

THE FIRST RESURRECTION CANNOT HAVE BEGUN IN 1918

The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses correctly teaches that the Great Tribulation is yet future. However, they also teach that Jesus returned invisibly in 1914, and that the first resurrection, in the main, has already taken place in 1918 with a continuing, at-the-point-of-death, immediate resurrection to heaven of those who have died since then. This Jehovah's Witnesses scheme of events closely follows the pattern of the teaching of dispensationalist churches who teach a *pre-tribulation resurrection/rapture*. This contradicts the biblical sequencing of events. Such sequencing can be understood by drawing together the many relevant scriptures and taking note of the way the relevant Greek words are used in these passages. Once one realizes that the gathering of 'the holy ones' refers to their meeting the descending Jesus then Matthew 24 can be seen as a clear sequence of events.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION OCCURS BEFORE THE FIRST RESURRECTION

The MATTHEW 24 SEQUENCE

1. "When you see the **disgusting thing that causes desolation**...standing in a holy place (v.15)."
2. Warning to flee from Judea (verses.16-20).
3. Then the **Great Tribulation** (verse. 21).
4. "Immediately after **the Tribulation** of those days...they will see **the Son of Man coming** on the clouds of heaven" (verses 29-30).
5. "He will send his angels with a **great trumpet** sound, and they **will gather** His chosen ones together from the four winds, from one extremity of the heavens to the other" (verse 31) i.e. harvest/resurrection as in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 23, 52; John 1:3 and 11:24.

It would be illogical to state that this *gathering* is one which is into an organization. Such a statement would mean that the conversion of the individuals occurred after the Great Tribulation.

THE GATHERING TO CHRIST WITH A TRUMPET SOUND IN MATTHEW 24 INVOLVES THE FIRST RESURRECTION

First Thessalonians 4:16 - 5:6 gives nine details of the time of the end. Eight of the details of Matthew 24:30-43 are the same as the details of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 - 5:6 indicating that the ninth detail in Matthew 24:31, namely, "**will gather**," must be the same as the being "**caught away**" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 which the WTS recognizes as being connected to the resurrection. These details are:

1. Son of man (24:30) / Lord himself (4:16).
2. Clouds of heaven (24:30) / air (4:17).
3. Great sound of a trumpet (24:31) / the trumpet of God (4:16).
4. **Gather together** (24:31) / **caught away together** (4:17). *See section on the rapture.*
5. Know that summer is near (24:32) / times and the seasons (5:1).
6. Marrying, then flood came (24:38) / safety then destruction (5:3).
7. Coming of the Son of man (24:39) / day of the Lord (KIT 5:2).
8. Watch (24:42) / stay awake and keep our senses (5:6).
9. Known in what watch the thief was coming (24:43) / thief in the night (5:4).

Evidently Paul was writing about the same subject in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 as Jesus had spoken of in Matthew 24, namely the time of the end that culminates in the resurrection when Christians are gathered together by the angels to meet Jesus. This will occur when everyone:

- ❖ "...will see the **Son of Man coming** on the clouds of heaven. He will send his angels with a **great trumpet** sound, and they **will gather** His chosen ones together from the four winds..."
(Matt. 24: 30, 31).
- ❖ "**The Lord will descend** from heaven...with the voice of an archangel, with **God's trumpet** ... the dead in union with Christ **will rise** first (*resurrected*). Afterward (then), we the living who are surviving will, *together with them*, be **caught away** in clouds to **meet the Lord** in the air..."
(1 Thess. 4:16-18).

So the Matthew 24 sequence can clearly be seen to present an *after the tribulation* first resurrection. With the Great Tribulation yet future it is not possible that the first resurrection occurred in 1918.

THE RESURRECTION IS AT THE 7th [*THE LAST*] TRUMPET

- ❖ "...we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, during **the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound and **the dead** will be **raised up** incorruptible" (1 Cor. 15:52).
- ❖ "The *seventh* angel blew his **trumpet**. And loud voices saying: 'The Kingdom of this world did become the Kingdom of Our Lord and of His Christ...the *nations became wrathful*, and your own wrath came ... **time for the dead to be judged**, and to reward your slaves the prophets and the holy ones'" (Rev. 11:15, 18).

