of the spirit.

### **Practical life**

Those who in practice do not walk in heaven, usually do not have any future expectations. At best they know the Biblical fact that the Lord will return some time, but it does not play a significant role in their thoughts and walks. Our earthly life in itself is useless. It is vain according to Ecclesiastes. Nevertheless, our life on earth has an effect in heaven. That certainly applies to the believers today. Our real life takes place in heaven. This is where all kinds of things are caused in our practical life. That is also where the result of our practical life is. We should not look for cause and effect of our lives here in the visible world. In practice, our struggle is visibly opposed to flesh and blood. Nobody can deny that. Nevertheless, Scripture says that we do not have the fight against flesh and blood. (Ephesians 6 : 12) Behind flesh and blood are the principalities, powers and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. That is the real cause of the struggle we are in. The result of the battle is seen in the heavenly.

21 Who (the Saviour) will **transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body**, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

The Lord will save our lowly body. We expect the Lord to raise our lowly body. Adam was on earth before his fall. After his fall, he did not fall a metre down, but he was still on the earth. It was a moral fall and not a literal fall. If our lowly body is raised, it does not go up one metre. It is not about place, but about order. The Lord will change our lowly, mortal body into an immortal body. An immortal body is higher in order. We will get a changed body instead of the old body, so that this body will become conformed to His glorious body. Hence, we expect glorification. The Lord does that according to the working, through which He can subdue all things (the whole creation) to Himself. On the last day, this entire old creation will be changed into a new creation. This humiliated world will then be replaced by an exalted world. All this comes about through complete submission. The flesh does not subject to the law of God and is not able to do so. (Romans 8 : 7) The flesh cannot please God. On the one hand, the flesh is the instrument that we have made available to God. On the other hand, our flesh is a limitation. Not every tool is suitable for the same things. The Lord can still use us despite our shortcomings. He can make a straight strike with a crooked stick. In our final submission we will receive a body that is 100% subject to God.

Again, in Philippians many expressions are used for what we call 'the rapture of the Church'. However, again the term 'rapture' does not occur. Moreover, it does not talk about a displacement here. It is about glory, exaltation, salvation and conformity to the image of God's Son. Philippians 3 : 20 and 21 are the result of a long argument in chapters 2 and 3. In these chapters, the believers are called to be of one mind and to have the same love. (Philippians 2 : 2-5) We should count the old man loss and rubbish in imitation of Paul and of Christ. We should especially give up the valuable things of the old life, as Christ Himself did. As a result, He was greatly exalted.

### **19. Colossians 3 : 1-4**

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

Colossians 3 says what matters, briefly and powerfully. At least that is clear. Some believers never get any further than that they died with Christ. Some people are very happy with that, because nobody can hurt them. God does not know, see and hear them, because they are dead. That is an excuse for a licentious and godless life. That is no good news, although it is true. If in practice it is true for us that we are resurrected with Christ, we ought to seek the things above. There Christ is seated at the right hand of God, but He is also in our hearts.

- 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Our thoughts and our hope should go to the things that are above. We should do one thing and not do the other.

- 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

We now have a hidden life. That life will be revealed in the future.

- 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also **will appear with Him in glory.**

Christ is our life, for He lives in us. (Galatians 2 : 20: "no longer we") When He is revealed at the end of the 70th week, we will be revealed with Him in glory. On that cloudy day, when the Lord appears from heaven from the clouds, we will appear with Him from the clouds. That is only possible if we have first met Him in the clouds. This is literally found in 1 Thessalonians 4 : 17. We now suddenly think of place and time, while hopefully we did not think about that in all the other Scriptures. One will only see us again as a heavenly host, with the Lord above the Mount of Olives. We will appear with the angel of the Lord, praising God, saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2 : 13, 14) That peace will then be realized by the Prince of Peace and by us. For we are already servants of the covenant of peace!

The letters to the Thessalonians are in the back, between the letters regarding the Church. That is because for an important part these letters deal with the future of the Church. The rapture of the Church is central in these letters, although it concerns the future of the Lord (second coming).

## 20. 1 Thessalonians 1 : 9, 10

- 9 [...] and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

We have been converted from the idols, not with the aim to go to heaven, but to serve the living God. Idols are considered dead idols. Idols and lies are opposed to one God and the truth.

- 10 And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who **delivers us from the wrath to come.**

We are also converted to await His Son from the heavens. Jesus Christ became the Son when He was physically raised from the dead. Here it says that He is coming to deliver us from the wrath to come. The future wrath is the Great Tribulation. In these verses it is about awakening from the dead, namely a physical resurrection. We who remain alive, are physically changed. This is not about physical displacement.

## 21. 1 Thessalonians 2 : 12

- 12 That you would walk worthy of God who **calls you into His own kingdom and glory.**

In 1 Thessalonians 4 : 1-12, it speaks about sanctification. Sanctification is the practical service of the believer. From 1 Thessalonians 4 : 13, it speaks about the future. We think the title above verse 13 should be 'Rapture of the Church'. However, it says 'The comfort of Christ's coming'. This inscription is perfect on closer inspection. In 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul explains what the future of the Lord will look like. (1 Thessalonians 4 : 15) The future of the Lord is the presence (parousia) of the Lord. It is the designation of the whole period that we indicate as 'the second coming of Christ'. That period is the dispensation of the fullness of times and it lasts 40 years. At the end of this study, 1 Thessalonians 4 : 13 to 1 Thessalonians 5 : 11 will be discussed.

## 22.2 Thessalonians 2 : 1-14

- 1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and **our gathering together to Him**, we ask you.

We call our gathering together to Him 'the rapture of the Church'. Our gathering precedes the future of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here the order of importance is mentioned and not the chronological order. It is about the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are gathered to Him before the Lord will appear visibly.

