

provided for, and nourished during the "time, times, and half-a-time," referring to three-and-a-half years, which is equivalent to 42 months, or 1,260 days (3 1/2 x 360 days) spoken of in *Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 11:2-3; 12:6,14; 13:5*.

In scripture, the word "time" refers to a 360 day prophetic year.

"Time" refers to a year. Therefore, "times" is two years, and "half a time" is half a year or 6 months, which equals 3 1/2 years. The period of Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord (*Read tracts: 'Signs Of The End Of The Age,' 'Heavenly Signs Introduce The Day Of The Lord'*).

Who will not be protected? Unrepentant sins and disobedience to God's commandments has brought and will increasingly bring untold misery, pain and suffering upon this world. The Bible states that man does not know the way to peace (*Is 59:8*). When men will say "peace," sudden inescapable destruction comes upon them (*Jer 6:14*). The Great Tribulation is approaching fast, and will be so devastating that only Christ's return will stop world suicide from becoming a reality (*Mt 24:21-22*).

Conclusion: As we have discovered in our study of the scriptures, there is a living hope of the resurrection for all true believers at Christ's return. There is no secret rapture to heaven prior to the Great Tribulation. At least part of God's Church will be protected in the place prepared by God Himself, on this earth (*Rev 3:10; 12:6, 14*).

In the meantime, we are to develop an intimate spiritual relationship with God, live holy lives, zealous of good works, and preach the gospel throughout the world, as we eagerly await the blessed hope of Christ's soon return! (*Mt 24:14; Mk 16:15; Titus 2:13-14*). (*Read tracts: 'Intimacy With God,' & 'Living Hope.'*)

Scriptural References:

Isaiah 40:10

Isaiah 59:8

Jeremiah 6:14

Ezekiel 7

Daniel 7:25; 12:7

Matthew 16:18

Matthew 24:14-22, 36-44

Mark 16:15

Luke 21:20-21

John 17:15

John 18:36

Acts 2

1 Corinthians 15:50-53

2 Corinthians 11:1-2

Ephesians 5:22-33

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

Titus 2:13-14

Revelation 3:10

Revelation 5:10

Revelation 6:9-11

Revelation 11:2-3

Revelation 12:6,9,13-17

Revelation 13:5

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Secret Rapture or Place of Safety?

Millions of professing Christians believe in a “secret rapture,” when Jesus Christ will secretly return to whisk away true Christians from the coming “Great Tribulation.” Is this Biblically correct? Will you be whisked away to heaven? Or is there a place of safety here on the earth? Does God promise protection? If so, who will be protected? When and where will this occur?

Many professing Christians believe the idea of a rapture up into heaven before the prophesied Great Tribulation. Also promoted through movies and books. According to the “secret rapture” theory, Christians believe that Jesus will return to earth in two phases:

1) He will return secretly to whisk away true Christians to heaven, where they will be protected from the Great Tribulation of the last days (*Read tract: 'Signs Of The End Of The Age'*).

2) His public return, when He will return with them to confront and judge God's enemies at Armageddon, which will be visible to everyone (*Read tract: 'Awesome And Exalted: Battle Of That Great Day Of God Almighty!'*).

Among the millions of professing Christians who believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ, there are hundreds of various beliefs concerning when and how He will return.

The three main ideas are the “Postmillennial Coming,” the “Secret Rapture” and the “Spiritual Coming.”

1) **The “Postmillennial Coming”** is the idea that Christ's second coming would occur after the millennium—the time when His Kingdom was prophesied to be established here on earth—and was suggested by an English clergyman in A.D.1700. However, those who uphold this idea are finding it increasingly perplexing to believe that man can ever succeed in bringing worldwide peace and prosperity without Christ's intervention (*Isaiah 40:10*).

2) **A second frequently accepted idea** believed by millions of professing Christians is the idea of a “**Secret Rapture**,” where Jesus will return to earth in two stages. First, He will return to earth secretly to whisk away all true Christians to heaven, where they will be supernaturally protected from the “Great Tribulation.” Thereby, believing the promised place of safety is up in heaven, not on earth. It is believed that the second stage of Christ's return is a “public” appearing where every eye will see Him.

The word “rapture” was unheard of by the early New Testament Church of God or anyone else for that matter until around 1830, when it was adopted by a few people in Britain and later publicized in the famous Scofield Reference Bible.

The first few supporters of the rapture theory passionately believed that they were living in the last 3 1/2 years of earth's history. When that time elapsed and Christ still had not yet returned to “rapture them away,” they changed their doctrine to a general anticipation that Christ might return unexpectedly—at any time! That is how the “Secret Rapture” doctrine circulated through much of Protestantism today.

Christ told His followers in Judea to flee to the mountains when they see a particular “abomination of desolation” (*Mt 24:15-20; Lk 21:20-21*). When Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, true Christians fulfilled this prophecy and fled into the mountains. But this prophecy is DUAL—meaning it has a former fulfillment and latter day fulfillment. At the end time, Christians in Judea are given instructions to flee to the mountains when the “abomination of desolation” is occurring. There would be no concern with a flight being in the winter or on the Sabbath, or invading armies, if there was a “secret rapture!”