The last trumpet, when the first resurrection occurs, is the 7th trumpet of Revelation. The Kingdom arrives with the 7th trumpet. Therefore, the first resurrection also occurs at the future arrival of the Kingdom and so cannot have occurred in 1918. Please see STUDY 15. THE FUTURE KINGDOM OF GOD WILL BE ON EARTH showing that the **kingdom has yet to arrive** and it will not be invisible.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION/GATHERING OCCURS WHEN CHRIST ARRIVES AT HIS PAROUSIA

- ❖ "...**resurrection** of the dead...*who belong to Christ* at his **parousia**" (1 Cor. 15:21, 23)
- ❖ "I will **come again** and **take you to myself**" (John 1:3).

Adolph Deissmann informs us that:

parousia means **advent**, coming, **arrival**. From the Ptolemaic period down to the 2nd century A.D. we are able to trace the word in the East as a technical expression for the arrival or visit of the King...(or other person in authority).....Adventus coins were struck...Epiphany nearly always means the future parousia of Christ,...

The lexicons of Bauer, Thayer, Moulton and Milligan, Liddle and Scott, and Abbot-Smith give **coming** or **arrival** as the definition of **parousia** with reference to Christ. (Please see STUDY 4 which demonstrates that Christ's *parousia* is yet future at his revelation).

AFTER THE GREAT TRIBULATION

- ❖ "...respecting the **parousia** of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being **gathered together to him**, we request of YOU not to be quickly shaken from YOUR reason...to the effect that the **day of Jehovah** is here...it [*the day of Jehovah*] will not come unless *the apostasy* ("**rebellion**" is better) comes **first**

and *the Man of Lawlessness* gets revealed... Then indeed the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will do away with... by the manifestation of his **parousia**. But the lawless one's **parousia** is according to the operation of Satan" (2 Thess. 2:1-3, 8, 9).

Please see STUDY 6. THE GREAT TRIBULATION IS NOT ARMAGEDDON. As proved from Joel 2:32 and Matthew 24:29 "*the day of Jehovah*" follows after the Great Tribulation. Also, because "*the day of Jehovah*" became "*the day of the Lord/day of Christ*" in the Christian Scriptures it will occur when Jesus returns, at which point the "*gathering together to him*" i.e. the first resurrection occurs. So because it occurs on "*the day of the Lord*" it must of necessity be after the Great tribulation and not in 1918.

AFTER 'THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS' ARRIVES

Second Thessalonians 2 also shows that the 'apostasy' and the appearance of "the man of lawlessness" must be before the first resurrection can occur. Yet this 'man' does not appear until shortly before the one-time return of Christ which is yet future. (Please see Volume 5 STUDY 14). Again this shows that the first resurrection must occur after the Great Tribulation. The sequence is:

1. Rebellion - "many fall away" at the time of the end (Matt 24:10).
2. Man of lawlessness appears 3½ years before Jesus' arrival.
3. 3½ years of Great tribulation.
4. Day of Jehovah (celestial darkening).
5. Jesus descends, at which time the first resurrection occurs.

LOOKING AGAIN AT THE MATTHEW 24 SEQUENCE

1. "When you see the **disgusting thing that causes desolation**...standing in a holy place (v.15)." See NOTE below.
2. Warning to flee from Judea (verses.16-20).
3. Then the **Great Tribulation** (verses.21).
4. "Immediately after the **Tribulation** of those days...they will see **the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven**" (verses 29-30).
5. "He will send his angels with a **great trumpet** sound, and they **will gather** His chosen ones together from the four winds, from one extremity of the heavens to the other" (verse 31) i.e. harvest/resurrection as in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; 1 Corinthians 15:21,23,52; and John 1:3 and 11:24.

NOTE: Mark 13 says "*standing where **he** should not*" NAB, REB. The reference is therefore to an individual. Please see Volume 5 STUDY 7: THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS AS THE FINAL ANTICHRIST which gives proof that this "**disgusting thing**" is a personalization of **the man of lawlessness** who "*sits down in the temple of The God, publicly showing himself to be a god*" (2 Thess. 2:4). There is no scriptural basis for this to be reinterpreted as any kind of composite 'man of lawlessness' such as the clergy of Christendom. So the advent/arrival of the Man of Lawlessness must be shortly before the yet future advent/arrival of the Lord Jesus and is therefore also yet future.

