

Rightly dividing our Lord's returns.

A look at some of the Biblical support for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

INTRODUCTION

Rather than argue from the usual 'rapture passages', this work seeks to take a more panoramic view of God's ways with mankind. You will notice an almost complete lack of references to the gospels, there are two principal reasons for this; first, over familiarity and second, that the gospels are primarily an historical record of OT fulfilment written both *from and to* an almost exclusively Jewish perspective. The subject matter of the epistles occurs after that of the gospels and we should be very careful not to read the epistles back into the gospels, only confusion results. I am continually amazed at the perfection and completeness of God's revelation of Himself and His wonderful grace to us in our Lord Jesus Christ. If we want to make Jesus known more effectively then we need to know Him better ourselves; understanding the Pre-Trib Rapture will help enormously. May the Holy Spirit add his blessing.

Many believe in The Trinity even though the word 'trinity' does not appear in the bible, both trinity and rapture are simply English words (of which there are none in the original mss). The bible is full of the doctrine of The Trinity, the utterly unexplainable concept of three distinct persons (expressed as; Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in one, God.

If we take the Telescope rather than the Microscope to the Bible and ask; What is God doing here, and Why? We find the rapture distinguished from the Second Advent and a clear sequence of events emerges. However, before we go there, a quick word in answer to those who say "Oh, that's Dispensationalism". Dispensationalism is NOT a doctrine, it is a TOOL, a tool for helping to understand the message of the Bible, it is like a set of 'Dividers', sometimes called 'Calipers'. We use them to identify an era or period of time as defined by it's character, eg; in our day God is 'dispensing' grace (grace *is* a doctrine). We have a box full of these tools.

Is the rapture in the bible?

First stop then, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, in Greek...

epeita hmeis oi zwntes oi perileipomenoi ama sun autois arpaghsomeqa en nefelais eis apanthsin tou kuriou eis aera kai outws pantote sun kuriw esomeqa

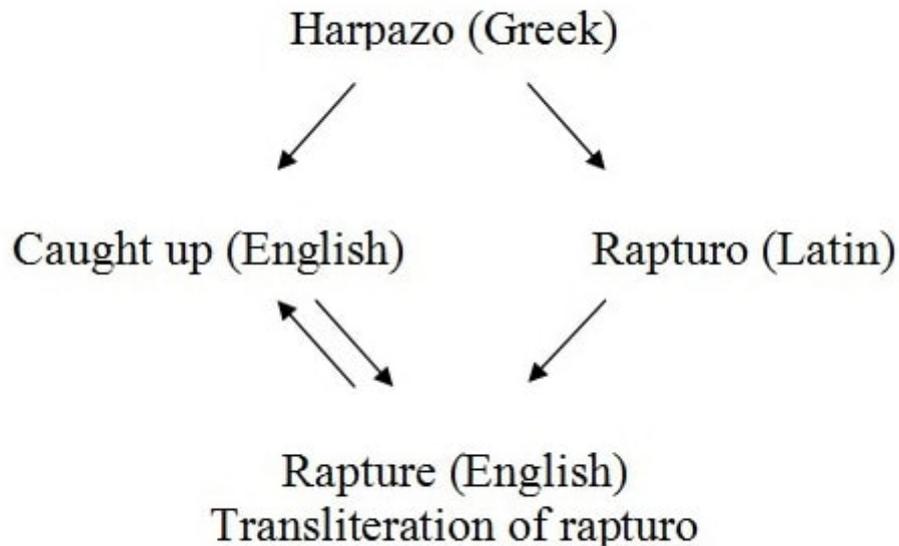
And it is no help whatever unless you are in the minority who knows Greek. I include it solely for the purpose of illustrating that fact. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself and we are greatly mistaken if we think it can be understood by any other means than by revelation of the Holy Spirit.

And in English...

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

'Caught up' is Strong's G726, the Greek word 'harpazo'.

The Greek word "harpazo" translates "caught up" in English and "rapturo" in Latin. It is from the Latin "rapturo" we get "Rapture". Rapture is a transliteration of Rapturo.



You can call it; the harpazo
 the rapturo
 the caught up, or catching away
 the rapture - it's all the same thing.

The Rapture *is* in the bible. The same word is used in regard to Philip in Acts 8:39, Paul in 2 Cor 12:2, and the 'man child' in the vision of Rev 12:5.

What *is* the rapture?