- 2 Not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

In those days there were letters going around, with the name of the apostle Paul incorrectly underneath. Such things did and still occur. It was claimed that the Day of the Lord had already begun. 'The Day of the Lord' is the 'day of wrath' (Romans 2 : 5; Revelation 6 : 17) or the 'day of vengeance' (Isaiah 34 : 8; Jeremiah 46 : 10; Luke 21 : 22) or 'a cloudy day' (Ezekiel 30 : 3) or a 'day of darkness'. (Joel 2 : 2) The Christian persecutions at that time were interpreted as if it were the day of judgment already, with the prophecies being fulfilled. Of course, that was not possible. Before the day of the Lord comes, we will be gone. That does not mean that there is no oppression, trouble or persecution. That only means that the trouble and the like that there is, is not that of the Lord's day. It is not the wrath of God that comes upon us and the world. That is a comforting thought.

- 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day (of the Lord) will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition;

It is said that the falling away is now clearly visible, but that has been the case for hundreds of years. The falling away (Daniel 8 : 12, 13) means that the Jewish state (the host of heaven) will be surrendered to another religion. This will happen in the middle of Daniel's 70th week, when the idol is set up in the holy place. The term "Day of the Lord" is taken from the Old Testament prophecies. The term "the falling away" is also derived from Old Testament prophecy. We should read New Testament prophecy in the light of Old Testament prophecy. In fact, New Testament prophecy

is essentially nothing more than a renewed reference to, or comment on, the Old Testament prophets. In the Old Testament it says that the Day of the Lord would come. This is repeated in the New Testament. In the time of the falling away the man of sin (lawlessness) will be revealed.

- 4 Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Among other places we find this in Daniel 7 : 25, Daniel 8 : 9-13, Daniel 11 : 36 and Revelation 13 : 1-10.

- 5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

Paul had told them a lot. When someone put together a false letter with a beautiful eschatological story, with Paul's signature underneath, they forgot what Paul had told. People believed what was written in black and white.

- 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

It deals here with what is restraining the revelation of the son of perdition. We should know that. God Himself has set the time in which this king of Babylon would no longer be hidden but would be revealed. As long as the restrainer is here, the son of perdition will not reveal himself. His own time comes when the restrainer is gone. That means that he is looking forward to it impatiently. His time naturally coincides with the time that God Himself has set.

- 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.

The king of Babel works in secret. The special thing about our dispensation is that not only the Kingdom of God is hidden, but also that of the adversary (satan). Jerusalem that is above and Babel are both hidden. Nevertheless, in our days Jerusalem has become the capital of the Jewish state and Babel has been rebuilt. Babel will be the capital of the



last empire. Verse 7 is not a clear verse, but all the other verses around it are clear. There is something that restrains this man of sin and that will remain so until his own time. At some moment in time that restrainer will be taken away and the man of sin will be revealed. Who or what is that restrainer? In 2 Thessalonians 2 : 1 Paul speaks about our gathering together to Him. After that we do not find a word in the whole letter about our gathering together to Him. Paul says that he is going to talk about the rapture of the Church. The only verse in which the rapture is apparently mentioned is 2 Thessalonians 2 : 7. There is no other choice. This way we circumvent all problems. Some say that the one who will be taken away is the Holy Spirit. That is a misunderstanding. When the Church is taken away, two witnesses will appear in the streets of Jerusalem. (Revelation 11 : 3) Those witnesses have the Holy Spirit and also those who come to believe, of course.

The idea is that as long as the Church is here on earth, the work of God with regard to Israel and the nations cannot be realized in any way. God first takes away the Church from the earth and then realizes His work on earth. That is how powerful He is. The work of God with regard to Israel and the nations involves the conversion of the remnant of Israel and the nations. As long as the Church is here on earth, everyone (Jew or Gentile) who comes to believe, is added to that Church. This way, there will never be a converted Israel, but mere expansion of the Church. When God has finished (fulfilled, completed) His work of building the Church, He will begin again with His work on earth. That is, the preaching of the gospel to Israel, beginning in Jerusalem, then throughout Judea and then to Samaria to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1 : 8) According to Daniel 9 : 24, seventy weeks were destined for the people of Daniel. After 69 weeks a break came, or the clock was stopped. That clock is still standing still. Since then, the Church is being built. Before the salvation history of the Jewish people will continue, the Church must be gone.

- 8 And then (when the restrainer is taken out of the way) the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

The lawless one is the man of sin, or the son of perdition. That man will be consumed by the breath (Spirit, the Word) of the Lord's mouth. For the Lord will speak in His anger and in His grimness. (Psalm 2 : 5, Jeremiah 30 : 24) His appearance and His future are synonymous here. It means: His appearance, namely His future. Future (parousia) means 'presence'. The

power of the man of sin in relation to Jerusalem and Judea will be shattered at the end of the 70th week of Daniel. For the other nations he will establish and expand his power and will not yet be destroyed. This only happens at the end of the period of forty years. (Revelation 19 : 20)

2 Thessalonians 2 : 1-8 describes the events before the Lord's day. That means, therefore, that we cannot live now in the day of the Lord. The tribulation (distress, darkness) that now comes upon the people is not the day of the Lord.

- 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders.

Miracles and signs can therefore also be of satan. In the future, that will certainly be the case.

- 10 And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

One rejects the truth and thus one enters into the power of the beast or the man of sin.

- 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie.

If one does not want the truth, the Lord Himself, then God will send the lie in abundance. The lie has always been there, but then it will be much stronger.

- 12 That they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

This is the summary of what will take place in the day of the Lord.

- 13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning **chose you for salvation** through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth;

God did not choose us for judgment, but for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit. (This is also the theme of the first letter to the Thessalonians.) God has chosen us to believe the truth. 'Sanctification by the Spirit' and 'belief in the truth' are basically the same at a high level. Where we accept the truth and make it our own in our heart and live from it, this sanctification by the Spirit takes place. The Spirit would lead us into all truth. (John 16 : 13) In the future, however, man in general will believe the lie, accompanied by signs and miracles.

