

**GRACE BIBLE CHURCH**  
**Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries**

**The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.**

**The Tree of Life from the week ending 03/11/07**

**What it means to be initiated into the secret of the mystery. Part 53.**

**The Rapture will be the end of the age of no prophecy. Part 2.**

**I**n our subject of the Rapture, we last noted the coming of Christ in the clouds of the air for the Church. Around 1824, John Darby was a member of the church of England and he was a little grieved about the spiritual condition of that church. So, he decided to do a study regarding what the Bible said about the Church, what it is, and how it should conduct itself. Darby found that the Church is something unique, absolutely different than any other undertaking God has ever done. He studied God's plan and purpose for Israel, and he contrasted that with God's purpose for the Church, and found that God never mixes Israel and the Church. He began to see that the Church had a miraculous beginning, and was created only after Israel had rejected and executed their own Messiah and God had set them aside. We have also studied that the Church was a mystery, and that mystery was the fact that God was going to have a period in human history where He would deal with the Gentiles and not the Jews. Rom 11 puts in a unique way: Rom 11:7-17, *“What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; just as it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day.’ And David says, ‘Let their table become a snare and a trap, and a stumbling block and a retribution to them. Let their eyes be darkened to see not, And bend their backs forever.’ I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! [Israel has a future called their fulfillment] But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? And if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches [toward the Jews]; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.”*

This means that we are saved and included in God's program because we have inherited the covenant given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that's the root. However, the covenant we are speaking of is the salvation covenant, not the four unconditional covenants given to Israel. The four unconditional covenants given to Israel are: The Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants to Israel. These covenants have an eternal life clause based on the fact that Israel has a future both in time and in eternity. The Abrahamic Covenant defines the *race* for client nation Israel. Abraham became a Jew at age 99; circumcision was the sign (Gen 12:1-3, 13:15-16, 15:18, 22:15-18, 26:3-4;

Exo 6:2-8). The Palestinian Covenant defines the *land* for client nation Israel (Gen 15:18; Num 4:1-12; Deu 30:1-9; Jos 1:3-4). The Davidic Covenant defines the *dynasty* for client nation Israel (2Sa 7:8-16; Psa 89:20-37). The New Covenant defines the *restoration* of the client nation Israel at the Second Advent and its Millennial modus operandi (Jer 31:31-34). This part of the contract is not operational until the Second Advent.

The covenant we have received is given in Gen 15:6 *“Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”* Therefore Paul says to the Gentiles in Gal 3:6-9, *“Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations shall be blessed in you.’ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.”* Rom 11:17-20, *“But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches [toward the Jews]; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’ Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;”* This is a passage against anti-Semitism. Rom 11:20-22, *“Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches [Israelites as a group], neither will He spare you [Gentiles as a group]. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you [Gentiles], God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.”* This is God's warning to the Gentiles who are in a place of favor now, God's grace is upon them. For a Jew to be saved today, he has to come to a Gentile dominated church and believe in Jesus as Messiah, and this can be humiliating to a Jew. Darby really understood this, he knew that the Church had a very specific beginning at Pentecost, and that it is going to have a very specific ending, the Rapture, and then God is going to go back and deal with Israel again. Rom 11:23-24, *“And they also [Israelites as a group], if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more [a fortiori] shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?”* This passage is not talking about individual Gentiles nor individual Jews but rather both as groups. So when it says they can be grafted back into their own tree, it is not that a Jew is believing and becoming a member of the Church, because we're talking about the position of God's special blessing on a group of people. It means that if they are grafted back into their own olive tree that God is once again going to be dealing with the Jew in a place of favor. That's the importance of the correct interpretation of this passage. It is not talking about individuals, that would mean that you could lose your salvation, it is talking about the Gentiles and Israel as groups. Rom 11:25 *“For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in [the completion of the Church];”* Rom 11:26 *“and thus all Israel will be saved;”* This means every Jew who believes in Jesus Christ as Messiah is true Israel and they will be saved. What about the Jews who do not get saved who are Israelites? Rom 9:6 says, *“But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended*

*from Israel;” Back in Rom 11:27-36, “And this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins. From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”*

The Church is distinct from Israel, it's unique, and this wasn't known until God revealed it, in detail, to the Apostle Paul who was the first to understand it. So again, the Church began with a miracle (the baptism of the Spirit), and it was going to end with a miracle (the Rapture). The Church was a kind of parenthesis that was not foretold in the O.T.. One reason that God did not tell the Jews about the Church in the O.T. is because God couldn't foretell that He had a special Church coming, made up of Gentiles, and that He was going to accomplish what He called the fullness of the Gentiles. The Jews would have held that they were going to fail to believe in the Messiah when He came, and therefore when He came, naturally they rejected Him because God already had an alternate program in place. God had to keep this alternate program a mystery so that He could make an all out bona fide offer of the kingdom that was promised to the Jew. So the fullness of the Gentiles is talking about this parenthesis in history we call the Church.