In order to understand what the rapture *is* we need first to be sure that we are not trying to build a doctrine on a lone text and second, see to it that it makes sense in its context. With that in mind I'd like to introduce the next tool from the bible interpretation toolbox, the rule of 'First Mention', I like to think of this tool as a 'Grappling Hook' on a rope. Look for the earliest mention of a thing or idea in the bible and swing your grappling hook around your head for a while and then loose it way back (usually into Genesis) and anchor it firmly in the seedbed of all teaching, then study it in its context for its primary and/or basic meaning. The first mention of God 'catching up' a person is in Genesis 5:24. "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him". Now I want to labour this point, *'took.'* here is Strong's H3947, the Hebrew word 'laqach' (pronounced like 'macaque' the monkey, you know, the ones that 'snatch' peoples sunglasses etc on Gibraltar) it means; "to take, fetch, lay hold of, seize, snatch, take away." Here we have a type (and there are more) of the anti-type in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 which confirms the fundamental doctrine that God can and does 'take out'; a precedent has been set.

The meaning of the English word rapture, as found at www.dictionary.com is "ecstatic joy or delight" or "joyful ecstasy" appropriate to being caught up to heaven. Though this is not it's biblical meaning the rapture could be called the ecstatically joyful moment when watching and waiting Christians will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Does it differ from the Second Advent?

Here we take up another tool from the box, namely the 'Compound Prophecy' tool. I like to think of

this one like a 'Combination Spanner' - two very similar tools, one on each end of a connecting handle. The best known example of which is Isaiah 61:1,2.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn"

Partial fulfilment is seen in Luke 4:19. (1st Advent). Jesus offered good tidings to the meek, He came to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to announce the time in which mankind can accept Him. Jesus stopped there.

The 'day of vengeance of our God' is a completely separate event, or rather, period of time, to be fulfilled in the time before His 2nd Advent, *after which* all those that mourn will be comforted.

It is widely accepted that there are many such 'Compound (or Composite) Prophecies' describing the 1st and 2nd Advents together. There are also many 'Compound Prophecies' in which both *the Rapture* and *the Day of the Lord* are mentioned; here's one, there are lots more.

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" Titus 2:13.

Many scriptures like this one, are quoted as being 'proof' that the rapture (blessed hope) occurs immediately before the 2nd Advent (glorious appearing), in the widely held view that the Church will be 'raptured' to meet the Lord in the air on His way down to set up His kingdom here on earth (2nd Advent), this has the Church rising part way to heaven, meeting Jesus, and returning to earth, setting up and living in 'the Kingdom' here on earth.

Here a precedent has also been set, in that the 1st and 2nd Advents are already distinguished in exactly the same way.

They are 'Compound Prophecy' scriptures in which both events are mentioned, but they cannot be at the *same time* in light of their clearly distinct natures and settings (see list below).

Key Differences between Rapture and 2nd Advent Compared

R = Rapture

2 = 2nd Advent

- | | |
|----|--|
| R. | Christ comes in the <i>air</i> , for His own |
| 2. | Christ comes <i>with</i> His own to the <i>earth</i> |
| R. | <i>No judgement</i> on earth |
| 2. | <i>Christ judges</i> earth's inhabitants |
| R. | Church taken to <i>heaven</i> |
| 2. | Kingdom set up <i>on earth</i> |
| R. | <i>Imminent</i> - could happen any time |
| 2. | Other prophecies (signs) <i>must occur first</i> |
| R. | <i>No Signs</i> |
| 2. | <i>Many Signs</i> for Christ's physical coming |

- R. For *believers* only
 - 2. Affects *all humanity*

 - R. Time of *Joy*
 - 2. Time of *mourning*

 - R. *Before* the 'day of wrath' (Tribulation)
 - 2. Immediately *after* Tribulation (Matt 24:29,30)

 - R. *No mention* of Satan
 - 2. *Satan bound* in abyss for 1,000 years

 - R. *Only His own* see Him
 - 2. *Every eye* will see Him

 - R. *Tribulation* begins
 - 2. *1,000 year Kingdom of Christ* begins
- Understanding Bible Prophecy for Yourself. Tim LaHaye. (edited)

The Rapture is an unseen event

The Lord Jesus Himself calls; He is heard only by those He calls. (eg; Lazarus)

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead *in Christ* shall rise first: Then we which are *alive and remain* shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:16~17.

Salvation is the *object* of the rapture, it has the saints watching and praying, living holy lives, sharing the gospel, looking for their Saviour from heaven; this is our '*blessed hope*' to be ever with the Lord.