14 To which He called you by our gospel, **for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The apostle points to the gospel as it was preached by him. The consequences of that gospel are that the believers not only receive eternal life but are also set in heaven and have their future there. Here again it is not stated that we will be taken away in the future. It says that we would obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not expect the day (the judgment) of the Lord, not the vengeance of our God, but the glory of Christ. To this end we are called. (1 Thessalonians 2 : 12) One should not make the mistake of attributing the circumstances in which we find ourselves to judgments of God. That is not the case and moreover it is completely impossible.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

This verse corresponds with 1 Corinthians 15 : 58.

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace,  
17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

Where these good words (words of grace) and works are found, it will lead to glory. That glory will be revealed to us in the future. That future is well before the coming of the Lord's day. That is what 2 Thessalonians 2 says.

## 23. 2 Timothy

### 2 Timothy 2 : 10

10 Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus **with eternal glory.**

### 2 Timothy 4 : 8

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

## 24. Titus 2 : 11-14

In Titus, the apostle summarizes things very briefly. He does not write to believers in general, but to Titus in particular.

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

A majority of the people do nothing with that saving grace of God.

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.

According to the flesh we still live in the present age. In expectation of our Savior (expecting) we should live godly. That is taught to us by the saving grace of God. 'Living godly' means worshipping (serving) God in the right way. The result of that teaching is that we will receive glory.

13 Looking for **the blessed hope and glorious appearing** of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Christ Jesus).

It does not say: "Expecting the rapture of the Church". That is true, but that is not generally the right expression for what we expect. We are looking for glory on the basis of the work that God is now doing in and on us. God works according to the teaching in grace.

- 14 Who (Christ) gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us (believers) from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

Christ devotes His resurrection life to us. His death was for the whole world. He died in the past for all people. (Titus 2 : 11) Now Christ delivers us from all unrighteousness. In this way He purifies for Himself His own people, zealous for good works. We are being cleansed from an evil conscience to serve the living God. (Hebrews 9 : 14; 10 : 22) Our lives, our service now, are directly related to what we can and should expect for the future.

## 25. Titus 3 : 7

- 7 That having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The Scripture never speaks about a displacement of believers. But Scripture does speak of the reception and revelation of glory. It is not about the rapture. We should take into account our revelation before the judgment seat of Christ.

## 26. Hebrews 2 : 10

- 10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, **in bringing many sons to glory**, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

## 27. Hebrews 10 : 19-39

- 19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.

We should go to our High Priest over the house of God. (Hebrews 10 : 21)

- 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

The washing of the body with pure water under the old covenant is a type of the cleansing of the conscience under the new covenant. In short: Let us approach the throne of grace to make ourselves available for the service of and under the new covenant. On that ground we have a living hope (expectation) of reward, retribution, inheritance, and glory that will be revealed on us. That is why Hebrews 10 says:

- 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

What did God promise us? That we are going to heaven? No, because that promise is already fulfilled. We have eternal life and we are already in heaven. We should live from that. Here it concerns the better promises of the new covenant. (Hebrews 8 : 6)

- 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.

If that love and good works are not there, the glory will fail.

- 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

"Assembling together" is the same Greek word as "gathering together" in 2 Thessalonians 2 : 1. In Greek it is 'episynagoge'. Here it is about our assembling together before the throne of grace. In both cases it speaks of how we approach the throne and become involved in the work of Christ, our King and High Priest. There are believers who are not in the habit of approaching the throne or serving the Lord.

- 26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

- 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

This is not about unbelievers. This is about the judgment of the believers' practical life. A large fire can be made from wood, hay and stubble.

34 For you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that **you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.**

It says: "you have" and not "you shall have". You have for yourselves a better and an enduring possession (heritage) in heaven. Where is that heritage? In ourselves or in heaven? Since when is there a difference? There is no difference, because we are in heaven and we already have this possession for ourselves. We already have glory, but it still has to be revealed.

35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence (to go in), **which has great reward.**

For we expect compensation, namely wages.

36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, **you may receive the promise.**

When we are patient here, we will receive glory. (Romans 8 : 18) We should do the will of God, namely walk in good works which God has prepared. (Ephesians 2 : 10) Then the promise to us will be fulfilled. The promise is the appointment as son in heaven and receiving a heavenly inheritance. That promise is conditional! Not all believers will participate. But all believers will have part in 'the rapture of the Church'.

37 "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry.

38 Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."

We, the just, should live by faith in the truth and the promises of God. If someone does not, God has no pleasure in him. God's well-pleasing will is that we should present our bodies a living, holy, sacrifice, acceptable to God. (Romans 12 : 1)

39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Whoever does not draw back from the life of faith (godly life) to perdition (to the judgment), believes to the saving of the soul. Such a person believes in order to pertain his practical life. The 'soul' speaks of our daily walk in life. (1 Peter 2 : 11, 12) That practical life has everything to do with the wages or the inheritance that we should receive in the future.

## 28. Hebrews 12 : 6-29

In Hebrews 12 it is said that we who are children of God should become sons of God. (Romans 8) All this through education, discipline and chastisement.

6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.

7 If you endure chastening (suffering, persecution or oppression), God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

Where we are brought up in the flesh to adulthood by our fathers, as children of God we are brought up to maturity by our spiritual Father so as to be appointed as His son (heir).

11 Now no chastening (upbringing) seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the **peaceable fruit of righteousness** to those who have been trained by it.

Those difficulties in our lives (all those things that we have to learn to overcome, that hurt so much and are so bothering us) later on give a peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by that chastisement. So throughout our whole life, we are trained. Thus, we are trained for our future position in glory with Christ. If there is no upbringing beforehand, then the final result or the final destination will not be reached. It then remains a heavenly body. One is then saved as by fire. (1 Corinthians 3 : 15) As we are useless for the Lord here, we will be so in the future. As we are usable and available to the Lord, we will continue to be so in the future. After all, we have learned something!