THE RESURRECTION WILL BE AT THE END OF THE AGE HARVEST-TIME

In the Scriptures *harvesting* is often used figuratively of judgment for either condemnation or acquittal. It also, logically, means **a gathering in** as is the case with Jesus' admonition to "beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers" (Luke 10:2). However, in the following scriptures *the harvest/gathering* cannot refer to any extended time for the conversion of individuals to Christianity but is the gathering to Jesus at the very end of the age—on the last day:

❖ "**The harvest** is the conclusion (Gk *syntelia*) of the age" (Matt. 13:39 KIT:).

Syntelia = *a point of time marking completion of a duration* (Bauer and also Thayer). Most translations give 'end.' Marshall's interlinear gives 'completion.' *Syntelia* is synonymous with '*telos*' = 'end' in Matt. 24:14. *Syntelia* is not a period of time otherwise it would become an extra age. Therefore the gathering of Christians to Christ is not until the very end of the age. Yet *we have not yet reached the completion of this age* so no Christians can have been resurrected in 1918 i.e. many years before the completion of the age.

GATHERING IS AT THE END

- ❖ "I am **with you** always, even to the conclusion (*syntelia*) of the age" (Matt. 28:20 KIT).
- ❖ The congregation will have Jesus with them in spirit until the completion of this age at which point he returns in glory (Matthew 24:3). Therefore Christians cannot have departed the earth in 1918. However, Jesus speaks of the harvest as being the time for the gathering of his followers:
- ❖ "Allow both [*wheat and tares*] to grow together until **the harvest**" (Matt. 13:30 NASB).
- ❖ "... upon the cloud ... **son of man** ... another angel ... crying with a loud voice ... put in your sickle and **reap** for **the harvest** of the earth is ... ripe" (Rev.14:14-16).
- ❖ "...the dragnet **gathered** fish of every kind...the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away...so it will be at **the conclusion** (*syntelia* KIT) of the age" (Matt. 13:47-49)

In contrast to the gathering of "*the clusters of the vine of the earth*" for destruction this gathering of "**the harvest of the earth**" concerns the holy ones who have already "*endured*" (verse 12) during the 3½ year period of the worship of the Beast (verse 9) and "**the dead who die in union with the Lord from this time onward**" rest (verse 13). This harvest occurs when "*the hour of judgment by him has arrived*" at the end of the age. So no living Christians can then be in heaven. Of course, the dead are in their graves awaiting resurrection.

RESURRECTION IS ON "THE LAST DAY"

❖ "I will raise him [*Lazarus*] up on the **last day**...he will rise again in *the resurrection* on the **last day**" (John 6:40, 44, 54 and 11:24).

The Greek word for 'last' is *eschatos* which also means *final*. So this presumably refers to the final day of the present age.

- ❖ "...those who are considered worthy to attain to **that age and the resurrection**..." (Luke 20:35).
- ❖ "...he will receive...**in the age to come, eternal life**" (Mark 10:30).

Hence, the last day of the present age must also be the first day of the 'age to come' [*the Millennium*], making the theory of the resurrection as occurring many years before the Great Tribulation impossible.

SUMMARY OF WHEN THE FIRST RESURRECTION OCCURS

1. After the Man of Lawlessness appears.
2. After the Great Tribulation.
3. At the descending and *Parousia* of the Lord.
4. At ‘the end of the age.’
5. On ‘the Last Day.’
6. At the 7th and last trumpet.

NO TRUE CHRISTIANS CAN BE AWAY FROM THE EARTH JUST BEFORE JESUS’ FUTURE RETURN

The teaching of the Governing Body of the JW’s is that the First resurrection is to heaven and that it occurred in 1918 exactly 3½ years after the setting up of the kingdom in October 1914. However, the following Scriptures demonstrate that this is not possible because all **living** Christians must demonstrate their faith right through the Great Tribulation which occurs immediately before Jesus’ revelation (Gk *apokalipsis*) and his appearing (Gk *epiphania*). This requires that they be on earth.

STILL ON EARTH UNTIL THE PAROUSIA

- ❖ “...exercise **patience**, brothers, **until** the **parousia** of the Lord” (James 5:7)
- ❖ “...may the spirit, soul and body of you [*brothers*] be **preserved** in a blameless manner **at** the **parousia** of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess.5:23).