John 14:1~3 does not apply to the Church the Body of Christ, it is exclusively for the Little Flock, The Body of Christ did not exist in John 14.

The 2nd Advent is a public event

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and *every eye shall see him*, and they also which pierced him: and *all kindreds of the earth shall wail* because of him. Even so, Amen." Rev 1:7.

As we have just said, Judgement is the *object* of the Day of the Lord. When He comes at His 2nd Advent, He comes in judgement and every eye shall see Him. They who pierced Him would have to be Israel but nowhere is Israel said to be raptured, they are an earthly people awaiting a kingdom on earth. A Christian is not of the world, he is of heaven and why would he wail? His Saviour has come!

When Jesus returns at His 2nd Advent He comes in judgement to those in sin. Never could the Day of the Lord be described as "ecstatic joy or delight" or "joyful ecstasy". Rather, a beleaguered, unbelieving church (small c) is awaiting Anti-Christ and a countdown to Armageddon *before* Jesus returns. This is evidence of the fact that today's church does not take judgement at all seriously, they simply do not believe anything about God's judgement.

Matthew's gospel is addressed to the Jews, about the fulfilment of the kingdom and its coming king, which was rejected and remains so to this day, chapters 24 and 25 relate what happens in answer to the questions; "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" the church is still a mystery and so is not in view. Do you see what I mean about reading the epistles back into the gospels? When Jesus comes for His kingdom it is the millennial kingdom or the 'kingdom of heaven' as promised to the Jews that is in view, so the ten virgins, the women grinding at the mill and the recipients of the talents are all being qualified for the kingdom and those failing the test are taken for judgement and should not be confused with the calling home of the Church.

So when is the rapture?

This is where we get into all sorts of trouble, so back to our toolbox and select the 'Golden Rule' tool. In brief, this rule states: 'where the text and context make sense, seek no other sense'. I like to call it the 'Spade' because it calls a spade a spade and it is *the* best tool for digging in the scriptures. It needs to be used in conjunction with the 'Leading Question' tool or, the 'Flashlight' with which we ask probing Who? What? Why? Where? When? and How? questions. Used properly these tools will ensure that we are "rightly dividing the word of truth" 2 Tim 2:15. In about 1535 Myles Coverdale, translator of the first complete Bible into English said "It shall greatly help ye to understand the Scriptures if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth after."

Go back along your rope to the 'Grappling Hook', (to the ancient landmark, Proverbs 22:28) the story of Enoch in Genesis 5 and read on into the next chapter (context) and we quickly see that the next big event on the calendar is the '*judgement*' of the flood. Noah and his *family* are saved '*through*' the flood, by contrast, Enoch was '*taken out*' beforehand.

We do well to take note of the stories in Genesis (which has been said to be the seedbed of the whole Bible), because there we find another type of the (largely gentile) Church being 'taken out'. The well known but little understood story of Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 is fascinating not least because Lot is a Gentile. Abram is chosen, Lot is a hanger-on. Genesis 11:27 tells us that Lot was Abram's *nephew* and therefore not a Jew. Here we have a spectacular thumbnail drawing of the Church, pertinent in every detail.

But first, there is a very important backdrop to the fire and brimstone. The previous chapter (context) sees three men appear to Abraham and he immediately recognises them as the Lord (the pre-incarnate Jesus) and a couple of angels, you see, Abraham knows the Lord, they have a relationship and the Lord reveals his mind to destroy Sodom. The two angels depart and a conversation between the Lord and Abraham follows in which Abraham ventures to question if it is right for the Lord to destroy the righteous along with the wicked, Gen 18:25.

"That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Abraham finds the thought so objectionable that he challenges the Lord, now remember, Abraham knows who he is speaking to, he is horrified by the thought of the righteous being destroyed with the wicked and so we should be too. Where do we get the idea that the Lord Jesus, in whom is vested all judgement, should pour out God's wrath on those who have His righteousness imputed to them by means of His own death on the cross of Calvary, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do

right?"

Has Jesus taken the Judgement for my sins on Calvary or not?

The Lord assures him that He would spare the whole wicked, seething mass of immoral humanity in Sodom and Gomorrah if there were only ten righteous souls therein, and so too He spares this 'present evil world' (Galatians 1:4) on our account. He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." Numbers 16:20,21.

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." Rev 12:6. Speaking of the remnant of Israel, we can see that they are saved out of the wrath of God, not from it.