14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

Peace is the new covenant, the covenant of peace. (Ezekiel 37 : 26) That sanctification is the will of God. (1 Thessalonians 4 : 3) That sanctification is our upbringing. Because of that upbringing we now live in communion with the Lord. That is what "seeing the Lord" means. If we do not allow ourselves to be chastised now, we will now not see the Lord and His work in our lives. If we do not take on anything of our spiritual Father now, we will not see Him, and He will not see us. When we are His servants, we see Him crowned with honour and glory. (Hebrews 2 : 9) Then we see Jesus, the great Victor who now cleanses and sanctifies us.

15 Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.

The grace of God is also the new covenant. The whole letter is about this.

16 Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.

Esau gave away his birthright for food. We are called to be appointed as sons. That is the same as the appointment as firstborn. Sons are sons, but the firstborn is the son appointed by the Father. We should not be fornicators like Esau, who, for something earthly, gave away his birthright. This comment would not have meant anything, if our individual birthright had been simply established in the fact that we are children of God. In other words, the fact that we are children of God does not mean that God will appoint us as sons in the future. We can lose the inheritance that comes with the birthright. Esau was the firstborn on account of his birth. He did not get that birthright, because he did not care much about it. The moment he did value it, it was too late. That example is presented to us. Like Esau, for the sake of life here on earth, we can leave the spiritual things for what they are. With the motto: we will all go with the rapture of the Church, so nothing can happen to me. Well, we are all going, but that was not the goal. You may think so, but that is a misconception. The goal is: our glorification with Christ! That glorification comes about on the basis of what precedes the rapture of the Church. All the Scriptures that we are dealing with now speak about that. We are being warned, because the question is whether we will indeed be appointed as sons, even though it is our calling. That appointment depends on our personal relationship with the Lord. It depends on whether we serve Him here or not. It depends on what we find important in this life.

- 17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears (when it was too late!).
- 18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched [...].
- 22 But you have come to Mount Zion [...].

The tangible mountain of Sinai is a type of the old covenant. The mountain Zion is the untouchable mountain. That is a type of the new covenant.

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven [...].

We have been added to that Church. Our responsibility is to walk worthy of the calling with which we are called. (Ephesians 4 : 1) If we do not walk worthy of our calling, we will not be appointed as son. The entire Church is collectively appointed as Son, as a people, but not all individual members. Some say, "It is enough for me that I belong to that Church." My answer to that is: "This is not why the Lord has called you." When you love the Lord, you should submit to the will of the Lord. You should put your life in His hand, so that He would use it with as consequence the appointment as son.

At the end of this argument, Paul says in Hebrews 12:

- 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.
- 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

An immovable Kingdom is an eternal Kingdom that no longer falters. We should hold grace (Hebrews 12 : 15) and not the law. We may serve God by grace. It is not only grace that made us children of God. It is also by grace that we will be appointed as sons. That consuming fire is the judgment of God over our lives and our works. When everything burns, we might shed many a tear, like Esau did. Then it is too late! The Old Testament ends the same way as Hebrews 12. In Malachi 4 : 6 it says: "[...] Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." That is where the judgment is announced.

## 29.1 Peter 3 : 9

- 9 Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

## 30.1 John 3 : 1-3

- 1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

The last part of this verse in some places disappeared from the manuscripts for an understandable reason. It was thought that it was better to tell the people they were to become children of God, because then they would work harder. It really says that we already are children of God. It was announced in advance that we would become children of God. In John 1 : 12 it says: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." Since the resurrection of Christ all living believers have been born again. So they have become children of God.

- 2 Beloved, now (in the meantime) we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be [...].

We, New Testament believers, have become participants of the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises. That is already true. Peter said on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 : 39: "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." It is about the promise of eternal life and of the Spirit. Paul says in Acts 13 : 32: "And we declare to you glad tidings - that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus (raised from the dead)." Paul held the same speech as Peter! The content is that the resurrection of Christ brought the fulfilment of God's promises, thus eternal life. Every believer receives eternal life since the resurrection of Christ. He is therefore a child of God.

The Old Testament promises imply that man who believes will become a child of God. The New Testament promises imply that the child of God living by faith would become a son of God. We are already God's children, but it has not yet been revealed what we will be.

Literally it says: "It has not yet appeared what we will be." 'Revealing' and 'appearing' both mean that it is not yet visible. When something is revealed, the veil is pulled away. When something appears, the light shines on it. We say: "It has not yet appeared." That is a wonderful expression. According to Biblical standards, that glory will express itself in, among other things, light (radiation). It has not yet appeared what we will be. That does not mean that it has not yet been announced what we will be. A child of God will become a son. That has been announced, but it is waiting for the redemption of our body.

- 2 [...] But we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

In Colossians 3 : 4 it says that we will be revealed with Him in glory. Our hope is that we will see Him as He is. Our future expectation is that we will share visibly in the glory of Christ. It is conditional because it is based on living by faith.

- 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

'Cleansing' or 'sanctification' is a condition for this appointment as son or for receiving this glory. John offers us the choice: you can do sin or do righteousness. You can serve the lie or the truth. We should serve the Lord and thereby be purified.

In 1 John 3, we also miss the term 'rapture of the Church'. We miss the move from earth to heaven. Revelation chapters 2 and 3 contain seven letters to seven churches. These two chapters are not about the revelation of Jesus Christ, but about what precedes it, namely the Mystery. This is what we read in Revelation 1 : 19 and 20. These verses form the introduction to chapters 2 and 3. In the seven letters to the seven churches the history of the mystery Kingdom is recorded. In other words, the situation described in the seven letters corresponds to seven successive eras during the Mystery of the Kingdom. The Mystery covers the fifth and the sixth dispensation. The sixth dispensation is described in the seventh letter, the one to Laodicea. The fifth dispensation is thus described in the sixth letter, in the letter to Philadelphia (brotherly love).