This fact does not contradict the Jehovah’s Witnesses teaching that the ‘parousia’ began in 1914. However, the following scriptural facts do not harmonize with such teaching.

STILL ON EARTH AT THE APOKALYPSIS

- ❖ “...to repay tribulation to those who make tribulation for you...relief along with us at the revelation (**apokalipsei**) of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels...*at the time he comes (elthe = erchomai)* to be glorified in connection with his holy ones and to be regarded **in that day with wonder**” (2 Thess.1:6-10).
- ❖ “...that the **tested quality of your faith...may be found** a cause for praise and glory and honour **at** the revelation (**apokalipsei**) of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7).
- ❖ “...brace up your minds for activity, keep your senses completely; **set your hope upon the undeserved kindness that is to be brought to you at** the revelation (**apokalipsei**) of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13).
- ❖ “...eagerly waiting for the revelation (**apokalipsin**) of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will *make you firm to the end (of the age), that you may be open to no accusation in* the Day of our Lord Jesus...” (1 Cor.1:7, 8).

According to Bauer’s Gk/Eng. Lexicon it is: “The end (*telos*) of the age, not the end of one’s life.”

STILL ON EARTH UNTIL THE EPIPHANIA

- ❖ “...that you **keep the commandment...until** the **epiphania** of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6:14).

Why would Christians be awaiting the revelation of Jesus if he had already revealed himself to them in an earlier invisible *parousia* and taken them to heaven? It is therefore necessary for all living Christians to *prove their faith, set their hope, be made firm as blameless, be keeping the commandment, and waiting to receive “the undeserved kindness to be brought to you at the revelation (apokalipsei) of Jesus.”* Hence no Christian can be separately alive in heaven at Armageddon which will occur at “*the epiphania of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

MUST BE ON EARTH DURING THE GREAT TRIBULATION

- ❖ “Therefore, when you catch sight of *the disgusting thing that causes desolation* standing in a holy place...those in Judea **begin fleeing to the mountains**...For then there will be **Great Tribulation**....Then if anyone says to you, Look! Here is the Christ, or There! **Do not believe it**. For false christs...will arise and give great signs” (Matt. 24:15ff).

Why would Jesus bother to give these warnings if anointed Christians would be already safely in heaven? It will be only after the tribulation that Jesus returns to gather the Christians:

- ❖ “**Immediately after the tribulation** of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven...and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds” (Matt. 24:29).

Only after this does Jesus send his angels to gather his chosen ones (verse 31). Please see Volume 5, STUDY 6. THE FUTURIST VIEW OF END TIME EVENTS sub-heading: THE GREAT TRIBULATION LASTS FOR 3½ YEARS. Furthermore, the ‘*the holy ones*’ are shown to have endured the 42 month (verse 6) Great Tribulation. Hence, they cannot be in heaven during the Great Tribulation:

- ❖ “...there was granted it [*the beast*] to wage **war with the holy ones** and to conquer them” (Rev. 13:7).

STILL ON EARTH UNTIL ‘THE DAY OF CHRIST’

- ❖ “...so that you may *be flawless* and not be stumbling others *up to the day of Christ*” (Phil. 1:10).
- ❖ “He who started a good work in you *will carry it to completion until the day of Jesus Christ*” (Phil. 1:6).

THE RAPTURE

A BIBLE TEACHING

Because of the teachings of Roman Catholicism this Bible teaching had been lost for over 1000 years. In 1 Thessalonians 4:17 the Greek word *harpazo* means *snatched up* or *caught up*. It is the same as in Revelation 12:5 where “*her child was caught away to God*.” Also in Acts 8:39, 40 (KIT) where “*the spirit of the Lord snatched away Philip...to Ashdod*.” Similar events happened to Enoch (Gen. 5:24, Heb. 11:5, 13), Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) and Jesus (Acts 1:9). This Greek term was translated into Latin as *raptare* from which we get the English word ‘rapture.’