When you really understand the Church, and the reason for the Church, you'll understand why God extracts the Church before the Tribulation. There's no purpose in the Church's presence upon the earth during the Tribulation. In fact, its presence would hinder the purpose of God in the Tribulation because it is to be a time when God allows the full manifestation of evil for the sake of Israel's redemption, and for the unsaved Gentiles. When the believer understands that Satan's attack is directed, not toward the Church, but Israel, during the Tribulation period (Rev 12 and Dan 12), then the one understands that the Church will not be here. Michael will stand up for Israel at that time (Dan 12:1).

God has three witnesses that put the nail in Satan's coffin: The first witness is the Lord Jesus Christ. The second witness are the winner believers. The third witness is Christian marriage. Therefore, Satan spends all his time attacking Israel in the Tribulation period because of the absence of the Church, and he wants to destroy God's covenant people, the Jews, in order to attempt to make God a liar with respect to His promises and covenants. In 2Th 2:1, Paul is convincing the disturbed believers of Thessalonica that they are living in a lifestyle of fear because of false reports that the Tribulation period had begun. This is the same thing that is happening today when people teach that the Tribulation period is to be endured by the Church, and this simply causes people to become Christian activists. Therefore one becomes aware that like the believers in Thessalonica, the final gathering of believers are resurrected in immortal bodies and will precede the Tribulation period. When you understand that the Spirit of life in the believers of the Church-age is empowered by God the Holy Spirit, who is resident in

every believer, then you understand that Satan cannot prevail against the Church during the Tribulation period. This is because there is always a pivot of mature believers who make sure the gates of hell cannot prevail against it (Mat 16:13-18). Look at Eph 5:25 *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;”* When you truly understand that TLJC said this, how could you even insult Him by saying He will leave His bride on earth to suffer the worst time in all of human history.

**Point 3. Time of the Rapture or the Doctrine of Imminence.**

Many signs were given to the nation Israel which would precede the Second coming which is a totally different event than the Rapture. This is so the nation would be living in expectancy when the time of His coming should draw near. Although Israel could not know the day nor the hour, they could know, through these signs, that their redemption is drawing near. To the Church however, no such signs were given. The Church is told to live in the light of the imminent return of TLJC (Joh 14:2-3; Acts 1:11; 1Co 15:51-52; Phi 3:20; Col 3:4; 1Th 1:10; 1Ti 6:14; Jam 5:8; 2Pe 3:3-4). Imminence means impending, or threatening to occur immediately. It does not mean immediately. Imminence is used technically for the fact that no prophecy has to be fulfilled before the Rapture occurs. The rapture will occur when the last member of the body of Christ is saved. The early Church anticipated the Rapture under the concept of imminence, 1Co 1:4-8, *“I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The Corinthian church was made up of loser believers, yet Paul thanked God concerning them because they were the beneficiaries of phenomenal grace, they were in union with Christ, and most of all were enriched by Him. Enrichment in the Christian life is not measured in terms of work and Christian service, but in terms of doctrine and knowledge, yet most of the Corinthian believers rejected that doctrine. So while the Rapture is imminent, no one really knows when it will occur. In the meantime, the Royal Family of God lives in this dispensation of historical trends. In fact, the imminence of the Rapture is a doctrine for mature believers only. A mature believer lives as though the Rapture could occur at any moment, however, only the Trinity knows when the Rapture is going to occur.

**Point 4. The Work of the Holy Spirit as the Restrainer (2Th 2).**

2Th 2:1 *“Now we request you, brethren [all fellow believers], with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him [the Rapture], that you may not be quickly shaken [or agitated or distracted] from your composure or be disturbed [or terrified] either by a spirit [prophetic utterance] or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.”* The Greek noun *episunagogue* means to gather together in one place, namely in the air, for the purpose of worship and our glorification in the presence of Him. The Thessalonians were concerned that the Rapture had already taken place, and the day of the Lord was already there. In the Bible, *the day of the Lord* can include the Rapture, the last half of the Tribulation, Second Advent, and Millennium, all totaling 1007 years, or it can be used for any portion of this period, the context dictating how long (Isa 2:12, 13:6; Joel 1:15, 2:1; Zec 14:1, 1Th 5:2; 2Pe 3:10). 2Th 2:3 *“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it [the day of the Lord] will*

*not come unless the apostasy [or the departure] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,*” This indicates, in the Greek syntax, that the son of destruction is unveiled at the very beginning of *the day of the Lord* or at the Rapture of the Church. So, first Paul shows them *that the day of the Lord* could not take place until there was a departure. The Greek word for *apostasy* in verse 3 is *apostasia* and refers to a departure, either the departure from the faith, or the departure of the saints as mentioned in verse 1. Secondly, Paul reveals that there was to be the manifestation of the man of sin or the lawless one described in Rev 13.