3) **The third prevalent belief is that Christ is already here.** Many presume that Jesus, after His resurrection, came the second time on the day of Pentecost (*Acts 2*). Those upholding this theory claim that His Kingdom was the Church He founded during that time, and therefore all the churches together comprise the “Kingdom of God.” If this were so, such a kingdom would not fulfill many Bible prophecies. Also, scriptures state that the early true Christians, including apostle Paul were eagerly awaiting the Second Return of Christ and His Kingdom long after Pentecost! (*Titus 2:13*). Jesus' spiritual Church began on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after His resurrection (*Mt 16:18; Acts 2*). But He stated clearly that His Kingdom was not of this world (*Jn 18:36*).

Rapture and the Bible - There is no Biblical support for a “rapture” of Jesus' followers out of the world. Nowhere in the Bible do we find the word “rapture.” In fact, when Christ was praying for His followers in *John 17:15*, He did not ask the Father to take them out of the world, but that He would protect them from the evil one.

English words such as “rapt,” “raptor” or “rapture” originate from Latin translations. In English literature, to be raptured means to be suddenly caught up. The Bible describes a sudden catching up of Christ's followers at His return, as the resurrection, and it does not happen years before every eye will see Christ's return. Instead, it occurs at the end of the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord.

The resurrection will occur at the seventh or last trumpet, when the righteous dead will be raised and living true believers are changed to immortal spirit beings (*1 Cor 15:50-53*). They cannot have been taken up into glory before the calamitous events of the 3 1/2 years of Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord. Scriptures don't support a rapture of the saints to heaven for a few years.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 refers to a resurrection and glorification of true believers at Christ's return accompanied by a loud command, voice of an archangel and trumpet call of God. This does not refer to a “rapture,” but rather being “caught up.” (*Read tract: 'Is Heaven Your Reward?'*)

Does God promise protection and who will be protected? In scripture, a “woman” is used as a symbol for a Church (*2 Cor 11:1-2; Eph 5:22-33*). God will provide a place of safety for His true Church - spiritual Israel, where it will be protected from Satan (who is also called the “devil,” “dragon” or “serpent.”) (*Rev 12:9, 13-14*).

God's promise of protection for His true saints during this time of severe turbulence and distress is specifically found in *Rev 12:6*. The commandment keeping, faithful Christians will be supernaturally protected. God promises supernatural protection for His true Church (elect) during the Great Tribulation of 3 1/2 years (time, times and half a time), at the end of the age (*Revelation 3:10; 12:14*).

According to *Rev 3:10*, those who overcome—endure patiently to the end, will be kept safe from the “hour of trial” or “hour of temptation,” which is referred to as the coming Great Tribulation.

Revelation 3:10 - ‘Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.’ (NIV).

We also find another scripture that informs us that at least part of God's people will suffer Satan's persecution, while others will be supernaturally protected, as mentioned in:

Revelation 12:17 - ‘Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.’ (NIV).

It's possible that the outcome of this persecution will be martyrdom as represented by the fifth seal of Revelation (*Rev 6:9-11*).

Where will the saints of God be protected? God's obedient servants will be protected in a wilderness or desert—a special place prepared by God. It is during the coming time of Satan's wrath upon the entire world, as we read in:

Revelation 12:6 - ‘and the woman fled into the **wilderness**, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.’ (NRSV).

Revelation 12:14 - ‘But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent into the **wilderness**, to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.’ (NRSV).

I wish to emphasize that this particular place will not be up in heaven. Instead, it will be here on the earth, in the “wilderness” or “desert” as it's often translated. *Note: in the Bible, heaven is never described as a wilderness.*

Notice that “earth” helps the woman (*Rev 12:16*). Therefore, the true “saints”-members of God's true Church—will be in a place of safety here on the earth during the Great Tribulation—not up in heaven, as many rapture theorists believe!

Although God promises protection, there are no scriptures in the Bible stating exactly where the specific location is. Also, God doesn't reveal specifically where, when and how, or even the identities of the individuals who will be protected. However, as the appointed time of the end approaches, we can be assured that He will reveal all the information we need to know.

In the meantime, we must remain focused on our spiritual preparation for Christ's return and establishment of God's Kingdom and government on this earth (*Mt 24:36-44; Rev 5:10*). Always being watchful, ready, alert and sober, for no one knows the day or hour of His return (*Read tract: 'Glorious & Imminent Return Of Jesus Christ'*).

When and how long will the saints be protected? The phrase: “The woman was given the **two wings of a great eagle**, so that she **might fly** to the place, prepared for her in the desert, ...” in *Rev 12:14*, has been misunderstood by some, to mean that it is referring to the form of transportation. It's using figurative language in actual fact, it means that the woman will escape or flee from Satan's persecution, whereby God's true Church will be