## 31. Revelation 3

- 8 I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

An 'open door' means that in our day there is great freedom for the preaching of the Gospel. In past centuries, the preaching of the Gospel was virtually impossible. These last centuries mission and evangelization was possible all over the world. Those who say that it is not free everywhere are engaged in bringing the Gospel in those 'closed' countries. In the past, this was, for example, behind the 'Iron Curtain' or behind the 'Bamboo Curtain'. 'Little strength' means that there are not so many people who preach the Gospel. Despite everything it is done. There are few who have kept the Word of the Lord. People prefer to keep the word of the elders or of the church fathers.

- 9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie - indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

This verse says, among other things, that the believers would receive glory.

- 10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

"My command to persevere" means that we are willing to suffer because of the Word. All this is related to serving the Lord. The "hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world" is the Great Tribulation throughout the world. In Daniel 12 : 1 it says: "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book." The "time of trouble" or the "hour of trial" begins at the second half of the seventieth week of Daniel. We are delivered from the hour of trial. This does not state in what way that will happen.

- 11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take **your crown**.

In 2 John 1 : 8 it says: " Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward." "Hold fast what you have" is the same as "do not lose those things we worked for." "Your crown" is the same as "a full reward". It is possible that a crown is taken (one can lose a crown) or that the wage is lost (missed). This is also found in other places in the Bible. These crowns are not for the believers in general, but for those who have lived by faith. (See 1 Corinthians 9 : 25; 2 Timothy 4 : 8; James 1 : 12; 1 Petrus 5 : 4; Revelation 2 : 10)

- 12 He who overcomes, **I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God**, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

The victory is in Christ, because in Him we are more than conquerors. (Romans 8 : 37) The "pillar in the temple" speaks of priesthood and kingship. The house of God, the church of the living God, is the "pillar and ground of the truth". (1 Timothy 3 : 15) This is a description of the priestly position of the Church. In addition, all pillars carry a crown (capital).

- 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

So here it speaks of hidden things.

## 32. Revelation 12 : 5-7

In Revelation 12 : 5 the same term is used (derived from the Greek verb 'arpazoo') as in 1 Thessalonians 4 : 17. In Revelation 12 : 5 it is also translated as "caught up". 'Arpazoo' literally means 'to take away with or by power'. In the vision of Revelation 12, it is about a woman. That woman was pregnant, and cried out, travailing, and in pain to give birth. (Revelation 12 : 2)

- 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And **her Child was caught up to God and His throne**.



First and foremost the woman is a type of Israel. She gave birth to a male Child. That Child was to rule the Gentiles with an iron rod. That Child "was to" do something, that is to say that this had already been announced in advance, namely in Psalm 2 : 9. Psalm 2 is about Christ, the King, who is anointed over Zion. The Son of Psalm 2 is Christ with great emphasis. Here in Revelation 12 : 5, the same statement that applied to Christ is also applied to the Church. The woman in Revelation 12 is a people. The Child is therefore also a people. The woman is Israel and the Child that is born of it is the Church. Moreover, of the Lord Jesus it cannot be said that He was snatched away to God and His throne. In Acts 1 : 9 it says that the Lord Jesus was taken up. The Lord was not caught up from before the approaching dragon either. Instead the Lord has overcome the dragon by His death and resurrection. He made a public spectacle of the principalities and powers [satan], "triumphing over them in it." (Colossians 2 : 15) The removal to God and His throne thus refers to Christ and the Church, to the Head and the Body. The male Child (the Church) is born while the woman (the Jewish people or Israel in general) suffers. This is characteristic of our entire dispensation. As soon as the male Child has been snatched away to God and His throne, the woman must flee into the desert because of the dragon. At that moment the man of sin, the son of perdition, will be revealed.

### Being caught up

In Revelation 12 it is not about individuals, but about the Church as a whole. The entire Church is caught up to God and His throne. The removal to God and His throne implies that the Church is put on the throne. From that throne, the Church will judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19 : 28) and the angels. (1 Corinthians 6 : 3) That collective destination is certain. The same words that sounded at the resurrection of Christ sound with the rapture of the church: "You are my Son, today I have begotten You." (Psalm 2 : 7) This concerns the appointment as Son, the acquisition of the inheritance, the reception of glory and the appointment as King. The Church is caught up to God and His throne. It does not say that the Church is taken away from the earth. There is no indication of wherefrom. It is about what that power leads to. The power of God that already works in us now, brings us to the throne of God and of Christ. The term 'caught up' does not mean 'to be taken to above'. The term 'caught up' means 'to take away with power'. By that power we are physically changed from an old to a new creation. So it is hardly a displacement. Displacement is only mentioned in connection with our appearance from the clouds above or on the Mount of Olives.

- 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

At this moment the 70th week of Daniel begins.

- 7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought.

Michael and His angels are the same as the male Child, namely Christ and the Church in heaven.

Finally, we will study 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5. In 1 Thessalonians 4, things are mentioned more or less in chronological order. First, mention is made of the rapture of the Church, and then of the second coming of Christ. This leads to misunderstandings, because usually we do not notice that in 1 Thessalonians 4 the main element is not the rapture of the Church, but the second coming of Christ. The second coming of Christ is central in 1 Thessalonians 4 : 13 to 1 Thessalonians 5 : 11.

## 33. 1 Thessalonians 4

- 13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

Who are those others? We usually never think about it because we do not think it is important. Those others are those who have no future expectations. They have no hope.