2Th 2:3-6, *“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you [face to face], I was telling you these things? And you know or have come to know what [that which] restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.”* Notice it says *what* restrains him now, not who restrains him, and what restrains him now is the mystery of the spiritual life of the Church-age. 2Th 2:7 *“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work [super-naturally operative] only He [the Holy Spirit who is empowering the spiritual life] who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.* Here the Holy Spirit is the one who empowers the spiritual life of the believer. This lawless one could not be manifested until the restrainers (Church-age believers living the spiritual life), and the restrainer (God the Holy Spirit), be taken out of the way. As long as the Holy Spirit is resident within the Church, which is His temple, His restraining work will continue. In Dan 9:27, Daniel reveals that this lawless one will be manifested at the beginning of the 70th week, *“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”*

2Th 2:8 *“And then that lawless one will be revealed [there will be the public manifestation of the lawless one] whom the Lord [TLJC] will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;”* This is the appearance of Christ to earth at the Second coming, not what Paul is talking about in verse 1, which is the Rapture. Look at 1Th 3:11-13, *“Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”* In 2Th 2:9-12, the object turns back to the anti-Christ; *“that is, the one [the anti-Christ's advent] whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false [the lie], in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth [Gospel], but took pleasure in wickedness [or unrighteousness].”*

So again, the understanding of the pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church, or the body of Christ, comes clearly from understanding the principle of Mystery doctrine more than it does from understanding prophecy. As we noted, there's no purpose to be served

by the Church's presence upon the earth during the Tribulation. God, in the Tribulation, is dealing with Israel and the unbelieving Gentiles under the principle of crisis evangelism. This is why we read in Rev 12:1-12, “*And a great sign appeared in heaven a woman [a reference to Israel] clothed with the sun [a reference to Jacob], and the moon under her feet [wives of Jacob], and on her head a crown of twelve stars [the twelve patriarchs or the twelve tribes of Israel]; and she [Israel] was with child [a reference to the virgin pregnancy]; and she cried out [a reference to the many different Jewish Holocausts throughout human history], being in labor and in pain to give birth [she wanted to be delivered from this anti-Semitism]. And another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon [that's Satan] having seven heads and ten horns, [which is the revived Roman empire of the Tribulation plus ecumenical religion, which is being formed today], and on his heads were seven diadems or crowns. And his tail [a reference to Satan's power] swept away a third of the stars of heaven [a reference to the pre-historic revolution in Heaven when one third of the angels in Heaven followed Satan in the pre-historic angelic conflict], and He [God] threw them to the earth [this will happen in the middle of the Tribulation]. And the dragon [Satan] stood or who had stood before the woman [the virgin Mary] who was about to give birth [the thing that Satan tried so hard to stop, anticipating the virgin birth of Christ], so that when she gave birth he [Satan] might devour or destroy her child destroy the humanity of Christ. And she [the virgin Mary] gave birth to a son [the humanity of Christ], a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron [TLJC will use to rule during the Millennium]; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne [ascension and session]. And the woman, true Israel, the believing Jews fled into the high desert country in order that there [in that specific geographical location, namely the desert country of Edom, Moab and Ammon] she might be nourished [or sustained] for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. And there was a battle in heaven [Michael and his army of elect angels fought against the dragon]. And the dragon and his angels fought, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven, And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now deliverance [Second advent], and the power, [Jesus Christ in Hypostatic union, undiminished deity, true humanity in one person forever] and the kingdom of our God [the Father's plan for the Millennial reign of our Lord Jesus Christ] and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night.’ Furthermore they overcame him, [that is Satan], because of the blood of the lamb, [the saving work of Christ on the cross, and because of the doctrine applied] by means of their testimony. In fact they did not love their life to the point of death. For this reason, be celebrating you heavens, [elect angels and all resurrected Church-age believers] and you, who live temporarily in them, [O.T. saints and Tribulational martyrs, who reside in heaven in the interim body] Woe to both land and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having and holding on to great wrath, or foaming with fury because he knows that his time is short.”*

If a believer has perception regarding the pre-historic angelic conflict and the appeal trial of Satan, he will understand the difference between the Church-age and the Tribulation period. The appeal trial of Satan is co-terminus with human history and when

you understand that the dispensation of the Hypostatic Union and the glorified humanity of Christ and the Church age has to do with the prosecution's rebuttal, and that the Tribulation period coincides with Satan's rebuttal, then you understand that the Tribulation period must be separate from the Church-age. One period is God's rebuttal toward Satan, the Church-age. The other period is Satan's rebuttal toward God, the Tribulation period. At the Rapture, the Church, is gone to the courtroom of heaven and they are now on the witness protection program. Therefore Satan's defense comes and he uses nothing but violence. It is going to be the greatest time anti-Semitism in all of human history.

So, we have two mysteries, the first is found in 1Ti 3:16 *“And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, taken up in glory.”* The Greek word for *godliness* is *eusebeia* meaning the spiritual life of TLJC. Then we have the *godliness* or the *eusebeia* of the mystery of living the spiritual life of the believer. 1Ti 4:7-8, *“But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; the spiritual life for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”* Secondly, in the Tribulation period, we will have the mystery of lawlessness (2Th 2:7). In other words the spiritual life of two unique humanities is the means and defeat of Satan in the angelic realm, TLJC, the unique humanity and the Church, the new humanity. So, the first witness, TLJC is out of reach He's seated at the right hand of God. The second witness will be out of reach after the Rapture, the Church, on earth right now. The third witness, not necessary or needed but still there, Christian marriage, will also go up in the Rapture. This will leave the man of lawlessness (2Th 2:3) and the mystery of lawlessness of 2Th 2:7, unrestrained.