OCCURS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE RESURRECTION

- ❖ “The Lord will descend.....*the dead*...will rise **first**. Then, we *the living* who are surviving will, (“at the same time” KIT) together with them, be **caught away** in clouds to **meet the Lord in the air**” (1 Thess. 4:16-18)

Therefore, the descent of Jesus, the resurrection and the rapture are all in close proximity of time. This is the **only time for the resurrection of believers**.

THE GOVERNING BODY’S INTERPRETATION

Jehovah’s Witnesses do not accept the biblical teaching of the rapture but, in following the pattern of a pre-tribulation resurrection, they make it refer to an **invisible and secret resurrection**. So (1) “the Lord” of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is interpreted as being *God* who invisibly descends in the sense that he turns his attention to resurrecting the dead. (2) Being “**caught away**” is interpreted as the resurrection itself. (3) The description “in clouds” is interpreted as indicative of invisibility. Then (4) the “air” becomes heaven. However, this is misinterpretation for the following reasons:

(1) The description in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 shows this to be an event that is **very public**, inasmuch as there is a “trumpet blast” and the **loud** voice of an archangel. Additionally Matthew 24:27 gives the singular description, in that chapter, of Jesus’ return as being comparable to ‘lightning’ which is so very **visible**. Also the Greek words used to refer to Jesus’ return indicate that it will be a visible return (See STUDY 2). It must also be noted that it is Jesus who will perform the resurrection (John 5:28, 29). So

it follows that “the Lord” mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 must be Jesus who is literally descending into “the air” of earth’s atmosphere to resurrect and then rapture his faithful holy ones.

(2) The Governing Body’s interpretation of being “**caught away**” ignores the facts concerning the snatching away of Enoch, Elijah, Phillip and the ascension of Jesus. None of these events was a resurrection but, rather, was a literal snatching away to a different location of living persons.

(3) In the Scriptures clouds are not generally indicative of invisibility but, rather, of God’s presence or that of his representatives. See p 157 of Dictionary of Biblical Imagery.

(4) The snatching up (away) **in the air**, (Gk *aera*) refers to: the atmosphere immediately above earth’s surface. Bauer’s Gk/Eng. Lexicon. Hence, there is no thought of going to heaven in this verse. So the phrase: “*Thus we shall always be with the Lord*” is because resurrected Christians will accompany Jesus as he continues his descent to earth (1 Thess. 4:16).

THE FIRST RESURRECTION DOES NOT OCCUR IN STAGES

As noted earlier the Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that after an initial resurrection of the Christian dead in 1918 there is a continuing, at-the-point-of-death, immediate resurrection to heaven of those who have died since then. This teaching is as a result of following the faulty pattern of the Pre-tribulation Rapture theory as discussed in this study. It is clear from 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 that all Christians who are living when Jesus descends will be **caught away** in clouds to **meet the Lord in the air “at the same time”** together with them [*all the Christians just resurrected*].” Also, to teach that there are multiple stages to the First Resurrection interferes with the biblical fact of it being a single event (I Cor. 15:22). It makes each individual stage in itself a separate resurrection event and thereby producing not just a first resurrection but many resurrections. Furthermore, the First Resurrections then become stretched over a period of 17 years up to 1935 or 92 years up to now according to current Governing Body teaching. Yet 1 Corinthians 15:23 gives three clearly defined and discrete events concerning the resurrection and which relate to 3 different categories of persons: 1) Jesus, 2) Christians, 3) The non-Christians at the ‘end’ of the Millennium. To posit the theory of many stages of the First Resurrection also violates the concept of a “last day” and “7th trumpet” resurrection. (Please see STUDY 13. Subheading: IS THE FIRST RESURRECTION REALLY NOW UNDER WAY?)

THE TWO WITNESSES ARE KILLED DURING THE TRIBULATION THEN THEY ARE RESURRECTED/RAPTURED

❖ “...spirit of life from God entered into them, and they **stood upon their feet**...And they heard a *loud voice* out of heaven say to them: **come on up here**. And they went up into heaven **in the cloud** and their enemies beheld them” (Rev. 11:12).

This is immediately prior to Armageddon (Rev. 16:15). The detail of “in the cloud” shows this to mean “in the air” as in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 when Jesus brings relief for Christians:

“...to you who suffer *tribulation*, **relief** along with us at the **revelation** of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels” (2 Thess. 1:7, 8).

Hence, the relief is not earlier than the Great Tribulation.