These are just two of many other scriptures describing how God does NOT judge the righteous along with the unrighteous. See also; Romans 5:9. Hebrews 4:3. Colossians 3:6. Ephesians 2:3. 5:6. John 3:36. and Nahum 1:2.

Never mind ten righteous, the Lord will not destroy *any* righteous along with the wicked. The two angels come to Sodom and they find Lot *'in the gate'* of the city. Courts of law and debating on social and economic issues was done *in the gate*, just look at the church today, we are sitting in the gate of a wicked society. There is a progression of involvement set out in Psalm 1:1. walking, standing and sitting. Friends, we are fully involved in this world and it is the same losing battle that Lot faced. In spite of offering our most precious things to them, all they want to do is shaft* you. Lot's eyes are only opened to the danger he is in when the angels blind the men of the city at the siege of Lot's house.

* To 'shaft' someone is modern slang, in business or financial terms it means; to rob or to con someone, it also has a secondary meaning; to sodomise.

"And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law."

They reject his message of salvation from the wrath of God. Oh! Dear reader, do not reject the message of salvation. The impending judgement cannot be executed until Lot is out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2:7). His extended family had him in derision as one who mocked, they would not even look into it and consider.

Lot is practically dragged out of Sodom. The man and the type always fall short, the angels would have Lot go to the mountains but he escapes to a small city called Zoar, meaning smallness. We fail every time, God never fails, neither in his mercy nor in his judgement. Let us not be consumed in the iniquity of this world, nor dare to look back.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, *that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*" Romans 12:2.

Do you see the pattern?

Enoch was taken out;

Because he pleased God. Hebrews 11:5.

Lot was taken out;

Because he was *counted* just or righteous. 2 Peter 2:7,8.

Enoch was taken out;

Before the judgement of the flood.

Lot was taken out;

Before the judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah.

These are just a very few of the scriptures that bear on this wonderful uplifting subject, no wonder Paul said "comfort one another with these words".

Why are these people escaping judgement? Because, in the same way as He can't make a square circle, God CANNOT righteously execute judgement upon those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation from that same judgement. Jesus bore Gods wrath for us. Can you see that the idea that you are going to go through the tribulation is saying that God is going to judge you again, that's double jeopardy! It is tantamount to rejecting the gospel and certainly rejecting clear Bible teaching about the nature of God?

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."
1 Thessalonians 5:9.

The Rapture must occur before the Tribulation

After the true Church, consisting of those 'in Christ', the Body, is taken out (2 Thessalonians 2:7), 'The Beast', the ruler of the new world order, the one world government, in partnership with 'The False Prophet', the head of the one world religion, of which the ecumenical church will be part, will make a deal with Israel to guarantee their safety, and peace in the region, for seven years. I believe this deal will be made with no intention of keeping it. They want Israel re-gathered for annihilation, God wants Israel re-gathered for discipline unto salvation (ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good. Genesis 50:20). 144 thousand are sealed from the twelve tribes of Israel (erm, they'll be Israelites then! It means what it says and says what it means) and two prophets or witnesses will appear on the streets of Jerusalem; Moses and Elijah. They will witness against the Beast and the False Prophet for... a time, times and a half a time, forty and two months, 1260 days.

Read Daniels prophecy of seventy weeks along with Revelation, it is most instructive.

Then the deal is broken, the Beast presents himself in the Temple as the 'One and Only' (beware of new translations), claiming to be God himself. Another time, times and a half a time, forty two months or 1260 days starts, this is the time of Jacob's trouble (the clue is in the name), the time of Great Tribulation, the Day of Vengeance of our God (He is avenging for Israel). For the rest of mankind it is called the Day of the Lord, the Day of God's Wrath, etc. It is the time when Jesus pours out God's judgement or wrath on wicked, unregenerate mankind and also a time of discipline, (unto salvation) for the whole re-gathered nation of unbelieving Israel.

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 7:14.

Robes always speak of righteousness and theirs need washing (filthy rags), 'their' righteousness needs to be washed off in the blood of The Lamb. Interesting that nobody notices that those saints going through the tribulation, in addition to being persecuted to martyrdom, not being able to buy food for three and a half years will not survive, so how can there be any 'living who remain'? The Bible NEVER contradicts itself.

Revelation 7:14 is often used to justify the Church going through the tribulation and in a sense it is, but 'these are they' who, though they may have been in the church (small c) were not 'in Christ', not a part of 'the Body of Christ', they are 'Kingdom' saints, looking for a 'Kingdom' here on earth in exactly the same way as the Jews, this is called 'Replacement Theology'. Many think the Church replaces Israel and converts the world.