- 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

We believe, but who do not believe? These are the others in verse 13. God has raised the Lord Jesus from the dead as Firstfruit on account of His faith. Thus, God will also raise us from the dead in the same way, as firstfruits on account of our faith. Christ is the forerunner (Hebrews 6 : 20) and the example. (1 Peter 2 : 21)

Usually one does not even realize that those who are already asleep will also take part in the rapture. The idea is that one does not know what the rapture of the Church is. It is not a rise of us to heaven and thus a return of the ones who are asleep who are already in heaven.

- 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 by no means precede those who are asleep.

The future expectation of Paul is always: to never die. That is why he writes: "We who are alive and remain." We who are alive do not have a privileged position. Paul explains that the believers of this dispensation will indeed partake in the Kingdom of Christ. Those who are asleep (who have died) will rise and those who are alive and remain will not precede them. The question is always: "Those who are asleep (who have died) have preceded us anyway, are they not already in heaven?" But are we not already in heaven ourselves? Heaven is here. These verses do not deal with the fact that the believer of our dispensation receives a heavenly body to replace the old earthly body. For the last generation, of course, that is the case, because they still have an old body. Generally speaking, those who are asleep are in heaven and no longer on earth, like us. Thus, they already have a heavenly body. The question then is: What is the use of the rapture of the Church for the ones who are asleep? Does it not say that they will take part in that? **see note 3** All believers from our dispensation will participate in the rapture. It is not about the change of the body, but about receiving glory! Then we will all appear with Christ in glory (Colossians 3 : 4) and reign over the earth from heaven. We cannot imagine how the brothers and sisters who are asleep will take part in the rapture of the Church. However, we will all receive glory at the same time. We will all be changed from one moment to the next. Those who are asleep are in heaven, but they have not yet received any wages (glorified body, crown, garment). This happens collectively on a certain date. The biblical idea is: the ones who are asleep wait for us and we wait for them. The only difference is that we still have to discard of the earthly. The ones who are asleep no longer have to.

Paul says in Philippians 1 : 23, "For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Paul said this when he was still bound, but he was already with Christ. The idea is that it is better to depart and be with Christ, than to be bound. Now we are bound by our old body, but we are with Christ. Those who have gone before us have departed and are with Christ. The final glorification, the reward, the judgment seat of Christ, the handing out of the crowns or covering and dressing, happens collectively. From our position in the flesh we call this 'the rapture of the Church'. The main sentence of 1 Thessalonians 4 : 16 is: "The Lord Himself will descend." When this will happen, is not in 1 Thessalonians 4, but in chapter 5.

## 34.1 Thessalonians 5

- 1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.
- 2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

Paul writes this because they could and should have known, but they did not know. About which times and seasons does it speak? It is about the times and seasons of the revelation of the Kingdom of Christ. These are the same times and seasons as in Acts 1 : 7, where it was said: "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority." 'Times' and 'seasons' is the same. 'Time' is the time on a clock or calendar. The year (point in time) is of less importance than the event as such. In Acts 1 : 7 they did not know the times and seasons. That was the situation among the disciples in the first days of Acts. Now it says: "You have no need that I should write, for you know very well." That is not there, so they would not know it, but because they know it now. They know that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. (1 Thessalonians 5 : 2) It does not say that the Church is caught up as a thief in the night.

The coming of the Lord from 1 Thessalonians 4 : 15 is the period in which the Lord's day begins. In that day, the Lord will bring judgment on the whole of living humanity and ultimately on the entire creation (more than a thousand years later). The Lord first appears to bring judgment on Israel (in the second half of the 70th week) and then on the nations (in the 33 years). This judgment leads to the removal of all unbelievers from the earth and the leaving behind of all believers on the earth. Before the day of the Lord begins, the Great Tribulation of those days first comes over Israel. Then follows the obscuration of the sun and the moon, and at that moment the day of the Lord begins. (Joel 2 : 31, Matthew 24 : 29)

- 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

Those "they" are the same as "the others" from 1 Thessalonians 4 : 13. They are unbelieving Jews who have no hope. Upon searching within the Jewish religion, it will appear that there is indeed no hope for those who have died. In Judaism people do not believe in an afterlife. One does not

know the resurrection and the eternal life. One knows a thousand-year empire, that is, the revelation of the Messianic empire. Other than that, there is no hope. The word "they" is also a reference to Old Testament prophecy. "They" is "your people" from Daniel 9 : 24-27. When will they say, "peace?" When the Jewish people make a covenant with the greatest enemy. That is in Daniel 9 : 27 in connection with the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel. That peace refers to the first half of the 70th week. Daniel points out that this peace will be broken in the middle of the week. (Daniel 9 : 27) Then there will be devastation until the end of the 70th week of Daniel. That desolation has been determined.

The sudden destruction refers to the second half of the 70th week of Daniel. At the end of the 70th week, the Lord will put His feet on the Mount of Olives. At that moment, according to many Scriptures, the Lord's day officially begins. It says here that they will not escape it (corruption, judgment) in any way. Even if millions of believers prayed for the peace of Jerusalem, Jerusalem would be destroyed. (Zechariah 14 : 2, Luke 21 : 20) Moreover, the Lord says: "So do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry out to Me because of their trouble." (Jeremiah 11 : 14) Praying for the peace of Jerusalem is pointless. Jerusalem will not have peace. What we can do is pray for the salvation of the people. (Romans 10 : 1-3) We should pray for their salvation and at the same time be willing to preach the Gospel to them, like the Apostle Paul.