THE ANY MOMENT RAPTURE THEORY (PRE-TRIBULATIONISM)

This could not happen in the apostles’ time. Jesus had stated that Peter would reach old age and die before Jesus returned. (John 21:18-23). Paul expected imprisonment, sufferings and a visit to Rome

before Jesus' return. The Ephesian Elders were to expect "ravenous wolves." Yet they all entertained the coming of Christ as a "present hope" ... "the blessed hope." The any moment rapture scheme produces a secret return of Jesus and a secret resurrection/rapture. Yet there were many visual signs that God gave for the first coming of Jesus. Why would God want the second coming of Messiah to be secretive?

WHAT ABOUT THE THIEF PASSAGES?

These emphasize the unexpected nature of the second coming for those who are unprepared [*not watching*] rather than any silence or secrecy:

- ❖ "But if the head of the house had known what time of the night *the thief* was coming, he would have **been on the alert** and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason **you must also be ready**; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think he will" (*Matt. 24:43, 44*). See also Luke 12:39, 40.
- ❖ "**If you do not wake up** I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you" (*Rev. 3:3*).
- ❖ "But YOU, brothers, YOU are not in darkness, so that that **day** should overtake YOU as it would thieves" (*1 Thess. 5:4*).
This shows that the day will overtake them, but they are not caught unawares.

CAN "THE FIRST RESURRECTION" REALLY NOW BE UNDER WAY?

The WT magazine article of January 1, 2007 attempts to prove that the first resurrection has been happening since 1918 with this teaching being based partly on the idea that the 24 elders represent the 144,000 joint heirs with Christ in their heavenly glory. However, this can be shown to be incorrect for the following reasons:

1. The 24 elders are heavenly beings and there is no indication that they were ever previously humans. Please see the seven reasons given in STUDY 21. THE 24 ELDERS OF REVELATION ARE NOT CHRISTIANS.
2. There is no heavenly glory in the sense of any Christian as ever going to heaven. Please see STUDY 12. 144,000 DO NOT GO TO HEAVEN
3. The first resurrection occurs at one single time:
 - i. 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18 concerns the descent of the Lord *and "the dead in union with Christ will rise first. Afterward (thereupon KIT), we the living who are surviving will, [at the same time KIT] together with them, be caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in the air..."* So both the resurrected and the *then living* Christians will be caught up to meet the descending Jesus in earth's atmosphere (not heaven) *at the same time*. There is no allowance in the Scriptures for the concept of a resurrection that is extended over decades and with the living having to die before they ascend to meet the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:35-49 is concerning those who have already died up to the time Jesus returns. See STUDY 11. Section: THE RAPTURE DOES NOT MEAN GOING TO HEAVEN.
 - ii. The first resurrection occurs most specifically on the "last day" (John 6:40, 44, 54; 11:24) There is no indication in the Scriptures that this is any extended period of time but simply the last day of this present age.
4. The so-called evidence that the first resurrection has already been taking place because in Revelation 6, as part of the 5th seal, "a white robe was given to each of them," flies in the face of the facts that:

- Revelation 6:9-11 concerns martyrs who are still dead because, as the WBTS correctly teaches, it is their sacrificed blood that is at the base of the altar metaphorically. However, one cannot switch to literal meanings within **a single entirely metaphorical passage**. Because the ‘blood at the base of the altar’ is a metaphor to show that they are dead, then when “*a white robe was given to each of them*” it is still in a metaphorical sense and is the same as when Abel’s blood metaphorically cries out for vindication (Gen. 4:10, Heb. 11:4). Also Isaiah 14:9, 10 gives an example of the dead speaking, but not literally. So too, Revelation 6:9-11 is poetic imagery of the promise that martyred Christians will later be given such white robes (“**will be clothed**” Rev. 3:5).
- Also the 24 elders of Revelation 4:4 clothed in white garments are completely different individuals to Christians and can be seen as clothed in white just as the angels were clothed in white at Jesus’ tomb.
- It is not until the 7th trumpet blows (Rev.11:15, 18 and 1 Cor.15:52) that the first resurrection takes place. The very earliest that the 7th trumpet could blow is during the 7th seal which is obviously after the 5th seal.
- The Great Tribulation, which obviously has not yet begun, will occur before the first resurrection. Logically, the first resurrection cannot, therefore have begun.
- Anointed Christians are resurrected, as Jesus was: He was human, tangible and visible but with a glorified immortal and imperishable body. Please see STUDY 1, THE RESURRECTED JESUS IS AN IMMORTAL HUMAN. So Christians too are promised the same type of body which, in being tangible, will give proof of the resurrection as having occurred inasmuch as all such resurrected ones will be seen.