NOTE In scripture the Body has a Head, never a king. The Bride of Christ is not scriptural. The Nation (of Israel) has a king and the Bridegroom (the Lamb) has a Bride.

Acts 15:13~18 emphatically separates the Church from Israel, as do many other passages. Israel's believing remnant, the Bride, (see Song of Solomon) flees into the wilderness. Remember here that Israel as a nation is unbelieving (Romans 11:28).

Many new believers and those not raptured are persecuted mercilessly by the Beast and the False Prophet. Seals are opened, trumpets sounded and bowls of judgement poured down from heaven, culminating in the return of Jesus to earth with his saints or angels (Jude 14 and many more) not *as* King but to become King, of the Jews (Jesus is *never* king of the Church). Many prophecies are yet to be fulfilled in this period but the element of surprise would be lost if the rapture were dependent on any of them, thus making all those exhortations to 'watch & pray' redundant.

Where have the true Church been all this time then?

Well, at the Rapture we have been changed into incorruptible bodies, like unto His, we've had a grand reunion, we have been judged, not for condemnation, Jesus bore that for us (Romans 8:1), but for rewards, at the judgement seat of Christ (Romans 14:10. 2 Corinthians 5:10). And so shall we ever be with the Lord. If you want to call it escapism feel free, I say bring it on. Jesus promises escape from judgement, that's precisely what the gospel is friends.

That IS the gospel!!! Salvation FROM judgement.

And it goes a lot further than that too! We have little enough idea of what we have been saved *from*, we can hardly comprehend what we have been saved *to*.

In Conclusion

The church has lost sight of the gospel because it has lost sight of God's righteousness and it has lost sight of God's righteousness because it has lost sight of our depravity.

Principle themes run throughout the Bible: God does not judge the righteous with the wicked or the saved with the lost; Salvation is FROM judgement; Salvation is by faith, much blood was spilt in the Reformation to recover this truth.

God always acts in line with his revealed self and the Bible *never* contradicts itself. Often, well reasoned arguments are flawed with thoughtless inconsistencies, eg; many popular presenters expound that the '*overcoming*' in Revelation 2 & 3 is the basis of salvation, this is nothing less than salvation by works and stands in opposition to the clear Bible teaching of salvation by faith alone, in Jesus alone. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom 4:5), "While we were yet sinners" (Rom 5:8).

We are quite familiar with the concept that God is love but while we know about His other attributes like; God is righteous, God is sovereign, God is perfect in all His ways and cannot deny Himself, we prefer to ignore them, it seems.

Followed through, a dispensational and therefore Pre-Trib rapture view harmonizes scripture references previously forced together, enlightens the reader to the interpretation of many other so called 'difficult' passages, removes perceived contradictions and above all gives peace and liberty to the believer.

An exercise in 1 Thessalonians 5:1~10.

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Two groups of people are being addressed here and we must *rightly divide* them.

It's about 'Them & Us'.

v1 & 2. But of the times and the seasons, brethren, **ye** have no need that I write unto **you**. For **yourselves** know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. You (Thessalonians, brethren, believers) do not need to be told about these times, you know perfectly well that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night to 'steal and to kill and destroy' John 10:10. That is not for you guys.

v3. For when **they** shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon **them**, as travail upon a woman with child; and **they** shall not escape. They (those who *do not* believe in Jesus) when *they* shall say, 'Peace and safety' now why would they be proclaiming peace and safety? Because a deal has been struck that guarantees peace. What shall come upon *them*? Sudden destruction. Who? 'a woman with child' can speak of *no one else but Israel*, and *they* shall not escape. Israel shall not escape from the discipline of the Lord in the period known as the time of *Jacob's* trouble.

v4, 5 & 6. But **ye**, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake **you** as a thief. **Ye** are all the children of light, and the children of the day: **we** are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let **us** not sleep, as do others; but let **us** watch and be sober. Ye, you, ye, we, us (Thessalonians, brethren, believers) Are children of light, of the day, *not* of the night or darkness. The Tribulation is a day of darkness, the true Church, as children of light, won't be there.

v7. For **they** that sleep sleep in the night; and **they** that be drunken are drunken in the night. They (those who *do not* believe) are of the night and darkness.

v8, 9, 10. But let **us**, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for **us**, that, whether **we** wake or sleep, **we** should live together with him.

©Marcus Emerson