- 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.
- 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.
- 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

These are in particular quotes from the prophecies of Isaiah 60. In Isaiah 60 : 1 it says: "Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you." This verse is also quoted in Ephesians 5 : 14. It says: "Therefore He says: Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." Let us walk in the Light. Let us watch and not sleep. Then these events will not overtake us like a thief in the night either. The day of the Lord cannot overtake us, for we have long since gone away. The rapture of the Church cannot overtake us either. Usually it is said that you cannot know when these things will occur. The argument is that so many have already calculated it and that to date it has not been

right. That is no wonder, because to date it could not have been right. We will only know for sure it is right when it happens. That is because we do not have a useful calendar for that purpose. When the Lord announced a judgment, He always included when that would be. In the days of Noah, the judgment would come after 120 years. The desolation of Jerusalem was also always announced. Ezekiel had to lie on his left and right side for 390 and 40 days (Ezekiel 4). Daniel knew that Jerusalem would be destroyed after 70 weeks. After 69 weeks the judgment on our sins would be borne. That is not exactly what it says, but that is what is meant. Everything is announced. The Lord Himself also announced the destruction of Jerusalem on the last day of the 69th week of Daniel. He said that this destruction would come because they had not known the time of their visitation. (Luke 19 : 44) That can only mean something if they could have known. The Lord does all things on the time appointed by Him. We should not mind when it will actually happen. But it is very interesting to know how the history of salvation works. Namely, how God fulfils His promises and prophecies at the time appointed by Him. If that is certain, we should at least take it into account.

- 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We expect the redemption of wrath. We expect the obtaining of salvation, especially that of the body.

- 10 Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.
- 11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. (Compare with 1 Thessalonians 4 : 18)
- 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God [...].

The Lord Himself will descend. That means that the Lord will be present again on earth. He will come down with a shout. He will descend with the voice of an archangel (the voice = the archangel). That is a powerful speaking by Him who is the Supreme Angel (Michael). For certain this is a reference to Daniel 12 : 1. The archangel is Christ who is the Word (the cry, the voice) of God. The Lord will descend with the trumpet of God. In Joel 2 : 1 it says: " Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy moun-

tain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand." This is at the end of the 70th week of Daniel.

For 1900 years we have been living in a time when God does not speak but is silent. He has spoken, and He has given His Word. We can find the speaking of the Lord in the future in Psalm 2. This Psalm is often quoted in the New Testament. It says that the Gentiles and the peoples stand against the Lord, but that the Lord does not care about it. He will laugh and He will mock them. After all, the Lord has already won the victory. The world does not know that, however. In Psalm 2 : 5 it says: " Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure." The biblical idea is that when God is actively engaged with the world, this will be to bring wrath (judgment) upon living humanity, beginning with Israel. When God speaks, Christ who is the Word of God appears! God officially speaks again only at the end of the 70th week of Daniel. That is also the time when the Lord will descend.

16 [...] And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Those who have died in Christ will rise first. (Realize that this is all happening in one moment, so it is told very slowly here!) The Lord Himself will descend, but first the believers from our dispensation who have since died will rise (be changed). If there are still mortal remains of them here on earth in a grave, then that grave will be empty after the rapture! Perhaps the grave will even be open. As the living bodies will be changed, the possibly present dead bodies will also be changed. Exactly the same happened with the Lord Jesus. The Lord might as well have received a heavenly body to replace the one that lay in the tomb. That did not happen. The grave was empty. His body was converted from earthly to heavenly. Only the linen cloths were still there. (Luke 24 : 12) That is resurrection. Resurrection is not only the replacement of the old, but emphatically the change of the old. The old is made new. The new one takes the place of the old, but the old one is gone. In the following verse, one should notice the order.

17 Then **we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds** to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Literally it says: "we, who are alive, shall be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air". "Thus" means that we will not be in

this body but in a heavenly body with the Lord. It does not say "thus we will go to the Lord forever." That could very well be, but that is not what it says here. It says: "And thus we shall always be with the Lord (for years to come)." It is about sharing in the glory of Christ. As far as that glory is revealed on earth, it happens from heaven and from the clouds. When heavenly things appear visible in the world, it always happens from above. That is not necessary, but that is in accordance with the symbolism. "With them" means, with those who died and were raised. At the end of this event they and we are somewhere in heaven (that is higher than the earth). Satan is thrown on the earth with his angels and we as Church will take their place in heaven. (Revelation 12 : 7, 8) This "promotion to glory" (the rapture of the Church) is necessary, so that the Church will be revealed with Christ in glory. This is the real theme. Together with them, that is with the entire Church of the past 2000 years, we will be taken away with force. That is with the power (the working) through which He can also subdue all things to Himself. (Philippians 3 : 21) That power will work in us and thus we will be changed and taken away from the earth.

## The clouds

Where are we going? We go with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and we will come again with Him! The Lord will come on the clouds. He can only come on (out of) the clouds when He is first on (above) the clouds. There are many other prophecies in which those clouds are mentioned. (including Exodus 16 : 10, 19 : 9, Ezekiel 32 : 7, 34 : 12, Daniel 7 : 13) 1 Thessalonians 4 : 17 speaks about those clouds from the prophecies, unless explicitly stated otherwise. The clouds from 1 Thessalonians 4 : 17 refer to the day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 5 : 1.

In Acts 1 : 11b the two men in white clothing say: "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." "So" means that it will be on the Mount of Olives. Moreover, it says that a cloud took Him away from their eyes. (Acts 1 : 9) That means that when the Lord comes back, the same things will happen in reverse order. The Lord will appear from the cloud on the Mount of Olives in the future. The visible ascension of Christ was His last sign in connection with His second coming. That was what the disciples saw. The real ascension of Christ took place on the resurrection day.

Matthew 24 : 30 says: "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great

glory." I believe that that great power and glory refers to the Church. Compare Luke 2 : 13 and Hebrews 12 : 22 and Judas : 14.

In Ezekiel 30 : 3 it says: "For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near; it will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles." The sun and the moon will then be covered (darkened) by the clouds because of the earthquakes and the destruction of Jerusalem. It does not matter whether the clouds are dust or water vapour, does it? That darkness will at least be all over Israel. From that darkened heaven the Lord (the glorified form of the Lord including the Church) will appear in glory. That will then be the only Light to be seen in the wider area.