So because the 24 elders do not represent Christians; and because Christians do not, in any case, go to heaven but go visibly only into earth’s atmosphere to meet Messiah as he descends to earth, the WBTS proposition is scripturally unworkable and becomes even more so with the fact that the first resurrection occurs at a single time for all Christians and yet after the Great tribulation at the 7th trumpet which is obviously some time after the 5th Seal has occurred. Also the WBTS demonstrates their inconsistency of switching from one type of language to another within the same thought pattern, i.e. from metaphorical to literal, in Revelation 6:9-11 in an attempt to make the resurrection to have occurred within that passage.

CONCLUSION

All of these scriptural details give proof that Christ’s return and the First Resurrection will be a single future event. This means that, with reference to this subject, both 1914 and 1918 are irrelevant dates in the biblical scheme of things.

HISTORY OF RESURRECTION/RAPTURE POSITIONS IN RELATION TO THE TRIBULATION

- Early 2nd century: **The Didache** speaks of the: “fiery trial...but they who endure” *before* the Lord comes. *This is therefore Post-tribulation futurism.*
- Late 2nd century: **Irenaeus** looked forward to a series of significant events before antichrist could arise and Christ return: “The Antichrist...will reign for 3 years and six months...and then the Lord will come from heaven.” *This is therefore Post-tribulation futurism.*

- The **first three centuries of Christian belief** were characterized by Pre-millennial *Post-tribulation futurism*.
- Middle of the 12th century: The **Cathari** introduce the Historicist approach to interpreting prophecy. The Saracens are seen as being the antichrist.
- 1180: **Peter Waldo** identifies the antichrist with the Papacy. *This is Historicism*.
- 1202: **Joachim de Floris** assigned a day/year value to the 1,260 days of Revelation. From then there have been 36 different starting points up to 1823 supposedly leading to the return of Christ.
- c.1350: **The Waldenses** publish a treatise to prove that **the system** of Popery was the Antichrist.
- 1519: **Martin Luther** identifies antichrist with the Papacy. Protestants adopt Historicism.
- 1590: **Ribera** a Spanish Jesuit recovers the patristic Futurist interpretation in his commentary on Revelation.
- 1706: **Daniel Whitby** originates Post-Millennialism.
- 1826: Futurism Rediscovered by **S.R Maitland** who publishes a pamphlet entitled: ‘**An enquiry into the ground on which the Prophetic Period of Daniel and St John has been supposed to consist of 1,260 years.**’ This was Post-tribulation Futurism. He was supported by Professor of Hebrew **James H. Todd**.
- 1830: **Margaret MacDonald** writes to **Edward Irving** describing her visions of a secret rapture before the revealing of antichrist. This is developed into Pre-tribulation dispensationalism.
- Irving subsequently introduces Pre-tribulation dispensationalism. **J.N. Darby** adopts it.
- Late 1800s: The first president of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WBTS), C.T. Russell adopted a mix of Pre-tribulation dispensationalism and the Historicist day/year system with the clergy of Christendom as being “the man of lawlessness.”
- Early 1900s: J.F. Rutherford, the second president of the WBTS adapts this approach to apply to the history of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society but moves away from some aspects of dispensationalism and away from some aspects of the historicist day/year system. The parts that are kept are the 1,260 days as years to prove 2,520 years lead to 1914 for the invisible return of Christ and a Pre-tribulational invisible resurrection of 144,000 in 1918.

EARLIER WATCHTOWER MISAPPLIED DATES

- The first resurrection was claimed to have occurred invisibly in 1878 and then in 1881 and was the last opportunity for anyone to become one of the 144,000.
- Rutherford opens the door for membership of the 144,000 until 1935. This teaching was changed in 2007 to a position of indefinite time based on the concept of ‘overlapping lives’ since 1918 (please see STUDY 3).

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