In the book of Revelation, first the Lord Jesus Christ is presented and immediately after that the Church. It must be like this, because there is no other way. Revelation 1 : 5b and 6 says: "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Those who He has made kings and priests is the Church. Some say that Revelation speaks about the return of Christ and about Israel and the nations. It is felt that the Church should not appear in the book of Revelation. One is then forced to explain away the Church from Revelation. But the above reasoning can be easily turned around: Since the revelation of Christ will be the revelation of Christ including His Church, we should expect the Church to appear everywhere in Revelation.

### **To meet**

What does it mean to meet the Lord in the air? 'To meet' means to go to Him and to return together with Him. 'To meet' does not mean to go somewhere, but to go to someone to return with that person. When we meet the Lord, it means that the Lord comes to earth. Meeting him does not necessarily have to happen in time and space. It is therefore possible to say that our promotion to glory can be referred to in itself as the coming of the Lord. If we are conformed to Him and are like Him, then that is also 'to meet' Him. You can also meet each other while sitting on a chair on either side of a table.

The first coming of the Lord was a picture of His return. The Lord will come again, but with Him will immediately appear a multitude of heavenly hosts. Those armies will praise God and say, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2 : 13, 14) Therefore an angel of the Lord appeared, and immediately a multitude of heavenly hosts. Luke 2 : 8-14 thus contains truth about the Church. When

we appear in glory on the Mount of Olives, it can be easily seen from the fields of Ephrata. That is only a distance of a few kilometres. Perhaps that angel of the Lord and the army also appeared above the Mount of Olives. In any case, the shepherds could see it. The Lord will appear with His ten thousand angels. (Hebrews 12 : 22, Jude : 14) The Lord will appear with His body. That is obvious.

The future of the Lord begins with the descending of the Lord on the clouds on the Mount of Olives. If we are glorified with Him and share with Him the revelation of His Kingdom, then we must meet Him in the air. The one is therefore related to the other. Since the Lord comes on the clouds, we also come on the clouds. That is not necessarily on the day of what we call 'the rapture of the Church'. In 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 not so much is said about the day of the rapture of the Church, but about the day of Christ's return, 7 years later.

We should not only take the meeting of the Lord literally. We would go to Him, that we might be glorified with Him. We are gathered in heaven after the redemption of our bodies. Then the tasks within the Church will be divided. After all, it is a governing body. Only after 7 years are we revealed with Christ in glory. In that intermediate 7 years we are in heaven with the Lord. We then have a task in connection with the woman from Revelation 12. So the rapture of the Church is a preparation for the second coming of Christ. Our future is thus directly related to the return of Christ. When He appears visibly from heaven, we also appear visibly from heaven. The emphasis is not on going to Him. The emphasis is on being revealed with Him in glory.

### **The revelation before Christ**

Hopefully it has now become clear that it is only 1 Thessalonians 4 : 13-17 and no other Scripture that speaks about the idea that we will be caught up. It does not say that we will go up slowly and will slowly disappear from view. That is based on a human reasoning. It might be possible, but if that were the biblical idea, it would be impossible to explain that those who have been with the Lord in heaven for centuries will still be part of the rapture of the Church. We call it 'the rapture of the Church'. In reality it is the revelation before the judgment seat of Christ. This expression is also more common in the Bible. We have therefore chosen an unfortunate term to describe these things. As a result, we developed a wrong notion. We expect that, from one moment to the next, we will suddenly see where we are and where we were already. That is in heaven, surrounded by heavenly beings (angels) with the Lord visible in our midst.

Distance does not play a role at all. When the Church is caught up, our bodies leave this visible world. We then see that other world, of which we have been part of for many years. That means that people no longer see us here on earth. In any case, they will no longer see us in our old form. When they see us again, they will see us in great power and glory.

The Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me." (John 16 : 16) The waiting is for His return, in which He will reveal Himself in glory. Our future expectation is that we will be revealed with Him in glory. To this end, we will first be physically changed. That redemption of our body is connected with the result of the work of the Spirit in us. The rapture is the final settlement with regard to the Church and thus with all members of the Church.

## **Descending**

The descending of the Lord is therefore not a descending of the Lord on the occasion of the rapture of the Church. It is the descending that we know from the prophecies on the occasion of the conversion of the Jewish people at the end of the 70th week of Daniel. Then one will (probably the Jewish government of the Jewish state) invoke the Name of the Lord. On the basis of calling upon His Name (Jehovah) the Lord will descend. Everything the Jewish people now have in the country will be lost on that occasion. The Lord regards Judaism and Zionism as wood, hay and straw. All these things will be taken away and replaced by His glory, His inheritance and by His Kingdom. One does not expect that, but one could have known better from Scripture.

We now know that all these things will take place. Yet we know that our future is not in a Great Tribulation or in the 70th week of Daniel. We will meet the Lord exactly in time and we will be revealed with the Lord exactly in time at the end of Daniel's 70th week. God will still fulfil the promises and prophecies made in relation to Israel and the nations. Many claim that all those prophecies have already been fulfilled and that Israel has no future. The fulfilment of the prophecies awaits completion, or rather the appointment as Son of the Church. That is what the whole world is waiting for. Even believers in our days ask, "Where is God and why is He not doing anything?" In reality, for 2,000 years God has been secretly preparing for His revelation in glory together with the Church.

We should be glad that the Lord is doing this work now. We have been added to the Church that is being saved. It is a salvation with eternal

glory. (2 Timothy 2 : 10) The deposition of our earthly body is of totally minor importance. It is our revelation with Christ in glory, in which you and I are called to radiate or make known the glory of Christ. That is a logical continuation of our priestly function, which we already have in the old body. The service we now have as believers in the flesh has its logical continuation after the rapture of the Church. Where we are now servants of God, we will also be in the future. Where we now declare His glory, His multi-coloured wisdom, His mercy, we will do so in the future. That is what we will do in heaven, with an invisible body, in connection with the events on earth.

### **Titus 2 : 13**

13 Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let this be our personal expectation.

**Amen**